

## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John**

The relationship between Jesus the Son and God the Father plays a crucial role in the Johannine revelation of Christ. The Gospel of John symbolically portrays Jesus as the Son of God who is relationally inseparable from his Father. This research proposes that the Son-Father Relationship (SFR) is at the center of the network of Christological symbols in the Fourth Gospel. The SFR serves to fulfill the author's stated purpose of John 20:31 and acts as an organizing principle that integrates and structures the Gospel's unique symbolism. The uniqueness of Johannine symbolism is illustrated in the definition and theory of symbol formulated in this research using principles from theories propounded by Paul Ricoeur and Wilbur Urban.

Two key passages in this study are the Prologue (John 1:1-18) and the Prayer (John 17:1-26). These passages are strategically positioned in the Gospel narrative and contain similar clusters of symbols, symbolic language, and themes centered on the SFR. The Prologue subtly and symbolically introduces the SFR; both SFR and symbolism are then developed through the words and actions of Jesus' teaching ministry. The Prayer culminates Jesus' teaching ministry and elevates the SFR to its highest point in the narrative, utilizing most of the symbolism introduced in the Prologue. This research unveils a symbolic network referred to as John's Christological Symbology, through which the Gospel presents Jesus the Son in close relationship with God the Father. The Symbology, commencing in the Prologue and culminating in the Prayer before ending in the remainder of the Gospel, reveals the centrality of the SFR in Johannine symbolism.

## **DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET**

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Doctor of Philosophy  
Biblical Studies

has been read and approved by the undersigned members of  
the Faculty of  
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**THE SON-FATHER RELATIONSHIP AND CHRISTOLOGICAL SYMBOLISM  
IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**A Dissertation**

**Presented to the Faculty of  
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**Dissertation Committee:**

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract .....	i
Dissertation Approval Sheet .....	ii
Title Page .....	iii
Copyright Page .....	iv
Acknowledgments .....	v
Table of Content .....	vi
Table of Figures .....	xii
1.1 Introduction.....	13
1.2 The Problem of Understanding John’s Figurative World.....	15
1.3 Key Questions and Problem Statements .....	18
1.4 Symbol Studies in the Gospel of John .....	22
1.4.1 Defining the Johannine Symbol.....	24
1.4.2 Developing Theoretical Frameworks.....	28
1.4.3 The Semantic Relation between Symbol and Metaphor.....	30
1.4.4 The Structure and Function of Johannine Symbolism.....	32
1.4.5 Summary .....	35
1.6 Research on Figurative Networks in the Gospel of John.....	36
1.6.1 Van der Watt’s Descriptive and Deductive Method .....	37
1.6.2 Ruben Zimmermann’s Network of Images.....	39
1.6.3 Summary .....	42
1.7 Working Definitions .....	43
1.7.1 Symbol .....	45
1.7.2 Symbology .....	48
1.8 The Prologue and the Prayer.....	49
1.9 Chapter Outline.....	51
CHAPTER 2: THEORY OF SYMBOL .....	53
2.1 Introduction.....	53
2.2 The Literary Symbol and Development of Symbol Theory .....	54
2.3 Wilbur Urban’s Theory of Symbol .....	58
2.3.1 Definition of Symbol .....	59
2.3.2 Classification of Symbols .....	60
2.3.3 Principles of Symbolism.....	61
2.3.4 Theory of Transcendent Symbols .....	64
2.3.5 Guidelines for Interpreting Symbols.....	65

2.3.6 Summary .....	67
2.4 Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Symbol.....	68
2.4.1 Dimensions of Symbolism.....	68
2.4.2 Essence of the Symbol .....	70
2.4.3 The Non-Semantic Structure of the Symbol .....	72
2.4.4 Similarity and Dissimilarity in the Symbol .....	74
2.4.5 Summary .....	75
2.5 Similarities between Urban and Ricoeur's Principles of Symbol.....	76
2.6 The Dominating Power of Symbols.....	77
2.7 Conclusion .....	83
CHAPTER 3: THEORY OF JOHANNINE SYMBOLISM .....	85
3.1 Introduction.....	85
3.2 Symbol and Symbology: Working Definitions.....	86
3.3 Theory of Johannine Symbolism .....	92
3.3.1 Principle One: <i>Johannine Symbols are Representational</i> .....	93
3.3.1.1 Symbolic Presentation.....	94
3.3.1.2 Symbolic Re-Presentation .....	95
3.3.1.3 Symbolic Reflection .....	96
3.3.1.4 Symbolic Resemblance .....	98
3.3.2 Principle Two: <i>Johannine Symbols are Products and Agents of Assimilation</i> .....	101
3.3.2.1 Pre-Semantic Assimilation.....	101
3.3.2.2 Semantic Assimilation.....	103
3.3.2.3 Interpretative Assimilation.....	104
3.3.3 Principle Three: <i>Johannine Symbols Associate with Other Figures of Speech</i> .....	105
3.3.3.1 Metaphorical Association.....	106
3.3.3.2 Organizational Association .....	107
3.3.4 Principle Four: <i>Johannine Symbols are Transcendent</i> .....	109
3.3.4.1 Semantic Transcendence .....	109
3.3.4.2 Dualistic Transcendence .....	110
3.3.4.3 Revelatory Transcendence .....	112
3.3.4.4 Transformative Transcendence .....	114

3.4 Conclusion .....	117
<b>CHAPTER 4: NARRATIVE AND SYMBOL IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN .....</b>	<b>120</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	120
4.2 What is Narrative? .....	122
4.2.1 Plot .....	124
4.2.2 Characters .....	126
4.2.3 Time .....	128
4.2.4 Rhetoric.....	130
4.2.5 Summary .....	132
4.3 Narrative, SFR, and Symbolism in the Gospel of John .....	133
4.3.1 SFR and Symbolism in the Johannine Plot.....	135
4.3.2 Symbolic Characterization of the Son and Father .....	139
4.3.3 SFR and Symbolism in Narrative Transcendence and Temporality.....	144
4.3.4 SFR, Symbolism, and Narrative Rhetoric in the Gospel of John .....	148
4.4 Conclusion .....	149
<b>CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>152</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	152
5.2 Semantic Field of Reference and Semantic Domains .....	153
5.3 Narrative Development of the Characterization of the Son and Father .....	159
5.3.1 Equality and Unity .....	160
5.3.2 Sending and Coming of the Son .....	162
5.3.3 Life-Giving Authority .....	166
5.3.4 Love .....	167
5.3.5 Glorification and Revelation.....	169
5.3.6 Summary .....	171
5.4 Methodological Approach .....	172
5.4.1 The Prologue and the Prayer.....	174
5.4.2 Theoretical Analysis .....	176
5.4.3 Semantic Analysis.....	177
5.4.4 Plot Analysis .....	177
5.4.5 Character Analysis .....	177
5.4.6 Time Analysis .....	178
5.4.7 Symbolological Synthesis .....	178



5.4.8 Theological Synthesis .....	179
5.5 Conclusion .....	179
CHAPTER 6: THE PROLOGUE: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS.....	182
6.1 Introduction.....	182
6.2 Representation.....	182
6.2.1 Presentation.....	183
6.2.2 Re-presentation .....	184
6.2.3 Reflection.....	185
6.2.4 Resemblance .....	189
6.3 Assimilation .....	190
6.3.1 Pre-semantic Assimilation .....	190
6.3.2 Semantic Assimilation .....	193
6.3.3 Interpretative Assimilation.....	195
6.4 Association.....	196
6.4.1 Metaphorical Association .....	197
6.4.2 Organizational Association.....	198
6.5 Transcendence.....	200
6.5.1 Semantic Transcendence.....	200
6.5.2 Dualistic Transcendence .....	201
6.5.3 Revelatory Transcendence .....	202
6.5.4 Transformative Transcendence.....	203
6.6 Summary .....	205
CHAPTER 7: PROLOGUE: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS.....	207
7.1 Introduction.....	207
7.2 Plot Analysis .....	208
7.2.1 Sequence One: The Λόγος Dwells with God (vv. 1-3).....	209
7.2.2 Sequence Two: The Λόγος as Light in the World (vv. 4-8) .....	210
7.2.3 Sequence Three: Rejection and Reception of the Light (vv. 9-13).....	212
7.2.4 Sequence Four: The Witness to the Glory of the Son (vv. 14-18).....	212
7.2.5 Summary .....	214
7.3 Semantic Analysis.....	215
7.3.1 Semantic Field of Reference in the Prologue .....	215
7.3.2 The Prologue as a Semantic Domain for SFR and Symbolism .....	217
7.3.3 Summary .....	219

7.4 Character Analysis of the Son and Father.....	220
7.4.1 Unity and Equality .....	220
7.4.3 Life-Giving Authority .....	222
7.4.2 Sending and Coming Into the World .....	223
7.4.4 Love .....	225
7.4.5 Revelation and Glory .....	226
7.4.6 Summary .....	230
7.5 Time Analysis .....	230
7.5.1 Sequence One: Verses 1-3 .....	231
7.5.2 Sequence Two: Verses 4-8.....	232
7.5.3 Sequence Three: Verses 9-13.....	234
7.5.4 Sequence Four: Verses 14-18 .....	234
7.5.5 Summary .....	237
7.6 Conclusion .....	238
CHAPTER 8: THE PRAYER: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS.....	239
8.1 Introduction.....	239
8.2 The Prayer: Semantic Analysis.....	240
8.2.1 Semantic Field of Reference in the Prayer .....	240
8.2.2 The Prayer as a Semantic Domain for SFR and Symbolism .....	242
8.2.3 Summary .....	245
8.3 The Prayer: Character Analysis of the Son and Father in Five Dimensions .....	245
8.3.1 Unity and Equality .....	246
8.3.4 Life-Giving Authority.....	250
8.3.3 Sending and Coming Into the World .....	251
8.3.2 Love .....	253
8.3.5 Revelation and Glory .....	254
8.3.6 Summary .....	257
8.4 Conclusion .....	258
CHAPTER 9: JOHN'S CHRISTOLOGICAL SYMBOLOGY .....	260
9.1 Introduction.....	260
9.2 John's Christological Symbology: Sequence and Synopses.....	261
9.2.1 Synopsis of Sequence One: The Prologue (John 1:1-18) .....	261
9.2.2 Synopsis of Sequence Two: The Baptizer's Second Witness and Jesus' First Disciples (1:19-51).....	263

9.2.3 Synopsis of Sequence Three: The Wedding at Cana and the Cleansing of the Temple (2:1-25) .....	264
9.2.4 Synopsis of Sequence Four: Encounter with Nicodemus and the Baptizer's Final Testimony (3:1-21) .....	266
9.2.5 Synopsis of Sequence Five: Jesus in Samaria (4:1-42) .....	268
9.2.6 Synopsis of Sequence Six: Jesus Heals in Cana and Bethesda (4:43-5:47) ..	269
9.2.7 Synopsis of Sequence Seven: Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1-71) .....	270
9.2.8 Synopsis of Sequence Eight: Jesus at the Feast of Booths (John 7:1-8:59)...	272
9.2.9 Synopsis of Sequence Nine: The Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-10:42) .....	273
9.2.10 Synopsis of Sequence Ten: Jesus in Bethany and Jerusalem (11:1-12:50) .	275
9.2.11 Synopsis of Sequence Eleven: The Farewell Discourse Part One (13:1-38)	277
9.2.12 Synopsis of Sequence Twelve: The Farewell Discourse Part Two (14:1-31) .....	278
9.2.13 Synopsis of Sequence Thirteen: The Farewell Discourse Part Three (15:1-27) .....	279
9.2.14 Synopsis of Sequence Fourteen: The Farewell Discourse Part Four (16:1-33) .....	280
9.2.15 Synopsis of Sequence Fifteen: The Prayer (17:1-26) .....	281
9.2.16 Synopsis of Sequence Sixteen: The Passion Narrative (18:1- 19:42).....	283
9.2.17 Synopsis of Sequence Seventeen: The Resurrection and Epilogue (20:1-21:25) .....	284
9.3 Prologue and Prayer: Narrative Anchors for John's Christological Symbolology ..	285
9.4 Conclusion .....	293
CHAPTER 10: Theological Implications of John's Christological Symbolology .....	297
10. 1 Introduction.....	297
10.2 Theological Significance of John's Symbolic Presentation of the SFR .....	298
10.3 The Significance of a Theo-Symbolic Reading of the Gospel of John.....	300
10.4 Theological Issues Raised in this Study.....	304
10.4.2 Gender Implications of Father-Son Language.....	306
10.4.2 SFR: As a Model for Discipleship for Believers .....	309
10.4 Conclusion .....	311
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	312

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 : Theory of Johannine Symbolism.....	93
Figure 2: Semantic Field of Reference .....	154
Figure 3: Methodology .....	172
Figure 4: Sequence of Events in the Prologue .....	208
Figure 5: Semantic Field of Reference for the SFR in the Prologue .....	215
Figure 6: SFR, Symbols/Symbolic Language, and Themes in the Prologue.....	218
Figure 7: Semantic Field of Reference for the SFR in the Prayer .....	240
Figure 8: SFR, Symbols/Symbolic Language, and Themes in the Prayer.....	242
Figure 10 Symbograph: John 1:1-18.....	263
Figure 11 Symbograph: John 1:19-51.....	264
Figure 12 Symbograph: John 2:1-25.....	266
Figure 13 Symbograph: John 3:1-21.....	267
Figure 14 Symbograph: John 4:1-42.....	269
Figure 15 Symbograph: John 4:43-5:47 .....	270
Figure 16 Symbograph: John 6:1-71.....	271
Figure 17 Symbograph: John 7:1-8:59 .....	273
Figure 18 Symbograph: John 9:1-10:42 .....	274
Figure 19 Symbograph: John 11:1-12:50 .....	276
Figure 20 Symbograph: John 13:1-38.....	277
Figure 21 Symbograph: John 14:1-31.....	278
Figure 22 Symbograph: John 15:1-27.....	280
Figure 23 Symbograph: John 16:1-33.....	281
Figure 24 Symbograph: John 17:1-26.....	282
Figure 25 Symbograph: John 18:1-19:42 .....	284
Figure 26 Symbograph: John 20:1-21:25 .....	284
Figure 27: Symbols/Symbolic Language and Themes in the Prologue, Prayer, and Gospel .....	289

# CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM OF UNDERSTANDING JOHN'S FIGURATIVE WORLD

## 1.1 Introduction

This research examines the connection between the Son-Father Relationship (SFR)<sup>1</sup> and symbolism in the Gospel of John. Throughout the Johannine narrative, the Son is *relationally* inseparable from his Father; therefore the investigation begins with the premise that the Gospel's aim (20:31) is accomplished by the striking symbolic portrayal of Jesus as Son, *within the context of his relationship with God the Father*. John's Christological revelation of Jesus takes place through an expansive network of symbols organized around the SFR.<sup>2</sup> This research proposes that the SFR is at the center of John's Christological symbolism because it draws the Gospel's symbols into a cohesive and comprehensible whole. The role of the SFR is explained in the following points: 1) it is the key to the narrative strategy by which the author fulfills his stated purpose in John 20:31, 2) it is an organizing principle and integrating force that gives structure to the Gospel's unique symbolism, and 3) it provides insight into the theological nature of Johannine symbolism.

The terms "symbol" and "symbolology" are specially defined in this research and theories of symbol propounded by Paul Ricoeur and Wilbur Urban assist in formulating a Theory of Johannine Symbolism specifically adapted to the Johannine narrative. The

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<sup>1</sup> The Son is mentioned first in the phrase "Son-Father Relationship" for the following reasons: 1) the Gospel presents Jesus as Son primarily in light of his relationship with the Father, 2) at the start of the narrative (the Prologue), the focus is on the Son who is mentioned before the Father, 3) everything about the divine relationship known only through the Son, 4) quantitative lexical analysis reveals that in the Gospel, the Son carries out more activities than the Father (see chapter five of this research, 5) the Father is "actively absent" in the dramatic episodes of the narrative, and 5) in the SFR, the Son serves as a theological model of how believers are to relate to God the Father.

<sup>2</sup> While acknowledging the continuing discussion surrounding the authorship(s) of the Gospel, in this study "John" refers primarily to the Gospel of John.

theory, which is applied to the Prologue, highlights four features of Johannine symbolism, namely, representation, assimilation, association, and transcendence. In addition, this study analyzes the narrative structure of both the Prologue and Prayer explaining how SFR and symbolism together fulfill the purpose of the Gospel. The theoretical and narrative analyses in this research form the framework for charting John's Christological Symbolology, a network made up of symbolic clusters structured around the SFR. The study concludes with reflection on the theological significance of John's Christological Symbolology for the community of faith.

The Prologue (1:1-18) and the Prayer (17:1-26) are the two primary passages this research uses to establish the centrality of the SFR. Both passages which show how the SFR is supported by clusters of symbols/symbolic language and themes are strategically positioned in the Gospel and contain similar clusters of Johannine symbolism connected to the SFR. The Prologue stylistically and gradually introduces the SFR in connection with several symbols/symbolic language and themes that are subsequently developed in Jesus' teaching ministry. In the course of teaching and interacting with other characters, Jesus expounds on his relationship with the Father using symbolism. The Prayer which culminates Jesus' teaching ministry elevates the intimacy in the SFR to an unparalleled height, utilizing much of the symbolism revealed in the Prologue. Thus, in this study the Prologue and Prayer function as narrative anchors for John's Christological Symbolology.

This introductory chapter will proceed as follows: 1) discussion of difficulties encountered in navigating John's figurative world, 2) identification of key questions underlying this research, 2) review of various approaches taken by scholars in four areas of Johannine symbolism, namely, definition, theoretical frameworks, semantic relation

between symbol and metaphor, and the structure/function of Johannine symbolism, 3) reviews of Van der Watt and Zimmermann's researches into figurative networks in the Gospel of John, 4) explication of definitions formulated for this research, 5) clarification of the significant roles of the Prologue and Prayer in charting John's Christological Symbology, and 6) outline of chapters in the research.

## 1.2 The Problem of Understanding John's Figurative World

Many scholars consider the task of interpreting the Gospel of John a challenging and problematic enterprise.<sup>3</sup> The advent of twentieth century scholarly criticism engendered intense debates over the Gospel's provenance, authorship, and historicity. The result has been a general acceptance of multiple authorships and editions of the Gospel over an extended timeframe. However, the focus of Johannine critical studies has shifted to the narrative and literary dimensions of the Gospel. One of the consequences of this shift has been a burgeoning interest in the Gospel's multilayered and often cryptic figurative language, particularly its use of imagery, metaphor, and symbol.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Beasley-Murray laments "Everything we want to know about the book is uncertain, and everything that is apparently knowable is a matter of dispute." G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC 36 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), xxxii. Burge also observes, "Scholars have poured so much energy into unraveling the Gospel's many enigmas that the flood of academic articles and books published regularly shows no sign of abating. The Gospel seems to evade our grasp and as a result has become an inexhaustible subject of interest." Gary M. Burge, *John*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 23.

<sup>4</sup> See Culpepper who notes that the emergence of narrative-critical studies over the last two decades has been the most productive for Johannine scholarship. Alan Culpepper, "Looking Downstream: Where Will the New Currents Take Us?" in *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective* (ed. Francisco Lozada Jr. and Tom Thatcher; Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 203. Narrative critical works include the following: Günter Stemberger, *La Symbolique du bien et du mal selon saint Jean* (Paris: Editions du Seuil 1970); David W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (Theologische Dissertationen 4. Basel: Komm. Friedrich Reinhardt, 1970); G. W. MacRae, "Theology and Irony in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Word in the World: Essays in Honor of Frederick Moriarty* (ed. R. J. Clifford and G. W. MacRae; Cambridge, MA: Weston College Press, 1973), 83-96; David W. Wead, "Johannine Irony as a Key to the Author-Audience Relationship in John's Gospel," *American Academy of Religion Biblical Literature: 1974 Proceedings*, (comp. Fred O. Francis; Tallahassee: American Academy of Religion, 1974); John Painter

The Johannine figurative quest has endeavored to make linguistic, literary, and theological sense of what is sometimes viewed as a non-systematic hodgepodge of figurative language; however, this quest has generated its own problems. The complexities that accompany navigating the nebulous nature of figurative language in the general discipline of literary studies has passed over into Johannine literary studies, resulting in overlapping use of the terms symbol, metaphor, and imagery.<sup>5</sup> Interpreting the figurative language of the Fourth Gospel therefore requires that a theoretical decision be made concerning the leading figure of speech in the Johannine narrative. Inevitably,

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“Johannine Symbols: A Case Study in Epistemology,” *JTSA* 27 (1979): 26-41; Xavier Léon-Dufour, “Towards a Symbolic Reading of the Fourth Gospel,” *NT* 527 (1981): 439-56; Wade R. Paschal, “Sacramental Symbolism and Physical Imagery in the Gospel of John,” *TynBull* 32 ([1981]: 151-76; D. A. Carson, “Understanding Misunderstanding in the Fourth Gospel,” *TynBull* 33 (1982): 59-91; Alan R. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985); E. Richards, “Expressions of Double Meaning and their Function in the Gospel of John,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 96-112; J. D. G. Dunn, “Plot and Point of View in the Gospel of John,” in *A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South African New Testament Scholars* (ed. J. H. Petzer and P. J. Hartin; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 149-69; R. Kieffer, “Different Levels in Johannine Imagery,” in *Aspects on the Johannine Literature: Papers Presented at a Conference of Scandinavian New Testament Exegetes at Uppsala* (ed. L. Hartman and B. Olsson; ConBNT 18; Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), 74-84; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1992); Mark W. Stibbe, *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of 20th Century Perspectives* (New York: Brill, 1993); Dorothy Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel. The Interplay of Form and Meaning* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994); Herman Servotte, *According to John: A Literary Reading of the Fourth Gospel* (London: DLT, 1994); Larry Paul Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John* (JSNT 145. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); Van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Mary Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2001); Wai-Yee Ng, *Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender and Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 2002); Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Ruben Zimmermann, *Christologie Der Bilder Im Johannesevangelium: Die Christopoetik Des Vierten Evangeliums Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung Von Joh 10*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 171. Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2004; Jörg Frey, Ruben Zimmermann, and J. G. Van der Watt, eds. *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (WUNT 200. Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2006).

<sup>5</sup> For example, Paul Ricoeur’s theory of metaphor delves deeply into symbolism. See Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 45-70. Van der Watt comments, “Symbols and metaphors are sometimes even regarded to be synonymous, although metaphors are usually regarded as a sub-section of symbolism. This is all very confusing and unrefined.” Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 1.



the interpretation of Johannine figures of speech has amassed a wide array of literary and theological perspectives, resulting in what Van der Watt refers to as “theoretical plurality.”<sup>6</sup> Practically every one of John’s figurative lexemes has been interpreted within all three categories of symbol, metaphor, and imagery.<sup>7</sup> In view the vacillating use of these three terms by scholars, negative criticism leveled at John’s distinct use of figuration should focus on the vague nature of figuration, rather than clumsiness or ambiguity on the part of the author of the Gospel.<sup>8</sup> Even though scholars offer explanations for their choice of symbol, metaphor, or imagery as the Gospel’s main figure of speech, their discussions are usually not limited to the figurative term they choose.<sup>9</sup> This phenomenon shows that figures of speech do not operate in isolation. Effective theoretical strategies are therefore needed to assist in interpreting the figures of speech in the Gospel.

A major task of this study is to uncover the underlying figurative structure of the Johannine narrative. Although John was not aware of modern literary classifications, a definite figurative and narrative strategy that conforms to modern figuration and narrative

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<sup>6</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, xix- xx.

<sup>7</sup> Johannine scholars who adopt the term symbol include: Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism*; Koester, *Symbolism*; Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism; Gender and Theology* Léon-Dufour, “Towards a Symbolic Reading”; Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*; and Stenberger, *La Symbolique du bien et du mal selon saint Jean*. Others argue for metaphor or imagery as do van der Watt, *Family of the King*; Ruben Zimmermann, *Christologie der Bilder*; and Jörg Frey, Ruben Zimmermann, and J. G Van der Watt, eds. *Imagery in the Gospel of John*.

<sup>8</sup> Zimmerman complains, “The images of John are unwieldy, resistant, and intricate. To use a metaphor from Adolf Jülicher: They are jumbled and confused—like a hedge or thicket. Zimmermann, “Imagery in John,” in *Imagery in the Gospel of John*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Many scholars use overlapping terms such as metaphorical symbolism (Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*, 5); Zimmerman refers to “symbolic image.” Rueben Zimmermann, “Imagery in John: Opening up Paths into the Tangled Thicket of John’s Figurative world,” in *Imagery in the Gospel of John* (ed., Jörg Frey, Jan G. van der Watt, and Rueben Zimmerman; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). According to Koester, “The core symbols in John’s Gospel are often expressed in metaphors.” Koester, *Symbolism*, 9.

style can be detected in the Gospel. John purposefully and creatively threads various strands of figuration throughout the narrative, which point primarily to the SFR. The function of the symbol as a pointer is a basic premise of symbol theory; therefore, this study argues that the Gospel's symbolic network focuses on Jesus as Son in filial relationship with his Father. The Gospel's Christological symbolism points to Jesus the Son who in turn points to the Father by means of symbolic language and actions (1:18). This symbolic presentation is accomplished by using clusters of symbols/symbolic language and themes supported and developed by metaphors, imageries, and other figures of speech.

### **1.3 Key Questions and Problem Statements**

Christology and symbolism are two distinct features in the Johannine narrative. The relation between the two is reciprocal—Johannine Christology is symbolical while Johannine Symbolism is Christological. This research explores the relation between Christology and symbolism by asking the following questions: Can a common denominator be identified for both the Gospel's Christology *and* symbolism? Does an organized structure underlie John's Christological symbolism? If so, what is the center of this structure? These questions lead to the following two main problems in the study of Johannine symbolism: the lack of theoretical models to explain Johannine symbolism and the need to discover the underlying structure of the Gospel's expansive symbolic network.

An overview of the excellent works undertaken in the study of Johannine symbolism reveals a deficiency of specialized and clearly delineated theories that account

for the foundational concepts underlying Johannine symbolism and explain its nature and function in the narrative. In other words, a lack exists of comprehensive theoretical models specially adapted to the Johannine narrative that could shed more light on the Gospel's elaborate symbolic system. The presence of symbolic systems in narratives such as the Gospel of John implies the deliberate use of a multiplicity of symbolic representations to communicate a message or represent a person. Regrettably, authors do not explain the principles that underlie their particular use of symbolism; therefore the task of Johannine symbolists is to inquire into the theoretical and philosophical principles that undergird not only individual symbols, but also the entire network of symbols in the Gospel. Johannine symbols should be understood, not only as literary devices, but also as *theoretical, philosophical, and theological constructs that contain hermeneutical keys* for interpreting the Gospel. Within the phenomenon of the symbol are concepts that should be uncovered in order to effectively interpret the Gospel. To arrive at intended symbolic meaning, researchers need to offer possible theoretical models that take the distinctive features of Johannine symbolism into account in combination with the author's narrative design and theological purpose.

The second problem in the study of Johannine symbolism is the need to explore the possibility of a common denominator uniting the seemingly diverse spectrum of Johannine symbols and symbolic language. The complexity of Johannine symbolism calls for deep probing into its structural composition. More work is needed to explain the overall structure of John's symbolic universe and illustrate how it operates as an *organized whole*. Most studies on Johannine symbolism focus on one symbol;<sup>10</sup> these

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<sup>10</sup> Some studies on individual symbols include the following: Evil: Stemberger, *La Symbolique du bien et du mal*. Flesh/incarnation: Lee, *Flesh and Glory*; Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May*

studies argue for the dominance of one symbol over all other symbols in the Gospel.<sup>11</sup> Only Koester's *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (2003), gives a resourceful and comprehensive overview of practically every symbol in the Gospel.<sup>12</sup> However, Koester offers little in terms of a distinct comprehensive and methodological framework for interpreting Johannine symbols *as a network*. A viable approach to understanding John's symbolic structure would be to seek for a cohesive factor(s) that can explain the wide array of symbols in the narrative. Because of the strong connection between the SFR and symbols in the narrative, this study proposes that the SFR is the common denominator and organizing principle of Johannine symbolism.

Despite the fact that the Son-Father language is a prevalent feature of the Johannine narrative, investigation into the possibility of the SFR playing a significant role in Johannine symbolism is lacking. Virtually every Johannine scholar recognizes the relationship between the Son and his Father as integral to the Gospel's presentation of Jesus. However, no study has been conducted into how the narrative and theological function of the SFR contributes to the unity of Johannine symbolism or how the

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*Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (rev. and enl. ed.; New York: Crossroad, 2003). Garden: Ruben Zimmermann, "Symbolic Communication between John and His Reader: The Garden Symbolism in John 19-20," in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (ed. Tom Thatcher and Stephen D. Moore. Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 221-235. Sacrament: Paschal, "Sacramental Symbolism"; S. M. Schneiders, "Symbolism and the Sacramental Principle in the Fourth Gospel," in *Segnie sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni* (ed. P.-R. Tragan; SA 66. Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1977), 221-235. Temple: Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*. Water: Ng, *Water Symbolism*; Jones, *Symbol of Water*.

<sup>11</sup> Studies of individual symbols have much to offer in terms of historical, social, and theological backgrounds, narrative development, and theological function of John's symbols. There is definitely need for more study on individual symbols, explaining how they function and interact with other symbols within the larger matrix of Johannine symbolism.

<sup>12</sup> The scope of Koester's research is impressive. His study covers symbolic characters, symbolic actions, symbols in relation to hearing, seeing, believing, symbols of light, darkness, water, crucifixion, relationship between symbol and the Johannine community, symbol and unity, symbol and discipleship, symbol and revelation, symbol and the world, sacramental symbolism, geographical symbolism, and numerical symbolism.

prevailing SFR functions as a cohesive factor in the Johannine network of symbols.<sup>13</sup>

Discussions surrounding the SFR are primarily descriptive, addressing the subjects of intimacy, love, unity, honor, mission, and agency. In Johannine research, references to the SFR are generally in the following areas: 1) the Jewish and Greco-Roman background of “Son of God” or “Father” as divine titles,<sup>14</sup> 2) the Son and Father as literary characters,<sup>15</sup> 3) theology and Christology,<sup>16</sup> and 4) topical aspects such as sending<sup>17</sup> and oneness.<sup>18</sup> Other discussions of the SFR are scattered throughout various

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<sup>13</sup> Van der Watt’s *Family of the King* comes closest to a broad survey of the SFR in light of figurative language; however, his work emphasizes metaphors and not symbols. Moreover, Van der Watt interprets the Father/Son language under of the broad spectrum of the metaphorical nature of family imagery. His focus on the SFR is mostly limited to a subsection entitled “The Father Educating the Son to Give Life,” where he examines the Father/Son relationship in context of ancient Mediterranean education. Van der Watt’s study covers ethics, communication, love, and honor. His work gives little attention to the Gospel’s narrative design or theology. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 202-209, 266-333.

<sup>14</sup> See W. F. Lofthouse, *The Father and the Son: A Study in Johannine Thought* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1934); Evert J. Blekkink, *The Fatherhood of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942); C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 228-262; Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 308-329; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (vol. 1; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 291-297, 310-31; Lee discusses “father” as a symbol of God. See Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 110-128. The entire edition of *Semia* 85 (1999) is dedicated to the subject of God as Father.

<sup>15</sup> See Jan A. Du Rand, “The Characterization of Jesus as Depicted in the Narrative of the Fourth Gospel,” *Neot* 19 (1985): 18-36; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 106-115; Koester, *Symbolism*, 39-42; Paul W. Meyer, “The Father: The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John: Essays in Honor of D. Moody Smith* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Clifton Black; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 255-273; Harris D. Francois Tolmie, “The Characterization of God in the Fourth Gospel” in *Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (*JSNTSup* 69; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 57-75.

<sup>16</sup> See Tord Larsson, *God in the Fourth Gospel: A Hermeneutical Study of the History of Interpretations* (ConBNT 35; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2001); Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. Francis J. Moloney; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 249-252; C. Cowan, “The Father and Son in the Fourth Gospel: Johannine Subordination Revisited,” *JE TS* 49, 1 (2006): 115-136; Andreas J. Kostenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> See Jose Comblin, *Sent from the Father: Meditations on the Fourth Gospel* (trans. Carl Kabat; New Y: Orbis Books, 1979); H. S. Friend, “Like Father, Like Son: A Discussion of the Concept of Agency in Halakah and John,” *ATJ* 21 (1990): 18-28; Eduard Schweizer, “What Do We Really Mean when We Say, God Sent His Son,” in *Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer* (ed. John T. Carroll, Charles H. Cosgrove, and Elizabeth E. Johnson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 298-312; Calvin Mercer, “Jesus the Apostle: ‘Sending’ and the Theology of John,” *JETS* 35 (1992): 457-462.

Johannine commentaries. In conclusion, no research has yet centered on the important role of the SFR *in context of the Gospel's overall symbolic structure*.<sup>19</sup> The aim of this research to close this gap, which calls for a specialized theoretical framework and methodological design to bring cohesion and to shed further light on the SFR symbolism in the Gospel of John.

## 1.4 Symbol Studies in the Gospel of John

Extensive research into Johannine symbolism began when literary critical scholars took the role of figurative language in the Gospel's narrative seriously. During the pre-literary critical phase of Johannine symbol studies, scholars understood symbolism mainly as representative of the mythical worldview of the evangelist, or the socio-religious experience of his community.<sup>20</sup> Because historical critical scholars discounted the historicity of symbolism, they also tended to disregard the validity of the

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<sup>18</sup> See Mark L. Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel: Motif Analysis and Exegetical Probe into the Theology of John* (Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr, 1976).

<sup>19</sup> Lee's *Flesh and Glory* includes a helpful chapter entitled, "Authoring Life: The Symbol of God as Father" This chapter treats the term "Father" as a symbol and although it provides much insight into the divine relationship, it does not connect SFR to the overall symbolism of the Gospel.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Bultmann does not view the symbol as a literary device, but rather as a tool for mythological language that conceals meaning. Bultmann analyzes the Gospel's symbols in context of Mandaean Gnostic mythological language. He explains that myth is not objective or historical; rather it "symbolizes how we human beings understand ourselves in our world." Rudolph Bultmann, *New Testament & Mythology and other Basic Writings* (ed., trans., by Schubert M. Ogden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 9. Resultantly, Bultmann's interpretative method is a process of demythologization, which views the symbol not as an integral part of John's narrative but as an ideological covering to be stripped and discarded in order to discover the basic message of the Gospel. Bultmann, *New Testament & Mythology*, 357-358. Ashton's historical critical approach to Johannine symbolism links the Gospel's symbols to the Johannine community. Ashton comments that symbols such as Messiah, prophet, and Son of Man, which are of Jewish provenance, have been transformed so as to serve the purposes of the fourth evangelist. In addition, Ashton remarks that the evangelist uses the theme of judgment to "turn the experience of Jesus into a symbol of the experience of the Christian community." Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 124, 226. John Painter believes that "the evangelist's use of symbols was shaped in the struggle with the synagogue." Painter "Johannine Symbols," 34.

Gospel's figurative language for interpretation.<sup>21</sup> Even though scholars readily acknowledged the symbolic nature of the Gospel, little effort was made to probe into the nature of the symbol as a literary entity and its significance in the Johannine narrative. Neither definitions nor theories of symbol were utilized to explain the nature of the diverse symbolic structure in the Fourth Gospel. Sandra Schneiders explains that during the pre-literary critical era of Johannine studies, a common assumption existed that the more the historical reliability of the Gospel was confirmed, the less symbolic interpretation was viewed as valid or necessary.<sup>22</sup> According to Schneiders, these misgivings were partly due to the view that symbolic interpretation was arbitrary, indemonstrable, and also because symbolic interpretation lacked reliable criteria.<sup>23</sup> Schneiders, however, cautions that if a text is symbolic then no meaning of that text exists apart from its symbolic meaning;<sup>24</sup> therefore, taking the symbolic nature of the Gospel into account is "not an optional exercise, but a condition of validity."<sup>25</sup>

The growing interest in Johannine symbolism has produced a number of significant works, which have established the validity of symbolism in Johannine

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<sup>21</sup> In spite of the Fourth Gospel's symbolic nature, a perusal of indices of most commentaries reveals the absence of the entry "symbol" or its cognates. Léon-Dufour notes that in classical commentaries, John's symbolism has been insufficiently explored and appreciated. Léon-Dufour, "Towards a Symbolic Reading," 439.

<sup>22</sup> Sandra Schneiders, "History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel," in *L'evangile de Jean: Sources, Redaction, Theologie* (ed. M. de Jonge; Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1977), 371-372.

<sup>23</sup> Schneiders, "History and Symbolism," 371-372. A classic example of reservation towards symbolic interpretation is reflected in Wead's comment: "Symbolism within the Gospel of John must be approached with extreme caution. Not only is there very little agreement as to what should be considered symbolism but also there are many good reasons why the search for the symbolic interpretation brings trouble to the exegetes." Wead, *Literary Devices*, 27-28.

<sup>24</sup> Schneiders, "History and Symbolism," 372.

<sup>25</sup> Schneiders, "History and Symbolism," 376. Schneiders insists that symbolism is intrinsic to the Fourth Gospel and is the primary hermeneutical key to its interpretation" Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 63.

research and interpretation. The aim of this review is to examine how scholars have approached certain issues pertinent to this study. The review focuses on the following: 1) defining the Johannine symbol, 2) developing theoretical frameworks, 3) understanding the semantic relation between symbol and metaphor, and 4) explaining the structure and function of Johannine symbolism.<sup>26</sup>

#### **1.4.1 Defining the Johannine Symbol**

Not all Johannine scholars offer specific definitions of symbol tailored to suit their research focus, however, most definitions offered reflect the Gospel's theological emphasis. The author of the Gospel uses symbols to advance his theological purpose (20:31), giving Johannine symbolism theological/religious character and function;<sup>27</sup> the theological emphasis of the Gospel's symbolism is therefore unquestionable. The Gospel is the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God; symbolic words, actions, discourses, and narratives all aim at revealing Jesus. Each symbolic representation in the narrative develops an aspect of Jesus' person, mission, and message. Many scholars therefore recognize the Johannine symbol as a tool of divine revelation. As a result, most definitions put forward refer to the theological or religious nature of the symbol, in particular its revelatory and transcendent nature. For example Lee views John's symbols

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<sup>26</sup> Culpepper's recommends that the following foci in the study of Johannine symbols: 1) adequate definitions, 2) development in the narrative, 3) relating symbolism, metaphors, and motifs, and 4) analyses of functions. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 188-89.

<sup>27</sup> Lee's understanding of symbol is based primarily on religion and theology; she states, "John's symbols lie at the heart of his theological enterprise." Lee goes on to explain that religious symbolism is at the core of theology, particularly in the Fourth Gospel. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 15, 17. Lee's study draws from concepts of religious symbolism propounded by Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner, she also refers to Patristic theologians such as St. Ephrem the Syrian.



as “vehicles of revelation.”<sup>28</sup> The concept of revelation also features in the two-fold definition of literary symbol by Larry Jones, which he describes as first, “a literary device that points . . . to something far greater than itself.” Second according to Jones, the symbol “‘embodies’ that which it represents . . . it is revelation itself.”<sup>29</sup> The first part of Jones’ definition is literary, while the second part is theological, focusing on revelation.

The concept of transcendence is recognized in literary, religious, and philosophical theories of symbol, primarily because the referent of the symbol is not explicit in the text—the referent transcends the text. The reader is therefore made to search for the meaning of the symbol beyond what is explicitly stated in the text. From the onset of John’s Gospel, the concept of transcendence is inescapable, pervading most symbolic presentations of Christ. Koester’s definition is solely based on transcendence and according to him a symbol is simply: “An image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance.”<sup>30</sup> Schneiders defines symbol as a “sensible reality which renders present to and involves a person subjectively in a transforming experience of transcendent mystery.”<sup>31</sup> According to Ng, Johannine symbolism “proclaims the transcendent truth.”<sup>32</sup> Transcendence is therefore an important

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<sup>28</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 17. According to Lee, Johannine symbols have a three-fold function: 1) they reveal the Gospel’s spirituality 2) they are open-ended, and 3) they engage the reader at both a cognitive and intuitive level. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 222.

<sup>29</sup> Jones, *Symbol of Water*, 19.

<sup>30</sup> Koester explains that Johannine symbols span the chasm of “from above” and “from below” without collapsing the distinction. His recognition of a transcendent reality leads him to characterize Johannine symbols as “tensive and dialectical.” In addition Koester notes that the symbols bring contradictory ideas together and into agreement with one another. *Symbolism*, 3-4, 28.

<sup>31</sup> Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 66.

<sup>32</sup> Ng, *Water Symbolism*, 44. Ng states that symbolism may not always be interpreted with precision or exhaustively explained, “Precision and exhaustiveness belong to the domain of criticism, which, when dealing with symbolism, cannot avoid ambivalence because symbols are versatile in their

element of Johannine symbolism that reflects the author's underlying philosophical thought.

Symbols originate from socio-cultural environments that have been influenced by underlying philosophies. Philosophies express the realities, reasoning, and fundamental beliefs of individuals and communities. Thus, the symbols in a narrative reflect the belief system of the author and his/her milieu, which may in turn determine the general pattern of the narrative's symbolic system. C. H. Dodd, one of the earliest scholars to explore the background and nature of Johannine symbolism, postulates an understanding of symbol that stems from Greek philosophical thought. According to him, the nature of Johannine symbolism reflects author's fundamental *Weltanschauung*, "a world in which things and events are a living image of the eternal."<sup>33</sup> Hence, most definitions of Johannine scholars reflect the element of transcendence—an element that is also emphasized in this research. Transcendence is part of John's philosophical worldview as symbols portraying the SFR are transcendent; the Son who is the earthly image of the transcendent Father is from "above," and is situated in but not part of the world "below."

Peyre expresses the desire for a solution to the problem of multiple definitions of the symbol in the following statement: "It could be wished—in vain—that some international congress of critics might one day propose two or three precise meanings for

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power to signify. . . . In this book, we will allow for multiple meanings as well as inconclusive investigations. Ng postulates a three stage development in her study of the symbol of water: 1) eschatological, 2) Christological, and 3) soteriological. Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*, 46, 87. Of these three stages, Ng focuses on eschatology.

<sup>33</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, 143. While Dodd does not suggest the evangelist had direct acquaintance with Platonic doctrine of Ideas, he believes there is ample evidence that in circles with which Johannine thought emerged has affinities with Plato's conception of a world of invisible realities of which the visible world is a copy. According to Dodd therefore, "It seems clear that the evangelist assumes a similar *philosophy*" (emphasis mine). Dodd, *Interpretation*, 139-149. Paschal offers a definition of symbol based on similar philosophical thought, stating, "The essence of a symbol is that it refers to reality, but is not itself that reality." Paschal, "Sacramental Symbolism," 151.

the word *symbol*, according to which it would henceforth be used in the several Western languages.”<sup>34</sup> The reality is that the versatile character of symbols makes a universal definition unviable. The difficulty of finding one definition for the symbol is clearly articulated in Douglas McGaughey’s concise statement, “There can be no ‘proper’ meaning of the symbol, for it resists the proper.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, the multivalent nature of the symbol renders the symbol incapable of being limited to a few definitive meanings.

Johannine scholars have also complained about the lack of a definition of symbol for everyone to follow.<sup>36</sup> Since no discipline has been able to adopt one definition of symbol, the situation is unlikely that Johannine scholars will. Different interests shape Johannine research, which in turn shape definitions of symbol. Thus, the multi-dimensional character of the Johannine narrative can produce several valid definitions of symbol that may even be employed in other disciplines. In other words, the symbolic nature of the Gospel of John can contribute much to the broader interdisciplinary field of symbol studies and also serve as a model for how symbols operate. The challenge for Johannine scholars is to probe more deeply into the mechanics of Johannine symbols, identify elements unique to the narrative’s symbolic system, and develop theoretical models that illustrate how symbols make the Gospel of John an enduring and effective narrative.

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<sup>34</sup> Henri Peyre, *What is Symbolism?* (trans. Emmet Parker; Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 6.

<sup>35</sup> Douglas R. McGaughey, “Ricoeur’s Metaphor and Narrative Theories as a Foundation for a Theory of Symbol,” *RelS* 94 (1988): 433-434.

<sup>36</sup> For example, after noting the meaning or definition of symbolism is not agreed upon by scholars, Ng argues that skepticism towards Johannine symbolism could have been avoided if symbolism had been “more discreetly defined.” Ng, *Water Symbolism*, 22. Wead complains that there is little agreement as to what should be considered symbolism. Wead, *Literary Devices*, 27.

### 1.4.2 Developing Theoretical Frameworks

Over the past three decades, Johannine literary critical scholars have undertaken the task of establishing the validity and relevance of the symbolism in the Gospel. Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (1983) launched an unabated interest in the nature and function of Johannine figurative language. Culpepper interacts with several literary theorists including symbolists such as Seymour Chatman, E. K. Brown, Thomas Fawcett, Norman Friedman, Walter Hinderer, Paul Ricoeur, and Philip E. Wheelwright. Hence, Culpepper's research paved the way for the use of modern literary theory in the interpretation of Johannine symbols.

Although most studies in Johannine symbolism refer to both ancient and modern theories of symbol, these studies do not develop theoretical models that explain the vast spectrum of Johannine symbolism. The task of validating the importance of symbolism for a credible interpretation of John's Gospel requires a strong theoretical foundation that combines interdisciplinary principles of symbol with the distinctive features of Johannine symbolism. Such theoretical models will account for the Gospel's symbolic structure and style, bring much needed cohesion to John's multifaceted symbolism, and contribute to the range of theoretical models in the general field of symbolism. For example, Koester's comprehensive study is shaped by the theological question: How do people know God?<sup>37</sup> Koester, who focuses on the role of symbolism in communicating the Gospel's message from God, uses a methodology that explores "the Gospel's literary dimensions, socio-historical context, and theological import."<sup>38</sup> However, his work lacks a clear framework

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<sup>37</sup> Koester, *Symbolism*, 1. Koester's study presents Johannine symbols in context of theology.

<sup>38</sup> Koester, *Symbolism*, xi.

that explains the theoretical underpinning of the wide scope of symbolism his study covers.<sup>39</sup> Koester's work indicates a problem encountered in interpreting Johannine symbolism—negotiating the balance between theology and theory. John's authorial intent and the nature of his narrative are undeniably theological; however, he uses a theoretical entity—the symbol—to convey his theology. The theological nature of Johannine symbolism is undisputable and interpretation ought to pay close attention to theology. The symbol, nevertheless, is a literary construct that operates on theoretical principles which facilitate meaning. If fully explored, the theoretical nature of the Johannine symbol can be developed into a useful medium for presenting the Gospel's theology. In sum, theological inquiries into Johannine symbolism would be strongly substantiated and greatly enriched if pursued within a properly organized theoretical framework.

Another problem in the study of Johannine symbolism is the need to explore the possibility of a common denominator that unites the diverse spectrum of Johannine symbolism. The complexity of Johannine symbolism calls for detailed investigation into its structural composition. A solid theoretical framework for Johannine symbolism can be achieved by surveying the entire symbolic structure of the Gospel from particular angles and investigating how various symbols interconnect under a common component. More

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<sup>39</sup> Koester refers to literary theories of Freedman, Ricoeur, and Wheelwright to explain characteristics of the symbol but he does not use these theories to form a framework for interpretation. *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 9, 24, 26. Other Johannine studies focusing on one symbol are also devoid of theoretical frameworks. Ng notes this lack of well defined theoretical frameworks and methodological strategies in Johannine symbol studies but offers no clear methodology of her own; her attempts at both theory and methodology are vague and elusive. Ng, *Water Symbolism*, 24. Larry Jones' employment of literary theory in his study on the symbol of water does not develop much beyond a definition of symbol. Jones, *Symbol of Water*, 14-19. Mary Coloe's study on temple symbolism offers no theoretical framework; she devotes approximately three pages to symbol theory. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 4-7. Lee's work on the symbol of flesh refers to theories of religious symbols expounded by Karl Rahner and Paul Tillich. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 225. However, her theological emphasis overlooks the necessity of establishing a well-defined theoretical framework in which to structure her valid theological claims.

research is needed to clarify the overall structure of John's symbolic universe explaining how it operates as an organized whole. Johannine symbol studies that focus on individual symbols and argue for an overarching symbol tend to ignore the possibility of a common denominator that links *all* the symbols together. An effective theoretical framework would help explain the interconnectedness of John's Christological symbols, which seem to defy logical explanation. Uniting John's symbols within a theoretical framework weaves the symbols together under a common scheme of thought thereby demonstrating their validity and relevance.

### **1.4.3 The Semantic Relation between Symbol and Metaphor**

Generally, symbols do not operate in isolation and Johannine symbols are no exception to this pattern. John's symbolic system is largely dependent on its several metaphors; a symbolic study of the Gospel therefore requires that scholars determine the relation between the symbol and the closely related metaphor. At the onset of writing, almost every Johannine symbolist determines the semantic relation between symbol and metaphor by noting the distinctions or lack thereof between the two. Culpepper perceives the haziness that can result from intermingling figurative language; consequently, one of his recommendations for symbol studies includes relating symbols to metaphors.<sup>40</sup> According to Culpepper, the symbol *which often carries the principal burden of the narrative* is related to other figures of speech such as metaphors.<sup>41</sup> Culpepper explains

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<sup>40</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 188-189.

<sup>41</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 181.

that while symbols are distinct, some overlap always exists, which results in symbolic metaphors,<sup>42</sup> motifs with symbolic function,<sup>43</sup> and symbols or metaphors used as signs.<sup>44</sup>

Apart from the obvious absence of a tenor in the literary symbol,<sup>45</sup> Johannine scholars note other distinctions between symbol and metaphor. Some of these distinctions are based on the socio-historical background and semantic conventions of certain words,<sup>46</sup> linguistics,<sup>47</sup> or specificity of statements.<sup>48</sup> Others perceive no distinction between symbol and metaphor and describe these two figures of speech as operating on a continuum.<sup>49</sup> Even though Lee makes some distinctions, she concludes that symbol and metaphor cannot be easily divided; she states, “The disconnection between symbol and

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<sup>42</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 189.

<sup>43</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 183.

<sup>44</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 182.

<sup>45</sup> I. A. Richards introduced the term “tenor” for the subject of the metaphor and “vehicle” for the metaphor itself. I. A. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 96.

<sup>46</sup> For example Ashton differentiates between life as a symbol and eternal life as a metaphor. Ashton insists that in John, eternal life is rooted in Jewish eschatology; however, once transferred to the present age eternal life becomes a symbol. Ashton also argues ἀϊώνιος makes eternal life a metaphor. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 217. Van der Watt views symbols as figurative language that works on convention, thus a metaphor may become a symbol when fossilized through semantic convention. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, Lee explains the symbol covers a wide range of expressions such as painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance, dreams, actions, and events; on the other hand, as a feature of discourse, metaphor is confined to linguistics. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 17.

<sup>48</sup> See Wade Paschal who explains that the statement, “I am *the true* Vine” cannot be symbolic because it is specific. According to Paschal, in the “I am” statements, Jesus is not speaking symbolically because the statement is specific. Paschal, “Sacramental Symbolism,” 152.

<sup>49</sup> Koester describes the relation between symbol and metaphor as “a continuum.” According to him, the most identifiable symbols appear in form of metaphors. For example, in the metaphorical statement, “I am the bread of life” (6:11-13, 35), bread functions symbolically because incongruity is apparent. Koester makes the distinction that symbols evolve from images in the realm of sense perception, while elements of metaphor are more abstract such as seen in statements such as “I am the resurrection and the life” and “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” which are metaphorical in form, but do not include symbols. Koester, *Symbolism*, 6, 8. Ng also believes that symbols and metaphors are related on a continuum and explains that symbols have a broader application and are more expansive than metaphors. Ng, *Water Symbolism*, 6.

metaphor creates too many problems, both literary and theological. In the Johannine worldview, at least the two clearly belong together.”<sup>50</sup> Lee’s conclusion that the two are interconnected is correct; however, failure to distinguish theoretically how these two figures of speech relate to one another and how they operate together within the Gospel tends to compound the interpretation of Johannine symbolism.

The Johannine network of symbols interweaves metaphors. Metaphors such as the “I Am” sayings introduce certain symbols; when metaphors appear in a Christological context, they operate symbolically and become part of the symbolic network. Symbols and metaphors operate jointly, fulfilling a common theological purpose of revealing Jesus as the Son of God. Theoretical clarity is therefore needed to account for the close association between these two figures of speech in the Johannine narrative; blending symbols with metaphors may blur their functions in the Gospel. A clear understanding of the symbolic and metaphorical dimensions of the Fourth Gospel is an important issue in the research of Johannine symbolism.

#### **1.4.4 The Structure and Function of Johannine Symbolism**

The symbols in the Gospel of John are diverse in socio-historical and cultural provenance, multilayered in meaning, disparate in distribution, and characteristically cryptic. The task of structuring the symbolism of the Gospel in order to comprehend its narrative design and theological purpose is therefore of essential importance.<sup>51</sup> Some Johannine scholars have offered various classifications for the symbols in the Gospel,

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<sup>50</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> See Culpepper who emphasizes the need to analyze the function of Johannine symbols within the entirety of the Gospel as a literary whole. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 189.



based on literary or theological function. Culpepper proposes a broad classification that takes into account several characteristics of Johannine symbols such as background, narrative function, and variableness.<sup>52</sup> His classification shows how Johannine symbols cluster and interrelate.<sup>53</sup> Other scholars offer multi-level classifications. Léon-Dufour discerns a “double symbolism,” that is, two levels of symbolic operation.<sup>54</sup> Anderson identifies four categories of symbolization—explicit, implicit, correlative, and innocent.<sup>55</sup> Koester identifies a twofold structure in which the first level of meaning concerns Christ and the second level concerns discipleship.<sup>56</sup> Zimmermann distinguishes two domains of symbolism—the first consists of basic symbols of human life such as light, water, and birth, and the second covers specific symbols from the Jewish tradition.<sup>57</sup> Lee identifies

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<sup>52</sup> Culpepper’s classification is as follows: 1) nature (material, animal, personal, or numerological), 2) function within the narrative (allegorical or transcending), 3) “core and guide” or “co- and subordinated” symbols, 4) personal and impersonal symbols, and 5) expanding and fixed symbols. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 184, 185, 189. According to Culpepper, the three core Johannine symbols are light, water, and bread. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 201.

<sup>53</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 185.

<sup>54</sup> The first level is the meaning from the Jewish cultural milieu in which Jesus lived, while the second level is the Christian cultural milieu that inspired John’s interpretation. These two milieux form a unified reading. Léon-Dufour, “Towards a Symbolic Reading,” 440-441.

<sup>55</sup> Explicit symbolism is declarative when the narrator or character tells the reader directly that something is symbolically important. Implicit symbolism is associative when meaning is not explicitly articulated. Correlative symbolism is possibly symbolic. Innocent symbolism is when a symbol lacks symbolizing functions. Paul N. Anderson, “Gradations of Symbolization in the Johannine Passion Narrative: Control Measures for Theologizing Speculation Gone Awry,” in *Imagery in the Gospel of John* (ed. Jörg Frey, Jan G. van der Watt, and Reuben Zimmerman; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 170-188.

<sup>56</sup> Koester explains that the first half of the “I am” statement in 6:35 reads “I am the bread of life,” which makes a statement about Jesus; the second half reads “He who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst,” which says something about the believer. Koester, *Symbolism*, 13. Koester describes the structure of Johannine symbolism as “concentric, with Jesus at its heart.” Koester, *Symbolism*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Zimmermann suggests that identification of symbols should take place by means the following two criteria: a) conventional plausibility, and b) textual plausibility. Conventional plausibility occurs when a symbol is understood within the social-traditional convention of early Judaism while textual plausibility occurs when clues in the text make it clear that a term is symbolic. Zimmermann, “Imagery in John,” 20-23.

two levels of symbolic meaning; the first level relates to material reality of the world and on the second level Johannine characters struggle to understand.<sup>58</sup>

Other categorizations of Johannine symbolism are based on one symbol or theme, such as dualism,<sup>59</sup> incarnation,<sup>60</sup> and water.<sup>61</sup> Studies that elevate the significance of one symbol above all others suggest that the author of the Gospel may have had in mind a graded symbolic structure. The result of this approach tends to make individual symbols vie for the status of most important symbol.<sup>62</sup> Scholars who argue for the case of one main symbol establish their case by highlighting the significance and illustrating how the particular symbol relates to other symbols and figures of speech. However, since most Christological symbols point to Jesus as Son in relation to the Father, making one Christological symbol higher than other symbols seems moot. Jesus the Son, who identifies himself primarily through God the Father, is the *center* of John's symbolic

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<sup>58</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 19.

<sup>59</sup> Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 404. According to Ashton, the symbols of light and darkness are archetypal symbols, which establish the basic symbolic pattern in the Gospel. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 208-209.

<sup>60</sup> Lee describes the Christological symbol of flesh as an expanding symbol that stretches to incorporate Jesus' incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and risen presence. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 65. In her study, Lee builds a case for flesh (incarnation) as the Gospel's core symbol and highlights how this symbol connects to other symbols, particularly the symbol of glory.

<sup>61</sup> Through John 4, Ng demonstrates the comprehensive nature of water symbolism showing how themes of salvation, incarnation, worship, eternal life, rebirth, Holy Spirit, harvest, spiritual food, and mission are all interwoven with the symbol of water. Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*, 152-153.

<sup>62</sup> For Lee the symbol of the flesh is the "controlling symbol which makes room for all the others." Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 222. According to Lee, the incarnation is the "centrepiece of the Johannine symbolic universe upon which all else is built." Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 32. She also states that the symbol of flesh is the core symbol of the Gospel and all other symbols are symbolic because of the core symbol. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 51. Ng surmises that eschatologically, water symbolism plays a versatile and outstanding role in the Gospel. Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*, 95. Ashton believes that the symbol of life is the Gospel's central symbol because other symbols such as bread, water, and wine cluster around it. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 218-219. Coloe states, "I propose to show that the Temple functions in the narrative as the major Christological symbol." Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 3. (Emphases in quotes are mine).

world. Hence, according to this study, the SFR is the center of John's symbolic world. One significant factor missing from the many structures explaining John's symbolism is the centrality of the SFR and its connection to almost every symbol. This research aims to use an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to show how all of John's symbols unite around the common denominator of the SFR.

#### **1.4.5 Summary**

The above review of Johannine scholarship has sought to determine how scholars have approached the study of Johannine symbolism in four important areas. First, on the issue of defining the symbol, the possibility and practicality of deciding on *one* definition of symbol for Johannine studies is a lost cause. Generally, the symbol as a literary entity is difficult to confine. Likewise, as a literary and theological device, the symbol in the Johannine narrative defies exact definition. Definitions depend on largely the purpose and scope of the research at hand and this factor nullifies the possibility of one definition for the Johannine symbol. Second, regarding the problem of theory, although Johannine scholars have fared well in anchoring their research in the works of several well-known literary theorists, their insightful theoretical observations do not develop into clear and concise theoretical models or frameworks that encapsulate the nature and function of Johannine symbols. A theoretical model that brings out the operation and depth of meanings of Johannine symbols will be of great value to in the field of biblical studies. Third, every research into the symbols of the Fourth Gospel has to tackle the symbol-metaphor conundrum and much work has been done in this area by Johannine scholars.

Various explanations of the dynamic relation between symbols and metaphors have revealed how both figures of speech work together in the Johannine narrative.

Finally, Johannine scholars have put much effort into the classifying the symbols in the Gospel, however, classification contributes more to analysis rather than synthesis. That John's symbols are diverse is evident, the question is: Do they *unite* under a common denominator and *how* are they all connected to serve the author's narrative and theological purposes? This research intends to answer this question and thus contribute to the progress made so far in Johannine symbol studies. The SFR is a major factor that facilitates the interpretation of Johannine symbolism.

Scholars have made great advances in the study of Johannine symbolism by uncovering much information about the literary and theological function of Johannine symbols. Social, cultural, and historical backgrounds have been explored. John's symbolic world is now less complicated and more comprehensible. Studies in Johannine symbolism have been driven by many concerns, each legitimate in its own right. This research adds to these concerns, the necessity of a clear theoretical framework and recognition of the SFR as an important factor in the symbolic interpretation of the Gospel of John.

## **1.6 Research on Figurative Networks in the Gospel of John**

The purpose of the review is to highlight various factors involved in identifying and revealing figurative networks underlying the narrative, semantic, and theological structure of the Johannine text. The review examines two approaches utilized in unveiling networks of figurative speech in the Gospel. Van der Watt and Zimmermann, whose

works focus on metaphor and imagery respectively, are the only scholars whose studies have revealed extensive figurative networks underlying the Johannine text. Therefore, they serve as models for unveiling levels of symbolic networks in the Gospel of John.

### 1.6.1 Van der Watt's Descriptive and Deductive Method

Van der Watt describes his method as “a descriptive endeavor in order to determine the functional dynamics of complex metaphors.”<sup>63</sup> He explains further:

I carefully described the way in which John himself applies his own metaphors. . . By carefully describing the way in which metaphors and other figurative elements are used in these extensive and complex collections of metaphors, the basic elements of what could be called ‘John’s theory of metaphor’ can be established.<sup>64</sup>

Van der Watt develops a theory of metaphor by analyzing John 15, 10, and 4 respectively. This review will single out Van der Watt’s analysis of John 15 in order to show how he arrives at his theory and network of metaphors.<sup>65</sup> First, Van der Watt underlines the importance of interpreting metaphors within their socio-historical context.<sup>66</sup> Second, as a framework for interpreting the vine metaphor, he describes in detail the socio-cultural context of viticulture in Greek and Jewish antiquity. Points Van der Watt highlight include the following: 1) special care given by the gardener of the vine, 2) pruning the vine, 3) the fruit of the vine, 4) the gardener’s emotional involvement with the vine, and 5) aspects of vine farming absent in John’s metaphor.<sup>67</sup> Third, Van der

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<sup>63</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, xv.

<sup>65</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 25-54.

<sup>66</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 26-29.

Watt analyzes the metaphorical language of the first eight verses of chapter 15.<sup>68</sup> Van der Watt's analysis leads to a theory of four "metaphorical constructions," namely, 1) substitution, 2) analogical interaction, 3) comparison, and 4) climactic description.<sup>69</sup> Van der Watt's method shows how metaphors in the Gospel form a semantic cohesion on meso- and macro-levels. At the meso-level, metaphors relate together to create a larger image.<sup>70</sup> At the macro-level, metaphors form intra-textual relationships,<sup>71</sup> that is, they relate to each other within the text. Van der Watt also identifies a thematic cohesion in the text, this cohesion of themes occurs in the following areas: 1) semantic field of thematically related words, 2) repetition of words, objects, or motifs, 3) stylistic features

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<sup>68</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 31-48. Van der Watt also examines vine imagery in the rest of chapter 15 and also discusses vine imagery as OT symbolism. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 50-54.

<sup>69</sup> Substitution occurs when literal words are replaced with figurative words resulting in personification. Personification eases the semantic tension occurring in metaphorical statements like "I am the door" (10:7) or "I am the Vine." (15:1). Van der Watt explains, "Through personification the qualities of the inanimate door are transferred to Jesus, and vice versa. Within the boundaries of the imagery this lowering of the borders between the literal and figurative worlds becomes possible as well as functional." Analogical interaction, takes place for example in chapter 15, with the use of verbs like "pruning," "remaining," and "bearing fruit." Verbs common to vehicles and tenors bring about analogical interactions. In 15:2, the Father prunes the disciples as a gardener prunes branches, and in 15:4-5 the disciples are to stay in Jesus and bear fruit as branches are attached to the vine. Comparison parallels two different situations and states the exact points of comparison. For example, 15:4 makes a comparison between fruitfulness in branches and fruitfulness in the disciples; here, the metaphor mirrors two different situations with fruitfulness being the point of comparison. Last, climactic descriptions give metaphors dramatic effect. In John, dramatic effect occurs when nouns and verbs, usually joined together with καί clauses, appear in conjunction to one another. An example is 15:6, when climactic description magnifies the horror of destruction when four verbs, linked by καί, describe how the branches will be gathered and burned. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 111-117.

<sup>70</sup> For instance, in chapter 15 the metaphors substitute the figurative realities of gardener, vine, and branches for the Father, Jesus, and his disciples respectively. These objects then interact with one another. The gardener (Father) prunes the vine (Jesus), while the branches (disciples) stay in the vine (Jesus). Van der Watt concludes that substitutional and interactive metaphors cohere to form a semantic network of metaphors, which creates meaning in the text. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 123-124.

<sup>71</sup> As related metaphors are repeated, they join with previously mentioned themes to form images. According to Van der Watt, themes in chapters 14 and 15 are interrelated by similar terms such as λελάληκα, □ντολή, and κόσμος. Thus, the vine metaphor in chapter 15 reflects what Jesus said in chapter 14 and in both chapters, concepts such as unity and remaining in Christ lead to a macro interpretation. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 126-127.

such as parallelism or chiasm, 4) linguistic features like syntax and semantics, and 5) use of words belonging to the same semantic field within a single context (e.g., light, lamp, and blindness).<sup>72</sup>

Van der Watt unveils a network of family metaphors that include metaphors such as father, son, brothers, house, birth, and life. For example, in the metaphor of birth, Van der Watt examines birth in the ancient Mediterranean world and lists all direct and indirect references to spiritual birth in the Gospel, after which he interprets the metaphor of birth in chapters 3:1-10; 1:12-13, and 8.<sup>73</sup> Van de Watt arrives at his network of metaphor of birth by connecting all the references to birth in the Gospel.<sup>74</sup>

Van der Watt's descriptive and deductive method is primarily semantic, he identifies key metaphorical terms and links the terms together based on ancient Mediterranean socio-historical culture. In sum, the networks of metaphors in Van der Watt's research are formed by observing lexical, semantic, and socio-historical connections throughout the Johannine narrative.

### **1.6.2 Ruben Zimmermann's Network of Images**

Zimmermann refers to his method as a "compositional path,"<sup>75</sup> which he explains in the following words:

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<sup>72</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 135-137.

<sup>73</sup> Van der Watt does not apply his theory of climactic description to his study of the metaphor of birth.

<sup>74</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 166-200. Van der Watt examines other aspects of family imagery such as education, ethics, communication, love, honor, care and protection. He also covers other elements such as friendship, Holy Spirit, kingship, judicial (forensic), and bridegroom imagery. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 360-393.

<sup>75</sup> Zimmermann, "Imagery in John," 27.

Instead of searching for individual genres of imagery, as in the older form criticism, one makes more progress by looking at imagery as a partial aspect of a coherent and complete work . . . I would like to describe text-immanent compositional techniques on a literary-synchronic level, which demonstrate how John formed and composed his images within the framework of his complete work.<sup>76</sup>

Zimmermann identifies three forms of “image composition,” which are as follows: 1) clusters of images within a small text, 2) images within a motif, and 3) image networks in the entire Gospel. Clusters of images within a small passage consist of the superimposition of connected images within a small number of verses.<sup>77</sup> These clusters manifest in two ways. First, they appear side by side in close succession. Using fine art analogy, Zimmermann refers to this composition as a “polyptychon” or “patchwork technique.”<sup>78</sup> For example, 1:1-18 contains a cluster that includes the terms “logos,” “God,” “Light,” “only begotten,” and “flesh.” The second type of cluster consists of images superimposed on each other in such a way that they are inseparable.<sup>79</sup> According to Zimmermann, the most obvious example of this kind of cluster is the inseparable blending of “Son” and the “one who has been sent.”<sup>80</sup>

Variations of images within a motif occur when the same image is transposed, modulated, reversed, or reflected. For example, the imagery of natural light becomes

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<sup>76</sup> Zimmermann, “Imagery in John,” 30.

<sup>77</sup> Zimmermann, “Imagery in John,” 30.

<sup>78</sup> Zimmermann, “Imagery in John,” 30-31.

<sup>79</sup> Zimmermann, “Imagery in John,” 31.

<sup>80</sup> Zimmermann, “Imagery in John,” 31-32. Zimmermann argues that this blending is a deliberate creation of the author, and expounds, “Auch wenn Joh die Verbindung dieser zwei Hoheitsnamen wahrscheinlich schon aus der Tradition übernommen hat, vollzieht er doch ihre Überlagerung so konsequent, dass man in der Verknüpfung beider Bereiche ein bewusstes Gestaltungsmittel des Evangelisten erkennen muss.” Zimmermann, “Christologie,” 414. Zimmermann’s patchwork technique enables the reading of contradictory images juxtaposed with each another (e.g., Jesus as both Door and Shepherd in John 10).



experiential (11:9 ff.; 12:35), or expresses John's dualism (1:4 ff.; 3:19; 12:36).<sup>81</sup> Thus, the author of the Gospel uses a combination of normal life experience, linguistics, and symbolic tradition to lead the reader into a deeper understanding.<sup>82</sup>

Image networks in the entire Gospel consist of images and motifs that recur throughout the entire Gospel. These images may appear at the beginning, middle, and/or end of the Gospel (e.g., King in 1:49; 12:13; 19:21), or they may appear constantly throughout the Gospel (e.g., "one who is sent," and "son").<sup>83</sup>

Zimmermann notes that in the Gospel, a group of images may branch out like nets to another group. For example, the shepherding images of "door," shepherd," and "lamb," and metaphors of "grain of wheat" and "grapevine," come under the larger image of agriculture.<sup>84</sup> Zimmermann in the following notes that these images portray unity in diversity:

Insgesamt fallen die Bilder weder auseinander, noch sind sie nur zu einer bunten Bildcollage im äußeren Rahmen des Evangeliums vereint. Sowohl das Neben- und Ineinander verschiedener Bilder als auch die formale Vielfalt einzelner Bildmotive oder die Verknüpfung von Bildern zu übergreifenden Netzwerken dienen dem gleichen Zweck. Sie sind auf je eigene Weise Darstellungen von Jesus Christus.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Zimmermann, "Imagery in John," 32.

<sup>82</sup> Zimmermann, "Imagery in John," 33.

<sup>83</sup> Zimmermann argues that images such as the depiction of Christ as the "one who is sent" should be viewed in their entirety. He argues that readers' have the responsibility to "put the mosaic of sending declarations, which do not build upon each other either in a chronologically or logically consistent way, together into a complete picture." Zimmermann, "Imagery in John," 33-35.

<sup>84</sup> Zimmermann, "Imagery in John," 36.

<sup>85</sup> Zimmermann, "Christologie," 421.

Consequently, the reader's perception of Christ is formed through repeated readings of Johannine network of images.<sup>86</sup>

Zimmermann's compositional approach notes distinctive patterns in which Johannine images emerge within the Gospel narrative. His approach follows the narrative structure of the Gospel; Zimmermann therefore concludes that the Johannine narrative is "figuratively shaped."<sup>87</sup>

### 1.6.3 Summary

The theories and methods of Van der Watt and Zimmermann show how networks of figurative language can be identified in the Johannine narrative. The approaches of both scholars differ in technique. Van der Watt pays little attention to the narrative structure of the Johannine Gospel.<sup>88</sup> His "descriptive and deductive" method reveals an elaborate system of metaphors that focus on semantic structure and ancient Mediterranean socio-historical background of Johannine metaphors. On the other hand, Zimmermann pays more attention to narrative features while emphasizing the theological import of the Johannine network of images.

Although Van der Watt and Zimmermann identify networks using different approaches to the narrative, their methods arrive at similar theoretical conclusions. Van

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<sup>86</sup> Zimmermann, "Imagery in John," 35.

<sup>87</sup> Zimmermann, "Imagery in John," 24. These "figurative narratives" exhibit coherence, development of imageries, and elements such as time and characters in the Gospel text. Zimmermann, "Imagery in John," 23-26.

<sup>88</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 3.

der Watt develops a four-fold theory of metaphor.<sup>89</sup> Zimmermann's theory consists of three image compositions. Van der Watt identifies metaphors, linked by semantic cohesion, on meso- and macro-levels. Zimmermann identifies images in speech, themes, chapters, and the entire Gospel.

The methods employed by Van der Watt and Zimmermann shed light on the figurative structure underlying the Johannine text, thus, facilitating the methodological strategy for this research. Van der Watt's theory of metaphors, socio-historical analysis of Father and Son in ancient Mediterranean culture, and identification of semantically related words and themes are valuable to this research. Zimmermann's vibrant semantic and theological interaction with the Johannine narrative and his description of clusters of images also assist this research in identifying symbolic clusters in the Gospel.

## 1.7 Working Definitions

The term σύμβολον does not occur in the text of the Gospel of John.<sup>90</sup> Therefore any research into Johannine symbolism needs to clarify why the symbol has been selected as the primary figurative device for interpreting John's revelation of Jesus. This research chooses to use the term "symbol" as the starting point for interpreting the figurative language of the Gospel, for the following reasons: 1) the literary characteristics of symbol encompasses many of the characteristics of metaphor and imagery,<sup>91</sup> such that

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<sup>89</sup> Van der Watt mostly applies only three of his four theorems (substitution, interaction, and comparison) play a major part in his method; climactic description is applied only minimally.

<sup>90</sup> Neither do the terms μεταθορά or εἰκόν appear in the Gospel.

<sup>91</sup> New Criticism tended to regard the symbol as a strong form of metaphor. Wendell V. Harris, *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 402. William Yeats states that metaphors "are not profound enough to be moving, when they are not symbols,

many of the metaphors and imageries in the narrative function symbolically,<sup>92</sup> 2) generally, the symbol is more commonly identified with theological/religious language and discourse than metaphor, and 3) in the Gospel, actions of Jesus, narrative sections, discourses, and idiomatic phrases, and characters are usually described by scholars as “symbolic” rather than “metaphoric.” Consequently, due to its all-encompassing nature, the symbol is more fitting as the *primary* means of understanding Johannine figurative language.

The first step in navigating a theoretical path for the study of Johannine symbolism is to decide on working definitions.<sup>93</sup> Definitions of symbol abound because they are used in various disciplines such as literature, linguistics, religion, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy. Therefore, due to this expansive nature, the most efficient way to study symbols in a narrative is to clearly articulate the theoretical boundaries within which the symbols will be interpreted.<sup>94</sup> A clear and precise definition of the symbol not only lays out a basic meaning for working with the text, but also sets forth boundaries for investigation into what could otherwise be an intractable subject. In

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and when they are symbols, they are the most perfect of all.” William Butler Yeats, “The Symbolism of Poetry,” *Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 36.

<sup>92</sup> Semantically, metaphors are textually constrained; however, since virtually all Johannine metaphors exceed their metaphoric function, they operate symbolically leading to transcendent meaning.

<sup>93</sup> See Lee who confirms the need for specific definition: “No study of religious symbolism within a text such as the Fourth Gospel can bypass the question of definition. The issue of how to interpret the Bible is related directly to the way we believe symbolism operates within the biblical narrative.” Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 9.

<sup>94</sup> See Paul Tillich’s comments on the nebulous nature of symbol: “No account of the uses of symbolism is complete without the recognition that the symbolic elements in life have a tendency to run wild, like the vegetation in a tropical forest.” Paul Tillich, “The Religious Symbol” in *Symbolism in Religion and Literature* (ed. Mary, Rollo; NY: George Braziller, 1960), 61. According to Kenneth Burke, “No one quite uses the ‘symbolism’ of a word in its mere dictionary sense and *its usage is revealed by the company it keeps in the words of a writer*.” (emphasis mine). Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 33.

addition, definitions identify the underlying concepts and essential qualities of the symbols analyzed in Johannine research.

The setting from which symbols emerge and develop is important for understanding Johannine symbolism. The basic function of Johannine symbols is literary, primarily because of their narrative setting and connection with other literary devices. The application of literary-narrative criticism to the Gospel of John has brought to light many pertinent aspects of Johannine symbolism, which were hitherto undiscovered or ignored. Literary theories of symbol have been mined and utilized by Johannine scholars to give Johannine symbols meaning and function.<sup>95</sup> However, in definitions and descriptions offered by scholars, the theological nature of the Johannine symbol usually overshadows its literary function. Definition of the Johannine symbol should take literary function and narrative setting into account.

### 1.7.1 Symbol

An important key to attaining a suitable working definition of the Johannine symbol is the ability to weave elements pertinent to the research at hand into one definitive statement. The symbol has numerous characteristics that cannot all be contained in one definition; therefore, an effective definition comprises a clear and

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<sup>95</sup> These literary theorists include: C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1946); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Max Black, *Models and Metaphor* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1962); I. A. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); W. Freedman, "The Literary Motif: A Definition and Evaluation," *Novel* 4/2 (1971); Walter Hinderer, "Theory, Conception, and Interpretation of the Symbol: Theory of the Symbol" (in *Perspectives in Literary Symbolism*, ed. Joseph Strelka; Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972); Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976); Paul Ricoeur *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

precise statement that identifies the main foci of study. The working definition of symbol specially adapted for this research is as follows: *A symbol is a figure of speech that embodies certain characteristics of its literal meaning and leads to a transcendent meaning, significant in its narrative context and transformative in its theological purpose.*<sup>96</sup> This definition highlights and combines the literary, narrative, and theological functions of the Johannine symbol. The essence of this definition is transcendence, a trait inherent in every virtually Christological symbol in the Gospel of John. John's Christological symbols represent transcendent realities linked to Jesus' transcendent origin and relationship with his Father.

According to the above definition, within the narrative setting of the Fourth Gospel, the Johannine symbol functions first, as a literary figure of speech that points beyond itself, to a referent not explicit in the text. Second, the symbol operates by embodying some characteristics of its literal or primary meaning. For example, the symbol of light in the Prologue (1:4-5, 7-9), which points to Jesus as the light of humanity, *begins* with the literal or basic meaning of φῶς (light), thus the symbol *embodies* certain characteristics of natural light, such as brightness, which enables physical vision or guidance. However, a simple analogy to natural light does not lead to an adequate interpretation of the symbol, for Jesus is not physical light dwelling in human beings (1:4, 9). The reader with certain characteristics of literal light in mind has to look for the meaning of φῶς beyond its literal meaning. This literal meaning leads the reader to a transcendent meaning, which in the case of the Prologue, is linked to Jesus' transcendent origin. In 1:1-2, Jesus together with God is co-creator of humanity and is

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<sup>96</sup> A full explanation of this definition is given in chapter 3.

therefore able to impart spiritual light (not physical) to humanity. In 1:5, the spiritual darkness in the world is overcome with spiritual, not physical light. Therefore, the symbol of light in the Gospel does not point to earthly physical light, rather, it points to Jesus who is the embodiment of transcendent spiritual light. The transcendent meaning of the symbol points to Jesus, the spiritual light from God, who guides people out of darkness; this symbolism of light expands as the narrative progresses.

In sum, the symbol initially embodies the literal concept of natural light as that which provides vision or guidance. Inadequacy of the literal analogy to arrive at the intended meaning of the symbol draws the reader to its transcendent meaning, which is understood in context of Jesus' transcendent origins. This transcendent meaning is significant within the immediate context of the Prologue because without it the reader cannot fully grasp the dimensions of how light functions in the narrative as a Christological symbol representing Jesus. Failure to grasp the transcendent meaning of the symbol at the introductory stage of the narrative results in misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the symbol when it reappears. As noted earlier, Johannine symbols rarely occur alone, they unite with other symbols and figures of speech reflect transcendent ideas which facilitate symbolic meaning and contribute to the Gospel's symbolic network. For example, the symbol of light combines with other figures of speech that represent concepts connected to light, such as darkness, night, day, sight, and knowledge; these all form symbolic clusters that shape John's Christological Symbolology.

### 1.7.2 Symbolology

The aim of this study is to reveal a symbolic network called John's Christological Symbolology. The working definition for symbolology is: *An overarching network comprising symbols, symbolic language, and themes connected to a common denominator that runs through a narrative.*<sup>97</sup> Thus, John's Christological Symbolology is an overarching network of symbols, symbolic language, and themes having at its center a common denominator flowing through the Johannine narrative—the SFR. Symbols in the Gospel of John are supported and intensified by the use of words having specialized meanings within Johannine narrative and theology;<sup>98</sup> hence, this research takes into account the *specialized use of other figures of speech such as metaphors and imageries, lexemes, phrases or themes that express significant symbolic or transcendent realities.* These specialized words are referred to in this study as *symbolic language*.<sup>99</sup> The main distinction between symbols and is that symbols are standard figures of speech while symbolic language are words in the Gospel that represent or express the Johannine worldview, revelation, or theology. The inclusion of symbolic language in the theoretical equation for this study ensures that areas where symbol, metaphor, and imagery overlap are covered.

John's Christological Symbolology is the *overarching* symbolic network for the *entire* narrative; however, this network contains smaller interrelated symbolic networks referred

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<sup>97</sup> This definition of symbolology is limited to the functions of a symbolic network *within the confines of a specific text* and therefore is more text-bound than the above definition of symbol.

<sup>98</sup> For example, the words δοξάζω/δόξα, δίδωμι, ἔργον, and ἔρχομαι carry symbolic implication when they are used Christologically since they point to an aspect of Jesus' person or mission.

<sup>99</sup> Other variations of the term "symbolic language" are "symbolic terminology" or "symbolic expression."



to as *symbolic clusters*. A symbolic cluster consists of *a group of connected symbols/symbolic language and themes linked to the SFR*, thereby forming the structure of John's Christological Symbolology. Symbographs are *visual illustrations such as charts or graphs*, used to demonstrate the connections between the SFR and symbolic clusters.

## 1.8 The Prologue and the Prayer

The Prologue and the Prayer are the primary texts used in the narrative and methodological framework for this study. John's Christological Symbolology commences in the Prologue, develops in the ensuing narrative, and peaks in the Prayer. These two passages function as main *narrative anchors* for John's Christological Symbolology because of their strategic positions in the Gospel and their similar symbolic content. In sum, the Prologue commences John's Christological Symbolology, while the Prayer brings the Symbolology to a crest before concluding in the remainder of the Gospel.

The Prologue and Prayer are critical to this investigation for three main reasons. First, the Prologue is the introduction to the Gospel, the SFR, and Johannine symbolism.<sup>100</sup> The Prologue functions in the following ways: 1) it stylistically and

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<sup>100</sup> This research views the entire Gospel in its current canonical form as a unified whole. Much discussion concerning the connection of the Prologue to the rest of the Gospel has arisen. Opinions range from scholars who insist on no connection such as Rudolf Bultmann who sees no connection between the Prologue and what follows in the rest of the narrative. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (tr. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 13. Stephen Smalley relates the Prologue to only the rest of chapter 1. Stephen S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, Exeter: Paternoster, 1978, 95. Thomas Brodie mentions in one passing sentence the Prologue's relation to John 3. Thomas Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 138. Gail O'Day narrows the function of the Prologue to just one theme, the interaction between two spheres—the "timeless" and "timebound." Gail R. O'Day, "The Word Become Flesh: Story and Theology in the Gospel of John," in *"What is John?"* (vol. 2; Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel; ed. Fernando Segovia; Atlanta: SBL, 1998), 69. Robert Kysar sees only one connection between the Prologue and the Gospel, namely, the impact of Jesus upon people. Robert Kysar, *Voyages with John: Charting the Fourth Gospel* (Waco: Baylor, 2005), 39. Meanwhile other scholars have identified links between the Prologue and Gospel. For example George Mlakuzhyil notes similarities and links between the Prologue and the rest of

symbolically introduces the SFR, and sets the stage for the theological significance of the divine relationship, 2) it connects key Johannine symbols to the SFR before they are expanded in the proceeding narrative, and 3) its conclusion declares the purpose of the teaching ministry of the Son (v. 18), during which he symbolically reveals the Father. The emphasis placed on the SFR at the beginning and end of the Prologue points to the significance of this pericope in the Gospel's narrative. The striking introduction of the SFR at the start of the narrative bears upon the Christological revelation that follows. Episodes sequentially narrated in the Gospel are therefore to be understood in light of the divine relationship. The Prayer represents the pinnacle of the symbolically portrayed SFR for the following reasons: 1) it marks a major shift in the narrative as Jesus declares the teaching ministry, during which he symbolically revealed the Father, fulfilled, 2) it is the longest and most intimate address of Jesus as Son to his Father, and 3) it is the last chapter in the narrative containing a concentration of symbols/symbolic language and themes, some of which terminate in the chapter

From a narrative perspective, both passages respectively commence and conclude similar symbolic clusters that have the SFR as a common thread. Hence, the Prologue and Prayer encapsulate symbolic representations of the SFR that are expounded upon in the

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the Gospel. George Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1987), 301. William Loader acknowledges John's unique lexicology in the Prologue noting that it reflects the underlying structure of the Gospel's Christology. William Loader, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Structure and Issues* (Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie, 23, Frankfurt, Germany: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989), 39. Others who recognize a connection between the Prologue and Prayer are: M. E. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue* (trans. Carisbrooke Dominicans; Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1957); Jay Eldon Epp, "Wisdom, Torah, Word: The Johannine Prologue and the Purpose of the Fourth Gospel," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 128–46; Alan R. Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (1980): 1–31; Craig A. Evans, *The Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (JSNTSup 89; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Werner H. Kelber, "The Birth of a Beginning: John 1:1–18," *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives* (ed. Mark W. G. Stibbe; Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1993), 209–230; Peter M. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 3–15.

teachings of Jesus; within Jesus' teaching ministry, both SFR and connected symbolism emerge and are explained.<sup>101</sup> The expected result of this study is to confirm that the Symbology in the Johannine narrative is shaped by the SFR. The goal of this study is to add another lens through which this Gospel can be interpreted—the Christological lens of the Son-Father Relationship.

## **1.9 Chapter Outline**

This research is divided into two main sections; the first section consists of five chapters that lay out the theoretical and methodological framework for the study. Chapter one states and explains the research thesis which proposes that the SFR is the center of the overarching symbolic network in the Gospel—John's Christological Symbology. This first chapter also highlights some problems encountered in researching Johannine figurative language, particularly regarding symbolism. The review of scholarship shows how Johannine scholars have approached important areas in the study of Johannine symbolism. Lastly, chapter one introduces the specialized definitions used in the research and explains the important role of the Prologue and Prayer in the overall scheme of the study. Chapter two discusses the nature and structure of the symbol as a literary entity with reference to how it relates to imagery and metaphor. Discussion of the symbol is followed by a survey of theories of symbol proposed by Urban and Ricoeur, which reveal the nature and power of the symbol in narrative. Chapter three also explains the working definitions for symbol and symbology and then outlines the four principles underlying the

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<sup>101</sup> After the Prayer, the SFR appears only five times (18:7, 11; 20: 17, 21; 31) in the Gospel narrative. A few symbols appear after the Prayer, but not accompanied with the kind of exposition in chapters 1-17.

theory of Johannine Symbolism proposed in this study. Chapter four lays the groundwork for the methodological framework of the study by analyzing four narrative elements which develop the SFR and symbolism in the Gospel, namely, plot, character, time, and rhetoric. Chapter five describes the methodological framework within which John's Christological Symbology and its center, the SFR, will be unveiled. First, the outline of a semantic field of reference for the SFR delineates the lexical boundaries for charting the Symbology. Second, the framework shows the development of the characterization of the Son and Father in the narrative. The third part of the chapter explains the methodology in four stages, showing how the Prologue and Prayer will be interpreted in order to chart John's Christological Symbology.

The second section of this research applies the theoretical findings in section one to the Prologue and the Prayer, charts John's Christological Symbology, and then concludes with a theological reflection. Chapter six applies the four principles of the proposed theory of Johannine Symbolism to the Prologue. Chapters seven and eight present narrative analyses of the Prologue and Prayer using the methodological framework outlined in chapters four and five. Chapter nine unveils John's Christological Symbology in seventeen sequential stages explaining how the symbolic network is formed by clusters of symbols/symbolic language and themes; these clusters expound the SFR as it emerges in the narrative. Chapter nine also gives an analytical comparison explaining how the Prologue and Prayer function as narrative anchors for John's Christological Symbology. Finally, chapter ten considers the theological significance of the centrality of the SFR, argues the need for a theo-symbological reading of the Gospel of John, and considers three issues raised in the study, which may inspire further research.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORY OF SYMBOL**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter develops the framework for creating a theory of Johannine symbolism. Theoretical investigation into the nature and structural components of the symbol reveal that the innate power of the symbol enables it to draw other figures of speech into a symbolic network. Thus, the literary and narrative strategy in the Fourth Gospel reveals a symbolic system that utilizes symbols and symbolic language in combination with other figures of speech. As a precursor to developing a theory of Johannine symbolism, this chapter shows how the symbol is used as the Gospel's dominating figure of speech. In order to establish a foundation for the theory of symbol, the chapter examines the symbol as a literary concept and reviews the multidisciplinary theories of symbol propounded by Urban and Ricoeur. The theoretical principles of Urban and Ricoeur have been selected because they span the disciplines of linguistics, literature, philosophy, and religion. Both Urban and Ricoeur adopt philosophical approaches that lead them to probe the depth of the symbol; both theorists emphasize the influence of human consciousness, culture, religion, and language on the symbol. Urban discusses the strength residing in the symbol allowing it to communicate meaning and reality. Urban also highlights the intuitive and transcendent nature of the symbol. Ricoeur delves into the cosmic root of symbols and explains how the literary symbol functions both semantically and non-semantically. The theoretical principles comprising the theories of the two symbolists highlight the pervading power of the symbol revealing its multi-dimensional ability, while articulating its function in and outside the text.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. After this introduction, the second section examines the symbol as a literary device and presents a brief introduction of the development of symbol theory. The next two sections review Urban and Ricoeur's theories, emphasizing the principles relevant to this study's theory of Johannine symbolism. Section five compares similarities in the theories of these two symbolists. The sixth section explains the literary dominance of the symbol by examining its semantic association with imagery and metaphors. Finally, the chapter concludes that the essence of the symbol is its power of transcendence, a power absent in other figures of speech. This element of transcendence makes the symbol the dominating figure of speech in the Fourth Gospel.

## 2.2 The Literary Symbol and Development of Symbol Theory

The symbol is one of the many literary devices called figures of speech, which occur when words are used in forms differently from their original or simplest meanings in order to increase power and depth.<sup>102</sup> Figurative language communicates meaning by unusual use of ordinary language. The transformative use of normal language and the resultant creation of new meanings lead readers to search for deeper meanings in

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<sup>102</sup> Abrams defines figurative language as departure from the standard meaning of words to achieve a special meaning or effect. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 66. According to Ethelbert Bullinger, the Latin *figura*, ("figure") from which "figurative" is derived, stems from *ingere*, meaning "to form." Ancient Greeks developed figuration into a science, naming over a hundred forms; the Greeks called these forms *schema* (σχῆμα) and the Romans, *figura*. Ethelbert William Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), v. Bullinger's work catalogs 200 figures of speech. Auerbach's essay "Figura," traces the semantic history of this Latin word form Terence to Quintilian. In its earliest usage, *figura* referred to physical form and was later absorbed into rhetorical vocabulary due to Hellenization. The meaning of *figura* was later transformed by the Church Fathers. Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973), 12-15, 25-26. Quintilian defines figure of speech as, "Any deviation either in thought or expression, from the ordinary and simple method of speaking" (*Instit. Orat.* IX, i, 11).

narratives.<sup>103</sup> Richard M. Roberts and Roger J. Kreuz explain that despite its ambiguity, figurative language is often used because it communicates more effectively than literal language.<sup>104</sup> In sum, the symbol is used primarily because of its ability to communicate deeper meaning.

Generally the literary symbol is described as a word or phrase that signifies an object or event having a range of reference beyond itself.<sup>105</sup> Σύμβολον (from σύν, *together*, and βάλλειν, *to throw*) means “throwing together;”<sup>106</sup> thus, the symbol unites the concrete sign to whatever it signifies.<sup>107</sup> The symbol has an inherent ability to communicate meaning outside its linguistic setting by leading the reader to a reference not explicit in the text; this ability gives the symbol its transcendent nature. Because of the transcendent nature of symbols, theories of symbol are generally shaped by philosophical, anthropological, theological, and religious thought.

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<sup>103</sup> This view is reflected in Kathryn Darr’s discussion on figurative language where she explains carries out a combination of informative and performative functions. Informatively, figurative language communicates ideas, data, and perspectives, while performatively it draws participation from readers. Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah’s Vision and the Family of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 43.

<sup>104</sup> Richard M. Roberts and Roger J. Kreuz, “Why Do People Use Figurative Language?” *Psychological Science* 5/ 3 (1994): 159.

<sup>105</sup> Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 206.

<sup>106</sup> Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 769. In ancient Greek σύμβολον stood for one part of an object (e.g., a piece of pottery) broken in two as a gesture of hospitality and given by a host to a guest. The broken fragment was a promise of protection that the host’s family or tribe would welcome the guest at the sight of the “symbol.” Peyre, *What is Symbolism?* 6.

<sup>107</sup> Peyre, *What is Symbolism?* 6. Peyre states that no hard-and-fast distinction can be drawn between sign and symbol; signs may become symbols and symbols may degenerate into signs. Therefore the symbol is a special kind of sign. Peyre, *What is Symbolism?* 8. However, other symbolists do link symbol to sign; for example, Kahler explains that the first stage of the symbol is the bridging act of the sign, an act of “de-signating.” The fixation of this bridging act as a separate entity marks the beginning of the symbol. Kahler goes on to explain that as soon the sign is established it no longer merely points to something but gradually represents the thing it points to. This representation is the second and final state of the symbol. Erich Kahler, “The Nature of the Symbol,” in *Symbolism in Religion and Literature* (ed. Mary, Rollo; New York: George Braziller, 1960), 54, 57.

Theories of the literary symbol began with Hellenistic philosophical thought.<sup>108</sup> Rules and guidelines for interpreting representational symbols began with Aristotle and a continuous tradition of symbolism is traced from Plato to Philo, Origen, Clement, and Augustine, until its complete formation in medieval times.<sup>109</sup> Christian medieval writers shaped symbolism religiously and philosophically by influencing the interpretation of symbols. In the Modern era, during the decades after World War I, major literary writers used symbols drawn from religious traditions of medieval Christianity.<sup>110</sup> However, in the nineteenth century when Christian belief was declining, belief was promoted by the Symbolist Movement of the Parisian poets that escape from the harsh reality of the world could be attained through poetry rather than religion.<sup>111</sup> Thus, the Hellenistic philosophical roots of symbolism reappeared when poets used the symbol to express

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<sup>108</sup> According to Simon Brittain, *Poetics* by Aristotle is the first work devoted solely to literary theory. *Poetics* is recognized by modern linguists and literary scholars as central to the discussion on the nature of language and meaning. Aristotle recognized representation (figurative language) as an intellectual process and therefore argued that representations must have rules of interpretation. Simon Brittain, *Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory: Interpreting Metaphorical Language from Plato to the Present*, (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 11-13.

<sup>109</sup> Whitehead recounts that during the medieval period in Europe, symbolism dominated people's imagination. However, Reformers who reacted to the Roman Catholic Church attempted to dispense with symbols. Whitehead, *Symbolism, its Meaning and Effect* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 1. From Augustine to Aquinas, the use of symbols was limited by Scripture; thus, symbols could convey meaning as long as they were in a biblical context. Brittan, *Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory*, 1, 4. Symbolism has always been present in every era and every branch of civilization. This constant presence is affirmed by Tillich who remarks that the symbol is "inherent in the very texture of human life." Tillich, "The Religious Symbol," 61-62. Abraham Heschel also notes that symbolism is not a modern invention but rather, what is new is the role it has assumed. Heschel explains that in earlier times symbolism was regarded as a form of religious thinking while in modern times religion is regarded as a form of symbolic thinking. Abraham. J. Heschel, *Man's Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism*, (New York: Scribner, 1954), 127-129.

<sup>110</sup> Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 209.

<sup>111</sup> Charles Chadwick, *Symbolism* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd: 1971), 3.



“correspondences” (or parallels) between heaven and earth, between the concrete and ideal.<sup>112</sup>

Henri Peyre describes the Symbolist Movement as a latent form of Platonism through which poets used symbolism to express their desire for an ideal world.<sup>113</sup> The Symbolist Movement, thus, emphasized the transcendent nature of the symbol. Peyre notes the lack of theoretical cohesion in the Symbolist Movement in the following words:

The almost inevitable and disillusioned conclusion of every investigation undertaken after the event on any collection of literary talents that have been casually called classicism, impressionism, or symbolism is that there was neither a common doctrine nor a clearly perceived goal or even any technique around which agreement might have been achieved.<sup>114</sup>

This lack of theoretical agreement on the symbol continues in the study of symbolism today. The diverse theories of symbolism available show how scholars in different disciplines have developed their concept of the symbol with each scholar having a particular goal in mind as s/he employs individual techniques.

The application of contemporary theories to ancient texts like the Gospel of John is a delicate process, primarily because ancient literary conventions are either unknown or different from modern literary conventions. When applied indiscriminately, contemporary literary theory can hinder rather than advance accurate interpretation.

Judicious selection of theoretical principles used by the interpreter of ancient narratives is

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<sup>112</sup> Peyre, *What is Symbolism?* 10.

<sup>113</sup> Peyre, *What is Symbolism?* 13. The Symbolist movement took place from about 1850 to 1920, Peyre, *What is Symbolism?* 52. According to Brittain, like Plato, the Symbolists viewed the physical world as a shadow of the ideal; they believed they could lead people into the ideal world through symbolic poetry. Brittain also notes the irony of the Symbolist poets following Plato who proposed to banish artists, including poets, from his Ideal Republic. Brittain, *Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory*, 5. Contemporary theorists C. K Ogden and I. A. Richards describe the Symbolists as poets who revolted against all forms of literal and descriptive writing and attached symbolic meanings to particular objects, words and sounds. C. K Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, v.

<sup>114</sup> Peyre, *What is Symbolism?* , 128.

therefore important. On the other hand, modern theoretical principles contribute to the general understanding of the structure and function of symbols in narratives. Modern theories can explain the following: 1) how figures of speech function in the text, 2) similarities and overlapping functions of figures of speech, 3) meanings authors intend their readers to comprehend, 4) the intellectual dexterity required of readers to grasp the author's meaning, and 5) guidelines for interpretation of symbols.

The philosophical, linguistic, and religious approaches of Urban and Ricoeur reveal the multi-faceted nature of the symbol. The aim of the following review, therefore, is to select applicable theoretical principles from the interdisciplinary approaches of these two theorists, which will contribute to the development of a theory of symbol for this research.

### **2.3 Wilbur Urban's Theory of Symbol**

The driving concern behind Urban's theory of symbol is how language and symbols express reality. In his book, *Language and Reality: The Philosophy of Language and the Principles of Symbolism* (1961), Urban's philosophy of language evolves into a philosophy of symbolism.<sup>115</sup> As expressed in its subtitle, Urban's book is divided into two parts, the first concerns the problems of relating language to logic and knowledge (cognition). The focus of this review, however, is on the second half of the title—*Principles of Symbolism*. Five key areas of Urban's theory examined in this study, which

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<sup>115</sup> Wilbur Marshall Urban, *Language and Reality: The Philosophy of Language and the Principles of Symbolism* (London: George Allan and Unwin, 1961), 46. Urban explains, "If the function of language is not to copy reality, but to symbolize it, it is necessary, in order to understand that function, to understand the principles of symbolism." Urban, *Language and Reality*, 401.

are pertinent to the formulation of a theory of Johannine symbolism, are definition, classification, principles, transcendent nature, and interpretation of symbols.

### 2.3.1 Definition of Symbol

Urban defends the “traditional” use of the term symbol formed in the disciplines of poetry, art, and religion; according to him, this concept of symbol is preferable because it centers on insight rather than literal interpretation.<sup>116</sup> In his defense of the traditional understanding of symbol, Urban identifies the true function of symbols by distinguishing them from signs. Urban insists that equating symbols with signs makes the notion of symbols useless.<sup>117</sup> He then argues that equating symbols with signs makes symbols merely an act of reference. In the following words, Urban explains that likening symbols to signs,

. . . divides the functions of language into two, the indicative and emotive, the symbolic function becomes identified with the sign function, and those aspects of the notion which were central in the traditional conception, namely, non-literal but intuitive representation, are denied part in the symbolic function.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 403.

<sup>117</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 403.

However, Urban recognizes some connection between symbols and signs, he explains: “Signs may become symbols and symbols may, so to speak, degenerate into signs. Some distinction must, however, be made, otherwise the entire notion of symbolism becomes meaningless. All symbols, we may say, are signs, but not all signs symbols. Urban, *Language and Reality*, 407.

<sup>118</sup> Urban explains further, “Under the influence of mathematics and “symbolic” logic, a notion of the symbolizing function has arisen which has introduced great confusion into the entire discussion, and has brought about an almost complete reversal of the traditional notion. This reversal appears at two points: (a) in the tendency to identify symbol with sign, and (b) the denial of the “intuitive” character of the symbol.” Urban, *Language and Reality*, 403.

In other words, symbols are not merely indicative, but are bound to the intuitive and cannot be separated from it.<sup>119</sup> Signs, on the other hand, are primarily operational and possess a non-intuitive relation to the object for which they stand.<sup>120</sup>

Urban describes the symbol as the indirect representation of a concept through intuition;<sup>121</sup> he finally defines symbol as “a special kind of sign.”<sup>122</sup> For Urban, the function of the symbol goes beyond the operational signification of the sign. The symbol functions at a deeper level—the level of knowledge and perception. In sum, Urban understands the symbol as bearing a dual functionality—indicative and intuitive. His understanding of the symbol begins with the basic idea of cognitive representation (sign) and then advances to non-literal, intuitive representation (symbol).

### 2.3.2 Classification of Symbols

Urban classifies symbols into three: 1) extrinsic, 2) intrinsic, and 3) insight.<sup>123</sup> Extrinsic symbols act primarily as substitutes, that is, as designator signs that merely draw attention to their referents.<sup>124</sup> Intrinsic symbols are related to their referents because they contain enough similarity to make an analogous predication.<sup>125</sup> The insight symbol

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<sup>119</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 408.

<sup>120</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 403.

<sup>121</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 413.

<sup>122</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 407.

<sup>123</sup> Urban’s classification is taken from H. Flanders Dunbar’s *Symbolism in Mediaeval Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929). Although Dunbar’s book is a study of mediaeval symbolism in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, it is valuable for the general study of symbolism.

<sup>124</sup> An example is signs used in mathematics, which are pronominal and only stand for something. Urban, *Language and Reality*, 407.

<sup>125</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 414-415.

according to Urban is the “gateway into something and beyond.”<sup>126</sup> The role of the insight symbol is to help one understand what would not otherwise be adequately expressed or understood.<sup>127</sup>

The very heart of religious language, as we shall see is the insight symbol. The notion of God as father is not merely a descriptive symbol, but one by means of which we are given not only pictorial knowledge about, but *actual insight into the nature of spiritual relations* (emphasis mine).<sup>128</sup>

Urban’s three-tier categorization of symbols begins with simple substitutional extrinsic signs that have no intrinsic connection to their objects. These sign-symbols do not give a true or total knowledge of what they represent. Positioned midways are intrinsic symbols that contain a measure of similarity that enables them to function as representations. Finally, the insight symbol does not merely represent, but rather, gives insight into reality. The category that fully expresses the intrinsic nature of symbols is the insight symbol.

### 2.3.3 Principles of Symbolism

Urban outlines four principles undergirding his theory of symbol which are general truths about the nature and function of symbols describing the role they play in human thought and communication; the principles guide the interpretation and evaluation of symbols.<sup>129</sup> The four-fold aim of Urban’s theory is to: 1) identify the nature of

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<sup>126</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 415.

<sup>127</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 440-441.

<sup>128</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 416. Urban explains that the object of religious symbols, which mostly operate as insight symbols, is not to predict but to understand. Urban, *Language and Reality*, 440-441.

<sup>129</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 421.

symbols, 2) explain how symbols function, 3) describe the role of symbols in human communication of reality, and 4) assist in discovering symbolic meaning.

The first principle states the following: *Every symbol stands for something*, in other words, the symbol has an unexpressed reference beyond itself.<sup>130</sup> This principle identifies the representational character of the symbol. According to Urban, interpreting a symbol is tantamount to *developing* the unexpressed reference of a symbol.<sup>131</sup> The underlying assumption behind this principle is that thought and language determine the unknown by the known, and so the general movement of language is from the physical to the spiritual.<sup>132</sup> This principle therefore affirms that language communicates both physical and non-physical realities.

The second principle, which is an expansion of the first, simply states: *Every symbol has a dual reference*. The dual reference comprises the original object (the symbol) and the object for which it now stands (the referent).<sup>133</sup>

The third principle states: *Every symbol contains both truth and fiction*.<sup>134</sup> Truth in the symbol is the reality of what is unexpressed in the narrative. Fiction is the misrepresentation that occurs when the symbol is taken literally, that is, when it is interpreted without intuitive reference to its object.<sup>135</sup> Two types of misinterpretation

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<sup>130</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 422-423.

<sup>131</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 422-423.

<sup>132</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 427.

<sup>133</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 423.

<sup>134</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 424.

<sup>135</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 424. For example, the statements “Napoleon is a wolf” and “the State is a living body” are false when taken literally, but when understood in a symbolic sense becomes true. Urban, *Language and Reality*, 433.

exist. The first type of misinterpretation occurs when interpretation terminates at the literal meaning. The second kind of misinterpretation, which does not lead to truth or reality, arises when no reference is made to the intuitive character of the symbol.<sup>136</sup>

Urban's fourth principle is the principle of dual adequacy, which states the following: *A symbol may be adequate as a representation of the object.*<sup>137</sup> In other words, because total representation is not always assured in every symbol, a second adequacy is required for what is incommunicable, but which the symbol still seeks to express.<sup>138</sup> The second adequacy is found in the realm of human consciousness or, the intuitive realm. For example, Urban explains that unless this principle is recognized the symbol of God as Father is contradictory and unintelligible.<sup>139</sup> In other words, if the inexpressible nature of God embedded in a particular symbol cannot be adequately expressed, then a symbol cannot adequately represent divinity. Therefore, a second adequacy is required, which comes from within the interpreter of the symbol. The principle of dual adequacy implies that certain symbols, particularly religious or theological symbols may not be fully interpreted rationally, so the interpreter must appeal to intuition.

The first three of Urban's principles identify the semantic trait of symbols. The first examines the absence of a tenor in the symbol, meaning that the symbol stands for something not explicitly stated in the text. The second principle seeks the representative nature of the symbol as expressing the reality of its unexpressed object. The third principle highlights the danger of symbolic interpretation not moving beyond literal into

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<sup>136</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 425.

<sup>137</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 425.

<sup>138</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 441.

<sup>139</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 425.

intuitive interpretation. Last, the fourth principle moves symbolic interpretation beyond the semantic range of linguistics into the transcendent realm of symbols. This principle leads into Urban's theory of transcendent symbol.

### 2.3.4 Theory of Transcendent Symbols

Urban's theory of the transcendent symbol begins with a division of theories of symbol into two broad categories—naturalistic and transcendental.<sup>140</sup> Naturalistic theories search for symbolic meaning outside the symbol itself, while transcendental theories discover meaning within the symbol. Urban critiques the naturalistic theory of symbol on the grounds that it is reductionistic and does not explain the symbol in terms of the reality expressed in the symbol. Furthermore, the naturalistic theory does not recognize that the function of the symbol is universal and part of knowledge;<sup>141</sup> therefore, the naturalistic approach to symbolic interpretation is causal.<sup>142</sup> This causal approach means that the symbol is interpreted by inquiring into the reason for its existence and searching for its effects on those who encounter it, rather than looking to *the symbol itself* to communicate truth. According to Urban the naturalistic approach makes the symbol stand for something other than it intends.<sup>143</sup> The naturalistic theory therefore is reductive, not expansive in interpretation.<sup>144</sup> Urban's point is that since the naturalistic approach does not view the symbol as inherently containing knowledge, the

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<sup>140</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 447.

<sup>141</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 450.

<sup>142</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 447.

<sup>143</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 447.

<sup>144</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 447-448.



symbol is reduced and limited to no more than an object of external value, with no intrinsic significance.

By comparison, the transcendental theory always develops and interprets the symbol in terms of the reality meant, making it prospective and progressive.<sup>145</sup> According to Urban, unlike the negative approach of the naturalistic theory, the positive approach of the transcendental theory assumes that objects in space and time have significance beyond themselves.<sup>146</sup> The transcendental theory interprets the symbol in terms of the object itself, not by the cause of the object.<sup>147</sup> Thus, transcendental interpretation entails *developing* the meaning of the unexpressed reference of the symbol.<sup>148</sup> For Urban, the symbol does not merely point to, but leads *into* its transcendent meaning.<sup>149</sup> In sum, Urban's theory of transcendental symbolism emphasizes the intrinsic significance of symbols. The transcendental reality the symbol conveys is the key to symbolic interpretation.

### 2.3.5 Guidelines for Interpreting Symbols

Regarding symbolic interpretation, Urban emphasizes the necessity of distinguishing literal meaning from symbolic meaning. He also insists that interpreters determine the "ontological significance" of the symbol; that is, discover the reality

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<sup>145</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 447-448.

<sup>146</sup> Urban's transcendental theory is based on the classical theory of symbolism that began with Plato who believed the phenomenal world is an expression of the intelligible world. Urban, *Language and Reality*, 448, 450.

<sup>147</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 450.

<sup>148</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 448.

<sup>149</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 415.

expressed in the symbol.<sup>150</sup> Urban's idea of symbolic interpretation is that symbols are "concentrates of meaning, shorthand expressions for a manifold of ideas."<sup>151</sup> Symbols are contractions of the unexpressed reference thus interpretation entails the verbal expansion of these contracted meanings into expressed references.<sup>152</sup>

Urban's first guideline for symbolic interpretation is to interpret symbols by expanding "symbol sentences;" expansion involves applying the "rule of reflection."<sup>153</sup> For instance, the sentence "Napoleon was a wolf" means that Napoleon was related to people as a wolf is related to sheep. Reflection on the agricultural context of wolf and sheep is transferred into the historical context of Napoleon and his people; the expansion of the symbol sentence is the relation of these two contexts.<sup>154</sup>

Second, Urban recognizes that expansion of the unexpressed reference can only take place in terms of the ideal or universal relations that the symbol expresses, that is, the relation between the symbol and its referent.<sup>155</sup> For example the expansion of the sentence, "God is the maker of heaven and earth," can only take place in terms appropriate to divinity.<sup>156</sup> This means that the expansion of the symbol is more abstract than the language of the symbolic expression. Urban insists that although the expansion

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<sup>150</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 428.

<sup>151</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 429.

<sup>152</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 429.

<sup>153</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 431.

<sup>154</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 431.

<sup>155</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 434.

<sup>156</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 434.

may be abstract (as in the case of religious symbols), the expansion deepens and enriches the meaning of the symbol.<sup>157</sup>

In sum, the expansion or interpretation of the symbol entails discovering the reality of the symbolic expression by reflecting on the relation between the symbol and its unexpressed object. This reflection transposes the context of the symbol sentence onto the context of the unexpressed reference, thus giving the symbol its intrinsic meaning.

### **2.3.6 Summary**

Urban's theory of symbol begins with the idea that language functions symbolically in order to express reality. This concept leads him to explore functions of symbols as substitutional and representational. However, more important for Urban, is the intrinsic nature of the symbol, which gives the symbol the ability to express spiritual reality. Urban's transcendental theory of symbol examines the expansive nature of the symbol and its ability to convey reality. His guidelines for interpretation explain how interpreters can expand contractions in symbols and arrive at the intended meaning of symbols. According to Urban, perfecting the principles of language and symbolism can solve the problem of language and reality. His belief is based upon the assumption that the more richly the human spirit builds language and symbolism, the nearer it comes to ultimate meaning and reality.<sup>158</sup>

Urban's theory is relevant to this research in many ways. First, his theory identifies the essence of the symbol, which is its intrinsic ability to convey transcendent

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<sup>157</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 434.

<sup>158</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 451.

realities. In this study, Johannine symbols convey the transcendent realities of the SFR. Second, Urban's concept of the insight symbol shows symbols facilitate meaning by giving insight into the nature of divine relationship as presented in the Fourth Gospel. Third, the principle of dual adequacy stresses the need to discover the transcendent meaning of Johannine symbols. Finally, Urban's theory of transcendent symbols perfectly describes the nature of Johannine symbolism.

## **2.4 Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Symbol**

Ricoeur does not actually postulate *a* theory of symbol, rather theoretical principles emerge in different phases of his philosophical works on phenomenology, religion, language, and narrative. Ricoeur's work on symbolism initially emerged in response to the doubt and skepticism brought about by the Enlightenment, which resulted in the loss of belief in the sacred. One of Ricoeur's solutions to this general disillusionment was hermeneutics, specifically, the interpretation of religious symbols that have shaped humanity's consciousness. Consequently, the initial stage of Ricoeur's investigation into symbolism is rooted in the history of religion. Later his work on symbolism shifts to linguistics, literature, and narrative.

### **2.4.1 Dimensions of Symbolism**

In an early work entitled *The Symbolism of Evil* (1967), Ricoeur explores the philosophical subject of how evil manifests itself in language. This study leads him to explore how symbols function in human expressions of defilement, sin, and guilt. Ricoeur outlines three dimensions of symbolism, namely, cosmic, oneiric, and poetic.

These dimensions are connected to how humans comprehend sacred elements of the world<sup>159</sup> and depict aspects of human consciousness.<sup>160</sup> Reflection on these symbols leads to symbolic meaning.<sup>161</sup>

Cosmic symbols occur when humans comprehend the sacred in elements such as the heavens, sun, moon, waters, and vegetation.<sup>162</sup> Ricoeur explains the reciprocal relationship between these symbols and human reflection, stating, “The symbol gives rise to thought, and thought returns to the symbol;” when reflected upon, the meaning of the symbol is discovered in the symbol itself.<sup>163</sup> Cosmic symbols are connected to oneiric (psychic) symbols, because they both appear in dreams; both are two extremes of the same expression.<sup>164</sup> Cosmic and oneiric symbols represent the culture and consciousness of people.<sup>165</sup> The third dimension of the symbol is poetic, which Ricoeur simply describes as a “welling up of language;”<sup>166</sup> a common dimension in the literary world.

Ricoeur’s concept of symbol reveals a complex structure composed of religious, anthropological, and literary dimensions. The three categories of symbol relate to human thought and consciousness, and the literary world. The symbol is rooted not only in

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<sup>159</sup> Ricoeur, Paul. *The Symbolism of Evil* (1st ed.; Religious Perspectives 17; trans. Emerson Buchanan; New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 11.

<sup>160</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 10.

<sup>161</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 11.

<sup>162</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 11.

<sup>163</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: I,” in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (trans. Denis Savage; ed. James M. Edie; Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1974), 288.

<sup>164</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 12-13.

<sup>165</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 12-13.

<sup>166</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 13.

human culture and psyche, but also in human interaction with the universe. Ricoeur explains that his three dimensions of symbol are not separate but all combine to form the structure of the symbol.<sup>167</sup>

### 2.4.2 Essence of the Symbol

Ricoeur further identifies the structure and function of the symbol in what he refers to as the “essence of a symbol.”<sup>168</sup> First, like Urban, Ricoeur compares symbols to signs; for Ricoeur, symbols are signs since they are expressions that communicate meaning through speech.<sup>169</sup> However, because symbols have a “double intentionality,” not every sign is a symbol. The first intentionality, which is literal, does not resemble what is signified; rather, it points beyond itself to a second intentionality not given in the text.<sup>170</sup> The opacity in the second intentionality constitutes the “depth of the symbol” making the meaning of the symbol inexhaustible.<sup>171</sup> Ricoeur’s recognition of opacity in the symbol highlights the problem of ambiguity and open-ended meanings in symbolic interpretation. To overcome this problem, Ricoeur advises that interpreters should outline their interpretational boundaries.<sup>172</sup> The second essence of symbol Ricoeur identifies is the “analogical bond” between literal and symbolic meaning which is reflected in the

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<sup>167</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 14.

<sup>168</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 14.

<sup>169</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 14.

<sup>170</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 15.

<sup>171</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 15.

<sup>172</sup> Ricoeur advises, “In a variety of ways symbolic activity lacks autonomy . . . it is the task of many disciplines to reveal the lines that attach the symbolic function to this or that non-symbolic or pre-linguistic activity.” Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 58.

notion that the first (literal) meaning leads the interpreter into symbolic meaning.<sup>173</sup> Third Ricoeur identifies another aspect of the symbol by distinguishing symbol from allegory. Ricoeur explains that allegory works by translation; once the translation is achieved the allegory becomes useless and is dropped. However, the meaning of the symbol is not derived by translation, rather, it “evokes its meaning.”<sup>174</sup> This evocative power makes the symbol an experiential and enduring figure of speech. The fourth essence of the symbol is its “function of absence” and “function of presence.”<sup>175</sup> Absence in the symbol is the manner in which the symbol signifies “vacuously,” that is, the symbol signifies without direct substitution. Presence is the symbol’s ability to signify something in existence,<sup>176</sup> but not expressed in the text. These two functions reveal the complex but complimentary role of the symbol. The last essence of the symbol which Ricoeur, identifies as a core element, entails a comparison between myth and symbol. Ricoeur explains while myths evolve in narrations through time, symbols are formed spontaneously and are of immediate significance.<sup>177</sup>

In sum, Ricoeur’s initial theoretical work on symbolism begins with human thought and consciousness. His identification of the essence of the symbol emphasizes significant characteristics such as ambiguity (opacity), analogy, evocation, and immediacy. Ricoeur shows how symbols function semantically as a powerful means of

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<sup>173</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 15.

<sup>174</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 16.

<sup>175</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 17.

<sup>176</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 17.

<sup>177</sup> According to Ricoeur, for example, “Exile is a primary symbol of human alienation, but the history of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise is a mythical narration.” Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 18.

the human expression of the sacred. The next stage of Ricoeur's study of symbols shifts to the disciplines of hermeneutics, language, and narrative.

### 2.4.3 The Non-Semantic Structure of the Symbol

In *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (1967), Ricoeur explains that his study stems from the problem of how to handle the "surplus of meaning" in literary works, particularly, the non-cognitive significations in metaphors and symbols. Ricoeur's view is shaped by belief that the symbol contains both semantic and non-semantic elements.<sup>178</sup> To establish his theory, Ricoeur develops a theory of metaphor that leads to his theory of symbol.<sup>179</sup> The complexity of the symbol leads Ricoeur to explain symbols in light of metaphors,<sup>180</sup> which leads to Ricoeur's explanation of symbols. Ricoeur begins with the understanding that metaphor is the result of tension between two terms.<sup>181</sup> The differences and resemblances between the vehicle and tenor of metaphors give rise to tension from which "a new vision of reality springs forth."<sup>182</sup> The metaphor, therefore, reveals new information about reality.<sup>183</sup> At this juncture of his theory of

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<sup>178</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 45.

<sup>179</sup> One of Ricoeur's main criticisms of the Aristotelian concept of metaphor is that it implies the words in the metaphor are to be taken in isolation from one another. Thus, Ricoeur's theory of metaphor takes into consideration the entire sentence in which the metaphor appears and according to him, "a new signification emerges, which embraces the whole sentence." Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 47-48.

<sup>180</sup> The two complexities Ricoeur notes are: 1) symbols belong to too many and too diverse fields of research and 2) the symbol brings together two dimensions (linguistic and non-linguistic). Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 53- 54.

<sup>181</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 50. Ricoeur's "tension theory" comprises of three levels of tension between the following: 1) tenor and vehicle, 2) literal and metaphorical interpretation, and 3) similarity and difference in the copula. Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 247.

<sup>182</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 68.

<sup>183</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 52.



metaphor, Ricoeur transitions into symbolism using the tension theory to identify the non-semantic component of the symbol.<sup>184</sup>

According to Ricoeur, the symbol has both linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions. The linguistic dimension leads to the non-linguistic.<sup>185</sup> The linguistic (semantic) character of the symbol is what transmits meaning into a conceptual language.<sup>186</sup> However, the surplus of meaning in a symbol is attested to because the meaning of the symbol cannot be fully expressed in conceptual language.<sup>187</sup> This non-linguistic element of the symbol resists linguistic or semantic transcription.<sup>188</sup> Resistance occurs because symbols are rooted in individual or communal experiences that are open to different methods of investigation.<sup>189</sup> Ricoeur describes the resistant element in symbols as “powerful, efficacious, and forceful.”<sup>190</sup>

Ricoeur rephrases his earlier idea of “double intentionality” to “double meaning” thusly, “The symbol has a double meaning or a first and a second order meaning. The symbol brings together two universes of discourse, one linguistic and the other of a non-

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<sup>184</sup> Ricoeur explains, “The relation between the literal meaning and the figurative meaning of a metaphorical utterance provides an appropriate guideline which will allow us to identify the properly semantic traits of a symbol.” Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 54.

<sup>185</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 54.

<sup>186</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 54.

<sup>187</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 57.

<sup>188</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 57. According to Ricoeur’s theory of metaphor, “The metaphorical twist, which our words must undergo in response to the semantic impertinence at the level of the entire sentence, can be taken as the model for the extension of meaning operative in every symbol.” Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 55.

<sup>189</sup> Thus according to Ricoeur, it is the task of various disciplines to reveal how the symbolic function is connected to these experiences or “pre-linguistic” activities. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 57-58.

<sup>190</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 63.

linguistic.”<sup>191</sup> Ricoeur describes these two meanings as a single movement in which the interpreter is transferred from the linguistic level and *assimilated* into the non-linguistic level. Thus, the sole means of access to the second meaning (non-linguistic) is via the first (linguistic).<sup>192</sup> Ricoeur’s theory shows how the semantic and non-semantic elements of the symbol collaborate and are inseparable.

#### 2.4.4 Similarity and Dissimilarity in the Symbol

Ricoeur identifies the interplay between similarity and dissimilarity in symbols, which is the correspondence or lack thereof between the symbol and its referent. The interplay results in a “conflict between some prior categorization of reality and a new one just being born.”<sup>193</sup> In the conflict, the symbol *assimilates* rather than apprehends the similarity, which cannot be clearly articulated on a logical level.<sup>194</sup> Ricoeur’s theory of assimilation argues that in the course of interpretation, the interpreter of the symbol is assimilated into the symbolic process.<sup>195</sup> Ricoeur’s earlier work explains assimilation in the following words: “The symbol is the movement of the primary meaning which makes us participate in the latent meaning and thus assimilates us to that which is symbolized without our being able to master the similitude intellectually.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 53-54.

<sup>192</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 56.

<sup>193</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 56.

<sup>194</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 56.

<sup>195</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 56.

<sup>196</sup> Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 16.

### **2.4.5 Summary**

Ricoeur's theory of metaphor sets the stage for explaining the non-semantic elements of the symbol. Ricoeur shows how the semantic part of the symbol cannot be bound by linguistics because it goes beyond verbal signification. Ricoeur's "non-semantic moment" in the symbol points to the transcendent element in symbols. The symbol transcends linguistic, literary, and narrative boundaries by semantically resisting these boundaries; this element gives the symbol its power enabling it to surpass the ability of the metaphor to express deep human thoughts and experiences. Ricoeur's theory also reveals that since full symbolic meaning is not attained by logical comprehension of correspondences between referent and symbol, no smooth transition into symbolic meaning occurs. The symbol absorbs certain aspects of its referent causing new information and insight into the symbolic meaning to emerge. In this complex process, the interpreter is somehow assimilated into the symbolic process because discovering symbolic meaning requires intuitiveness and inner perception on the part of the interpreter.

Aspects of Ricoeur's theory of symbol will assist in formulating a theory of Johannine symbolism. First, his idea of cosmic, psychic, and poetic symbols helps explain the socio-cultural background of Johannine symbols. Second, one of the characteristics of the symbol identified by Ricoeur is its evocative power which could explain the repetitive nature of the symbols in John's Gospel. Third, the resistance of the symbol identified in Ricoeur's non-semantic analysis of the symbol describes the ability of Johannine symbols to transcend the text and pull along with it other figures of speech such as metaphors. Finally, the principle of assimilation that draws readers into the

transforming reality of Johannine symbols is important in the Gospel's theological agenda.

## **2.5 Similarities between Urban and Ricoeur's Principles of Symbol**

The principles of symbolism propounded by Urban and Ricoeur are extensive, multifaceted, and mine the deep strata of religious conceptualization, phenomenology of the sacred, as well as the role of human thought and consciousness in symbolic interpretation. These theories also probe the dynamics of symbols in speech, linguistics, and narrative. Both Urban and Ricoeur view the symbol, first as a literary, cognitive representation similar to the sign. Both identify the dual function of the symbol by describing the main difference between symbol and sign, which is the symbol's "unexpressed reference" (Urban) or "surplus of meaning" (Ricoeur). Both theorists also recognize that symbols function on two levels—linguistic (textual) and non-linguistic level (supra-textual). Urban's "dual adequacy" and Ricoeur's "semantic/non-semantic moment" express the same idea, that is, the symbol is first revealed in the text before it transcends the text. Whether one arrives at the transcendent meaning through theological, religious, anthropological, social, psychological, or philosophical analysis, depends on the interpreter. The important point is that symbolic meaning is connected to the worldview of the writer, which in turn reflects his or her culture, community, theology, and philosophy. The symbol is therefore more than a literary phenomenon; its roots go beyond its appearance in the narrative.

Through Urban's recognition of insight and intuitiveness in the symbol, and Ricoeur's theory of assimilation, one understands that the interpreter is also part of the

symbolic process. The symbol gives sight, leads into, and assimilates; thus, the interpreter is more than an objective, rational, analytical observer—the aim of the symbol is human participation and transformation.

The definition and theory of symbol for this research highlights the transcendent nature of Johannine symbolism; for this reason principles of symbolism proposed by Urban and Ricoeur have been selected as theoretical models. Both theorists demonstrate profound understanding of the structure and function of symbols. Their principles delve into the important role humans play in the conceptualization and interpretation of transcendent symbols.<sup>197</sup> These principles will therefore assist in developing a theory of symbolism suited to the narrative style, lexicology, and theological purpose of the Gospel of John.

## **2.6 The Dominating Power of Symbols**

In light of the preceding discussion of symbol theory and the intention of formulating a theory of Johannine symbolism, the aim of this section is to explain why this research has selected the symbol as the primary figure of speech for interpreting the Johannine narrative. The symbols in the Gospel do not operate alone; they are connected to mainly imageries and metaphors. This discussion therefore centers on the structural and semantic link between symbols, imageries, and metaphors, the three main figures of speech in the Gospel. The discussion first describes imageries and explains how they relate to symbols; discussion of metaphors follows the same format and the section

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<sup>197</sup> Some may argue that philosophical theories are not suited for the ancient Johannine text; however, the aim of this study is not to focus on complexities of philosophical thought, but rather highlight contributions made towards better understanding the power of the symbol.

concludes with an explanation of the dominating power of symbols over imageries and metaphors.

Imagery, which is the “making of likenesses,”<sup>198</sup> entails more than visualization;<sup>199</sup> it is the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, and sensory or extra-sensory experiences.<sup>200</sup> The process of an image begins with the direction of a transitive verb of “seeing” towards an object; when the object is seen, the act of seeing is concretized and this act leads to an imagined picture.<sup>201</sup> Imagery conveys meaning in pictorial form and is therefore the base of *all* figurative language including symbols. Imagery is a core component of symbols, forms the basis of the symbol, and lends concreteness and clarity to symbolic meaning. Since imagery is a structural component of the symbol, an inherent connection exists between the two. First, images function symbolically because symbols utilize images from the realm of sense perception to deepen meaning.<sup>202</sup> Second, the symbol combines an image with a concept,<sup>203</sup> allowing authors to use symbols to project conceptual images upon readers.

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<sup>198</sup> J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Double Day, 1977), 316. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary explains that the word “imagery” is from the Latin *imagin-*, *imago*; perhaps akin to Latin *imitari* to imitate. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed.; Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996).

<sup>199</sup> According to Caird, imagery overwhelms the imagination and locates points of a comparison. Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible*, 149-150.

<sup>200</sup> J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Double Day, 1977), 316. The symbolist poet Baudelaire states, “The whole visible universe is but a storehouse of images and signs to which the imagination will give a relative place and value; it is a sort of pasture which the imagination must digest and transform.” Charles Baudelaire, *The Mirror of Art: Critical Studies* (trans. J Mayne; New York: Doubleday, 1956), 241.

<sup>201</sup> Zimmermann, *Christologie Der Bilder*, 61.

<sup>202</sup> Koester, *Symbolism*, 7. Koester's definition of image is: “things that can be perceived by the senses.” Koester, *Symbolism*, 4.

<sup>203</sup> Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 655. Urban states the essential character of all symbolism is that images or ideas are used as expressions. Urban, *Language and Reality*, 450. Wesley Kort

Frye's definition of image is: "a *symbol* in its aspect as a formal unit of art with a natural content" (emphasis mine).<sup>204</sup> This definition views imagery as a basic form of symbols. The visualization and inward perception imageries evoke transcendent meaning in symbols. René Wellek and Austin Warren emphasize that if an image persistently recurs in a narrative it becomes a symbol and may even become part of a symbolic system.<sup>205</sup> Imageries, therefore, link with symbols to form symbolic networks.

Metaphor is a figure of speech that refers to objects in a semantically inappropriate way.<sup>206</sup> In metaphor, the literal meaning of a particular object/action is applied to a different object/action without asserting a comparison,<sup>207</sup> as in the statement "life is a journey."<sup>208</sup> The objects in a metaphor are literal and the figuration lies in the copula "is."<sup>209</sup> Although symbols and metaphors are distinct, both work closely together in narratives. The main distinction between symbols and metaphors is their basic structures. The metaphor has two components—vehicle and tenor with both clearly

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notes although the category of image is broader than symbol, not all images are symbols. Wesley Kort, *Narrative Elements and Religious Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 9.

<sup>204</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 366.

<sup>205</sup> René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), 189.

<sup>206</sup> Harris, *Dictionary of Concepts*, 222. Μεταθορά (from μετά, *beyond* or *over*, and φέρειν *to carry*), means "transference," thus, "carrying over or across." Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 735. Wheelwright explains similarly that a "semantic motion" is implicit in the word "metaphor;" the motion (*phora*) consists of outreaching and combining. Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 71-72.

<sup>207</sup> Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 67.

<sup>208</sup> A simile, on the other hand would read: "Life is *like* a journey." Bullinger explains: The metaphor, owing to some association or connection with object expressed, declares that one thing is the other. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 735.

<sup>209</sup> Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 735. Bullinger's description is echoed by Ricoeur: "The 'place' of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb *to be*." Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 7.

represented in the text. The symbol consists only of the vehicle; its referent is outside the text, which enables the symbol to transcend the limitations of the text.<sup>210</sup> A close and complex relation exists between symbols and metaphors, both are representational—they point to and represent something beyond themselves. Since they both significantly change the use and meaning of familiar or ordinary words, these two figures of speech are therefore often viewed similarly.

Some scholars view symbol as a strong form of metaphor.<sup>211</sup> According to Urban, the character of all symbols is that they are in their original sense, metaphors.<sup>212</sup> Just as Wellek and Warren explain the connection between imagery and symbol,<sup>213</sup> likewise, Wheelwright states that a metaphor becomes symbolic only when it recurs.<sup>214</sup> Ricoeur describes two main similarities between symbol and metaphor. First, the “semantic impertinence” of the metaphor is similar to the “extension of meaning” in symbols.<sup>215</sup> Second, the work of resemblance in symbols is also present in metaphors.<sup>216</sup> Hence,

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<sup>210</sup> Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretation*, 57.

<sup>211</sup> Metaphor is also described as the *first degree* of the symbol. Harris, *Dictionary of Concepts*, 399, 402. Pierre Grelot describes the symbol as “a kind of developed metaphor.” Pierre Grelot, *The Language of Symbolism: Biblical Theology, Semantics, and Exegesis* (trans. Christopher R. Smith; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 18. Similarly, Wead explains the symbol is the final or solidified step of the metaphorical process. Wead, *Literary Devices*, 73-74.

<sup>212</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 429.

<sup>213</sup> See previous page.

<sup>214</sup> Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 93.

<sup>215</sup> Semantic impertinence is the absurdity that occurs when attempt is made to literally interpret a metaphorical utterance. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 50.

<sup>216</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 55-56. McGaughey also points out similarities between symbol and metaphor, some of which are as follows: 1) metaphor and symbol both involve understanding and experience, 2) metaphor and symbol serve as a shock to make readers think more, 3) symbols function like metaphors but at the level of the narrative rather than of the sentence, and 4) symbols have the same tensions as metaphors—tensions between tenor and vehicle, and between literal and figurative interpretation. McGaughey, “Ricoeur’s Metaphor and Narrative Theories,” 415-432.



according to Ricoeur, the metaphor expresses what is implicit in the symbol and also clarifies what is confusing in the symbol, thus, metaphors are “the linguistic surface of symbols.”<sup>217</sup> Ricoeur’s analysis reveals the intricate relation between metaphor and symbol. In the symbol/metaphor interplay, metaphors are drawn into symbolic systems where they function symbolically and contribute to symbolic meaning in narratives.

In narratives, imageries, metaphors, and symbols associate with one another semantically. While structural similarities exist between the three figures of speech, the symbol appears to be the most powerful. First, the profound power of the symbol is evident in its inability to be contained by narratives.<sup>218</sup> The unspoken potential of the symbol is always discovered outside the confines of the semantics of narrative. The symbol’s ability to create meaning *inside* the text by operating *outside* the text, gives it literary and narrative potency. Therefore, because it is not bound by language, the symbol is able to communicate more expansively than imagery or metaphor.

Second, the transcendent nature of symbols gives them a wider range of operation than imageries and metaphors enabling symbols to have a stronger effect in the narrative. The symbol by its sheer power of elevation is able to surpass other figures of speech in a narrative and draw them into its symbolic systems. This strong influence gives imagery and metaphor symbolic overtones, causing them to *function symbolically* in a narrative. When imageries and metaphors function within a symbolic narrative, the possibility exists for a symbol to overshadow and extend the meaning of imageries and metaphors outside the semantic range of the text.

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<sup>217</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 69.

<sup>218</sup> McGaughey, “Ricoeur’s Metaphor and Narrative Theories,” 432.

Third, symbols are generally regarded as more central to the meaning of a work and are therefore viewed as the stronger figure of speech.<sup>219</sup> This factor gives the symbol a greater force and dominance in narratives. Roman Jakobson describes the dominant element in literary works as the focusing component that rules, determines, transforms the remaining components, and guarantees the integrity of the narrative structure. According to Jakobson, “The dominant specifies the work . . . dominates the entire structure and thus acts as its mandatory and inalienable constituent, dominating all the remaining elements and exerting direct influence upon them.”<sup>220</sup> Jakobson’s observations aptly describe the operation of symbols in the Johannine narrative where symbols not only dominate the entire Gospel but also influence and transform the function of imageries and metaphors.

In conclusion, while imageries and metaphors form the basis of Johannine symbolism and facilitate symbolic meaning, this symbolic function takes place because of the transcendent power of the symbol. Its transcendent nature gives the symbol an innate ability to ascend the text, influence other figures of speech, and draw them into its network. The theoretical structure and function of the transcendent symbol show that it is *sui generis* among other figures of speech.

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<sup>219</sup> Harris, *Dictionary of Concepts*, 402.

<sup>220</sup> Roman Jakobson, “The Dominant,” in *Language in Literature* (ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy; Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987), 41. Roman Jakobson is a Russian Formalist who identifies as “the dominant” as one of the main characteristics of Russian Formalist literature.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has established a theoretical foundation for the structure and function of symbols and has explained how symbols associate with and dominate other figures of speech in narratives. One of the tasks of this study is to formulate a working definition of symbol and propose a theory of symbol for uncovering John's Christological Symbolology.

With the existence of theories of symbol in other disciplines, some may question the need for a specialized theory for the Gospel of John. General theories of symbol are certainly useful in identifying the components of the symbol, explaining how symbols function, offering guidelines, and providing disciplinary boundaries for symbolic interpretation of most narratives. However, because of their broad spectra, these theories are not able to accommodate the specificities of individual texts, particularly ancient texts with distinct theological perspectives as in the Gospel of John. In other words, literary and religious theories of symbol are not "one-size-fits-all" applications. The symbolic interpretation of a literary-theological text must take into account a number of pertinent factors, such as the following: 1) the author's purpose(s), which may dictate narrative style and structure, 2) the socio-cultural background and provenance of both author and reader, which reveal origins of symbolic expressions, and 3) historical and narrative contexts of individual symbols, which show how symbols expand within a text. A carefully formulated theory of symbol suited to the dynamics of a specific text enables interpreters to bring the aforementioned variables into their interpretative equation. The importance of considering the literary and ideological setting of the symbol is reflected in Hinderer's advice:

It should be the task of the interpretation of the symbol, I repeat, to *analyze the field of the symbol* of the respective work of art in the field of language and to

*show the manifold associations. . . . an interpretation which wants to approach especially the themes and intellectual tendencies of a work of art, must seek a way through the analysis of style and symbol. The material of the symbol as such is structured, organized, and polarized within the organism of the linguistic work of art. For that reason the analysis of the symbol must be joined by the analysis of the motif, subject-matter, and style (emphases mine).*<sup>221</sup>

The interpretative process in this research is therefore facilitated by a theory that will assist in navigating the peculiarities of the Gospel of John. Already established theories of symbol will serve as stable springboards for developing the specialized theory.

The symbols in the Gospel did not arise in a vacuum. Even though the writer of the Gospel does not articulate a theory of symbol, his use of symbolism does not preclude one. The interpreter's task is to uncover the theoretical underpinnings that hold the expansive network of Johannine symbols together. Understanding Johannine symbolism begins with the problem of language—how does one cognitively communicate spiritual realities by means of a literary narrative? The symbols in the Fourth Gospel are intended to present readers with spiritual realities of the SFR and draw them into the transcendent and divine relationship between the Son and Father. Transcendence is the genius of Johannine symbolism. The theory of Johannine symbols is a theoretical model specifically adapted to the literary and theological features of the Johannine narrative. With the goal of contributing to the ongoing effort in resolving complexities of the Gospel's symbolism, this theory offers practicable insight into the nature, pattern, and interpretation of the symbols in the Gospel of John. Having laid a theoretical foundation of the symbol as a literary construct, the following chapter will present a definition for the symbol and outline the principles underlying the proposed theory of symbol for the Johannine narrative.

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<sup>221</sup> Hinderer, "Theory, Conception, and Interpretation of the Symbol," 98.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORY OF JOHANNINE SYMBOLISM

### 3.1 Introduction

The systematic unveiling of Christ by means of extensive symbolism gives a strong impression that the Gospel of John has been carefully planned and strategically executed by means of a persuasive symbolic narrative.<sup>222</sup> The authorial intent expressed in 20:31 is unmistakable—that hearer-readers believe Jesus the Christ is the Son of God. The symbolic narrative of the Gospel is therefore the consequence of a careful theological consideration of Jesus Christ in context of his *relationship with God the Father*. The Christological Gospel's symbols aim to persuade readers to believe in Jesus the Son of God—a belief that results in the experience of eternal life. If John were to reveal a symbolic theory underlying his narrative, how would it appear? What theoretical concepts would form the basis of his Christological Symbolology? Also, how would the all-pervading SFR feature in his symbolic strategy? In answering these questions, this research proposes that the SFR is the key to John's symbolic strategy. To substantiate this proposal, a symbolic network—John's Christological Symbolology—will be charted through the narrative.

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<sup>222</sup> See Luke Timothy Johnson who comments the Gospel is “stylistically simple yet symbolically dense;” Johnson also notes almost everything in the Gospel, including names and numbers, have symbolic value. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN, 1999), 532. See also Harold Attridge who asks, “Why does the Fourth Gospel exhibit so much interest in playing with generic conventions . . . making literary forms do things that did not come naturally to them?” Attridge suggests that the author has deliberately embarked on a “genre bending” exercise. Harold W. Attridge, “Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 121, 1 (2002): 20. Hinderer remarks that the process of symbol-formation depends particularly on the *personal point of view, the world view and style and the personal interests and intentions* of the author. Hinderer, “Theory, Conception, and Interpretation,” 97.

The previous chapter has established a theoretical background for the nature and function of symbols in narratives and has argued the need to construct a theoretical model relevant to Johannine symbolism. This chapter will now articulate the proposed theory of Johannine symbolism that forms a framework of this study. Section one of this chapter explains the specialized definitions. The definitions of symbol symbology describe the overarching symbolic system revealed in the research. Section two outlines four theorems comprising the theory of Johannine symbols—representation, assimilation, association, and transcendence. Each principle is clarified in segments that note different ways Johannine symbols appear in the narrative and explain hearer-reader interaction. The chapter concludes with a summary in section three.

### 3.2 Symbol and Symbology: Working Definitions

The first step in developing a theory of symbol is defining the term “symbol.” A clear definition is necessary due to numerous descriptions of symbol available.<sup>223</sup> Ng’s succinct comment summarizes the problem of definition among Johannine scholars as

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<sup>223</sup> Some literary definitions of symbol/symbolism are as follows: Abrams: “In discussing literature . . . the term symbol is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, *beyond itself*.” Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 206; Chadwick: “An attempt to penetrate beyond reality to a world of ideas.” Chadwick, *Symbolism*, 2-3; Harris: “Anything that, through convention, resemblance, or association, is recognized as representing or standing for a second thing. . . Language presenting images that evoke, and perhaps give insight into that which cannot be directly perceived, such as spiritual truths, transcendent patterns or things-in-themselves.” Harris, *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism*, 398; Kahler: “The *symbol* is something concrete and specific that is intended to convey something spiritual or general, either as indicating a sign, i.e., an act of pointing, or as an actual representation.” Kahler, “The Nature of the Symbol,” 70; Vernon H. Kooy: “A representation, visual or conceptual, of that which is unseen and invisible. The religious symbol points beyond itself to reality participates in its power, and makes intelligible its meaning . . . The value of a symbol is its ability to elucidate; to compress into a simple, meaningful whole.” Vernon H. Kooy, “Symbol, Symbolism,” *IDB* 4:472; Ricoeur: “Any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.” Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretation*, 57; Wheelwright: A relatively stable and repeatable element of perceptual experience, standing for some larger meaning or set of meanings which cannot be given, nor fully given in perceptual experience itself. Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality*, 92.

follows: “Their conceptions of what a symbol is are all very different.”<sup>224</sup> This state of affairs is not surprising since scholars approach their study of Johannine symbolism from different angles; definitions reflect different foci of study.<sup>225</sup> Forming a definition requires focus on one or two main aspects of the multivalent symbol. A highly symbolic narrative with a clearly stated theological purpose (20:31), points to a distinct use of the symbol. The interpreter should therefore recognize that the Johannine text reveals a modified use of the symbol to suit a theological purpose. This definition is based first, on the literary-narrative setting in which the symbols emerge and second, on their theological context and purpose. The working definition of symbol for this research, explained in paragraphs following is: *A figure of speech that embodies certain characteristics of its literal meaning and leads to a transcendent meaning, which is significant in its narrative context and transformative in its theological purpose.*

*A figure of speech that embodies certain characteristics of its literal meaning:*

Recognizing the literary function of the symbol is the starting point for understanding its role as a figure of speech. Generally, literary symbols are verbal or written expressions pointing to or representing a person, thing, or action. The symbolic representation itself is a literal, earthly, and physical entity. For example, light as a symbol begins with a basic literal understanding of a physical object that emits physical light, that is, releases visible electromagnetic radiation known to travel at the speed of about 186,281 miles per second. Literal transmitters of light include the sun, moon, stars, lightning, fire, and electrical lightings. Some of the characteristics or effects of light are brightness, burning, vision,

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<sup>224</sup> Ng, *Water Symbolism*, 8. Lee states that by its very nature, the symbol defies *precise* definition. Lee, *Symbolic Narratives*, 33.

<sup>225</sup> See chapter one of this research.

illumination, or guidance. As a figure of speech, the symbol embodies or incorporates some of these characteristics of physical light relevant to the context or use of the symbol in the narrative.<sup>226</sup> For example, in 9:5 Jesus symbolizes Light of the world. Based on context, hearer-readers<sup>227</sup> select and apply to the symbolism, appropriate characteristics of literal light such as physical vision, which is portrayed in the healing of the blind man in chapter 9. However, the application does not lead to sensible interpretation, for Jesus physically cannot be the “eyes or vision of the world.” The hearer-reader then looks further for other characteristics of light such as illumination or guidance and then may view Jesus as one who gives human beings illumination and guidance for living. The symbol of light, therefore, embodies certain characteristics of physical light such as illumination or guidance but these characteristics still do not lead to the full meaning of the Johannine symbol of light. However, the literal characteristics embodied by the symbol are a starting point for the hearer-reader, who based on the context of the larger Johannine narrative, is compelled to seek another level of symbolic interpretation—the transcendent level of the symbol of light already introduced in the narrative as in chapter 8.

*And also leads to a transcendent meaning:* Symbolic interpretation in the Gospel of John does not culminate with literal meaning. The first stage of symbolic interpretation begins with literal meaning, which leads to transcendent meaning—the intended meaning. In this definition, transcendent meaning connotes a “double transcendence,” a

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<sup>226</sup> See Urban: “It is precisely the nature of a symbol that it *takes the primary meaning of both objects and words* and modifies them in certain ways so that they acquire a meaning of a different kind” (emphasis mine). Urban, *Language and Reality*, 405.

<sup>227</sup> “Hearer-reader” or “audience” is a collective term that refers to recipients of Jesus’ audience or recipients of the Gospel for all time.



meaning that Johannine symbols lead to transcendent meaning in two ways. First, semantic transcendence in the Johannine symbol leads to its intended meaning by semantically transcending the text; this trait is common to all literary symbols. The symbol transcends the text because its meaning is not clearly stated or explicit *in* the text. As noted in the example above, the symbol of light embodies characteristics such as illumination or guidance, which do not lead to the full meaning of the symbol. In the context of the larger Johannine narrative, the symbol of light points to Jesus who *illuminates people with knowledge of God and guides them into a relationship with God as Father*. This symbolic meaning is not clearly stated in the text; the absence of meaning in the text leads to the transcendent meaning outside the text.

The second type of transcendence is Christological; Johannine symbols lead to transcendent meanings because they denote a transcendent attribute of Jesus, who is the referent of most of the Gospel's symbols. In 8:12, Jesus declares, "I am the Light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life;" in this verse, the symbol of light does not merely signify illumination and guidance to live in the physical world. The symbol *takes on the qualities of spiritual light, which in the Gospel of John leads to eternal life*. As Light, therefore, Jesus is not only a guide for his audience to follow and listen to in the earthly realm, but he also gives spiritual light, which in the Gospel leads to eternal life from the Father. In sum, the symbolic representation of light points to a realm transcending the physical and earthly, and points to the spiritual realm from where the Son originates and the Father dwells.

*Which is significant in its narrative context:* As seen in the above example of the symbol of light (chapters 8 and 9), transcendent meaning of Johannine symbols is

significant both within the immediate context of the narrative in which they appear and also in the larger context of the Johannine narrative. Without the transcendent meaning, the reader cannot adequately interpret the symbol or understand the statement or story in which the symbol appears or reappears. In John 9, Jesus declares himself Light of the world and proceeds to heal a man born blind. When interpreted in context of chapter 8, both Jesus' declaration and act of giving light to the blind man symbolize spiritual light. In John 9, therefore, the symbol of light points to Jesus' mission of giving spiritual light to those who believe in him. Failure to arrive at transcendent meanings of most Johannine symbols leads to incomplete interpretation of symbolic statements, actions, or narratives. Because the narrative context of a symbol does not explicitly provide transcendent meaning, the hearer-reader is required to move beyond a literal to transcendent level in order to comprehend the full import of the symbol. Furthermore, without transcendent meaning, the symbol loses its dramatic effect, thus, affecting its ability to impact hearer-readers and persuade them to believe that Jesus is indeed the Son sent from the Father. In sum, Johannine the symbol embodies attributes of its literal meaning and leads hearer-readers to the full symbolic meaning which transcends the text.

Symbology basically means "a network of symbols;"<sup>228</sup> the definition of symbology in this study is as follows: *An overarching network comprising symbols, symbolic language, and themes connected to a common denominator that runs through a narrative.* The network in this research is referred to as John's Christological Symbology, which comprises *symbolic clusters*. Symbolic clusters are made up of symbols connected

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<sup>228</sup> Merriam-Webster's three-fold definition of symbology is as follows: 1) the art of expression by symbols, 2) the study or interpretation of symbols, and 3) *a system of symbols*. "Symbology," *Merriam-Webster's on CD ROM*. In this study, *symbology* is limited to the concept of *symbolic network* within the Johannine text and is therefore more text-bound than the term *symbol*.

to other figures of speech, symbolic language and/or themes. These clusters occur in episodes or chapters dominated by both the SFR and connected symbols.

Symbolic language is the *specialized use of words or phrases in the Gospel of John that intensify and clarify a main symbol and/or the SFR emphasizing their transcendent nature*. For example in chapter 3, the words πιστεύω (vv. 15, 16, 18[x3]), σκίζω (vs. 17), and κρίνω/κρίσις (vv. 17, 18 [x2], 19), are symbolic language because their use in the Gospel is specialized.<sup>229</sup> These words in chapter 3 enrich the symbol of life in the Gospel and reveal that the symbol of life points to the Son who comes from the Father to give divine eternal life to those who believe and those who believe will ultimately be saved from judgment. The words emphasize the transcendent life in the SFR and also its connection to the salvific mission and the Son's role as eschatological judge.<sup>230</sup> In sum, symbolic language supports the Gospel's symbolism by emphasizing further and giving deeper insight into realities expressed in Johannine symbols.

Clusters in John's Symbolology also include recurring themes such as preexistence, agency, rejection/reception, and the Holy Spirit. These themes or motifs enrich Johannine symbols by accentuating their transcendent Christological dimensions.

In sum, John's Christological Symbolology is the overarching network of symbols in the Gospel, which consists of symbolic clusters. The symbolic system in John's Gospel is intricate and comprises various overlapping and interconnected symbols all linked to the SFR. The Symbolology is illustrated in graphs, or charts called *sybographs*.

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<sup>229</sup> Symbolic language consists of words used to convey Johannine theological distinctives usually carry Christological significance, pointing to the Son, his mission, message, and/or his relationship with the Father.

<sup>230</sup> For example, δίδωμι (give) and its cognates are symbolic language; in addition, πέμψας is a symbolic expression that carries transcendent connotations augmenting symbols linked to the SFR.

Symbographs plot the progression and development of the SFR and associated symbolism in the narrative. Underlying the symbols in John's Christological Symbology is a theory providing the foundational underpinnings of this research.

### **3.3 Theory of Johannine Symbolism**

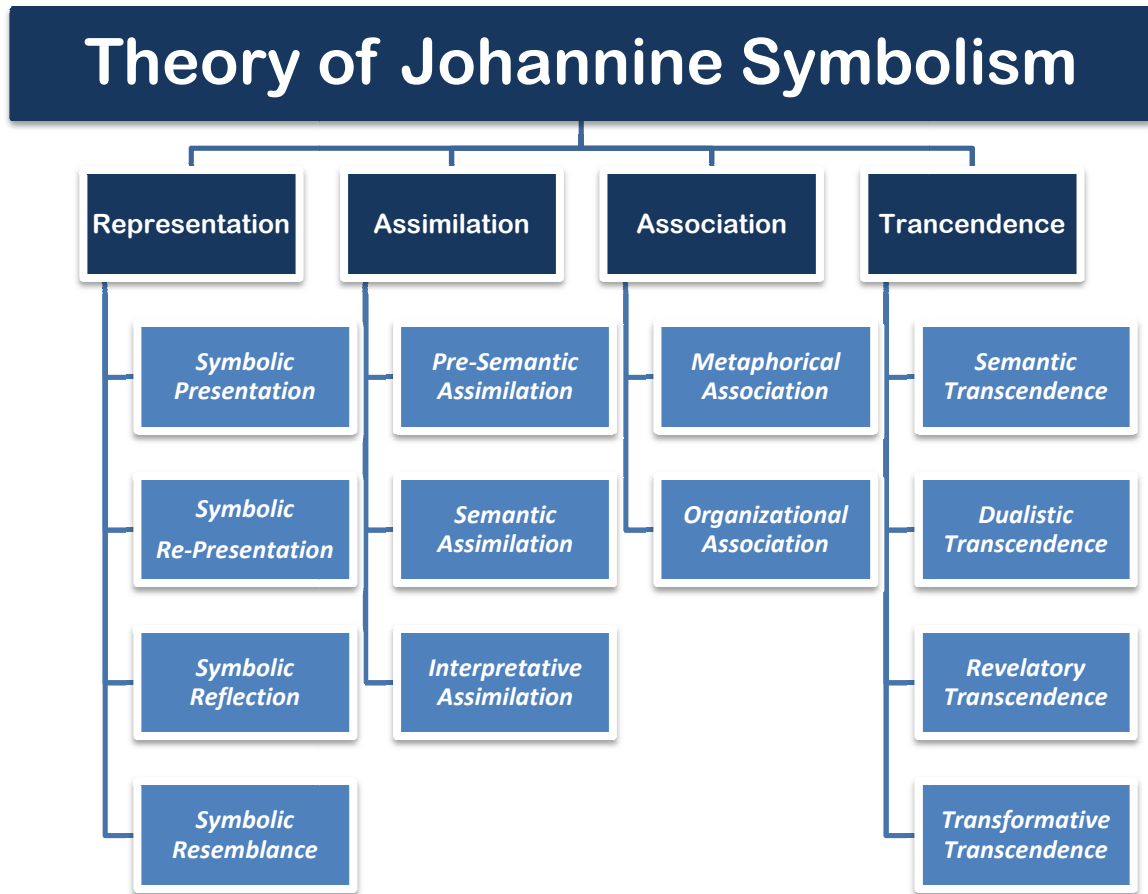
A theory is a “coherent set of hypothetical, conceptual, and pragmatic principles forming the general frame of reference for a field of inquiry.”<sup>231</sup> This theory of symbolism will therefore serve as a theoretical frame for inquiry into symbolism and SFR in the Gospel of John. Principles underlying the theory facilitate interpretation of Johannine symbolism in five ways. First, the principles explain how symbols function in the Gospel and associate with other figures of speech. Second, they reveal the dynamics of author and hearer-reader participation in the interpretative process. Third, the principles set theoretical markers that delineate boundaries for interpretation, streamline, and safeguard against haphazardness. Fourth, they guide the methodological process. Fifth, the symbolic operations described in the theory indicate what to anticipate in the unfolding of John's symbolic network.

This theory does not account for every possible concept behind Johannine symbolism but is a theoretical model that attempts to forge an interpretative path across the complex terrain of Johannine symbolism. The four principles in the theory, which are divided into sub-principles, are as follows: 1) representation, 2) assimilation, 3) association, and 4) transcendence.

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<sup>231</sup> “Theory,” *Merriam-Webster*, n. p.

Figure 1 : Theory of Johannine Symbolism



### 3.3.1 Principle One: *Johannine Symbols are Representational*

The symbol's basic idea is that it stands for something else; therefore, representation is the basic principle in the theory.<sup>232</sup> This principle of representation is

<sup>232</sup> According to Kahler, after stabilization and fixation, *representation* is the final stage of the symbol. Kahler distinguishes between two kinds of representational symbolism—descending and ascending. Descending symbolism detaches itself, descends from a prior and higher reality, and describes real happenings from which humans derive symbolic meaning. For example, Jesus as Messiah was for original Christianity a real, not a symbolic figure; his sacrificial death was and not symbolic. Ascending symbolism, on the other hand is not pre-existent, but springs from artistic imagination. Kahler, "The Nature of the Symbol," 57, 65-67. Urban explains that knowing involves representation and *one form of representation is the symbolic*. According to him, the concept the symbol includes *literal and non-literal representation*. Urban, *Language and Reality*, 402-403. See also Harris, *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*, 398.

divided into the following four sub-principles: 1) presentation, 2) re-presentation, 3) reflection, and 4) resemblance.

### **3.3.1.1 Symbolic Presentation**

The first phase of the representational principle of symbol is the *initial* presentation or appearance of the symbol in the narrative. Presentation takes place when a symbol emerges for the first time in the narrative and *introduces* a characteristic of its referent. The first appearances of most of the Gospel's Christological symbols introduce something new about Jesus. The hearer-reader's attention is directed to specific information about Jesus, which is expanded as the narrative progresses. For example, a succession of symbolic presentations takes place in the Prologue where vivid and evocative symbols and symbolic language introduce various characteristics of Jesus in relationship with the Father, which are developed in the remainder of the narrative.

The entire first chapter of the Gospel unfolds multiple presentations of Jesus that form a panorama of symbols. After presenting Jesus as Λόγος in the first verse, other presentations in the first chapter are Light, Life, Only Begotten (Son), Lord, Lamb of God, Baptizer, Son of God, Rabbi, Messiah, Son of God, King, and Son of Man. With each presentation, a new depiction of Jesus in context of the SFR is impressed upon the hearer-reader. Other symbolic presentations of Jesus in the Gospel narrative include Bread of Life in chapter 6, Good Shepherd in chapter 10, and Resurrection and Life in chapter 11. Most presentations recur as re-presentations as the narrative progresses.

### 3.3.1.2 Symbolic Re-Presentation

Re-presentation takes place when a previously introduced symbol is presented again. Re-presentations may introduce new dimensions of an initial symbolic presentation, such as the symbol of light presented in 1:4, which is re-presented later in vv. 5-9. In 1:4 the symbol of light points to Jesus as co-creator with God, in vs. 5 light points to Jesus' power over darkness; in the Baptist's witness of vv. 6-7, the symbol refers to Jesus as spiritual Light sent from God; and then in vs. 9, light speaks of the illuminating or enlightening effect of Jesus upon humanity. In vv. 5-9, each re-presentation of the symbol of light reveals a new dimension of Jesus' character and mission in connection with the Father.

Symbolic expansion takes place by means of re-presentations in which Jesus re-presents himself in symbolic words and actions. Symbolic expansion occurs when the representative symbolic actions are accompanied by explicatory discourses in disputes or monologues. In John 6, after his symbolic act of multiplying bread, Jesus declares himself the Bread of Life (6:35), he then expands upon the symbol of bread in the subsequent dispute and discussion. Also, the indirect presentation of Jesus as Temple in 1:14 is re-presented in symbolic action and speech of the cleansing of the temple in chapter 2. Re-presentation also occurs in symbolic language, as in the use of  $\square\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omega$  and  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\pi\omega$ , which re-present Jesus the Son, "sent from the Father," highlighting his prophetic mission.

Another form of re-presentation occurs in form of intertextuality, when symbols are drawn from prior cultural or theological use. Since the term "shepherd" has prior symbolic usage in the HB, the presentation of Jesus as Shepherd in chapter 10 can be

viewed as a symbolic re-presentation.<sup>233</sup> In the Gospel of John, therefore, Jesus the Shepherd becomes a re-presentation of God the Shepherd. This re-presentation causes the audience or reader to *reflect* on the previous use of the symbol.<sup>234</sup>

### 3.3.1.3 Symbolic Reflection

In symbolic reflection, the author presents or re-presents symbols after mentally “bending back”<sup>235</sup> to retrieve knowledge about the symbolic representation that corresponds to the referent of the symbol. This knowledge may be based on experience, worldview, culture, or theology. Thus, Johannine symbols exhibit, according to Urban, “a common form of representation sufficient for the purposes of reflection.”<sup>236</sup>

First, the author of the Gospel selects a particular symbol because elements of the symbol evoke a correlation with the symbolic referent. Second, the author expects a similar and immediate response of reflection on the symbol in the mind of the hearer-reader. Third, presentation or re-presentation of the symbol causes the reader to reflect upon his or her knowledge of the symbol and connect some aspects to the referent. Johannine symbols provoke the hearer-readers to bend back mentally and intuitively

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<sup>233</sup> See Psalm 23:1-2; 77:20; 78:52; 100:3; Isaiah 40:10-11; 63:11.

<sup>234</sup> This form of re-presentation is different from previous examples as it is recognized by hearers already aware of significations generated by the intertextual symbols in the original text.

<sup>235</sup> The word “reflection” stems from the Latin term *reflexio* meaning “bending back.”

<sup>236</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 441. Urban refers to the “rule of reflection” in which a symbol sentence is developed by reflecting on the context of the symbol and its referent. The context of the symbol is carried over into the context of its referent and the symbol is expanded. Urban, *Language and Reality*, 432. Wheelwright states the attitude to which symbols appeal is *contemplative*. Philip Wheelwright, “The Archetypal Symbol,” in *Perspectives in Literary Symbolism* (ed. Joseph Strelka; Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), 214.



search for meaning. The act of reflection may take place repeatedly before the symbolic representation is finally understood.

Symbolic representation easily lends itself to reflection because of the universal nature of symbols.<sup>237</sup> Several Johannine symbols such as, life, light, bread, and water are universal symbols.<sup>238</sup> These universal symbols are rooted in the theology, culture, and community of both author and audience. Johannine symbols are better understood when the theological and cosmological worldview of the original audience is taken into consideration. Reflection on the symbol leads to the meaning of the symbol, thus, “the symbol gives rise to thought, and thought returns to the symbol.”<sup>239</sup>

Symbols may evoke knowledge, experience, memory, images, emotions, likes, and dislikes; all of which are rooted in the hearer-reader’s knowledge and experience. The Christological symbols in John are often intensely evocative that some of Jesus’ Jewish audiences automatically resist the divine correspondences Johannine symbols imply. In John 6:35, when Jesus declares himself the “Bread of Life” from heaven, his audience reflects on the previous symbolic reference of Exodus 16, where God provides manna from heaven for the Israelites in the wilderness. Representation of Jesus as manna implies divine origin; some of his hearers are unable or unwilling to receive the symbolic connection to Jesus, for they view him as merely human. The audience’s reflection on the

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<sup>237</sup> Although symbols such as light and life vary slightly from culture to culture, they are universal. Ricoeur writes about the “reflective use of symbolism” in the human conscience, which is rooted in the cosmos, psyche, and poetic dimensions. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 10.

<sup>238</sup> See also Grelot who uses the term “existential symbols,” which according to him, “refers to cases in which various aspects of common human experience, whether in our perception of the world (the feel of the wind, light, etc) or in our interpersonal relationships, are transposed metaphorically onto the place of relationship with God.” Grelot, *Language of Symbolism*, 24.

<sup>239</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Hermeneutics of Symbols,” 288.

theological implications of manna and refusal to accept it results in misunderstanding and their ultimate rejection of Jesus.

In the Gospel, symbolic reflection is sometimes vocalized in the form of questions. For example, in the Bread of Life discourse, Jesus' audience question one another (6:42, 52) regarding the divine implications of his words. In John 4, the Samaritan woman's question directed to Jesus (vv. 11-12), reveals her reflection on the symbol of water and the Samaritan tradition about Jacob and the well.

Symbolic reflection leads to the social, historical, and theological backgrounds of symbols and to the strong connection between Johannine and HB symbolism. Symbolic reflection relieves Johannine symbolism of abstraction thereby grounding it in the realities of human belief and experience. Reflection leads to resemblance as hearer-readers reflect on the symbol to identify points of resemblance that lead to symbolic meaning.

#### **3.3.1.4 Symbolic Resemblance**

The fourth sub-principle of representation is resemblance. A symbol must have some form of resemblance with its referent. The work of resemblance is reflected in this study's definition of symbol—the symbol *embodies certain characteristics of its literal meaning*. Embodiment takes place when after reflecting, the author or hearer-reader discovers and selects points of resemblance that evoke correspondences between the literal meaning of the symbol and its referent. The correspondence is never exact because the symbol is not substitutional; in fact, more differences than resemblances may exist between symbol and referent. However, points of resemblance lead to the true meaning

of the symbol. Thus, the work of resemblance brings together two distant ideas or reduces the gap between two seemingly incompatible ideas.<sup>240</sup>

Symbolic resemblance consists of two levels, the first of which is logical or cognitive, when hearer-readers identify points of resemblance between symbol and referent through logical reasoning. In John 3, Jesus uses the symbol of birth to communicate transcendent realities about the kingdom of God and new birth to Nicodemus; Jesus insists no one can enter the kingdom without being “born again/anew.” Nicodemus looks for logical points of resemblance between natural birth and entering God’s kingdom by reflecting aloud and asking Jesus how it is possible for an adult to be physically born a second time. Nicodemus’ search for points of resemblance between the symbol of birth and the realities Jesus is communicating fails abysmally at the cognitive level. In the Gospel, logical or cognitive resemblance begins at, but often fails to lead to the full or intended meaning of the symbol.

The act of resemblance in Johannine symbolic interpretation must therefore move to a second level, the spiritual level or what Urban refers to as the non-literal or intuitive level.<sup>241</sup> In the Gospel, symbolic resemblance that leads to transcendent meaning in symbols is rarely determined at the logical level. Discovery of similarity between Johannine symbols and their referents is usually intuitive as appeal is made to innate or intuitive faculties of knowledge. When Jesus’ audience fails to identify symbolic resemblances at the logical level, he leads them into the intuitive level. In his encounter

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<sup>240</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 51. Ricoeur discusses the work of resemblance in detail in *Rule of Metaphor*. See Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 173-200.

<sup>241</sup> Urban declares, “The genuinely symbolic is bound up with the intuitive and it cannot be separated from it. In so far as the symbolic in language is concerned it is found precisely in the intuitive elements in language.” Urban, *Language and Reality*, 408-409.

with Nicodemus, Jesus leads him into the intuitive level by associating the elements of water, spirit, and wind with the symbolism of birth. The resemblance between birth and entering the kingdom of God is revealed in 3:8: “The wind blows where it desires and you hear its sound, but do not know where it comes from and where goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Consequently, the act of being “born again” does not occur in the cognitive sphere of physical birth. Resemblance between the symbol of birth and entering the Kingdom of God is discovered in the unknown, unseen, and uncontrollable realm. Entering into the Kingdom of God is an unseen, *spiritual* reality, not a known and controlled religious reality.

In the Gospel, as in the example of Nicodemus, Jesus gives his audience clues enabling them to *intuitively* discover symbolic meaning; however, since they often remain at the cognitive level, their search for symbolic resemblance sometimes leads to misunderstanding. Jesus’ audience is often unable to identify intended points of resemblance, thus failing to grasp symbolic meaning. Symbolic representations of Jesus need to be understood intuitively, i.e., with spiritual insight into his divine nature and origin. Johannine symbolic representations express a reality beyond the literal and cognitive realm; they highlight the divine realities expressed in the Sonship of Jesus and his relationship with the Father.

In sum, symbol representation consists of 1) presenting or introducing the symbol and referent, 2) re-presenting the symbol and referent for emphasis or expansion, 3) reflecting on previous symbolic presentation or usage, and 4) identifying cognitive and intuitive points of resemblance between symbol and referent.

### 3.3.2 Principle Two: *Johannine Symbols are Products and Agents of Assimilation*

The second principle in the theory is assimilation; symbolic assimilation occurs at three levels: 1) pre-semantic, 2) semantic, and 3) interpretative.

#### 3.3.2.1 Pre-Semantic Assimilation

Assimilation first occurs in the pre-semantic state of the symbol, meaning that most Johannine symbols are already in existence before appearing in the text. These symbols are the result of linguistic, cultural, and/or theological assimilation; pre-semantic origins of symbols are found in the depths of human experience.<sup>242</sup> Mircea Eliade explains that symbols diffuse through culture and human societies, sometimes far from their point of origin and are assimilated by different peoples.<sup>243</sup> Symbolic assimilation also takes place when elements of the created world merge with human activity or experience, such as the connection between burial or death and the sowing of grain.<sup>244</sup> These symbols are not products of a single culture, but are found in different cultures separated in time and influence; symbols that take on a universal nature are commonly referred to as archetypal or mythical symbols.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 69.

<sup>243</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (trans. Philip Mairet; New York: Sheed & Ward, 1969), 34.

<sup>244</sup> Ricoeur observes that certain fundamental human experiences create symbolisms such as the notion of above and below, cardinal directions, spectacle of the heavens, terrestrial localization, houses, paths, fire, wind, stones, or water.” Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 62, 65.

<sup>245</sup> Frye describes the archetypal symbol as a symbol that helps unify and integrate human experience. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 99. Wheelwright’s examples of archetypal symbols include sky father, earth mother, serpent, eye of the sun, ear of grain, vine, sprouting tree, ritualistic bathing, road or path and the pilgrimage along it, kingly power as blessing and threat, soaring bird, and circle or sphere. Wheelwright, “The Archetypal Symbol,” 222-223. Ashton identifies light and darkness as archetypal symbols in the Gospel of John. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 208. Jesus used archetypal symbolism in 12:24, when he speaks of his impending death: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

Many Johannine symbols are universal, such as light, darkness, bread, grain, water, life, and birth. Symbolic language such as Λόγος, which spans both Hebrew and Greek cultures, has traveled through time and developed conceptually in these cultures. John's original audience was at least tri-cultural (Jewish, Samaritan, and Greek).<sup>246</sup> Most Johannine scholars recognize Johannine symbols as emanating from Hebraic origin;<sup>247</sup> however, due to their universality, these symbols have also been assimilated into Greek culture. This process of assimilation makes several Johannine symbols easily recognizable. Although set in context of Jewish history and tradition of the Israelite journey in the wilderness, the symbol of manna in John 6 resonates with the Greek audience because bread is a universal symbol representing life and sustenance.<sup>248</sup>

Investigation into the process of assimilation of Johannine symbols reveals a rich history

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<sup>246</sup> See Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 18-24. Koester comments, "The Greek-speaking world of the late first century included many different kinds of potential readers for the Fourth Gospel. Johannine imagery has affinities with imagery in an astonishing range of ancient sources, including the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic Jewish texts, Greco-Roman sources, and later gnostic writings." Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 18.

<sup>247</sup> According to Ashton, Johannine symbols such as Messiah, prophet, and Son of Man are "unquestionably Jewish provenance" transformed to serve the purposes of the author of the Gospel. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 124. Johnson observes, "Elements of John's symbolic structure are present and important in the Judaism of first-century Palestine." Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 527. Gilbert Soo Hoo points out a difference in the manner in which Jesus uses symbolism when communicating with his general Jewish audience and with his disciples. With the former, Jesus uses traditional Jewish symbols of water, light, and temple; however, with his disciples, rather than resort to Jewish tradition, Jesus performs the symbolic acts of footwashing and giving the morsel of bread. Gilbert Soo Hoo, "The Pedagogy of the Johannine Jesus," PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2009, 248.

<sup>248</sup> According to Dodd, images of bread and water already serve as symbols for religious conceptions. In Jewish religion bread is viewed as a symbol for Torah or Wisdom, and manna is not only Jewish but in Philo is a symbol of the Logos. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 136-138. Other examples of symbols spanning Hebrew and Greek cultures are the symbols of vine and shepherd. Although Dodd relates the vine symbolism to the vine allegory in Ps 80:9-15 and Jer 2:21, he notes a Hellenistic reader of the Gospel familiar with the work of Numenius the second century philosopher, will be familiar the figure of God as a vinedresser. Likewise, Koester comments in Hebrew culture, shepherd evokes associations with Israel's leaders and even God; Greek classics also used shepherd to refer to leaders and the art of governing people. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 16.

of symbolic tradition. Exploring the pre-semantic phase of symbolic assimilation provides a variety of social, cultural, and religious perspectives for interpretation.

### **3.3.2.2 Semantic Assimilation**

Semantic assimilation takes place when the referent of the symbol assimilates similar characteristics of the symbol at the semantic level. The terms “assimilate” and “similar” are cognates; in symbolic assimilation, symbol and referent assimilate at the points of similarity. The symbol is not a literal substitute of its referent; hence, semantic assimilation can occur between alien or distant ideas.<sup>249</sup> Distant but similar concepts of the symbol and referent are assimilated and the assimilation connects them semantically. In John 1: 29, the Baptist calls Jesus “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” In the interpretative process of the Lamb of God symbol, Jesus the Lamb assimilates the “distant idea” of the Hebrew Passover lamb. The main point of resemblance and assimilation between the two ideas is death, for Exodus 12:3-6 narrates the death of the Passover lamb. Jesus the Lamb of God therefore assimilates the sacrificial act of redemption implicated in the killing of the Hebrew Passover lamb. Jesus is a man, not a lamb; therefore, this symbolic principle is described as assimilation rather than logical comprehension because the connection is comprehended intuitively rather than rationally. Because the relation between symbol and referent is not logically articulated in the narrative the hearer-reader comprehends symbolic meaning after the process of assimilation.

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<sup>249</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1:195.

### 3.3.2.3 Interpretative Assimilation

Interpretative assimilation occurs when interpreters participate in symbolic assimilation by first intuitively comprehending and then experiencing theological truth in the symbol. In the Gospel of John, the aim of symbolic interpretation is transformation. The process of interpretative assimilation begins with the principle of symbolic presentation; the interpreter first encounters the symbol, then its re-presentation, which is followed by reflection and resemblance.

The first level of symbolic assimilation occurs when the interpreter first comprehends the transcendent symbolic meaning of the literary symbol. The interpreter is thus assimilated into symbolic meaning as s/he makes a shift from literal to symbolic meaning.<sup>250</sup> In 2:13-22, the temple symbolism is at first an alien idea; however, if the interpreter reflects back to the temple symbolism of 1:14, s/he will understand that the symbolism connotes the visible abiding presence or glory of God. Next, 2: 21-22 flashes-forward to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; the interpreter then grasps the symbolic connection. Jesus' physical presence symbolizes the presence of God; therefore, Jesus himself is the temple.<sup>251</sup> At each stage of the interpretative process described above, the interpreter assimilates the meaning of the symbol by gradual comprehension.

John 2 shows symbolic assimilation can be delayed since the disciples do not immediately comprehend the temple symbolism until after the resurrection. Also, for the

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<sup>250</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 55. Ricoeur also describes assimilation thusly: By living in the first meaning (i.e. literal meaning), the interpreter is "led by it beyond it" into the symbolic meaning. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 15. Ricoeur explains further, "The symbol is the movement of the primary meaning which makes us *participate* in the latent meaning and thus *assimilates us to that which is symbolized without our being able to master the similitude intellectually*" (emphasis mine). Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 16.

<sup>251</sup> Jesus' death symbolizes the "destruction" or phasing out of the old temple and its religious system. Furthermore, in his resurrection, Jesus embodies and displays the visible glory of God.



reader-hearer, the temple symbolism hinted at in 1:14 is expanded in chapter 2, and fully assimilated in the post-resurrection narrative. Thus, delayed assimilation is the gradual comprehension of the succession of symbolic representations in the entire narrative. As the plot progresses, the hearer-reader assimilates by adapting, expanding, and conforming to newly presented knowledge of Jesus, before arriving at symbolic meaning.

The second level of interpretative assimilation occurs when the interpreter experiences reality conveyed in the symbols. Those who accept the Gospel's invitation to believe that Jesus is the Son of God can partake of the spiritual realities expressed the Christological symbols such as birth, life, light, water, and shepherd. Schneiders describes Johannine symbols as the "locus of experience."<sup>252</sup> Symbolic portrayals of Jesus call readers to enter into the truths expressed in the symbol. Jesus the Light calls his hearers to follow him and they will not longer walk in darkness; Jesus the Living Water, invites all to quench their spiritual thirst; and Jesus the Good Shepherd, calls believers to enter into his fold by hearing and following his voice. Thus, hearer-readers are assimilated into the realities of Johannine symbolism and the SFR.

### **3.3.3 Principle Three: *Johannine Symbols Associate with Other Figures of Speech***

The principle of association explains association between symbols and other figures of speech in the Johannine narrative. Symbolic association occurs at two levels: 1) metaphorical, and 2) organizational.

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<sup>252</sup> Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*," 68.

### 3.3.3.1 Metaphorical Association

The broad and complex operation of symbols in the Johannine narrative reveals a close association between symbols and other figures of speech, particularly metaphors.<sup>253</sup> The absence of the symbol's referent in the text enables the symbol to fulfill what the metaphor cannot perform, namely, highlight the transcendent nature of Johannine symbols that serve the theological purpose of the Johannine narrative. The purpose of the narrative is to reveal Jesus as Son of God, whose life is set in the earthly realm while he maintains a transcendent relationship with the Father. Metaphors cannot fully express John's Christological purpose because they are limited to the linguistics and lexicology of the text.<sup>254</sup> Metaphors connect Jesus to an earthly socio-cultural and historical context, while symbols connect him to the transcendent context of his relationship with the

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<sup>253</sup> Structural and semantic connections between symbol and metaphor are outlined in chapter two of this study.

<sup>254</sup> Van der Watt's main reason for interpreting Johannine figurative language as metaphors rather than symbols is because metaphors limit interpretation to text and socio-cultural conventions. His objections to symbolic interpretation of John are: 1) symbols work on convention and function only within that sphere of consensus; outside the sphere symbols no longer communicate to people not familiar with the convention, 2) because the symbol is based on convention, its referents change as convention changes, and 3) a metaphor can be identified syntactically and semantically in the text. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 1- 4. Susan Hylen who also favors a metaphorical reading of the Gospel notes that in the Gospel, symbols "point to truth that lies beyond or outside of conventional understanding of the source domain," on the other hand, metaphors use the cultural conventions of Jesus' day. Susan E. Hylen, *Imperfect Believers: Ambiguous Characters in the Gospel of John* (Westminster: John Knox, 2009), 136. Although Watt attempts to avoid the problem of ambiguity and open-ended interpretation, these problems are unavoidable and are woven into the literary and narrative fabric of the Gospel. The theological nature of the Gospel requires interpreters to address its non-cognitive character, because *the aim of its symbolism is to lead hearer-readers to the experience theological realities*. The uniqueness of John's metaphors, particularly those in context of the SFR, is that they point to *eternal, transcendent realities*. Because of their temporality, metaphors alone cannot communicate these transcendent realities. Accurate interpretation means Johannine metaphors ought not to be bound *only* to text, language, and socio-cultural background. John 20:31 states the Gospel's purpose is to bring readers to faith in the Jesus—symbols and metaphors perform this task *together*.

Father.<sup>255</sup> Therefore, the symbol-metaphor association reveals different facets of the person and ministry of Jesus.

Johannine symbolism uses metaphorical statements about the Son to point to transcendent realities. For example, socio-cultural or historical interpretation cannot *adequately* explain Jesus' metaphorical statement, "I am the Good Shepherd" (10:1, 14).<sup>256</sup> The metaphor points to or symbolizes Jesus' divine shepherding of the *spiritual* flock of God on behalf of his heavenly Father. In the Johannine narrative, symbol-metaphor association produces a wholesome interpretation, which covers both socio-historical and theological realities. The metaphor is sometimes the first stage of Johannine symbolism as seen in the "I am" statements. However, as these statements expand in the ensuing discourses and symbolic actions of Jesus they are no longer confined to the semantic or metaphorical level, but move to a symbolic level. At the symbolic level, metaphors become vehicles of symbolic meaning and revelation.

### 3.3.3.2 Organizational Association

Symbols direct, *organize*, and communicate.<sup>257</sup> Johannine symbols rarely appear or develop in the narrative alone; they draw other figurations into their networks. The principle of association reveals how other figurative elements of the Gospel function in a symbolic network. When symbols appear in the Johannine narrative they are usually

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<sup>255</sup> See Hylen who makes a similar observation that symbolic readings lead to "transcendent reality," while metaphorical readings do not express a preexisting reality but enables readers to structure their conception of reality. Hylen, *Imperfect Believers*, 148.

<sup>256</sup> In the Good Shepherd Discourse, Jesus is/does the following: 1) he is the door of the sheep (v. 7, 9), 2) he is the entry way to the sheepfold (v. 9), 3) he lays down his life for the sheep (v. 11, 15), and 4) he gives eternal life to his sheep (v. 28); these are not job descriptions of a normal ancient shepherd.

<sup>257</sup> Ogden and Richards, *Meaning of Meaning*, 9.

preceded, accompanied, or developed by metaphors, imagery, irony, misunderstanding, parables, proverbs, allusions, repetitions, double entendre, and/or rhetorical questions. The intricate association between symbols and other figures of speech reveal a literary and narrative organization in which each figuration is significant for symbolic meaning. The ability of the symbol to overshadow other figures of speech means that these figurations carry symbolic implications and are therefore drawn into the Gospel's symbolic system. Symbols associate with other figures of speech to form networks; these networks are *symbolic* because symbols usually occupy *central* position. Symbols in the network also function by organizing narrative elements around them, such as theme, plot, and characterization.<sup>258</sup>

John 4 is a classic example of organizational association. The encounter with the Samaritan woman consists of several symbolic revelations of Jesus; he is giver of living water and eternal life, prophet, Messiah, and the one sent from the Father. The central symbol in this passage is water and associated figures of speech include the following: 1) *misunderstanding* reflected in the woman's response to Jesus' "living" water (vv. 4: 7-15) and the disciples misunderstanding of Jesus' "food" (vv. 31-34); 2) *irony* in Jesus' response regarding the woman's husbands (vv. 16-18); 3) , 3) *allusions* to Samaritan oral tradition about Jacob (v. 12), worship (v. 20), and the eschatological coming of the Messiah (v. 25); and 4) *imagery* of harvest, laborers, reaping, and sowing (v. 34-38). The appearance of each figuration at different stages of the narrative develops the symbol of

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<sup>258</sup> See also Culpepper's categorization of symbols which include core symbols such as light, water, and bread, pointing to Jesus' revelatory role. According to Culpepper, these three symbols associate with other symbols, metaphors, and concepts, such as darkness, life, wine, and flesh. For instance, Light associates with concepts such as lamps, fires, torches, lanterns, day (and night), morning, seeing, and healing the blind, which manifest in form of symbols, imageries and metaphors. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 189.

water, culminating with Jesus the Messiah-Evangelist giving “water” of salvation or eternal life to the Samaritan village.

Each figure of speech accompanying a symbol is part of John’s symbolic network and gives coherence to the Gospel narrative. Clusters of figurative language expand, explicate, and dramatize the narrative, shedding light on the underlying structure of John’s Christological symbology.

### **3.3.4 Principle Four: *Johannine Symbols are Transcendent***

Transcendence distinguishes the symbol from other figures of speech; therefore, the essence of this theory is transcendence. Virtually every symbolist identifies transcendence as the complex core component of the symbol.<sup>259</sup> Urban and Ricoeur’s theories highlight the element of transcendence in the symbol. Transcendence shapes the language of John’s Gospel and operates on four levels: 1) semantic, 2) dualistic, 3) revelatory, and, 4) transformative.

#### **3.3.4.1 Semantic Transcendence**

Definitive meaning of the symbol is *outside* the linguistic and semantic boundaries of the text. Transcendence occurs when the symbol *in the text* joins the referent *outside the text*.<sup>260</sup> Meaning moves from the semantic domain to a trans-semantic

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<sup>259</sup> Literary and Johannine scholars who stress transcendence in symbols include the following: Richard B. Gregg, *Symbolic Inducement and Knowing: A Study in the Foundations of Rhetoric* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), vii. Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 656; Harris, *Dictionary of Concepts*, 398; Koester, *Symbolism*, 4; Lee, *Symbolic Narratives*, 33; Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 29; Schneiders, “History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel,” 372; and Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 75-76.

<sup>260</sup> See Ricoeur’s explanation of how transcendence operates in the symbol: “It is an unbound or liberated language that is freed from certain lexical, syntactical, and stylistic constraints. It is freed, above

domain where experience, culture, community, and theology play significant roles in symbolic interpretation. The transcendent symbol, however, is not totally disconnected from its semantic context and this provides a measure of stability for interpretation. For example, in 10:35, the semantic meaning in “bread of life” remains attached to its transcendent meaning. The idea of literal physical bread as sustenance and nourishment is the foundation from which transcendent meaning is attained. When fully interpreted, the symbol of bread still retains these aspects of semantic meaning. The symbolic principle of semantic transcendence expands the scope of interpretation, with the linguistic signification and narrative context of the symbol acting as a safeguard against inaccurate or incongruous interpretation.

### **3.3.4.2 Dualistic Transcendence**

The second occurrence of symbolic interpretation is dualistic; in this principle, the term “dualism” basically refers to dual dynamics in the SFR. Dualistic transcendence is reflected in the Son’s earthly mission, which is directly connected to his transcendent origins and his relationship with the transcendent Father. The transcendent nature of symbols expresses, explains, or enhances the transcendent relationship between Son and Father. In the narrative, the dual reference in the symbol, that is, its cognitive and non-cognitive elements, aptly conveys the physical (earthly) and spiritual (heavenly) aspects of the SFR. Thus, the ability of the Johannine symbol to span two realms of reality makes it an appropriate means of expressing dualism in the SFR. The Son, represented in the text as physically active *below* on earth, originates from *above* and symbolizes the Father

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all, from the intended references of both ordinary and scientific language, which, we may say by way of contrast, are bound by the facts, empirical objects, and logical constraints of our established ways of thinking.” Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, 59.

who dwells in the transcendent realm *above*. Jesus *descends* to earth to accomplish the divine mission; on completion of his mission, he will *ascend* to the Father in the transcendent realm.<sup>261</sup> Thus, transcendent elements of the SFR are expressed in the dualistic language of “above” and “below.”

Knowledge of the Father and aspects of Jesus’ identity and mission are often symbolically expressed in dualistic language. Symbolisms of light/darkness, night/day, blindness/vision, life/death, as well symbolic language of reception/rejection, ascent/descent, belief/unbelief, and honor/dishonor all convey aspects of the Son’s mission and relationship with the Father.<sup>262</sup> Transcendence and dualism shape the Gospel’s language and symbolism as evidenced in the Prologue, which contains several of the above-mentioned dualistic contrasts. The Baptizer uses dualistic transcendence to confirm Jesus’ mission and relationship with the Father. In 3:30-31, the Baptizer declares, “He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.”

Johannine symbols cannot be properly interpreted without understanding their transcendent nature; transcendent symbolism conveys Johannine Christology. Jesus spans immanent and transcendent realms, which creates tension for the interpreter who is

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<sup>261</sup> For Jesus’ origin see 3:13; 6:38; 18:36; for his return see 6:62; 13:1; 20:17.

<sup>262</sup> Culpepper observes that John’s symbols are: “Predominantly dualistic: light and darkness, ordinary water and living water, plain bread and true bread. These symbols are woven into the more extensive dualism of the gospel,” Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 200. Koester comments, “In Johannine terms, symbols span the chasm between what is ‘from above’ and what is ‘from below’ without collapsing the distinction.” Koester, *Symbolism*, 4. Lee describes Johannine symbols as the “expression of the coming together of divine and human, the transcendent and the immanent, the spiritual and the this-worldly.” Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 29. Speaking of religious symbols, Wesley Kort observes, “Potent symbols gather meaning and force by unifying contraries—light and dark, life and death, male and female, beginning and ending, good and evil. The more unifying, the more powerful a symbol is or must be. Wesley Kort, *Narrative Elements and Religious Meanings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 9.

required to navigate both realms. This tension is eased by dualism embedded in transcendent symbols, which are described as visual or conceptual representations of what is unseen or invisible.<sup>263</sup>

### 3.3.4.3 Revelatory Transcendence

The entire Johannine narrative is aimed at revelation; from the pre-existence of the Λόγος in 1:1 to Thomas's unbelief in 20:29, every stage of the narrative reveals Christological truth.<sup>264</sup> Hence, the third principle of symbolic transcendence is revelatory; revelation in the Fourth Gospel takes place through transcendent symbols. The aim of transcendent symbols is to lead hearers-readers into intuitive or spiritual revelation. In the interpretative process, the transcendent nature of the symbol pulls the hearer-reader's vision above or outside the text where a deeper understanding of the symbol is revealed. The hearer-reader is drawn into the transcendent domain of the symbol where he or she grasps the symbol's intended meaning; the symbol reveals what was hitherto unknown about Jesus and his Father. Johannine symbols are therefore vehicles of insight;<sup>265</sup> they give insight into the nature of spiritual relations,<sup>266</sup> which would not otherwise be

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<sup>263</sup> Kooy, "Symbol, Symbolism," 4: 472.

<sup>264</sup> This observation is based on John 20:31. While acknowledging that the Gospel narrative contains statements reflecting ambiguity and concealment, leading to misunderstanding, these statements show *the need for belief in the Son of God* in order to arrive at revelation. *Unbelief in the Son of God leads to concealment of the symbolism*. Ng observes that Johannine symbols may be seen to work like the kingdom parables since they create a dilemma of concealing and revealing at the same time. Ng, *Water Symbolism*, 47. See also: Frank Charles Hancock III, "Secret Epiphanies: The Hermeneutics of Revealing and Concealing in the Fourth Gospel" (PhD diss., Rice University, 1994).

<sup>265</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 415.

<sup>266</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 416.



adequately expressed or understood.<sup>267</sup> Johannine scholars attest to the role of the symbol as a vehicle of revelation in the Gospel.<sup>268</sup>

Jesus' mission is to reveal the Father, a revelation that emerges via his symbolic teaching and acts. The healing of the blind man in chapter 9 is a classic example of the revelatory nature of symbolic action. According to Painter, John 9 is a symbolic narrative on spiritual perception; the point of the story is that humans are blind from birth and are in darkness until Jesus gives them light.<sup>269</sup> Painter explains, "The symbols are used to enable the blind to see, but the meaning of the symbols can only be known by those who see that they *point beyond themselves to the revealer and through him to God*" (emphasis mine),<sup>270</sup> thus, symbols are bearers of revelation. Painter's interpretation emphasizes the need for the hearer-reader's vision to follow the transcendent path of the symbol, which reveals the SFR.

The principle of revelatory transcendence highlights the important role of hearer-reader participation in the interpretative process of Johannine symbols. Readers engage with another level of reality when transcendent symbols draw them into the experience the symbols describe.<sup>271</sup> Johannine symbols are intrinsic to revelation as bearers of

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<sup>267</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 440-441.

<sup>268</sup> See Koester who insists that one of the main underpinnings of Johannine symbolism is witness to divine realities. Koester, *Symbolism*, 2. Lee comments that the symbols of the Gospel are "intrinsic to revelation," according to her, symbols as vehicles of revelation, "take us to the threshold of divine mystery: they reveal and conceal, convey yet do not capture, evoke without exhausting meaning." Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 27-28. According to Ashton, "Every major motif in the Gospel is directly linked to the concept of revelation." Ashton, *Understanding*, 515.

<sup>269</sup> Painter, "Johannine Symbols," 37.

<sup>270</sup> Painter, "Johannine Symbols," 38.

<sup>271</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 16.

reality.<sup>272</sup> The symbol not only points to, but also *leads into* its transcendent meaning.<sup>273</sup>

The interpretative process of moving beyond the cognitive to the transcendent, therefore, draws readers into the spiritual reality of the Gospel.<sup>274</sup> The reader intuitively perceives the divine revelation expressed in the symbol leading to the experience of the reality of the revelation. Hence, symbols are “used to communicate that which transcends the world in order that the transcendent might be *experienced*.”<sup>275</sup>

Jesus insists that his audience must see and believe before they can grasp and experience his symbolic utterances. Jesus expresses the need to hear and believe,<sup>276</sup> because this is the only way people will experience the revelation in his message. The revelatory aim of Johannine symbolism is therefore to lead hearer-readers into faith in Jesus Christ and transformation by experiencing divine life (20: 31).

#### 3.3.4.4 Transformative Transcendence

Schneiders observes Johannine symbols open hearer-readers to transformation, she explains, “what the symbols of the Fourth Gospel offer is a pathway to divine glory,

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<sup>272</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 28.

<sup>273</sup> Urban, *Language and Reality*, 415.

<sup>274</sup> See Schneiders who points out that Johannine symbols: 1) *make the transcendent present* (in a limited mode), 2) *reveal by involving the person in a relationship with the transcendent*, 3) *lead the person into the unknown*, 4) *leads to a transforming experience*, and 5) *mediate what is spiritual or mysterious*. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 67-69.

<sup>275</sup> Painter, “Johannine Symbols,” 35. See also Attridge who suggests that John’s genre bending of words is “an effort to force its audience away from words to an *encounter* with the Word himself” (emphasis mine). Attridge, “Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel” 21.

<sup>276</sup> See: 3:12, 15, 21; 5: 24-25; 7:17; 8: 24, 43; 10: 25, 38; 13:7-8.

which is both the location and the means of transformation.”<sup>277</sup> The transformative purpose of the Gospel is reflected in 20:31—the author desires hearer-readers to experience the transforming power of eternal life by believing that Jesus is the Son of God (20:31). Those who believe the revelation communicated through transcendent symbols are *transformed* by the revelation. Transcendent symbols reveal Jesus’ identity as Son of God, which leads to the transformative experience of spiritual realities in his salvific message. Transcendent symbols shape the text and engage hearer-readers both cognitively and intuitively.<sup>278</sup> Lee stresses the important role hearer-readers play in embracing the transformation evoked by the text. Lee explains, “Meaning emerges in the interaction between text and reader in which the reader is an *active* listener, an engaged presence within the borders formed by the symbolic structure of the text” (original emphasis).<sup>279</sup> As symbols are interpreted and conceptualized, transformation occurs in the mind of hearer-readers. Understanding is no longer limited to the cognitive and sensual realm and interpretation shifts to the intuitive realm where insight and revelation lead to symbolic meaning.<sup>280</sup>

The transformation that results from transcendent symbols occurs at both the interpretative and experiential phases of the hearer-readers’ encounter with the symbols.

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<sup>277</sup> Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*,” 235, 237.

<sup>278</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 222.

<sup>279</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 235.

<sup>280</sup> The cognitive still remains part of the interpretative process. See Schneiders’ insistence that the aim of symbolic interpretation is “not to deny cognitive content but rather, to confirm that the symbol conveys an intelligible yet ineffable sense of presence.” According to her, “It is precisely this sense of presence, participation, and transformation that lies at the heart of Johannine symbolism.” Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 21-22. According to Heschel, transcendent symbols serve as a meeting place for the spiritual and the physical, and for the invisible and the visible. Heschel, *Man’s Quest for God*, 138.

In 3:1-21, Jesus' teaching on the new birth evokes a fresh understanding in the mind of hear-readers regarding requirements for entering the God's Kingdom. Jesus' explanation of being "born anew" or "born from above," transforms the Jewish religious concept entering the Kingdom from obedience to the law to belief in Jesus and his power to grant eternal life. Likewise in Jesus' symbolic act of raising Lazarus from the dead in 11:1-44, transforms eschatological concept of rising from the dead to understanding that Jesus is himself the embodiment of eternal life, which is available *now*. Thus, transcendent symbols moves conceptualization of what hearer-readers already know and transforms their understanding to conceive of symbolic meaning and spiritual realities light of Jesus' mission from the Father.<sup>281</sup>

As hearer-readers encounter and believe the truth expressed in the Gospel's transcendent symbols, they experience a revelation of Christ that leads to transformation and results in relationship.<sup>282</sup> The narrative shows that transformation is not always instantaneous or permanent, as seen in the transformation that occurs in the faith of the disciples.<sup>283</sup> Nevertheless, the Gospel gives examples of radical transformation in the lives of those who believe. For example, the woman and village of Samaria (4:1-42), the nobleman and his household (4:46-53), and the man born blind (9:38), all respond to Jesus in ways that show transformed lives. After comprehending the symbolic language

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<sup>281</sup> See also Koester comment on the transformation that takes place in understanding the symbol of bread: "John's Gospel agrees that those who eat bread should recognize the divine giver, but transforms the way this is usually understood: True bread comes from God and the crucified Christ." Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 102.

<sup>282</sup> Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 67.

<sup>283</sup> The narrative shows different stages of belief as well as unbelief in the disciples who follow Jesus (1:37-47; 2:12, 22; 6: 60-71; 68-69; 16:29-30; 20:27).

and actions of Jesus, these individuals receive a revelation of him as Son of God, which results in a transformation from a state of unbelief to one of belief.

Transcendent symbols in the Gospel of John are able to transform the hearts of hearer-readers and bring them to belief in Jesus. Those who do not believe the Christological signification in Jesus' symbolic words and actions are not transformed by revelation; they remain in darkness or in sin (3:18-21; 9:35-41; 12:35-36, 44-46; 15:21-22). Those who believe and receive God's revealing activity in Jesus enter into a transformed relationship with God as Father.<sup>284</sup> As expressed in his Farewell Prayer (17:11, 21), Jesus reveals the Father so that believers may partake in the SFR; transcendent symbol leads to the transformation of becoming children of God (1:12). Transformation begins with a new understanding of the Son and his Father as revealed through the transcendent symbols in the teachings of the Son.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The Gospel of John is a literary narrative with a symbolic design serving a theological purpose. The above outlined theory is formulated to facilitate interpretation of the Gospel by offering insight into the nature, function, and pattern of Johannine symbols. The theory organizes the Gospel's symbols into four main *theoretical* and *theological* principles, namely, *representation*, *assimilation*, *association*, and *transcendence*. *Since not all symbols have equal frequency, function, or force in the*

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<sup>284</sup> Carter, *John Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, 4.

*narrative,*<sup>285</sup> *the theory assists in evaluating and recognizing variables in Johannine symbolism.*

The four principles provide a theoretical platform for examining the link between the SFR and symbolism. Representation shows how the SFR is symbolically introduced and reintroduced at different stages of the narrative, thereby, offering hearer-readers a multi-faceted view of the SFR. The principle of representation also explains an aspect of interpretation in Johannine symbols evoking acts of reflection and resemblance on the part of hearer-readers before symbolic meaning is determined. The second principle of assimilation emphasizes the linguistic, cultural, and theological origins of Johannine symbolism, showing that most symbols and symbolic expressions representing the Son and Father have pre-semantic origins. Semantic assimilation explains how Johannine symbols embody characteristics of their literal meaning. Assimilation also sheds light on how hearer-readers assimilate meaning in the act of comprehending the symbol. Principle three gives insight into the structure of the Johannine network of symbols focusing on how the network comprises other figures of speech. The fourth principle of transcendence focuses on the core element of Johannine symbolism. Symbols are basically transcendent because their meaning transcends semantic boundaries; however, the text gives the transcendent symbols representing the SFR a narrative context for accurate interpretation. Dualistic transcendent explains how transcendent symbols ease the tension of the dualistic positions of the Son and Father in the narrative. Revelatory and transformative transcendence describe how Johannine symbols lead to revelation and transformative experience, which enable hearer-reader participation in the SFR.

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<sup>285</sup> See Wheelwright's observation that some symbols have more universality and durability than others. Wheelwright, "The Archetypal Symbol," 221.

Due to versatility and multiplicity of function in the Gospel, Johannine symbolism is an intricate phenomenon. The symbols enrich the Gospel narrative, moving the plot forward, developing characters, navigating transcendent and temporal time, and reinforcing the purpose of the Gospel. A specialized theory of symbolism is invaluable for resolving complexities faced in symbolic interpretation of the Gospel narrative. Even though symbolic interpretation is inexhaustible,<sup>286</sup> hopefully *this theory will contribute to the ongoing endeavor of making Johannine symbolism more comprehensible.*

Chapter four, the next stage of this research, lays a theoretical foundation for understanding narrative components that enable the Gospel to accommodate the wide scope of Johannine symbolism. The analysis in chapter four will be used in chapter five to develop a narrative framework for examining ways in which the SFR occupies central place in the Gospel narrative with the support of Johannine symbolism.

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<sup>286</sup> Many scholars refer to the inexhaustible nature of symbolic interpretation. See: Tzvetan Todorov who notes the “inexhaustible character of the symbol.” Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation* (trans. Catherine Porter; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 17. Hinderer speaks of the “principle of inexhaustiveness or incommensurability.” Hinderer, “Theory, Conception, and Interpretation,” 93. Koester comments, “Many of the images that function symbolically in John's Gospel are as familiar as daily bread, yet the familiarity does not dispel the mystery; it conveys the mystery.” Koester, *Symbolism*, 29.

## CHAPTER 4: NARRATIVE AND SYMBOL IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### 4.1 Introduction

The message and meaning conveyed to readers by the author of the Fourth Gospel is connected to the way the narrative is structured.<sup>287</sup> The author of the Gospel skillfully crafts narrative elements to accommodate his presentation of Jesus as Son of God. Hence, the unfolding of John's Christological Symbolology within a symbolic narrative structure prompts the following questions considered in this chapter: Is the relation between narrative and symbol reciprocal, does the narrative structure develop symbols or do symbols develop narrative? Which narrative elements render the Gospel conducive to an elaborate symbolic network? How do these narrative elements enable the Johannine narrative to support a symbolic network and the central theme of the SFR?

Having established the structure of symbols in general and outlined the theoretical and theological nature of Johannine symbolism in a theory, this chapter presents a narrative framework for establishing the centrality of the SFR and charting John's Christological Symbolology. This framework consists of analyses of narrative elements of the Gospel that are significant in the presentation of both SFR and symbolism. Following

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<sup>287</sup> Derek Tovey states that the Johannine message cannot be separated from the Gospel's narrative form because the theological purpose of the Gospel's is contained within its narrative shape. Tovey also argues the Gospel is more integrated and developed than the Synoptic narratives as individual episodes are more extended and complex, transitions between episodes are more even, and frequent use of temporal markers, connectives, flashforwards, and flashbacks give the narrative chronological and thematic unity. Derek Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup 151; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 34-36. Likewise, Hans Windisch notes in the Gospel a "graphic storytelling and a mastery of technique that none of the synoptic evangelists was able to achieve." Hans Windisch, "John's Narrative Style," *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives* (ed. Mark W. G. Stibbe; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 38. According to Windisch, John's mastery of literary craftsmanship is evident in how he selects his material working only with material significant for his purpose and shaping scenes vividly and dramatically. Windisch, "John's Narrative Style," 62. However, the Gospel contains several aporiae, which are evidence of possible disjointedness. See 4:1-2; 6:1; 7:53-8:11; 14:31; 21:1-25.



the Gospel's narrative structure enables a "calling out" of the SFR and John's Christological Symbolology.<sup>288</sup> Rather than impose an alien structure upon the text, this research engages the narrative on its own terms and follows its inherent structure. Close attention is thereby given to where and how symbol and narrative mutually support each other.

The aim of this chapter is to accomplish the following tasks: 1) utilize narrative theory to define, identify, and analyze four elements—plot, character, time, rhetoric—showing how they facilitate symbolic systems, 2) analyze the four elements in the Johannine narrative, paying close attention to how they develop the SFR and symbolism, and 3) conclude with a preview of how the research will proceed within the established narrative framework.

The second section covers narrative theory by examining definitions of narrative and analyzing the underlying theories of plot, character, time, and rhetoric.<sup>289</sup> These four narrative elements are selected because of their significance in designing this research's methodology. Plot, character, time, and rhetoric are important in narratives characterized by symbolism for the following reasons: 1) they direct the order in which symbols appear and reappear, 2) their function in narrative structures influence the organization of symbolic networks, and 3) they contribute to symbolic interpretation.

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<sup>288</sup> In advising how to engage the biblical text, Michael Fishbane employs the phrase "call out." He uses Hebraic analogy to explain the phrase: "*Miqra*, the Hebrew word for Bible, properly means 'calling out.' And what calls out from a text, what beckons and addresses a reader-hearer, if not its words? . . . For guided by it, the reader of the Bible will confront the *repeated* or *key words* and *themes* of a biblical text, and so enter that text on its own terms. . . *Miqra* is thus a "'calling out' to follow the lead of a text's words, themes and structures" (emphasis mine). Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture* (New York: Shoken Books, 1979), 141. Resseguie regards the biblical narrative as a unity and organic whole to be examined on own terms. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 22.

<sup>289</sup> This research acknowledges other narrative elements such as setting, tone, and point of view in the Gospel, but believes the four elements selected are most influential in the Gospel's symbolic presentation of the SFR.

The third section applies the theoretical analyses in section two to the Johannine narrative. The section begins by establishing the Gospel as a symbolic narrative, and then shows how the four narrative elements shape the Gospel's presentation of the SFR and symbolism. The following aspects are examined: 1) sequence of the narrative plot, 2) characterization of the Son and Father, 3) emergence of transcendent symbolism within temporal dynamics of narrative, and 4) persuasive language aimed at leading readers to believe Jesus is the Son of God. These four areas contribute significantly to the presentation of the SFR and configuration of John's Christological Symbology. The chapter concludes with a brief explanation of the next stage, which is to develop a methodological framework for the research.

## **4.2 What is Narrative?**

Similar to the authors of the Synoptic Gospels, John employs the age-old medium of written narrative to persuade his readers that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.<sup>290</sup> When engaged with interpretation of gospel narratives, modern readers face the problem concerning lack of information about the conventions from which biblical narratives were shaped.<sup>291</sup> Literary critical research into John's Gospel therefore, relies on modern theories to shed light on the basic structure and functions common to most narratives.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Burton L. Mack observes that the Evangelists gave sayings of Jesus that were common in a pre-Gospel setting a different nuance by framing them with a narrative plot; thus the gospels were given a new narrative setting. Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 80.

<sup>291</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (NY: Basic Books, 1981), 47.

<sup>292</sup> Tovey insists that interpretation of the Fourth Gospel should be aided by techniques of narrative critical theory. Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act*, 34.

The first task of any study of narrative theory is answering the following questions: What exactly is a narrative? What is its composition? What do different narrative terms mean?

The basic idea of a narrative is that it is a work of literature that tells a story.<sup>293</sup>

Seymour Chatman's seminal study on narrative structure postulates that narrative is composed of two parts—story and discourse. Story describes *what* the narrative is about (events, characters, and settings); discourse refers to *how* narrative is told or transmitted.<sup>294</sup> In other words, story is the content of the narrative, and discourse is the form by which the narrative is expressed.<sup>295</sup> Other literary scholars have offered slightly nuanced versions of Chatman's definition;<sup>296</sup> essentially narrative is made up of two parts—content of the story and the author's stylistic representation of the story. A literary narrative is more than just the random "telling" of a tale. Most narratives follow a broad structural pattern, which consists of various components such as sequenced events, representational characters who carry out those events, the narrative style of the author, and the hearer-readers of the story. In sum, narrative may be defined as a linguistic

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<sup>293</sup> Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 23.

<sup>294</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1978), 9. E. M. Forster defines story as "a narrative of events arranged in time sequence." E. M. Forster, *Aspects of a Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1927), 51.

<sup>295</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 23-24.

<sup>296</sup> For Peter Abbott, narrative consists of story and narrative discourse; thus, story is an event or sequence of events, while narrative discourse is the representation of those events. Porter H. Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16. Susana Onega and Jost Landa define narrative as "a representation of a series of event." Onega and Landa identify narrative in two senses; the broad sense is a work with a plot and the narrower sense of narrative is "exclusively linguistic phenomenon, a speech act, defined by the presence of a narrator or teller and a verbal text." Susana Onega and Jost Angel Garcia Landa, ed., *Narratology: An Introduction* (London: Longman, 1996), 1-4. Onega and Landa's second definition places emphasis on the linguistics, writer, and recipient of the text. Tovey describes narrative as an artifact and an act. As an artifact, narrative is a construct made up of elements such as characters, events and settings. As an act, narrative is a process by which a message (story) is transmitted from sender to receiver, or an interaction between the author and reader. Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act*, 34. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg view narrative simply as a literary work distinguished by the presence of a story and a story-teller. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 4.

representation of a sequence of events conducted by characters, and expressed to an audience in a narrator's particular style.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the purpose of this analysis of narrative theory is to lay the foundation for a methodological framework for examining the SFR and Johannine symbolism. The Johannine narrative presents, 1) through a sequence of events (plot), 2) Jesus in complete unity with his Father (characters), 3) by use of transcendent symbols set in temporal dynamics (time), 4) for the purpose of persuading readers to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and thereby to experience life in his name (rhetoric). These four reasons form the rationale for selecting the narrative elements of plot, character, time, and rhetoric for the ensuing theoretical analysis.

#### 4.2.1 Plot

The structure of narrative is traditionally called plot.<sup>297</sup> The general idea of plot comprises events or episodes;<sup>298</sup> however, scholars' definitions focus on various elements such as arrangement/structure/design,<sup>299</sup> causality,<sup>300</sup> emphasis,<sup>301</sup> ending,<sup>302</sup> and

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<sup>297</sup> Wellek and Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 216.

<sup>298</sup> Scholes and Kellogg define plot as the sequential element in narrative. Scholes and Kellogg, *Nature of Narrative*, 207. Wellek and Warren describe plot as composed of smaller narrative structures referred to as episodes or events. Wellek and Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 217.

<sup>299</sup> Aristotle regards plot as the "construction" or "arrangement" of incidents. O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Aristotle's Poetics: A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature* (trans. Leon Golden; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 12. Aristotle divides plot into two—simple and complex. Simple plot is when change of events takes place without a reversal of fortune or recognition. However in a complex plot, change takes place by reversal of fortune, recognition, or both (*Poetics*, X). Hardison, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 18-19. Peter Brooks views plot as the outline of story, "that which supports and organizes the rest." According to Brooks therefore, plot is "an embracing concept for the design and intention of narrative." Peter Brooks, "Reading for the Plot," in *Narratology: An Introduction* (ed. Susana Onega and Jost Angel Garcia Landa; London: Longman, 1996), 254, 255. Ricoeur observes plot produces "a new congruence in the organization of the events;" in other words, plot grasps together and integrates multiple, scattered events into a complete story. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1: ix, x.

interpretation.<sup>303</sup> Ricoeur examines plot in the first volume of his three-part work entitled *Time and Narrative* (1984). Ricoeur's basic understanding is that plot orders events into a story;<sup>304</sup> the plot of a narrative draws a meaningful story from a diversity of events.<sup>305</sup> According to Ricoeur, plot is symbolic in nature because its actions signify goals and motives;<sup>306</sup> therefore, plot is "symbolic articulations of action" that have the capacity to be narrated.<sup>307</sup> Human action can be narrated because it has been "symbolically mediated," which confirms the presence of a symbolic system in narrative.<sup>308</sup> Actions of characters are to be interpreted in context of the symbolic convention of the narrative.<sup>309</sup> Ricoeur's theory of narrative confirms plot not only organizes, but also functions symbolically.

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<sup>300</sup> Forster describes plot as "a narrative of events the emphasis falling on causality." E. M. Forster, *Aspects of a Novel*, 130.

<sup>301</sup> Chatman notes the function of plot is to emphasize or de-emphasize, focus, interpret, or comment on certain events in the narrative. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 43.

<sup>302</sup> Northrop Frye explaining plot in the following statement: "When a reader of a novel asks, 'How is this story going to turn out?'" he is asking a question about the plot." Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 52

<sup>303</sup> According to Culpepper, plot interprets events by placing them in sequence and context, which defines their meaning; thus, plot conveys the significance of the story. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 85. Brooks sees plot as "a structure for those meanings that are developed through temporal succession." Brooks, "Reading for the Plot," 255. Resseguie also views plot as contributing to the understanding and meaning of a narrative. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 197.

<sup>304</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:56.

<sup>305</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:65.

<sup>306</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1: 55.

<sup>307</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:54.

<sup>308</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:57-58.

<sup>309</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:58.

Plot gives narrative a basic literary design, reveals the author's emphases and purpose while aiding interpretation. The plot can be described as the backbone of a narrative. A narrative without a comprehensible and well-organized chain of events is unable to produce meaning. The plot has the purpose of containing the symbolic meaning the author is communicating to the reader. Plot actions are symbolic, making plot a reservoir of meaning significant for interpretation. Events of the plot have symbolic meaning, which are interpreted within the symbolic conventions of the narrative.

#### 4.2.2 Characters

Actions and events in a plot are usually carried out by characters,<sup>310</sup> who reveal themselves in speech and actions. They are known by what they say about themselves, what others say about them and by their environment or setting.<sup>311</sup> Characterization is the technique by which authors fashion convincing portraits of people.”<sup>312</sup> Characterization is also the process by which characters are “formulated, depicted and developed.”<sup>313</sup> In reality, a character is not *actually* a person, but rather, the author's *representation* of a person, be it historical or fictional.<sup>314</sup> Narrating every detail about characters does not

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<sup>310</sup> This study acknowledges that narratives characters are not always human. According to Abbott, some stories revolve around animals or animated objects. Hence, Abbott uses the term “entities” and refers to entities with human qualities as “characters.” Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 17.

<sup>311</sup> Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 121.

<sup>312</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 105.

<sup>313</sup> J. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 173 (footnotes).

<sup>314</sup> On characters as individuals, see Petri Merenlahti who describes characterization as the “representation of individuality.” Petri Merenlahti, “Characters in the Making: Individuality and Ideology in the Gospels,” in *Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; JSNTS 184; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 49. Baruch Hochman argues that a character must be viewed as part of the structure of the text, as one of the complex and interlocking elements that constitute the text.

serve the author's purpose; therefore authors are selective in what they reveal about characters. Distinctive traits, tones, and qualities of narrative characters are carefully selected and integrated into the narrative plot. Characterization is thus part of an author's narrative strategy.<sup>315</sup>

Most literary scholars approach characterization primarily by categorization. Most follow E. M. Forster's distinction between "round" and "flat" characters.<sup>316</sup> According to Chatman, a flat character possesses a single dominating trait and is therefore, clearly structured and highly predictable. In contrast, round characters possess a variety of conflicting or contradictory traits, are open-ended, capable of surprising readers, and thus become "inexhaustible objects for contemplation."<sup>317</sup> Dual categorization of characters provides a clear-cut, but restricted means of character identification and analysis. The terms "static" or "flat" create the impression of an uninteresting, dull, or uneventful

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Characters are therefore, part of the organizing structure that generates and contains them. Baruch Hochman, *Character in Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 31, 65.

<sup>315</sup> D. Francois Tolmie, "The Characterization of God in the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 69 (1998), 75. Culpepper notes, "The writer has a distinct understanding of a person and his or her role in a significant sequence of events." Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 105. Likewise Resseguie states that no author can give a complete record of everything that happens in a person's life; thus, to a certain extent, literary authors give characters life and the characters are re-created in the reader's imagination. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 121.

<sup>316</sup> According to Forster, flat characters are constructed around a single idea or quality, while round characters involve more than one factor. Forster, *Aspects of a Novel*, 103. In contrast to dual characterization, Hochman proposes eight categories with opposites, which are as follows: 1) Stylization/Naturalism, 2) Coherence/ Incoherence, 3) Wholeness/Fragmentariness, 4) Literalness/ Symbolism, 5) Complexity/ Simplicity, 6) Stylization/ Naturalism, 7) Transparency/Opacity, and 8) Closure/ Openness. Hochman, *Character in Literature*, 88-89.

<sup>317</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 132-133. Similarly, Wellek and Warren posit static and dynamic (developmental) characterizations. Static ('flat') characterization presents a single dominant trait throughout the narrative, while dynamic ('round') characterization is expansive and requires space and emphasis in the narrative. Wellek and Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 218. See also Scholes and Kellogg who expand dynamic characterization into developmental and chronological descriptions. Developmental characterization clarifies the progress of the character's personal traits; however, with chronological characterization, the character's personal traits are more extended and significant. Scholes and Kellogg, *Nature of Narrative*, 169.

character. However, the possibility exists for static characters with a few dominant traits to be dynamic, forceful, and even capable of surprise, propelling the narrative forward in speech and action to an eventful conclusion. A third category that combines dominant and dynamic features may provide an alternative for characters that do not fit into either round or flat categorizations.<sup>318</sup>

Another important aspect of categorization is the role of repetition in developing images of characters. According to Bal, in first appearances, qualities of characters are not totally comprehended by readers; however, in the course of the narrative, relevant characteristics are repeated and characters emerge more clearly.<sup>319</sup> Repetition of character traits through speech and action usually signifies or symbolizes meaning the author wants to convey. Characters move the plot forward through actions impacting other characters, giving narratives meaning.

#### 4.2.3 Time

The world unfolded in narrative is always temporal.<sup>320</sup> Events in the narrative create the order of time.<sup>321</sup> Narrative time is not always chronological but rather

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<sup>318</sup> See Outi Lehtipuu who notes that distinction between round and flat characters has attracted much criticism in several recent literary theories. Outi Lehtipuu, "Characterization and Persuasion: The Rich Man and the Poor Man in Luke 16:19-31," in *Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; JSNTS 184; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 78.

<sup>319</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 125. Bal also points out that the image of a character is built by its relationship with other characters, which tend to accentuate similarities and contrasts. Bal, *Narratology*, 125. Similarly, Hochman observes characters are generated by words pointing to structured sequences of events within the narrative. Hochman, *Character in Literature*, 31

<sup>320</sup> Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*, 1: xi.

<sup>321</sup> Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 3-4. Onega and Landa explain that successive parts of a narrative have a "longitudinal structure of time and actions." Onega and Landa, *Narratology*, 5.



compressed into events and episodes. Authors employ various methods to control how time develops in narratives. Methods range from expanding time by detailed and prolonged narrations, to encapsulating time into very brief summaries. Thus, narrative time is fluid<sup>322</sup> and establishes “a sense of a present moment.”<sup>323</sup> The “present moment” in narratives is identified in two ways; first, the author writes the narrative in his or her present time, such that even historical narratives are written from the present perspective of author or narrator. Second, readers read the narrative in their “present,” meaning that events of all time frames are “pulled” into the reader’s present moment.

As noted in section 2:1 of this chapter, Ricoeur uses his theory of plot to explain the relation between time and narrative. This relation is described by Ricoeur as “prefigured time that becomes a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time.”<sup>324</sup> In other words, time representing past events (prefigured time), is shaped and arranged into the plot (refigured time), with the result being time constructed by narrative (configured time). Beneath explicit chronological narrative time is implicit configured time, which signifies the author’s perspective of narrated events.

Time is a complex phenomenon in narratives that toggles several time frames. Phelan’s rhetorical approach helps ease the difficulty in navigating narrative time. Phelan views the text as an invitation to experience the movement of narrative through time and

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<sup>322</sup> Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 5. Abbot remarks that even though narrative time is fluid, it is rarely kept in strict isolation from regular time.

<sup>323</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 63.

<sup>324</sup> Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*, 1: 54. Refiguring takes place by combining two temporal dimensions—chronological and non-chronological. Chronological (episodic) dimension is linear and consists of events laid out in the story. Non-chronological (configurational) dimension unites all events and incidents into a temporal whole and leads to the narrative’s theme. Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*, 1: 66-67.

simultaneously engage the reader's intellect, emotions, judgment, and ethics.<sup>325</sup> The subtle twists and turns of time in the sequence of a plot require close attention.

#### 4.2.4 Rhetoric<sup>326</sup>

Persuasive rhetoric is applied to literature to reinforce the power of argument;<sup>327</sup> therefore, rhetoric is the power of narrative.<sup>328</sup> As the art of persuasion, rhetoric breathes life into narratives and influences how readers think and feel about what authors say.<sup>329</sup> Narrative rhetoric is strategic in purpose as it attempts to mold others' views of the world inviting readers to "reconsider their existing world view in the light of a world view promoted through strategic communication."<sup>330</sup> Thus, rhetoric "tells a particular story to a particular audience in a particular situation for, presumably, a particular purpose."<sup>331</sup>

Walter Fisher proposes a paradigm showing how, as a means of persuasive communication, narratives function symbolically. Fisher explains "narrative reasoning" is more effective in influencing opinions and decision-making than propositional

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<sup>325</sup> James Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1996), 90.

<sup>326</sup> In this study "rhetoric" is used not in the sense of "rhetorical criticism" or speech methods used in ancient Greece, but rather in the general sense of persuasion that occurs through narratology.

<sup>327</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 245.

<sup>328</sup> Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 36.

<sup>329</sup> Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 41. According to Abbott, rhetorical features in narratives produce strong feelings and thoughts in readers. Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 36.

<sup>330</sup> Peter M. Phillips, "Rhetoric," in *Explorations in Biblical Interpretation & Literary Theory* (ed. David G. Firth and Jamie A. Grant; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 241. Resseguie states authors use rhetoric to persuade readers of their ideological point of view, norms, beliefs, and values." Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 41.

<sup>331</sup> Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, 4.

reasoning,<sup>332</sup> therefore challenging the presupposition, dating back to Aristotle, which views humans as primarily rational beings.<sup>333</sup> With the Aristotelian paradigm, persuasion is determined by knowledge and rational argument.<sup>334</sup> In contrast, Fisher insists that humans are storytellers.<sup>335</sup> Because human communication and decision making is based on symbols and signs,<sup>336</sup> reasoning does not have to be confined to argumentative prose, but can be “discovered in all sorts of symbolic action.”<sup>337</sup> Fisher describes his narrative model as “a theory of symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them.”<sup>338</sup> Fisher’s paradigm unfolds the *symbolic nature of rhetoric* in narratives. Narratives are representative; they persuade by pointing the reader to events or characters in the narrative that symbolize the author’s

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<sup>332</sup> Walter A. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 266.

<sup>333</sup> Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration*, 59. Fisher’s paradigm began with his study on public argument, which he describes as “a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands” consisting of the following: 1) the argumentative and persuasive, and 2) the literary aesthetic. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration*, 266. Ricoeur views narratology as simulation of *narrative intelligence* belonging to the same level of rationality in other sciences of language. Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (trans. David Pellauer; ed. Mark I. Wallace; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 239.

<sup>334</sup> Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration*, 59.

<sup>335</sup> Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration*, 64. Fisher’s theory of humans as “homo narrans” is an extension of Kenneth Burke’s theory of humans as “symbol-making” and “symbol-using.” See Kenneth Burke, “Definition of Man,” in *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 16.

<sup>336</sup> Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration*, 65.

<sup>337</sup> Walter Fisher, “Narrative as Human Communication Paradigm,” in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader* (ed. John Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill; New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 265. Likewise, Ricoeur states, “Human action can be narrated because it is symbolically mediated.” Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1: 57.

<sup>338</sup> Fisher, “Narration as Human Communication,” 266.

worldview. Therefore, persuasive power of rhetoric in narrative lies in the authors' ability to effectively symbolize meaning.<sup>339</sup>

Another theoretical model that helps explain the significance of rhetoric in symbolic narratives is Richard B. Gregg's proposal that *rhetoric is symbolic inducement*.<sup>340</sup> According to Gregg, *language is a symbol system* that makes possible the human capacity to symbolize; therefore, symbolic persuasion is part of human cognitive activity.<sup>341</sup> In other words, because narrative is formed by language, a tool of human selection and choice, narrative is inherently symbolic *and* persuasive.

In sum, rhetoric is the act of powerful, strategic symbolizing power through narration. Because rhetoric involves purpose and decision making, both author and reader naturally engage the text symbolically. The author strategically symbolizes human experience and the reader makes a choice based on the power of rhetoric in the narrative. By the conclusion of a narrative, readers will be compelled to make decisions based on the power and effectiveness of the author's rhetorical skill. Because of its symbolic nature, narrative is a powerful means of persuasion.

#### 4.2.5 Summary

The above theoretical discussion on the nature of the components of narrative, namely, plot, character, time, and rhetoric, are specifically selected for the purpose of

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<sup>339</sup> See Phelan who proposes that rhetoric is synergy occurring between authorial agency, textual phenomena, and reader response. Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, xii.

<sup>340</sup> Gregg, *Symbolic Inducement*, 148.

<sup>341</sup> Gregg, *Symbolic Inducement*, 19. Symbolic cognitive activity occurs by structuring or patterning human experience and structuring involves selection, choice, and purpose. Gregg, *Symbolic Inducement*, 132.

creating a methodological framework for examining the SFR and Johannine symbolism. Both SFR and symbolism in the Gospel emerge and develop within the four narrative elements analyzed in this chapter.

Several observational conclusions are made from this discussion of narrative theory. First, plots design, arrange, and unite events and episodes thereby giving narrative momentum, purpose, and meaning. Plots serve a symbolic purpose because they consist of signifying actions. Second, narratives bring characters into sharp relief through actions and speeches portrayed in plots. Emphases of certain character traits raise reader anticipation of what to expect as the narrative progresses. Authors use the speech and actions of characters symbolically. Third, the dimensions of time represented in narratives are created by authors who interweave different frames for purposes of signification. Finally, narrative rhetoric aims at persuading readers to accept authors' perspectives; the symbolic power of rhetoric is therefore, a powerful and integral part of narrative. In sum, narrative creates its own meaning and exerts power because of its elements.<sup>342</sup> The four elements of plot, character, time, and rhetoric each play important roles in creating symbolic meaning in the Gospel of John. The next section examines how these elements function in the Johannine narrative.

#### **4.3 Narrative, SFR, and Symbolism in the Gospel of John**

Narrative and symbol work unitedly in the structure of the Fourth Gospel to progressively unveil Jesus as Son of God the Father through the intricacy of John's Christological Symbolology, which has the SFR at its center. Thus, narrative and symbol

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<sup>342</sup> Kort, *Narrative Elements and Religious Meanings*, 18.

work together to unveil a symbolic presentation of the SFR. Each unveiled symbol progressively tells the story of Son and Father, thereby contributing to narrative content. The symbolic presentations of the SFR are in turn bound together in and by the narrative.<sup>343</sup> Scholars have recognized the strong link between the Johannine narrative and symbolism; however, they focus on the following different aspects.<sup>344</sup> First, story and discourse comprise the Johannine narrative, bound together by symbols.<sup>345</sup> Second, the narrative unfolds Johannine symbolism;<sup>346</sup> hence, narrative structure gives rise to symbol, which creates the structure of the narrative.<sup>347</sup> Third, miraculous signs in the narrative contribute to the symbolic form of the Gospel.<sup>348</sup> Symbols undoubtedly integrate and shape the Johannine narrative, on the other hand, the narrative is structured in such a way

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<sup>343</sup> Lee views the entire Johannine narrative as symbolic; her study show how symbols form narrative content. Lee, *Symbolic Narratives*, 33. According to McGaughey, symbols build and transform their “narrative horizon.” McGaughey, “Ricoeur’s Metaphor and Narrative Theories,” 434.

<sup>344</sup> Lehtipuu remarks, “The fragile unity of the narrated-interpreted world is closest to the breaking point in the Gospel of John, where scholars often speak of ‘narrative symbolism’ or ‘symbolic narratives.’” Outi Lehtipuu, “Characterization and Persuasion,” 116. Zimmermann describes the Johannine text as “figuratively shaped on the level of the ‘narrated world.’” Zimmermann, “Imagery in John,” 25. Carter refers to the Prologue as “a symbolic unit.” Warren Carter, “The Prologue and John’s Gospel: Function, Symbol and the Definitive Word,” *JSNT* (1990), 50.

<sup>345</sup> Dodd describes the Gospel as “narrative and discourse, bound together by an intricate network of symbolism.” Dodd, *Interpretation*, 143. According to Dodd, discourses such as the Feeding of the Multitude, Healing at Siloam, and Raising of Lazarus are related to their narratives and are to be understood symbolically. Where no direct symbolic indication is given, the reader is to seek symbolic interpretation. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 133-134.

<sup>346</sup> Lee’s study focuses on six “symbolic narratives” in the Gospel. Lee explains the purpose of the narrative is to unfold symbolism reciprocally; thus, unfolding the symbolism draws out the narrative. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 16, 28. Lee observes the entire Gospel is the product of intersections between narrative and symbol; therefore, narrative structure and symbol work together in a cohesive and integrated way. Lee, *Symbolic Narratives*, 226. Painter identifies chapter 9 as a “narrative symbol,” which lays out what the writer intends to convey through the symbol of light. Painter, “Johannine Symbols,” 39.

<sup>347</sup> Lee, *Symbolic Narratives*, 21. McGaughey insists that symbols have no meaning without narrative. McGaughey, “Ricoeur’s Metaphor and Narrative Theories,” 434.

<sup>348</sup> Paschal views narratives with miraculous signs as symbolic; they contain sharp, dramatic sentences and seem to be “alive to the symbolic potential of language and events.” For example in 13:30 the sharp sentence following Judas’ departure, “it was night,” is dramatic. This chronological information symbolically reflects the nature of Judas’ mission. Paschal, “Sacramental Symbolism,” 154.

that it unfolds and expands the symbols. The significance of Johannine symbols is emphasized by the different ways symbols relate with narrative. Johannine symbols are concentrated forms of the narratives to which they relate.<sup>349</sup> The result of the interworking of symbol and narrative is the vivid and dramatic presentation of the SFR. The next sections examine how the narrative elements of plot, character, time, and rhetoric function in presenting the SFR through the Johannine network of symbols.

#### 4.3.1 SFR and Symbolism in the Johannine Plot

Generally, plots of the gospel genre center on Jesus' life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension;<sup>350</sup> however, the four gospel writers created different plots,<sup>351</sup> with the plot of John's Gospel being remarkably different. Theologically, the Johannine plot of Jesus' life, message, and ministry is woven with his divine relationship with God the Father; literarily, the plot is purposefully designed and structured by a symbolic network. This research proposes that the Johannine plot centers on Jesus, who is specifically cast in the role of Son sent from the Father. The Son's origin is linked to his intimate relationship with the Father and is pre-existent to the timeframe of the narrative.

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<sup>349</sup> Brian Bull, "Narrative and Symbol as a Means of Embodying Cultural Values," 2 . [Cited 14 September 2011]. Online: <http://www.reachingandteaching.org/downloads/NarrativeandSymbol.pdf>;

<sup>350</sup> See Grant Osborne's identification of two levels of plot in the four gospels: the macro level is plot development of the entire gospel level, which consists of major and minor points. Micro level is the plot of the individual story or pericope. Grant R. Osborne, "Literary Theory and Biblical Interpretation," in *Explorations in Biblical Interpretation & Literary Theory* (ed. David G. Firth and Jamie A. Grant; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 43-44. See also Scholes and Kellogg, *Nature of Narrative*, 214.

<sup>351</sup> According to Culpepper, fluidity of the gospel traditions enabled the Gospel writers create different plots; they fashioned their materials into a coherent whole by imposing meaning on events. Culpepper explains, "To establish internal coherence and convey the significance of the story, the evangelists selected, shaped, and arranged material so that its sequence established a certain progression and causality. Action and dialogue were used to establish various themes or motifs which recur throughout the gospels and the narrator and characters were made to cooperate in conveying the meaning of the story." Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 84-85.

The Son is sent from his heavenly dwelling with the Father to humanity on earth, to deliver and perform the Father's word and works. The main message from the Father is for people to believe in his Son Jesus as sole agent and Savior. The plot develops a story line of dichotomous reaction to the message—belief and unbelief. Each successive plot episode registers one or both reactions. The conflict generated from those who do not believe escalates until the plot reaches its peak in the death, resurrection, and departure of the Son to the Father, which intriguingly has been repeatedly predicted in the narrative. Although the Son dies by the schemes of his antagonists, his death is part of the Father's plan, who is the one who subsequently raises his Son from the dead. The resurrection, final departure (ascension), and return of the Son to the Father, marks the beginning of a new era for those who believe in the Son. They are now taught and guided by the indwelling Spirit of God

The sequenced events in John's narrative plot unveil one Christological symbolism after another. The brilliance of the Johannine plot lies in the structured symbolic system that gradually unveils the Son and Father through symbolic words and actions; SFR and symbolism are unveiled in five ways. First, the sequence of events in the plot organizes symbols into a network. In turn, the Johannine plot can be uncovered by following the symbolic network in the Prologue. As each event unfolds, a symbol or cluster of symbols emerges to establish the plot around the SFR. For example, the events narrated in the Prologue unveil a cluster of symbols and symbolic language portraying the Son's mission in light of his relationship with the Father. Plot events facilitate



symbolic meaning; as readers follow the plot within which symbols are interpreted, they are drawn into John's theological perspective.<sup>352</sup>

Second, dramatic succession of events heightened by temporal markers and connections (e.g., τὸ πρῶτον, τὸ δεύτερον, τὸ τρίτον, and μετὰ ταῦτα) connect symbolic events in the Gospel's portrayal of Christ. Momentum and tension created in the narrative connect symbols/symbolic language and themes, thus comprehension of Johannine symbols occurs as each dramatic episode introduces or expands the symbols in narrative progression. The dramatic nature of the Johannine plot acts as a unifying agent pulling symbolic words and actions together into a continuous flow of Christological revelation.

Third, the symbolic speeches and actions of Jesus in connection to the Father are also united by the plot and to become part of the Gospel's symbolic system. For example, in chapter five, Jesus' symbolic act of healing of the blind man, results in the religious leaders' plan to kill Jesus; this episode connects with previous themes of divine agency (1:47-51; 2: 1-11; 4:46-54) and rejection (1:10-11; 2:24; 3:18-16; 4:48). The plot merges discourses and actions into episodes with each episode expanding the symbolic network around the SFR; thus, plot development gives John's symbolic network structure.

Fourth, in the Johannine narrative, speeches and actions of Jesus *as unique agent of the Father* causes sharp reactions from other characters in the plot, which contribute to the structure of the symbolic network. The plot is driven by conflict generated from resistance to Jesus' claims of sonship and agency. Along with the plot develops conflict

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<sup>352</sup> See also Culpepper who observes the Gospel's plot is controlled by "thematic development and strategy for wooing readers to accept its interpretation of Jesus." Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 98. Ricoeur also identifies a symbolic system that furnishes a descriptive context for particular actions. In other words, the meanings of actions are interpreted within the symbolic conventions of narratives. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:58.

and controversy, leading to dramatic peaks in the narrative. Each conflict episode, such as the Sabbath conflicts of chapters 5 and 9, become narrative contexts for symbolic revelations of Jesus. As conflict episodes increase, symbolism expands, thus, Johannine symbolism is designed around conflict episodes in the Gospel's narrative plot.

Fifth, the Johannine plot contains much repetition;<sup>353</sup> symbols of life, light, and truth develop through repetition. Repeated mention of the "hour" (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1), heighten dramatic tension and emphasize strategic points in the symbolic network. In addition, references to the "sending" Father also recur to establish Jesus' divine identity. Therefore, repetitions in the Johannine plot serve to emphasize and expand John's Christological Symbolology.

The literary craftsmanship of the Johannine plot undergirds the Christological symbolism contained within it. The measured sequence of events, dramatic tension, conflict controversy, and repetition, all contribute to the reciprocal relationship between plot and symbol in the Gospel of John. As the plot progresses, symbolism expands and develops resulting in the hearer-reader's gradual comprehension of the SFR. The structure of the Johannine plot is intertwined with the structure of the symbolism it unveils, thus one can conclude that the Johannine plot is the unveiling of the SFR though John's Christological Symbolology.

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<sup>353</sup> According to Resseguie, repetition reiterates words, phrases, themes, patterns, situations, and actions for emphasis. Repetition is important for identifying narrative structure and design and may divide narrative passages into smaller units. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 42. Alter recognizes in biblical narratives, an elaborate system of repetition of phonemes, words, and phrases, linked to actions, images, and ideas. Alter identifies repetitive devices such as *leitwort*, motif, theme, sequence of actions, and type-scenes. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 95-98. In addition, Alter observes phrases or sentences first stated by the narrator that do not reveal their full significance until they are repeated; therefore, he advises readers to watch for small differences that emerge in patterns of verbatim repetition. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 182-183. Culpepper observes throughout John's Gospel, the repetition of "images, terms, themes, signs, confrontations over the Law and Jesus' identity, appearances at feasts in Jerusalem, and dialogues with followers and opponents." Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 87.

### 4.3.2 Symbolic Characterization of the Son and Father

In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus the Son is the leading narrative character;<sup>354</sup> however, his identity is inextricably bound to God the Father who is the second most cited character in the narrative. Most of what the narrative reveals about Jesus comes from Jesus' own words; his character emerges as he explains his existence, mission, and actions in symbolic terms. Because Jesus reveals himself in reference to his relationship with the Father, as Jesus' character unfolds, so does his Father's character.<sup>355</sup> The Johannine Gospel reveals a remarkable narrative strategy characterizing the two foremost characters in the narrative *simultaneously*.<sup>356</sup> Two pertinent questions considered in this section are as follows: 1) to what extent is a character a "literary phenomenon"? 2) Can a character "develop"?<sup>357</sup> The answers to these questions reveal how in the Johannine narrative, character and symbol interact in the joint presentation of Son and Father.

In the Gospel, activities of the Son and Father compare with the typical activities of a human son-father relationship.<sup>358</sup> Van der Watt's research into the socio-historical dimensions of relationships between sons and fathers in the Mediterranean world covers

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<sup>354</sup> In this discussion, "narrative character" does not imply fictional characterization, but rather *depiction* or *representation* of persons in the narrative.

<sup>355</sup> Culpepper comments, "God is characterized by Jesus . . . having understood the gospel's characterization of Jesus one has grasped its characterization of God." Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 113.

<sup>356</sup> Nevertheless, in the narrative, Son and Father can be distinguished in the following ways: 1) they dwell in different time zones—the Son in narrative time and the Father in transcendent time, 2) they fulfill different roles in the mission—the Father sends and the Son carries out the mission, and 3) the Father says nothing about himself, almost everything about him is known through the Son.

<sup>357</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, "'God's Voice You Have Never Heard, God's Form You Have Never Seen': The Characterization of God in the Gospel of John," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 181-182.

<sup>358</sup> Hylen stresses the social context of Johannine characters in the following remark: "Understanding John's characters as representative figures allows the reader to situate the Gospel in a likely first-century context: characters are mirrors of the social context in which the Gospel was produced." Hylen, *Imperfect Believers*, 4.

activities such as fathers educating, teaching, and loving their sons; with sons being loyal, responsible, obedient, and honorable to their fathers.<sup>359</sup> Communication and unity were also important aspects of filial relationship in ancient Mediterranean society.<sup>360</sup> Van der Watt emphasizes while God is not a “father” in the sense of the ordinary, most characterization of God in the Gospel is analogous to that of an ordinary father.<sup>361</sup> However, the terms “son” and “father” in the Gospel also symbolize a divine transcendent relationship. Because the Father is not physically represented in the narrative,<sup>362</sup> the Son *symbolizes* the Father through his words and actions. The Son is the primary symbol of God; Jesus is the symbol and the Father is the referent.<sup>363</sup> The symbolization of Jesus as Son means that his words and actions *represent* and *reveal* the character of the Father. The symbolization of the human terms “son” and “father” makes the characterization of the Son and Father a literary phenomenon.<sup>364</sup> In sum, the characterization of Jesus the Son and God the Father by means of the literary symbolism

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<sup>359</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 278-289. However, Thompson notes in the historical context of “father,” the idea of intimacy is less significant than kinship. Thompson, “God’s Voice You Have Never Heard,” 197. Robert Kysar describes Jesus’ Sonship as a “creative wedding of two themes.” According to Kysar, first, in Jewish thought, to be a son of God was primarily a matter of obedience and second, in Hellenistic thought, to be the son of God was to have the nature of deity in one’s person. Kysar concludes, “Hellenistic divine sonship was a matter of the essence of the person, while Jewish divine sonship was a matter of the function or behavior of the person. The evangelist has portrayed Jesus as the Son in a way that bridges the difference.” Kysar, *John the Maverick Gospel*, 56.

<sup>360</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 289- 296.

<sup>361</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 264.

<sup>362</sup> The only words God speaks in the entire narrative are in 12:28. See also Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 113.

<sup>363</sup> Culpepper views Jesus as a “symbolic representation of God.” Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 188. Schneiders sees Jesus as the “principal symbol of the Fourth Gospel.” Schneiders, “History and Symbolism,” 373. According to Lee, “Father” is the primary symbol for God in the Gospel. Lee, *Flesh and Symbol*, 110.

<sup>364</sup> Culpepper comments that “Father” and “Son” are “symbolic metaphors” of the Fourth Gospel. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 189. Lee views the term “Father” as a symbol. Dorothy Ann Lee, “The Symbol of Divine Fatherhood, *Semeia* 85 (1999), 177.

that runs throughout the Johannine narrative provides a powerful motif drawing Johannine symbols into a network.

In this study, the concept of character “development” does not connote character change, modification, or moral development, but rather, the *gradual, progressive, or sequential unfolding* of a character and its meaning in the narrative. Marianne Meye Thompson explains that the emphasis of biblical literary scholars is not so much on what a character is, but on *how* the character is constructed and *progressively coordinated*.<sup>365</sup> Thompson notes two outcomes of character development in the reading process. First, the sequential reading of the narrative is emphasized because readers meet a character successively through various episodes of the plot.<sup>366</sup> Second, characters are strictly literary phenomena because they are constructed *as* the reader reads the text.<sup>367</sup> Thompson therefore concludes that in a narrative, characterization can be developed or a character can be portrayed as developing.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Thompson, “‘God’s Voice You Have Never Heard,’” 180. According to Carter, main characters generally emerge as the plot progresses. Carter, *John Storyteller*, 47. Phelan describes character progression as the way in which narrative establishes its logic of forward movement. Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, 90.

<sup>366</sup> McGaughey notes that symbols depend on the *chronology and configuration* of narrative; however, they are not contained by the narrative horizon. McGaughey, “Ricoeur’s Metaphor and Narrative Theories,” 431.

<sup>367</sup> Thompson, “God’s Voice You Have Never Heard,” 180. Similarly, Merenlahti comments that information is strategically sequential “so as to make *reading a character a process of discovery*,” often in unexpected ways, characters gradually take shape and there is usually a notable distance between first and last impressions. Merenlahti, “Characters in the Making,” 54.

<sup>368</sup> Thompson, “God’s Voice You Have Never Heard,” 182. Francois Tolmie observes development in the characterization of God as Father. First, he notes that the Prologue characterizes God in terms of his relationship with Jesus, and his relationship with human beings. Second in 1: 19–12: 50, God is characterized primarily in terms of his relationship with Jesus; thus, the fatherhood of God receives the most emphasis in the second section of the narrative. Third, according to Tolmie, in 13:1–17:26 God is often characterized in terms of his relationship to human beings, particularly to the disciples. Last, in 18:1–21:25 the most important development is in 20:17, when Jesus tells Mary “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God,” and for the first time in the narrative, God’s Fatherhood is directly linked to characters other than Jesus. Tolmie views 20:17 as the culmination of the characterization of God

According to Culpepper, the character of Jesus is static and does not change; it only emerges more clearly in the narrative.<sup>369</sup> However, following the classic categorization of narrative characters into either flat (static) or round (dynamic), difficulty exists trying to fit Jesus into one or the other. Jesus obviously does not fit only one description; if as a flat character, Jesus has only one dominant trait, one wonders what it is. A flat characterization of Jesus makes him a dominant, closed character that does not develop, is highly predictable, incapable of surprising the reader, and not inclined to further insight.<sup>370</sup> In other words as flat, Jesus would be a “closed character.” On the other hand, categorizing Jesus solely as round means that his characterization has no clear direction. Jesus’ character covers both flat and round character traits; as flat, his characterization is structured and has clear direction, and as round, it is dynamic, expansive, and an inexhaustible object of contemplation. The versatility of Jesus’ character adds color and diversity to the range of symbols that represent him.

John Darr proposes a helpful approach to understanding characters in a narrative sequence, in the following explanation: “Like all narrative elements, character is

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in the Fourth Gospel. Tolmie, “Characterization of God in the Fourth Gospel,” 60-75. Petri Merenlahti proposes that characters in the Gospels “are constantly being reshaped by distinct ideological dynamics.” Petri Merenlahti, “Characters in the Making,” 49-50.

<sup>369</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 103. Culpepper’s characterization of Jesus as static is based solely on moral development. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 88.

<sup>370</sup> Forster’s description of flat (static) characters is that they are easily recognized, do not need reintroducing, do not have to be watched for development, and are easily remembered by the reader afterwards. Forster, *Aspects of a Novel*, 105-106. Forster comments that flat characters are bad in biographies because the characterization of human beings is not simple. Forster, *Aspects of a Novel*, 111. Likewise, Hylen notes, “The question then arises that if neither Greek nor Hebrew characters are simply flat, static, and opaque, why must John’s characters be read in this way? While there are one-sided characters in antiquity, this no longer appears to be the only available option, and the reader of John should be prepared to encounter other possibilities.” Hylen, *Imperfect Believers*, 4. Cornelis Bennema’s proposal for a theory of character in the Gospel of John recognizes that many Johannine characters are not flat, static, or one-dimensional; rather they move along continua of three degrees—complexity, development, and inner life. Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009), 14.

cumulative. Thus, the means and timing of its accumulation must be taken into account by the interpreter. . . it is essential that we be cognizant at all times of the degree to which a character or a character group has been constructed at each point along the text continuum.”<sup>371</sup> In light of Darr’s approach to characterization, the cumulative development of the Son and Father as narrative characters occurs simultaneously with the expansion of the Gospel’s symbolism, revealing yet another important aspect of the structure of Johannine symbolism.

Joint characterization of Son and Father emerges in the narrative through symbolic clusters comprising the following: 1) names and/or titles of Son and Father, 2) positions and/or actions of Son and Father, and 3) Christological symbols/symbolic language, and themes. The Johannine narrative characterizes the Son and Father through their names/titles and shows they relate to each other in terms of position and action, with symbolism giving deep insight into the divine relationship. The semantic range of names/titles and activities/positions for the SFR serves as a means of characterization and also facilitates symbolic meaning.<sup>372</sup> As semantic vehicles, the SFR gives Johannine symbolism semantic grounding in the text. The plot gradually unveils and enriches symbols while the characterization of the Son and Father introduces symbolism. In sum, multi-dimensional characterization of Son and Father is central to the structure of Johannine narrative and symbolism.

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<sup>371</sup> Darr, *On Character Building*, 42.

<sup>372</sup> Meaning requires a semantic carrier and a semantic content. Wheelwright, “The Archetypal Symbol,” 215.

### 4.3.3 SFR and Symbolism in Narrative Transcendence and Temporality

In the Fourth Gospel, a strong link exists between time and the characterization of Son and Father, and also between time and symbolism.<sup>373</sup> Jesus is symbolically portrayed as Son of God in close relationship with a Father suspended in transcendent time; thus, SFR and connected symbols operate on two time frames—transcendent and temporal.<sup>374</sup> The unveiling of transcendent symbols within the confines of narrative temporality raises the question of how the Johannine narrative accommodates the transcendent SFR and symbology within the constraints of temporality. Characterization of the divine Son and his transcendent Father is set within the narrative temporality. The Father dwells in transcendent time entering only into narrative time through the words of the Son. The Son gives no indication of *when* his activities with the Father, such as doing, showing, speaking, and honoring, take place. The Father's sending of the Son, usually expressed in the aorist form of πέμπω, takes place in transcendent time; however, the Son's interactions with the Father during his "sending" are usually expressed in narrative time. The narrative, therefore, gives the impression that the Son operates seamlessly between two time frames.

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<sup>373</sup> See J. E. Bruns who argues that John uses time for its symbolic value. J. E. Bruns, "The Use of Time in the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 13 (1967): 290. See also Maritz who notes "active tensions" between present time and eternity, pre-Easter events and post-Easter reflection, narrative time and chronological sequencing. Maritz argues these timeframes anchor John's theological arguments. P. Maritz, "Some Time in John: Tensions between the Hour and Eternity in John 17," *Neot* 41.1 (2007): 112-130.

<sup>374</sup> See Culpepper who identifies five timeframes in John's Gospel, namely, pre-historical past, historical past, narrative present, historical future, and eschatological future. Culpepper insists that none of these timeframes is large enough to reveal Jesus adequately. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 106-107. Culpepper's five divisions can be simply divided into temporal and transcendent. The historical past, narrative present and historical future fall into the temporal zone, while pre-historical past and eschatological future fit into to transcendent time.



Douglas Estes explains that the Johannine narrative deals with the transcendent/temporal problem by “bending and shaping time as it sees fit.”<sup>375</sup> One type of time-bending occurs by using “temporal referential words” that “warp temporality;”<sup>376</sup> for example, the two words depicting the SFR—πατήρ and υἱός. According to Estes, πατήρ and υἱός distort temporality by going back to the pre-existence in the Prologue time frame.<sup>377</sup> Another example of time warp occurs in 16:28, where the following four different verbs convey four journeys undertaken by Jesus at different times: Jesus has “come forth” (ἐξέρχομαι) from the Father, “come” (ἔρχομαι) into the world, he “leaves” (φίημι) the world, and “goes” (πορεύομαι) to the Father.<sup>378</sup> Thus, 16:8 demonstrates how the narrative contains “a very high degree of temporal complexity”<sup>379</sup> in presenting the SFR.

The Johannine narrative controls time in order to portray transcendent symbolism within temporality. The first mention of time is in the Prologue, harking back to transcendent time, and long before Jesus enters into narrative time. Events in narratives usually create the order of time and the Johannine narrative creates its order by beginning

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<sup>375</sup> Douglas Estes, *The Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel: A Theory of Hermeneutical Relativity in the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 138. Estes employs a paradigm of modern physics (relativity) to tackle the issue of temporality in the Gospel’s narrative and proposes a paradigm of time “that will both get around modern assumptions and shed greater light on the ancient text.” Estes, *Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel*, 96.

<sup>376</sup> Estes, *Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel*, 208. John 16:8 demonstrates how the narrative contains a high degree of “temporal complexity.” Estes, *Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel*, 212- 220.

<sup>377</sup> Estes, *Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel*, 212.

<sup>378</sup> Estes explains: ἐξέρχομαι connects the Son’s coming to the Prologue pointing to the “atemporal” position of God and the temporal transit of the Son into creation (1:2-3); ἔρχομαι refers to the Son’s incarnation (1:14); φίημι takes the journey back to the Father through the cross (6:51, 8:28, 10:17-8, 11:50-2, 18:11); πορεύομαι describes the future journey with nuances of the ascension Estes, *Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel*, 217-220.

<sup>379</sup> Estes, *Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel*, 9.

with transcendent time (1:1-5). The Prologue places the symbolic characterization of Son and Father firmly outside the temporal confines of the narrative; throughout the narrative, Jesus symbolically traces his identity to the transcendent pre-narrative realm. Added to this is the issue of intertextual characterization as several symbolic representations of Son and Father revert back to HB characterizations of God, prophets, and other leaders appointed by God. Characterization of Son and Father extends beyond the confines and immediate context of the Johannine narrative. Consequently, hearer-readers are aware that transcendent time constantly hovers over the narrative.

The Johannine narrative also controls time by repeating and interspersing groups of words that indicate transcendence. For example the Christological title, “Son of Man,” regularly appears in close proximity to words like ascent, descent, and eschatological judgment (1:51; 3:13-19; 5:27-30; 6:62; 8:26-28), while repetitive use of *πέμπω* describing the Father constantly points hearer-readers to Jesus’ transcendent origin. Most of what Jesus says about himself, particularly in the Farewell Discourse and Prayer, refers to transcendent time. Jesus’ departure from the world to the Father, his glorification, prayers that will be answered from heaven in his name, and the sending of the Holy Spirit from above, all point to transcendent time. In the Farewell passages, transcendent language controls time by drawing the reader out of the disciples’ narrative time into the transcendent world of the SFR.

The concept of time in John’s narrative world is not strictly chronological or linear, but is fluid.<sup>380</sup> Using Ricoeur’s terminology, John refigures time by interweaving

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<sup>380</sup> See Osborne who states that in keeping with ancient historiography, the gospels were not concerned with chronological order of events but desired to show the meaning and impact of Jesus’ life, so they organized the events in such a way as to provide a theological portrait of Jesus’ life and impact. Osborne, “Literary Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” 40. Estes argues that although events and times

temporal (narrative) and transcendent (prefigured) time, which results in configured time. John configures narrative time because it cannot contain the transcendence of the SFR and its symbolism. Thus, John manipulates time for rhetorical and thematic effect.<sup>381</sup> The transcendent symbols, however, do have historical dimensions, as noted by Margaret Davies who observes that the Johannine narrative is structured by a concern for both history and eternity. Davis remarks, “The story which the Fourth Gospel tells, then, is intended to illuminate the eternal dimension of God’s creative purpose for his world.”<sup>382</sup> Many of John’s transcendent symbols do have temporal dimensions that are manifested within narrative temporality.<sup>383</sup> The transcendent symbols first appear in a semantic-lexical context within narrative time, so in this sense they are set within narrative time. These symbols are also spoken by Jesus within the historical context of his earthly ministry, when he explains or defends his incarnational ministry. Nevertheless, transcendent symbols cannot be *wholly confined* to narrative time. Johannine narrative does not conform to narrative temporality. The Gospel’s transcendent symbology and the SFR, which are manifest in stratified time, cannot be contained by narrative temporality alone.

The characterization of Son and Father is shaped by the text but transcends the text. Interpreting the Johannine plot requires an intricate dance between transcendence

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between the Prologue and epilogue of the Fourth Gospel cannot be aligned with absolute chronology, these events exist as “relatable dimensions across the movement of the text.” Estes, *Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel*, 252.

<sup>381</sup> Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act*, 38.

<sup>382</sup> Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup 69; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 44-45.

<sup>383</sup> For example, water symbolism and glorification/“lifting up” of Jesus appear in the historical event of the crucifixion (chapter 19); rejection/reception symbolism also plays in historical events within narrative time.

and narrative temporality. Charting Johannine symbology in the context of the SFR requires traversing transcendent and temporal timeframes, which results in a unique two-dimensional symbolic system. Even though the narrative is two-dimensional, it is crafted in such a way that hearer-readers can relate to its fluidity. Intersections between narrative temporality and symbolic transcendence reveal the versatility of the Johannine narrative, which contributes to shaping the Gospel's symbology.

#### **4.3.4 SFR, Symbolism, and Narrative Rhetoric in the Gospel of John**

The aim of the Johannine narrative is not only to *present*, but also to *persuade* hearer-readers to *believe* that Jesus is the Son of God and to *receive* life in his name (20:31); therefore, Johannine symbolism functions rhetorically to persuade readers of the validity of the Gospel's unique presentation of the SFR. John's rhetoric begins in the first chapter of the narrative with compelling rhetorical symbolism and continues to the end of the Gospel where he reveals the purpose of his writing.<sup>384</sup> Symbol and rhetoric intersect, bound together within the Johannine narrative.

John's use of a symbolic narrative to persuade hearer-readers to make a decision about his presentation of Jesus reflects Fisher's theory that humans make decisions based not only on propositional reasoning, but also on "narrative reasoning."<sup>385</sup> Although Fisher's theory is modern, it can be applied to ancient narratives such as the Gospels, which aim to persuade hearer-readers mainly through narration, not rational,

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<sup>384</sup> Phillips observes in the Prologue, a rhetorical process that establishes the point of view the reader is to adopt for the rest of the text. Phillips, "Rhetoric," 256.

<sup>385</sup> Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration*, 78.

propositional, or logical arguments only.<sup>386</sup> The Fourth Gospel attempts to persuade hearer-readers through symbolic language, discourse, and actions. The Gospel narrates the story of Jesus as a “symbol-using” teacher who uses symbols such as life, light, bread, water, shepherd, and vine, as tools of persuasion.<sup>387</sup>

Distinct Johannine use of the terms “Son” and “Father” can also be viewed as tools of narrative persuasion pointing to Jesus’ divine origin.<sup>388</sup> John’s unrelenting symbolic presentation of intimacy between Son and Father reveals a remarkable rhetorical strategy. Rather than propositional reasoning, the Gospel uses narrative reasoning aided by symbolism; hearer-readers wrestle to comprehend the symbolism, which results in either belief or unbelief in Jesus as Son of God. One may conclude that John’s rhetorical pattern is highly symbolic;<sup>389</sup> in the presentation of Jesus within the context of the SFR, narrative and symbol work together as a means of theological persuasion.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

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<sup>386</sup> See also Michael Gary Duncan, “Rhetorical Narrativism: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of the Early Christian Gospels,” Ph.D. Diss. University of Memphis, 2009.

<sup>387</sup> In 3:1-21, Jesus uses the symbols and symbolic language of birth, life, Son of Man, judgment, light, darkness, to explain to Nicodemus how he can enter the Kingdom of God and receive eternal life. A similar episode takes place in the following chapter (4:7-25), where Jesus uses the symbol of water to lead the woman of Samaria to believe that, first, he is a prophet, and second, the Messiah.

<sup>388</sup> See Ringe who comments that John uses the term “Father” as part of his rhetoric of persuasion. Sharon H. Ringe, “Reading Back, Reading Forward,” *Semeia* 85 (1999), 191.

<sup>389</sup> See Resseguie’s statement that rhetorical pattern is the means by which authors persuade readers of their ideological point of view, norms, beliefs, and values. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 41.

The four elements of narrative analyzed in this chapter—plot, character, time, and rhetoric—are significant in enabling the Johannine narrative to present its symbolic portrayal of the SFR. The plot's organizational and designing function contributes to the Gospel's symbolic design and structure. The plot sequence directs appearances and reappearances of symbols and symbolic actions in the narrative. The plot therefore assists in integrating symbols in the Johannine narrative.

The narrative characterization of Jesus and God as Son and Father is unique to the Fourth Gospel; the plot reveals Son and his Father as the main characters. The character of Jesus combines traits from both static and dynamic categorizations; his character is dynamic, progressive, and well structured; the character of Jesus moves the plot forward with clear direction.

The concept of time in the Johannine narrative is a complex matter; the stratified nature of Johannine time can be broadly divided into two—transcendent and temporal. The narrative accommodates two levels of time and at some points, demarcation between the two is almost blurred. The refiguring of temporality is an intriguing feature of the Johannine narrative and makes it adaptable to John's transcendent symbolism.

The Gospel of John was written in symbolic language with the purpose of persuading readers to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and it is for this reason virtually all of the Gospel's symbols function rhetorically. Apart from the Prologue and a few narrative asides, the persuasive force of the Gospel comes mostly from the lips and actions of Jesus who identifies himself with his Father. Consequently, Johannine symbolism is patterned around a "symbolic SFR rhetoric," which entails proving Jesus is the Son of God through evocative symbolic language.

A structured, the Johannine narrative enables symbolism to create a particular Christological identity of Jesus in the mind of readers. Symbols lead hearer-readers into a symbolic universe aiming to persuade them that Jesus is the Son of God. The four elements of narrative do not only facilitate the presentation of the SFR; they create John's Christological Symbolology. Symbolism is integral to the distinctive structure of the Johannine narrative; this narrative therefore holds important keys for uncovering and interpreting the symbolic network in the Gospel of John.

The analyses in this chapter form the basis of the methodological framework for charting John's Christological Symbolology. The following chapter uses the four narrative elements to examine the following: 1) contribution of the plot to the structure of Johannine symbolism, 2) semantic field of reference and semantic domains of the SFR, 3) narrative characterization of Son and Father, and 4) how the interplay between narrative temporality and transcendence contributes to the Gospel's presentation of the SFR. The chapter will then outline methodological steps for interpreting the Johannine text.

## CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Introduction

The Fourth Gospel portrays the SFR through an expansive network of symbols referred to in this research as John's Christological Symbolology. The strong and direct link between Johannine symbols and the SFR is the basis of this research, which defines the SFR as the axis of John's Christological Symbolology. Clusters of symbols/symbolic language and themes form the choreographed symbolology explicating the SFR as the narrative progresses. This chapter outlines the methodological framework for establishing the centrality of the SFR and analyzing how symbols and symbolic language emerge around the SFR in the Johannine narrative. The framework therefore, reveals the operational structure underlying the symbolic interpretation, semantic, character and time analyses of the Johannine text. These methodological steps will lead to revealing John's Christological Symbolology.

The framework begins in section two, which explains the process of delineating a semantic field of reference for the SFR; the lexical range will be used to identify passages dominated by the SFR. Passages containing high concentrations of SFR lexicology are referred to as *semantic domains*; thus, semantic domains identify points in the narrative dominated by symbolic representations of the SFR. The next section explains the narrative development of the characterization of the Son and Father, which takes place in five dimensions. Section four outlines methodological steps for interpreting the text and charting the Symbolology; the steps are as follows: 1) application of the theory of Johannine symbolism to the Prologue, 2) narrative analyses of the Prologue and



Prayer,<sup>390</sup> 3) charting John's Christological Symbology, and 4) theological reflection on the significance of the centrality of the SFR in the narrative, arguing the need of a theosymbological reading of the Gospel. This chapter concludes in section five with a brief summary and procedure for the rest of the study.

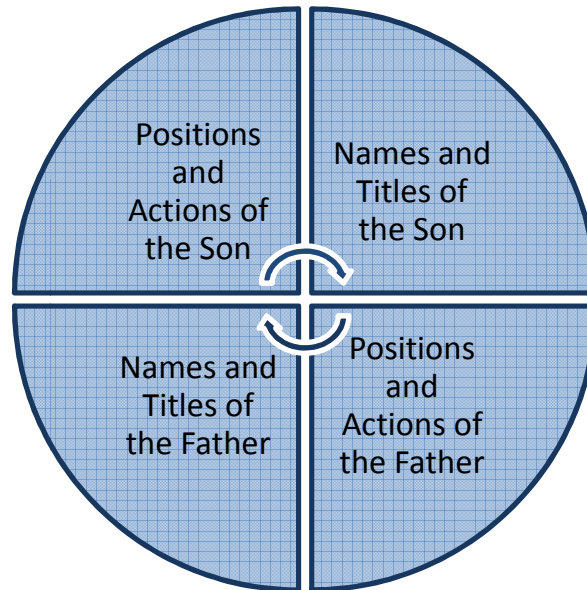
## **5.2 Semantic Field of Reference and Semantic Domains**

The field of reference for the SFR covers areas in the narrative where names and/or titles of Son or Father *intersect* with actions and/ or positions of Son or Father. Semantic domains are passages dominated by lexicology from the semantic field of reference; thus, semantic domains are passages with high concentration of SFR language. Semantic domains reveal crucial points in the narrative where symbols develop, explain, and intensify the Gospel's presentation of the SFR. the semantic field of reference delineates the lexical parameters for charting John's Christological Symbology; thus, the symbology follows a semantic path in the narrative. In sum, this field of reference comprises the full range of lexicology that portrays the SFR in the narrative.

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<sup>390</sup> Due to word limitation, the theory is applied to the Prologue only and not the Prayer.

**Figure 2: Semantic Field of Reference**



This range of reference is based on the pairing of Son and Father in the narrative, which is confirmed by lexical statistics.<sup>391</sup> As main characters, the Son and Father are closely linked in the narrative plot; therefore, they are also semantically paired in the text. However, Paul W. Meyer contends that although occurrences of “Father” and “Son” are frequent, the actual pairing of these terms as coordinates is infrequent; therefore, Meyer advises interpreters to “break the habit” of coordinating the words “Father” and “Son.” Meyer cautions that until this habit is broken, the way God functions as Father cannot be

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<sup>391</sup> This research takes into account the following caution given by Gilbert Van Belle and Sydney Palmer: “Style criticism has often focused on word counts and similar gatherings of statistical information, but scholars have become increasingly aware that such numerical frequencies in themselves say nothing. *They need interpretation to be relevant.* Even then, the evidence for one or another position is rarely definitive but remains open for discussion. It is not the absolute uniqueness of a phenomenon that points to typical Johannine language but rather the *exceptional frequency of the characteristic and the network of interconnections it establishes. Of these two characteristics, the development of networks may be more important than a word's frequent appearance*” (emphasis mine). Gilbert Van Belle and Sydney Palmer, “John’s Literary Unity and the Problem of Historicity,” in *John, Jesus, and History* (vol. 1; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 222. The semantic analysis carried out in this study confirms the “exceptional frequency” of SFR symbolism/symbolic and themes, noting their importance in the Johannine network of symbols.

clear.<sup>392</sup> Meyer's argument prompts the question of whether in John's Gospel the Father be understood apart from the Son or the Son be understood apart from the Father. Anderson defends the pairing of Father and Son, arguing that Meyer overlooks the mention of the Father's sending the Son, which occurs in all major parts of the Gospel. Anderson argues, "In nearly all of John's narrative, dialogue, and discourse sections where the Father is mentioned, some aspect of the Son's emissary mission is also narrated."<sup>393</sup> Besides Anderson's observation, Meyer also fails to consider instances where Father and Son are represented *together, in form of other designations*.<sup>394</sup> Even though the Son and Father are individual characters, it is virtually impossible to separate them semantically in the Johannine narrative. The Fatherhood of God, therefore, manifests primarily within the context of the Sonship of Jesus. The author combines attributes of God with the concept of a "father" to present to the audience both the transcendence and the immanence of God.<sup>395</sup>

The field of reference for this study covers four areas: 1) names and titles of the Son, 2) names and titles of the Father, 3) actions of the Son in relation to the Father, 4) actions of the Father in relation to the Son.<sup>396</sup> Within this field of reference are semantic

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<sup>392</sup> Meyer, "'The Father': The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel," 263.

<sup>393</sup> Paul N. Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father: Aspects of Agency, Encounter, and Irony in the Johannine Father-Son Relationship," *Semeia* 85 (1999): 37.

<sup>394</sup> These include: 2:16-17; 3:16, 35; 5:19-23, 25-27; 6:27; 8:18-19; 8:42; 10:18, 25, 36-36; 14:14; 17:1; 20:17, 21. One could also include the 47 occurrences of the designation "Son of God," where the terms "Son" and "God" not only appear in very close proximity but also point to the SFR.

<sup>395</sup> Judith A. Diehl, "The Puzzle of the Prayer: A Study of John 17" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2007), 111.

<sup>396</sup> This field of reference includes *personal pronouns* representing the names/titles and actions/positions of Son and Father.

domains that contain clusters of symbols/symbolic language and themes. Semantic domains can comprise a pericope, discourse, or entire chapter(s).

The names and titles of the Son are: Λόγος (1:1, 14), μονογενής (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18), υἱός (v, 18)<sup>397</sup> υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ (Lamb of God: 1:29, 36), ἡσοῦς (Jesus: 244 times), ἡσοῦς Χριστός (Jesus Christ: 1:17), Χριστός (Christ: 1:[20, 25], 41, [3:28; 4:25, 29; 7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42; 10:24], 11:27; [12:34] 20:31), υἱός<sup>398</sup> (the Son: 3:17, 35, 36[x2]; 5:19[x2], 20, 21, 22, 23[x2], 25, 26; 6:40; 8:36; 14:13; 17:1[x2]) μονογενής υἱός (only begotten Son: 3:16, 18) υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ (Son of God: 1:34, 49, 3:18; 5:26; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31), υἱός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (Son of Man: 1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, [34x2]; 13:31),<sup>399</sup> υἱός τοῦ Ἰωσήφ (son of Joseph: 1:45; 6:42), ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ (the holy one of God: 6:69), προφήτης (prophet: [1:21], 1:45; 4:19, 44; 6:14; 7:40 [52, 53], 9:17), and ῥαββί (rabbi: 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2 11:8).<sup>400</sup>

<sup>397</sup> Edwin Abbot suggests punctuating the words, μονογενὲς θεὸς υἱός, as though they were three distinct titles—μονογενὲς, θεός, and υἱός (qualified by ἐκ τοῦ κόλπου τοῦ πατρὸς). Abbott explains that the Greeks and Philo called God “that which is” (neuter τὸ ὄν) and in Rev 1 :4, 8, John adopts the title for God. Edwin Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 55-56. Therefore, this study reads μονογενὲς, θεός and υἱός as three distinct titles of the Son.

<sup>398</sup> According to Mlakuzhyil, in John, υἱός is used 17 times as an absolute title for Jesus; the title is used almost exclusively by Jesus himself. Mlakuzhyil, *Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 261. Unlike the title “the Son of God,” which is sometimes used as a Messianic title, the absolute title “the Son” usually indicates the unique divine Sonship of Jesus to God the Father. Mlakuzhyil, *Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 264.

<sup>399</sup> Mlakuzhyil states that υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ may sometimes be used as a Jewish Messianic title for Jesus (e.g. 1:49; 11:27) or in the deeper theological sense as a Christian designation of Jesus as the true divine Son (e.g. 19:7; 20:31). The absolute υἱός in relation to πατήρ always refers to Jesus’ divine Sonship (e.g. 3:17; 5:19-30; 14:13; 17:1), whereas υἱός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου points to the human Jesus. This is clear from the fact that though both “the Son (of God)” and “the Son of Man” are said to be “glorified” (11:4; 17:1 and 12:23; 13:31 respectively), the former is never spoken of as “being lifted up” as is the latter (3:14; 8:28; 12:34). “According to Mlakuzhyil, because ‘the Son of Man’ has a mysterious heavenly origin (3:13; 6:62), this Christological title may be considered a theological bridge between the Messianic title ‘the Christ’ and the divine title ‘the Son’ (of God). Mlakuzhyil, *Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, 270-271).

<sup>400</sup> In John, κύριος (Lord) is a term of respect (sir), so it is not in this field of reference. Neither is βασιλεὺς mentioned in context of the SFR. Φῶς (light) in vv. 1: 7-9 is regarded as both as title and symbol.

In the Gospel, the primary title for God is πατήρ, which occurs 122 times,<sup>401</sup> while θεός<sup>402</sup> occurs 83 times.<sup>403</sup> The Father is also referred to as ὁ πέμψας (4:34; 5:24, 30, 37; 6:38, 39, 44; 7:16, [18], 28, 33; 8:16; 9:4; 12:44, 45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5).<sup>404</sup>

The Son's actions in relation to his Father include the following, his: being with the Father (1:1-2, 18 [16:32]; 17:5), coming from the Father (7:28, 8:42; 13:3; 16:27, 28, 30; 17:8), coming from heaven (6:38, 50, 51, 58, 62), coming in the Father's name (5:38), going/ascending to the Father (7:33, 13:1, 3; 14:1, 12, 28; 16:10 [17]; 16:28; 17:11, 13; 20:17), working in the Father's name (10:25), showing the Father's works (10:32), doing the Father's works (10:37-38), explaining the Father (1:18), giving salvation and eternal life / taking sin away (1:12; 3:17, 29, 36; 5:21), doing the Father's will (4:34; 6:38-40, [9:31]), pleasing the Father (8:29), seeking the Father's will (5:30), seeking the Father's glory (7:18), glorifying the Father (17:4), equality/unity with the Father (5:18; 10:30, 33,

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<sup>401</sup> "Father" occurs 122 times in 99 verses, 1:14, 18; 2:16; 3:35; 4:21, 23(x2); 5:17, 18, 19(x2), 20, 21, 22, 23(x2), 26, 36(x2), 37, 43, 45; 6: 27, 32, 37, 40, 44, 45, 46(x2), 57(x2), 56, 65; 8:16, 18, 19, 27, 28, 38, 41, 42, 49, 54; 10:15(x2), 17, 18, 25, 29(x2), 30, 32, 36, 37, 38(x2); 11:41; 12:26, 27, 28, 49, 50; 13:1, 3; 14:2, 6, 7, 8, 9(x2), 10(x3), 11(x2), 12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28(x2), 31(x2); 15:1, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 23, 24, 26(x2); 16:3, 10, 15, 17, 23, 25, 26, 27(x2), 28(x2), 32; 17:1, 5, 11, 21, 24; 18:11; 20:17(x3), 21).

<sup>402</sup> Thompson comments "'God' is not a name. In fact the Johannine God has no name. Even though the Gospel several times says that God has given his name to Jesus, we are never told what that name is. God's name is to be found, apparently, only through Jesus." Thompson, "God's Voice You Have Never Heard," 189.

<sup>403</sup> θεός is used for the Father 76 times in 63 verses: 1:1(x2), 2, 6, 12, 13, 18, 29, 34, 36, 49, 51; 3:2(x2), 5, 16, 17, 21, 33, 34(x2), 36; 4:10, 24; 5: 18(x2), 25, 42, 44; 6:27, 28, 33, 45(x2), 46, 69; 7:17; 8:40, 41, 42(x2), 47(x3), 54; 9:3, 16, 24, 29, 31(x2), 33; 10:33, 35, 36; 11:4(x2), 22(x2), 27, 40, 52; 12:43; 13:3(x2), 31, 32(x2); 14:1; 16:2, 30; 17:3; 19:7; 20:17, 31; 21:19.

<sup>404</sup> According to Meyer, "God is referred to as 'the Father' (absolute) 74 times; with the possessive 'my/your [sg.]' (always with Jesus as the antecedent), another 25 times; with the addition of 'who sent me/him,' another 7 times; in the anarthrous nominative/vocative of prayer, 9 more times; and as an (anarthrous) predicate, 3 times. This yields a total of 118 occurrences of 'Father' for God. For purposes of comparison, one may note that God is referred to with θεός ("God") only 45 times; this count does not include the 31 instances of θεός as a genitive modifier (as in ὁ υἱός θεοῦ, "the Son of God" 19 times], τέκνα θεοῦ, "children of God" [2 times], ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, "the Lamb of God" 12 times], etc.), nor the use of θεός as a predicate (1:1; 8:54) or predicate accusative (10:33), but it does include all uses of θεός with prepositions (22 times) and the one vocative (20:28)." Meyer, "'The Father': The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel," 269.

38; 14:10-11, 20; 17:11, 21, 22, 23), seeing the Father work (5:19; 8:38), seeing Father (6:46), hearing the Father (5:30; 8:26; 15:15), living by the Father (6: 57), knowing the Father (7:29; 8:55; 10:15; 17:25), judging with the Father (8:16), speaking for the Father (8:28, 38; 14:24), honoring the Father (8:43), obeying the Father (8:55; 14:31 ) doing the Father's work (9:4; 17:4) receiving the Father's commandment (10:18) is the way to Father (14:6), asking from the Father (14:16; 17:15, 20), loving the Father (14:31), sending the Spirit from the Father (15:26), speaking plainly of the Father (16:25), manifesting the Father's name (17:6, 26), giving the Father's word (17:14), and drinking the Father's cup (18:11).

In the Father's actions relating to the Son, the Father is with the Son (8:29; 16:32), gives the Son (3:16; 6:32), gives to the Son (3:35; 5:22, 26, 27, 5:36; 6:37, 38; 10:29; 13:3; 17:2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 22, 24; 18:11) sends the Son (3:17, 34; 4:34, 5:24, 30, 36, 38; 6:29, 38, 39, 44, 57; 7:16, [18], 28, 29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 8:42; 9:4; 10:36; 12:44, 45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21) loves the Son (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 17:23, 24, 26) works (5:17), shows the Son his actions (5:20, 21), testifies of the Son (5:37; 8:18), seals the Son (6:27), teaches the Son (8:28), glorifies the Son (8:54; [12:28], 13:31-31; 17:1, 5), is glorified in the Son (14:13), hears the Son ([9:31], 11:41-42), knows the Son (10:15), sanctifies the Son (10:36), gives commandment/speaks to the Son(10:18; 12:49-50), honors those serving the Son (12:26), abides in the Son (14:10), and sends/gives the Spirit in the name of the Son (14:26; 15:16).

The Gospel narrative contains several semantic domains for the SFR connected to clusters of symbols and symbolic language. These domains include 1:1-18, 5:17- 47; 6:26-65; 7:17- 39; 8:12- 59; 10:14- 38; 12:27- 50; 14:1-31; 15:1-10; 15:21- 16:15; 16:23-

33; and 17:1- 26. Mapping out a semantic field of reference and identifying the semantic domains of the SFR will provide a narrative blueprint for charting John's Christological symbology.

### **5.3 Narrative Development of the Characterization of the Son and Father**

The above semantic analysis of the lexical field of reference and semantic domains for the SFR provides data for the following character analysis of the Son and Father. In the Gospel, the characterization of Son and Father develops simultaneously with the emergence and expansion of Johannine symbols. The characterization of Son and Father is cumulative as each sequential episode reveals and/or reiterates dimensions of the relationship through symbols/symbolic language and themes. As the characterization of Son and Father develop, the symbolism expands into a network, which in turn intensifies the characterization. Therefore, a reciprocal relation exists between characterization and symbolization that constitutes a narrative path for charting John's Christological Symbology. Hence, the development of the characterization of the Son and Father plays a crucial role in charting the Symbology.<sup>405</sup>

The interaction between Son and Father is the crucial factor uniting them in the simultaneous narrative progression of their characterization. This study therefore, views the character development of the Son and his Father *in terms of their relationship with each other*. In this analysis, five significant dimensions of the SFR exist within which

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<sup>405</sup> As noted in chapter four, character development denotes a sequential unfolding within the narrative plot.

their characterizations emerge in the narrative: 1) equality/unity, 2) sending/coming of the Son, 3) life-giving authority, 4) love, and 5) glorification/revelation.<sup>406</sup>

### 5.3.1 Equality and Unity

Jesus' oneness and unity with the Father expresses equality; *in this study, the notion of equality is based on the transcendent relationship between Son and Father.*<sup>407</sup>

Equality in the SFR is also expressed in the mutual dependence of Son and Father in accomplishing the mission to humanity.<sup>408</sup> Themes of oneness, unity, and equality recur throughout the Gospel, appearing in strategic points of the narrative. The Prologue commences the characterization of Son and Father by emphasizing their oneness (1:1-3). This unity is expressed in the terms of pre-existence (1:1-2), intimacy (1:1-2, 18), co-labor in creation (1:3), and shared glory (1:14). Nicodemus in 3:2 reiterates the notion of Jesus *with* God, which was introduced in the Prologue.

As the narrative progresses, Jesus' constantly stresses and explains his exclusive relationship of oneness with the Father, particularly during conflict episodes with the Jewish religious authorities. For example, in 5:17-19 the theme of unity is heightened when Jesus' declares his equality with God as a defense for blatantly breaking Jewish Sabbath laws. Jesus in chapter 5 purposefully heals the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath to demonstrate that the Father and he are working *together*—he is only doing what he sees the Father doing. Jesus' breaking of the Sabbath law is proof of his

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<sup>406</sup> These dimensions generally follow the order of their appearance at the beginning of the narrative.

<sup>407</sup> While this discussion does not intend to delve into the theological debate/tension regarding equality and subordination, the issue of subordination is addressed, in terms of the Son's obedience, in the next section (5.3.2). Chapter ten (section 10.4.1) addresses the subject of subordination directly.

<sup>408</sup> See page 143.



united relationship with the Father. Based on their reaction, the religious leaders regard Jesus' Sabbath-breaking act as a claim of equality with God, which is significant because this claim sets into motion the plan to kill Jesus.<sup>409</sup> The theme of equality and unity in the SFR reaches a critical point in another conflict scene where Jesus defends his messiahship by explicitly declaring his equality with God: "I and the Father are one" (10:30). Jesus then explains his oneness with the Father in numinous terms—he is in the Father and the Father is in him (10:38). In 12:44-45, another conflict scene, Jesus again declares his equality with God.<sup>410</sup>

In the remainder of the narrative, unity in the SFR develops mainly the Farewell Chapters. In his final teaching session with the disciples, Jesus explains that knowing and seeing him (Jesus), is equal to knowing and seeing the Father, for Son and Father dwell in each other (14:7-11, 20).<sup>411</sup> In 14:23-24, together, Father and Son also indwell believers; and the words of the Son are the words of the Father. Echoing 1:1-2 and 18, Jesus assures his disciples that the Father is with him (16:32).<sup>412</sup> The unity of Son and Father reaches its height in the Prayer where Jesus prays for restoration of the preexistent glory he shared with the Father (17:5). Unity is also expressed in Son and Father's joint possession of all things, including the divine name (17:10-11). Jesus then prays that the disciples become one as he and the Father are one (17:11). In 17:21 as Jesus prays for the

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<sup>409</sup> "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making himself *equal* with God."

<sup>410</sup> "He who believes in me does not believe in me but in him who sent me. He who sees me sees the One who sent me."

<sup>411</sup> In 8:19 Jesus accused his opponents, "You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me you would know my Father also."

<sup>412</sup> Here Jesus repeats what he said earlier in 8:29.

unity of believers, the oneness in the SFR extends to the community of faith. Perfect unity will take place when Jesus imparts the glory he shares with the Father to believers (17:22-23). With the inclusion of believers in the SFR, the dimension of unity that characterizes the Son and Father reaches a narrative peak.<sup>413</sup>

### 5.3.2 Sending and Coming of the Son

Mark Appold explains the sending of the Son in the following words: “The Father’s oneness with Jesus is present in terms of his sending the Son and the Son’s oneness with the Father in terms of his coming as the manifestation of God among men.”<sup>414</sup> Jesus emphasizes his sending through repeated references to the Father as  $\square$  πέμψας (“the One who sends”). The characterization of the Father as  $\square$  πέμψας, combined with the motif of the sent Son and continuous references to his coming, are symbolic narrative threads also beginning in the Prologue. In 1:14, the phrase παρὰ πατρός figuratively hints at the Son coming *from the Father*.<sup>415</sup> The first open declaration of Jesus coming from God is mentioned by Nicodemus in 3:2. For Nicodemus, Jesus’ signs are proof of that he (Jesus), has come from God. In this encounter with Nicodemus, the primary reason the Father sends his Son is for the salvation of the world (3:16-17). In 3:31, the Baptizer is the first to speak of Jesus coming from “above” and from “heaven.”

Next in 5:43, the Son’s coming is mentioned by Jesus himself for the first time in the narrative when he declares that he has come in his Father’s “name” or authority. The

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<sup>413</sup> The theme of Jesus’ coming from/departing to the Father also denotes oneness and intimacy.

<sup>414</sup> Appold, *Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, 283.

<sup>415</sup> If  $\square$ ρχόμενον in v. 9 is viewed periphrastic construction, it indirectly refers to the Son’s coming into the world to offer divine light to humanity. The Son’s coming is also inferred in 1:10-11 but 1:14 is the first mention of the Son’s coming *in direct connection with the Father*.

Father's act of giving the Son his name signifies full agency and authority of the Son.

The theme of the Son and Father sharing the divine name also develops in the narrative: Jesus has come (5:43; 12:13), performs signs (10:25), and keeps the disciples (17:12) all in the Father's name; Jesus also glorifies (12:28), and manifests the Father's name (17:6; 26). In addition, believing in the Son's name is necessary for receiving the Father's salvation (1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 20:31), both Father and Son answer prayers made in the Son's name (14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26), and the disciples will be persecuted because of the Son's name (15:21).

The symbolic Bread of Life discourse in chapter 6 expands the motif of Jesus' coming from heaven. After miraculously multiplying barley loaves and fish, Jesus feeds five thousand people and uses this symbolic act to confirm his unique relationship with the Father. First, Jesus reminds his hearers of manna falling from heaven to feed the Israelites in their wilderness journey and then declares himself to be the "Bread of Life from heaven." Unlike the manna in the wilderness that gave only temporary physical sustenance and not spiritual life, Jesus is the true bread who has come from heaven to give spiritual life, furthermore, whoever "eats" this bread will never die (6:33, 50, 51, 58). According to 6:38, Jesus' coming specifically fulfills the Father's will. The symbolic characterization of Jesus as bread of life from the Father instigates another conflict scene where Jewish authorities dispute and reject Jesus' claim of heavenly origin (6:41-43). In chapter 7, against the background of his breaking Sabbath Law, Jesus connects coming from God to his messianic and prophetic mission (7:26-27, 31, 41-42). In chapter 8, the Son makes the strongest personal attestation of his coming; he knows from where he has

come—from God the Father; however, his antagonists do not know this fact (8:14, 42).<sup>416</sup>

While the opposition refuses to believe Jesus' affirmation of coming from the Father, Mary of Bethany gives the narrative's strongest profession of faith, firmly establishing the messianic nature of Jesus' coming by declaring: "I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, He who *comes* into the world" (11:27).<sup>417</sup>

The narrative gives insight into how both Son and Father are impacted by the sending. The sending Father is honored/dishonored (5:23), recognized/unrecognized (7:28, 12:45, 15:21), believed (5:24; 12:44), and received (13:20). In addition, the Father testifies to the Son's sending (5:37; 8:18), requires belief in the one sent (6:29), draws believers (6:44), is always with (8:29), and sanctifies the Son (10:36). Regarding the Father, the sent Son speaks his words (3:34; 7:16; 8:26; 12:49; 14:24), seeks his will (4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39), is the only one who has seen him (6:46), lives because of him (6:57), seeks his glory (7:18), knows him (7:29), will return to him (7:33; 16:5), judges with him (8:16), comes on his initiative (8:42; 12:49), and does his works (9:4). In addition, the Son's works prove the Father sent him (5:36), and even though some do not believe the Father sent the Son (5:38), the Son prays audibly to the Father so that hearers may believe he is sent (11:42).

Every reference of the sending of the Son by the Father points to the coming of the Son as an act of obedience to the Father. The Son himself constantly portrays his coming as an act of obedience to the Father's will and his dependence on him to

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<sup>416</sup> "I know where I came from and where I am going" (8:14); "I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on my own initiative, but he sent me" (8:42).

<sup>417</sup> The author uses Mary's profession of faith, "I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, He who comes into the world," to declare his narrative purpose (20:31). Also in 4:25-26, Jesus is the coming Messiah, prophet (6:14), light (12:46-47), and king (12:13; 18:28).

accomplish his will.<sup>418</sup> Although not explicitly stated, the thought could be surmised that the Father depends on the Son's obedience for the accomplishment of the divine mission. Therefore, the SFR can be described as mutually dependent. The Father, who is unseen and virtually unheard in the narrative, depends on the obedience of the incarnate Son for the success of the divine mission to bring life to humanity. On the other hand, the Son, whose divinity is veiled in his incarnate state on earth, is dependent on the Father for accomplishing the mission.

In the remainder of the narrative, the theme of Jesus' coming from the Father develops once again in context of his departure to the Father (13:3).<sup>419</sup> In 16:28 Jesus makes his final announcement of departure, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."<sup>420</sup> In 16:30 the disciples declare they finally believe that Jesus has come from God. The motif of sending concludes in the Prayer where eternal life entails knowing both Sender and Sent (17:3), and the disciples believe the Father sent Jesus (17:8, 25). Also in the Prayer, Jesus sends the disciples as the Father sent Jesus (17:18),<sup>421</sup> and the unity of the disciples is proof to the world that the Father sent the Son (17:21, 23). Most of Jesus' references to his sending occur before the Last Supper, and are used to counter the unbelief in his antagonists, particularly in chapters 6-9, where the Jewish religious authorities challenge Jesus' claims of divinity, sonship, agency, and his authority to heal on the Sabbath. In

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<sup>418</sup> See: 5:19, 30; 6:38-40, 57; 7:16-18, 28-29; 8:28-29, 38, 42; 10:18; 12:50; 14:10, 31; 15:10; 17:4.

<sup>419</sup> Departure of the Son occurs in 7:33-35; 8:14, 21-22; 13:33, 36; 14:2-5, 12, 28; 16:5, 7, 10, 17; 17:13; 20:17.

<sup>420</sup> In the Prayer, Jesus proleptically sees himself as "no longer in the world" (17:11).

<sup>421</sup> The actual sending of the disciples by Jesus takes place in 20:21.

these conflict episodes, the Son insists the heavenly Father is specifically the one who sent him to speak his message and do his works. In the Farewell chapters, references to sending are explanatory rather than confrontational.

### 5.3.3 Life-Giving Authority

Eternal life is a Johannine distinctive connected to the SFR, which begins in 1:4 where the Λόγος is portrayed as giving life to all. Next, 1:12-13 narrates the Son's ability to give people the right to become children of the Father by being born anew. The characterization of the Son sent from the Father to give life continues in Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus where the phrase ζωή αἰώνιος (eternal life) occurs for the first time. Those who believe in the Son whom the Father "gives," obtain ζωή αἰώνιος. (3:15-16, 36).<sup>422</sup> The Sabbath controversy in chapter five also characterizes the Son and Father as united in the act of giving life. Using his Sabbath-breaking authority as a backdrop, Jesus declares that he and the Father jointly participate in the act of bestowing life. Believing in Jesus' teaching means believing in the Father; this belief leads to eternal life. Furthermore, the life in the Son is the same life that resides in the Father.<sup>423</sup>

Chapter 6 symbolically depicts the Son as the Father's mediator of life. Using the miraculous multiplication of bread as the basis for his teaching on eternal life, Jesus repeatedly declares himself to be the "Bread of Life" (6:35, 48, 51). This teaching takes a controversial turn when Jesus insists that his hearers partake of eternal life by "eating"

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<sup>422</sup> In Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, eternal life from the Son is symbolically portrayed in terms of drinking water and water forming a spring within the receiver (4:13-14).

<sup>423</sup> Like the Father, the Son, gives life (5:21). Whoever believes in the Father who sent his Son Jesus, has eternal life (5:24), as the Father has life so also he enables the Son to have life (5:26).

his flesh (6:51, 53-54). As a result, the Jews grumble, some of Jesus' disciples forsake him, and for the first time, the ominous subject of Judas' betrayal appears in the narrative.

Chapter 10 develops further the theme of eternal life in the SFR. The Son's bestowal of eternal life is symbolized by Jesus as the Good Shepherd, who in collaboration with the Father lays down his life for the sheep.<sup>424</sup> In this chapter, eternal life is referred to as abundant life (10:10); the Son-Shepherd procures abundant life by sacrificing his life, signifying the Son's crucifixion (10:11). In 14:6, Jesus declares: "I am the way, and the truth, and the *life*; no one comes to the Father but through me," implying access to life from the Father comes *only* through the Son. The Prayer is a high point in the narrative development of the motif of eternal life. In 17:2, Jesus refers to his God-given authority to bestow eternal life, and in 17:3, eternal life is defined as knowing "the only true God *and* Jesus Christ." Therefore, experience of eternal life is by believing in *both* Father and the Son. The theme of eternal life culminates in the author's declaration of the purpose of the Gospel: "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the *Son of God* and that believing you may have *life* in His name" (20:31).

### 5.3.4 Love

The Prologue (1:14) introduces Jesus as the unique Son (μονογενής) from the Father.<sup>425</sup> The phrase μονογενοϋς παρϋ πατρός combines the uniqueness of Jesus'

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<sup>424</sup> See: 10:15, 17-18.

<sup>425</sup> See Caird's comment: "What Jesus communicates is a new style of sonship, *a style of what it means to know God as Father, which comes directly out of his own experience*" (emphasis mine). G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (ed. L. D. Hurst; (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 403.

sonship with the concept of love and intimacy in the SFR.<sup>426</sup> Μονογενής appears again in 1:18 where love between Son and Father is expressed in spatial, physical terms that portray Son and Father in a most intimate familial position; μονογενής θεός ἐν ἐκ τῶν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς is a progression and explication of the divine intimacy first mentioned in 1:1-2. Μονογενής occurs only two more times in the narrative (3:16-18). In Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, μονογενής is combined with υἱός,<sup>427</sup> and thereby directly connected to Jesus' exclusive sonship. John 3:16 expands the concept of love in μονογενής as the Son himself declares the Father's love for the world by giving his unique Son. John 3:16-18 intimates that the precious love the Father has for his unique Son makes the Son the most costly sacrifice the Father gives for the salvation of the world.

The testimony of the Baptizer in 3:35 is the narrative's direct mention of love in the SFR; 3:35 portrays divine love in terms of the Father giving all things to the Son.<sup>428</sup> Jesus himself first mentions the Father's love for him in 5:20, stating that the Father expresses his love of the Son showing him all he (the Father) does.<sup>429</sup> John 10:17 extends the dimension of love in the SFR to the crucifixion—the Father loves the Son because the Son sacrifices his life for the sheep. In 14:31, the Son's love for his Father is stated in the

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<sup>426</sup> According to Witherington, John does not merely emphasize the Son's personal uniqueness but also his pedigree; Jesus is the sole natural descendant of the Father. Witherington continues, "The issue here is not means or manner of birth but lineage and family connection . . . In short, the word *monogenes* means . . . the only kin of God who is also God or the sole descendant of the Father." Witherington, *Many Faces of Christ*, 172.

<sup>427</sup> Υἱὸς ἐν τῶν μονογενῶν (3:16) and τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (3:18).

<sup>428</sup> The Father as a "giving" character is another theme developed in the narrative: the Father gives the Son all things (3: [27], 35; 13:3; 17:7), authority to judge (5:22, 27), life (5:26), works (5:36; 17:4), believers (6:37, 39, 65; 10:29; 17:6-7, 9), commandment (10:18; 12:49), authority (17:2), words (17:8), and glory (17:22).

<sup>429</sup> John 5:20 is the only verse where φιλέω (not ἀγαπάω) expresses love in the SFR.



context of the Son's unqualified obedience.<sup>430</sup> Finally, the Prayer informs readers that the Father's love for the Son existed long before his incarnation (17:24). The aim of divine love in the SFR ultimately becomes clear in the Prayer as Jesus prays for believers to partake of the Father's love for him; the Son has made the Father's name known allowing the divine love in the SFR to reside in all who believe in the Son (17:23, 26).

### 5.3.5 Glorification and Revelation

According to Diehl, the word "glory" carries symbolic connotations in the Gospel.<sup>431</sup> The symbolic theme of glory is another Johannine theme connecting Son and Father, which also begins the first chapter of the narrative. In 1:14, δόξα depicts the SFR and the unfolding narrative reveals how Father and Son share this glory. In the Gospel of John, δόξα may denote either the visible glory of God as portrayed in the HB or it may refer to the reciprocal honor between Father and Son.<sup>432</sup> When is used with verbs of seeing, δόξα usually refers to God's resplendent glory, pointing to the Son as revealer of the Father's glory. The Prologue refers to Jesus as the Father's "exegete" (1:18);<sup>433</sup> therefore, the Father is revealed through words and actions of the Son. As μονογενής and

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<sup>430</sup> John 14:31 is the only occurrence where the Son explicitly declares his love for the Father; however, his love for the Father is reflected in his overall actions of obedience and his constant self-identification in light of the Father.

<sup>431</sup> Diehl, "Puzzle of the Prayer," 209.

<sup>432</sup> Several references to δόξα denote honor, reverence, and esteem; for example, in 5:23; 11:4; 14:13, Son and Father share the same honor. In the first part of the narrative, the honor of Father and Son appears mostly in conflict scenes as the Son seeks the Father's glory (7:18; 8:49, 50), while in turn, the Father honors the Son (8:54). Chapter 12 links the theme of honor to the Son's crucifixion and exaltation (12: 27-28). In chapter 13, both Son and Father are glorified in the crucifixion (13:31, 32).

<sup>433</sup> In the biblical text, ἐξηγέομαι means "to set forth in great detail or expound;" ἐξηγέομαι is always used in the context of narration. Luke is the only other biblical writer who uses the term. See Luke 24:35; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19.

“exegete” Jesus is privileged to be the only one who has seen the Father,<sup>434</sup> and is the one who makes God known.

The idea of the Son who reveals the Father is also a developing theme in the narrative. Unlike the world, the Son knows the Father, has been taught by the Father,<sup>435</sup> and speaks and teaches<sup>436</sup> what he has learned from the Father.<sup>437</sup> Jesus also uses his claims of privileged knowledge of God to refute disputations of Jewish religious leaders. As the only one who has seen the Father (6:46), the Son knows the Father while his opponents do not (5:37; 7:28; 8:55; 10:15; 17:25). Those who do not believe in the Son will instigate future persecution of the disciples (15:21; 16:3). Interestingly, at the point of Jesus’ departure his disciples have not grasped the truth that the Son is the ultimate revelation of the Father. In chapter 14, Jesus’ verbal exchange with Philip shows the difficulty the Son encounters in making the Father known (14:7-11). John 14:9 marks the high point of Jesus’ revelation of the Father; he has not only revealed the Father by words and actions—*he is* the definitive revelation of the Father.<sup>438</sup> In 14:20, Jesus tells his disciples that complete revelation will come with the eschatological dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The Prayer culminates the characterization of the Son as Revelator of the

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<sup>434</sup> Jesus also refers to knowing the Father in 3:11, 32; 4:10; 5:32; 7:29; 10:15; 13:3.

<sup>435</sup> See 5:19, 21, 30

<sup>436</sup> According to Gilbert Soo Hoo, there is a correlation between the unfolding of the Johannine narrative and how he teaches. He comments, “The prominent motif of Jesus as the one sent from above to the world below to reveal the Father is a *mapping of the narrative’s forward progression*” (emphasis mine). Gilbert Soo Hoo, “The Pedagogy of the Johannine Jesus,” 260.

<sup>437</sup> See: 7:17-18; 8:26, 27, 38; 10:32; 12:49-50; 14:10, 11, 24, 25; 15:15; 17:7-8.

<sup>438</sup> “He who has seen me has seen the Father.”

Father—he who has made the Father’s name known, will continue to make it known (17:26).<sup>439</sup>

The glory motif peaks in the Prayer where δοξάζω occurs five times and δόξα three times. The hour arrives for the Son to be glorified and he prays to the Father for glorification (17:1); the Son affirms he has glorified the Father by completing his assigned works (17:4). The Son asks for a return to the pre-existent glory he had with the Father (17:5). The Son prays the disciples will see his glory (17:24), and finally, he is honored by the Father’s act of giving believers to him (17:10).

### 5.3.6 Summary

Characterization of Son and Father begins in the Prologue where they are introduced respectively as Λόγος and Θεός. The Son is creatively and indirectly introduced as Λόγος, confronting readers with a vivid first impression of his person and mission—in close relationship with the Father.<sup>440</sup> The steady unfolding of the characters of Son and Father takes place primarily through the Son’s words. The SFR reaches its narrative peak in the Prayer where the purpose of the divine relationship, delicately introduced in the Prologue, is clearly explicit through a familiar cluster of

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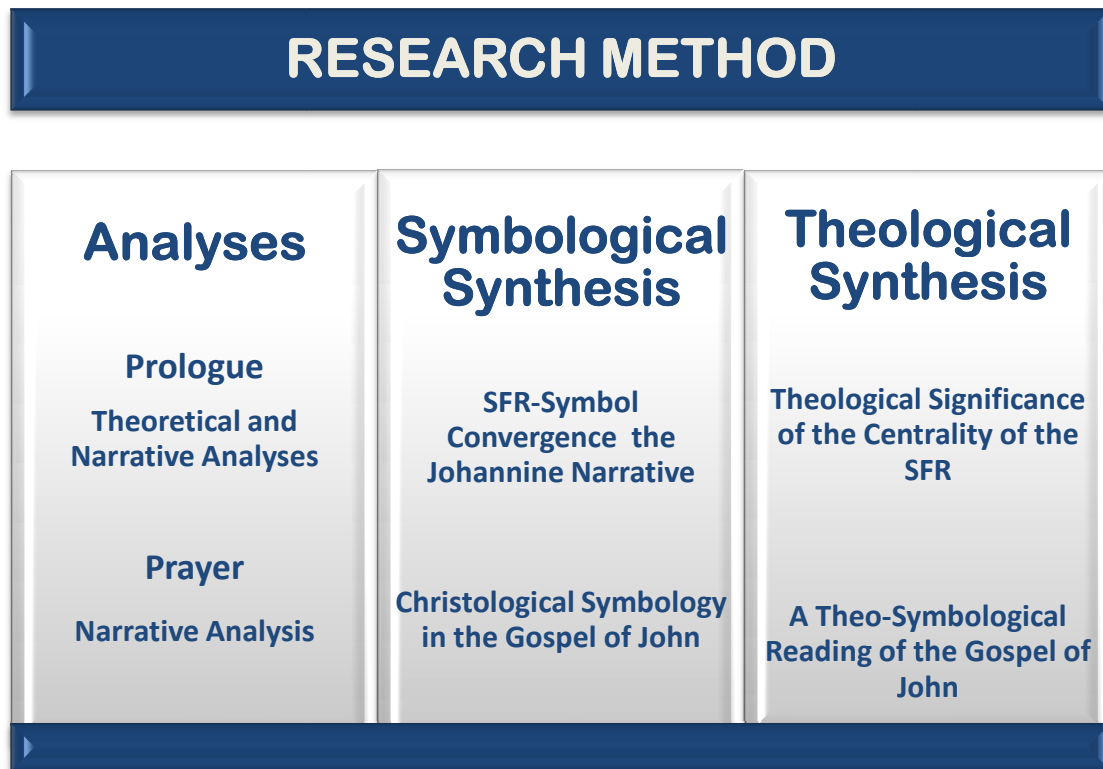
<sup>439</sup> Presumably, this will happen through the work of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>440</sup> See Norman R. Petersen explanation that in 1:14-18, the Father/Son system takes over from the Word system and subsequently in the narrative, the Word’s “becoming flesh” is displaced by the notion of the Son was sent by and going back to the Father. Petersen also notes that the link of the relationship to the Prologue is maintained. Norman R. Petersen, *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 66. Petersen divides Jesus’ Christological titles into three sets of systems: 1) the Word and the Son of God, 2) the Son of Man and the bread of life, and 3) the Light and prophet or Messiah. Petersen, *Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light*, 62.

symbols/symbolic language and themes. The Prologue and Prayer are therefore, strategic in the characterization of the two main narrative characters.

#### 5.4 Methodological Approach

**Figure 3: Methodology**



Research aims determine the methods selected for the inquiry; when applied to the biblical text the primary research method is to illuminate and explain the text.<sup>441</sup> The aim of this study is to search for the cohesive force behind the network of symbols in the Johannine text. The research methods chosen for this study will, therefore serve as

<sup>441</sup> Stan Harstine, "To What End, Methodology?" in *What We Have Heard From the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 123.

effective interpretative tools shedding light on the pattern, function, and meaning of the symbolism in the Gospel of John in light of the SFR. This research proposes that the SFR is the common denominator behind the network of Christological symbols in the Fourth Gospel. The methodological design for this research focuses on the important connections between the SFR and symbolism in the narrative and literary features of the Johannine text.

The method entails five steps. First, the specially created theory of symbolism is applied to the Prologue and the four principles explain how Johannine symbolism manifests in the text to support the presentation of the SFR. The second step consists of plot, semantic, character, and time analyses of the Prologue. Plot analysis places the SFR in the center of the Prologue plot, semantic analysis outlines the field of reference for the Prologue and shows how the passage is a semantic domain for the SFR symbolism, character analysis establishes the overriding presence of the SFR in the Prologue, and time analysis shows how the tension of transcendence and narrative temporality bring the SFR into the forefront of the narrative. The third step applies semantic and character analyses to the Prayer.<sup>442</sup> The fourth part of the method is symbological synthesis of the entire Gospel, which is accomplished by charting the simultaneous development of SFR and symbolism in the Gospel, thus leading to the unveiling of John's Christological Symbology. The Symbology is illustrated in symbographs, which are graphs/charts of symbolic clusters connected to the SFR. The last methodological step concludes the research with a theological synthesis, which reflects upon theological implications of the study.

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<sup>442</sup> The aim of the plot analysis of the Prologue is primarily to determine the centrality of the SFR in the Gospel's introduction. The centrality of the SFR in the Prayer plot is clear as the entire passage entails the Son speaking directly to the Father.

The method for unveiling John's Christological Symbolology therefore consists of the following: 1) a theoretical analysis of the Prologue, 2) a narrative analysis of the Prologue, 3) a narrative analysis of the Prayer, 4) symbolological synthesis charting John's Christological Symbolology through the Gospel, and 5) a theological synthesis. The five steps are explained in detail in the succeeding sections.

#### **5.4.1 The Prologue and the Prayer**

These two passages occupy strategic positions in the structure of the Johannine narrative.<sup>443</sup> The Prologue and Prayer also contain similar clusters of symbols; consequently they are pivotal to the structure of John's Christological Symbolology.<sup>444</sup> The Prologue subtly and stylistically unveils the transcendent relationship between the Son and Father.<sup>445</sup> This unveiling takes place through a cluster of symbols and symbolic language subsequently developed through the symbolic teaching ministry of the Son, which is announced in the last verse of the Prologue.

The methodology follows the *narrative design* of the Johannine text, which uses the Prologue as a strategic introductory tool, not only for the SFR, but also for the diverse

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<sup>443</sup> This research recognizes that passages such as John 7:16-29, 8:12-59, and 9:7-38 are key passages for the SFR and are important in the Symbolology. However, the Prologue and Prayer are selected as the two primary passages for analysis because of their strategic positions in the narrative's overall presentation of the SFR, and the similarity of symbolic clusters in both passages.

<sup>444</sup> Lee recognizes this connection: "In symbolic terms, however, the two can be seen as fundamentally connected . . . The correlation between the two passages can be seen symbolically at a number of levels." Dorothy Lee, "Response: The Prologue and Jesus' Final Prayer," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (Waco: Baylor, 2007), 230.

<sup>445</sup> The lack of direct SFR language may be seen as a point of objection for using the Prologue as a primary text. However, this methodology follows the *narrative design* of the Johannine text, which uses the Prologue as an *introduction* for the SFR, diverse array of symbolism, specialized terminology, themes, and intertwine of temporality and transcendence, all of which all play significant roles in the Gospel's presentation of the SFR.

array of symbols in the narrative. The Prologue is important, not only for creatively presenting the SFR, but also for introducing other Johannine narrative features such as high symbolism, the intertwine of temporality and transcendence, and the use of specialized terminology and themes, which all play significant roles in portraying the SFR.

The Prayer ends the teaching session of the Son in the narrative, thus, culminating the symbolic teaching ministry of Jesus. As the last semantic domain in the narrative with a dense cluster of symbols and symbolic language, the Prayer represents the peak of the narrative development of the SFR and connected symbolism. In addition, several symbols, symbolic language, and themes around the SFR, which are introduced in the Prologue, recur in the Prayer with some making their last appearance in the narrative. John's Christological Symbolism peaks in the seventeenth chapter before continuing in the Passion narrative.<sup>446</sup> The Prologue and Prayer are strategically at opposite ends of the narrative enclosing the teaching ministry of Jesus and both passages contain similar cluster of symbols. This commonality between both passages makes them narrative anchors for John's Christological Symbolism. In other words, being positioned at the beginning and end of the narrative they serve as main structural supports for the Symbolism. The Prologue commences several key symbols and symbolic language intricately woven into the narrative sequence. The Prayer is a culminating point in the plot of the narrative, as the Son uses symbolic expressions in the Prologue to convey the completion of his earthly mission. Therefore, the Prologue and the Prayer virtually encapsulate John's Christological Symbolism.

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<sup>446</sup> Chapters 18 to 21 feature in the Symbolism and validate the argument that symbolic representations of the SFR reach their highest point in the Prayer.

### **5.4.2 Theoretical Analysis**

This part of the research method applies the theory of Johannine symbolism to the Prologue. The aim of this theoretical analysis is to identify how the principles of representation, assimilation, association, and transcendence account for manifestation and meaning of Johannine symbolism in the Prologue. Symbolic presentation identifies the initial appearance of SFR symbolism in the Prologue, representation identifies the reappearances of the symbolic representations in the same passage, reflection explores how readers may arrive at symbolic meaning, and resemblance reveals similarities between symbols and Son or Father.

The principle of assimilation examines the pre-semantic origins of symbols in Hebraic and Greek cultures, and examines where the Son or Father assimilate with symbolic representations. Interpretative assimilation recognizes verses in the Prologue where symbolic representations of Son and Father may be resisted or accepted by hearer-readers of the narrative. Third, the principle of association explains how symbols in the Prologue associate with other figures of speech to portray the SFR. The fourth principle examines the concept of transcendence. Semantic transcendence recognizes the points in the Prologue where SFR symbols are not confined to the semantic level. Dualistic transcendence explores the author's dualistic presentation of the heavenly origins of the Son and the heavenly abode of the Father. Revelatory transcendence identifies transcendent realities regarding the SFR conveyed by the author and reviews how symbols function as vehicles of revelation for the SFR. Transformative transcendence shows transformation may transpire when hearer-readers interpret and believe the symbolic representations of the SFR.



### **5.4.3 Semantic Analysis**

The semantic analyses of the Prologue and Prayer establish the two passages as semantic domains for the SFR. The quantitative breakdown of the semantic range for the SFR substantiates the pervasiveness of the SFR in the passages. The semantic range also discloses areas of the texts where characterization and pairings of Son and Father are not obvious. The semantic analysis of the SFR and connected symbolism in the Prologue and Prayer creates a semantic path for charting John's Christological Symbolology.

### **5.4.4 Plot Analysis**

Plot analysis provides an outline of the plot in the narrative revealing a sequential emergence of symbols organized around events portraying the SFR. Thus, data derived from the plot analysis is coordinated with the sequential emergence of symbolism and SFR in the text. Analysis of the plot provides a narrative framework for the gradual unfolding and connection of Johannine symbolism to the SFR. Plot analysis also reveals complications in narratives, such as the insertions of verses on the Baptizer in the Prologue, and the tension it creates.

### **5.4.5 Character Analysis**

Character analysis describes the five dimensions of the characterization of Son and Father in the Prologue and Prayer. These dimensions reveal significant themes in the SFR that give Johannine symbolism narrative substance and theological meaning. This character analysis constitutes the qualitative part of the methodology bringing to light in a

clear and coherent manner the distinctive attributes of the combined characterization of the Son and Father.

#### **5.4.6 Time Analysis**

Time analysis shows how the tension of transcendence and narrative temporality bring the SFR into the forefront of the narrative. This analysis of time shows how portrayal of the SFR is aided by creative narrative shifts between transcendent and temporal time; the transcendent relationship between Son and Father emerges within these narrative sifts. Time analysis of follows the four sequences outlined in the plot analysis.

#### **5.4.7 Symbological Synthesis**

This synthesis uses observations gleaned from the theoretical, semantic, and character analyses to chart John's Christological Symbology. The symbological synthesis charts stages of narrative development of the SFR in the entire narrative, establishes the centrality of the SFR, and identifies connected symbolic clusters. The result is the unveiling of John's Christological Symbology. John's Christological symbology will thereby be outlined and illustrated on three levels: 1) the Prologue, 2) the Prayer, and 3) the entire Gospel.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Constraints of space and time render the ability to analyze these points of convergence in the Gospel, impossible. The same constraints also means the process of charting John's Christological Symbology outside the Prologue and Prayer will be brief but specific.

#### **5.4.8 Theological Synthesis**

John's Christological Symbology shows that Johannine symbolic representations of Jesus are intricately linked to the relationship between the Son and Father. The entire literary and narrative complex has one primary theological aim clearly specified in John 20:31—that readers will believe in the Jesus presented in this narrative complex and that their belief will lead to the experience of eternal life. The theological synthesis will bring the Symbology into theological focus and highlight two main issues. The first issue considered is the significance of the centrality of the SFR and its implications for the community of faith. Second, the chapter argues the need for a theo-symbolic reading of the Gospel of John. In sum, the theological reflection in the conclusion of the research reveals the contributions of John's Christological Symbology to biblical and practical theology.

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

The SFR and Christological symbols uniting to form John's Christological Symbology are closely aligned with the narrative design of the Gospel. Therefore, the task of creating a methodological framework for this research begins with the relation among the Johannine SFR, symbols, and narrative. This methodological framework based on the narrative design of the Johannine text lays the foundation for mapping John's Christological Symbology. This chapter outlines a methodology that accommodates these three factors. The plot, semantic, character, and time analyses form the contours of this framework; observations of how these narrative features intersect with SFR and symbolism facilitate charting John's Symbology.

The analyses show how the Prologue launches both SFR and symbolism, which are subsequently amplified in the course of the narrative, while the Prayer depicts the highest point of SFR as symbolism as for the last time in the narrative and a major portion of Johannine symbolism recurs in one passage. John's Christological Symbolology is therefore, firmly anchored in these two strategic passages. The theoretical analysis of the Prologue reveals the literary and theological function of Johannine symbols, showing how symbolism expounds the SFR. The theory also shows different ways readers may arrive at symbolic understanding. The narrative analyses in both passages shed light on SFR-symbol dynamics as the analyses identify points of convergence and reciprocal relations SFR and symbolism. Semantic analyses reveal the close proximity between SFR and symbolism, and notes patterns, repetitions, and emphases. The qualitative and quantitative data derived from the Prologue and Prayer analyses form a prototype for charting John's Christological Symbolology through the entire narrative, thus validating the strong link between SFR and symbolism. The concluding synthesis is a theological reflection that combines the research findings regarding SFR centrality and symbolic function to evaluate and explain their significance for the community of faith. In summation, the methodological process reveals the consistency and prevalent use of symbols/symbolic language and themes to portray the SFR in virtually every chapter of the Gospel and this factor constitutes the crux of this research—SFR and Johannine symbolology occupy a central place in the theological purpose, narrative plot, and symbolic pattern of the Gospel of John.

This chapter concludes the first part of this research. The second section applies the method outlined above to the text of the Gospel. Chapters' six to eight analyze the

Prologue and Prayer, chapter nine maps out John's Christological Symbology, and chapter ten concludes with the theological implications of the entire project. It is anticipated that the following process of discovering John's Christological Symbology will shed more light on the Gospel of John.

## CHAPTER 6: THE PROLOGUE: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates how the theory of symbolism outlined in chapter three facilitates symbolic meaning. The application of the theory to the Prologue furthers an objective of this research, which is to establish the close link between SFR and symbolism in the Johannine narrative. When applied to the narrative sequence of the Prologue, the theory reveals a striking literary design in which Johannine symbolism *indirectly* and *gradually* presents the two main characters in the narrative, first as Λόγος and God, and finally as Son and Father in vv. 14, 18. This analysis therefore believes that by means of vivid symbolism, the Prologue presents the SFR from the start of the narrative in a “show and tell” fashion. The theory also shows how hearer-readers engage in the interpretative process by drawing on socio-cultural and religious knowledge and experience.<sup>448</sup> The theory comprises four principles, namely, representation, assimilation, association, and transcendence. Each principle is applied to a section of the Prologue, showing the link between symbolism and SFR. The chapter concludes with a summary, which highlights how the theory gives insight into the network of Johannine symbols and expands the Gospel’s presentation of the SFR.

### 6.2 Representation

The principle of representation is divided into the following four sub-principles: 1) presentation, 2) re-presentation, 3) reflection, and 4) resemblance.

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<sup>448</sup> The interpretative process described in this analysis is hypothetical and reflects ways in which interpreters *may* apprehend symbolic meaning.

### 6.2.1 Presentation

The principle of symbolic representation begins with *initial presentation* of symbols and symbolic language. Due to its position in the narrative, the Prologue contains several initial symbolic presentations such as ζω□, φ□ς, σκοτία, κόσμος, and σάρξ; also occurring for the first time are words with symbolic implications.<sup>449</sup> Words also exist in the Prologue that occur only once in the entire narrative but introduce symbolic themes developed in the Gospel.<sup>450</sup>

The initial presentation of a symbol or symbolic expression introduces characteristics of its referents, which in the case of the Prologue are the Son and Father. In vv. 1-4 symbolic presentations introduce Jesus' divinity, preexistence, and role as creator in context of his relationship with the Father (□ν □ρχ□, λόγος). Verses 1-4 narrate aspects of Jesus' mission from the Father such as his authority to give life and light to humanity (ζω□, φ□ς). Verse 5 depicts the Son's victory in conflict against the darkness (σκοτία, καταλαμβάνω). The symbolism in vv. 6-8 introduces the Father's role as witness to the authenticity of his Son's person and ministry (μαρτυρία, □ληθινόν, πιστεύω). Verses 9-13 introduce more elements of the Son's mission such as humanity's response of rejection and reception, his divine name, and his partnership with the Father to bring people into the family of God (□ρχομαι, κόσμος, γινώσκω, λαμβάνω/παραλαμβάνω, δίδωμι, □ξουσία, τέκνα θεο□, □νομα, and γεννάω). Verse 14 introduces the symbol of flesh and themes of incarnation (σάρξ, σκηνώ); in these verses,

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<sup>449</sup> Words with symbolic connotations include the following: μαρτυρία, πιστεύω, □ληθινός/□λήθεια, □ρχομαι, γινώσκω, λαμβάνω/παραλαμβάνω, □ξουσία, τέκνα θεο□, □νομα, γεννάω, θεάομαι/□ράω, δόξα, μονογενής, νόμος, Μωϋσ□ς, and δίδωμι.

<sup>450</sup> Examples include □ν □ρχ□ and λόγος (preexistence and divinity), καταλαμβάνω (conflict and rejection), and □ξηγέομαι (revelation and teaching).

hearer-readers are introduced to the concept of the Son's glory (θεάομαι/ᾔράω, δόξα, μονογενὴς) as representing the Father. The authenticity and superiority of the Son's agency from the Father is again stressed in the testimony of the Baptizer in vv. 15-17 (νόμος, Μωϋσῆς, δίδωμι). Verse 18 is the Prologue's pièce de résistance as the two main characters are finally and directly presented as Son and Father; furthermore, the primary role of the Son's mission in relation to the Father is revealed—he is the Father's revelator (ἐξηγέομαι). Thus, the symbolism in the Prologue establishes the centrality of the SFR in the Johannine narrative and prepares the audience for symbolic re-presentations of the SFR in the ensuing narrative.

### 6.2.2 Re-presentation

Re-presentation or recurrence of Johannine symbolism expands previously introduced elements of the SFR. The Prologue contains several symbolic re-presentations, one of which is the lexeme λαμβάνω, which carries symbolic implication in the Gospel of John. In the Prologue, the first occurrence of λαμβάνω is embedded in the word παραλαμβάνω in v. 11, which refers to the rejection of Jesus' by his own people.<sup>451</sup> Λαμβάνω is re-presented in an opposite scenario in v. 12 where it refers to those who recognize and receive Jesus. Verse 12, therefore informs hearer-readers that the act of receiving the Son is equivalent to believing in his name, which leads to becoming a child of God (v 13). The next re-presentation of λαμβάνω in the Prologue is in v. 16 where witnesses who received the Son testify of their encounter; receiving the Son also results in receiving divine grace, which v. 17 implies surpasses the Mosaic Law.

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<sup>451</sup> Παραλαμβάνω means agreement, approval, or acceptance. *BDAG*, 768. The word appears two other times in the Gospel—14:3 and 19:16.



As the narrative progresses, clearly the symbolic import λαμβάνω points to receiving the Son whom the Father sent. In sum, the symbolic meaning in λαμβάνω in context of Johannine theology answers the following question: What does the hearer-reader do with the Son sent from the Father? The answer according to the Prologue is, receive and believe in him.

### 6.2.3 Reflection

Symbolic reflection evokes correlations between symbols and their referents, which lead to symbolic meaning. In the act of interpretation, hearer-readers reflect on possible socio-cultural or theological backgrounds underlying Johannine symbolism. Most symbols and symbolic expressions in the Gospel have been assimilated by both Hebrew and Greek cultures and these multicultural backgrounds give deeper insight into SFR symbolism.

The unprecedented manner in which the Prologue uses the metaphorical word λόγος has attracted much attention and speculation. The symbolic significance of λόγος is attested to by the observation that it appears as a title for the Son only once in the narrative;<sup>452</sup> it is also the first title ascribed to the Son *in his relationship with the Father*. The term λόγος has a wide philosophical and theological semantic range. Greek and Jewish philosophers used λόγος in a special way, and equivalent terms for the word appear in Jewish scripture and rabbinic literature. Scholars therefore suggest that John

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<sup>452</sup> The conspicuous absence of the title Λόγος in the Gospel narrative attests to its symbolic import in the Prologue. No consensus exists as to why John uses Λόγος as his first designation for Jesus, nor are scholars absolutely sure of the origin of John's use of the term. However, in the Gospel, the nomenclature signifies Jesus' divinity, agency, and role as co-creator with God. According to Tovey, the Prologue establishes a strong association between the Λόγος and the name and person of Jesus. See Derek Tovey, "Narrative Strategies in the Prologue and the Metaphor of Λόγος in John's Gospel," *Pacifica* 15 (2002): 138-153.

utilizes the term because of its wide spectrum and use within first century Mediterranean world.<sup>453</sup>

Stoics viewed the λόγος as the supreme principle of the universe, the force that originated, permeated, and directed all things;<sup>454</sup> thus, Stoicism equates λόγος with the concept of God.<sup>455</sup> Λόγος was also used by Gnostics who merged the Stoic Logos with Plato's idea of the World Soul and the Demiurge who created the world.<sup>456</sup> Stoic and Gnostic understanding of λόγος show correspondences of divinity and creation with the Johannine λόγος.

The Hellenistic concept of λόγος influenced Jewish theology through the works of Jewish philosopher and exegete, Philo (20 BCE-50 CE) who uses λόγος over 1,300 times in his writings.<sup>457</sup> Among Philo's several descriptions of the λόγος are the following: Word, Eternal Word, most ancient Word, First-born Word, Word of the First Cause by whom the whole world was made (Sacr 8; Fug 95; LAI 3:204; Post 102; Plant. 1:18, 20; Sac 1:8; Conf. 1:146-147); the Beginning, the Name of God, eldest-born image of God (Conf. 1:146-147); chief messenger, uncreated, mediator (Her 205. LA 3:177-178; Fug 5-6; QE 2:13); second deity (QE 2:62), and light (Op. 31; Abr. 47; L A 3:45). Thus, the

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<sup>453</sup> See Keener: "Whether the term came from the author or elsewhere, whoever applied it to this text did so to communicate something within a specific cultural framework." Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:339. Also Phillips: "The author of the Prologue, then, consciously uses a term that resonated with contemporary religious discussion. Indeed, the word seems to be part of a whole host of religious languages – Jewish, Christian, Stoic, Hermetic, Gnostic." Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 106.

<sup>454</sup> D. J. MacLeod, "The Eternality and Deity of the Word: John 1:1-2," *BSac* 160 (2003): 55. See also Keener who notes that Stoics believed the passive principle in the universe was matter and the active principle, which is identical to God, was the Logos. Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:341-343.

<sup>455</sup> Kleinknecht, H. "The Logos in the Greek and Hellenistic World," *TNDT*, 4:84-85.

<sup>456</sup> See Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1: 342.

<sup>457</sup> Niessen, Richard. "The Contrast between John & Philo on the Essential Nature of the Logos," *ETS* 1032 (TREN, 2005). 1.

wide range of correspondences between the Philonic and Johannine λόγος include divinity, creation, agency, and sonship.<sup>458</sup> Possibly, John uses λόγος because of Hellenistic/Philonic ideas of divine relationship between the λόγος and God.

Many scholars believe attention must be given to the HB and Jewish Wisdom literature for the background of the Johannine Λόγος.<sup>459</sup> An obvious connection between Gen 1:1 and the Prologue exists because the exact phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ also appears in the LXX creation story.<sup>460</sup> The HB portrayal of Wisdom in the act of creation also finds strong support as a background to the Λόγος.<sup>461</sup> One of the closest parallels between the Prologue's Λόγος and Wisdom literature is Prov 8, where John 1:1 echoes Prov 8:22-23;<sup>462</sup> additionally, Prov 8:30 corresponds with John 1:1-2.<sup>463</sup> Thus, these resemblances portray the Johannine Λόγος as a divine being in intimate relationship with God.

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<sup>458</sup> One major difference between Johannine and Philonic concepts of λόγος is that John's Λόγος is personal, incarnate, historical, living and dying on earth as a man, while Philo's λόγος is not impersonal. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 73. A solution to this problem is that both writers shared a common background of biblical traditions, and modes of thinking. Brown, *Introduction*, 130.

<sup>459</sup> See Walther Bindemann, "Johannesprolog: Ein Versuch, ihn zu verstehen" (*NovT* 37/4 1995): 331; Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 73; Evans, *Word and Glory*, 81-83; Marianne Meye Thompson, "Every Picture Tells a Story": Imagery for God in the Gospel of John," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John* (ed. Jörg Frey, Jan G. Van der Watt, and Ruben Zimmermann; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 260; Alexander Ivanovich Tsousterov, "Glory, Grace, and Truth in John 1:14-18" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, Scotland 2004); Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John Volume 1: Introduction, Analysis, and Reference* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2010), 1:413; Ben Witherington III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 52-53.

<sup>460</sup> However, a main difference is that in Genesis the Λόγος is not mentioned in the act of creation.

<sup>461</sup> An example of a parallel passage is Sir 24:8-9, which reads, τότε ἐνετείλατό μοι ἐκτίστης πάντων, καὶ ἐκτίσας με κατέπαυσεν τὴν σκηνὴν μου καὶ ἐπέειπεν . . . πρὸ τοῦ ἀρχῆς ἐκτίσέν με, καὶ πρὸς ἀρχῆς οὐ μὲν ἐκλίπω. Words such as "beginning," "creator," and "tent," in Sirach 24 and other passages of Wisdom literature are similar to those in the Prologue. See also: Prov 1:20-33; 8:1-9:6; Sir 1:1-18, 24:1-31; Wis 7-9; Bar 3:9-28. Von Wahlde contends that while the parallel verses in Wisdom literature are similar to the Prologue, they do not categorically affirm that the Logos is Wisdom; however, Von Wahlde admits that Wisdom tradition is an important part of the background of the Gospel. Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters of John*, 1:416.

<sup>462</sup> עולם and רֵאשִׁית (beginning and everlasting) are parallels that evoke concepts of preexistence and divinity.

Sometimes the LXX uses λόγος to refer to the Torah either literarily or in an abstract form;<sup>464</sup> thus, λόγος is connected to concepts of the Law. The possible use of λόγος as reference to the Torah draws parallels with the story of the coming of the Law to Israel in Sir 24, as the Torah is identified with Wisdom.<sup>465</sup> Thus, the Wisdom-Torah-λόγος connection evokes images of the Johannine Λόγος, as one who delivers God's word to his people. The Targumim use of the term מֵמְרָא (*memra*) is another Hebrew concept similar to λόγος.<sup>466</sup> Because *memra* was a circumlocutory and anthropomorphic substitution for the name of God,<sup>467</sup> the λόγος/*memra* connection might point to the Johannine Λόγος, thus sharing the same name with God the Father.

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<sup>463</sup> לְפָנָיו and יְחֻזְּתָא (beside and presence of) correspond with πρὸς τὸν θεόν in John 1:1-2. Nevertheless, some scholars note that Wisdom is designated by the feminine nouns סְפִירָה and σοφία, not the masculine λόγος. In addition, Wisdom is not uncreated like the Johannine Λόγος. Martin Scott acknowledges that the Logos in the Prologue is not a created being; however, he does not consider this a great difference. Martin Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (JSNTsup 71; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 95. See also Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:369-370.

<sup>464</sup> D. A. Reed, "How Semitic was John? Rethinking the Hellenistic Background to John 1:1." *ATHR* 85 (2003): 718. Conversely, Evans notes that the Prologue does not identify Jesus as Torah personified. Evans, *Word and Glory*, 130-131. Keener views the Prologue's praise of the Λόγος as a contrast with the limitations of the Mosaic Law (v. 17). Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:361. Verse 17 reads, οὐτις νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια διὰ ἡσοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο, which seems denote superiority of the Λόγος over the Torah. The absence of a subordinating conjunction between ἐδόθη and χάρις conveys the idea of a continuing act of God, implying that grace and truth from Jesus was a fulfillment of the Law. Ἀντὶ with genitive χάριτος, means "in place of" and gives the idea of succession rather than substitution, as expressed in the phrase "one grace after another." Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 287.

<sup>465</sup> Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 49. Witherington argues that instead of identifying Wisdom or Word with Torah, the author identifies Wisdom with Christ who is seen as eclipsing the law of Moses (v. 17).

<sup>466</sup> Although the Midrashim and the Targumim were committed to writing about five hundred years after the Fourth Gospel, some scholars believe that these rabbinic works contain interpretive traditions that shed light on the Prologue's Λόγος. According to Evans, 19<sup>th</sup> century, interpreters made frequent comparisons with *memra*, but by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these comparisons were abandoned believing מֵמְרָא was mainly a periphrasis for the divine name. Evans, *Word and Glory*, 126-127. However, Phillips believes that *memra* may still provide some intertextual background (or parallel) for the use of λόγος in the Prologue. Phillips, *The Prologue*, 136.

<sup>467</sup> See Keener's discussion. Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:349-350.

From the above analysis, reflection on the Greek/Hebrew background of the symbolic term λόγος points to the Λόγος as a divine being in relationship with God in the following areas: 1) divinity/preexistence, 2) creative power/authority, 3) divine sonship/relationship, and 4) emissary/mediator of the divine message. In the Prologue therefore, the symbolic import of the term λόγος commences the Gospels portrayal of the SFR.

#### 6.2.4 Resemblance

After symbolic reflection, hearer-readers *identify* relevant points of resemblances between symbols and referents. Symbolic representations of Jesus initially evoke resemblances at a logical level; however, these resemblances do not lead to accurate symbolic meaning. Resemblances adequate for symbolic meaning are discovered at a trans-logical level, this can be observed in the symbols of life and light.

The first occurrence of ζῶν is in v. 4 where it appears in context of the preexistent state of the Λόγος who is declared to be the embodiment of divine life. Verse 4 continues explaining the life indwelling the Λόγος is the light for humanity. Particularly after the depiction Λόγος as creator in v. 3, points of resemblance between the Λόγος and the ζῶν/φῶς symbolism may begin at a semantic and logical level with the basic idea of the Λόγος imparting biological life to humanity, resulting in human enlightenment or understanding. However, these resemblances prove to be insufficient because in v. 5, light is portrayed *in conflict* with darkness. Hearer-readers need to look for points of resemblances at a trans-logical level correlating with the idea of light in cosmic conflict with darkness. In v. 5 φῶς becomes a title for the Λόγος, referred to as

the *true* Light who warrants a *witness from God*; thus, v. 6 evokes resemblances of divine agency. By v. 6, hearer-readers know that φως is a *person*, and realize that ζω and φως signify more than physical biological life or intellectual enlightenment.<sup>468</sup> Φως therefore is not an abstract, impersonal entity but rather, a divine being *in relationship with God* (vv. 1-2), co-creator of all things (v. 3), in whom dwells *divine life* (v. 4a), and out of this divine life, he offers divine light to humanity (v. 4b).

### 6.3 Assimilation

Symbolic assimilation occurs at three levels: 1) pre-semantic, 2) semantic, and 3) interpretative.

#### 6.3.1 Pre-semantic Assimilation

Pre-semantic assimilation explains how symbols are rooted in the depths of human experience, which give them a universal nature. Most symbols are shaped by common human experiences and are thus, assimilated into the linguistics and theology of different cultures. The symbol of birth, which in the Gospel signifies birth or recreation of believers, illustrates the principle of pre-semantic assimilation.<sup>469</sup> Verses 12-13 narrate

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<sup>468</sup> In classical Greek, φως means “To make known in reference to the inner life—enlighten, give light to, shed light upon. *BDAG*, 1074. For the Greeks, light is life. *TDNT*, 9:311. In the HB, אור (light), is a term for life in the absolute sense; thus, light also denotes salvation. To see light is to live (Job 3:16; 33:28), and an aspect of salvation is to be in the light. *TDNT*, 9:319.

<sup>469</sup> Although scholars generally refer to birth in the Gospel as a metaphor (Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 142; Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 167), according to this research, the metaphorical nature of the Johannine concept of birth transcends the semantics of the narrative, which gives no details of exactly how Johannine birth occurs. Hearer-readers are just informed that believers are “born of God;” however, they realize that the birth anthropomorphism applied to God is in every way unlike natural birth. Thus, the Johannine concept of birth remains transcendent and unexplained, enabling it to function symbolically.

how the Λόγος/Φῶς gives those who receive him the right to become children of God and be born of God. However, this birth does not involve natural genealogy, physical effort or desire, or human participation. Because the birth symbol is universal, many aspects of this description of birth are not unusual or unfamiliar for Greek and Hebrew cultures.<sup>470</sup>

Birth and family are universal, human experiences, and in vv. 12-13 the terms τέκνον, ἀμὰ, σάρξ, θέλημα ἄνδρος, and γεννάω express experiences from ancient Mediterranean cultures. First, for John's Greek and Jewish audience, ἀμὰ may refer to natural generation, that is, the blood lines of both parents, for in the ancient world blood was viewed as the main element in producing children due to belief that conception was caused by the mingling of male and female blood.<sup>471</sup> Second, John's ancient audience would have understood the phrase ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπος θελήματος σαρκὸς to mean either parental passion,<sup>472</sup> or human decision to conceive and bear children.<sup>473</sup> Third, ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπος θελήματος ἄνδρος may refer to the will of the husband in the childbearing process, indicating the father's authority in the decision to have a child.<sup>474</sup> In addition, both Jewish

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<sup>470</sup> Petersen comments that the author is using everyday language in a special way and in contrast with everyday use. Petersen, *Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light*, 9.

<sup>471</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 141. Morris notes that in antiquity, birth was the result of the action of blood; he recalls Wis. 7:1-2, "In the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh, within the period often months compacted with blood, from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage." Morris, *Gospel According To John*, 89.

<sup>472</sup> Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:404.

<sup>473</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 141. According to Lee, the contrast is between human devising and effort, on the one hand, and divine generativity on the other; thus, vv. 12-13 depict "the ineffectiveness of human effort, and the extraordinary simplicity of that which is divinely wrought." Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 141.

<sup>474</sup> Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:404.

and Greco-Roman audiences, who understood the mother's body as an incubator for the male seed,<sup>475</sup> would have regarded οὐδὲν θελήματος νόμος as reference to the male initiating role in generating a child, which involves the need for heirs.<sup>476</sup> Fourth, ἅλλοι θεοὶ γεννήθησαν describes the Johannine birth as completely, divinely initiated and generated—the birth of believers is not from any human initiative;<sup>477</sup> rather, “it is a strictly supernatural event, wrought by God alone.”<sup>478</sup>

For John's audience, the symbolic depiction of God as a Father who bears children would evoke concepts of Mediterranean families and the socio-cultural implications of belonging to the family of God. The family was the basic social structure of life in the ancient Mediterranean world. Through birth, a person became part of a family, which implied privileges and responsibilities.<sup>479</sup> Furthermore, birth and acceptance into a family automatically meant that children stood in a well-defined relationship to the father.<sup>480</sup> Thus, John's hearer-readers would understand the believers' moral responsibility to the Father. The father's reputation was the starting point of the reputation and character of his children;<sup>481</sup> typical ancient Mediterranean thought

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<sup>475</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 135.

<sup>476</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 141.

<sup>477</sup> Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters of John* (3 vols.; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2010), 2:9.

<sup>478</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: Crossroad, 1980) 1: 263.

<sup>479</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 166. The bloodline and family into which a person was born played crucial roles in the eventual expected behavior of that person. Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 166. Kinship relations were characterized by harmony, agreement, unity, common commitment to the same ideals, sharing of a common religion, and sharing of resources. David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 139.

<sup>480</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 167.

<sup>481</sup> DeSilva, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 137.



believed that children should act according to the Father's identity,<sup>482</sup> and the father's authority was expected to be balanced by love.

In the ancient world, a person's family of origin established his or her social position in the world. Israelites gave careful attention to their lineage and pedigree.<sup>483</sup> They drew on their kinship as in the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from which they derived cohesion.<sup>484</sup> In Rome, imperial, powerful, and pervasive bonds of kinship were used to bring unrelated people together in a "fictive kinship" that provided political and social unity for the empire. Therefore, the nation was viewed as a household with the emperor as the "father of the country" of a vast extended family.<sup>485</sup> As a result a family could exist without the bonds of the natural human bloodline.<sup>486</sup>

The pre-semantic assimilation of concepts of birth and family outlined above reveal the far reaching implications of the Johannine symbol of birth introduced in the Prologue. Ideas of human generation and family, rooted in the human experience of Greek and Jewish cultures, shed light on the life-giving mission of the Son in collaboration with the Father. Belief in the Son enables humanity to become children of God and partake in the SFR.

### 6.3.2 Semantic Assimilation

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<sup>482</sup> Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 167.

<sup>483</sup> DeSilva, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 137.

<sup>484</sup> DeSilva, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 138.

<sup>485</sup> DeSilva, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 142.

<sup>486</sup> According to DeSilva, this became the prominent idea of the early Christian movement where members are joined to one another by virtue of the fact that they are all born into one family under God the Father. DeSilva, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 142.

Semantic assimilation occurs when characteristics of a literary symbol are assimilated by its referent. Although meanings of Johannine symbolism are discovered at a transcendent level, Jesus the primary referent still assimilates symbolic characteristics identified at the semantic level. The temple symbolism in the Prologue shows how semantic assimilation occurs by means of intertextuality. In v. 14, the Λόγος takes on human form and “dwells” with humanity. The verb σκηνώω, which means to live, take up residence,<sup>487</sup> or settle down permanently in a place,<sup>488</sup> symbolizes the HB tabernacle/temple that represented God’s dwelling on earth where he manifested his presence. The human body of the Λόγος is likened to God’s dwelling place; thus, Jesus assimilates characteristics of the divine act of tent/temple dwelling portrayed in the HB.

In the HB, the tabernacle and temple housed and displayed the glory of God as a means of fulfilling covenantal promises of divine presence and self-revelation (Ex 25:8). Likewise, the body of the Λόγος housed the glory of God, confirmed in the testimony of witnesses who testify to beholding the glory of the Son (v. 14). By displaying the glory of God in and through his earthly body, the Λόγος assimilates theological connotations implied in the HB equivalent of σκηνώω.<sup>489</sup> In Exod 25:8, which relates God’s command to build the tabernacle, the verb בָּנָה is replaced with בָּרָא (בָּרָאִיתִי וְבָנִיתִי)<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> BDAG, 929. Σκηνώω corresponds with בָּנָה meaning, “dwell, settle, or reside.” HALOT, 1496.

<sup>488</sup> D. J. MacLeod, “The Incarnation of the Word: John 1:14,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (2004): 77.

<sup>489</sup> Against HB background, σκηνώω implies the incarnate Λόγος is the new localization of God’s presence; hence, the enfleshed Λόγος succeeds and replaces both tabernacle and temple as the glorified sign of divine presence among humanity. Raymond F. Collins, *These Things Have Been Written: Studies On The Fourth Gospel* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990), 119-200. According to Collins, σκηνώω is filled with theological significance and situates the presence of the incarnate Word in the world within the broad context of salvation history by means of sacerdotal-liturgical imagery in the priestly traditions embodied in the HB. See: Collins, *These Things Have Been Written*, 189-205.

<sup>490</sup> *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996).

and reads, “I will be *seen* among them.” The Λόγος is therefore, the *visible* manifestation of the God. Moreover in the LXX, the tabernacle is referred to as σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου (tent of witness), connecting σκηνώ to the ministry of the Λόγος as an agent and witness of God. Hence, the Λόγος assimilates characteristics of visible glory and divine agency implied in the symbolic terminology σκηνώ. Furthermore the enfleshed Λόγος takes on characteristics of the HB tabernacle/temple as the locus of God’s self-revelation to humanity; the Son is Revealer of the Father.

In the Prologue, Jesus assimilates several characteristics of σκηνώ identified at the semantic level of the text. The symbolic use of σκηνώ in v. 14 reveals more details of the SFR presented in vv. 1-2. The incarnate Son is literally the earthly dwelling place of God and as a divine emissary/witness he reveals God’s glory and covenant faithfulness.

### 6.3.3 Interpretative Assimilation

Interpretative assimilation explains how interpreters of Johannine symbolism *gradually* comprehend meaning as symbols/symbolic terminologies recur, expand, and develop in the narrative. At first, the symbolism may be an alien idea; however, at different stages of symbolic expansion, hearer-readers gradually assimilate or take in symbolic meaning. The symbol of light again illustrates this principle.

The initial occurrence of φῶς in v. 4 reveals light only as an object originating from the life indwelling the Λόγος. However, in v. 5, interpreters are confronted with the potent nature of φῶς over darkness and at this point may apprehend this depiction as a personification of light. The obvious titular use φῶς in vv. 6-8 confirms the

personification, and hearer-readers understand that Φῶς is a person. Through the depiction of the Baptizer as a witness *sent from God*, the interpreter assimilates the symbolic implication of Φῶς as a genuine divine emissary from God, and understands that humanity has to decide whether to believe in him. Symbolic assimilation continues in v. 9, where Φῶς is re-presented with three modifiers. First, ἔρχομενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον hints of the entrance of the Light into the world; second, ἰληθινός authenticates the divine agency of the Light; and third, ὁ φωτίζει πάντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον signifies the mission of the Light to all humanity. Consequently, interpreters assimilate knowledge that Φῶς is a divine agent sent by God into the world to enlighten humanity with the divine light indwelling him.

However, the narrative gives no knowledge of the content of enlightenment; this emerges in the final segment of the Prologue. Although the φῶς symbolism does not appear after v. 9, vv. 14 and 18 contain several allusions to light, which give interpreters insight into what enlightenment entails. In v. 14, witnesses testify about seeing the glory of the Λόγος, which they liken to glory shared between father and son. Interpreters familiar with the understanding that δόξα signifies self-revelation assimilate the notion that the Λόγος is a divine Son who comes into the world to reveal God as Father. This idea is confirmed in v. 18 where God is directly referred to as Father, and the Λόγος as μονογενὴς. With the Prologue's final declaration that the mission of the Son is to make the Father known, the interpreter fully assimilates the symbolic import of φῶς—the Son has come to enlighten humanity with the knowledge of God the Father.

## 6.4 Association

The first type of association in this theory explains the semantic symbol/metaphor relation, showing how metaphors function symbolically; the second association describes how figurative clusters organize around symbols to facilitate meaning.

#### 6.4.1 Metaphorical Association

In the Prologue, the metaphor μονογενής functions symbolically, signifying the intimate filial relationship between Son and Father (vv 14, 18). Μονογενής means unique, only one of its kind within a specific relationship, or one and only.<sup>491</sup> Hence, μονογενής does not merely point to the Sonship of the Λόγος, but rather to the *uniqueness* of his Sonship. The first occurrence of μονογενής appears in the witnesses' description of beholding the glory of the incarnate Λόγος, who is likened to the son of a father (v. 14). In v. 14, a key to understanding the symbolic implications of μονογενής lies in the terms σκηνόω and δόξα, which signify the manifestation of divine, transcendent glory. The metaphor μονογενής associates with the symbolic terms σκηνόω and δόξα to explain the role of the Jesus as the Son whose mission is to reveal his Father's glory.

In v. 18, μονογενής unmistakably appears as a title of Jesus the Λόγος, introducing him formally μονογενής and thus, as Son of God the Father. The phrase □  
□ν ε□ς τ□ν κόλπον το□ πατρ□ς symbolizes filial intimacy and sheds more light on the

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<sup>491</sup> BDAG, 658. Several scholars decry the translation “only begotten” for μονογενής, among them are Von Wahlde who explains that μονογενής means “unique” and “one” (monos) of a “kind” (genos). Although the term is related to the verb γεννάω, etymology does not help in a correct understanding. Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters of John*, 2:11. See also Keener who insists, “Only begotten’ fails the etymology test.” Keener points out that other writers contemporary with John such as Plutarch used μονογενής to indicate uniqueness rather than procreation. Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:412-413.

SFR. First, holding an object to one's bosom signifies the specialness of that object;<sup>492</sup> second, as a term of intimacy and endearment, μονογενής is similar to the word ἁγαπητός<sup>493</sup> used in the LXX to describe Isaac the son whom Abraham loved dearly (Gen 2:22). Isaac was μονογενής in that he was special; he alone carried the covenant promises.<sup>494</sup> In light of the allusion to Isaac, μονογενής may symbolize the sacrifice in the earthly mission of the Son of God.<sup>495</sup> Thus, it is possible that the metaphor μονογενής symbolizes the love of the Father exhibited in the crucifixion of his Son.

In the Prologue, the most important implication of μονογενής is its function in revealing the divine person formerly called Λόγος (v. 1), Φίλος (vv. 5, 7-8), and ὁ ἡσους Χριστός (v. 17) as *Son of God the Father* (20:31). Μονογενής depicts the filial relationship is neither aloof nor abstract, but characterized by intimacy and love. Thus, μονογενής is the starting point for understanding the symbolic implications in the transcendent relationship between Son and Father that is developed in the ensuing narrative. In sum, μονογενής signifies the Father's self-revelation, manifested glory, and covenantal sacrifice, which are all aspects of the Son's mission to the world.

#### 6.4.2 Organizational Association

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<sup>492</sup> Keener also notes in the gospel tradition Jesus used the image of being in Abraham's bosom to denote intimacy and fellowship (Luke 16:22). Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:424.

<sup>493</sup> ἁγαπητός refers to one who is in a very special relationship with another who is dear, prized, or valued. *BDAG*, 7.

<sup>494</sup> Lawrence R. Farley, *The Gospel of John: Beholding the Glory* (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 2006), 21.

<sup>495</sup> See Keener who comments that in Jewish texts, the title applies particularly to Isaac at the Akedah, of whom God said "Sacrifice your son, your 'only son' whom you love;" therefore, μονογενής increases the pathos of sacrifice (3:16) represented by Jesus' act of loving obedience in view of his special relationship with the Father. Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:415-416.

Figures of speech organize around symbols to develop meaning in the Johannine narrative. In the Prologue, although ζω□ occurs only twice (v. 4), several figures of speech expand the symbol and deepen its meaning. The first five verses of the Prologue contain allusions from the HB (□ν □ρχ□,<sup>496</sup> θε□ς, γίνομαι, φ□ς, ζω□, and σκοτία), which occur in the LXX creation story (Gen 1:1-5). These allusions point to the preexistent, creative, life-giving authority of the Λόγος. Next in v. 4, the Prologue uses repetition and parallelism to emphasize the life-giving mission of the Λόγος to humanity: □ν α□τ□ ζω□ □ν, κα□ □ ζω□ □ν. In v. 5, the life symbol is intensified by the dramatic contrast in the imagery of darkness in conflict with the light, which originates from the divine life. Σκοτία usually symbolizes death; the imagery and contrast in v. 5 therefore signify the Son's power over death, which plays in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son later in the narrative.

Another cluster of figuration that contributes to the symbolic meaning of ζω□ is the imagery of family and birth in vv. 12-13. In v. 13, the words α□μα, σάρξ, □νήρ, γεννάω, form a cluster of birth imagery and the family imagery in the phrase τέκνα θεο□ γενέσθαι points to the life-giving authority of the Λόγος/Φ□ς. Additionally, the verb γεννάω personifies God as giving birth. Thus, the cluster of birth and family imagery and

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<sup>496</sup> Gen 1:1 ( LXX ) reads, □ν □ρχ□ □ποίησεν □ θε□ς τ□ν ο□ραν□ν κα□ τ□ν γ□ν. Based on themes of preexistence, creation, and the opening words □ν □ρχ□, many scholars connect the Prologue directly with Genesis 1. According to Bauckham, "We do not need to postulate any background to these verses other than Genesis 1 and the tradition of Jewish creation accounts." Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 241. Similarly, Evans notes that the language of Gen 1:1-3 provides the closest parallels to the opening words of the Prologue. Evans, *Word and Glory*, 79. See also: Peder Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 83-84; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:4, 24; Oscar Cullmann, "The Theological Content of the Prologue to John in Its Present Form" in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990), 297; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:364,366-368; Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 31; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 46-47, 49-51; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 64-67; Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St John*, 1:221; Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 95; Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 2: 28; Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 52.

personification of God expands the symbol of life, giving insight into the nature and result of life imparted by the Λόγος/Φίλος.

In sum, figures of speech organized around the symbol of life portray the SFR in the following ways: 1) allusions in vv. 1-3 emphasize the divine preexistent relationship between the Λόγος and God and their union in creation, 2) repetition and parallelism in v. 4 stresses the life-giving mission of the Λόγος from his transcendent abode with God, to humanity on earth, 3) imagery in v. 5 proleptically depicts the victory of the Son over death, thus fulfilling his mission from the Father, and 5) the cluster of family and birth imagery in vv. 12-13 show the Son and Father's joint participation in the birth of believers into the SFR.

## **6.5 Transcendence**

The effectiveness of Johannine symbolism lies in its transcendent quality, which enables meaning to be discovered beyond semantic limitations of the text. Thus, transcendent symbols are most appropriate in portraying the transcendent relationship between the Son and Father. Four main principles of transcendence in this theory are as follows: 1) semantic, 2) dualistic, 3) revelatory, and 4) transformative.

### **6.5.1 Semantic Transcendence**

Semantic transcendence occurs when the intended meaning of a symbol or symbolic expression is discovered outside the semantic range of the text; however, the symbolism still retains some of its semantic meanings. The Prologue introduces the word *ἔρχομαι*, which when used in a Christological context, symbolizes the sending and



coming of the Son into the world at the behest of the Father. Ἐρχομαι occurs twice in the Prologue and on a semantic level may basically imply a birth narrative not included in the Gospel or refer to the emergence of the Λόγος in the narrative plot.<sup>497</sup>

The first mention of ἔρχομαι occurs at the end of the Baptizer's witness of the Λόγος; the Baptizer is sent by a *transcendent God* to validate the mission of the Λόγος *in the world* (vv. 6-8). The end of the Baptizer's witness mentions the *coming of the Son into the world* to enlighten humanity (v. 9). Thus, ἔρχομαι in v. 9 symbolizes the transcendent origin of the Son's presence in the world—he comes from his transcendent abode with the Father and enters into the temporal world to accomplish a divine mission. The second occurrence of ἔρχομαι is again in context of the Baptizer's witness. In v. 15 the Baptizer mentions the coming of the Son using the participial phrase ὁ ὤπισθ' μου ἔρχόμενος, referring to the chronological entrance of the Son into the temporal world; the Son enters into the Johannine narrative after the Baptizer. However ὁ ὤπισθ' μου ἔρχόμενος is modified by the following two prepositional phrases: ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν and ὅτι πρότερός μου ἐν, which again point to the timeless, transcendent origin of the Son and hence, the superiority of his agency and mission above the Baptizer's.

In sum, the Prologue introduces transcendent implications in the word, ἔρχομαι which in the Johannine narrative acts as symbolic terminology signifying the coming of the Son *from the transcendent Father*; whenever ἔρχομαι appears in a Christological context, it reminds hear-readers of the transcendent nature of both the Son's origin and his relationship with the Father.

### 6.5.2 Dualistic Transcendence

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<sup>497</sup> The coming of the Son is of course strongly implied in v. 14, where his incarnation is declared.

In the Johannine narrative, certain symbols and symbolic terminology express dualistic dimensions of transcendence and immanence in the SFR.<sup>498</sup> The Prologue for example, contains symbols and symbolic language that reflect dualistic dimensions of the SFR. In v. 1-3, the HB allusion  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$  symbolically introduces the preexistent Λόγος situated with God in the heavenly, transcendent realm. However, by the end of the narrative, the verb  $\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\tau\omicron$  symbolically positions the Son-Λόγος in the earthly, temporal realm, commencing his mission to reveal the Father, *still in transcendent relationship with the Father* (v. 18). Verses 1-3 symbolically portray the Λόγος as divine and transcendent while vv. 14-16 reveal him as the human Jesus Christ imparting grace and truth to believers on earth, *yet still the transcendent Son of God*. In the Prologue therefore, the symbolic introduction of the Son reflects an unmistakable dualism in the SFR. The Son spans two realms; he relates to his Father above in the transcendent realm and to humanity below in the temporary realm.

### 6.5.3 Revelatory Transcendence

The purpose of the Fourth Gospel is to reveal Jesus as Son of God and transcendent symbolism is used to reveal the Son in relationship with the Father. The Gospel conveys SFR revelation through transcendent symbolism primarily because divine revelation cannot be fully expressed within the semantic constraints of a narrative.

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<sup>498</sup> The concept of dualism in this theory is strictly limited to the transcendent/immanent relationship between the Son with transcendent origin, who ministers on earth, and the transcendent Father who is closely involved with the Son.

In the Prologue, the transcendent symbol of light reveals the nature and mission of the Son bringing revelation of God the Father to humanity (v. 4).<sup>499</sup> In v. 5, the contrast between the symbols of light and darkness depicted in a transcendent struggle, points to the conflict episodes that ensue in the narrative, which ends with the crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>500</sup> The audience will later understand that the conflict is not merely about who exercises greater authority, Jesus or his religious opponents, rather the conflict is about Jesus, Light to the world, who is resisting the darkness of blindness and ignorance in people to reveal the Father. The symbolic depiction of darkness unable to overpower the Light alerts hearer-readers to the Son's ultimate victory over death and return to his transcendent abode with the Father. Thus, the transcendent symbol of light overcoming darkness signifies the Son overcoming the darkness of spiritual ignorance and fulfilling his mission to impart divine light and life to all who believe in him.

#### **6.5.4 Transformative Transcendence**

Transcendent symbolism reveals the spiritual realities offered in the Gospel and enables hearer-readers be transformed by them (20:31). The Prologue shows how transcendent symbolism leads to transformation that can take place in the lives of those who believe in the Son of God.

In v. 4, the symbol of light signifies that the Son is in the world to offer transformative light to humanity. The Baptizer's witness in vv. 6-8 informs the audience

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<sup>499</sup> Neyrey comments that Jesus is light "in the sense of illumination and revelation." Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (NCBC; York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42-43.

<sup>500</sup> The struggle is transcendent because the conflict between the Son and his antagonists stems primarily from his claims *divine or heavenly origin and Sonship and transcendent relationship with the Father*.

what to do with the Light—believe in him; thus, the transforming power of the light is attained through belief in the Son. Nevertheless, a question remains: what does enlightenment entail? The last verse of the Prologue answers this question, for v. 18 declares that the Son has come to make the Father known. Hearer-readers are thereby informed that the enlightenment offered them entails knowing the Father.

In v. 5, the symbolic portrayal of light against darkness depicts the struggle involved in the Son's mission to enlighten humanity, which hints at a struggle the audience may experience before believing in the Son. This struggle is underscored in v. 10-11, which narrates experiences of two groups of people—those who do not recognize the Son and reject him, and those who believe in and receive him. Thus, hearer-readers understand that they also face the same choices—reject or receive the Son. Verse 13 narrates the transformation that accompanies receiving and believing in the Son, which is the experience of new birth and transformation into children of God.

The symbolic testimony of the witnesses in vv. 14 -16 also points to transformative experiences offered in the Gospel. The witnesses testify of *beholding* the divine glory of the Son and *partaking* of his grace and truth. Even though hearer-readers cannot see the Son physically as the witnesses did, by hearing/ reading and believing in the narrative presentation of the Son, they can also behold his glory and be transformed by it.

Transcendent symbols are vehicles of insight, as hearer-readers conceptualize symbolic meaning and ponder on the theological implications of transcendent symbolism. They understand that as part of “humanity,” the Son of God also comes to enlighten *them*. Hearer-readers can receive the Son, be transformed by his revelation of the Father,

and become children of God. Thus, the Prologue, through transcendent symbolism, reveals the transformation offered to both those represented in the narrative and in the hearer-readers.

## 6.6 Summary

In this chapter, the four principles underlying the formulated theory of symbolism are applied to sections of the Prologue. Symbolic presentation shows how the Prologue introduces Johannine symbolism and SFR *together*, thereby setting a symbolic pattern for the ensuing narrative. On the other hand, symbolic re-presentation emphasizes and expands the portrayal of the SFR, and symbolic reflection and resemblance explains how hearer-readers engage in the interpretative process in understanding the SFR. Pre-semantic assimilation accounts for the universal roots of Johannine symbolism, which enable comprehension of key symbols that express the earthly mission carried out in the SFR. Semantic assimilation explains how semantics are related to the characterization of the Son. Interpretative assimilation clarifies how symbolism progressively leads hearer-readers to a clearer understanding of the SFR. The principle of association explains how metaphors and other figures of speech organize around symbolic presentation of the SFR. Last, the principle of symbolic transcendence describes the transcendent, dualistic, revelatory, and transformative functions of Johannine symbolism, thus, stressing the theological purpose of the narrative's presentation of the SFR. In sum, the theory applied to the Prologue reveals the symbolic structure underlying the Gospel's presentation of the SFR and gives a preview of how SFR and symbolism emerge and expand together in the Johannine narrative.



## CHAPTER 7: PROLOGUE: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

### 7.1 Introduction

The function of the Prologue as a thematic and theological preview to John's Gospel is widely recognized by scholars.<sup>501</sup> The Prologue *simultaneously* introduces the SFR and Johannine symbolism, thereby commencing the narrative design of the Gospel. This chapter analyzes the plot, semantics, characterization, and timeframes of the Prologue's narrative structure. The plot analysis confirms the *centrality* of the SFR in the Prologue, which in turn establishes the centric position of the SFR in the Gospel plot. The semantic analysis shows how the Prologue constitutes a semantic domain for SFR symbolism in the Johannine narrative and for John's Christological Symbolology. Character analysis of Son and Father explains how their characterization occurs simultaneously, thus, Son and Father are virtually inseparable in the narrative. The time analysis shows how the prominence of the SFR in the Johannine narrative is aided by narrative shifts between transcendent and temporal time. The chapter concludes with observations on how the analyses contribute to the presentation of the symbolic SFR in the narrative and to John's Christological Symbolology.

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<sup>501</sup> See: D. A. Carson, "The Gospel According to John," *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 111; Warren Carter, *John: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 34; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 19; Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 41-42; Gail R. O'Day, "The Word Become Flesh: Story and Theology in the Gospel of John," in "What is John?" (vol. 2 Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel; ed. Fernando Segovia; Atlanta: SBL, 1998), 71; Gail R. O'Day, "'I Have Said These Things to You . . .': The Unsettled Place of Jesus' Discourses in Literary Approaches to the Fourth Gospel," in *Word, Theology, and Community in John* (ed. John Painter, R. Alan Culpepper, and Fernando F. Segovia. Danvers; MA: Chalice Press, 2002), 146; O'Grady, "The Prologue," 220; Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St John*, 224; Phillips, *The Prologue*, 2-3, 75; Fernando Segovia, "John 1:1-18 as Entrée into Johannine Reality," in *Word, Theology, and Community in John* (ed. John Painter, R. Alan Culpepper, and Fernando F. Segovia; Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2002), 33-64.

## 7.2 Plot Analysis

The Prologue encapsulates the Gospel plot and is therefore essential for understanding the plot of the larger Johannine narrative. Although not every detail of the twenty-one chapter Gospel narrative appears in the Prologue's eighteen verses, every aspect of the SFR, symbolism, and events in the Prologue develop in the course of the Gospel narrative. The analysis examines the plot in terms of how the SFR and its accompanying symbolism emerge sequentially in the Prologue events. The passage is examined in four sequences.

The Prologue plot comprises situations and events, which when presented together provide a panoramic view of the Gospel and facilitate symbolic meaning. The sequential nature of the Prologue plot integrates events in the Johannine narrative. The Prologue events center on the person and activities of Jesus the Son in relationship with God his Father. The sequence of these activities unveils a divine saga foretelling events in the Gospel narrative unfolding in light of the SFR. The plot sequence in the Prologue is as follows:

**Figure 4: Sequence of Events in the Prologue**

Sequence One: The Λόγος Dwells with God (vv. 1-3)		
Event One	The Λόγος is with God	vv. 1-3
Event Two	The Λόγος is Co-Creator with God	v. 3
Sequence Two: The Λόγος is Light in the World (vv. 4- 8)		
Event One	The Λόγος is light of humanity	v. 4
Event Two	The Λόγος shines in the darkness	v.5a
Event Three	Darkness attempts and fails to overcome the Light	v. 5b
Event Four	The Baptizer is sent to witness about the Light	vv. 6-8
Sequence Three: The Rejection and Reception of the Light (vv. 9-13)		
Event One	The Light comes into the world	v. 9
Event Two	The world fails to recognize him	v. 10
Event Three	His people fail to receive him	v. 11



Event Four	Those who believe in receive him	v. 12a
Event Five	The Son gives those who believe in him authority to become God's children	v. 12b
Event Six	Those who believe are born of God	v. 13
Sequence Four: The Witness to the Glory of the Son (vv. 14-18)		
Event One	The incarnation of the Λόγος	v. 14a
Event Two	Eyewitnesses behold the glory of the Son	v. 14b
Event Three	The witness of the Baptizer	v. 15
Event Four	The eyewitnesses experience grace	v. 16-17
Event Five	The Son is in filial intimacy with the Father	v. 18a
Event Six	The Son makes the Father known	v. 18b

### 7.2.1 Sequence One: The Λόγος Dwells with God (vv. 1-3)

The first event recorded in the Prologue is the close relationship existing between Son and Father who are referred to respectively as the Λόγος and Θεός. The Son and Father are prominently positioned together at the start of the narrative, *before the beginning of time*. In vv. 1-4, allusion to the Genesis creation story (ἐν ἀρχῇ, λόγος and φῶς), connects this event to Gen 1, where the HB events begin with the existence of God, before chronological time and the creation of the world. As in Gen 1:1, the Prologue gives no information about how the Λόγος or God came to be, the text simply declares they are already in existence *together*. The close position of the Λόγος and God introduces the following two important Johannine realities: 1) the close relationship or fellowship between the Λόγος and God, and 1) the divinity of the Λόγος who is also referred to as God.<sup>502</sup> The character of the Johannine Jesus cannot be understood without

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<sup>502</sup> Witherington explains, “*Theos* occurs without the definite article, which emphasizes the generic side of things (the *logos* is the *genus* or species of *theos*) . . . It emphasizes the kind of being the Word is or the Word’s true nature rather than the Word’s personal identity.” Ben Witherington, *The Many Faces of the Christ: The Christologies of the New Testament and Beyond* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 171.

taking these realities into consideration—the Son, whose character is entwined in relationship with his heavenly Father, is divine and transcendent in origin and nature.

The second event is the participation of the Λόγος in creating the world into which he eventually arrives. This event is also synonymous with the creation event of Gen 1 where God uses first person plural (Gen 1:14), indicating the presence of more than one person in the work of creation. Therefore, the Prologue informs the hearer-reader of the presence and participation of the Son and Father in the events of Gen 1.<sup>503</sup> This creation event further establishes the pre-existence and divinity of the Λόγος. The reiteration and emphasis of the Λόγος creating *everything* (v. 3) inscribes into the larger Johannine narrative the transcendence and authority of the Son over everyone he encounters in his earthly mission.

### 7.2.2 Sequence Two: The Λόγος as Light in the World (vv. 4-8)

The sequence of events in vv. 4-8 highlights the purpose of the Λόγος in the world; he comes into the world to be and give to light humanity. Verse 4 states that the light which the Λόγος gives to humanity *originates* from the eternal life indwelling him. The Prologue therefore informs hearer-readers that the Λόγος, shortly to be revealed as Son of God the Father, is the transcendent, divine, all powerful creator with a mission to bring divine life and light to humanity he created. Focus on the Son's mission on earth continues with the unobtrusive entrance of the Λόγος onto earth.<sup>504</sup> Now called the Light,

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<sup>503</sup> According to Borgen, John not only reproduced words from Gen 1, he substituted Gen 1:1 with a creation formula. Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul*, 83-84. Borgen argues that in John 1:1, 18 the title ὁ λόγος replaces ὁ ἵπεν ὁ θεός in Gen 1:3. Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul*, 77.

<sup>504</sup> Kelber describes the transition thusly: “The Λόγος was installed ἐν ὁρχῇ only to be dislodged from it.” Kelber, “Birth of a Beginning,” 219. However, v. 18 where the Son is depicted as still in fellowship with the Father, does not give the impression that the Son has been dislodged.

the Λόγος is portrayed as *presently* shining in the darkness of the world, the focus now shifts to the Son's mission on earth. Transition of the Λόγος from the transcendent to earthly realm is supported by the historical present φαίνει, which may refer to the visible appearance of the Λόγος in the world.<sup>505</sup>

The event of the Light shining in the world generates a reaction recorded in the next event where darkness attempts to overcome the light, but fails (v.5b), introducing a portent tone into the Prologue plot.<sup>506</sup> This event of darkness attempting to overcome the Light signifies the conflict the Son encounters with antagonists who do not believe in his origin and mission from the Father.<sup>507</sup> The event also points to other events such as the Son's crucifixion by his antagonists and his resurrection by the Father.<sup>508</sup> Verse 5 therefore hints at the ultimate victory of the Son, giving hearer-readers indication of how the Johannine plot ends.<sup>509</sup>

The fourth event in this sequence introduces the Baptizer. The event of the Baptizer's witness highlights the Father's validation of his Son's person, agency and mission, a significant theme in the Gospel. The aim of the Baptizer's *witness* is to

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<sup>505</sup> Φαίνω also means to appear or become visible. *BDAG*, 1047.

<sup>506</sup> Καταλαμβάνω is a strengthening of λαμβάνω, and means "to seize or grasp" especially in a hostile manner. *TDNT*, 4:5-7. Darkness in John denotes not only the absence of light but also the presence of evil. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 119. Σκότος also carries the connotation of a subjective attitude of secrecy and deception. In the HB darkness (ךחך) denotes moral evil or all that is a threat to life. *TDNT*, 7:424, 426.

<sup>507</sup> Von Wahlde commenting on v. 5 states: "This is the first of a variety of ways in which the hymn describes the result of the appearance of the Word: being in the world but not known by the world, coming into his own but not being accepted, the Word becoming flesh." Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters of John*, 2:5.

<sup>508</sup> See: Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters of John*, 1:258.

<sup>509</sup> Verse 5 therefore, is a prolepsis of two events mentioned later in the Prologue; the conflict expresses rejection of the Son in vv. 10-11, while the light shining (φαίνω) in darkness can be interpreted as reception of the glory of the Son in vv. 15, 16.

encourage people to *believe* in the Son sent by the Father (v. 6-7), thus introducing the recurring themes of witness and belief in the Johannine narrative.

### **7.2.3 Sequence Three: Rejection and Reception of the Light (vv. 9-13)**

While vv. 4-5 indirectly refers to the presence of the Λόγος in the world, v. 9 indirectly mentions his *coming* into the world. The next four events describe reactions to the mission of the Son (vv. 10-13). Two events reveal negative reactions to the Son. First, the world fails to recognize the Λόγος, and second, when he reaches out to his very own people,<sup>510</sup> they do not receive him (vv. 10-11). The fourth event describes the positive reaction of those who believe in the name of the Son and receive him (vv. 12-13). In the fifth event of this rejection-reception sequence is the significant theme of spiritual birth in the Gospel plot. The Son gives those who believe and receive him the right to become children of the Father, thus, they are born of God (vv. 12-13). This stage of the plot therefore reveals the crux of the Gospel message—the Father sends his Son into the world so that humanity may believe in him and in doing so they partake of the divine relationship.

### **7.2.4 Sequence Four: The Witness to the Glory of the Son (vv. 14-18)**

The first event in this sequence is the incarnation of the Λόγος. The early part of the Prologue mentions the presence of the Λόγος in the world and finally in v. 14,

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<sup>510</sup> Τὸ ἴδιον refers to the Son's own people—the Jews/nation of Israel. See: Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters of John*, 2:7, 30; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:395, 399.

unidentified witnesses *formally* announce his transition from transcendence to immanence—the Λόγος becomes a human being and is likened to the son of a father.<sup>511</sup> The second event is the unspecified eyewitnesses testifying to the person and ministry of the Son (vv. 14-18). The testimony stands out in the Prologue, due to the sudden use of second person plural. This witness event is the *first personal and direct witness* to the person and mission of the Son.<sup>512</sup>

The third event in this sequence is the Baptizer's witness to the preeminence of the Son (v. 15). The Baptizer's testimony references the following two events previously mentioned in the Prologue: 1) the preexistence of the Son (ἐμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν . . . ἐτι πρὸ τός μου ἐν), mentioned in vv. 1-3,<sup>513</sup> and 2) the coming of the Son (ἐκ πίσω μου ῥχόμενος), mentioned in v. 9. This first recorded witness of the Baptizer is most likely the event recorded in 1:29-34 since the words in 1:30 are almost identical to v. 15 of the Prologue. This event of the Baptizer's witness is inserted into the middle of the eyewitnesses to buttress the testimony of the eyewitnesses.<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> Although the Prologue does not reveal details of Λόγος "becoming" human, it is possible that the author assumes at some of his audience is aware of the nativity stories in the Synoptic Gospels. Thus, John's nativity is narrated in one verse. One wonders why the incarnation event does not appear earlier on in the narrative, since the presence and mission of the Son-Λόγος on earth is mentioned proleptically as early as v. 4. It is possible that the incarnation, which is the pinnacle of events narrated in the Prologue, occurs in v. 14 to establish the validity of all that has been previously narrated about the Son through the unidentified eyewitnesses.

<sup>512</sup> Although John's witness to the authenticity of the Light is mentioned in vv. 6-8, his words appear from v. 15 onwards.

<sup>513</sup> Zerwick's translation of John's testimony reads, "From the very moment he began his existence in time, he surpassed me in dignity owing to his pre-existence." Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis*, 286.

<sup>514</sup> It is possible that the Baptizer is also part of the witnessing community of v. 14, yet it seems odd that the collective witnessing would begin v. 15 with the ἐωάννης and switch from 1<sup>st</sup> person plural to 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular.

Verse 16 introduces the fourth event, which describes the witnesses' encounter with the Son when they experience a measure of grace upon another. The fifth event of this sequence recalls the first event where the Λόγος is positioned in close relationship with God (vv. 1-2). In v. 18, the relationship is now depicted as a Son-Father relationship with the Λόγος now called μονογενὴς θεός and God is referred to as πατήρ. With the SFR now established in the narrative, the Prologue concludes with a last event, which is the mission of the Son to reveal the Father. The relationship depicted in vv. 1-2 with the preposition πρὸς is now portrayed in v. 18, with the participial phrase ἐκ τῆς κοίτης τοῦ πατρὸς. The close relationship in the SFR enables the Son to be the one most qualified to reveal the Father.

### 7.2.5 Summary

The Prologue plot is a grid through which the hearer-reader understands the same events as they develop in the Gospel narrative. The first sequence of events in the Prologue (vv. 1-3), establish the preexistence, divinity, power, authority, and transcendence of the Son in close relationship with the Father. The second sequence introduces the Son's ministry in the world and the conflict that arises resulting in his rejection as the Son sent by the Father. Furthermore, the event of the Baptizer's witness reveals the Father's involvement in the Son's earthly mission as he verifies the authenticity of the mission of his Son. The third sequence summarizes the rejection-reception events in the Gospel and distinguishes the main purpose of the SFR as bringing believers into the divine relationship. The final sequence of events brings the Prologue full circle. The witnesses' event reemphasizes the divinity and transcendence of the Son,

his special relationship with the Father, and the authenticity of his agency, all mentioned at the beginning of the Prologue. The Λόγος-Θεός relationship of vv. 1-2 becomes the SFR in v. 18 and although the Son retains this transcendent relationship, he commences his mission to make the Father known in the world.<sup>515</sup> Thus, the Prologue sets into motion the fine balancing act of situating the SFR in a transcendent-immanent relationship. The plot of the Prologue is not the beginning of the plot of the Gospel; it *is* the plot of the Gospel and with the last two words, ἵκενος ἐξηγήσατο, the Prologue sets the plot events into motion.

### 7.3 Semantic Analysis

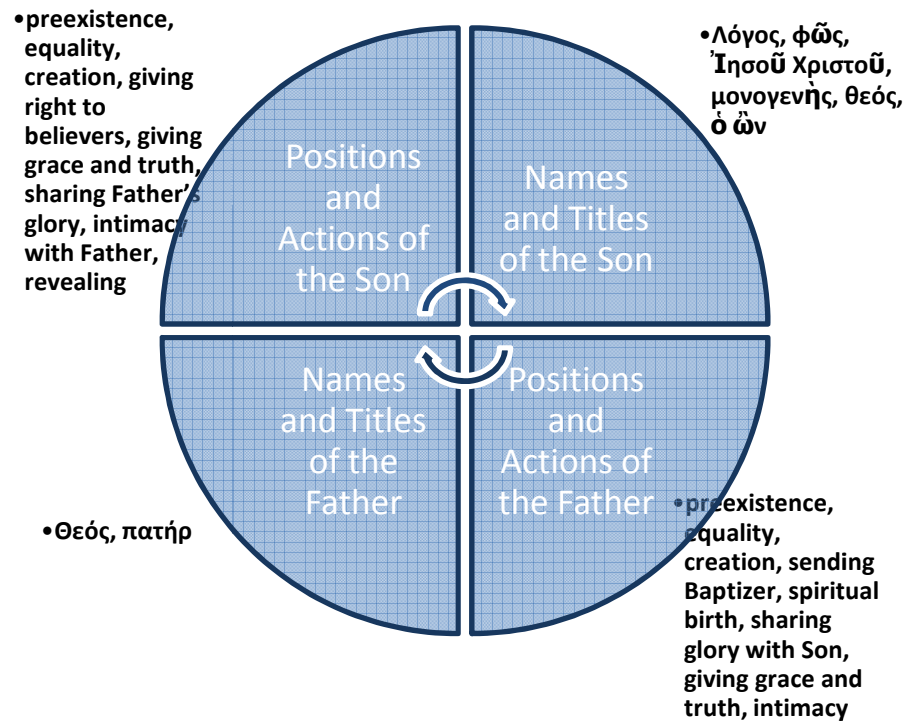
Analysis of SFR and symbolic language in the Prologue reveals a literary strategy in which John introduces the Son in *relationship* with the Father, thus setting the tone of the ensuing narrative. Although the Prologue contains no occurrence of υἱός and only one direct mention of πατήρ, this analysis shows how the passage still functions as a semantic domain and a narrative anchor for John's Christological Symbology.

#### 7.3.1 Semantic Field of Reference in the Prologue

#### Figure 5: Semantic Field of Reference for the SFR in the Prologue

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<sup>515</sup> See Keener regarding ὁ ὡς ἐκ τῶν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς (v. 18): "The conjunction of 'while being in . . . made known' (reading the participle temporally) suggests that Jesus revealed the Father while remaining in his bosom." Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:424-425.



The above field of reference identifies where names/titles of the Son or Father intersect with their positions/actions toward each other.<sup>516</sup> The semantic field therefore covers the following: 1) names/titles of the Son, 2) names/titles of the Father, 3) actions/positions of the Son in relation to the Father, 4) actions/positions of the Father in relation to the Son.

The various semantic ranges are as follows: 1) Names/titles of the Son: Λόγος (vv. 1 [x3], 14); θεός (vv. 1, 18); φῶς (vv. 5, 7, 8 [x2], 9);<sup>517</sup> μονογενῆς (v. 14, 18); ἰησοῦς Χριστός (v. 17); θεός (18)<sup>518</sup>; and ὁ ὢν (ἐκ τῶν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς).<sup>519</sup> 2)

<sup>516</sup> According to Lofthouse, John informs hearer-readers what the Son and Father *do in relation one another*. Lofthouse, *Father and the Son*, 41.

<sup>517</sup> Φῶς in vs. 4 is not viewed as titular.

<sup>518</sup> The textual problem in 1:18 is whether the verse should read μονογενῆς θεός or μονογενῆς υἱός. Μονογενῆς θεός is given strong external support and because μονογενῆς υἱός is theologically easier, it is most likely the result of scribal assimilation. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 169.



Names/titles of the Father: θεός (vv.1, 2, 6, 12, 13, 18) and πατήρ (vv. 14, 18). 3) The Son's actions/positions in relation to the Father: preexistent relationship (vv. 1-3, 15, 18), equality (vv. 1-2, 18), creation (vv. 3, 10), bestowing believers the right to become children of God (v. 12), giving grace to believers (v. 14, 17),<sup>520</sup> coming into the world/incarnation (v. 9, 11, 14), sharing the Father's glory (v. 14), seeing the Father (v. 18),<sup>521</sup> and revealing the Father (1:18). 4) The Father's positions/actions in relation to the Son: preexistence (vv. 1-2, 18), equality (vv. 1-2, 18), creation (v. 3, 10), sending the Baptizer (vv. 6-8), spiritual birth (vv. 12-13), sharing glory (v. 14), giving grace and truth (v. 7), and intimacy with the Son (v. 18).

### 7.3.2 The Prologue as a Semantic Domain for SFR and Symbolism

Semantic domains are passages dominated by the SFR and connected symbolism. Such passages reveal a lexical pairing of Son and Father. The Prologue is a semantic domain for the SFR because it contains thirteen names/titles of the Son and eight for the Father. The analysis reveals that lexical intersections between Son and Father take place in vv. 1- 3, 6-10, 12-13, 14, 16-18. Consequently, out of the Prologue's eighteen verses, fourteen (77.7%) contain intersections between titles/names and actions/positions of Son and Father.

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<sup>519</sup> The other participial reference to the Son is ἐπίσω μου ῥχόμενος (v. 15); pronominal references are: ὁ τοῦς (vv. 2, 15), αὐτοῦς (vv. 3 [x2], 4, 5, 6, 10 [x2], 11, 12 [x2], 14, 15, 16), ὁς (v. 9, 15), and κενοῦς (vv. 8, 18).

<sup>520</sup> The divine passive in τί νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως δόθη, χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια διὰ ἡσοῦ Χριστοῦ γένετο gives the notion of *God* giving grace and truth *through Jesus Christ*.

<sup>521</sup> The Son seeing the Father is implied in θεὸν οὐδεὶς ὥρακεν πώποτε (v. 18).

**Figure 6: SFR, Symbols/Symbolic Language, and Themes in the Prologue**

Verses	Intersection	Symbols/Symbolic Language and Themes
1-3	The Son is with God and is equal with God in divine essence, and creates the world (with the Father)	ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ρχὼς (x2), λόγος (x3)
3	The divine light in the Son is the source of the light he brings to humanity	ζωὴ (x2), φῶς (x2),
5	The Son-Light overcomes the darkness (opposition to his divine mission)	φῶς (x2), σκοτία, φαίνω
6-8	The Father sends the Baptizer to witness to the person and ministry of his Son, and to urge people to believe in the Son	μαρτυρία/μαρτυρέω (x3), φῶς (x3), πιστεύω
9	The Son is the true light who enlightens humanity; he comes into the world (from the Father)	φῶς/φωτίζω (x2), ὁρχομαι, κόσμος
10	The Son is in the world (he co-created with Father) and the world does not know him	κόσμος (x3), γινώσκω
11	The Son comes to his own people and they do not receive him	ὁρχομαι, παραλαμβάνω
12-13	The Son gives those who believe in him the right to become children of God and be born of God	λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, ὁξουσία, πιστεύω, ὁνομα, γεννάω
14	The Son takes on human form and dwells with humanity while sharing divine, visible glory with the Father	σὰρξ, σκηνώω, θεάομαι, δόξα, θεάομαι, δόξα (x2), μονογενής, ὁλήθεια
15	The Baptizer bears witness to the Son's preeminence, preexistence, and coming	μαρτυρέω, ὁρχομαι
16-17	In the HB, God gave the Law through Moses; however, in the Prologue, he gives grace and truth through his Son	λαμβάνω, ὁλήθεια (x2), νόμος, Μωϋσῆς, δίδωμι,
18	The Son is in the distinctive position of being in the closest possible fellowship with the Father, he is not only able to see the Father, he is the only one able to reveal him	ὁράω, μονογενής, ὁξηγέομαι

The Prologue contains a cluster of symbols/symbolic language and themes connected to the SFR, which are as follows: ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ρχὼς (v. 1, 2), λόγος (v. 1, 14), ζωὴ (v. 4), φῶς (v. 4), σκοτία (v. 5), καταλαμβάνω (v. 5), μαρτυρέω/ μαρτυρία (v. 7, 15), πιστεύω (v. 7, 12), ὁληθινός/ὁλήθεια (v. 9, 14, 17), κόσμος (v. 9, 10), ὁρχομαι (v. 9,

11, 15), γινώσκω (v. 10), παραλαμβάνω/λαμβάνω (v. 11, 12, 16), δίδωμι (v. 12, 17),  
 νόμος, (v. 12), σκηνίζω (v. 14), θεάομαι/βλέπω (v. 14, 18), δόξα (v. 14), νόμος/Μωϋσής  
 (v. 17), and εξηγέομαι (v. 18).

The Prologue begins with the Λόγος *in relationship with God* and by the end of the pericope, the Λόγος has been *gradually* and *symbolically* revealed to be Jesus Christ, Son of God. In v. 18, God is for the first time directly referred to as πατήρ in intimate filial relationship with the Son, who is for the first time directly referred to as μονογενής. Nominal and titular terms of *both* Father and Son *open and close* this pericope;<sup>522</sup> which *begins* and *ends* with vivid depictions of intimate, filial relationship (vv. 1-2, 18). The Prologue is therefore an encapsulation of the SFR. As a prelude to and a semantic domain of the SFR, the Prologue reveals the semantic and narrative pattern of the Johannine Gospel.

### 7.3.3 Summary

Lexical statistics in the Prologue show that the Son and Father are semantically paired. The analysis reveals that 77.7% of the Prologue's eighteen verses are directly connected to the SFR and symbolism. The intermingling of SFR and symbolism is patterned in the ensuing narrative in three ways. First, the Son's existence and mission are inseparable from his the Father. Second, of the two, the Son is the primary character because he is more active in the narrative episodes. Third, the Father is always mentioned

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<sup>522</sup> Although activities carried out in this pericope are mostly the Son's (actions of the Father are indirect), his activities are connected to the Father. For example, in 1:1 the Son is *with God* (ἐν). In 1:6-8, John the Baptist sent *from God* (ἐκπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ) to bear witness to the Son (φίλος) who comes from the Father (ἐρχομαι) into the world to enlighten (φωτίζω) everyone, connects the Son's activities of φωτίζω and ἐρχομαι to the Father. Also in 1:12, the Son gives believers the right to become children of God.

in context of the Son. In sum, the Prologue introduces the Son in context of his relationship with the Father and commences the pattern by which Johannine symbolism and themes reveal the SFR.

## 7.4 Character Analysis of the Son and Father

Character analysis of the joint presentation of Son and Father is an important part of this research as John's Christological Symbology centers on the SFR. The first aspect of Jesus' character revealed in the narrative is his relationship with God. Johannine symbolism emerges in the narrative primarily in context of the SFR. This analysis examines how the Prologue symbolically commences the joint characterization of Son and Father. Five dimensions in which the analysis is achieved are as follows: 1) unity/equality, 2) sending/coming of the Son, 3) life-giving authority, 4) love, and 5) glorification/revelation.

### 7.4.1 Unity and Equality

The Gospel begins with the notion of equality and unity in divine relationship as the Λόγος and God are introduced *together* as equal in divine status.<sup>523</sup> In v. 1, statements καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐν πρὸς τὸν θεόν and καὶ θεὸς ἐν ὁ λόγος emphasize the nature of the Λόγος. Πρὸς τὸν θεόν denotes accord and agreement as πρὸς places the Son in the

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<sup>523</sup> The. According to Wallace, in v. 1b the anarthrous predicate nominative θεός before the verb ἐν carries a qualitative sense. Thus, the Λόγος and God are identical in *essence*. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 269.

presence of God and also in union and fellowship with him.<sup>524</sup> The repetition in vv. 1-2 stress unity and divine qualities shared in the SFR, which continues in v. 3 where the Λόγος is united with God in the work of creation.<sup>525</sup> The emphasis on the Λόγος creating *everything* highlights equality in the work of creation. The creation of the universe takes place *through* the Λόγος. Therefore, at this early stage of the narrative, the *uniqueness* of the Son's agency is introduced, for in the Jewish milieu, agents of God such as prophets, kings, and priests were not considered equal with God. The Prologue, therefore, introduces the Son's agency in terms of equality and unity with God.

In vv. 6-8, the Baptizer's witness expresses the Father's unity with the Son in the divine mission. Verses 12-13 also depict Son and Father united in the mission, for only after people *receive the Son* by believing in his name are they *born of God*. The narrative later reveals that the Son and Father *share* the divine name.<sup>526</sup> The Son and Father are therefore engaged in the process by which believers are born anew; the Son gives those who receive him the right to become children of God and the Father implements their spiritual birth. In the last section of the Prologue, Son and Father are united in sharing divine glory (v. 14).

At the beginning of the Prologue unity in the SFR is depicted in the Λόγος-Θεός relationship and at the end, as a Son-Father relationship. The titles μονογενὴς, θεός, and

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<sup>524</sup> Beasley-Murray reads πρὸς τὸν θεόν as "in the presence of God," "in the fellowship of God," or "in union with God." Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10. According to Moloney, πρὸς τὸν θεόν expresses ideas of accompaniment and relationship. Moloney, *Gospel according to John*, 35, 76. Πρὸς with the accusative accompanied by a stative verb expresses the notion of being *by, at, near, or in company with* someone. BDAG, 875.

<sup>525</sup> The notion of the Λόγος and God as co-creators is implied in Gen 1:26 where God in 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural declares, "Let *us* make mankind in *our* image." Witherington describes the Johannine relationship as "intimate partnership." Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 142.

<sup>526</sup> See 5:43; 10:25; (12:13, 28); 17:6, 11, 12, 26.

ὁ υἱὸς for the Son, and πατήρ for the Father, occur in context of spatial physical terms (μονογενὲς θεὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ κόλπου τοῦ πατρὸς), which vividly heightens the notion of oneness.<sup>527</sup> The title Θεὸς for both Son and Father in vv. 1-2 and 18 affirms their divine equality. In sum, the Prologue expresses unity in the SFR in the following six areas: 1) preexistence (vv. 1-2), 2) creation (v. 3), 3) witness (vv. 6-8, 15), 4) mission of salvation to humanity (vv. 12-13), 5) sharing divine glory (v. 14), and 6) the mission to make the Father known (v. 18). Equality and unity in the Prologue commences the narrative's characterization of Son and Father in an inseparable relationship.

### 7.4.3 Life-Giving Authority

The purpose of the Gospel is to lead hearer-readers to experience eternal life (20:31). The mission of the Son is to grant eternal life to those who believe that the Father sent him,<sup>528</sup> and eternal life is the divine life the Son shares with the Father. The Prologue introduces the Johannine symbol of life in v. 4,<sup>529</sup> where ζωὴ is the source of the light with which the Son enlightens humanity.

Although after v. 4 ζωὴ does not appear in the Prologue, vv. 12-13 contain imageries of life as the verses describe birth and progeny, which require life. Verses 12-13 narrate the Son giving those who believe in his name the right to be born of God

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<sup>527</sup> Κόλπος means bosom, lap, or mother's womb; in the LXX, κόλπος expresses loving concern for a child and is regarded as the seat of the innermost being or feeling. *TDNT*, 3:824. In the HB, the equivalent of κόλπος (קִיץ) carries a variety of meanings that emphasize intimacy. *TWOT*, 273. According to Zerwick and Grosvenor, εἰς τὸν κόλπον is similar to πρὸς in v.1, denoting dynamic personal relationship. Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis*, 287. Wallace also states that εἰς is stative, affirming the intimate relationship of Father and Son. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 358.

<sup>528</sup> Carson notes the Son shares the self-existing life of God. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 118. According to Smail, the Father/Son metaphor implies mutual dependence, and shared life and being. Smail, *Forgotten Father*, 52.

<sup>529</sup> Ζωὴ is another key Johannine theme, which occurs 36 times; ζωὴν ἀφ' ὧντος occurs 14 times.

thereby, becoming children of the Father.<sup>530</sup> The Prologue introduces the Johannine symbol of life by describing how believers attain eternal life through both Son and the Father. Eternal life results in new birth initiated by the Son and carried through by the Father.

#### 7.4.2 Sending and Coming Into the World

The Father sending the Son and the Son's coming into the world are defining factors in the Gospel's presentation of the SFR. The one action Jesus repeatedly ascribes to the Father is the sending of the Son,<sup>531</sup> thus, the Father's title literally becomes  $\square$   $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\psi\alpha\varsigma$   $\mu\epsilon$  ( $\pi\alpha\tau\acute{\eta}\rho$ ). Although the Prologue makes no *direct* mention of the Son's sending, within the Jewish milieu, an agent's claims must be validated by the one who *sent* him;<sup>532</sup> thus, the role of the Baptizer in validating the Son's agency is proof of the Father's sending.<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> Ἐξουσία which means "the right to do something or the right over something," connotes authority and is used of authority given by a king. *TDNT*, 2:562.

<sup>531</sup> Schnackenburg describes Johannine Christology as a "theology of sending" and states, "Perhaps the most fundamental and comprehensive assertion about Jesus Christ is that He is the one sent by the Father into the world." Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels*, 248. See also: Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father," 33-57; Jose Comblin, *Sent from the Father: Meditations on the Fourth Gospel* (trans. Carl Kabat; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 3; Lofthouse, *The Father and the Son*, 105.

<sup>532</sup> Ashton notes that in the first century milieu, sons are rarely sent *unless they are princes royal, sent abroad to execute a mission on behalf of a kingly parent*. Ashton explains, "One of the most intriguing challenges set by the Fourth Gospel is to locate the source of the tradition according to which the Son was 'sent into the world';" Ashton therefore proposes John fused two traditions together—the simple title "son" and the original messianic 'Son of God.' Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 318. Based on Ashton's exception to the rule highlighted above, it is possible that Jesus' agency is linked to his position as Son/co-regent with God the Father/King, as indicated by references to the Kingdom of God and Jesus' statement in 18:36-37. Schweizer explains that "sending" is a legitimation of a human messenger authorized by God; in the HB, the prophet legitimized his message by attributing it to God's "sending him." Schweizer, "What Do We Really Mean when We Say, God Sent His Son," 298- 312. Similarly Dunn notes, "The thought is the familiar one of the prophet as speaking for God, God's *saliah*." James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity In The Making Volume: Jesus Remembered*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 663. *Saliah*, meaning, "sent one" was the Hebrew term used for the HB prophets when they spoke on behalf of God. See

The closest reference to the Father sending the Son in the Prologue, is v. 14 where the preposition παρ indirecty refers to the Son (or his glory), coming *from* the Father. In v. 17, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια δι᾽ ἡσοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο also implies the Son's agency; God gave the Law *through* the agency of Moses, now God sends Jesus Christ, his Son and supreme agent to give grace and truth to humanity.

The first occurrence of ἐρχομαι is in v. 9, where the Son is depicted as Light coming into the world to enlighten humanity.<sup>534</sup> The Prologue later reveals the Son comes to enlighten humanity about the Father (v. 18). In v. 11 the Son comes to "his own" and is rejected; later in the Gospel, the Son states that rejecting the Son is synonymous with rejecting the Father. The incarnation event in v. 14 indirectly describes the coming of the Son into the world by taking on human form. However, the last occurrence of ἐρχομαι in the Prologue appears in the witness of the Baptizer, who declares in v. 15 that the Son who *comes* after him existed before him. The Baptizer's witness reemphasizes Jesus' preexistence with the Father (vv. 1-3).

The sending and coming of the Son into the world is a pervading theme in the Gospel. The Father is both the commissioning source and the glorifying end of the Son's

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also: Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul*, 171; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:393. The Father sending Jesus his Son probably combines both notions of co-regent and prophet.

<sup>533</sup> Verse 5 contains the Gospel's first occurrence ἐποστέλλω, which in the narrative refers primarily to the sending of the Son. In the Prologue, ἐποστέλλω denotes Father as one who sends. Ὁ Ἀποστολὸς occupies a special position in John's Gospel; it expresses the fact that the sending takes place from a specific and unique standpoint, which unites with the sender either the person sent. *TDNT*, 1:404.

<sup>534</sup> In v. 9 ἐρχόμενον is a viewed periphrastic construction referring to the Son's coming into the world. The Son's coming is also inferred in 1:10-11, which positions the Son as *already* in the world; however, v. 14 gives the first hint of a connection with the Son's coming and his *relation with the Father*.



mission, while the Son is the revealing subject and representative agency by which the world is reached.<sup>535</sup>

#### 7.4.4 Love

Although ἀγαπάω and φιλέω do not appear in the Prologue, the passage introduces the Johannine theme of filial love between Son and Father. In vv. 1-2 the proximity and direction of the Son to the Father, expressed in the preposition πρὸς, which denotes close companionship is repeated emphasizing the relationship.<sup>536</sup> Πρὸς τὸν θεόν in vv. 1-2 therefore signifies preexistent relationship between the Λόγος and God, characterized by intimacy.

The lexeme μονογενὴς in v. 18 expands and intensifies the Λόγος/Θεός relationship of vv. 1-2, and transforms it into an intimate Son/Father relationship. The endearing term μονογενὴς, which appears only twice in the Prologue, signifies not only the uniqueness and exclusivity of Jesus' Sonship, but also the love of the Father for the Son.<sup>537</sup> In v. 14, μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός evokes the HB narrative of Abraham's *only* begotten son Isaac. However, Isaac was not Abraham's only son. Isaac was "only," in the sense that he was the only son *especially promised by God* who then asked Abraham to

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<sup>535</sup> Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father," 51.

<sup>536</sup> When used with the accusative case, πρὸς is a marker of movement or orientation toward someone or something, and means "on the side of" or "in the direction of." *BDAG*, 875.

<sup>537</sup> According to Thomas Weinandy, "The Son is the Son because He loves the Father as an only-begotten." Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship; Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 8. Lofthouse notes that Jesus' emphasis on his sending revealed his intimacy with the Father; the Son's love for the Father, shown by his obedience, reflects a unity of will and a unity of love. Lofthouse, *The Father and the Son*, 43. See also Bruce: "The unity between the Father and the Son is a unity of perfect love." Bruce, *Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 28.

give up the beloved son in a sacrifice (Gen 22:2).<sup>538</sup> In the context of Gen 22, just as Abraham laid down his μονογενῆς, so also God gives his μονογενῆς (3:16). The Son later declares his love for the Father in his willingness to give up his life in the crucifixion.

The filial nature of the divine relationship at the beginning of the Prologue is finally revealed in v. 18, where God is directly referred to as Father. Furthermore, in v. 18 μονογενῆς coupled with the title θεῆς makes the Sonship exclusive—Jesus is not only the Son of God, he also is God. With the Son in a posture of filial intimacy and fellowship with the Father, ‘ο υἱ ἐκ τῆς κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς clearly depicts love in the SFR.<sup>539</sup> Finally, v.18 states that as μονογενῆς, Jesus is the *only* one who has seen God, further emphasizing the Son’s close and personal relationship with the Father.<sup>540</sup> Jesus’ exclusive Sonship qualifies him to explain the Father and eventually enable believers to partake of the love in the SFR.<sup>541</sup>

#### 7.4.5 Revelation and Glory

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<sup>538</sup> In 3:16, God gives his μονογενῆς for the world, indicating the preciousness of the Son to the Father.

<sup>539</sup> Schweitzer comments, “Here is the meaning of God as father and son: the living love of the father toward the son and of the son toward the father, the action of the father and reaction of the son even before the existence of the world.” Schweizer, “What Do We Really Mean when We Say, God Sent His Son,” 312. Giblin likens the imagery in v. 14 to a “close converse of Father and Son at a banquet.” Giblin, “Two Complementary Literary Structures in John 1:1-18,” 89. Bruce describes the relationship as “coinherence or mutual indwelling of love.” Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 14.

<sup>540</sup> Neyrey, *Gospel of John*, 17.

<sup>541</sup> See Lee: “In the Johannine symbolic world, creation is drawn into the relationship between the Father and Son. All are invited to share the love.” Lee, “Symbol of Divine Fatherhood,” 181. Likewise Bruce: “By the knowledge of God men and women are admitted into the mystery of this divine love.” Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 329.

The Prologue launches the theme of the Son as the Father's revealer. Verse v. 4 declares the Son's mission to enlighten humanity, while light denotes inner illumination and revelation.<sup>542</sup> With the personification of φως in v. 5, Φως becomes the Prologue's second title for the Son; the imagery of conflict in this verse symbolizes the Son's as the Φως/Revealer who overcomes darkness in his attempt to enlightening humanity.<sup>543</sup>

Verses 6-8 reemphasize the role of the Φως as revealer in the Baptizer's witness, which informs hearer-readers that enlightenment is obtained by belief in the Light.<sup>544</sup>

Verses 10-11 situate the Φως in the world, reaching out to both the world and his own people; however, neither group recognizes or receives him. These negative responses depict lack of revelation and perception.<sup>545</sup> The two groups who reject Jesus stand in stark contrast to the one in vv. 12-13 who recognizes and believes the Son. This group believes in the name of the Son who will later declare that he has come in the name of the

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<sup>542</sup> In classical Greek φως denotes light as a medium of sight and object of sight, consequently, there is a connection between light and vision. *TDNT*, 9:311. Light also means salvation, for example Philo relates light to the term λόγος who is described as light and the enlightening power in conversion. *TDNT*, 9:313.

<sup>543</sup> Koester describes several levels of conflict between the φως and the σκοτία: 1) σκοτία connotes ignorance, since it is the opposite of the Λόγος who gives φως as knowledge, 2) σκοτία connotes death, since it is the opposite of the φως as light, and 3) σκοτία connotes sin and evil, pointing to alienation from God, since it is opposed to the divine nature of God and the Λόγος. Koester, *Symbolism*, 415-416.

<sup>544</sup> In the HB, יָאֵן (believe), translated πιστεύειν in the LXX, is used in a relational sense; the very essence of faith is mutual relation between God and humanity. *TDNT*, 6:187. John's concept of faith conveys a relational meaning—faith involves divine relationship.

<sup>545</sup> Γινώσκω means to know, recognize, or perceive. *BDAG*, 199-200. Unlike the Greek idea of objective verification, knowledge in the Fourth Gospel is akin to the Hebrew concept יָדָע, which is used for acknowledgment of the acts of God. *TDNT*, 1:689. The compound verb παραλαμβάνω means "to take to oneself," "take into a fellowship," or "take into close association." *TDNT*, 4:13. In Hellenistic pedagogy, παραλαμβάνω was used in the context of learning in which the pupil took to himself the teacher. This demanded a relation of confidence on the part of the παραλαμβάνων who viewed his teacher as absolute authority. *TDNT*, 4:11. Therefore, John is stating that those who refused to receive the Son relationally do not recognize God's act of sending him.

one who sent him,<sup>546</sup> thus, all the Son, says and does is a revelation of the Father who sent him.

The testimony of the unidentified witnesses contains the words θεάομαι, σκηνώω, δόξα, ἡγήθεια, νόμος, and Μωϋσέως, which reflect notions of divine revelation in the HB. First, the witnesses “behold” the glory of the Son likened to the glory of a loving son/father relationship. In the Gospel, δόξα occurs mainly in context of the SFR,<sup>547</sup> where δόξα denotes both honor and the visible manifestation of God.<sup>548</sup> The occurrence of δόξα in context of θεάομαι reflects the notion of divine self-revelation in the form of a visible manifestation.<sup>549</sup> Second, the witnesses’ revelation entails beholding the Son in the form of human flesh, likened to a tent. Σκηνώω alludes to the wilderness tabernacle where God manifested his glory and was witnessed by the Israelites. Third, the witnesses describe the glory of the Son as “full of grace and truth;” in the HB these two adjectives connote

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<sup>546</sup> The name of the Son is a revelation of all he is and represents. In the HB, God revealed himself by disclosing his name, which represented his nature, character, and the very essence of his being. In Exod 33:19-22 when Moses asked God to reveal himself and God responded by proclaiming his name. Laney explains the proclamation as God answering Moses by giving him “not a vision of how He appears but a description of what He is.” J. Carl Laney, “God’s Self-Revelation in Exodus 34:6-8,” *BSac* 158 (2001): 40. In ancient Greece a person’s name was regarded as an indispensable part of one’s personality, such that the Greeks would say a person comprised body, soul and name. Therefore, the name discloses the nature of its bearer. *TDNT*, 5:244.

<sup>547</sup> According to O’Grady, δόξα and δοξάζω occur 37 times in the Gospel of John and 42 times in the Synoptic Gospels. A theology of glory undergirds the Johannine narrative and as a theme it underlies Jesus’ signs (2:11; 9:24; 11:4, 40; 12:28; 17:4), discourses (14:13; 15:8; 16:14), disputes (5:41, 44, 7:18; 8:50, 54; 12:41, 43), crucifixion (7:39; 12:23), and resurrection (12:16; 13:31-32; 17:1; 5, 24). Thus, for O’Grady, the whole gospel from the prologue to the epilogue is concerned with glory. O’Grady, “The Prologue,” 215. Lee remarks that the Johannine revelation of glory is manifested symbolically in the Gospel. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 34.

<sup>548</sup> Δόξα in the biblical sense refers to God’s revealed presence. *DLNT on CD-ROM* n.p. Logos Library System Version 2.0c. 1998, 2000. In secular Greek, δόξα means expectation, view, opinion, or reputation. *BDAG*, 257. However, in the LXX there a significant change occurs in the use of δόξα and behind the new meaning is the HB concept of כְּבוֹד יְהוָה. MacLeod, “The Incarnation,” 79. In the HB כְּבוֹד יְהוָה is occurs 45 times in relation to the visible manifestation of God. John N Oswalt, “כְּבוֹד יְהוָה,” *TWOT*, 841.

<sup>549</sup> Θεάομαι means to behold intently with the implication of being impressed. *BDAG*, 445. The glory of God is characteristically linked with verbs of seeing. In the LXX these verbs include ὁράω (Exod 16:10; 33: 20; Isa 40:5; 60:1) and δείκνυμι (Deut 5:24; Exod: 33:18).

divine revelation.<sup>550</sup> Last, in v. 17 the witnesses refer to Moses who gave God's Law to the Jewish nation. The Law was a revelation of God's plan for relationship with his people and when Moses delivered the Law to the Israelites a spectacular display of God's glory occurred (Exod 19: 16-25). The reference to Moses giving the Law, in comparison to grace and truth given by the Son, may imply that the Son's revelation of the Father's glory includes visible manifestations of grace and truth. In other words, grace and truth manifested through the Son is the means by which God reveals himself to humanity.<sup>551</sup>

In light of v. 17, Θεὸς οὐδεὶς ὥρακεν πώποτε in v. 18 alludes to Moses' request to see God's glory; Moses only saw a limited portion of God's glory (Exod 33:18-23; 34:5-7, in stark contrast to the Son who abides in close fellowship with God. The revelation/glory of the Father is now assumed by the Son; therefore, whoever sees the Son sees the Father.<sup>552</sup> The Prologue's use of ἐξηγέομαι (interpret)<sup>553</sup> rather than ἀποκαλύπτω (reveal) may signify the Gospel's *narrative presentation* of the Son as

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<sup>550</sup> God in his self-revelation to Moses describes himself as gracious (Exod 34); ἡμεῖς denotes the condescension of God. *TWOT*, 302. ἀλήθεια (truth) means firmness, faithfulness, or stability. *TWOT*, 51. Χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια is a HB expression frequently used in reference to God's merciful love and faithfulness to his promises. Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis*, 286. In classical Greek, χάρις was also used in terms of the "favor" of the gods. *TDNT*, 9:373. A later development in Hellenism was that χάρις came to mean the supernatural power of love. *TDNT*, 9:376.

<sup>551</sup> Brodie speculates that though the text does not specify explicitly which event(s) manifested his glory, in the context of the gospel as a whole, "beholding the glory" refers to the wonders or miracles, especially the glory surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection. Brodie, *Gospel according to John*, 143.

<sup>552</sup> Kelber succinctly compares the revelations that came through Moses and Jesus, "Moses ascended and brought back the Law, without ever having seen, while the Logos who had 'seen,' descended and revealed what he had 'seen.'" Kelber, "Birth of a Beginning," 227. See also Hoskins who states that the revelation through the Son surpasses the revelation granted through previous events, persons, and institutions including Moses, the Law, the Tabernacle, and the Temple. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, Ore: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 124-125.

<sup>553</sup> Εξηγέομαι means "to make something fully known by careful explanation or by clear revelation." L & N, 339. 'Εξηγέομαι also means: 1) "to introduce," and 2) "to expound or present" and is a technical term for exposition of the law, religious teaching of priests, and revelation of the gods. *TDNT*, 2:908. In this sense, it can be stated that Jesus came to introduce or expound the Father.

Revealer.<sup>554</sup> In sum, the Prologue introduces the Johannine theme of divine revelation in form of the Father's glory as manifested in the Son.

#### 7.4.6 Summary

If characters are known by their setting, then the Prologue's symbolic introduction of Son and Father *together* in a *transcendent* setting, alerts hearer-readers to how the SFR is to be viewed. The Son, who is primarily active on earth in the narrative, is inseparable from his heavenly Father. This is the paradigm by which the SFR is to be understood throughout the narrative. The characterization of Jesus and God in the SFR paradigm is central to the narrative strategy of the Fourth Gospel. The five dimensions in this character analysis highlight the narrative development of Son and Father. The Prologue's striking symbolic portrayal of Son and Father makes the passage a narrative anchor for launching a Symbology based on the SFR.

#### 7.5 Time Analysis

This analysis examines the timeframes in the Prologue with the aim of showing how the transcendent relationship between Son and Father emerges within the temporality of the Gospel narrative. The analysis of transcendence and temporality shows how the Prologue introduces the pattern by which the joint characterization of Son and Father emerges in the Gospel narrative. The Son is historically active on earth in the temporal realm, yet his identity and mission is rooted with the Father in the transcendent realm. In addition, symbolism depicting the SFR also spans transcendent and temporal

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<sup>554</sup> Ἐξηγέομαι is primarily a narrative term, meaning relate in detail, tell, or report. *BDAG*, 349. Farley comments that Jesus' "life-story makes God known." Farley, *The Gospel of John*, 21.

realms. The semantic element in John's Christological symbols is rooted in temporality, while ultimate meanings of the symbolism are discovered in the transcendent realm. The Son and Father are the only two characters depicted within the transcendence-temporality paradigm, thus the transcendence of the SFR contributes to their centrality in the Johannine narrative.

The Prologue does not conform to historical chronology; therefore, navigating the transcendent pre-narrative and atemporal narrative time zones is complex. The timeline of events in the passage are not clearly demarcated and no evidence exists of distinct time markers or explanations of sudden or subtle shifts in time. This analysis shows how the author seamlessly weaves in and out of different time zones. Therefore, to closely follow the connection between Son and Father, and their joint activities in the narrative, hearer-reader are required to navigate transcendence and temporality with the same flexibility of the author. This time analysis follows the four sequences outlined in the plot analysis.

### 7.5.1 Sequence One: Verses 1-3

Events in the first sequence are framed outside narrative temporality as the phrase  $\square v \square \rho \chi \square$  carries the opening scene of the Prologue back to the beginning of the HB when God existed outside the realm of time.<sup>555</sup> Therefore,  $\square v \square \rho \chi \square$  symbolically places the  $\Lambda \acute{o} \gamma \omicron \varsigma$  outside the realm of time, accentuating his transcendence and primacy over narrative temporality.<sup>556</sup> The four occurrences of  $\square v$  in the first two verses of the

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<sup>555</sup> In order for the Son to partake in the creation of the world, he had to pre-exist before the creation.

<sup>556</sup>  $\rho \chi \eta$  signifies "primacy" in time or in rank. *TDNT*, 1:479.

Prologue stress the presence of the Λόγος *with* God during this atemporal phase;<sup>557</sup> thus, vv. 1-2 place the Λόγος and God *together* in the realm of eternity. The  $\epsilon\upsilon\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota$  timeframe is important; first it signifies the divine status of the Son as Λόγος, preparing the audience for Jesus' claims of divinity, which have far reaching implications in the plot. Second,  $\epsilon\upsilon\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota$  characterizes the SFR as atemporal, emphasizing the transcendent relationship that emerges in the narrative.

Verse 3 marks a point during the  $\epsilon\upsilon\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota$  timeframe when the Λόγος co-creates the world with God. This portrayal elevates the Λόγος over every character he encounters in the narrative, signifying his transcendence and power over time, which emerges in his discourse and actions in the Gospel narrative.<sup>558</sup>

### 7.5.2 Sequence Two: Verses 4-8

The phrase  $\epsilon\upsilon\ \alpha\epsilon\iota\ \zeta\omega\epsilon\iota$  (v. 4), which refers to the life indwelling the Λόγος is not a reference to biological life, but rather refers to eternal life existing in the Son *before* he co-created the world. The eternal life indwelling the Λόγος is the source of the light he gives to humanity during his earthly mission. This proleptic reference to the mission of the Son contains two timeframes as v. 4 begins in the realm of eternity and ends in narrative temporality with the reference to the Son's mission as light-giver. Thus, v. 4 reveals a subtle shift from atemporality to temporality.

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<sup>557</sup> Each occurrence of  $\epsilon\upsilon$  is expressive of continuous timeless existence. J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (vol. 1; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1953), 2.

<sup>558</sup> Examples of Jesus' power over time include: 1) chapter 11 where he decides when to raise Lazarus from death, 2) his knowledge of and protection from his antagonist until his "hour," and 3) his knowledge of the time of his return to the Father.



The verbal shift in v. 5a from the preceding aorist tense to the present moves the actions of the Λόγος (now the Φῶς) into present reality. In v. 5a the present intransitive φαίνει<sup>559</sup> portrays the Λόγος not only in narrative time but also shining throughout time. In other words the act of the Φῶς shining is both a present and eternal reality.<sup>560</sup>

In v. 5b κατέλαβεν depicts conflict between the Light and darkness and is a prolepsis pointing forward to the conflict the Son encounters in his mission in the world, and also to his ultimate victory. This conflict is another example of time traversing two zones—the Light who is transcendent in origin and the nature that comes into conflict with darkness in the temporal realm.

The witness of the Baptizer focuses on the Son within the temporal timeframe (vv. 6-8). The Prologue gives no indication as to when or how the Baptizer was sent by God no record of the actual event exists in the Gospel narrative. However, the actual witnessing by the Baptizer occurs within narrative time and is recorded in 1:15, 19-34. The reason for the Baptizer's sending is so *all* people may believe in the Son, implying that the result of his witness covers an extended or prolonged timeframe<sup>561</sup> and is expected to last beyond narrative time. Thus, hearer-readers can believe in the Son sent by the Father in their own present time.

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<sup>559</sup> In v. 5, φαίνω refers to an illumination present before creation, is revealed and reinforced with the coming of the Light. Φαίνω is present tense because it states the essential nature of light. Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis*, 285. The present tense may be customary or general, indicating an action that is an ongoing state. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 521-522. Thus, φαίνω may also emphasize the *ongoing* victory of the Son over the darkness or the outshining or glory of the Son in his *present* resurrected state. Therefore, the Prologue may assert the enduring nature and power of the Son to overcome every form or manifestation of darkness.

<sup>560</sup> Phillips, *Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 171.

<sup>561</sup> The aorist tense πιστεύσωσιν may also be read as inceptive, i.e., *come to believe*. This open time frame for people to believe in the Son is repeated in the Prayer (17: 20).

### 7.5.3 Sequence Three: Verses 9-13

In v. 9 attention is still focused on the Λόγος in the world. The phrase ὁρχόμενον ἐκ τῶν κόσμων poses the following grammatical problem: who exactly is the referent of the phrase and to which time frame does it belong? If the phrase modifies ἄνθρωπον, then the time frame reverts back to the act of creation in transcendent, pre-narrative time.<sup>562</sup> On the other hand, if ὁρχόμενον modifies φῶς, then the phrase refers to the Son coming into the world to enlighten humanity. This study views the phrase ὁρχόμενον ἐκ τῶν κόσμων as a proleptic reference to the Son's coming into the world thereby signifying his entrance from his transcendent abode with the Father into narrative temporality.

In emphasizing the world's lack of recognition of the Son, who co-created the world with God, v. 10, flashes back to the ὁρχόμενον time frame of v. 3. Finally, v. 13 describes how those who believe in the name of the Son are born of God, showing that the transcendent Father who exists outside narrative temporality is active *with* the Son within narrative temporality.

### 7.5.4 Sequence Four: Verses 14-18

The verb γένητο in v. 14 formally announces the transition of the Λόγος from transcendence into narrative temporality.<sup>563</sup> Neither the Prologue nor the Gospel offers a birth narrative and the first appearance of Jesus in the narrative presents him beginning

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<sup>562</sup> That is, supposedly the time of the creation of humanity.

<sup>563</sup> The previous direct reference to the Son's coming in v. 9 is a prolepsis of v. 14. Lee notes that John's theology indicates how the Son as eternal God enters the temporality and submits to the processes of human generation and birth. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 142.

his mission as an adult. Therefore, the incarnation event occurs somewhere in pre-narrative time.

The witnesses' testimony of beholding the glory of the SFR in v. 14 contains a flashback to time in the HB when the tabernacle housed the glory of God. In order to fully understand the symbolic import of the words σκηνώω, θεάομαι, and δόξα, the hearer has to temporarily switch back to the HB timeframe when God revealed his glory to the Israelites. Another flashback can be identified in the witnesses' testimony, which takes place in narrative time, but is a reflection back on their encounter with the Son.

In v. 15, the direct witness of the Baptizer suddenly appears to strengthen the witnesses' testimony (v. 14, 16-18). The Baptizer's witness shows how the Johannine narrative shifts between different timeframes. First, if the phrase, ὁ ἀννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ is spoken by the witnesses, then the statement (recorded in historical present), occurs in the past time of the witnesses as they presently reflect back on the words of the Baptizer.<sup>564</sup> Second, the Baptizer's words οὗτος ἐν ἐμοί are also his reflection of earlier statements he made.<sup>565</sup> Fourth, the Baptizer's statement reflects the following two timeframes; ἐπίσω μου ῥχόμενος, which refers to the Son's transition from atemporality into narrative temporality, and the phrases ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν and ἔτι πρὸτός μου ἐν, which refer to the Son's divine existence with the Father in

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<sup>564</sup> The recitative ἔτι shows that this testimony is a direct quote from the Baptizer. This testimony is expressed with the present tense μαρτυρῶ and the perfect tense κέκραγεν, connoting the validity of his testimony for all time. Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis*, 286.

<sup>565</sup> John 1:30 reads: οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ παρ' οὗ γὰρ ἐμὸν ἐπίσω μου ῥχεται ἐν ῥίᾳ ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ἔτι πρὸτός μου ἐν. Although the time in the narrative when these words were spoken by the Baptizer are not indicated in the Prologue, the striking similarity between this quotation by the Baptizer and the words he utters later on in the same chapter indicates that the two references are the same.

transcendent time. Thus, vv. 14-15 is a classic example of how the fluidity of time brings out the SFR in the Johannine narrative.

Verses 16-17 continue the witnesses' testimony of the Son and Father within narrative time. The witnesses' reflect on their experience of the glory of the Son during his ministry; they all experienced one measure of grace after another. Their reception of several measures of grace signifies experiences that occurred over an unspecified duration of time. To explain this experience, the witnesses compare the grace they received from the Son to the Law God gave the Israelites. Thus, the aorist  $\epsilon\delta\acute{o}\theta\eta$  pulls the audience back into another HB timeframe when God gave the Jewish nation the Law through Moses.

The last verse of the Prologue combines three timeframes to validate the divinity of the Son, the SFR, and Son's mission of making the Father known. Verse 18 continues with an allusion to another HB timeframe when Moses request to see God's glory (Exod 33:18-20). Thus, the Son's relationship with the Father is indirectly compared to Moses' relationship with God in the HB. While Moses was told by God that no human can see the face of God and live, the Son not only sees God but dwells with him in the closest possible proximity. The symbolic portrayal of filial intimacy pulls the hearer-reader back into the  $\epsilon\upsilon\ \epsilon\rho\chi$  timeframe of v. 1-2. This depiction of intimacy in the transcendent SFR informs the audience that although the Son has entered into the narrative temporal world, he is still continues his close relationship with the Father in the transcendent world. The Prologue ends in narrative time with the word  $\epsilon\chi\eta\gamma\acute{\eta}\sigma\alpha\tau\omicron$ , which symbolically points to the mission of the Son as the Father's revelator. Thus, the

Prologue, which began the SFR within a transcendent, atemporal time phase, ends by launching the mission of the Son to reveal the Father within narrative temporality.

#### 7.5.5 Summary

Events in the Prologue create the order of time for the Gospel narrative; the Prologue introduces the two main time zones in which the SFR operate in the narrative— atemporal and temporal. At the beginning of the Prologue (vv. 1-3), John uses the phrase  $\epsilon\upsilon\ \epsilon\pi\chi$  to establish the SFR within atemporality by presenting the Son as the divine Λόγος and co-creator with God. Thus, the Son is placed outside the constraints of narrative temporality at the beginning of the Gospel. Verse 4 presents the first case of a sudden time shift as the Son's role in the work of creation abruptly transitions to his mission of bringing light from the eternal realm to humanity on the earthly realm. The account of the conflict between the Light and darkness (v. 5) is proleptic and points to conflicts and ultimate rejection of the Son that ensues within narrative time. The mention of conflict at the beginning of the Prologue may signify that conflict will begin early in the Gospel narrative.

The Baptizer's witness introduces the idea of an open and extended timeframe for people to believe in the Son (vv. 6-8). The rejection-reception event (vv. 9-13) summarizes events that occur within narrative time; however, the participation of the Father in narrative events (v. 13) shows how transcendence intercepts narrative temporality.

Verses 14- 18 contain flashbacks to HB timeframes, which serve to validate the person and ministry of the Son. The audience is thereby alerted to the many HB

flashbacks that emerge in the Gospel narrative to portray the Father. The Baptizer's witness of the Son (v. 15) shows how the characterization of the Son shifts between temporality and atemporality. Finally, reference to divine intimacy of the SFR (v. 18) signifies that even though the Son is firmly located within the temporal events of the narrative, he continues to exist with the Father in the eternal realm. By the end of the Prologue the audience is introduced to the shifts between transcendence and temporality that establish the prominence of the SFR in the Johannine narrative.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter is to create a narrative framework for charting John's Christological Symbology. The framework provides insight into the symbolic structure surrounding the SFR. The plot and time analyses of the Prologue show the strategy by which the Son and Father emerge in the narrative. The semantic analysis provides a field of reference for examining how the joint characterization of Son and Father. The analysis shows that Son and Father semantically paired in their titles/names and positions/actions, establishes the passage as a semantic domain for John's Christological Symbology. Characterization in the Prologue gradually introduces the Λόγος and Θεός as the two main characters. The literary strategy employed by the author finally reveals that these characters are Son and Father. The five dimensions of the SFR are areas in which the characterization of the Son and Father develop and expand through symbols and symbolic language in the Gospel narrative.

## CHAPTER 8: THE PRAYER: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

### 8.1 Introduction

John's symbolic presentation of the SFR reaches a pivotal point in the Farewell Prayer where the Son gives an account of his earthly mission to the Father. John 17 marks the end of Jesus' teaching ministry and in the Prayer, the full intent of the SFR is revealed as his disciples and future believers are drawn into the divine relationship. John's Christological Symbolology begins with the symbolic introduction of the SFR in the Prologue, which at the end declares the role of the Son as the Father's revealer. What follows is a narration of the Son's revelation of the Father in context of the SFR, through a symbolic teaching ministry. As the last chapter in the narrative containing a dense cluster of SFR symbolism, the Prayer terminates the Son's teaching ministry and represents the peak of John's Christological Symbolology.<sup>566</sup>

This narrative analysis of the Prayer examines semantics and characterization of the Son and Father in the following sections: 1) the Prayer as a semantic domain for the SFR, 2) the characterization of the Son and Father in five dimensions, and 3) conclusion.

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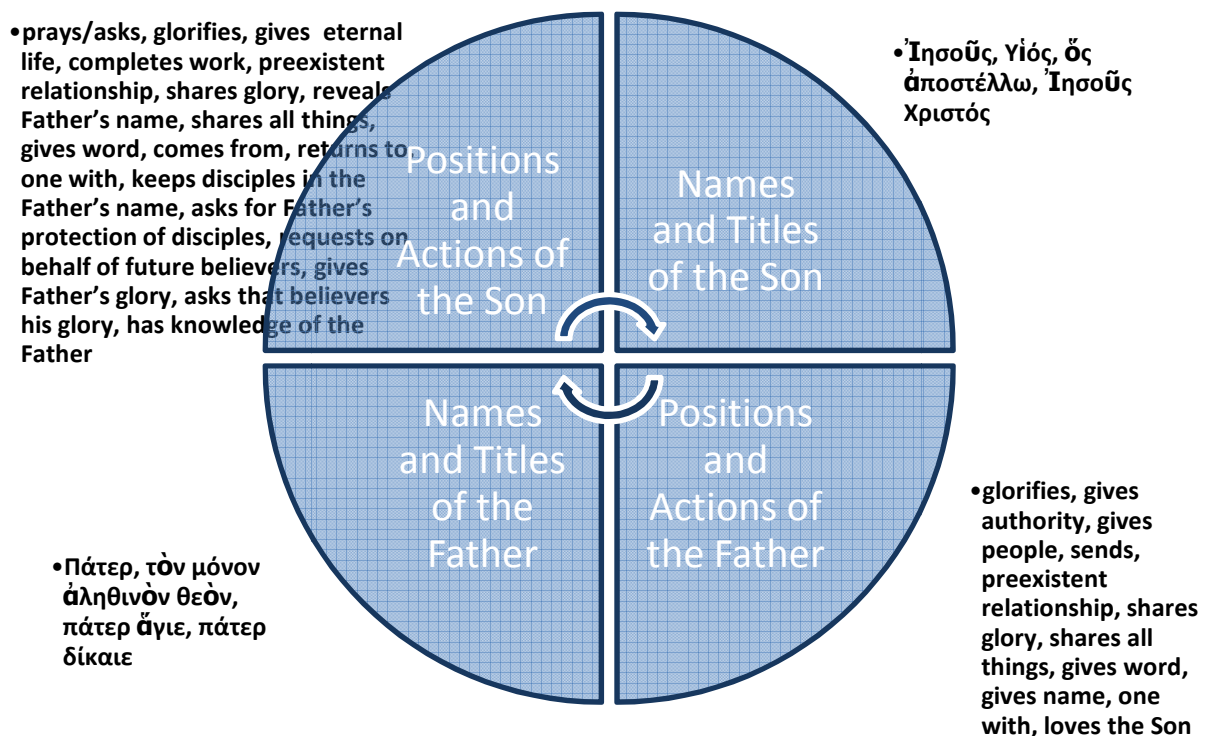
<sup>566</sup> The following is a sampling of scholars who recognize the Prayer as a culmination and their comments: Black: "The prayer is also intended to *summarize Jesus' relationship with the Father*." David Alan Black, "On the Style and Significance of John 17," *Criswell Theological Review* 3, 1 (1988): 154; Carson: "John 17 is *part of the crescendo*." Carson, "Gospel According to John," 551; Diehl: "The chapter *summarizes and emphasizes key themes and motifs*." Diehl also notes, "The prayer is the *climax of the verbal revelation of the Father* that Jesus came to give to humanity." Diehl concludes, "John 17 is placed in a *'peak' position* within the Gospel . . . the mission of Jesus, his signs, works, and spoken words lead towards *the pinnacle of the prayer*." Diehl, "Puzzle of the Prayer," 3-4, 150-151; Janzen: "*Words, images, and themes introduced as early as the Prologue, and receiving progressive elaboration in the course of the intervening chapters, come to climactic expression*." J. Gerald Janzen, "The Scope of Jesus's High Priestly Prayer in John 17," *Encounter* 67.1 (2006): 2. (All emphases mine).

## 8.2 The Prayer: Semantic Analysis

After interactions with various characters in the course of the narrative, in the seventeenth chapter Jesus communicates solely with the Father; the Prayer is therefore saturated with SFR language and symbolism introduced in the Prologue and developed through the Gospel narrative. The following diagram illustrates the semantic range of the SFR in the Prayer.

### 8.2.1 Semantic Field of Reference in the Prayer

Figure 7: Semantic Field of Reference for the SFR in the Prayer



The semantic field of reference identifies points in the Prayer where names/titles of the Son or Father connect with the positions/actions of the Son and Father toward each



other. The semantic range for names/titles of the Son is as follows: υἱός (v. 1); υἱός (v. 1 [x2]); υἱός ποστέλλω<sup>567</sup> (v. 3); υἱός Χριστός<sup>568</sup> (v. 3).<sup>569</sup> The semantic range for names/titles of the Father are the following: πάτερ<sup>570</sup> (vv. 1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25); τὸν μόνον ἄληθινόν θεόν (v. 3);<sup>571</sup> πάτερ ἁγίε (v. 11); πάτερ δίκαιε (v. 25).

The semantic field of reference for the Son's positions/actions in relation to the Father is as follows: the Son, prays/asks (vv. [1-26], 1, 9 [x2], 15, 20, 24); glorifies (vv. 1, 4); gives eternal life to those the Father has given him (v. 2); completes work (v. 4); has a preexistent relationship (vv. 5, 24); shares glory (vv. 5, 22, 24); reveals Father's name (vv. 6, 26 [x2]); shares all things (vv. 6, 7, 9, 10); gives disciples the Father's word (vv. 8, 14); comes from (v. 8); returns to (vv. 11, 13); one with (vv. 11, 21, 22, 23); keeps disciples in the Father's name (v. 12); gives Father's glory to disciples (v. 22); and knows the Father (v. 25).

The semantic field for the Father's positions and actions in relation to the Son are as follows: the Father, glorifies (vv. 1, 5); gives authority over humanity (v. 2); gives him people (vv. 2, 6 [x2], 9, 12, 24),<sup>572</sup> sends (vv. 3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25); has preexistent

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<sup>567</sup> This phrase is taken as a title in the Prayer.

<sup>568</sup> The full appellation υἱός Χριστός is significant because, first it stands in apposition to τὸν πέστελλας, highlighting the sending of Jesus. Second, it connects the Prayer to the Prologue since they are the only passages in the narrative where the full appellation occurs (1:17; 17:3).

<sup>569</sup> Pronominal references to the Son are: αὐτός (vv. 1, 2 [x2]); ἐγώ (v. 4 [x2], 5, 6, 7, 8 [x2], 9 [x2], 11, 12 [x2], 14 [x2], 16, 18, 19, 20, 21 [x2], 22, 23 [x 4], 24 [x5], 25[x2], 26); κἄν (vv. 11, 18, 21, 22, 26); ἐμός (vv. 10 [x2], 13, 24); ἐμοί (v.6); and ἐμεῖς (vv. 11, 21, 22).

<sup>570</sup> Jesus begins his prayer with πάτερ, which occurs 134 times in reference to God in the narrative.

<sup>571</sup> Μόνον ἄληθινόν θεόν echoes the HB prayer called the Shema in Deut 6:4.

<sup>572</sup> Due to Jesus' indirect reference to Judas (v. 12), it is most likely that from vv. 6-19 Jesus is referring to his disciples. See Brown: "In the context of the Last Supper this is a reference to the immediate disciples of Jesus . . . Later on (vs. 20) the prayer will switch from these to future converts." Brown, *John*, 2:758.

relationship (vv. 5, 14); shares glory (vv. 5, 22, 24); shares all things (vv. 6, 7, 9, 10); gives his word (v. 8); gives name (vv. 11, 12); is one with (vv. 11, 21, 22, 23); loves (vv. 23, 24, 26) the Son.

### 8.2.2 The Prayer as a Semantic Domain for SFR and Symbolism

The Prayer begins with the Son speaking directly to the Father using the filial terms πατήρ and υἱός, and ends on the subject of love in the SFR. The entire passage is dominated by actions between the two characters.<sup>573</sup> As a semantic domain, the Prayer contains five names/titles for the Son and nine for the Father. Lexical intersections between Son and Father occur in the entire chapter with the exception of vv. 16 and 19. Consequently, twenty-four (92.3%) of the Prayer's twenty-six verses are intersections; therefore, SFR language dominates the Prayer.

**Figure 8: SFR, Symbols/Symbolic Language, and Themes in the Prayer**

Verses	Intersections	Symbols/Symbolic Language and Themes
1	The Son prays to the Father, asking to be glorified	πα, δοξάζω [x2],
2	The Father gives the Son authority over humanity; the Son gives eternal life to all the people the Father has given to him	σάρξ, δίδωμι [x3], ξουσία, ζω αώνιος
3	The Father sent the Son	ζω αώνιος, γινώσκω, ληθινός, ποστέλλω
4	The Son glorifies the Father by completing the work the Father gave to him	δοξάζω, ργον, δίδωμι
5	The Son asks the Father to be glorified in the Father's presence with their preexistent glory	δοξάζω, δόξα, κόσμος
6	The Son reveals the Father's name to the people the Father gave to him	φανερώνω, νομα, δίδωμι [x2], κόσμος

<sup>573</sup> The entire chapter can be considered a semantic intersection between Son and Father.

7	The Father gives to the Son	δίδωμι, γινώσκω
8	The Son gives the Father's word to those the Father gave to him; the Son comes from the Father; the Father sent the Son	δίδωμι [x2], λαμβάνω, γινώσκω, □ληθ□ς, □ξέρχομαι, πιστεύω, □ποστέλλω
9	The Son prays to the Father, for those given to him by the Father	κόσμος, δίδωμι
10	The Son and Father share everything	δοξάζω
11	The Son is returning to the Father; the Son asks the Father to keep disciples in the name the Father gave to him; the Son and Father are one	κόσμος [x2], □νομα, δίδωμι
12	The Son keeps disciples in the Father's name, given to him	□νομα, δίδωμι
13	The Son is returning from the world to the Father	κόσμος
14	The Son has given disciples the Father's word	κόσμος [x3], δίδωμι
15	The Son asks the Father to keep disciples from the evil one	κόσμος
16		κόσμος [x2]
17	The Son asks the Father to sanctify the disciples	□γιάζω[x2], □λήθεια [x2],
18	The Father sent the Son	□ποστέλλω [x2], κόσμος [x2]
19		□γιάζω, □λήθεια
20	The Son requests the Father on behalf of future believers	πιστεύω
21	The Son requests the Father that believers may be one just as he and the Father are one; the Father sent the Son	κόσμος, πιστεύω, □ποστέλλω
22	The Father gives the Son glory; the Son and Father are one	δόξα, δίδωμι [x2]
23	The Son and Father are one; the Father sent the Son; the Father loves the Son	γινώσκω, κόσμος, □ποστέλλω, □γαπάω [x2]
24	The Father gives people to the Son; the Son asks that believers behold the glory given him by the Father; the Father loved the Son in their preexistent relationship	δίδωμι [x2], θεωρέω ,δόξα, □γαπάω, κόσμος [x2]
25	The Son knows the Father; the Father sent the Son	γινώσκω [x3], □ποστέλλω
26	The Son manifested (made known) the Father's name and will continue to do so; the Father loves the Son	γνωρίζω [x2], □νομα, □γαπάω [x2]

The Prayer contains clusters of symbols/symbolic language and themes connected to the SFR,<sup>574</sup> which are as follows:  $\square\rho\alpha$ <sup>575</sup> (v. 1),  $\delta\omicron\zeta\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ <sup>576</sup> (vv. 1 [x2], 4, 5, 10),  $\delta\omicron\zeta\alpha$  (vv. 5, 22, 24),  $\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\mu\iota$  (vv. 2 [x3], 4, 6 [x2], 7, 8 [x2], 9, 11, 12, 14, 22 [x2], 24 [x2]),<sup>577</sup>  $\square\zeta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  (v. 2),  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\zeta$  (v. 2),  $\zeta\omega\square$  ( $\alpha\square\acute{\omega}\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$ ) (vv. 2, 3),  $\gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\omega/\gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$  (vv. 3, 7, 8, 23, 25 [x3], 26[x2])  $\square\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omega$ <sup>578</sup> (vv. 3, 8, 18 [x2], 21, 23, 25),  $\square\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  (v. 4 ),<sup>579</sup>  $\square\nu\omicron\mu\alpha$  (vv. 6, 11, 12, 26),  $\kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$  (vv.5, 6, 9, 11 [x2], 13, 14 [x3], 15, 16 [x2], 18 [x2], 21, 23, 24 [x2]),  $\lambda\alpha\mu\beta\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega$  (v. 8),  $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omega$  (vv. 8, 20, 21),  $\square\rho\chi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota/\square\zeta\acute{\epsilon}\rho\chi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ <sup>580</sup> (vv. 8),  $\square\gamma\acute{\iota}\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$  (17 [x2], 19),  $\square\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha/\square\lambda\eta\theta\iota\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma/\square\lambda\eta\theta\square\varsigma$  (17:3, 8, 17 [x2], 19),<sup>581</sup>  $\square\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\omega/\square\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$  (vv. 23 [x2], 24, 26 [x2]),  $\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\acute{\omicron}\omega/\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$  (vv. 6, 24). Some of these lexemes occur multiple times:  $\delta\omicron\zeta\alpha/\delta\omicron\zeta\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$  (x8),  $\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\mu\iota$  (x17),  $\gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\omega/\gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$  (x 9),  $\square\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omega$  (x7), and  $\kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$  (x 18).

As a semantic domain for the SFR, through symbolic language, the Prayer summarizes Jesus’ earthly mission in collaboration with the Father and reveals how the

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<sup>574</sup> Diehl describes the Prayer is a “symbolic Prayer.” Diehl, “Puzzle of the Prayer,” 210.

<sup>575</sup> The Prayer marks the crux of this theme of Jesus’ “hour” since the last occurrence of  $\square\rho\alpha$  is in 17:1.

<sup>576</sup> Of the Gospel’s 23 occurrences of  $\delta\omicron\zeta\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ , 6 refer to the Son (7:39; 12:16; 3:31, 32; 17:5).

<sup>577</sup>  $\Delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\mu\iota$  carries symbolic connotations in the Gospel and occurs 17 times in the Prayer; in all but 3 of these occurrences the word refers to the Father giving something(s) to the Son. The Father gives the Son authority over humanity (v. 2), the mission to the world (v. 4), disciples to help (v. 6), the message (vv. 7, 14), the divine name (vv. 11-12), glory (vv. 22, 24), ultimately, the Father has given the Son everything (vv. 7, 10).

<sup>578</sup> In the Gospel,  $\square\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omega$  occurs 17 times in reference to the sending of the Son (3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21) and 6 of these occurrences are in the Prayer.

<sup>579</sup> In the Gospel,  $\square\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  when used in reference to the Son symbolizes his missionary and miraculous works which are a manifestation of the Father’s glory. See 4:34; 5:20, 36(x2); 7:3, 21; 9:3, 4 (x3); 10:25, 32, 33, 37, 38; 14:10, 11, 12; 15:24; and 17:4 the last occurrence of  $\square\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  in narrative.

<sup>580</sup> The Son’s *coming out /forth* ( $\square\zeta\acute{\epsilon}\rho\chi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ ) from the Father occurs 6 times in the Gospel, appearing for the last time in 17:8. See: 8:42; 13:3; 16:27, 28, 30; 17:8.

<sup>581</sup> Of the 25 occurrences of  $\square\lambda\acute{\eta}\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , 17:17 is the only verse where it modifies the word of God.

divine relationship extends to his disciples and future believers who will continue the mission on earth.

### **8.2.3 Summary**

The semantic analysis establishes the Prayer as a narrative anchor for John's Christological Symbolology. Results of the analysis show that twenty-four of the Prayer's twenty-six verses contain intersections between titles/names and actions/positions of the Son and Father, meaning that about 92.3% of the Prayer is dominated by SFR lexicology. The passage contains fourteen references to names/titles of Son and Father, and at least sixty-five references to their positions/actions towards each other. In addition, approximately seventy-four occurrences of symbols/symbolic language and themes depict the SFR.

In summation, three main factors contribute to the Prayer's function as a semantic domain for the SFR. First, lexical statistics show that the passage is dominated by the SFR language. Second, the direct communication of the Son to the Father in form of a prayer details the completion of his mission on the Father's behalf. Third, the Prayer occupies a strategic position in the narrative as it appears at the end of Jesus' teaching ministry as the Father's revealer.

## **8.3 The Prayer: Character Analysis of the Son and Father in Five Dimensions**

John 17, the longest and most detailed speech given by the Son to the Father is in the form of a prayer.<sup>582</sup> Prayer denotes relationship and brings the SFR into full relief in chapter 17; the first five verses situate the entire chapter within the context of the SFR. The Son's first word is *πάτερ*, which is also the last title with which he addresses God at the end of the Prayer (17:1, 25). As the Son recapitulates the mission and prays for its future advancement, he highlights several points of interaction between himself and the Father. Diehl aptly observes, "The Prayer encapsulates several key components that define the relationship existing between the Son and his Father. The author's presentation of the characters in the prayer is both representative and symbolic."<sup>583</sup>

Five dimensions of characterization exist in the Prayer as follows: 1) equality/unity, 2) the sending/coming of the Son, 3) life giving authority, 4), love, and 5) glorification/revelation.

### 8.3.1 Unity and Equality<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> Lifting up one's eyes was a common posture of prayer in early Judaism. Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1052. The act of Jesus "lifting up his eyes" (v. 1) is reminiscent of his similar action before he raised Lazarus from the dead (11:41). The Gospel's 4 occurrences of *ᾠρῶ* are in the Prayer (vv, 9 (x2), 15, 20). Jesus' first request in v. 1 is an imperative entreaty (*δόξασόν*). Wallace explains that imperatives in the aorist tense usually fit into the category of prayers directed toward God. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 487. See also Dana and Mantey: "The command signified by the imperative may be in compliance with an expressed desire." H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto, Ontario: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 176.

<sup>583</sup> Diehl, "Puzzle of the Prayer," 85.

<sup>584</sup> The notion of equality in the Prayer stems from the Son's divine and pre-existent status shared with the Father. The Johannine narrative depicts the Son in obedience to the Father who sent him; however, the Son's divine equality as a divine being never ceases, it is veiled temporarily as he carries out the earthly mission.

Themes of unity and equality in the SFR mark the beginning of the Prayer.<sup>585</sup> Jesus the Son reminds God the Father that the “hour” has finally arrived and asks the Father to glorify him (v. 1).<sup>586</sup> The meaning of this request is revealed in v. 5 when the Son asks for a return to the unveiled, preexistent glory he shared with the Father; this points to unity and divine equality in the SFR. This initial request suggests a prior understanding between Son and Father that the mission will conclude with a reciprocal glorification in which the Son will be glorified by being restored to his preexistent glory with the Father, and the Father will in turn be glorified by the completion of the Son’s mission. In v. 2, the Son’s divine authority over all humanity points to equality with the Father, and in v. 3, ζωή αἰώνιος expresses unity and equality in the SFR as eternal life entails knowing *both* the Father and the Son. The Father sending of the Son and the Son’s accomplishment of the mission (v. 4), point to unity and oneness in the SFR.<sup>587</sup> In the Prayer’s first five verses, the characterization of the Son and Father as united and equally

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<sup>585</sup> Black notes, “The underlying theme of the prayer is unity. This is established, not by counting how many times the expression αὐτὸς occurs, but by noting where it occurs and how it is used.” Black, “On the Style and Significance of John 17,” 154.

<sup>586</sup> “The hour appears at different stages of the narrative: 1) in 2:4 7:30 and 8:20, Jesus’ “hour” has not yet come; the hour is therefore an event which has to take a pre-determined course, 2) in 12:23-28 the hour for Jesus to be glorified includes his crucifixion, 3) in 13:1 the hour refers to Jesus’ departure, and 4) the last occurrence is in 17: 1. The hour therefore, refers to a series of progressive events set into motion at the end of Jesus’ earthly mission, signifying Jesus’ impending departure. According to Brown, ““The hour” is a long period of time, beginning with the first indication that the process which would lead to Jesus’ death had been set in motion, and terminating with his return to his Father.” Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1:740. Morris notes an air of finality with the use of the perfect ἤλκυθεν in 17:1; he believes that this point could mark the last final stage of the hour. Morris, *John*, 635, n. 4. Köstenberger views the hour as a dramatic device, which builds toward the climax of the “glorification of the Son”; in other words, it is shorthand for the cluster of events comprising Jesus’ crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. Köstenberger, *John*, 486. According to Morris, the entire ministry of Jesus leads up to the hour. Morris, *John*, 635. Käsemann believes the “hour” refers to Jesus’ passion and glorification. Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of John Chapter 17* (trans. Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968). 19

<sup>587</sup> According to Käsemann, the title “the Father who sent me” alternates with the concept of the Son’s oneness with the Father, thus, “the former receives its Christological meaning through the latter.” Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 11.

divine, takes place through the recurrence of symbols/symbolic language and themes such as ὁ πατήρ, δίδωμι, ζωὴ αἰώνιος, γινώσκω, ἀληθινός, ποστέλλω, ἔργον, and ἀληθινός. The symbolism summarizes what has been illustrated in the preceding narrative.

Verses 6-10, which focus on what Son and Father share in the divine mission, gives more detail about the unity in the SFR. First, the Father gives the Son people (v. 6, 9, [v. 24]). Second, everything the Son has is shared by with the Father (v. 7). Third, the words the Son gives to his disciples are the Father's (v. 8). Ultimately, the joint and equal possession of all things in the SFR is expressed in the statement: "All mine are yours and yours are mine" (v. 10). Unity and equality is also reflected in Son and Father sharing the divine "name," which symbolizes their nature and character.<sup>588</sup> In v. 6, the Son manifests the Father's name to his disciples and vv. 11-12 reveal more about the name: 1) the Father gave the Son the name, 2) the Son kept the disciples in the name, and 3) now the Son is leaving the world and asks the Father to continue keeping the disciples in the name.<sup>589</sup> The Prayer's last reference to the name is in v. 26, where the Son tells the Father that although he has revealed the name to his disciples, he will continue to reveal it even after his departure, presumably through the Holy Spirit.

The first *direct* mention of oneness in the SFR occurs in v. 11,<sup>590</sup> when the Son prays that his disciples experience the oneness within the SFR.<sup>591</sup> The theme of oneness

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<sup>588</sup> In 5:43 Jesus declares that he has come in the Father's name, meaning that he is the embodiment of the divine name; all the Son does is a manifestation of the divine name.

<sup>589</sup> Keeping the disciples in the Father's name implies relationship with God.

<sup>590</sup> In v. 11 *oneness* in the SFR is explicitly stated the second time in the Gospel; the first time is in 10:30, where Jesus declared—ὁ γὰρ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὁ ὢν σμεν. Ἐγὼ occurs 5 times in the Prayer (vv. 11, 21, 22 [x2], and 23) of these, 4 refer to unity in the SFR *and* the disciples (vv. 11, 21, 22 [x 2]), and once to the disciple's unity (v. 23).



recurs in vv. 21-23 where Jesus prays for the unity of all future believers. Verses 21-23 give insight into the divine oneness; first,  $\sigma\upsilon \ \epsilon\upsilon \ \epsilon\mu\omicron \ \kappa\alpha\gamma \ \epsilon\upsilon \ \sigma\omicron\iota$  points to its mystical nature—the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father (v. 21).<sup>592</sup> Second, Jesus prays that believers be drawn into the divine oneness (v. 21). Third, the disciples experience the unity in the SFR through the revelation of the Father’s glory given by the Son (v. 22).<sup>593</sup> Fourth, unity is also experienced as believers partake of the mystical union on the SFR (vv. 22, 23). In sum, vv. 21-23 state that unity in the SFR will manifest in believers through their relationship with the Son, then the world will believe in the Son’s mission from the Father.

Verse 18 reveals another element of equality in the SFR as the Son, not the Father, sends the disciples to continue the mission. Thus, for the future advancement of the divine mission, the Son delegates with the same authority of the Father. Finally, vv. 24-26 reveal two more aspects of unity in the SFR. The eternal love the Father has for the Son is a mark of unity (vv. 24, 26), and the Son’s intimate knowledge of the Father originates from the unity and love in the SFR (v. 25).

The joint characterization of Son and Father as equal in divine essence and united in the divine mission, in the first sixteen chapters of the Gospel, is fully expressed in the Prayer. The divine union clearly stated in the Prologue and expanded in the narrative, is

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<sup>591</sup> The comparative conjunction  $\kappa\alpha\theta\omicron \ \varsigma$  qualifies the unity desired for the disciples and also signifies the manner in which the disciples are to remain one—as in the SFR.

<sup>592</sup> Brown translates  $\epsilon\upsilon$  as “mutual indwelling.” Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:770. Bernard views  $\epsilon\upsilon$  as abiding. Bernard, *Gospel According to St. John*, 577.

<sup>593</sup> The second  $\epsilon\upsilon \ \alpha$  clause in v. 21 states another dimension of unity—believers are grafted into the intimacy of the Father and Son. This staggering notion unveils the purpose of the divine mission; the SFR is not exclusive, rather, the Son’s mission is to draw believers into the SFR. This abiding or indwelling unity may be either a mystical/spiritual union or a practical outworking of unity in the community of faith. The third  $\epsilon\upsilon \ \alpha$  clause in v. 21 points to the latter; if the world is to witness the unity it may refer to unity lived out from within the community of faith for the world to see.

now detailed in the Son's "hour." The content of the Prayer shows an uninterrupted relationship between Son and Father during the mission on earth. The Prayer unveils the unity and equality that characterizes Son and Father in the following areas: 1) reciprocal glorification, 2) bestowing of eternal life to humanity, 3) sharing all things, including disciples, believers, and the message to the world, 4) sharing the divine name, 5) mystical union, 6) reception of believers in the divine union, 7) love, and 8) divine knowledge.

### 8.3.4 Life-Giving Authority

The Johannine concept of ζῶν αἰώνιος symbolizes divine life that the Son offers humanity. Although ζῶν αἰώνιος occurs only in vv. 2-3 of the Prayer, the theme of life appears in other verses in the passage. Jesus' initial declaration in the Prayer is that the Father gave him authority to grant eternal life to humanity (v. 2),<sup>594</sup> ζῶν αἰώνιος means *knowing* both Son and Father.<sup>595</sup> In the Prayer, therefore, *eternal life involves being in*

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<sup>594</sup> According to Zerwick and Grosvenor, δέδωκας in 17:2 denotes the permanence of the gift; however, the alternation of the aorist and perfect in the following verses is difficult to explain. Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis*, 336. Köstenberger ignores the aorist tense in ἔδωκας and interprets the giving of ἔξουσία as a future act of the Father, and surprisingly, he then views the bestowal of eternal life by the Son as having already happened. Köstenberger, *John*, 486. It is unlikely that this act of giving authority to the Son is a future event, see 1:12. Brown's view is that power to give life was granted to the Son as a part of his earthly ministry, but would not become fully effective until Jesus' exaltation. Brown, 2: 740.

<sup>595</sup> Even though some scholars such as Morris view this verse as a parenthesis, it is very significant in the Gospel's theme of eternal life. Morris, *John*, 637, n. 11. John 17: 3 is the only verse in the Gospel where αἰώνιος appears before ζῶν; in addition, this verse is also the only instance in the Gospel where the phrase has both a definite article and a demonstrative pronoun; these syntactical features make this definition of eternal life distinct and emphatic. The ὅτι clause in 17:3 may be explained in one of the following ways: 1) epexegetical—explaining the content of αἰώνιος ζῶν, 2) result—the result of eternal life is knowing the Father and Son, or 3) purpose—the purpose of eternal life is knowing the Father and Son.

*relationship with the Son and his Father.*<sup>596</sup> Jesus confirms his disciples have fulfilled the requirement for experiencing eternal life (v. 8).<sup>597</sup>

The Prayer shows how Son and Father work together to grant eternal life to humanity; as the Father's emissary, the Son has authority to give humanity eternal life. Verse 3 marks a high point in the Johannine presentation of the symbol of life. Eternal life is not only knowing the Father, but also knowing his Son whom he authorized to bestow eternal life to believers. The remainder of the Prayer highlights the Son's success in his mission of bestowing eternal life.

### 8.3.3 Sending and Coming Into the World

The message of the Fourth Gospel is that God the Father *sent* Jesus his Son into the world to offer eternal life to humanity. The Gospel therefore places emphasis on believing in Jesus as Son *sent from the Father*;<sup>598</sup> in response the Son *comes from the Father* into the world. Thus, the mission is the result of joint-partnership in the SFR rooted in a preexistent union in heaven. The Prayer marks a turning point in the narrative after Jesus completes his public ministry. The Son gives his Father an account of his

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<sup>596</sup> In v. 3, the present tense γινώσκωσιν can be viewed as is a customary (habitual), implying a continuous process of knowing God. Γινώσκω implies relationship; the word means: 1) to arrive at a knowledge or acquaintance of someone (*BDAG*, 199), or 2) to learn to know a person through direct personal experience, implying a continuity of relationship (*L & N* 1:327). According to Köstenberger, eternal life means living in fellowship with God. Köstenberger, *John*, 488.

<sup>597</sup> In 5: 24 Jesus declared, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he *who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life*. In 17: 8, receiving, knowing, and believing point to: 1) the disciples' keeping Father's word (v. 6), 2) the disciples' acceptance of the Son's mission, and 3) evidence that Jesus has completed the work the Father gave him.

<sup>598</sup> Two out of the Gospel's four references to believing in the *sent Son* are in the Prayer (5:38; 6:29; 11:42; 17:8; 17:21).

mission.<sup>599</sup> Thus, themes of sending, coming, and returning feature prominently in this pericope.

In the first mention of sending in v. 3, the Son explains that eternal life means knowing God *and* Jesus Christ whom God *sent*. In vv. 8, Jesus states that his disciples know he *comes from God* and believe that *God sent him*. Earlier in the narrative, Jesus described himself as one “whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world (10:36); thus, sanctification is linked to the sending of the Son. In v. 19 of the Prayer, Jesus states that *he* is sanctifying *himself*; obviously the acts of sanctification in 10:36 and 17:19 differ in time and purpose. *Ἀγιάζω* in the Prayer is best understood as consecration, dedication, or offering;<sup>600</sup> most likely, this self-sanctification points to the crucifixion.<sup>601</sup> Interestingly, the Prayer makes no *direct* mention of the crucifixion, probably because the Son is looking beyond the crucifixion to his ascension and return to the Father (v. 5, 24). In v. 18, the act of sending extends to the disciples as they are sent by Jesus, just as he was sent by the Father. The next two references to the Father sending the Son are in

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<sup>599</sup> Käsemann remarks on the completion of the Son’s mission, “It is astonishing that even though Jesus’ glory is recognized as being already manifest, nevertheless at the same time, in certain respects, it is also regarded as still being in the future, for his glory will be perfected only with death.” Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 20.

<sup>600</sup> *BDAG*, 10.

<sup>601</sup> Morris comments: “He [Jesus] sets himself apart for doing the Father’s will, and in this context this must mean death. He dedicates himself to Calvary with all that Calvary means. . . It is purposeful. He dies with a view to the disciples being sanctified, being set apart for God. It is only on the basis of what he has done for them that his prayer for their being sanctified may be answered.” Morris, *John*, 647-648. See also Bernard: “The Father “consecrated” Jesus for his mission to the world; and now that His mission is about to be consummated in death, Jesus “consecrates” Himself, as He enters upon the Passion.” Bernard, *Gospel According to St. John*, 575. Brown likens this consecration to the HB idea of consecrating sacrificial victims: “It is plausible that, when in xvii 19 Jesus speaks of self-consecration, we are to think of him . . . as a priest offering himself as a victim for those whom God has given him.” Brown, *John*, 2:766-767.

context of the disciple's future ministry in the world; through the disciples, the world will believe that indeed, the Son was sent by the Father (vv. 21, 23).<sup>602</sup>

In the Gospel, the sending by the Father is the distinct mark of Jesus' Sonship; he is not just the Son, he is the *sent* Son. The symbolic significance of ἀποστέλλω in the Gospel is that the only way to know God is through his sent Son. The Johannine notion of believing means *believing that Jesus is sent by God*. The Prayer marks the fulfillment of the Son's mission; however, the mission is not ended but continues with the Son sending the disciples. The Prayer also mentions the Son's return to the Father, which emphasizes his *coming from* the Father. The Son is now returning to the Father and his disciples, whom having been grafted into the SFR will continue the divine mission in the world.

### 8.3.2 Love

The entire Prayer resonates of the love between Son and Father. The Son's intimate act of looking upward to the Father in prayer and his use of the title πατήρ in v. 1 sets the tone of divine love for the chapter. Jesus' first request is "Glorify *your* Son,"<sup>603</sup> which emphasizes his relationship to the Father as μονογενής. The Son's request and anticipation in v. 5, of a return to his pre-incarnate fellowship with the Father, signifies love. In vv 6-10 the Father's love for the Son is expressed in his act of giving and entrusting various things to the Son.<sup>604</sup> On the other hand, the Son's love for the Father is

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<sup>602</sup> The world's acceptance of the Father's message of salvation hinges on recognition of Jesus as the Son sent from God. In the statement να ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ τί σύ με ἀπέστειλας, the message of salvation has been compressed into the theme of the sent Son.

<sup>603</sup> In 17: 5 the forward position of σου is emphatic; με σύ, παρὰ σεαυτοῦ and παρὰ σοῦ emphasize intimacy in the SFR.

<sup>604</sup> According to Newman and Nida, "The primary focus on the biblical concept of love is always that of giving rather than receiving. One loves another for the sake of benefiting the one he loves, rather

expressed in his obedience and fulfillment of the Father's work (vv. 4, 6, 8, 12, 14, 18, 22, 26). Additionally, references to oneness and unity in the SFF point to closeness between Son and Father.

Ἀγαπάω is the verb used in the Gospel to express love in the SFR; □γαπάω appears in v. 23 of the Prayer where the word signifies the Father's love for both the Son and his disciples. Verse 24 describes the divine love as preexistent and transcendent, for the Father loved the Son before the beginning of time. Jesus ends his prayer on the note of love and his last request is that the Father's love for him may reside in believers.

The Son's prayer is in itself an act of intimate fellowship with the Father. Although the Father does not speak, the Prayer declares the unreserved love of the Father for *his* Son and all the Son's actions are grounded in his love for the Father. At the end of the Prayer, the Son reveals the ultimate purpose of love in the SFR—it is to be experienced by all believers.

### 8.3.5 Revelation and Glory

As the Son confirms his completion of his revelatory mission, he makes several references to δόξα, a central feature of the SFR.<sup>605</sup> In the Prayer, the connection between the SFR, revelation, and glory is striking; the Father sends the Son, who in turn reveals

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than for the sake of receiving benefit from the object of his love.” Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), 104. Schnackenburg explains that the love between Father and Son is “mutual devotion in activity.” Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels*, 254.

<sup>605</sup> Buck notes the use of δόξα to form an inclusio in chapter 17; δόξα appears four times in different forms in the first five verses, and then reappears in verses 22-24. Consequently, Buck views glory as the dominant motif. Erwin Buck, “John 17:6-19: Exegesis Case Study,” *Consensus* 7 (April 1981): 24-28.

the Father by manifesting their shared glory. The Prayer reveals three phases of the Son's glory—pre-incarnate, incarnate, and post-incarnate.

The first request the Son makes is for the Father to glorify him so that he may in turn glorify the Father (v. 1).<sup>606</sup> In vv. 4-5, the Son states he has glorified the Father by completing the work of *making the Father known* (v. 4).<sup>607</sup> In v. 5, the Son asks the Father to glorify him by restoring him to the place of preexistent glory they share. Here Jesus makes no mention of the cross in connection to glorification. While 17:5 does not preclude the cross, it surpasses the cross,<sup>608</sup> because the Son looks beyond the crucifixion for glorification. In sum, in the Prayer, the Son's glorification is his return to his divine preexistent status and relationship with the Father.

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<sup>606</sup> Scholars have pondered on what exactly this request means. Jesus refers to glory and glorification in terms of the past (vv.4, 5, 22), present (vv. 5, 10), and future (vv. 1, 24), and in Prayer, the request for glorification is yet to be carried out. John 13:31-32 parallels 17:1, 5 as both passages refer to the present and future glorification of Jesus, and the reciprocal glorification of the Father and the Son. John 13:31-32 sheds light on δοξάζω, here the verb occurs five times in two tenses (δοξάσθῃ [x3] and δοξάσει [x2]). In 13:31-32, after Judas' departure at the Last Supper, Jesus declares νῦν ἡδοξάσθῃ υἱοῦ τοῦ νθρώπου καὶ θεὸς ἡδοξάσθῃ ἐν αὐτῷ. [ἐν θεῷ ἡδοξάσθῃ ἐν αὐτῷ], καὶ θεὸς δοξάσει αὐτὸν ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐπεὶ δοξάσει αὐτόν ("Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. [If God is glorified in him] God will glorify Him in himself, and will glorify him immediately." Carson explains that in 13:31-32 Jesus is uttering three certainties. First, God is glorified in Christ, i.e., in his passion. Second, God will glorify Jesus in himself, i.e., in heaven; the resurrection after the crucifixion which will be the Father's seal on the Son. The future tense points beyond the passion to the eternal glory of the Father that the Son will share. Third, God will act without delay. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 483. Brown explains that in John 13:31-32, the process of glorification has begun with the commencement of "the hour" but is not yet complete. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 2: 740. According to Diehl, Jesus' "glory" is his crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Diehl, "The Puzzle of the Prayer," 210.

<sup>607</sup> John 17:4 ought to be interpreted in its immediate context (vv. 2-8); the adverbial participle τελειώσας could be rendered "by completing." According to Rogers and Rogers, the aorist ἡδόξα is constative, looking back at the glorification of God in the *whole* of Jesus' life and ministry. Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III., *The New Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 220. However, Morris bases his interpretation of ἡδόξα solely on word association and therefore connects the word to τετέλεσται, which Jesus' uttered on the cross in 19:30. Therefore according to Morris, τελειώσας in 17:4 looks forward to the cross. Morris, *John*, 638, n. 20. Köstenberger holds the same view: "The work that God gave Jesus to do is focused on the cross. When Jesus utters his final prayer, the cross still lies ahead, but by faith, he anticipates the successful completion of his mission." Köstenberger, *John*, 489. Brown looks further ahead—after the exaltation of Jesus. Brown, *John*, 2:742.

<sup>608</sup> See Köstenberger who believes that glorification in means Jesus is anticipating his exalted, authoritative position subsequent to his crucifixion and resurrection. Köstenberger, *John*, 486.

Jesus in v. 6 declares that he revealed the Father's name to his disciples; as a result, they have kept the Father's word. The manifestation of the Father's name means Jesus revealed the Father's nature and words to his disciples.<sup>609</sup> Therefore, now they know the following: 1) everything the Son possesses is the Father's (v. 7), 2) he comes from the Father (v. 8), and 3) the Father sent him (v. 8).<sup>610</sup> The Son therefore, has been successful in revealing the Father. In v. 10, Jesus declares he has been glorified in disciples whom the Father gave to him; this glorification may refer to the Son's success in making the Father known to them. In v. 17, Jesus declares "your word is truth," evoking his description of God in v. 3 as the only *true* God; the word of God reveals the true and genuine nature of the Father.<sup>611</sup> The Son's giving to his disciples his Father's glory in v. 22 may be for the purpose of the future work of continuing the revelatory mission. The Gospel's final mention of δόξα is in v. 24 where the Son expresses his desire for all believers to be with him so they can behold him in his position of restored and unveiled glory.<sup>612</sup> Finally in v. 26, the Son states he has revealed the Father's name

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<sup>609</sup> The name of a person represented the very nature of the person whom it designated; it expressed the person's qualities and powers. *BDAG*, 712.

<sup>610</sup> The adverb νῦν at the beginning of v. 7 places focus on the immediate present—*now, at the present time* (*BDAG*, 681). Thus, the present state of the disciples is that they know all that the Son has is from God. Brown connects this verse to 16:30, where the disciples declare, "*Now* we know that you know all things . . . we believe that you came from God." The disciples who understood Jesus mission only partially, have now come to a fuller knowledge during "the hour." Brown, *John*, 2:743. Morris also remarks that Jesus seems to be saying that only now at long last, have the disciples come into the knowledge of which Jesus speaks. Morris, *John*, 641.

<sup>611</sup> Hence, according to Morris, "the divine revelation is eminently trustworthy." Morris, *John*, 647.

<sup>612</sup> John 17:24 echoes 1:14 in the Prologue—καὶ ἵνα θεασάμεθα τὸν δόξαν αὐτοῦ.



and will continue do so that after his departure that the Father's love may be in believers.<sup>613</sup>

The Son's mission of revealing the Father concludes with the Father's glorification of the Son, that is, his return to preexistent, pre-incarnate glory. Meanwhile, during his sojourn on earth the Son glorified the Father by making the Father known to his disciples as they received the Father's message, witnessed the Father's glory, and believed in the Son he sent. The Son has been glorified in his success with his disciples, and he delegates them to continue the task of revealing the Father. On completion of their mission, the disciples will be with Jesus and experience the full revelation of the glory he shares with the Father.

### **8.3.6 Summary**

The Prayer details several dimensions of the SFR beginning with unity and equality of divine status. Unity in the SFR is reflected in the eternal, filial love shared between Father and Son, an unmistakable element in the Prayer. Love and unity form the backdrop of the sending of the Son and his coming into the world. The Prayer establishes the Son's status as the Father's divine agent and emphasizes his completion of the divine assignment. The Father sent the Son, the Son came from the Father, and in the Prayer the Son reports his accomplished mission before returning to the Father. Eternal life is unobtainable without knowledge of the SFR. Consequently, the Son comes into the world to reveal the Father's message, name, and glory. The disciples received and believed the

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<sup>613</sup> The future manifestation in v. 26 may point to: 1) the approaching crucifixion in which the love of God will be made fully and openly displayed, or 2) the resplendent glory the Son shares with his Father in heaven. Brown argues that this future manifestation refers to the work of the Holy Spirit. Brown, *John*, 2:781.

Son's revelation of the Father, and in the future will receive the ultimate revelation when they behold the Son in the splendor of his pre-existent glory with the Father. The detail and depth in the Son's prayer to the Father makes John 17 the thematic and theological climax of the Gospel's presentation of the SFR. In the preceding narrative, characterization of Son and Father occurred during the Son's interaction with other characters in the Gospel. However, the Prayer reveals the SFR in the Son's direct address to the Father, using a wide array of familiar symbols/symbolic language and themes.

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

The above analyses show the significant role of the Prayer in the Gospel's presentation of the SFR. The semantic analysis illustrates the high level of SFR lexicology and symbolism in the passage; the Prayer therefore functions as a semantic domain for the Gospel's symbolic presentation of the SFR and a narrative anchor for John's Christological Symbology. The character analysis reveals the joint characterization of Son and Father within the five dimensions of unity/equality, love, mission to the world, giving eternal life, and revelation/glory.

As the Son's public teaching ministry ends, the content and tone of the Prayer marks a major shift in the Gospel's presentation of the SFR. The Passion narrative and Epilogue shows a marked shift in the Gospel's symbolic presentation of the SFR as references to Son and Father are less extensive than the preceding seventeen chapters. John's Christological Symbology centers on the SFR, the primary portion from which emerges Jesus' teaching ministry. Consequently, the Symbology comprises its introduction in the Prologue, development in the narrative, culmination in the Prayer, and

conclusion in the Passion narrative and Epilogue. The following chapter will chart John's Christological Symbology through the entire Gospel and show how it centers on the SFR.

## CHAPTER 9: JOHN'S CHRISTOLOGICAL SYMBOLOLOGY

### 9.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to reveal John's Christological Symbolology, which is the Fourth Gospel's overarching network of symbols that portrays Jesus as *Son of God in light of his relationship with the Father*. The Symbolology confirms the centrality of the SFR and reveals the network of Christological symbols used in the Gospel's presentation of Jesus. John's Christological Symbolology begins in the Prologue, develops with the narration of Jesus' teaching ministry, and culminates in the Prayer before concluding in the final chapters of the narrative. The previous two chapters have explained the strategic roles of the Prologue and Prayer in the narrative's symbolic presentation of the SFR. The Prologue introduces the SFR and accompanying symbolism, then ends by declaring the mission of the Son as *the Father's Revealer* (1:18). The ensuing Gospel narrative focuses on the Son's teaching ministry, who explains and demonstrates his divinely ordained mission *in context of the SFR*. The narrative's emphasis on the SFR peaks in the Prayer, which marks the end of Jesus' teaching ministry as the Son details his accomplishment of revealing the Father; thus, the Prayer gives the final extensive portrayal of the SFR. The narrative concludes with the Son's crucifixion, death, resurrection, and commissioning of his disciples who will continue the mission that originated in the SFR.

This chapter unveils John's Christological Symbolology through a synopsis of seventeen sequences that establishes the centrality of the SFR, which follow the linear, sequential flow of narrative events and presents the SFR by means of symbolic

clusters.<sup>614</sup> Each sequence entails the following: 1) a synopsis consisting of a brief introduction and a summary of how the SFR emerges in terms of positions/actions of Son and Father toward each other; the synopsis is inserted with symbolic terms where necessary,<sup>615</sup> and ends with a summary of the SFR, and 2) a symbograph illustrating names/titles of Son and Father, symbols/symbolic terms, and key themes in the sequence. After the symbolic synthesis, the role of the Prologue and Prayer in the Symbology is evaluated and the chapter concludes with observations on the sequential symbolic unveiling of the SFR through John's Christological Symbology.

## **9.2 John's Christological Symbology: Sequence and Synopses**

### **9.2.1 Synopsis of Sequence One: The Prologue (John 1:1-18)**

John's Christological Symbology commences with the Prologue's striking, stylistic introduction to the SFR. The centrality of the SFR is established at the onset of the narrative as Son and Father are symbolically portrayed as the Λόγος and God, in divine, transcendent relationship and united in the work of creation (vv. 1-3). The symbolic title Λόγος, which appears only in the Prologue, introduces the preexistent divine nature possessed by Son and Father. The rest of the sequence continues the symbolic introduction by highlighting the following dimensions of the SFR: the Father, through the Baptizer, witnesses to the authenticity of the Son's divine agency and encourages people to believe in him (μαρτυρία/μαρτυρέω, φῶς, ἁληθινός, ἔρχομαι; vv. 6-8, 15), Son and Father co-create the world in which the divine mission is carried out

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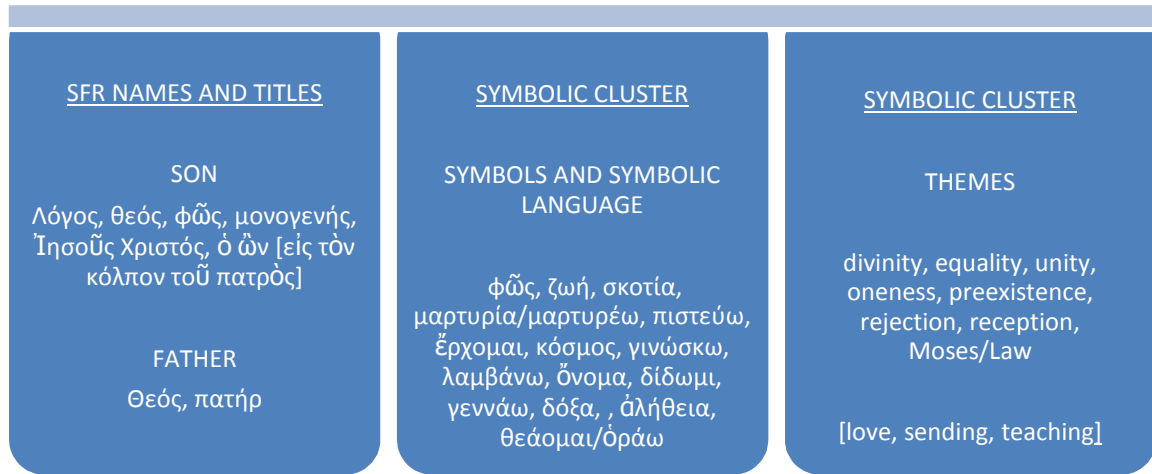
<sup>614</sup> The Symbology also contains a cyclical pattern of recurrent symbols/symbolic language and themes.

<sup>615</sup> The first part of the narrative contains insertions of symbols/symbolic language in Greek; however, because in the latter part of the narrative, symbols/symbolic language and themes are recurrent, the insertions are less frequent.

(κόσμος; v. 10), the Son's delegated mission from the Father is unrecognized and rejected, however, others receive and believe in him (σκοτία, γινώσκω, λαμβάνω/παραλαμβάνω, νόμα; vv. 5, 11-12), Son and Father are united in the mission of salvation as the Son gives believers the right to become children of the Father (ζωή, δίδωμι, γεννάω; v. 4, 12), witnesses testify of beholding the glory shared by Son and Father (θεάομαι/, δόξα, μονογενής; vv. 14), the Father gave the Law through Moses but gives grace and truth through his Son (λήθεια; v. 17), the Son, who is also God, is the only one who has seen the Father and both dwell in intimate fellowship; therefore, the Son is the one who makes the Father known (ράω; v. 18).

The symbolic cluster in this sequence introduces the SFR in terms of preexistence, equality in divine nature, close relationship/fellowship, co-creation of the world, and collaboration in the mission to offer eternal life bring believers into divine relationship. The cluster introduces several key symbols/symbolic language and themes that develop the presentation of the SFR. The sole occurrence of ξηγέομαι (v. 18) signifies the introduction to the Son's teaching ministry, through which the SFR expands as it is explained.

**Figure 10 Symbograph: John 1:1-18**



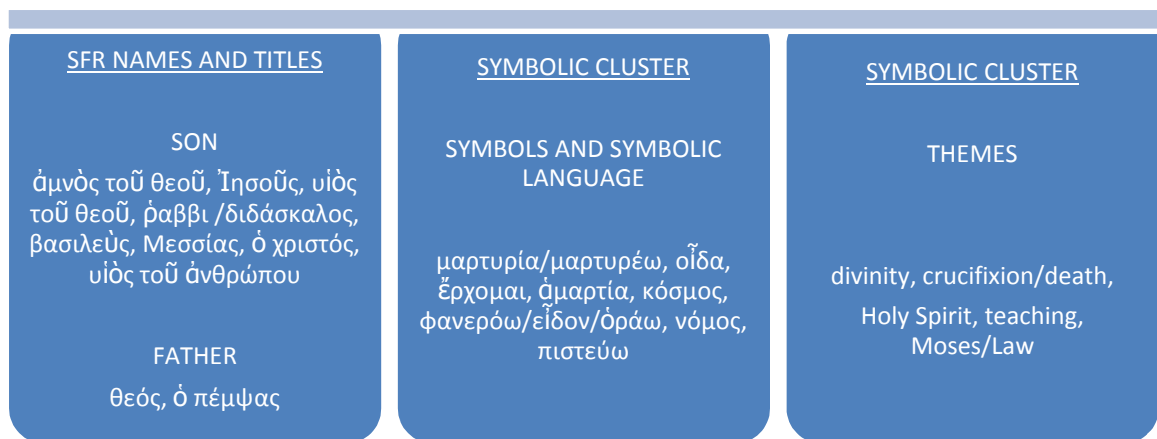
### 9.2.2 Synopsis of Sequence Two: The Baptizer's Second Witness and Jesus' First Disciples (1:19-51)

Sequence two presents the SFR through the words of the Baptizer and the first disciples who witness to the Son's relationship with the Father and his divine agency. In vv. 20-23, the Baptizer denies being the Christ or the Prophet, thus hinting at the messianic and prophetic mission of the Son that develops in context of the SFR as the narrative progresses. The symbolic witness in this sequence points to the following aspects of the SFR: Jesus as the *Lamb of God* who takes away the sin of the world symbolizing the Father's sacrificial "giving" of the Son and introducing the concept of sin later identified as refusal to believe in the sent Son (οὐκ ἔστις τοῦ θεοῦ, ἡμαρτία; vv. 29, 36), the Son's preexistence in heaven (v. 30), the Father's approval and of the Son's ministry signified by the descent of the Holy Spirit at his baptism (vv. 31-34), Jesus as Son of God and Messiah (vv. 34, 41, 45, 49), and lastly, the Son as King, signifying his co-regency with the Father (βασιλεὺς; 1:49). Other indirect symbolic references relating to the SFR later amplified in the narrative are the following: the Son's mission as teacher

who reveals the Father (διδάσκαλος; v. 38, 49), Jesus as Son of Man sent by the Father from heaven (v. 51), and the themes of Moses and the Law used by the Son to validate his agency from the Father (v. 45).

The symbolic cluster points to the divinity, preeminence, preexistence, coregency, crucifixion, death, and salvific mission of the Son in partnership with the Father. This sequence introduces □ μαρτία in connection with κόσμος; both words later recur and symbolize obstacles recognition of the Son as sent by the Father. In addition, the Father's sending role as □ πέμψας is introduced in context of his sending the Baptizer (1:33). The numerous references to seeing and knowing reflect the Gospel's Christological emphasis on recognition of the Son who is sent from the Father.

**Figure 11 Symbograph: John 1:19-51**



### 9.2.3 Synopsis of Sequence Three: The Wedding at Cana and the Cleansing of the Temple (2:1-25)



The third sequence in the Symbology combines symbolic events in chapter two—the Wedding at Cana and the cleansing of his Father’s Temple/House. The two acts present the SFR in the following ways: both the turning of water into wine and cleansing of the temple symbolize the Son’s divine agency and authority from the Father (σημεῖον; 2:11, 18, 23), the Son for the first time identifies God as his Father (v. 16), and the Son is the physical embodiment of the Father’s presence (vv. 19-22). Although the Father is not mentioned in the Cana event, the recurrence of δόξα (v. 11) links the symbolic act to the SFR. As the Prologue indicates, Son and Father share divine glory.

This sequence introduces the following three symbols/symbolic language: 1) ἡ ὥρα (2:4), which signifies the final phase of Jesus’ mission from the Father, 2) σημεῖον (2:11, 18, 23), which describes the eight signs in the Gospel as proof of his divine origin and mission,<sup>616</sup> and 3) the symbol of temple that signifies both the Son as the Father’s earthly representative and the crucifixion of the son and his resurrection by the Father. In this sequence the two signs point to Jesus as the Father’s Son and emissary.

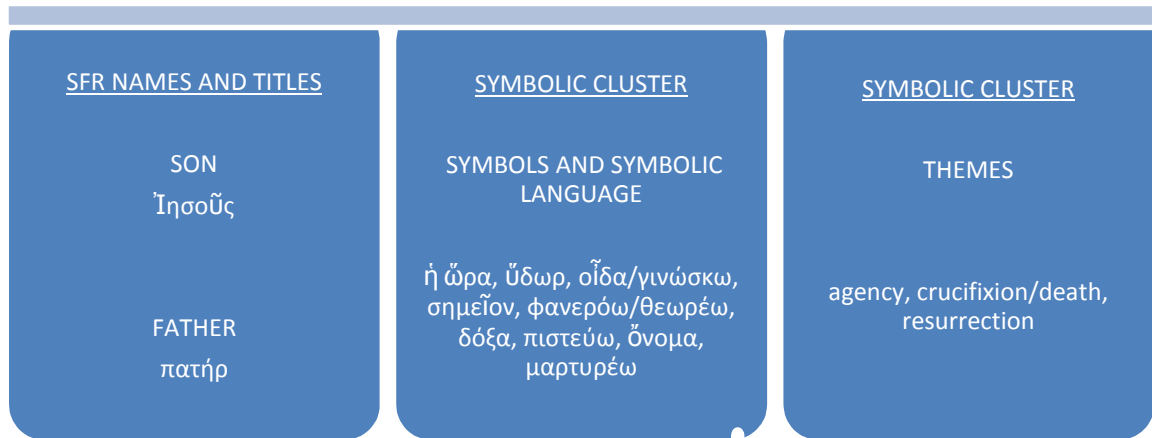
The symbolic cluster in this sequence points to the manifestations of the Son’s glory as signs of his divinity and agency from the Father. Jesus’ symbolic reference to his crucifixion/resurrection symbolizes the Gospel’s eighth sign in which the Father raises the Son from the dead as indicated by the passive ἡγέρθη in v. 22 (vv. 8-19; 6: 30). The resurrection indicates the unity in the SFR in accomplishing the divine mission. The cluster includes the first mention of the ominous ἡ ὥρα, which the narrative later reveals is the apportioned time for the accomplishment of the mission initiated in the SFR.

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<sup>616</sup> The signs are as follows: 1) changing water into wine (2:1-11), 2) healing the nobleman’s son (4:46-54), 3) healing of paralyzed man (5:1-15), 4) feeding the five thousand (6:1-14), 5) walking on the water (6:15-21), 6) healing the man born blind (9:1-41), 7) raising Lazarus (11:1-57), and 8) Jesus’ resurrection (2:18-19; 6: 30).

Finally, the end sequence ends on the note of belief in Jesus, which signifies his acceptance as the Father's emissary (πιστεύω; v.11).

**Figure 12 Symbograph: John 2:1-25**



#### **9.2.4 Synopsis of Sequence Four: Encounter with Nicodemus and the Baptizer's Final Testimony (3:1-21)**

This sequence entails Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus and the Baptizer's final witness. The Nicodemus event represents Jesus' first teaching episode in the narrative with the conversation focusing on new birth and eternal life. The Baptizer's final witness emphasizes the Son's origin and agency from the Father. This stage of the Symbology features the SFR in the following ways: the Son is a teacher from God and his signs are proof of divine agency and God's presence (v. 2), the Son teaches about the Kingdom of God (vv. 3-5), Jesus is the Son of Man descended from heaven who will later ascend back to heaven (ἐμβαβαίνω, καταβαίνω; v. 13), the Father gives his only begotten Son and whoever believes in him has eternal life and is saved, eternal life is therefore obtained only through in the Son sent by the Father (ζωή; vv. 15-16), the Father judges those who do not believe in the name of his Son (σῶζω; vv. 17-18, 36), the Son is the Light who

comes into the world and those who come to him have acted in accordance to God's will (vv. 19-21), the Son gives only what he has received from heaven (v. 27), the Son comes from above, is above all (vv. 31), the Son testifies of what he has seen and heard from the Father, yet is rejected, however, those who receive his testimony affirm that God is true (vv. 32-33), the Father sends the Son and gives him the Spirit without measure (δίδωμι; v. 34), and the Father loves the Son and has given him all things (ἀγαπάω; v. 35).

The symbolic cluster in this sequence highlights the collaboration of Son and Father in the salvific mission to humanity and mentions for the first time the role of the Son in bringing people into the kingdom of God (v. 3). Verses 31-33 introduce the theme of the Son "seeing and hearing" from the Father (ἀράω; ἀκούω vv. 3: 11, 32), and ἀγαπάω occurs for the first time in the narrative in context of the SFR. In addition, the sequence introduces the symbolic import of κρίνω and κρίσις, which signify the rejection of the Son and resulting judgment (vv. 17-19, 36).

**Figure 13 Symbograph: John 3:1-21**

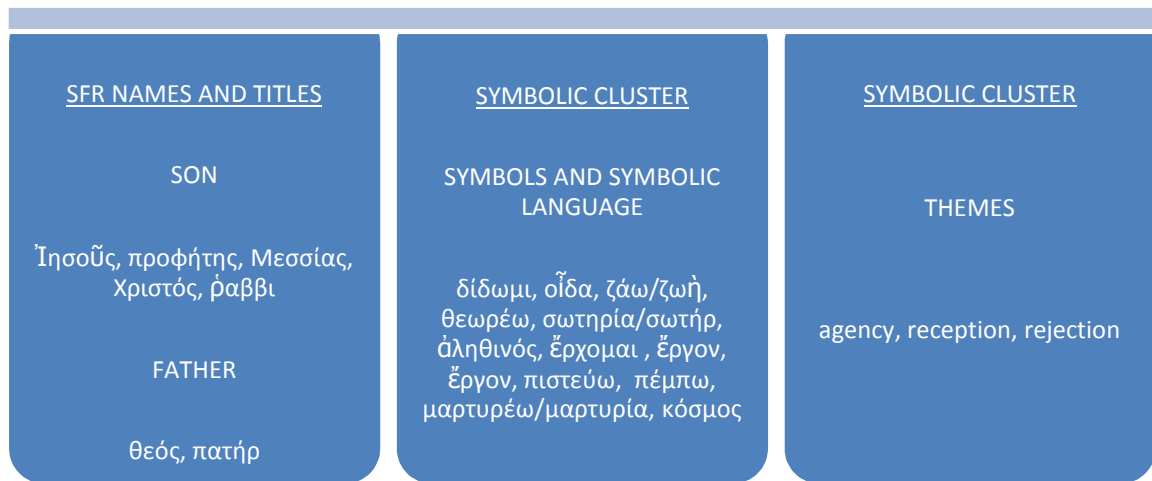
<u>SFR NAMES AND TITLES</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>
<p>SON</p> <p>Ἰησοῦς, ῥαββί/διδάσκαλος, υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, μονογενής, φῶς, υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστός</p> <p>FATHER</p> <p>θεός, πατήρ</p>	<p>SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE</p> <p>οἶδα/γινώσκω, ἔρχομαι, σημεῖον, εἶδον/ ὁράω/φανερῶ , γεννάω, σὰρξ, μαρτυρέω/ μαρτυρία, λαμβάνω, πιστεύω, ἀναβαίνω, καταβαίνω, Μωϋσῆς, ζωή, ἀγαπάω, κόσμος, δίδωμι, ἀποστέλλω, κρίνω/κρίσις, σῶζω, ὄνομα, φῶς, σκότος, ἔργον/ἐργάζομαι, ἀλήθεια/ἀληθής, ἀκούω</p>	<p>THEMES</p> <p>teaching, oneness, rejection, Moses, crucifixion/death, agency, reception</p>

### 9.2.5 Synopsis of Sequence Five: Jesus in Samaria (4:1-42)

In the fifth stage of the Symbology, Jesus gives his second teaching session to the woman at the well in Samaria using the symbol of water to explain salvation and eternal life (σωτηρία/σωτήρ; 4:22, 42). The SFR in this sequence is presented as follows: the Son is the “gift of God” who gives living water (ζωή/ζάω; vv. 10, 13-15), the woman recognizes the divine agency of the Son as a prophet (v. 19, 29), the Son explains the spiritual nature of the Father and what he requires of worshippers (vv. 21-25, [29]), the Son is the coming Messiah (from God) who will reveal all things (v. 25-26), the Son’s “food” is to accomplish the will and work of the Father who sent him (πέμπω, ἔργον; v. 34).

The symbolic cluster reemphasizes the salvific, messianic, and prophetic ministry of the Son in collaboration with the Father. Also introduced is the theme of the Son’s “work,” which symbolizes not only his mission from the Father, but also his desire to fully accomplish it.

**Figure 14 Symbograph: John 4:1-42**



#### 9.2.6 Synopsis of Sequence Six: Jesus Heals in Cana and Bethesda (4:43-5:47)

This sequence combines the first two healing events in Jesus’ mission—the royal official’s son and the man infirmed for thirty-eight years. The symbolic healings highlight the following aspects of the SFR: the Son works in unison with the Father (5:17), Son and Father are equal (5:18), the Son does nothing without the Father—whatever he does is what he sees the Father doing (5: 19), the Father loves the Son and shows him all things (5:20), the Father and Son give life (5:21), the Father has given all judgment to the Son (5:22, 27), Father and Son are honored together (5:23), the Father sends the Son (5:24, 36, 38), Father and Son share divine life (5:26), the Son seeks the Father’s will (5:30), the Father testifies about the Son (5:32, 37), the works the Father gives to the Son to perform are proof that the Father sent him (5:36), and the Son comes in the Father’s name (5:43).

The symbolic cluster in this sequence focuses on unity in the SFR to fulfill the mission to humanity. The healing of the royal official's son validates Jesus' agency from God (4:54). The second symbolic healing validates both Jesus' divine relationship and mission from the Father (5:17). The cluster introduces the symbolic term σάββατον, which signifies Jesus' intentional breaking of the Sabbath Laws to demonstrate his divine authority from the Father (5:9-10, 16-18). The healing of the sick man accentuates the themes of rejection as the sequence marks the beginning of the systematic rejection of the Son's divine origin, message, and agency from the Father (4:48, 5:16, 18, 23, 38-47). However, the reception of the Son is portrayed in the official who acknowledges the Son's divine mission from the Father by believing along with his household (4:50-53).

**Figure 15 Symbograph: John 4:43-5:47**

<u>SFR NAMES AND TITLES</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">SON</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ἰησοῦς, ὁ υἱός, υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FATHER</p> <p style="text-align: center;">πατήρ, θεός, ὁ πέμψας, ὁ μόνος θεός</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE</p> <p>εἶδον / βλέπω/δείκνυμι/ ὁράω , σημεῖον, πιστεύω, γινώσκω/οἶδα, σάββατον, ἁμαρτάνω, ἐργάζομαι/ ἔργον, φιλέω, ζωοποιέω/ ζωή/ ζάω, κρίνω/κρίσις, δίδωμι, πέμπω/ ἀποστέλλω, τιμάω/ δόξα, ἀκούω, ἐξουσία, μαρτυρέω/μαρτυρία, ἀληθής/ἀλήθεια, ὁράω, λαμβάνω, σῶζω, φιλέω, ἔρχομαι, ὄνομα</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THEMES</p> <p>reception, divinity, rejection, unity, equality, agency, Moses, preexistence</p>

### 9.2.7 Synopsis of Sequence Seven: Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1-71)

Sequence seven presents the SFR through another of Jesus' symbolic acts in which he miraculously multiplies loaves and fish. This act is the backdrop for his self-revelation as Bread of Life sent by the Father to give humanity eternal life. The following dimensions of the SFR revealed are as follows: the Father sets his seal of approval on the Son (v. 27, 53), Jesus is sent/given by the Father (v. 29, 37, 57) as Bread of life to the world (v. 31-35, 41, 48-58), the Father gives believers to the Son (v. 37), the Son does the Father's will which is to raise all those given to him in the last day (vv. 38-40, 44-45), the Father draws people to the Son who in turn learn from the Father (v. 44-45, 65), only the Son has seen the Father (v.46), the Son and Father shares divine life (v. 57), Jesus, the Son of Man will ascend back to the Father (v. 62), and the Son is the holy one of God (v. 69).

At this point of the Symbology, several of the symbols/symbolic language and themes in the narrative have been introduced and most of the remaining symbolic clusters contain only recurrences. The cluster in sequence seven reemphasizes the Son's transcendent origin and relationship with the Father, and their joint-mission to give eternal life to humanity on earth.

#### **Figure 16 Symbograph: John 6:1-71**

<u>SFR NAMES AND TITLES</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>
<p>SON</p> <p>Ἰησοῦς, ἄρτος, ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς, ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν, προφήτης, ῥάββι, υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ</p> <p>FATHER</p> <p>πατήρ, θεός, ὁ πέμψας, ὁ ζῶν πατήρ</p>	<p>SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE</p> <p>σημεῖον, θεωρέω/εἶδον/ ὁράω/θεωρέω, ἔρχομαι, κόσμος, οἶδα/γινώσκω, ἐργάζομαι/ἔργον, ζωή/ζάω, δίδωμι, πιστεύω, ἀποστέλλω, Μωϋσῆς, ἀληθινός/ἀληθής, καταβαίνω, ἀκούω, σάρξ, αἷμα, ἀναβαίνω</p>	<p>THEMES</p> <p>reception, rejection, agency, unity, teaching, preexistence, Holy Spirit</p>

### 9.2.8 Synopsis of Sequence Eight: Jesus at the Feast of Booths (John 7:1-8:59)

Sequence eight comprises chapters seven and eight, which narrate another of Jesus' Sabbath-breaking events. Jesus defends himself by reasserting his divine origin and authority from the Father and in doing so, reemphasizes the following aspects of the SFR: the Son's teaching is from God (7: 16-17), he is sent by the Father (7:16, 29; 8:16, 26, 29, 42), he seeks the Father's glory (v. 18), he knows the Father (7:29, 55), he will return to the Father (7:33, 36), and he judges with the Father (8:16). In addition the following is reemphasized: the Father testifies about the Son (8:18), for believers, knowing the Father is synonymous with knowing the Son (8:19), the Son is returning to the Father (8:21-23), the Son is from above (8:23), the Son speaks what he hears and what the Father has taught him (8: 26, 28, 38), the Father is always with the Son (8:29), the Son always does what is pleasing to the Father (8:29), the Son comes from the Father (8:42), the Son honors the Father (8:49), and the Father glorifies the Son (8:54).

The cluster in this sequence symbolically reemphasizes Jesus as teacher, judge, Light of the world, and the Christ, all in connection with the Father who sent him. Amid the general mood of rejection in this sequence, the theme of reception recurs as many



believe in the Son (8:58). The sequence ends with Jesus' bold declaration of his preexistence.

**Figure 17 Symbograph: John 7:1-8:59**

<u>SFR NAMES AND TITLES</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u> SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u> THEMES
<p>SON</p> <p>Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός, προφήτης, φῶς</p> <p>FATHER</p> <p>ὁ πέμψας, θεός, υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου</p>	<p>ἔργον, θεωρέω/φανερώνω/ ὁράω, κόσμος, πιστεύω, μαρτυρέω/μαρτυρία, οἶδα /γινώσκω, δόξα/δοξάζω/ τιμάω/ἀτιμάζω, ἀληθής/ ἀληθινός/ ἀληθῶς/ ἀλήθεια, σάββατον, κρίνω, ἔρχομαι/ἐξέρχομαι, πέμπω/ἀποστέλλω, ἡ ὥρα, σημεῖον, ὕδωρ, φῶς, σκοτία, ζωή, ἁμαρτία, ἀγαπάω</p>	<p>rejection, reception, teaching, unity, departure, Holy Spirit, divinity, crucifixion, preexistence</p>

### 9.2.9 Synopsis of Sequence Nine: The Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-10:42)

Sequence nine presents the Son as Light sent from the Father to remove spiritual darkness in the world. Jesus heals on the Sabbath a man born blind in order to display the Father's work (v. 3-5); the symbolic act sets the stage for his self-revelation as Light of the world and further reemphasizes his identity and relationship with the Father. In this sequence the symbolic act and ensuing Good Shepherd exposition highlights the following aspects of the SFR: the Father sends the Son (9:4; 10:36), the Son does the works of the Father (9:4; 10:37), the Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father (10:15), the Father loves the Son (10:17), the Son has command and authority from the Father to lay down his life and take it up again (10:18), the Son performs works in the Father's name (10:25), the Father gives believers into the Son's hand (10:29), Father and

Son are one (10:30), the Son shows the Father's works (10:32), the Father sanctifies the Son (10:36), and the Son and Father indwell each other (10:38).

The symbolic cluster introduces a new dimension of the SFR in terms of the Son who is Shepherd of the Father's sheep and the believers who are the sheep (πρόβατον, □ θύρα, □ ποιμ□ν □ καλός). Jesus self-revelation as Shepherd reveals how Father and Son work together and the sacrifice by the Son made on behalf of the Father's sheep. Jesus also reiterates his symbolic role as Son of Man authorized by the Father to execute judgment. Additionally, sin is symbolized as blindness, which is the refusal to recognize the Son as the Father's emissary; restoration of the blind man's sight symbolizes recognition of the Son. The cluster reemphasizes belief in the sent Son since πιστεύω occurs ten times in the sequence.<sup>617</sup>

### **Figure 18 Symbograph: John 9:1-10:42**

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<sup>617</sup> See: 9:18, 35, 36, 38; 10:25, 26, 37, 38 [x2], 42.

<u>SFR NAMES AND TITLES</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>
<p>SON</p> <p>ῥαββι, Ἰησοῦς, φῶς, προφήτης, χριστός, υἱός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἡ θύρα, ὁ ποιμὴν (ὁ καλός), θεός, υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ</p> <p>FATHER</p> <p>θεός, ὁ πέμψας, πατήρ</p>	<p>SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE</p> <p>ἁμαρτάνω/ἁμαρτία, φανερῶ/βλέπω/ὁράω/ δείκνυμι, ἔργον/ ἐργάζομαι, πέμπω/ ἀποστέλλω, φῶς, κόσμος, σάββατον, πιστεύω, σημεῖον, οἶδα/γινώσκω, Μωϋσῆς/νόμος, κρίμα, ἔρχομαι, πρόβατον, ἀκούω, σῶζω, ζωή, λαμβάνω, ἀγαπάω, ἐξουσία, ὄνομα, μαρτυρέω, δίδωμι, ἀγιάζω, ἀληθής</p>	<p>THEMES</p> <p>rejection, reception, crucifixion; unity; equality</p>

#### 9.2.10 Synopsis of Sequence Ten: Jesus in Bethany and Jerusalem (11:1-12:50)

The tenth sequence combines four events leading up to the Farewell Discourse. First, in another symbolic act, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, which demonstrates the glory of Father and Son (11:1-57). Second, Mary in a symbolic act anoints Jesus' feet signifying his sacrificial death (12:1-11). Third, Jesus makes a symbolic entry into Jerusalem as King (12:12-19). Fourth, when a group of Greeks seek him, Jesus foretells his impending death (12:20-50). The sequence occurs as follows: the Father gives the Son whatever he asks (11:22), Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who comes into the world (11:27), the Son prays to the Father who hears him (11:41-42, 27-28), the Father sends the Son (11:42, 45, 49), the Son comes as King in the name of the Father (12:13-15), the Father honors those who serve the Son (12:26), the Son prays to the Father for deliverance from his impending death but yields to the divine plan (12:27), the Son asks the Father to glorify his name and the Father answers audibly, stating that he has and will glorify it again (12: 28), those who believe in the Son also believe in the Father and those

who see the Son synonymously see the Father (12: 44-45), and the Father gives the Son words to speak and he does (12:49-50).

This recurrent symbolism in this cluster gives more insight into the SFR such as revealing more about the Son as Life, Light, and eschatological judge, his glory, and sacrificial death, all in context of his relationship with the Father. Mary's declaration in 11:27 is the strongest recognition of the Jesus' emissary role as both Son and Messiah; the declaration encapsulates the Son's mission from God. The sequence also contains the first conversation between Son and Father in which the Father utters his only words in the narrative, and which offers a glimpse into filial intimacy in the SFR. The anointing by Mary, which points to Jesus' death, signifies the Father giving his beloved Son. Additionally, the titles ascribed to Jesus in 12:13-15 point to his divine agency from and co-regency with the Father.

**Figure 19 Symbograph: John 11:1-12:50**

<u>SFR NAMES AND TITLES</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>
<p>SON</p> <p>Ἰησοῦς, υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ῥαββί/διδάσκαλο, φῶς, ὁ ἀνάστασις, ζωή, Χριστός, βασιλεύς, υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου</p> <p>FATHER</p> <p>θεός, πατήρ, ὁ πέμψας</p>	<p>SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE</p> <p>φιλέω/ἀγαπάω, δόξα/δοξάζω/τιμάω, φῶς, κόσμος, βλέπω/ὁράω/ εἶδον/θεωρέω, πιστεύω, δίδωμι, ζωή/ζάω, ἔρχομαι, ἀκούω, ἀποστέλλω/ πέμπω , σημεῖον, γινώσκω/οἶδα, μαρτυρέω, ἡ ὥρα, ὄνομα, κρίσις/κρίνω, σκοτία, νόμος, σφάζω, λαμβάνω</p>	<p>THEMES</p> <p>rejection, reception, crucifixion/death, preexistence</p>

### 9.2.11 Synopsis of Sequence Eleven: The Farewell Discourse Part One (13:1-38)

This sequence marks the beginning of Jesus' final teaching that takes place during his last supper with the disciples. The passage begins with the subject of Jesus' origin from and return to the Father (vv. 1, 3), then Jesus symbolically washes his disciple's feet; the conversation focuses on the meaning of this act. The sequence reemphasizes the following aspects of the SFR: the Son departs to the Father (v. 1), the Father gives the Son all things (v. 3), the Son comes from and returns to the Father (v. 3), whoever receives the Father also receives the Son (v. 20), the Father sends the Son (v. 20), the Father is glorified in the Son and also glorifies the Son (vv. 31-32).

The cluster begins with the symbolic import of the "hour" (ὥρα), signifying the Son's departure to the Father and culmination of events initiated in the SFR (vv. 1, 3, 33, 36). The reciprocal glorification of Son and Father recurs in the cluster, this time in context of the Son's impending crucifixion. The theme of rejection is again reemphasized in Judas' betrayal (vv. 10, -11, 18-30).

**Figure 20 Symbograph: John 13:1-38**



### **9.2.12 Synopsis of Sequence Twelve: The Farewell Discourse Part Two (14:1-31)**

This sequence continues the discussion of the Son's return to the Father and presents the SFR as follows: the Son describes his Father's dwelling place and promises to prepare a place for the disciples (v. 2), the Son is the only way to the Father (vv. 4:6), knowing and seeing the Son is equal to knowing the Father for Father and Son indwell each other (vv. 6-11, 20), the Father works through the Son (v. 10), the Son returns to the Father (v. 12, 28), the Father is glorified in the Son (v. 13), the Son asks the Father for the Holy Spirit on behalf of his disciples (v. 16), the Father loves those who love the Son (v. 21, 23), Father and Son will indwell those who love the Son (v. 23), the Son speaks the Father's words (v. 24), the Father sends the Son (v. 24), the Father will send the Holy Spirit in the Son's name (v. 26), the Father is greater than the Son (v. 28), and the Son loves and obeys the Father (v. 31).

The symbolic cluster in this sequence reemphasizes oneness in the SFR, particularly by stating that the Father is known and recognized *only* through the Son. The symbolism restates the divine origin and agency of the Son and introduces the Holy Spirit as the one through whom Son and Father will continue to reveal themselves to the disciples. The sequence ends on the note of love in the SFR.

**Figure 21 Symbograph: John 14:1-31**

SFR NAMES AND TITLES	SYMBOLIC CLUSTER	SYMBOLIC CLUSTER
<p style="text-align: center;">SON</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ἰησοῦς, ὁδός, ἀλήθεια, ζωή, υἱός</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FATHER</p> <p style="text-align: center;">θεός, πατήρ, ὁ πέμψας</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">πιστεύω, ἔρχομαι, παραλαμβάνω/λαμβάνω, ἀλήθεια, ζωή/ζάω, γινώσκω/οἶδα, ὁράω/δείκνυμι/ἐμφανίζω/θεω ρέω, ἔργον, ὄνομα, δοξάζω, δίδωμι, κόσμος, ἀγαπάω, ἀκούω, πέμπω</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THEMES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">departure, unity, agency, Holy Spirit, rejection</p>

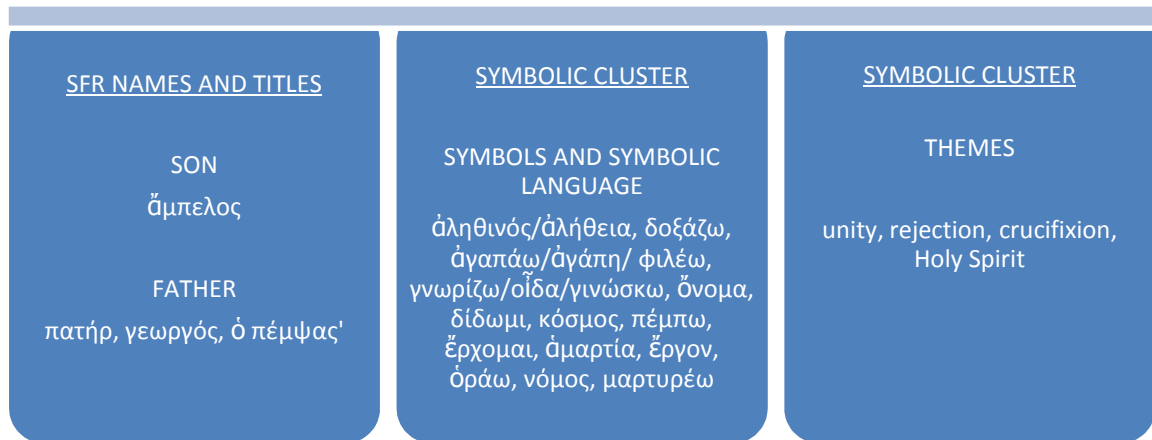
### 9.2.13 Synopsis of Sequence Thirteen: The Farewell Discourse Part Three (15:1-27)

The Farewell Discourse continues introducing new symbolism as the Son explains how believers are connected to the SFR. Jesus uses the symbol of viticulture to describe the SFR—the Son is the vine and the Father is the vinedresser (□ληθινός, □μπελος, γεωργός; v. 1). Emphasis on the SFR are as follows: the Son is the vine and the Father is the vinedresser (v. 1), the Father prunes unfruitful branches from the vine so that the Son can produce more fruit and the Father can be glorified by the branches fruitfulness (vv.2-8), the Father loves the Son (v. 9), the Son abides in the Father’s love and keeps his commandments (v. 10), the Son has revealed all he has heard from the Father (v. 15), the Father will answer prayers offered in the Son’s name (v. 16), those ignorant of the Father will persecute believers in the Son’s name (v. 21), the Father sends the Son (v. 21), whoever hates the Son hates the Father (vv. 23-24), and the Son sends the Spirit from the Father (v. 26).

The vine imagery in this cluster symbolizes oneness and love in the SFR. The sequence stresses that love is also required of believers and without an abiding

relationship in the Son, to be true disciples who glorify both Father and the Son is impossible. Jesus’ reference to coming persecution reemphasizes the themes of rejection, lack of knowledge, unbelief, and sin.

**Figure 22 Symbograph: John 15:1-27**



#### **9.2.14 Synopsis of Sequence Fourteen: The Farewell Discourse Part Four (16:1-33)**

The Son continues to prepare the disciples for his imminent departure and their coming persecution, and he reiterates the following details about the SFR: those who do not know the Father do not know the Son (v. 3), the Son returns to the Father (vv. 10, 17, 28), the Son shares everything with the Father (v. 14), prayers offered in the Son’s name will be answered by the Father (vv. 23-24), in the future, the Son will speak plainly about the Father and no longer in figurative language (v. 25), the Son will make requests to the Father on behalf of the disciples (v. 26), the Father loves the disciples because they love the Son and believe that he has come from the Father (v. 27), and the Father is with the Son during his “hour” (v. 32).



The symbolic cluster reiterates the role of the Holy Spirit whose future work in the disciples' lives will guide them and give them further revelation of Son and Father. The sequence reveals that the love in the SFR extends to believers as the Son testifies of the Father's love for those who believe in his Son. The cluster reemphasizes the origin and sending of the Son from the Father and the sequence ends on the note of oneness in the SFR.

**Figure 23 Symbograph: John 16:1-33**



#### **9.2.15 Synopsis of Sequence Fifteen: The Prayer (17:1-26)**

In the fifteenth sequence of the Symbology, the Son offers his final prayer to the Father. This direct communication from Son to Father is the last extensive insight into the SFR, and is a summary of the following key aspects of the SFR: the Son prays for glorification with the Father (v. 1, 4-5), the Father gives the Son authority over humanity and authority to give eternal life (v. 2), the Father gives the Son people/disciples (vv. 2, 6, 9, 24), the Son gives eternal life (v. 2), eternal life is knowing both the Father and the sent Son (v. 3), the Father sends the Son (vv. 3, 8, 18, 21), the Son glorifies the Father (v. 4),

the Son accomplishes work the Father gave him (v. 4), the pre-existent Son shares glory with the Father (v. 5), the Son manifests the Father's name (v. 6), the Son and Father share all things (vv. 7, 10), the Father gives the Son the divine message (v. 8), the Father gives the Son the divine name that the Son manifest on the earth (v. 12), the Son returns to the Father (v. 13), the Son delivers the Father's message (v. 14), the Son and Father are one because they indwell each other (v. 21, 22), the Father gives the Son glory (vv. 22, 24), the Father loves the Son (vv. 24, 26), the Son knows the Father (v. 25), and the Son makes the Father's name known (v. 26).

The symbolic cluster in the Prayer is the peak of John's Christological Symbolism as the Son refers several key symbols/symbolic language and themes that have portrayed the SFR in the course of the narrative such as  $\square$   $\square$ ρα, δοξάζω/δόξα,  $\square$ ξουσία, δίδωμι, ζω $\square$ , γινώσκω/γνωρίζω,  $\square$ ληθινός/ $\square$ ληθ $\square$ ς/ $\square$ ληθεία,  $\square$ ποστέλλω,  $\square$ ργον, κόσμος, φανερώω/θεωρέω,  $\square$ νομα,  $\square$ ρχομαι/ $\square$ ξέρχομαι, λαμβάνω, πιστεύω,  $\square$ γιάζω, and  $\square$ γαπάω/ $\square$ γάπη. In the sequence, Jesus first prays for himself (vv. 1-8) and then for the disciples (vv. 9-26). The essence of his prayer is that believers are drawn into the SFR and ultimately into the transcendent presence of the Father and Son in heaven (vv. 21-24, 26).

**Figure 24 Symbograph: John 17:1-26**

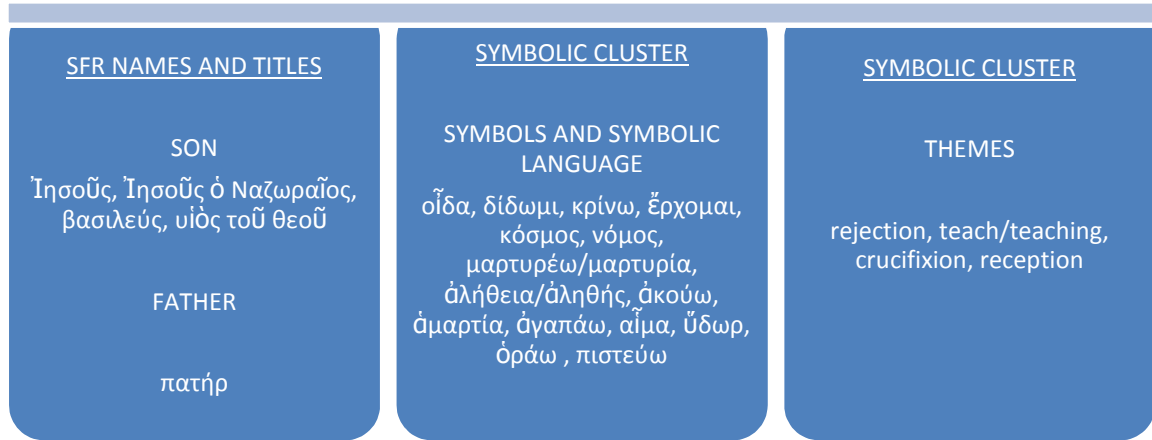
<u>SFR NAMES AND TITLES</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>
<p>SON</p> <p>Ἰησοῦς, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, υἱός</p> <p>FATHER</p> <p>πατήρ, μόνος ἀληθινός θεός πατήρ ἅγιος ,πατήρ, δίκαιος</p>	<p>SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE</p> <p>ἡ ὥρα, δοξάζω/δόξα, ἐξουσία, σάρξ, δίδωμι, ζωή, γινώσκω/γνωρίζω, ἀληθινός/ἀληθῶς/ ἀληθεία, ἀποστέλλω, ἔργον, κόσμος, φανερώω/ θεωρέω, ὄνομα, ἔρχομαι/ἐξέρχομαι, λαμβάνω, πιστεύω, ἀγιάζω, γαπάω/ἀγάπη</p>	<p>THEMES</p> <p>unity, equality, preexistence, reception, departure, oneness</p>

### 9.2.16 Synopsis of Sequence Sixteen: The Passion Narrative (18:1- 19:42)

The Passion Narrative describes the betrayal, arrest, trials, crucifixion, and death of the Son. Details of the SFR in the last two sequences are noticeably fewer. In this sequence the Son testifies about keeping the disciples given to him by the Father (18:9); he also refers to the “cup” the Father has given him to drink (18:11). The main feature of the SFR is Jesus’ identity as Son of God and King, signifying co-regency with the Father (18:33, 37 [x2], 39; 19:2-3, 12, 14, 15; 19, 21 [x2]).

The symbolic cluster primarily describes the ultimate rejection of the Son sent by the Father. During his trial, the Son reaffirms his heavenly origin and identifies himself as King, who has come into the world to testify of the truth (18: 23, 37-38; 19:35). However, the sequence ends on the theme of reception as two Jewish religious leaders give the crucified Son a proper burial. This cluster portrays the completion of the Son’s mission from the Father, which is depicted as fulfillment of Scripture (18:9, 32; 19:24, 28, 36).

**Figure 25 Symbograph: John 18:1-19:42**



#### **9.2.17 Synopsis of Sequence Seventeen: The Resurrection and Epilogue (20:1-21:25)**

In the final sequence of John's Christological Symbology the resurrected Son of God appears to Mary Magdalene and the disciples before ascending to the Father. For the first time in the narrative, the Son refers to the Father as the disciples' Father (20:17) and using the same authority executed by the Father, sends them to continue the mission (20:21). In addition, believers, who in chapter 10 are the Father's sheep, are now referred to as the Son's sheep in the final chapter of the narrative (21: 15-17).

The final symbolic cluster focuses on Jesus' ascension to the Father and his commissioning of the disciples to continue the mission initiated by the SFR. Importantly, 20:31 introduces the purpose for the writing of the Gospel—to bring about belief in Jesus the Christ and Son of God so that eternal life may be experienced in his name.

**Figure 26 Symbograph: John 20:1-21:25**

<u>SFR NAMES AND TITLES</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>	<u>SYMBOLIC CLUSTER</u>
<p>SON</p> <p>Ἰησοῦς, ῥαββουνί/ διδάσκαλος, θεός, χριστός, υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ</p> <p>FATHER</p> <p>πατήρ, θεός</p>	<p>SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE</p> <p>φιλέω/ἀγαπάω, οἶδα/γινώσκω, ὁράω/εἶδον/φανερόω/θεωρέω , πιστεύω/ἄπιστος, ἀναβαίνω, ἀποστέλλω/πέμπω, λαμβάνω, ἁμαρτία, σημεῖον, ζωή, ὄνομα, οἰκίζω, μαρτυρέω/μαρτυρία, ἀληθής</p>	<p>THEMES</p> <p>resurrection, departure, Holy Spirit</p>

### 9.3 Prologue and Prayer: Narrative Anchors for John's Christological Symbolology

The above synthesis charts John's Christological Symbolology through all the chapters in the Johannine narrative, commencing in the Prologue and culminating in the Prayer before concluding in the final chapters of the narrative. Therefore, the two key passages in the Symbolology are, 1) the Prologue, which gives the first presentation of the SFR and accompanying symbolism, thus, introducing the narrative strategy for the Gospel and, 2) the Prayer, which gives the Gospel's the last comprehensive insight into the SFR using symbolism established in the narrative. This section shows similarities between the Prologue and Prayer that enable them to function as narrative anchors for John's Christological Symbolology. This comparison focuses on the following: 1) lexical statistics, 2) names/titles of the Son and Father, 3) positions/actions of the Son and Father, 4) Johannine themes, and 5) symbols and symbolic expressions.

In spite of differences in length and genre, the Prologue and Prayer reveal high statistics in SFR lexicology. The statistics are 77.7% for the Prologue and 92.3% for the

Prayer; the shorter percentage in the Prologue is due to its shorter length and indirect introduction of the SFR.

The Prologue contains fifteen occurrences of names and titles of the Son and five in the Prayer.<sup>618</sup> The difference in the number of names/titles for the Son in the two pericopae is due to: 1) the Prologue is written by the author *about* the Son, therefore, more references to the Son's proper names/titles exist and, 2) in the Prayer, the Son is speaking about himself, his accomplishments and desires, also, a major part of his speech is intercession for others. Therefore, the Son makes fewer references to his proper names/titles. The Son refers to himself mainly with the pronoun ἐγώ, which occurs thirty-three times. The only name for the Son common to both pericopae is ἡσους Χριστός; however, if one considers μονογενής in the Prayer as synonymous with υἱός in the Prologue, both passages reflect a similar word count for name/titles representing the Sonship of Jesus.<sup>619</sup>

References to the Father in both passages are more evenly spread. The Prologue refers to the Father eight times with the titles θεός (vv. 1, 2, 6, 12, 13, 18) and πατήρ (vv. 14, 18). The Prayer contains seven references to the Father using the titles πάτερ (vv. 1, 5, 21, 24), πάτερ ἡγιε (v. 11), πάτερ δίκαιος (v. 25), and ὁ μόνος ἀληθινός θεός (v. 3). In the Prologue, θεός occurs six times,<sup>620</sup> which is not unexpected due to the passage's stylistic gradual introduction of the SFR. Πάτερ occurs at the end of the Prologue twice and only one of these occurrences is a direct reference to God. Meanwhile, full narrative

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<sup>618</sup> Prologue: Λόγος (vv. 1 [x3], 14); θεός (vv. 1, 18); φῶς (vv. 5, 7, 8 [x2], 9); μονογενής (v. 14, 18); ἡσους Χριστός (v. 17), and ὁ υἱός (ἐκ τῶν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς (v. 1, 18). Prayer: ἡσους (v. 1); υἱός (v. 1 [x2]); ὁ ποστέλλω (v. 3); ἡσους Χριστός (v. 3).

<sup>619</sup> Μονογενής appears twice in the Prologue; similarly, υἱός occurs twice in the Prayer.

<sup>620</sup> The seventh occurrence of θεός refers to Jesus (v. 18).

development of the characterization of God as Father is reflected in the Prayer's six occurrences of *πάτερ* and one of *θεός*. Thus, due to their strategic positioning in the narrative, the Prologue and Prayer complement one another in presenting the SFR.

The Prologue contains nine references to positions/actions of the Son in relation to the Father<sup>621</sup> and the Prayer reflects nineteen.<sup>622</sup> Almost all nine SFR positions/actions in the Prologue are present in the Prayer, with the exception of the creation and the Father's sending the Baptizer. The difference between the lexical count of SFR positions/actions in both passages is primarily due to the fact that the Prologue's eighteen verses *introduce* the audience to the mission of the Son in relation to his Father, while the Prayer's twenty-six verses give account of the *completion* of the mission and then refer to the *future* mission.

More similarities are identified regarding SFR positions/actions in light of several Johannine themes common to both Prologue and Prayer. Both passages reflect at least nineteen Johannine themes connected to the SFR, which are as follows: preexistence (1:1-3, 15, 18; 17:5; 24), unity/equality (1: 1-3, 12-13, 18; 17: 1-14, 21-23), life (1:4, [12-13]; 17: 2-3), Son's authority to give life (1:12; 17: 2), reception (1:12, 16-17; 17:6-8, 14, 22, 25), rejection (1: 5; 10-11; 17: 12, 14, 16, 25), sending/coming of the Son into the world (1:9, 10-11, 14, 15; 17: 3, [4], 8, 18, 21, 23, 25), enlightenment/revealing/knowing

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<sup>621</sup> The nine positions/actions are as follows: preexistence/ equality (vv. 1-2, 18), creation (v. 3, 10), sending the Baptizer (vv. 6-8), spiritual birth (vv. 12-13), sharing glory (v. 14), giving grace and truth (v. 7), and intimacy with the Son (v. 18).

<sup>622</sup> Positions/actions in the Prayer are: prays/asks (vv. 1, 9 [x2], 15, 20, 24); glorifies (vv. 1, 4); gives eternal life to those the Father has given to him (v. 2); completes work (4); eternal life means knowing the Father *and* the Son (v. 3); preexistent relationship (vv. 5, 24); shares glory (v. 5, 22, 24); reveals Father's name (vv. 6, 26 [x2]); shares all things (vv. 6, 7, 9, 10); gives disciples the Father's word (vv. 8, 14); comes from (vv. 8); returning (vv. 11, 13); one (unity) (vv. 11, 21, 22, 23); keeps disciples in the Father's name (vv. 12); requests behalf of future believers (v. 20); gives Father's glory to disciples (v. 22); knows (v. 25).

the Father (1: 3, 4, 9, 14, 18; 17: 6-8, [12], 14, [22], 23, 25-26), glory (1: [5], 14, [16]); 17: 1, 4-5, 10, 22, 24), the Son knowing the Father (1:18; 17: 25), the name (1:12; 17: 6, 11-12, 26), the Father giving to/through the Son (1: [17]; 17: 2, 4, 6-9, 11-12, 14,22, 24), the Son giving to believers (1:12, [17]; 17: 14, 22), belief (1:6, 12; 17: 8, 20-21), the world (1:9-10; 17: [5], 6, 9, 11, 13-14, 15-16, 18, 21, 23, [24], 25 ), truth (1: 9, 14, 17; 17: 3, 8, 17, 19), beholding the Son's glory (1:14; 17:24), mission in the world (1: [5], [7], 9-18; 17: 2-4, 6-8, 12, 14, 18, 21-23, 25-25), and evil (1:5; 17:15).<sup>623</sup>

The Prologue and Prayer contain similar clusters of SFR symbols/symbolic language, which are as follows: ζω[α[ώνιος] (1:4; 17:2-3), [ποστέλλω (1:6; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25), πιστεύω (1:6, 12; 17: 8, 20-21), γινώσκω/γνωρίζω (1:10; 17: 3, 7-8, 23, 25, 26), [ρχομαι/[ξέρχομαι (1:7, 9, 15; 17: 8, 11, 13), κόσμος (1:9, 10; 17: 5-6, 9, 11, 13-16, 18, 21, 23-24), λαμβάνω/παραλαμβάνω (1:11, 12, 16; 17:8), δίδωμι (1:12, 17; 17:2, 4, 6-9, 11-12, 14, 22, 24), [ξουσία (1:12; 17: 2), [νομα (1:12; 17:6, 11-12, 26), σάρξ (1:13, 14; 17: 2), θεάομαι/[ράω/θεωρέω (1:14, 18; 17:6, 24), δόξα /δοξάζω (1:14; 17:1, 4-5, 10, 22, 24), and [ληθινός/[λήθεια/[ληθ[ς (1:9, 14, 17; 17:3, 8, 17, 19).

Symbols and symbolic language in the Prologue but not in the Prayer include the following: φ[ς (1:4-7, 7-9), σκοτία (1:5), μαρτυρέω/μαρτυρία (1:7-8, 15), γεννάω (1:13), and νόμος/Μωϋσ[ς; (1:17); on the other hand, present in the Prayer but absent in the Prologue are the following symbolic terminologies: [ [ρα (17:1), [ργον (17:4), and [γάπη (17:26).

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<sup>623</sup> Johannine themes present in the Prologue but absent in the Prayer include: creation (1:3, 10), the Baptizer/witness (6-8, 15); Law/Moses (1: [14], 17 [18]); the main Johannine theme present in the Prayer. Absent in the Prologue is the Son's return to the Father (17:11, 13). Love between the Son and Father is not included in this list because the word "love" does not occur in the Prologue.



The above comparison shows striking similarities in the semantic, thematic, and symbolic presentations of the SFR in the Prologue and Prayer. The analysis establishes the strategic role of the two passages in the Gospel's presentation of the SFR in the following ways: 1) they show high lexical statistics in their presentations of the SFR, 2) they portray Son and Father with primary names/titles, 3) they contain similarities in positions/actions of the Son and Father towards each other, and 4) they share several Johannine, symbols/symbolic terminologies and themes. In conclusion, the Prologue and Prayer both exhibit striking similarities and their strategic positions in the Johannine narrative enable them to function as narrative anchors for John's Christological Symbology.

**Figure 27: Symbols/Symbolic Language and Themes in the Prologue, Prayer, and Gospel**

<b>Johannine Symbolism</b>	<b>Distribution in the Prologue</b>	<b>Distribution in the Prayer</b>	<b>Distribution in the Entire Gospel</b>
□λήθεια	1:14, 17	17:17 (x2), 19	<b>1:14, 17</b> ; 3:21; 4:23, 24; 5:33; 8:32 (x2), 40, 44 (x2), 45, 46; 14:6, 17; 15:26, 16:7, 13 (x2); <b>17:17 (x2), 19</b> ; 18:37 (x2), 38
□ληθινός	1:9	17:3	<b>1:9</b> ; 4:23; 6:32; 7:28; 8:16; 15:1; <b>17:3</b> ; 19:35
□ληθ□ς		17:8	4:42; 6:14; 7:26, 40; 8:31; <b>17:8</b>
γινώσκω	1:10	17:3, 7, 8, 23, 25 (x3)	<b>1:10</b> ; 2:24, 25; 3:10; 5:6, 42; 6:15, 69; 7:17, 26, 27; 8:27, 28, 32, 43, 55; 10: 6, 14 (x2), 15 (x2), 27, 38 (x2); 12:16; 13:7, 12, 28, 35;

γνωρίζω		17:26 (x2)	14:7, 9, 17 (x2), 20, 31; 15:18; 16:3, 19; <b>17:3, 7, 8, 23, 25 (x3)</b> ; 21:17  15:15; <b>17:26 (x2)</b>
δίδωμι	1:12, 17	17:2 (x3), 4, 6 (x2), 7, 8 (x2), 9, 11, 12, 14, 22 (x2), 24 (x2)	<b>1:12, 17</b> ; 3:16, 27, 34, 35; 4:7, 10 (x2), 12, 14 (x2), 15; 5:22, 26, 27, 36; 6:27, 31, 32 (x2), 33, 34, 37, 39, 51, 52, 65; 10:18, 29; 11:22; 12:49; 13:3, 15, 34; 14:16, 27 (x3); 15:16; 16:23; <b>17:2 (x3), 4, 6 (x2), 7, 8 (x2), 9, 11, 12, 14, 22 (x2), 24 (x2)</b> ; 18:9, 11; 19:11
δόξα	1:14 (x2)	17:5, 22, 24	<b>1:14 (x2)</b> ; 2:11; 5:41, 44 (x2); 7:18; 8:50, 54; 11:4, 40; 12:41; <b>17:5, 22, 24</b>
δοξάζω		17:1 (x2), 4, 5, 10	7:39, 8:54 (x2); 11:4; 12:16, 23, 28 (x3); 13:31 (x2), 32 (x3); 14:13; 15:8; 16:14; <b>17:1 (x2), 4, 5, 10</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ξουσία	1:12	17:2	<b>1:12</b> ; 5:27, 10:18 (x2); <b>17:2</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> ρχομαι	1:9, 11, 15		<b>1:9, 11, 15</b> , 27, 30; 3:2, 19, 31 (x2); 4:25 (x2); 5:43; 6:14; 7:27, 28, 31, 41, 42; 8:14 (x2), 42; 9:39; 10:8, 10; 11:27; 12:13, 15, 46, 47; 14:3, 18, 23, 28; 15:22; 16:28; <b>17:11, 13</b> ; 18:37
<input type="checkbox"/> ξέρχομαι		17: 8	8:42, 13:3; 16:27, 28, 30; <b>17: 8</b>

ζω□ (α□ώνιος)	1:4 (x2)	17:2, 3	<b>1:4 (x2)</b> ; 3:15, 16, 36 (x2); 4:14, 36; 5:24 (x2), 26 (x2), 29, 39, 40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47, 48, 51, 53, 54, 63, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 14:6; <b>17:2, 3</b> ; 20:31
κόσμος	1:9, 10 (x3)	17:5, 6, 9, 11 (x2), 13, 14 (x 3), 15, 16 (x2), 18 (x2), 21, 23, 24, 25	<b>1:9, 10 (x3)</b> , 29; 3:16, 17 (x3), 19; 4:42; 6:14, 33, 51; 7:4, 7; 8:12, 23 (x2), 26; 9:5 (x2), 39; 11:9, 27; 12:25, 31 (x2), 46, 47 (x2); 13:1 (x2); 14:17, 19, 22, 27, 30, 31; 15:18, 19 (x5); 16:8, 11, 21, 28 (x2), 33 (x2); <b>17:5, 6, 9, 11 (x2), 13, 14 (x 3), 15, 16 (x2), 18 (x2), 21, 23, 24, 25</b> ; 18:20, 36 (x2), 37
λαμβάνω	1:12	17:8	<b>1:12</b> , 16; 3:11, 27, 32, 33; 5:34, 41, 43 (x2), 44; 7:39; 10:17, 18 (x2); 12:48; 13:20 (4); 14:17; 16:14, 15, 24; <b>17:8</b> ; 20:22
παραλαμβάνω	1:11		<b>1:11</b> ; 14:3
□νομα	1:12	17:6, 11, 12	<b>1:12</b> ; 2:23; 3:18; 5:43 (x2); 10:25; 12:13, 28; 14:13, 14, 26; 15:16, 21; 16:23, 26; <b>17:6, 11, 12, 26</b> ; 20:31
□ράω	1:18		<b>1:18</b> , 14, 50, 51; 3:11, 32, 36; 5:37; 6:36. 46 (x2); 8:38, 57; 9:37; 11:40; 14:7, 9 (x2); 15:24; 16:16, 17; 19:35, 37; 20:18, 25, 29
θεωρέω		17:24	2:23; 4:19; 6:2, 40, 62; 7:3; 8:51; 12:45 (x2); 14:17, 19 (x2); 16:10,

θεάομαι	1:14		16, 17, 19; <b>17:24</b> , 20:14  <b>1:14</b> , 32
φανερώω		17:6	1:31; 2:11; 3:21; 7:4; 9:3; <b>17:6</b> ; 20:17;21:1, 14
πιστεύω	1:7, 12	17:8, 20, 21	<b>1:7, 12</b> , 50; 2:11, 22, 23; 3:12 (x2), 15, 16, 18 (x3), 15, 16, 18 (x3), 36; 4:21, 39, 41, 42, 48, 50, 53, 54; 5:24, 38, 44, 46 (x2), 47 (x2); 6:29, 30, 35, 36, 40, 47, 64 (x2), 69; 7:5, 31, 38, 48; 8:24, 30, 31, 45, 46; 9:18, 35, 36, 38; 10:25, 26, 37, 38 (x2), 42; 11:15, 25, 26 (x2), 27, 40, 45, 48; 12:11, 36, 37, 38, 42, 44 (x2), 46; 13:19; 14:1 (x2), 12, 29; 16:9, 27, 30, 31; <b>17:8, 20,</b> <b>21</b> ; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29 (x2), 31 (x2)
Φ <sup>624</sup> □ζ	1:4, 5, 7, 8(x2), 9		<b>1:4, 5, 7, 8(x2), 9</b> ; 3:19 (x2), 20 (x2), 21; 5:35; 8:12 (x2); 9:5; 11:9; 11:10; 12:35 (x2), 36 (x3), 46
σκοτία	1:5		<b>1:5</b> ; 8:12; 12:35, 46
σάρξ	1:14		<b>1:14</b> ; 3:6 (x2); 6:51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56; <b>17:2</b>

<sup>624</sup> Φ<sup>624</sup>□ζ overlaps as a title and symbol.

## 9.4 Conclusion

John's Christological Symbology offers a symbolic perspective of the Gospel of John through the lens of the SFR. According to this research, a symbology is *a network of symbols, symbolic language, and themes connected to a common denominator that runs through a narrative*. John's Christological Symbology reveals a network of symbols/symbolic terminology and themes clustered around a common denominator—the SFR. The Symbology follows the natural progression of the narrative focusing on plot, character development, and symbolism. Charting of the Symbology of the seventeen above sequences reveals the centrality of the SFR in the Gospel. The SFR features in *every* sequence and is prominent in most, accompanied by a symbolic cluster that expands or emphasizes the Gospel's characterization of Son and Father.

Starting in the Prologue, Son and Father are first, introduced as Λόγος and God, and finally as ὁ ἡσους Χριστός, μονογενής and πατήρ respectively. Introduction of the SFR in the Prologue is accompanied by the first large symbolic cluster, which includes symbols/symbolic terminology and themes such as φῶς, ζωή, σκοτία, μαρτυρία/μαρτυρέω, πιστεύω, ἔρχομαι, κόσμος, γινώσκω, λαμβάνω/παραλαμβάνω, δίδωμι, ἰσχυρισμός, γεννάω, σάρξ, δόξα, ἀλήθεια/ἀληθινός, θεάομαι/ὀράω, divinity, equality/oneness, unity, preexistence, rejection, reception, and Moses/Law. Thus, in the Prologue, the SFR is established in terms of divine equality, unity, joint participation in the mission to humanity, and filial relationship.

The second sequence in the Symbology continues the SFR introduction with a cluster that expands the Son's titles in context of his relationship with the Father, such as ὁ μόνος τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ὕψιστος τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἀββί/διδάσκαλος, βασιλεὺς, Μεσσίας, and ὁ υἱός

το ἄνθρωπον. Symbolism introduced in the second cluster includes μαρτία, crucifixion/death, and Holy Spirit. The third sequence introduces the terms παρὰ, σημεῖον and the theme of resurrection, which are significant in the symbolic interpretation of the Gospel and crucial for understanding the divine mission of Son and Father. The first of a series of symbolic acts carried out by the Son to validate his divine relationship and agency also appear in the third sequence. The symbolism in sequence four explains how the Son and Father work together to make eternal life and the kingdom of God available to humanity. In addition, the sequence introduces the symbolic theme of judgment, which involves both Father and Son. The fourth symbolic cluster introduces several symbolic terms, including ἀγαπάω, ἀκούω, ἀναβαίνω, καταβαίνω, ἀποστέλλω, ἔργον/ἐργάζομαι, κρίνω/ κρίσις, and σκίζω. The fifth stage of the Symbolology expands the symbol of life, salvation, and theme of “work,” which the Father has given the Son to accomplish. The symbolic term σάββατον in the sixth sequence introduces the Sabbath controversies in which Jesus gives long and detailed insight into the SFR. Jesus defends his Sabbath-breaking act by reasserting his origin and agency from the Father as well as his role as divine Son of Man. In addition, at this stage of the Symbolology, the rejection of the Son sent from the Father intensifies.

From stage seven of the Symbolology onwards, most of the sequences contain recurrent symbolic cluster that reemphasize the divine origin/agency of the Son and the unity in the SFR as the divine mission is executed. The ninth sequence introduces the Son as Shepherd of the Father’s Sheep; thus, fresh insight is given into how Son and Father collaborate in the mission. The highlights in sequence ten are bold affirmations of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God sent into the world. The sequence also narrates the only

conversation involving both Son and Father in the narrative. The sequences comprising the Farewell Discourse focus on the Son's departure to the Father and the symbolism begins to draw disciples and believers into the divine relationship. The Johannine concept of the "hour" and reciprocal glorification of Son and Father are prominent themes in these sequences.

John's Christological Symbology peaks in the Prayer, the Son's longest and most intimate speech to the Father, which is accompanied by a symbolic cluster in which key symbols/symbolic language and themes are reemphasized. As the Son explains how he has carried out the divine mission, he gives hearer-readers a final glimpse into the SFR and reveals the main purpose of the Gospel's revelation of the SFR—to draw believers into the divine relationship.

The last two sequences conclude John's Christological Symbology with the symbolic clusters reemphasizing for a final time, the divine origin/mission of the Son and his co-regency with the Father. The disciples are then commissioned to continue the mission to the world initiated in the SFR.

Some general observations regarding the unfolding Symbology are as follows: 1) the Prologue launches the Symbology by introducing the SFR and accompanying symbolism, showing how SFR and symbolism are intertwined in the remainder of the narrative, 2) the joint characterization of Son and Father is developed by introducing or repeating symbols and symbolic language, 3) recurring symbolism in each sequence presents the SFR from a different angle and provides deeper insight into the nature of the relationship between the Son and his Father, 4) as the portrayal of the SFR develops,

names and titles depicting the Son and Father expand, and 5) the Symbology peaks in the Prayer, which is the last extended and comprehensive presentation of the SFR.

The next and final chapter of this research will consider the theological implications of John's Christological Symbology in light of the following: 1) significance of the centrality of the SFR to Johannine theology, 2) how a symbolic perspective deepens a theological understanding of the Gospel of John, and 3) how a theory of symbol forms a solid foundation for a theological reading of the Gospel.



## **CHAPTER 10: Theological Implications of John's Christological Symbology**

### **10. 1 Introduction**

This research proposes that Son-Father Relationship (SFR) is at the center of the expansive literary symbolism in the Johannine narrative. The SFR shapes the narrative and literary strategy of the Gospel acting as an integrating force by giving structure and cohesion to the composition of the narrative's symbolic network. To establish this study's proposal, John's Christological Symbology, a network of symbols/symbolic language and themes clustered around the SFR has been unveiled. John's Christological Symbology reveals a skillful literary and theological strategy in which SFR and accompanying symbolism is introduced in the Prologue (1:1-18), expounded in the teaching ministry of Jesus, and culminates in the Prayer (17:1-26), before concluding in the remainder of the Gospel. The author of the Gospel uses John's Christological Symbology to achieve his theological purpose as stated in John 20:31, thus, Jesus is symbolically portrayed as the incarnate Son who is relationally inseparable from God, his transcendent Father.

In the previous nine chapters, the theoretical and methodological steps by which this study has arrived at John's Christological Symbology consist of the following: 1) a survey of how scholars have approached four significant issues relating to symbol studies in the Gospel of John, 2) formulation of the definition for the terms "symbol" and "symbology," specially adapted to the Johannine narrative, 3) development of a multi-disciplinary theory of Johannine Symbolism that accounts for the structure, style, and depth of meaning in the symbols and symbolic language of the Gospel, 4) an outline of a narrative framework within which the SFR and its symbolism are analyzed, 5) theoretical

and narrative analyses of symbolism and the SFR in the Prologue, 5) a narrative analysis of symbolism the and SFR in the Prayer, 7) comparison of the presentations of the SFR in the Prologue and Prayer, and 8) charting of John's Christological Symbolology.

This concluding chapter will now consider theological implications of the research. The chapter, which is primarily directed to the community of faith, is divided into four sections. After this introduction, section two examines theological significance of the centrality of the SFR in the Johannine narrative. Section three argues for a theosymbolological reading of the Gospel of John. The fourth section briefly considers three areas of theological interest raised in this study which may be subjects for further research. The three issues are as follows: 1) gender implications of the terms "son" and "father," 2) the Son's subordination to the Father, and 3) the SFR as a model for discipleship of believers. The fifth section concludes this chapter.

## **10.2 Theological Significance of John's Symbolic Presentation of the SFR**

How can we speak of God? God is not an abstract concept; God is a living presence with whom we are in relationship. How, then, can we describe this relationship in intelligible language?<sup>625</sup> These questions and comments are pertinent to inquiry of Johannine symbolism and theology. The Gospel helps solve the problem of how to reveal God intelligibly and explain the relationship he offers to humanity; this revelation takes place by means of remarkable creativity that tells the story of the incarnate divine Son who symbolically explains his relationship with God the Father. Humans are by nature

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<sup>625</sup> Grelot poses these questions at the beginning of his book. *The Language of Symbolism*. Grelot, 1.

symbolic beings;<sup>626</sup> consequently, symbolism is a fitting way to communicate the Johannine revelation expressed in the SFR. In addition, symbolism and theology are complementary and the extensive symbolic structure undergirding the Johannine narrative serves the theological purpose of leading believers to partake of the divine relationship existing in the SFR. In sum, the narrative structure of the Gospel is shaped through *symbolism and theology*.

At the beginning of the Gospel, the Prologue introduces Jesus as the Λόγος whose divinity and relationship is inextricably linked to God. At the end of the Prologue, the title in the phrase μονογενοϋς παρϋ πατρός unveils the Λόγος as Jesus Christ, Son of God the Father (1:14, 18). The symbolic introduction of Son and Father in the Prologue reveals the strategy behind the Gospel’s theological revelation—as Father, God is known only through his Son Jesus Christ. The Prologue therefore not only introduces both the Gospel’s symbolism and Johannine theology. After introducing Jesus as Son and God as Father, the Gospel narrative expands its theological purpose through a network of symbols referred to in this study as John’s Christological Symbolology.

Interpretation of a symbolic network depends largely on the purpose of the narrative in which it emerges. John 20:31 articulates the theological purpose of the symbolic Gospel: “These things have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may experience life in his name.” Because the aim of the Gospel is to reveal Jesus as Son of God the Father, the revelatory network of symbols in the narrative ought to be interpreted in context of the SFR. In this research, the theological significance of the symbolically portrayed SFR is that it gives

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<sup>626</sup> As mentioned in chapter four, Kenneth Burke describes humans as “symbol-making” and “symbol-using.” Burke “Definition of Man,” 16.

Johannine symbolism theological meaning, articulates Johannine theology, and serves as a model for discipleship.

The ultimate aim of John's Christological presentation is that hearer-readers will believe in Jesus the Son of God and thereby *experience* the divine life indwelling Father and Son. Thus, the theological intent of the Gospel may be summarized in the following three points,: 1) persuade and convince hearer-readers of the veracity of all that is unveiled in the narrative, 2) to engender belief in Jesus Christ *as the Son of God*, and 3) to lead hearer-readers into the experience of eternal life by partaking of the SFR. The Prayer specifies how believers experience eternal life—*knowing* Father and Son by participating in their divine relationship. For this reason, the SFR plays a vital role in Johannine theology; John's Christological Symbology serves the theological intent of the Gospel.

### **10.3 The Significance of a Theo-Symbolic Reading of the Gospel of John**

In the community of faith, primarily, believers read the Gospel of John theologically; in other words, Christians read the Gospel to comprehend the nature and character of God. However, a theological reading of the Gospel that neglects a symbolic reading of the Gospel is inadequate,<sup>627</sup> because the Gospel's theological meaning is embedded in an intricate network of symbols/symbolic language and themes.<sup>628</sup> To fully understand the Gospel message therefore, a *theo-symbolic reading* is necessary.

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<sup>627</sup> See also, Lee who laments the loss of interpretive tradition that reads the Gospel of John symbolically, theologically, prayerfully, and communally. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 15.

<sup>628</sup> See Urban who argues that there is no theology that does not recognize the symbolic character of its language and the use symbolism as a theological principle. According to him, Christian theology views the attributes and activities of God as in some sense symbolic representations. Urban, *Language and*

Theo-symbolic reading of the Gospel of John is interpretative reading that recognizes the following: 1) theological revelation is interwoven with symbolism, therefore, the Gospel's theological perspective is inseparable from its symbolic structure,<sup>629</sup> 2) the theological purpose of the Gospel expands the function of Johannine symbolism beyond a literary level and transforms it into a theological tool aimed at Christological revelation,<sup>630</sup> and 3) in order to arrive at a meaningful interpretation of the Gospel, Johannine symbolism should be interpreted specifically within the context of the Gospel's theological perspective. Symbols/symbolic language and themes are primarily Christological—they reveal Jesus *within the SFR*. In sum, readers of the Johannine narrative in the community of faith ought to recognize that Johannine symbolism is an indispensable hermeneutical key for comprehending the Gospel.<sup>631</sup> A theo-symbolic reading combines two important elements of the Gospel—theology and symbolism.

In the Gospel of John, theology is symbolical and symbolism is theological. John's Christological Symbology illustrates this reciprocal relation. The Symbology shows how Jesus Christ is portrayed as divine Son in close relationship with God the Father, through a symbolic network. Symbols function primarily as pointers and John's Christological Symbology focuses on Jesus the Son, who by means of symbolic language and action, points to the Father. The main objective of symbolic words, actions, and discourses in the Gospel is theological revelation—the Gospel is the revelation of Jesus

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*Reality*, 599. Lee also notes that religious symbolism lies at the core of theology, which according to her is exemplified in the Fourth Gospel. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 17.

<sup>629</sup> This point is supported by Lee who states, "John's theological perspective is at its core a symbolic one." Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 233.

<sup>630</sup> See Painter who notes, "The symbols are the means by which Jesus is disclosed in such a way as to evoke faith or provoke unbelief." Painter, "Johannine Symbols," 27.

<sup>631</sup> Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 76.

Christ as the *Son* of God the Father. Thus, the Gospel establishes Jesus' identity in context of the *symbolically portrayed SFR*; the Son is known only through the Father and the Father is known only through the Son. John's Christological Symbolology is a tool of divine revelation, recognizing this Johannine phenomenon is a crucial key to a theo-symbolic reading within the community of faith.

Underlying John's Christological Symbolology is a theory of Johannine symbolism, which includes four main principles, namely, presentation, assimilation, association, and transcendence. These principles not only provide theoretical foundation for the Gospel's symbolism, they also assist in a theo-symbolic reading of the Gospel. The sub-principles of symbolic presentation and re-presentation show how theological revelation emerges gradually and systematically through the symbols/symbolic language and themes. Next, symbolic reflection and pre-semantic assimilation inquire into the historical, cultural, social, and religious backgrounds of Johannine symbols thereby giving Johannine symbols both theological substance and meaning. On the other hand, symbolic resemblance and semantic assimilation highlight various levels at which hearer-readers process symbolic meaning before comprehending theological significance of Johannine symbolism. Interpretative assimilation explains how interpreters experience theological truth by assimilating realities conveyed in the symbols. The symbols therefore shape both the text and the reader.<sup>632</sup> The principle of association shows how the Gospel unveils its theology by means of clusters comprising figures of speech such as metaphors, imageries, allusions, and irony, which all form part of the Johannine symbolic network. Theology, these figures of speech give Johannine symbols an enduring quality.

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<sup>632</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 233.

Finally, the principle of symbolic transcendence, which is at the heart of John's theological perspective, explains how transcendent symbols function theologically. Transcendent symbols explain how the Son and Father interact within a transcendent-immanent relationship. The Son, who comes from above is immanently active in the world below as he reveals the transcendent Father above. The principle of transcendence also shows, how in order to comprehend and experience theological revelation, hearer-readers are drawn into the transcendent domain of symbols. Most importantly, the principle of transcendence explains how readers undergo transformation as they comprehend the theological truth in Johannine symbols.<sup>633</sup> Theological comprehension leads to belief in Jesus the Son of God, enabling readers to be transformed by the experience of eternal life and as they become partakers of the divine relationship (John 20:31).

In sum, the theoretical framework underlying John's Christological Symbolology leads to a theo-symbolic reading of the Gospel of John. The principles in the theory explain how symbols function in the Johannine narrative, especially, how symbols in the Gospel enable readers to grasp theological revelation of Father and Son. Symbolic interpretation not only *facilitates* theological interpretation, it *leads to* theological experience. A theo-symbolic reading of the Gospel of John leads to a deeper understanding of the Gospel message and enables readers to experience the truth it proclaims.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> See Lee who states that the symbols of the Fourth Gospel are the means of transformation. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 229. Also, according to Schneiders, Johannine symbolism is the locus of revelation and also of participation in what is revealed. Schneiders, "History and Symbolism," 372.

<sup>634</sup> See Koester: "As the Gospel unfolds we see that people can come to know Jesus and God when their own language, the language of the world, becomes a vehicle for divine communication." Koester, *Symbolism*, 2.

## 10.4 Theological Issues Raised in this Study

This section will now discuss three theological issues regarding the SFR in the Gospel of John which this research raises.

### 10.4.1 Subordination in the SFR

In this research, the character analysis of the Son and Father focuses on unity and equality in terms of their *transcendent relationship* as introduced in the Prologue.<sup>635</sup> However, questions regarding the nature, extent, and theological implications of the Son's earthly subordination to the Father constantly loom over the Gospel's presentation of the SFR. The subordination conundrum in the Gospel stems from theological tension arising from the portrayal a Father who *sends* his Son into the world as agent, revealer, and savior. Out of the Johannine Christology of sending set in context of the SFR, emerges the paradox of how Jesus who is divine and equal with God can be subordinate during his earthly mission. The Son's divinity and subordination in relation to the Father is addressed by several biblical and Johannine scholars.<sup>636</sup> Some scholars view the Son's subordination through Jewish or Roman socio-historical context of sonship and agency.<sup>637</sup> Other scholars tackle the problem in light of the SFR or Trinitarian theology.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> See sections of 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 of chapter five.

<sup>636</sup> See Brown, *Introduction*, 249-252; Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* (1st ed.; Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press, 1997), 267; Carter, *John: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, 59-61; James F. McGrath, *John's Apologetic Christology: Legitimation and Development in Johannine Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 80-90; Meyer, "'The Father': The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel," 43-64. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 92-98; Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters of John*, 410, 427.

<sup>637</sup> See Charles Michael Anderson, *Sending Formulae in John's Gospel: A Linguistic Analysis in the Light of Their Background* (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); Francis M.



There is no easy solution to the subordination issue in the SFR. In chapter five, this research explains how the Son and Father are mutually dependent.<sup>639</sup> Other propositions for the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus as subordinate to the Father in his role on earth Son as follows. First, it may be argued that the Gospel uses the Prologue to emphasize the Son's divine equality with the Father, even above his Sonship. The Prologue presents Jesus, first as equally divine with God (1:1-3) before revealing him as Son (1:14, 18). Second, the Johannine Christology of sending, which ties Jesus divine Sonship to his agency makes his subordination inevitable. In other words, although the Son is equal to God in his divine origin and essence, because of his role as Son *sent from* the Father, Jesus automatically and inevitably assumes a subordinate position within his earthly mission. Third, in the Prayer, Jesus portrays himself as having been an example to his disciples. This portrayal positions Jesus as a model *Son* who presents a pattern for the believer's filial relationship with God the Father and also an example for continuing the divine mission as believers are also sent just as Jesus has been sent by the Father (17:18;

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DuBose, *God Who Sends* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983): 207-226; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 310-317; Andreas J. Kostenberger, "The Two Johannine Verbs for Sending: A Study of John's Use of Words with Reference to General Linguistic Theory" in *Studies on John and Gender: A Decade of Scholarship* (New York: P. Lang, 2001), 129-147; Robert Davis Prescott-Ezickson, "The Sending Motif in the Gospel of John: Implications for Theology of Mission," Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986; Beth M. Sheppard, "Another Look: 'Subordinationist Christology' and the Roman Family," in *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective* (ed. Francisco Lozada Jr. and Tom Thatcher; Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 101-119.

<sup>638</sup> Harold F. Carl, "Relational Language in John 14-16: Implications for the Doctrine of the Trinity," *GJCT* 2:1 (Dec 1999), [http://www.phc.edu/gj\\_carlpap.php](http://www.phc.edu/gj_carlpap.php); Cowan, "The Father and Son in the Fourth Gospel," 115-136; Köstenberger, *Father, Son, and Spirit*; Daniel Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God* (New York: de Gruyter, 2004); Franklin G. Shirbroun, "The Giving of the Name of God to Jesus in John 17:11,12," Ph.D. diss. Princeton Theological Seminary, 1985; Mark Stibbe, "Telling the Father's Story: The Gospel of John as Narrative Theology," in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (ed., John Lierman; WUNT 2/219; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2006):170-193; Thompson, *God of the Gospel of John*; Ben Witherington and Laura Michaels Ice, *The Shadow of the Almighty: Father, Son, and Spirit in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002);

<sup>639</sup> See section 5.3.2.

20:21). Thus, through the portrayal of a Johannine Jesus *obedient* to the Father, believers have a clear idea of how they are to relate to as faithful and obedient children of the transcendent Father. In conclusion, as the Father's Son and agent, the Johannine presentation of Jesus serves two main purposes. First, through the Johannine portrayal of Jesus, the Father and his plan of salvation are revealed; the aim of which is to bring believers into the divine relationship. Second, the Johannine Jesus reveals how believers are to relate to God as subordinate obedient children within the divine relationship.

#### 10.4.2 Gender Implications of Father-Son Language

The second theological issue this study raises is the implication of Gospel's use of the gender-driven "son" and "father" as primary terms for Jesus and God. This issue is particularly relevant to Johannine studies because John's use of Father-Son language notably exceeds that of the Synoptic Gospels. The main question regarding this problem is: How are women to view *their* personal relationship with God within a *son-father* paradigm? This problem is intensified by the fact that in both ancient and modern cultural conventions, son-father relationships are markedly different from daughter-father relationships. Scholarly discussion of Johannine FSL has focused primarily on the Gospel's use of the term "Father," which is generally viewed as patriarchal.

The depiction of God as Father has examined and critiqued by female and feminist biblical scholars,<sup>640</sup> as well as other scholars in general.<sup>641</sup> Johannine scholars

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<sup>640</sup> See Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff, eds., *A Feminist Companion to John* (vols. 1&2; Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press 2004); Adele Reinhartz, ed., *Semeia 85: God the Father in the Gospel of John* (Atlanta: SBL, 1999); Janet Martin Soskice, "Can a Feminist Call God 'Father'?" in *Women's Voices: Essays in Contemporary Feminist Theology* (ed., Theresa Elwes; London: Marshall Pickering, 1992): 15-29

like Alison Jasper employ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's notion of "hermeneutic of suspicion," which relentlessly views the bible as andocentric, patriarchal, oppressive, marginal, and exclusive of women's life experiences and theological reflection.<sup>642</sup>

Resultantly, Jasper's view of the God as Father in John's Prologue in the following ways:

1) it supports a patriarchal myth,<sup>643</sup> 2) because of there are no female characters in the text, it is marginal,<sup>644</sup> and 3) the explicit masculine titles of Logos and Son of God "have acquired unassailable dominance" in the narrative.<sup>645</sup> Jasper however concludes that while the text is hostile towards women, it is still "significant."<sup>646</sup> Scholars like Lee, on the other hand, have adopted a more moderate approach by viewing the term Father primarily as symbolic.<sup>647</sup> Lee argues that because it is concerned with the surrender of power, the Johannine motif of the sent Son destabilizes the notion of patriarchy in the Gospel; through his identification, suffering, and death, the Son represents the Father's

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<sup>641</sup> Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Robert W. Jenson, "The Father, He . . ." in *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism* (ed., A. F. Kimel; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992): 95-109. .

<sup>642</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York, Crossroad, 1983). Alison E. Jasper, *The Shining Garment of the Text: Gendered Readings of John's Prologue* (JSNT 165; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 25-26.

<sup>643</sup> Jasper, *Shining Garment*, 165. See also Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Intimating Deity in the Gospel of John: Theological Language and 'Father' in the Prayers of Jesus," *Semeia* 85 (1999): 77.

<sup>644</sup> Jasper, *Shining Garment*, 19-20.

<sup>645</sup> Jasper, *Shining Garment*, 40.

<sup>646</sup> Jasper, *Shining Garment*, 242-247.

<sup>647</sup> Lee notes that some theologians regard the term "Father" as gender-neutral while ignoring its symbolic power. Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 177-178. See also Dorothy Ann Lee, "The Symbol of Divine Fatherhood," *Semeia* 85 (1999): 177-87; Dorothy Ann Lee, "Beyond Suspicion? The Fatherhood of God in the Fourth Gospel," *Pacifica* 8:1 (1995): 40-54; Gail O'Day, "John," pages 392-393 in *Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. Carol Ann Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe).

gift of himself to the world. Second, the Gospel depicts filial relationship in the SFR in terms of love and intimacy rather than patriarchal duty and fear.<sup>648</sup>

Two suggestions this study offers for further resolving the issue of gender in the Father-Son language are as follows. First, the Gospel's presentation of Jesus in the Prologue as *flesh*, (σάρξ), rather than a male person places attention on the essence of his person rather than gender. Second, the incarnation and sending of the Son by God automatically situates him into the pattern of divine agents who within the religious context of ancient Judaism are dominantly male, as God's agents were predominantly male priests, prophets, and kings. Third, in the Gospel, the context in which the terms "son" and "Father" occur, focus not on gender but on *relationship*. This point is emphasized in the Prologue (1:18), where the first direct presentation of the SFR takes place through vivid maternal imagery of mother and child. Thus, use of the term "Father" in the Gospel connotes the self-revelation a caring God who desires to make himself known within the loving context of family relationship. The core dimension of the SFR, therefore, is love and intimacy, which far exceeds the love and intimacy found in any human son-father relationship. In other words, because the essence of the SFR in the Johannine narrative is divine, the relational dimensions of the Son and Father transcend gender distinctions and limitations.

Fourth, all believers begotten of God through faith in his Son, both female and male, are referred to as "children" and not "sons" in the Gospel. Use of the inclusive τέκνον for female and male children of God may imply that that the term "Son" symbolically serves primarily as a Christological title pointing to the agency and mission

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<sup>648</sup> Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 180.

of Jesus from God the Father. In sum, the aim of the SFR is to draw all believers—female and male—into the divine relationship. Thus, thus the SFR is a model of discipleship for believers, which leads to the final issue discussed in this section.

#### **10.4.2 SFR: As a Model for Discipleship for Believers**

The third theological implication of the SFR raised in this research on the Gospel of John is the role of Jesus as a model for discipleship.<sup>649</sup> Jesus' relationship and interaction in the SFR serves as a model for the believer's relationship with the Father in two ways. First, through his teachings and actions, set in context of the SFR, Jesus trained the disciples and prepared them to continue the divine mission. Practically everything Jesus taught about himself, including his origin, coming, mission, and departure, centered on his relationship with the Father. Details of Jesus' relationship and interaction with the Father exemplify how believers are to live as children and disciples. The Father is portrayed as sending, authorizing, commanding, teaching, revealing, testifying, and giving to the Son, while the Son in his earthly ministry is portrayed as obeying, pleasing, honoring, working for, receiving from, and returning to the Father. Thus, the narrative reveals details of Jesus' interaction with the Father in ways that

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<sup>649</sup> There are no studies on Jesus role as Son in the SFR as a model of discipleship. Most studies on discipleship focus on either Jesus' model of discipling the twelve or certain characters in the Gospel as models of discipleship. The few works on discipleship in the Fourth Gospel include the following: David R. Beck, *The Discipleship Paradigm: Readers and Anonymous Characters in the Fourth Gospel* (BIS 27; Leiden: Brill, 1997); Rekha M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006); Dirk Gysbert van der Merwe, "Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel," D.D diss., University of Pretoria, 1996; Barhatulirwa Vincent Muderwha, "Socio-Rhetorical Perspective of Discipleship in Gospel of John," Ph. D diss., University of South Africa, 2008; Wes Howard-Brook, *Becoming Children of God: John's Gospel and Radical Discipleship* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1994).

emphasize human filial relationship with God.<sup>650</sup> Furthermore, the Prayer reveals the purpose for the Johannine portrayal of Jesus as he sends the disciples into the world *just as the Father sent him into the world* (17:18; 20:11). Hence the Son's portrayal within the SFR is a model of discipleship for those who will continue the divine mission in context of divine relationship.

Second, as explicated in the Farewell Discourse, love and unity are principal marks of Johannine discipleship. Jesus fully expounds on these attributes of discipleship while speaking of his relationship with the Father. In the Prayer, Jesus focuses on oneness and unity in the SFR, praying that the disciples walk in these two attributes so that the world may believe that he is sent from and loved by the Father (17:21, 23). Thus, Jesus' teaching and exemplification of love and unity with the Father emphasize the hallmarks of divine discipleship. The Prayer also shows that Jesus specifically revealed these aspects of the SFR to the disciples, in order to bring them into the divine relationship (17:6-8, 14, 22, 25). Thus, believers are invited into divine intimacy in the SFR; Jesus uses the phrase, "that they may be one even as" He and the Father are one three times in the Prayer (11, 21, 22). In addition, Jesus also prays that believers be loved by the Father with the same quality of love the Father has for him (23). With the aim of the SFR to draw all believers into the divine relationship, Jesus is an example, not only for his disciples but also for all believers throughout time.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> These areas include , including not doing anything on his own initiative (5: 30; 8:42), imitating, knowing, and seeking, the Father as well as doing his will (5:19, 30, 55; 6:38-40; 9:4), obedience to the mission (7:28-29; 14:31; 15:10; 18:11), abiding in the Father's love (15:10), praying to the Father and glorifying him (11:4, 40-42; 17:1-26).

<sup>651</sup> Burge remarks, "The prayer becomes a model prayer for us, illustrating the sort of intimacy and confidence we can experience." Burge, *John*, 471.

## 10.4 Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation has been to examine the connection between and the centrality of the SFR and the symbolic structure in the Gospel of John. The findings of the research reveal an intricate and reciprocal relation between symbolism and the SFR. John's Christological Symbology shows how symbolism serves the theological and revelatory purpose of the Gospel, which is to make the Father known through his filial relationship with his Son. The ingenuity of John's narrative strategy is displayed in a series of symbolic actions and discourses that progressively reveal the person and purpose of the Son. As readers increasingly understand the Son, they come to know God the Father, thus the theological intention of the narrative is served. Consequently, it is virtually impossible to understand the theological purpose of the Gospel without acknowledging centrality of the SFR and the symbolic network that expresses the divine relationship.

Theologically, the findings of this research underscore the importance of understanding John's revelation of Jesus in light of his relationship with the Father. The SFR thus becomes a theological and practical a model for believers in the community of faith. The Son not only gives insight into what a transcendent-immanent relationship with the Father entails, but also in the Farewell Prayer, believers are drawn into the divine relationship, thereby revealing the express purpose for the Gospel's unique presentation of Jesus (20:31). Understanding that the theological aim of the Gospel is experiential knowledge of spiritual truth leads to recognition of the clear invitation to enter into divine relationship with the Son and his Father—a relationship symbolically portrayed in the SFR.

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