

THE UNITY *of* BELIEVERS *in* JESUS

THE UNITY *of* BELIEVERS *in* **JESUS**

Chad Harrington

HARRINGTON



APPROVAL SHEET

Dr. David Bauer

Dr. David Bauer
Dean; School of Biblical Interpretation

Joseph R. Angel

Name
Adviser

John H. Oswalt

Name
2nd Reader

THE UNITY *of* BELIEVERS

in JESUS

Protected, Collected & Connected as One

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts (Biblical Studies)

by
Robert Chad Harrington
Originally Presented 5 December 2014

Copyright © 2014 Robert Chad Harrington
Revised Edition
All rights reserved

Printed in U.S. by Instantpublisher.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis Statement: The unity Jesus seeks for believers in the Gospel of John, particularly John 17:11, 20-23, is unity primarily with God, not merely among believers.

I. Introduction.....	1
A. History of Research.....	2
B. Methods and Procedures	3
C. Key Terms of Unity in John 17	5
II. The Father-Son Relationship: A Survey of John as a Whole	8
A. The Father-Son Relationship: Before All	9
1. Before God.....	9
2. Before Believers	10
3. Before the Crowds	11
4. Before the Johannine Community	12
5. Before Jesus' Antagonists.....	13
B. The Father-Son Relationship and Believers' Unity	15
1. The Relationship Made Available to Believers	19
2. Relational Characteristics Not Identical with Unity	21
III. One Flock and One Family: A Survey of Key Unity Texts.....	23
A. One Flock, One Shepherd: A Survey of John 10:11-25.....	23
1. One Flock: Protected and Collected	24
2. One Shepherd	27
3. One Flock Under One Shepherd.....	33
B. One Family: A Survey of John 11:45-53.....	36
1. Jesus Mediates One Family: Collected	37
2. One Family Under One Father	38
C. Summary and Transition	39
IV. An Examination of Unity in the Farewell Discourses: John 17:11, 20-23	40

A. The Literary Structure of John 13-17	40
B. Two Strategic Unity Texts Prior to John 17.....	42
1. Part as Participation: The Foot Washing in John 13	43
2. Remaining in Christ: The Vine in John 15	45
C. The Immediate Context of John 17:11, 20-23.....	47
D. An Exegesis of John 17:11, 20-23	51
1. Characteristic #1: Unity by Protection	51
2. Characteristic #2: One Like the Father and Son.....	54
3. Characteristic #3: Unity in God.....	57
4. Characteristic #4: Unity Requires Glory.....	59
5. Characteristic #5: Unity Includes New Believers.....	60
V. Additional Possible Unities in John	65
A. Ecumenism.....	65
B. Sectarianism.....	67
VI. Conclusion	70
A. Essential Implications and Applications.....	72
B. Translation	74
<i>Works Cited</i>	76

CHAPTER 1

I. Introduction

Some have said that the waters of John's Gospel are "shallow enough for a baby to wade in, yet also deep enough for an elephant to drown in."¹ The same can be said about the waters of unity in John's Gospel. Believers are often divided over the issue of unity, but inevitably, someone will cite Jesus' prayer for the unity of believers in the Gospel of John, "that all of them may be one" (17:21).² But what kind of unity did Jesus envision when he prayed for it? Recorded only in John's Gospel, Jesus' petition for unity has been used to support ecumenical councils and to dissolve denominational divides. But are these applications what Jesus' prayed for when he asked for unity?

Jesus does not reference councils, denominations, or even particular churches in his plea for unity. He prays simply for the unity of all believers, and because of the scope (for *all* who believe), the meaning of his prayer is certainly relevant for the church today. Believers who misunderstand this text, though, continue in confusion, not clarity, on this important issue of church unity. A contextual understanding of unity in John will encourage and enliven the church today. The unity Jesus seeks in John's Gospel is the type of unity that will prevent church splits and hopefully even apostasies. Believers do not necessarily need to understand the prayer itself for Jesus' petition to be effectual, but by understanding it, believers can more effectively align themselves under the purpose for which God inspired this text—to strengthen and expand the church of all believers. To this end I write.

¹ Ben Witherington, *John's Wisdom* (Westminster Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 1.

² My translation. I use my translation throughout, except for some passages in the *New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1989).

A. History of Research

The unity prayer of John 17:11, 20-23 has been interpreted in two primary ways throughout history: the spiritual and organizational interpretations.³ The spiritual interpretation dominated commentaries from the Church Fathers into the nineteenth century with a focus on unity through the Eucharist (e.g., Ignatius of Antioch, Cyril of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom). Even Origin, Augustine, and Aquinas, while not focusing on Jesus' prayer in Jn 17 like the Fathers, still maintained a patristic understanding of church unity. Weber notes, however, that the organizational approach has gained popularity since the 1970s, when Rudolf Bultmann's commentary on John was first published.⁴

So is the unity for which Jesus prays a spiritual unity, where we all exist together in unified spirits? Or is it an organizational unity, where all believers adhere to a similar church structure? While the nature of unity remains mysterious at some level, I suggest that a literary analysis of unity texts in John reveals a simple definition for church unity. Perhaps Jesus' prayer for unity was not primarily about creeds or community among believers, but essentially about remaining in covenant with God.⁵ John casts a vision for this type of God-centered unity throughout his Gospel.⁶

³ Frederick Dale Bruner calls them the "spiritual" and "organizational" approaches, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 1015. Laura Ann Weber calls them the "ontological" and "institutional" approaches, "That They May All Be One: John 17:21-23 and a Plotinian Application of Unity" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1996), 39-69. By ontological approach, Weber means unity of essence, or being. By institutional, she means the various ecumenical efforts in the world. Both authors seem to be describing similar two approaches. I have adopted Bruner's categories.

⁴ In her summary of the history of research, she notes that it was Bultmann's 1971 commentary that changed the trajectory of commentaries away from the ontological and toward the institutional approach, but this does not comport well with Bultmann's commentary itself, in which he states that the unity for which Jesus prays cannot be "realized and organized in institutions and dogmas," *The Gospel of John* (ed. G. R. Beasley-Murray; trans. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 517. While he may not have directly caused it, as she asserts, the change still seems to have happened around the 1970s. Whatever the case, since Bultmann scholarship has leaned toward an institutional model more than the Church Fathers' spiritual one. Some commentators still suggest an spiritual approach, for example, Adrienne von Spyer in *John* (trans. E. A. Nelson; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 299-377.

⁵ John often uses "Father" and "God" interchangeably throughout the Gospel, with a preference for "Father" (e.g., 1:18; 3:34 with 5:23; *patēr*, 136 occurrences; *theos*, 83 occurrences). I use them similarly in this paper.

⁶ I use the name "John" in reference to the final compiler, writer, and editor of the Gospel of John and for the text itself. See Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians* (vol. 1; *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John*; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 394-395. Also,

B. Methods and Procedures

My general contribution to the discussion of unity is three-fold. First, like the Church Fathers, I emphasize the spiritual approach to unity. This unity is *spiritual* sharing, and it is primarily sharing in the life of God's Spirit. As a result, believers share life together as one. The priority is on the connection of believers with the Father through the Son, which is inseparably tied to community life. While unity in Jn 17 includes believers' connection with one another, the emphasis is on connection with God.⁷ Second, I emphasize how understanding the collective mentality of the first century personality is vital for an historical interpretation of Jesus' prayer for unity. This emphasis on a collectivist mentality is most important for understanding the image of one flock under one shepherd in Jn 10 and the collective nature of Jesus' death in Jn 11:52. Third, I focus on a literary analysis of the Gospel as a whole and of Jn 17 in particular, without neglecting other methodological perspectives. This aligns with my three-fold literary, historical, and theological methodology.⁸

My research will not address the 'historical Jesus' directly, but I assume that Jesus' prayer is in fact historical. I also assume that Jesus, who sent the Spirit to inspire the written words in Jn 17, is the same person who first spoke the words

"John" represents the Johannine Community, by taking source material primarily from the Beloved Disciple and writing under the inspiration of the Paraclete (Jn 14:16). I agree with Witherington that the Beloved Disciple wrote the Johannine letters and serves as the writer of source material for the Fourth Gospel, *ibid.* (This is different than John of Patmos who wrote Revelation.) The "Fourth Evangelist" is who Witherington calls the one who took the source material from the Beloved Disciple and compiled and edited the Gospel of John. The reason I use "John" to signify the author is for simplicity and tradition. It is traditionally known as *Kata Iōannēn*.

⁷ With regard to using "believers" verses "disciples," I generally use "the disciples" to mean the Apostles and "believers" to mean all those who believe in Jesus, including the twelve. The term translated "disciple" (*mathētēs*) has a wide range of meaning in its 78 occurrences in John. It is used of John the Baptist's followers (e.g., 1:35), of Jesus' followers in general (e.g., the crowds who turned away, 6:66; the man born blind, 9:28; and Joseph of Arimathea, 19:38), but most often of the twelve close disciples in particular (or "the eleven" after Judas betrayed Jesus; e.g., 2:2; 4:8; 6:8).

With regard to spiritual unity in general, though, I do not focus on the Eucharist as the visible element of unity, as the Church Fathers often emphasized, Weber, "That They May All Be One," 39-69. I have no problem with a Eucharistic application of unity. That can be one manifestation of oneness, but it does not exhaust the implications for oneness in the passage.

⁸ N. T. Wright, *New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 11-26.

recorded in Jn 17.⁹ As an historical piece of literature, Jn 17 is a discourse intended to be heard by the Johannine community as a rhetorical performance.¹⁰ George A. Kennedy includes Jn 17 in his rhetorical analysis of chapters 13-17, labeling these five chapters together as epideictic rhetoric (praise or blame), because the segment as a whole deals with the “attitudes, feelings, and beliefs” of the disciples.¹¹ As epideictic rhetoric, Kennedy notes, the goal of John 13-17 was to strengthen believers to live according to Jesus’ way of life. Finally, my exegesis is based on a synchronic, not a diachronic, reading of John, so I do not deal with the stages of text development throughout time. I deal only with extant manuscripts.¹²

Based on these assumptions and methodological terms, I understand that Jesus’ prayer for unity is focused on believers’ connection to God as a whole group, instead of focused primarily on the nature of fellowship between individuals. The unity of the group with one another is inseparable from their collective unity with God. This is evident throughout the entire narrative of Jesus’ ministry on earth, especially Jn 17. In short, then, the unity Jesus seeks for believers in the Gospel of John, particularly Jn 17:11, 20-23, is unity primarily with God, not merely among believers.

⁹ Contra Bultmann, who does not take the prayer to be authentic to the historical Jesus, but “historically speaking, the community,” *The Gospel of John*, 522. In my view, Jesus sent the Spirit from the Father (14:26; 15:26), and the Spirit conveyed the truth Jesus spoke while on earth during this prayer. Oscar Cullmann makes the point that the work of the Paraclete, as described in John 14:26, can be understood as more than an agent of mere factual recall, but an agent of depth of understanding that goes beyond plenary dictation. He grounds this in the meaning of *hypomimnēskō* in John 14:26, *The Johannine Circle* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1976), 66.

¹⁰ With regard to terminology, I use “Johannine Community” to refer to the intended audience of the Fourth Gospel, the first century recipients of the manuscript. Oscar Cullman refers to the community as the “Johannine Circle,” *The Johannine Circle*, passim. Andrew Lincoln calls the audience the “implied reader,” *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in John’s Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), passim. On the rhetoric of John, see Ben Witherington’s socio-rhetorical commentaries on the New Testament, throughout which he emphasizes the oral and aural nature of NT texts (e.g., Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 4-5). Also, Jesus prays for pedagogical reasons in John at least two occasions outside of Jn 17: Jn 11:41-42 and 12:30. (I use the term “pedagogy” loosely. Jesus is praying for the sake of the audience, and in this sense, the audience learns something from what he prays.)

¹¹ *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 73-85. The same type of rhetoric is present in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), Paul’s letter to the Philippians, 2 Peter, and Jesus’ discourse in Matthew 23.

¹² See Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 4. For this paper, I use the Greek text from *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 27th ed.

I will start by examining two terms associated with unity in John 17:11, 20-23, *hen* and *kathōs*. This will guide the discussion as I move through the Gospel of John as a whole. My survey is divided into two parts, each of which explores the relationship between the unity of believers and the unity of God (Father and Son) and how the two unities relate to one another.

First, I will compare and contrast the unity of the Father and Son with the unity of the Father and believers through a survey of John as a whole. This survey is an analysis of the nature of the Father-Son relationship throughout the entire Gospel as a means to better understand the Father-believer relationship from John's perspective. Second, I will explore two dominant images in John that share the theme of unity with Jn 17—one flock (Jn 10) and one family (Jn 11). These two images provide the Johannine context for understanding his theological thought-world, which will provide the necessary background and context for assessing Jesus' prayer for oneness in Jn 17. Finally, I will apply the insights from both of these surveys in examination of unity in John 17:11, 20-23 and distinguish my understanding of unity in John from ecumenism and sectarianism.

C. Key Terms of Unity in John 17

Two words in John 17:11, 20-23 are especially important for understanding Jesus' prayer for unity. Both of these terms occur together in the first petition: "*Pater hagio, tērēson autous en tō onomati sou ōh dedōkas moi, hina ōsin hen kathōs hēmeis*" (17:11).

The first term, *hen*, is translated "one" by the NRSV, NIV, and ESV (17:11). Jesus prays for this four times in Jn 17 (cf. vv. 21-23). Oneness is the goal or result of these prayers. *Hen*, with its masculine and feminine counterparts (*heis* and *mia*), holds a broad semantic range in the NT, but *hen* in the GNT and LXX has three dominant meanings: (1) "one among many", (2) a "whole one", and (3) "one of many".¹³ An example of definition (1), "one among many," is when Joseph was thrown into *one* pit

¹³ Dan Sheffler suggested these basic categories of meaning. I adapted his categories from a word study of the "one" word group in the GNT, along with the article "*Heis*" in BDAG, 291-293. I do not offer thorough analysis of the philosophical treatment of oneness, but a contextual treatment of oneness in John. For a more philosophical approach to John 17:11, 20-23, see Weber, "That They May All Be One."

among many pits (Gen 37:20). An example of “a whole one,” definition (2), is when the sun stopped for the *entire* day (Josh 10:13). And the third definition (3), “one of many,” is used in Galatians 3:28, in which Paul describes many believers who are *one* in Christ.¹⁴

Hen in Jn 17:11, 20-23 certainly does not mean (1) “one among many.” In this case, Jesus would be praying for one church and not the other, or one believer and not the other. The likely meaning is (2) “a whole one” or (3) “one of many” or both. If Jesus means (2) “a whole one,” then Jesus is praying that no one in the group be removed and that everyone remain together. This comports well with the immediate context, because prayer is couched in language of preservation: “Holy Father, *protect them in your name* that you have given me, so that they may be one” (17:11). But it is also possible that John also means (3) “one of many” (this is not one *among* many, but one *made of* many). In this case, “one” means that many different kinds of people exist together as one group. Jesus could, of course, be praying with both meanings in mind. In this case, the group is an undivided, yet diversified whole.¹⁵ Choosing among these options will become clear through survey and examination of particular texts.

Also important here is what Jn 17 *does not say*. First, Jn 17:11, 20-23 does not contain the words, “that they be one *with each other*.” Each of the four times Jesus prays about believers’ unity, he does not include an indirect object to modify their unity. He prays simply, “may they be one.” The silence here speaks to the possibility that the emphasis in his prayer is not on the quality of relationship *between other believers*, but on the very fact that the group is whole. Second, he does not define oneness directly by qualifying the nature of this oneness (e.g., “one in love” or “one in creed,” etc.) He simply says, “that they might be one.” My exegesis below will assess the context of Jn 17 for a conclusion on the meaning of *hen* in Jn 17:11, 20-23.

¹⁴ My goal is not a thorough analysis of the philosophical treatment of oneness, but an exegetical understanding of oneness in John. For a more philosophical approach to John 17:11, 20-23, see Weber, “That They May All Be One.” Dan Sheffler helped me to identify these basic categories. I adapted his categories from a word study of the “one” word group in the GNT, along with the article “*Heis*” in BDAG, 291-293.

¹⁵ John sometimes uses double entendre, because of his well-recognized double-layer writing style (e.g., *anōthen* [from above/again] and *pneuma* [spirit/wind] in John 3:1-10; *katharos* [clean] in 13:10 and 15:3), so he may be doing that here.

Kathōs. Another crucial word for a precise interpretation of unity in Jesus' prayer is *kathōs*.¹⁶ In the four petitions in which Jesus prays for the unity of the believers, three of those times include *kathōs*: "that they may be one as (*kathōs*) we are one" (17:11, 21-22). The question then becomes, *How does kathōs connect the unity of God and of his people together?*

Three options meanings of *kathōs* are viable. *Kathōs* here may suggest a comparison. The most common meaning of *kathōs* in the NT is (1) "just as," a comparative meaning. In that case, the passage reads, "that they may be one *in the same way that* we are one." This is not, however, the only possible meaning.¹⁷ Two other options are relevant for oneness in Jn 17. *Kathōs* may also signify (2) extent, which might be render, "that they be one *to the extent that* we are one" or (3) cause, which might give this reading: "that they be one *because* we are one." If it denotes (2) extent, believers can be unified *to the extent to which* the Father and Son are one. If *kathōs* is (3) casual, it denotes that the prayer would be a plea for unity *based on the fact that* the Father and Son are one. The text might read, "that they may be one *because* we are one." The point here is not to give an argument for each possible meaning, but to open up the possibilities. A conclusion requires more analysis of the Gospel as a whole, as I pursue below.

First, I will explore the relationship between the unity of God and his people in the Gospel of John as a whole. Then, I will survey unity in John through two images: one flock and one family. This survey and these images will provide evidence that John is framing an ecclesiology of believers who are connected, protected, and collected by God through the person of Jesus.

¹⁶ The Gospel of John uses *kathōs* 32 times, twice as much as any other gospel: John 1:23; 3:14; 5:23, 30; 6:31, 57–58; 7:38; 8:28; 10:15; 12:14, 50; 13:15, 33–34; 14:27, 31; 15:4, 9–10, 12; 17:2, 11, 14, 16, 18, 21–23; 19:40; 20:21. Luke uses it only 16 times, Mark seven times, and Matthew three times. John uses *kathōs* in at least two ways in John (e.g., comparison in John 3:14 and cause in 17:2 according to the NRSV, NIV, and ESV).

¹⁷ "*Kathōs*," BDAG, 493-494.

CHAPTER 2

II. The Father-Son Relationship: A Survey of John as a Whole

One of the most dominant themes in John is the intimate relationship between the Father and Son.¹⁸ John's description of the Father-Son relationship is unique in contrast with the three Synoptic Gospels: Jesus called God "Father" at an early age (Luke 2:49), during his ministry (Matt 7:21), and toward the end of his life (Mark 14:36). These accounts, however, do not develop their filial relationship in the same way or to the same extent to which John's Gospel develops it. The number of times alone that John uses the word "Father" attests to this Johannine emphasis, which he develops thoroughly.¹⁹ For this reason, the Father-Son relationship warrants close analysis throughout the Gospel of John for contextual understanding of Jn 17 in particular, where Jesus describes his relationship with the Father by saying, "we are one" (Jn 17:21). This becomes vital for understanding believers' unity, because in Jn 17:11, 20-23, Jesus makes a connection between the unity of Father and Son and the unity of believers. The following survey describes the comparison between the two unities.

Throughout his Gospel, John describes how Jesus and the Father share a dynamic, multifaceted life together. Their relationship goes beyond an external perfunctory union or mere obedience. They share the same essence and purpose,

¹⁸ For a detailed analysis of the Father-Son relationship in John's Gospel, see Adesola Akala, "The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John" (PhD diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2012). The following survey is based upon the supposition John is a thematic and repetitive writer, who develops his themes throughout the gospel as a whole. This is true of other themes like glory, life, and truth and symbols like light, water, and bread. It is true of oneness too. By repetitive I do not mean repetitive in a negative sense, as if he states the same things unnecessarily. Whenever he repeats themes or images, it is progressive, developmental, and even necessary to clearly communicate his thought-world. For example, we understand what he means by "love" through the particular settings and stories in which this theme recurs (e.g., God loves the world and the Son, John 3:16, 35; Jesus shows this love to his disciples 13:1; the greatest love is laying down one's life for friends, 15:13; and Peter is invited to love Jesus by taking care of the sheep, 21:15).

¹⁹ John writes *patēr* ("father") 136 times, more than twice as many times as Matthew (63 times) and Luke (56 times), and over seven times more than Mark uses it (18 times). Not all of these word occurrences in the Gospels are used with reference to God as Father; most occurrences in John refer to God as Father, so even if all the Synoptic occurrences referred to God as Father, they would still be less than those in John.

nature and function, words and actions.²⁰ This does not mean, however, they are identical persons, which is essential for assessing how Jesus' union with the Father is analogous for believers' unity with God. In these ways, the intimate relationship between the Father and Son is evident before every audience in John: Jesus' antagonists, the Johannine community, the crowds, the believers, and even God himself.

A. The Father-Son Relationship: Before All

1. Before God

Jesus' union with the Father is evident from how he prays in Jn 17. This prayer reveals at least five ways he is connected to the Father.

God as Father: Jesus Has God as His Father (Jn 17:1). The Son is the Son only because he has a Father, and without the Father, there is no Son.²¹ They are one because their identity depends on the other. Jesus has God as his Father, and this is the most basic relational element from which all other elements of their relationship follow. Essentially, they share identity.

Authority: The Son Can Give Life to All (Jn 17:2; cf. 13:3). The Father grants Jesus his authority to give everlasting life to all people (*sarkos*). The Father also gives Jesus authority to raise believers on the last day (Jn 6:40). They share authority.

Glory to God: He Glorifies the Father (Jn 17:1). Jesus asks God to glorify him on earth so that he can glorify the Father. The Father tells him that he has glorified his name and will glorify it again (Jn 12:28). Here the Father will glorify his name in the death of Jesus. In this way, Jesus carries the name and glory of God. They share glory.

The Father's Name: He Shares the Father's Name (Jn 17:11-12, 26). Jesus declares that the Father gave him his name, the name he made known to the disciples. "Name" is a person's character, and access to a person's name is access to their

²⁰ I will substantiate this claim below with citations and examples. On the dynamic relationship between Father and Son, see C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 194

²¹ See Richard Bauckham, "Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John," *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 251–52.

character is some way (e.g., Acts 19:13). Jesus and the Father share a name and, thus, they share character.

Unity: He is One with the Father (Jn 17:11, 22-23). Jesus declares to God himself that they are one. Declaring a statement about a relationship to others is not the same as declaring unity to the person with whom you share that unity. Jesus claims unity with the Father to his antagonists (Jn 10:30), but he also says this directly to the Father. The context here in Jn 17 implies that God receives this declaration as true. They share unity.

These examples show the intimacy between the Father and Son, because Jesus calls God “Father,” shares in the Father’s authority, glory, name, and unity. Jesus reveals even more about his relationship with the Father by what he tells those who believe in him.

2. Before Believers

Seven additional characteristics are evident throughout the Gospel of John by what Jesus says to his disciples and other believers:

Food: The Father Provides Him with Food (Jn 4:32). In the Synoptic Gospels, his food is literal food (e.g., bread in Matt 6:11) and metaphorical food (e.g., God’s word in Matt 4:4). In John too, God provides literal food for him (Jn 6:11) and metaphorical food as well (God’s work as food, Jn 4:32). They share life-giving substance.

Place: They Share a Home (Jn 14:3). Jesus tells his disciples about his Father’s house (*oikia*) that has many rooms. He even has preparation rights, because he promises to prepare rooms for his disciples (Jn 14:3). This is likely the place he was with the Father before the creation of the world (Jn 17:5), the place from which he came and to which he was going (Jn 8:14; 2:16; 13:3). They share a home.

In One Another: The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son (Jn 14:11). The Father and Son associate with one another so closely that Jesus claims that he is in the Father and the Father is in him: “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (Jn 14:11 NRSV). He makes this request in response to Philip’s plea to see the Father. Jesus and the Father are in one another to the extent that seeing Jesus is seeing the Father. In this way, they share a common association by being in one another.

Loving God: The Son Loves the Father (Jn 14:31). Jesus tells his disciples here that he loves the Father by doing exactly what his Father has commanded him. His obedience shows love (cf. Jn 14:15). So they share love with one another.

Mission: The Father Commissions the Son (Jn 20:21). One of the most common descriptions of God the Father in the Gospel of John is “the one who sent me.” Jesus himself says this twenty-six times in the Gospel of John.²² They share a common mission.

Insight: The Father Teaches the Son (Jn 8:28). Jesus tells the crowds, some of whom believed in him (Jn 8:31), that he only speaks what the Father taught him (*edidaxen*). The Father teaches the Son. Therefore, they share insight.

Persecution: The Son is Hated along with the Father (Jn 15:23-24). Jesus tells his disciples that anyone who hates him hates the Father as well. The identity of the Father and Son is so closely connected that hatred of one is hatred of the other. Jesus states this twice for emphasis. In this way, they share in persecution.

3. Before the Crowds

John the Baptist, Jesus, and the crowds all declare the unity of the Father and Son, providing six additional characteristics of Jesus’ unity with the Father.

The Spirit: The Father Gives the Spirit to the Son (Jn 1:32). John the Baptist declares that the Spirit descended upon Jesus from heaven. “From heaven” implies that the Spirit comes from God, and this is corroborated by Jesus’ claim to ascended to and descend from heaven, the abode of God (cf. Jn 3:13 with 2:16). Thus, they share the Spirit.

Centrality: The Father Gives the Son Centrality (Jn 6:44). Jesus also tells the crowds to whom he fed the fish and loaves that no one comes to him unless the Father draws them. The Father draws all people to himself through Jesus, because he is the only way to the Father (Jn 14:6). They share centrality.

²² Jn 1:33; 4:34; 5:23–24, 30, 37; 6:38–39, 44; 7:16, 18, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44–45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5.

Life: The Father Gives Life to the Son (Jn 6:57). Jesus tells the crowds to whom he fed the fish and loaves, “I live because of the Father.” He knew that his very sustenance came from God. They share life.

Open Communication: The Father Hears the Son (Jn 11:41-42). Not only does the Son listen to the Father, but the Father also listens to the Son. Here Jesus thanks God for always hearing him. They communicate openly.

Kingship: The Father Gives Jesus Kingship (Jn 12:13). The crowds declare Jesus’ kingship: “Hosanna... [to] the King of Israel.” Then, Pilate calls him “King of the Jews” before the crowds (Jn 18:39), and the soldiers nail this *titulus* to his cross (Jn 19:19). While this is not a direct declaration of oneness with God, the role of king originally belonged to God in salvation history (e.g., 1 Sam 8:7). In the context of John as a whole, the reader can infer that Jesus shares kingship with the Father.²³

Authority for the Final Resurrection: Jesus will Raise Believers on the Last Day (Jn 6:40). Jesus tells the crowds that he is the one who will ultimately give life in the resurrection on the Last Day. The Father’s will is that anyone who sees Jesus and believes in him will be raised by him on the last day. The Father shares authority with Jesus to raise believers in the final resurrection.

4. Before the Johannine Community

The Johannine community, too, gets insight into the nature of Jesus’ relationship with the Father. The following are four characteristics of Jesus’ relationship with the Father that John includes in his biographical narration for his readers.

Proximity: The Father is Relationally Close to the Son (Jn 1:18). John writes that the Son is close to the Father’s heart, a description of intimacy. Jesus had been close with the Father (Jn 1:1, 14) and he would be with the Father again (Jn 14:3).²⁴ He tells his

²³ The “I am” statements of John are another clue that Jesus lives into God’s roles as described in OT texts. Additionally, Jesus seems to be portrayed as the new David from Ezek 34:23. Thus, we can assume that because Jesus does not deny these claims of his Kingship that he in some way functions as king over Israel.

²⁴ I assume that John is speaking literally (in some sense) and figuratively in terms of relational proximity. To speak only literally would make little sense of the passages listed under this heading.

disciples that they would all leave him, but he would not be alone because the Father was with him on earth (Jn 16:32; cf. 8:29). So they share relational proximity.

Vision: The Son Sees the Father (Jn 1:18). The Gospel writer tells the readers of John that no one has seen the Father except the Son. Similarly, Jesus himself tells the crowds to whom he fed fish and loaves that only the Son has seen the Father (Jn 6:46). So they share line of sight.

Being Loved: The Father Loves the Son (Jn 3:35). Just as the Son loves the Father, so the Father loves the Son. John tells this to his readers, and Jesus himself declares that he lives in God's love (Jn 15:10). They share love.

Sonship: Jesus is the Father's Son (Jn 3:35). John declares to the Johannine Community that Jesus is the Son of God. His sonship sets the tone for his ministry and it opens up new meaning for others who are called children of God. They share a family.

In summary, John makes the close relationship of the Father and Son clear to the Johannine Community for whom the original text was written. They share proximity, vision, love, and family identity.

5. Before Jesus' Antagonists

Jesus tells his antagonists, often called "the Jews" in John, that he is one with the Father. Just like every other audience, his union with the Father seems to be the focus of his general orientation. Eight additional characteristics of his relationship with the Father are known by what he says to his antagonists.

Ultimate Judgment: The Father Gives the Son the Right to Judge (Jn 5:22). Jesus tells the people clearly, "The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn 5:22 NRSV). The Father had the power of judgment because Jesus says, "As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just" (Jn 5:30 NRSV). Jesus' judgment is the Father's judgment because it comes from the Father, even if the Father does not execute it. They share ultimate judgment.

Work: The Father Gives the Son Work to Finish (Jn 5:36). Jesus' work comes from God. His food is to do the will of God and "to complete his work (*ergon*)" (Jn 4:34 NRSV). His works (*ta erga*) include what he said (Jn 14:10), but his works go beyond

that—Jesus completes his work (*ergon*) from God and by completing it gives glory to the Father (Jn 17:4).

Words: The Father Speaks to the Son (Jn 8:40). Jesus *speaks* of the truth and *is* the truth of God (e.g., Jn 4:23-24; 14:6). This truth is what he hears from the Father. This is different than the Father *teaching* the Son. In addition to the Father teaching Jesus depth of meaning (*didaskō* in Jn 8:28), he also speaks plainly to Jesus and tells him the words to say (*laleō* in Jn 8:40). He tells his disciples, “The words I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works” (Jn 14:10). They share words.

Honor: The Son Honors the Father (Jn 8:49). In the middle of a discussion with his antagonists, Jesus tells them that they dishonor him, but he honors the Father. He says elsewhere that anyone who does not honor him does not honor the Father (Jn 5:23). They share honor.

Glory from God: The Father Gives Glory to the Son (Jn 8:54). The Son receives glory from the Father in contrast with Jesus seeking his own glory, which he explicitly denounces to seek. His glory is authentic, because God is the one who glorifies him (cf. 17:5).

Instructions: The Father Gave the Son Instructions on What To Do (Jn 10:18). Similar to teaching and speaking (above), Jesus tells his debaters that the Father *instructed* him to lay his life down. If teaching refers to communicating principles of knowledge and speaking refers to specific words, then instruction refers to specific actions. The Father gives instructions to the Son, and the Son follows his orders. Jesus literally receives a command from God (*entolē*) to die and rise from the dead (Jn 10:18).²⁵

Knowing: The Son Knows the Father (Jn 10:15). Jesus’ personal knowing of God is analogous to sheep knowing their shepherd, because it comes by experience. This is the only way a flock can recognize the voice of their protector—consistent exposure to it. Jesus knows the Father’s voice and even says to his antagonists, “If I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you” (Jn 8:55).

Being Known: The Father Knows the Son (Jn 10:15). The Son knows the Father, and the Father knows the Son. This accentuates the reciprocity of their intimate knowing of one another. They know each other.

²⁵ For the command in 10:18 as a command to die and rise from the dead, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 399.

In summary, Jesus' connection with the Father is obvious before his antagonists. He receives authority for ultimate judgment over people, work, words, honor, glory, and instructions from the Father, and Jesus and the Father know each other.

These characteristics describe the Father-Son relationship throughout the Gospel of John as a whole.²⁶ Their relationship as a whole might be described in various terms, but John's particular term is *unity*. Similarly, Jesus invites the disciples to share in his unity with the Father in specific ways. The following descriptions will show the nature of believers' union with God through Jesus. Their unity with the Father is comparable to the unity between Jesus and the Father.

B. The Father-Son Relationship and Believers' Unity

Jesus makes his relationship of interconnected dynamism with the Father available to believers as much as is humanly possible for believers to share with the Father. The reader does not have to infer these connections, because John makes many of them explicitly clear, often in parallel language with what he writes about the Father-Son relationship. The point here is not to be comprehensive but representative of the Gospel as a whole. The Gospel of John reveals that Jesus mediates his relationship with the Father to believers so they too can relate to the Father in the way that Jesus related to him while he was physically present on earth. Below are the relational characteristics of the Father-Son unity and how they compare to the characteristics of the Father-believer relationship. The characteristics in the far left column describe how the Father and Son relate, and the far right column lists comparisons between the two relationships.

²⁶ While other characteristics may be observed, these are the most obvious and evident ones.

The Father-Son vis-à-vis the Father-Believer Relationships

Characteristic	Father-Son Relationship	Father-Believer Relationship	Comparison
Before God			
God as Father	17:1; cf. 5:18; 8:41	20:17	Jesus and his disciples share God as their Father.
Authority to Give Life to All	17:2; cf. 13:3	1:12; cf. 17:10	---
Glory to God	17:1	15:8	Jesus teaches the disciples how to give glory to God.
The Father's Name	17:11-12; cf. 17:26	16:24	Jesus offers access to the Father's name.
Unity with God	17:11, 22-23	17:11, 21-23	By abiding in Jesus, believers are one with God.
Before Believers			
Food from God	4:32; cf. 4:32; 6:11	6:32, 35	The Father gives the people his food through the person of Jesus.
Place with God	14:3; cf. 2:16; 8:14; 13:3; 17:5	14:3; cf. 14:23	The Father's house is where Jesus and the disciples will live.
In God	14:11; cf. 17:21, 23	17:21, 23; cf. 15:4	Believers are in the Father by being in the Son.
Loving God	14:31; cf. 14:15	15:13; cf. 8:28; 14:31	The disciples can love the Father by obeying Jesus' commands.
Mission from God	20:21; cf. 1:33, etc.	17:18; cf. 20:21	Jesus sends his disciples like the Father sent him.
Insight from God	8:28; cf. 8:31	15:20	Jesus gives the disciples the words of the Father.

Persecution	15:23-24	15:20; cf. 15:23-24; 16:2	Disciples are hated like Jesus is hated.
Before Crowds			
The Spirit from God	1:32; cf. 3:13 with 2:16	15:26	Believers receive the Holy Spirit, which Jesus also received from the Father.
Centrality	6:44; cf. 14:6	6:44	---
Life from God	6:57	17:2; cf. 6:57	The life Jesus gives his disciples is from the Father.
Open Communication with God	11:41-42	16:23, 26	Jesus gives access to the Father by sharing his name with his disciples.
Kingship	12:13; cf. 18:39; 19:11, 19	3:3, 5	---
Authority for Final Resurrection	6:40	6:40	---
Before the Johannine Community			
Proximity to God	1:18; cf. 1:1; 16:32	14:23; cf. 14:3	Jesus brings his disciples to live with him and the Father.
Vision of God	1:18; cf. 6:46	14:9	Believers can see the Father by seeing the Son.
Loved by God	3:35; cf. 15:10	3:16; cf. 16:27; 14:21	The Father loves believers as he loves the Son.
Sonship	1:34; cf. 3:35; 5:19	1:12; cf. 12:36; 15:15	Just like Jesus is God's son, so are believers God's children.
Before Antagonists			
Ultimate Judgment	5:22; cf. 5:30	5:29	---

Work from God	5:36; cf. 9:3-4	14:12	The disciples will do the works Jesus has been doing for the Father.
Words from God	8:40; cf. v. 47	16:13-15; cf. 6:45	The Spirit will take the Father and Son's words and make them known to the disciples.
Honor to God	8:49; cf. 5:23; 12:26	5:23	Believers who honor the Son also honor the Father.
Glory from God	8:54; 17:1, 5	17:22	Jesus shares the Father's glory with the disciples.
Instructions from God	10:18	17:8	Jesus gives the disciples instructions from the Father.
Knowing God	10:15; cf. 8:55	10:14; cf. 17:3; 14:7	Believers can know the Father like Jesus knows the Father.
Being Known by God	10:15	1:48; cf. 10:14, 27	The Father knows believers through the Son.

From this chart, I have chosen to describe the following examples of believers' connection with the Father based on the clarity with which they are parallel to Jesus' union with the Father in John. They are each rooted in the fact that Jesus names God as the believers' Father, just like he calls God his Father. That believers would call God "Father" is taken for granted by Matthew and Luke (e.g., Matt 6:9; Luke 11:2; cf. Mark 11:25), but in John this is not explicit until Jesus describes to Mary God as the disciples' Father: "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (20:17 NRSV). Jesus emphasizes the mutuality of the sharing between Jesus and the disciples: "*my* God and *your* God." This is the only place in John that Jesus explicitly calls God the disciples' "Father." By doing so, he explicitly opens up their right to call God "Father" by declaring it to them through Mary (cf. Jn 1:12). That believers have God as their Father is essential to the parallel nature between the Father-Son and Father-believer relationship with God, and it is foundational background for believers relating to the Father like the Son related to him.

1. The Relationship Made Available to Believers

Believers share other major relational characteristics with the Father that parallel Jesus' relationship with the Father. The following characteristics are taken from the chart above. Like Jesus, believers can know God, share a home with God, exist in God, work for God, have open communication with God, experience God's glory, and share love with the God. These seven descriptions are representative examples of the Father-believer relationship as a whole, but they are not exhaustive of the Johannine vision of the relationship between believers and the Father. Additionally, these descriptions reveal the crucial role of mediation that Jesus plays in the Father-believer relationship. In short, Jesus shares with believers his dynamic relationship with the Father.²⁷

Knowing God. Just as Jesus knows the Father (Jn 10:15; cf. 8:55), so can believers know the Father: "This is everlasting life, that they might know (*ginōskōsin*) you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you sent" (Jn 17:3; cf. 3:16-17).²⁸ This knowing of God is integrally connected to knowing the Son, to the point that one cannot know God without knowing his Son (cf. Jn 14:7).²⁹ Knowing God is not a mere intellectual exercise. As Brown notes, it is like the experiential knowledge represented by the Hebrew verb *yד'* (to know), and this experiential knowledge "involves a life of obedience to God's commandments and of loving communion with fellow Christians."³⁰ Jesus makes this knowledge of God available to believers.

A Home. Just as Jesus lived near the Father's heart and shared a home with the Father (Jn 14:3, 23; 1:18; cf. 1:1; 16:32; 14:2), so are the disciples invited into this close relationship, even into space in which God lives. Jesus tells the disciples, "If I go and

²⁷ The criteria for determining which characteristics of the Father-Son relationship are clearly parallel with the Father-believer relationship are 1) those which are *explicitly named* as relational connections between believers and the Father (not just between believers and Jesus), 2) those which are described in *parallel language* to the characteristics of Jesus' relationship with the Father, and 3) relational characteristics that describe more of a *mutual, two-way connection* (e.g., giving and receiving love as opposed to simply receiving commission from the Father).

²⁸ Although Jesus says "God" (*theon*) here, "God" is interchangeable with "Father" in the context of the prayer.

²⁹ For the importance of knowing God through the Son in 17:3, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 2, 752.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also,” and, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (Jn 14:3, 23). Believers share a home with the Father, just like Jesus shares a home with him. The reciprocity of this sharing here is not that the disciples contribute to the home itself—the Father has a home to which the disciples will come (Jn 14:3)—but the Father himself will also come with Jesus and make his home with the disciples, where they are (Jn 14:23).

In One Another. As Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in the Son (Jn 14:11), so are disciples in God and he in them (Jn 15:4; 17:21, 23). For Jesus, his being “in” God meant that he revealed the very identity of God to his disciples (Jn 14:8-11). While the disciples do not share the exact same “inness” that Jesus shares with the Father with regard to extent, they are “in” Jesus; and by being in Jesus, they are in the Father too. Jesus is their source of life (Jn 15:5).

Work. The disciples are given the same works (*ta erga*) as Jesus from the Father (Jn 14:10). Jesus explicitly extends this to all believers when he says, “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works (*ta erga*) that I do” (Jn 14:12 NRSV). For Jesus, these works included the words he spoke from the Father, but his works seem also to include his general life of self-giving love (Jn 10:38; 14:10; 17:4; cf. 13:1).

Open Communication with God. Jesus shares open communication with the Father, where they both listen to one another (Jn 16:23, 26; 11:41-42; cf. 8:40). In the same way, believers have open access to the Father in the name of Jesus: “On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you” (Jn 16:23 NRSV). Then, he emphasizes the directness of their relationship, “On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God” (Jn 16:26-27). Jesus tells the disciples that they have open communication directly with the Father and he makes that available to them. The Father not only listens, but he also speaks to the disciples as he spoke with the Son. He speaks through the Spirit, who takes the words of Jesus from the Father and declares them to the disciples (Jn 16:13-15).

Glory. Just as the Son glorifies the Father by completing his work on earth (Jn 17:4), so the disciples give glory to God by bearing fruit (Jn 15:8). Their fruit-bearing

work is directly connected to Jesus' disciple-making efforts in the context of Jn 15:8: "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples" (NRSV). This is giving the Father glory, but Jesus also *receives* glory from the Father (Jn 8:54; cf. 17:1). While the disciples are not glorified by the Father (*ho doxazōn*) as Jesus is glorified by him, they still receive glory (*tēn doxan*) from the Father through the Son (Jn 17:22). They share in the glory of God like Jesus did.

Love. Finally, the disciples can love and be loved by God, as Jesus loves and is loved by God. This is perhaps the most vital characteristic of the relationship between the Father and the Son, as well as between the Father and believers. The Father loves the Son (Jn 3:35; cf. 15:10), and the Son loves the Father (Jn 14:31; cf. 14:15). Similarly, the Father shares love with the disciples. He *himself* loves the world in general, but he also loves the disciples in a personal way (Jn 14:21; 16:27).

In summary, believers can know God the Father personally, share a home with him, talk with him, glorify him, and share love with him. These seven relational characteristics represent the ways Jesus opens up his unity with the Father to his disciples. While various other aspects of Jesus' relationship with the Father are made available to believers, these are the clearest parallels in John. In this way, believers are relationally connected to the Father like the Son is relationally connected to the Father. Jesus' relationship with the Father, however, is not exactly like what the believers share with the Father.

2. Relational Characteristics Not Identical with Unity

The difference between believers' unity and Jesus' unity with the Father can be explained in terms of (1) nature, (2) manner, and (3) extent.³¹ The way Jesus lived out his relationship with the Father in the world was unique to him as a person. Believers do not literally share the specific interactions Jesus does with the Father. The way believers relate to the Father happens in the same (1) *nature* as Jesus' relationship with the Father, but the (2) *manner* of the relationship is not exactly the same. For example, believers love the Father by way of obedience, like Jesus loves the Father by

³¹ John Oswalt offered to me these three categories for understanding the Father-Son and Father-Believer relationships.

obedience, but the specific call to obedience in Jesus' life is different than what God asks of the disciples—substitutionary death. They are similar to one another, but the similarities are limited. Jesus shares the nature of his relationship with the Father, but not in every way.

Many of the characteristics of the relationship between the Father and Son are not given to believers. Thus, a comparison between the two unities breaks down with regard to (3) extent. That is, the oneness of believers with God does not compare to the same extent as the unity of the Father and Son. John excludes believers from at least five characteristics of unity between the Father and Son:³²

- 1) Authority to Give Life to All (Jn 17:2; cf. 13:3)
- 2) Centrality (Jn 6:44; cf. 14:6)
- 3) Kingship (Jn 12:13; cf. 18:39; 19:11, 19)
- 4) Authority for Final Resurrection (Jn 6:40)
- 5) Ultimate Judgment (Jn 5:22; cf. 5:30)

Believers do not have 1) authority to give everlasting life, 2) centrality, 3) kingship 4) authority to raise people from the dead at the final resurrection, and 5) ultimate judgment over other people on behalf of God.

In summary, Jesus shares a dynamic, interactive relationship with God the Father, which is similar but not exactly like the relationship believers have with the Father. Jesus' relationship with the Father is clear before his antagonists, the Johannine community, the crowds, Jesus' disciples, and even the Father himself. He makes available to his disciples his dynamic relationship of unity with the Father in various ways throughout the Gospel of John. While the relationship between believers and the Father is limited in terms of manner and extent, they share the essential nature of spiritual unity with the Father that Jesus shares with him. The Father-Son relationship is both an analogy and the basis upon which believers can relate to the Father. In conclusion, then, Jesus shares with believers the unity he has with the Father. The above survey focuses on vertical unity only (between believers and God), but what does the Gospel of John have to say about the unity in terms of horizontal unity among believers?

³² These come from the chart above.

CHAPTER 3

III. One Flock and One Family: A Survey of Key Unity Texts

This section examines texts in both Jn 10 and 11, because they are the only passages in John that contain the same essential terminology of unity as in Jn 17:11, 20-23. Jn 10 contains the image of one (*mia*) flock under one (*heis*) shepherd, and Jn 11 contains the image of one (*hen*) family. Thus, like believers are called “one” in John 17:11, 20-23, so are they called “one” in Jn 10 and 11. Nowhere else in John are the collective people of God explicitly described as “one.”

Jesus offers a discourse on the image of one flock in Jn 10. “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be *one flock, one shepherd* (*kai genēsontai mia poimnē, heis poimēn*)” (10:16 NRSV; cf. 17:21-22). Similarly, Jn 11 contains the image of one family. At least one purpose of Jesus’ death was to gather *into one* the people of God just like he prays that they would be completely brought *into one*. John writes, “Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather *into one* the dispersed children of God (*kai ta tekna tou theou ta dieskorpismena synagagē eis hen*)” (11:51-52 NRSV; cf. 17:23). Each of these texts has a specific image of unity, and together, these images support the idea that ecclesial unity is dependent upon unity with God. God makes unity possible among his sheep and he makes unity possible in his family. While John may describe elements of unity among believers in other texts, these two passages are clearly connected to Jn 17 on a literary basis. Thus, they serve as anchor texts for unity in John.

A. One Flock, One Shepherd: A Survey of John 10:11-25

The first image—the image of one flock—is an important starting point, because it not only portrays the oneness of God’s people but also the oneness of God himself. Jn 10 is literally central in the Gospel of John, coming at about a halfway point in the narrative as a whole. Jesus is moving closer to ‘the hour’ in which he will lay his life down, and the tensions are increasing between him and his antagonists.

Jesus had just healed on the Sabbath a man born blind (9:1-12), and the Jews are very suspicious of him for healing on a holy day (9:16).³³ After the Jews cast away the healed man, he finds the man and says, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind” (9:39 NRSV). The Pharisees overhear him saying this, which sparks his discourse in Jn 10.

1. One Flock: Protected and Collected

The OT background for flock imagery in Jn 10 is Ezekiel 34:1-31, where God is the Good Shepherd (cf. Zech 9-11).³⁴ In Ezekiel, God accuses the leaders of Israel, whom he calls “shepherds,” for neglecting the flock (34:1-10). Instead of taking care of the flock and seeking after the strays, they are feeding themselves and ignoring the well being of God’s people. Then, he tells them that he will chase after the flock himself (34:11, 15). If the problem is the selfish behavior of the leaders of Israel (34:1-10), the solution is the selfless love of God (34:11-31).

Three parallels between Jn 10 and Ezek 34 reinforce a thematic connection between the two texts. First, Jesus is speaking to Pharisees, some of the popular lay leaders of Israel.³⁵ In Ezek 34:2, God rebukes the leaders of Israel because of their failures to lead like Jesus rebukes the Pharisees as influential persons in Israel.³⁶ Second, God himself takes responsibility for caring for his sheep and searching after those in harm in each passage (Jn 10:29; cf. Ezek 34:1ff). Third, the Lord promises to commission “one shepherd (*poimena hena*), my servant David” to serve his flock and

³³ “The Jews” is a phrase John sometimes uses for describing Jewish antagonists of Jesus (e.g., Jn 7:11-13). Beasley-Murray gives helpful categories for understanding the seventy times the phrase “the Jews” are mentioned in John, *John*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 20.

³⁴ Frederick Dale Bruner claims this observation is agreed upon by a consensus among commentators, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 629.

³⁵ Josephus writes of how the Pharisees were even more influential than the Sadducees, “They [the Pharisees] are, as a matter of fact, extremely influential among the townsfolk; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed to their exposition . . . they [the Sadducees] perform the formulas of the Pharisees, since otherwise the masses would not tolerate them” (*Ant.* 18.15–17).

³⁶ That Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees seems clear. The Pharisees wonder if they are the blind ones Jesus is talking about in 9:40, and Jesus responds by addressing their blindness starting in 9:41 and he continues into this passage (10:1ff).

be their shepherd (LXX). He says, “I will be their God and my servant David shall be prince among them” (Ezek 34:24). This is vital because in Jn 10, the Father sends his servant, Jesus, as the one shepherd (*heis poimēn*), who lays down his life (10:29, 33).³⁷ Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd” (10:11). Jesus and the new David represent the Good Shepherd because they serve the people, instead of serving themselves (Ezek 34:23; 10:11). But how does the parallel between Ezek 34 and Jn 10 bring clarity to understanding the meaning of “one flock” in John 10:16? Both of these texts emphasize the activity of God for the unity of the flock. The flock is *one flock* because they are connected to God. Thus, the unity of the flock in Jn 10 is primarily dependent on their connection to God. Without their connection to God, the sheep are divided. This truth becomes evident by examining how God *protects* and *collects* his people.

Protected by Jesus. Jesus’ primary task as the Good Shepherd in Jn 10 is to seek the unity of his flock by protecting them against the attacks of the enemy:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (10:11-16 NRSV)

He continues to describe this image by saying, “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand” (10:27-28 NRSV). Jesus’ role is to protect the flock so that none of them will perish. The important note here is that *Jesus* is the one who protects—the flock does not keep itself together. In other words, the fact that they

³⁷ I do not intend to draw out every parallel or articulate a typological connection between David and Jesus. While one could argue that Jesus is king in Gospel of John (6:15; 19:21), there is no clear and direct indication by John that Jesus is the new king David of Ezek 34 (except maybe a loose connection Jn 18:33-38). I use the language of “new David” merely to assert that there is a mediatory role that Jesus has as God’s representative shepherd. They have nearly identical terms. The only linguistic difference between the LXX and GNT is case and word order. *Poimena hena* is masculine singular *accusative* (Ezek 34:24), and *heis poimēn* is masculine singular *nominative* (John 10:16).

are one flock is dependent upon God's work in Jesus. In this way, unity means that no sheep are harmed, scattered, or killed. They are one. Their unity here is unity in the sense that the flock is *whole*, which is definition (2) of "one" above, meaning "a whole one."³⁸ So the unity Jesus seeks is dependent upon the flock's connection to God as the Good Shepherd, and this is demonstrated by the fact that God keeps those in the flock together. Thus, connection to God receives priority of importance over the unity among the sheep themselves, which is the result of connection to God through Jesus. The second element of unity also depends upon God. This element is the collection of other sheep into the flock.

Collected by Jesus. Gentile inclusion is an important element of oneness in Jn 10. If protection, as I have demonstrated, includes unity as wholeness (definition [2]), then the sense that unity is the collected people of God supports the third definition of unity, (3) "the entire one." Not only does God protect the flock to keep them one, but he also collects them together, in order to make them one.

The collected people of God are the Jews and the Gentiles together. The existing "flock" in Jn 10:16 is Jewish people who know the Father through the Son, like in Ezek 34. The reference in Jn 10 to "other sheep" (*alla probata*), however, is not mentioned in Ezek 34 (cf. Isa 56:6-8). The denotation, "other sheep", most likely refers to those who will become part of the flock because of the Gentile mission.³⁹ Jews and Gentiles together will now form one new flock. Oneness in Jn 10, then, is defined not merely by *protection*, but also by the fact that the entire group is *collected* into one. Jesus concludes by saying, "So there will be one flock, one shepherd" (10:16 NRSV).⁴⁰ This succinct statement, in which Jesus repeats the word "one," indicates that oneness is a major theme of this pastoral metaphor.⁴¹ By listening to his voice, his people can become one flock under God. John employs asyndeton to join "one flock"

³⁸ See chapter 1 above.

³⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 227–28.

⁴⁰ The NRSV and ESV translate *kai* here as "so" to add a conclusive element with what precedes it, while the NIV simply translates it "and." "So" seems to fit best, given the climactic nature of the statement that follows *kai* ("there will be one flock, one shepherd") and this conclusive statement ends the discourse: "For this reason the Father loves me" (10:17).

⁴¹ According to this passage unity is a present and future reality. Some believers were already a part of the flock, but the Gentile mission had only begun (cf. 20:21). The same is true of unity in Jn 17, which I argue below: unity is a present reality that grows as believers are added to the group.

with “one shepherd,” making a close connection between the shepherd and the sheep. So the sheep are the “One Shepherd’s One Flock” as Bruner calls it.⁴² Jesus protects and collects the people of God to keep them one, but how exactly does their oneness relate to the fact that God too is described as “one” in Jn 10?

2. One Shepherd

The image of one flock is directly connected to God’s unity in Jn 10:16. These images occur together in Jn 10:1-16, but the image of one shepherd is developed in the second half of the chapter (Jn 10:22-38). These two passages do not take place in the same setting, but John connects these two passages together because they are both concerned with the general topic of shepherding. Also, one passage flows into the other, separated only by a few verses (10:22-25). Not only does Jesus use shepherding language in both segments, but he also speaks of unity in each segment, thus continuing the theological theme of God as shepherd.

- Shepherding language in general (10:1-16; 10:22-38)
- Shepherding language in particular: sheep who hear, know, and follow (10:3, 8, 14; 10:27)
- Oneness language in particular: the flock has one shepherd (10:16) and Jesus and the Father are one (10:30)

God’s unity from 10:16 is addressed in detail in 10:22-38. For this reason, Jn 10:22-38 provides further background for believers’ unity in the Gospel of John.

As the shepherd in Ezek 34, God takes care of the people. Because he takes care of the sheep, he is *good*, in contrast with the leaders of Israel, who are *bad*. Similarly, Jesus calls himself “the good shepherd,” and in this way fulfills the image of the one shepherd from Ezek 34, in contrast with the evil hireling. Then, he makes a bold claim about his connection with the Father: “The Father and I are one.”⁴³ But

⁴² *The Gospel of John*, 625.

⁴³ Jn 10 is similar to other passages that describe Jesus’ unity with the Father, but the other passages do not use “oneness” language (e.g., 5:19-23; cf. 8:58). My focus is on the specific language of oneness, which is only in Jn 10 and 17. With regard to Jn 5:19-23, F. F. Bruce notes that John 10:30 is a particularization of

what exactly does he mean that he is *one with the Father* (Jn 10:30)? Jesus continues to dialogue with his antagonists, and this dialogue reveals at least three qualifications of divine oneness: sonship, work, and “inness.”⁴⁴

Unity in Sonship. The first way Jesus explains his unity with the Father is by claiming to be God’s Son (Jn 10:31-36). He does this through complex logic as he outwits his antagonists. They accuse Jesus of blasphemy, and he employs a midrashic interpretation of Psalm 82:6 in response:

Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If those to whom the word of God came were called ‘gods’—and the scripture cannot be annulled—can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? (10:34-36)

Thatcher indicates that Jesus is telling a “riddle” centered on Psalm 82:6.⁴⁵ In this Psalm, the speaker writes, “I said, ‘You are Gods, and you are all sons of the Highest’” (*egō eipa Theoi este/ kai huioi hypsistou pantes*; Ps 81:6 LXX). Thatcher concludes that Jesus understands the background to this verse to be the Sinai event. Thus, Jesus interprets “you” (from *este*) as Israel and “gods” in a metaphorical sense. Just like God was sanctified, so Israel was sanctified at Sinai. That is how so they are called “gods.” Jesus applies this to himself with superlative logic. Like Israel, Jesus too was sanctified and sent by God, but he had an even greater commission than Israel. If Israel, therefore, is called “god,” how much more can Jesus be called God’s Son, a lesser title than “god” (10:36).⁴⁶ Whatever Jesus implies by the riddle, he clearly

what Jesus says there: “the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing” (5:19), *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, 232-233. I am focusing on explicit “oneness” connections with Jn 17, namely Jn 10 and 11. Many other places in John, though, reveal the divinity of Jesus and his connection to the Father. Richard Bauckham offers a very helpful summary of these other major connections between the divinity of Father and Son in his chapter, “Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John,” *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 239–52. He argues in this chapter that the Fourth Gospel carries the same Christology of divine identity that is evident throughout the NT—that is, a Christological divine identity in exclusive monotheistic terms common to Second Temple Judaism. He focuses on monotheism in Jn 1:1-14, Jn 5:1-26, the seven “I am” statements throughout John, and Jn 10.

⁴⁴ Witherington comments that the Father and Son are “one in intent, one in purpose, one in power, one in authority, one in works,” *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 191.

⁴⁵ For this passage as riddle, see Thatcher’s *The Riddles of Jesus in John: A Study in Tradition and Folklore* (Monograph Series 53; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 226-229.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 226–29.

identifies himself as God's Son. His identity as God's Son defines his unity with God, because he explains what he meant by "the Father and I are one." The connection between his unity with God and the riddle is evident by narrative sequence: he claims oneness with God, which results in the Jews picking up stones to kill him, which leads to his discourse on sonship from Psalm 82.

Unity in Work. Next, Jesus describes his unity with the Father in terms of work. He tells his antagonists that he does his Father's work in 10:37-38. Jesus says, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me" (10:37 NRSV). And by believing in his works, those who come out of the world come into the knowledge and understanding that the Father and the Son are in one another. He concludes, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me" (10:38). The reader can be sure that Jesus' actions come from his oneness with God, because he is still responding to the antagonists' threats against him for making himself God (10:33). This comes directly after his riddle from Psalm 82:6 in which Jesus describes his unity with the Father through language of sonship.

Unity in Being. The third way Jesus defends his claim of oneness with the Father is by asserting that he is in the Father and the Father in him (10:38). Jesus concludes this defense against his antagonists with "inness" language: "Even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that *the Father is in me and I am in the Father*" (10:38-39 NRSV). That the Father is in him and he is in the Father describes their close relational connection, and this type of language is utilized in significant passages in the Gospel of John and throughout the New Testament. Jn 10 clearly shows that the Son is in the Father and that the Father is in the Son, but this is restated again in Jn 14:11 and 17:21. "Inness" language, then, is extended to believers here. Believers are in the Father and in the Son (e.g., 17:21). Also, the Son is in believers (17:23). These are all the connections of "inness" in Jn 17:

- The Father is in the Son (17:21)
- The Son is in the Father (17:21)
- Believers are in the Father and Son (17:21)
- The Son is in Believers (17:23)

“Inness” language in Jn 10 defines oneness like it does in Jn 17:22-23: “I have given them the glory which you gave me, that they might be one because we are one—I in them and you in me.” The usage of asyndeton in Jn 17:22-23 between “one” and “I in them and you in me” indicates that “inness” defines unity. Because of the parallel language, Jn 17 offers a connection between unity and “inness” that informs Jn 10. For this reason, it seems even clearer that Jesus is defining his unity with the Father in terms of “inness.”

Other texts in Greco-Roman literature describe union in terms of “inness” as well. C. H. Dodd demonstrates this connection by examining union with God in John through an analysis of “in God” (*en theō*) in Hellenistic literature and in the New Testament. In Sophocles, for example, the preposition *en* is used to mean, “complete dependence on a person, whether human or divine.”⁴⁷ Dio Chrysostom uses *en theō* as “an expression for the most intimate union conceivable with the divine” (*Orat.* XII. 28).⁴⁸ Dodd notes that this is similar to Acts 17:28: “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring’” (NRSV). He concludes his analysis of Hellenistic literature for understanding John’s thought-world:

Our search for possible antecedents of Johannine usage has revealed a fairly wide range of imprecise meaning—dependence on God, conformity with His will, and the like—and two specific meanings: ecstatic possession by the divine, and, in a quasi-pantheistic sense, a ‘mystical’ inclusion in, or absorption into, the divine being.⁴⁹

The point here is that there is precedence in other Hellenistic literature for describing unity with God in terms of “inness” (*en*). So NT writers employ a proportionally common use of *en* to describe unity with God.

In the NT, Paul often uses *en* to describe the unity among believers and believers’ unity with God at the same time. In Galatians 3:28, for example, Paul writes, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in (*en*) Christ Jesus” (NRSV; cf. Rom

⁴⁷ *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 188. For an example of *en* a king, see Sophocles, *O.T.* 314, and *en* God, see *O.C.* 247; see also *en* God in Pindar, *Ol.* XIII, 104.

⁴⁸ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 189.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

3:23). The believers are one here because they are *in Christ*. Paul's usage of *en* here is similar to John's use of *en*. Adolf Deissmann relates Pauline usage of *en Christō* to John's Gospel. In fact, in his famous monograph, *Die neutestamentliche Formel 'In Christo Jesu'*, he assumes that Paul's *en Christō* is the basis for similar language in John.⁵⁰ Dodd, however, sides with Schweitzer's view about the relation between Paul and John's language in *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (1930) that *en Christō* in Paul is broader than in John: John's usage is still spatial, but "it is not a case of the individual living 'in Christ' as in a surrounding atmosphere, but of his forming part of an organic society in which Christ is active."⁵¹ The difference between Pauline and Johannine "inness" language is that Jesus is "in God" in John, but Christ is never "in God" in Paul. This makes John's usage of this terminology unique from Paul's usage, and Jn 10:38 is an example of this terminology. That they are *in* one another suggests an spiritual unity. This is significant for understanding not only the unity of the Father and Son, but also the unity of believers. Jesus prays that believers might be in him and the Father (17:21, 23). In summary, then, Jesus' unity with the Father in Jn 10 is described in terms of identity (sonship), function (work), and spiritual association (being in).

On a theological level, these characteristics of the Father-Son relationship—sonship, work, and association—characterize the Father-believer relationship in terms of comparison.⁵² With regard to sonship, believers are called children of God like Jesus is God's child (Jn 1:12; cf. 11:52) and have the right to call God "Father" in the Gospel of John (20:17). Jesus shares his work with his disciples (14:12), and just as Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in him (14:11) so are believers in them (17:21, 23). So even in Jn 10, the unity between the Father and Son is like the unity between

⁵⁰ Cited by Dodd, 193. Deissmann claims *en Christō* is a spatial metaphor. Whether John used Paul's *en* language as a basis for his Gospel is not important for my argument—even though Dodd concludes against Deissmann that John does not base his usage on Paul. He still makes space for Pauline influence in John's usage of *en theō*—he just distances a direct connection of meaning. I agree that Paul's usage is broader, but I do not reject the imagery of sphere, as Dodd seemingly does. While John does not mean everything that Paul means, the image of a sphere containing those *en Christō* is still true to the text, even if the people *en Christō* form "an organic society in which Christ is active" (193). Jesus entered the sphere of the world to draw all people into his sphere of living, where he gives life as the Good Shepherd. This image is particularly helpful in understanding oneness language in John. The important point here is the fact that there is precedence in Greco-Roman literature for John using *en* for oneness language.

⁵¹ Ibid., 193.

⁵² See chapter 2 above for a full description of how Jesus and believers share these characteristics.

the Father and believers. In this way, Jesus' relationship with the Father is a paradigmatic model for believers' unity with God.

Richard Bauckham explains the oneness of the Father and Son in Jn 10 in the context of Jewish monotheism, and his description provides clarity for how the Father-Son relationship is a paradigm for the unity of believers. He observes that the individual identities of the Father and Son are inseparably connected to one another, yet that connection does not negate their individual personhood. With regard to their oneness in Jn 10, he states:

Evidently, this reciprocal indwelling—the closest conceivable intimacy of relationship—is the inner reality of the oneness of Father and Son. Their unity does not erase their difference, but differentiates them in an inseparable relationship. We should also notice that the terms “Father” and “Son” entail each other. The Father is called Father only because Jesus is his Son, and Jesus is called Son only because he is the Son of his divine Father. Each is essential to the identity of the other. So to say that Jesus and the Father are one is to say that the unique divine identity comprises the relationship in which the Father is who he is only in relation to the Son, and vice versa. It is in the portrayal of this intradivine relationship that John's Christology steps outside the categories of Jewish monotheistic definition of the unique identity of the one God. It does not at all deny or contradict any of these, but from Jesus' relationship of sonship to God it redefines the divine identity as one in which Father and Son are inseparably united in differentiation from each other.

He concludes,

Without contradicting or rejecting any of the existing features of Jewish monotheism, the Fourth Gospel redefines it as Christological monotheism, a form of monotheism in which the relationship of Jesus the Son to his Father is integral to who the one God is.⁵³

The Father is Father only because he has a Son. Without the Son, there is no Father. They are inseparably connected yet distinct. Jesus makes himself clear in Jn 10 that he and the Father are one. But how does this relate to the oneness of the flock?

⁵³ Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 251–52.

3. One Flock Under One Shepherd

The question now is, *What does Jn 10 suggest with regard to the relationship between the unity of God and the unity of his people?* The reason for asking this question is ultimately to better understand Jesus' prayer for the unity of believers in Jn 17:11, 22, which is unity "as we are one." As I noted in chapter 1, the preposition, *kathōs*, can have a causal or comparative meaning. For this reason, I offer the following examination of how the two unities relate. In Jn 10, Jesus' unity with the Father is a comparison *and* a cause for believers' unity. By assessing these connections, one can better understand how Jesus relates the two unities theologically in Jn 17:11, 20-23 by using *kathōs*.

Comparison. The relationship between the one shepherd and one flock in Jn 10 becomes clearer by first understanding that first-century personalities were dyadic, not individualistic.⁵⁴ That is, they thought in terms of the group as a whole. Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey provide convincing evidence from social sciences and from New Testament texts that the Mediterranean culture of the first century operated under a dyadic paradigm of "group-embeddedness."⁵⁵ For those in the first-century Mediterranean world, "the basic, most elementary unity of social analysis is not the individual person but the dyad, a person in relation with and connected to at least one other social unit."⁵⁶

Malina and Neyrey name six categories that comprise the social relations for the dyadic personality: family-kin, clan-tribe, ethnic group, region, party-group, and craft-tribe. These are evident throughout the NT, and the following examples show each of these in Luke-Acts.⁵⁷

- Family-kin ("Sons of Zebedee" in Luke 5:10)
- Clan-tribe ("Tribe of Aaron" in Luke 1:5)
- Ethnic group ("Hellenists" in Acts 6:1)

⁵⁴ Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 67–96.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 72–73.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 85–90; cf. Paul's identifications within his social-matrices, Phil 3:4–6.

- Region, town, village: (“Sect of the Nazarenes” in Acts 24:5)
- Party-group: (“Pharisees” in Acts 15:5)
- Craft-trade: (Lydia “the dyer” in Acts 16:14)

Particular groups, such as families or clans, identified themselves by the name of the patriarch or tribe leader, because in their cultural thought-world, that person represented the entire group.

Applying Malina and Neyrey’s dyadic paradigm to Jn 10, the flock is a social unit, and the text shows evidence of the dyadic personality in the image of flock. Specific stereotypes of the flock are mentioned, and these represent the general characteristics of God’s people in the fold. The sheep:

- Follow the shepherd (10:4)
- Recognize the shepherd’s voice (10:4)
- Know the shepherd (10:14)
- Listen to the shepherd’s voice (10:16)
- Resist the stranger (10:5)
- Run from the stranger (10:5)
- Ignore the voice of a stranger (10:5)

These descriptions are stereotypes, in one sense of the term, and evidence shows that people in the first century often communicated—and even thought—in terms of stereotypes.⁵⁸ For example, they categorized individuals based on their group (e.g., “Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons,” Tit 1:12 NRSV). If an individual stood out from the group, the purpose was to accentuate their similarity with the group’s stereotype, not to portray excellence *above* or *beyond* the group, but excellence *as a part of* the group.

This mindset of the group mentality and of individual representatives even impacted how authors wrote biographies in Greco-Roman antiquity.⁵⁹ The purpose of a biography, for instance, was to showcase how an individual fulfilled the group’s

⁵⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 78.

stereotype, not to show deviance from the group or prominence above the group. The person who showed prominence exhibited the group's virtues in their life and represented their values well. The Greeks sometimes referred to these virtues and values as *topoi*—"stereotypical ways of understanding the nature of love, justice, anger, and the like."⁶⁰ Like other biographies, the Gospel of John highlights the life of an individual as a representative of the group.⁶¹ In this case, Jesus represents how the people of God 'ought' to be: Jesus follows the Father (5:19), recognizes his voice (8:40), knows him (10:15), and listens to him (10:18). These interactions with the Father are to be replicated by the flock. Jesus even models for them the most essential ethos of the group—laying down one's life. He models for them as one of them, who "became flesh and lived among us" (1:14). This shows a comparison between the Father-Son and Father-Believer relationships. The Father-Son relationship, though, is not only a paradigm but also the basis, or cause, for the unity of believers.⁶²

Cause. That Jesus is the basis of believers' unity is evident in Jn 10:1-38, because in this passage, Jesus mediates the Father's work of protection and collection, in order to make the group whole. In this way, Jesus fulfills the main objective of the group representative, says Malina and Neyrey. In a dyadic culture, the primary objective of the group representative was to keep the group sound as a healthy, safe, and cohesive unit (e.g., 1 Cor 12; Rom 12:3-21).⁶³ This comports well with the second definition of oneness above, (2) "whole one." Thus, believers' oneness is a direct result of their connection to the Father through the Son. No one can snatch any of the sheep out of the Father's hand, because no one is more powerful than is he.⁶⁴ In addition to mediating protection, Jesus also gathers in sheep that were not traditionally included into the flock. He collects those sheep himself, thus mediating their relationship with God by collecting them into one. The flock's oneness with each other is inseparable

⁶⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁶¹ For the Gospel of John as biography, see Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 220-239.

⁶² For the Father-Son unity as a "paradigm" and "basis," see Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 504.

⁶³ *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 77.

⁶⁴ I agree with Bruce Metzger's conclusion that "*what* my Father has given me is greater" (*ho patēr mou hos*) was likely not the original of 10:29. Instead, "my Father" is the subject, and the text should read, "My Father has given what is greater" (*ho patēr mou ho dedōken moi pantōn meizon estin*), *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Accordance electronic ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 197-198.

from their oneness with Jesus, and Jesus' actions of keeping and making the flock completely one are inseparable from his unity with the Father. That they are one group, united under one leader, the good shepherd, is what John seems to mean in his compact statement, "so they will be one flock, one shepherd."

In summary, Jesus both models (comparison) and mediates (cause) his flock's connection with God in Jn 10. Just like Jesus listens to, follows, and knows the Father, so the sheep relate to the Father by listening, following, and knowing. He does this for the sheep, as the "lamb of God" living among the sheep. He identifies himself as *one* with the Father by who he is (a son), what he does (shepherd), and where he exists (in the Father). His unity with the Father, therefore, is the source of his work among the sheep. This survey reveals that unity is not about how the sheep 'get along with one another,' as it were, but on how they relate to the shepherd as a group. The oneness Jesus provides, then, is primarily about connection with God, without whom unity among the sheep is not possible.

B. One Family: A Survey of John 11:45-53

The second image clearly connected to the oneness of believers in Jn 17 is the image of one family. Just like the unity of "one flock" is primarily dependent on their collective connection to God, so is the unity of one family primarily dependent on believers' connection to God. John uses the image of a family to describe the people of God elsewhere in his Gospel (e.g., 1:12), but only Jn 11:51-52 does John use explicit unity language like Jn 17:11, 20-23. That is why this survey includes Jn 11, in which John gives commentary on how the death of Jesus accomplishes *the coming together of the people of God*.

John writes about the unified family of God by saying, "As high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die on behalf of the nation, and not for the nation only, but also *to gather into one* the dispersed children of God" (11:51-52).⁶⁵ He writes this statement after Caiaphas, the high priest, says it is better for one man to die

⁶⁵ In terms of the narrative flow, John had already used family language early in the Gospel: "As many that received him, he gave them power to become children of God—to the ones believing in his name" (1:12). That means this is a familiar concept for the readers. John is adding more meaning into the image of the family here.

than for the whole nation to perish. This passage is linguistically similar to Jn 17:23, because the phrase “into one” (*eis hen*) is repeated exactly the same in both texts. Jesus says, “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one... that they may become completely one (*eis hen*)” (17:22-23 NRSV). The word “one” is exactly the same in both passages (lexical similarity), and the same preposition is used in each passage (grammatical similarity). Because of the lexical and grammatical similarities between Jn 11:51 and 17:23, the passage in 11:51 provides a broader perspective on Johannine thought in order to more accurately understand unity in Jn 17.

1. Jesus Mediates the Oneness Family: Collected

Jesus’ oneness with the Father is, in part, oneness in familial connection (Jn 10:36), and as a son, he opens up the meaning of what constitutes a family (cf. Gal 3:28). His death gathers into one the children of God. By virtue of Jesus’ connection with God, then, he has the authority in the family. This reality is evident in Jn 1:12, where Jesus gives the *authority* necessary for acceptance as children (*ta tekna*). Similarly, Jn 11:52 shows that his *death made it possible* for the children (*ta tekna*) to become one. So first, Jesus’ sacrificial death before God makes the unity of believers possible.

Second, like the image of one flock includes the nations (Jn 10), so too the image of one family includes the nations. Jesus mediates believers’ unity, but the essential characteristic of that unity is the fact that God’s children are collected together into one group. This comports well with the definition of oneness that means (3) “one of many,” which is a unity of many constituents. That John has Gentile inclusion in mind here, not just the gathering of all Jewish believers, is substantiated by the word he uses for “the dispersed” (*dieskorpismena*) children of God (11:52 NRSV; cf. Jn 7:35). He describes the scattered nature of the children, using the participle *dieskorpismena*, the root word of which is often used in Koine Greek to describe scattered objects. This text shows that the root of *dieskorpismena* (*diaskorpizōe*) can describe scattered to people as well. When applied to people, it is not used exclusively of the Jewish dispersion; it can include Gentiles (e.g., a flock Mt 26:31 and Mk 14:27; the proud, Num 10:34; Ps 67:2; 88:11; those on a battle field, *Ant.* 8, 404). John could have used the noun, *Diaspora*, which may have signified the

Jewish nature of the constituents, but he did not.⁶⁶ He employs *dieskorpismena* here instead, which is a generic term for scattered entities, regardless of type. So when he says in Jn 11:52 that Jesus' death gathered "into one the dispersed (*dieskorpismena*) children of God," he does not exclude people from other ethnicities (cf. Jn 4, the Samaritans). In summary then, Jesus mediates oneness, and Jn 11:52 confirms again that the unity Jesus seeks includes a group that is *collected* into one.

2. One Family Under One Father

The setting of John 11:48-52 is just before Passover around the city of Jerusalem. The tensions between him and his antagonists continue to increase to the point that they are plotting to kill him (11:53). The signs he performs are causing worry among some Jewish leaders, so they speak out against him in fear for the nation: "If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation" (11:48 NRSV). They cry out using group language: "*our* holy *place* and *our* *nation*."

In addition to national group language, John uses *mediatory language*: "Jesus was about to die for (*hyper*) the nation." The preposition *hyper* is often used to indicate mediation, doing an action on behalf of another. As a representative of a new family, he shows the group how to live, just like he does in Jn 10:11-25. Used with a genitive noun here, *hyper* refers to the collective group of God's people.⁶⁷ Together, the group and mediatory language indicates a collectivist reading and incorporative reading of unity. Thus, Jesus incorporates the group into himself as a mediator.

Understanding the dyadic mentality is important here, as it was for the shepherding discourse in Jn 10, because as the representative Son of God, Jesus mediates the connection between God's people and God himself. They are all gathered into one, because they are children of God. Without the Father, there is no family, and without the Son's connection to the Father, mediation ends short of a

⁶⁶ Even *diaspora* may also include the Gentiles (or "Greeks") in John, which makes an even stronger case that John is avoiding ethnic-exclusive language to describe the scattered people of God: "The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion (*diasporan*) among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?'" (Jn 7:35).

⁶⁷ "*Hyper*," BDAG, 1030.

completely united family. Thus, the imagery of one family supports the idea that the unity Jesus seeks is primarily about being connected to the Father in the Son. Just as the Son is not the Son without the Father, the people of God are not God's children without connection to the Father through Jesus.

C. Summary and Transition

The above survey of the Gospel of John asked three central questions, *What is the unity of believers? What is the unity of the Father and Son? and How are these two relationships connected?* The first survey analyzed believers' unity with Father and how the Father-Son relationship serves as a model for believers' unity. The theme of unity with God is prevalent in the life of Jesus and his believers throughout the Gospel as a whole. Of the dozens of connections Jesus shared with the Father, only five relational characteristics are exclusive to the Father-Son relationship. The other characteristics are a part of how believers relate to the Father, and seven of those as examples represent all the ways believers are spiritually connected to the Father in John's Gospel.

The second survey assessed specific passages in which unity is explicitly mentioned. My conclusion was that the unity of God's people in Jn 10 and 11 is the *whole* people of God, protected and collected by virtue of being connected to the Father in the Son. The sheep in the fold are kept as one, and thus, the group is whole. None are taken from the Father's hand, because Jesus lays down his life. He is one with the Father. Then, with regard to the collected people of God, those from another fold are brought into the fold. This is evident in Jn 11:52, as well, where John tells the reader that the purpose of Jesus' death was, in part, to gather into one the dispersed children of God, including Jewish and Gentile believers. But now, what is the unity Jesus seeks as he prays for believers in John 17:11, 20-23 in particular?

CHAPTER 4

IV. An Examination of Unity in the Farewell Discourses: John 17:11, 20-23

A. The Literary Structure of John 13-17

Jesus' prayer for unity in Jn 17 is the climactic ending of the Farewell Discourses (Jn 13-17), which serve as important literary context for understanding Jesus' prayer.⁶⁸ The public ministry of Jesus has come to a close (2:13-12:11) and now the Passion narrative quickly transitions to Jerusalem in Jn 12:12-50 and into the Farewell Discourses in Jn 13-17.⁶⁹ The Farewell Discourses can be divided into two major parts: 1) Jesus' departure from the world (Jn 13:1-14:31) and 2) The disciples' continued existence in the world (15:1-17:26).⁷⁰

In the first part, Jesus is going to the Father, whence he came (13:3), and the disciples cannot go with him (13:33). He is leaving, though, in order to come back and bring them to be with him (14:2-4). His departure is for the disciples' good (14:16-17). In the second part of the discourses, the disciples will be sad but their sadness will come to an end (16:16-22). The disciples are instructed to remain in Jesus, even though he is leaving. The sending of Jesus into the world becomes a typology for the

⁶⁸ Andre Feuillet argues that John 17 is understood against the background of *Yom Kippur* in *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers* (trans. Matthew J. O'Connell; Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), passim. Since the high priest is responsible for the prayer on *Yom Kippur* (Lev 16; 23:26-32), Jn 17 is often called the "High Priestly Prayer" (originally coined as such by a Lutheran theologian named, David Chytraeus [ca. 1530-1600]). See also, Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 76. While there are some similarities between Leviticus 16 and Jn 17 (e.g., consecration, intercession, and centrifugal movement from mediator to tribe to "nation"), Lev 16 is not about prayer, per se, but about sacrifice. Even though sacrifice may be implied in Jn 17:17-19, it is not clear that John intended a parallel between the two passages. He may have intended to keep *Yom Kippur* in the reader's mind, but I call it the "Farewell Prayer" because it more closely resembles other Farewell prayers within Second Temple literature, than the rites of *Yom Kippur*: Moses (*Jub.* 1:19-21; cf. Deut 32-33); Ezra (*4 Ezra* 8:19b-36); Baruch (*2 Bar.* 48); Noah (*Jub.* 10:3-6); Abraham's (*Jub.* 21:25); Isaac (*Jub.* 36:17). Even these prayers are different from Jn 17 with regard to setting, though, George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 293. See also Harold W. Attridge, "How Priestly Is the 'High Priestly Prayer' of John 17," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75.1 (2013): 1-14; and John Paul Heil, "Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57.4 (1995): 729-45.

⁶⁹ Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, v-vi.

⁷⁰ I include Jn 13 with the Farewell Discourses here because of the literary cohesion of Jn 13 with Jn 14 and the narrative break between Jn 12 and Jn 13.

disciples' mission into the world (17:18). While the theme of his departure pervades the entire section, the emphasis changes between Jn 14:31 and Jn 15:1. The change comes with Jesus' words, "Rise, let us go from here (*egeiresthe, agōmen enteuthen*)" (14:31 ESV). Before this statement, the theological emphasis is on Jesus' departure. After this statement, the emphasis is on what the disciples will do when he is gone.

Jesus' statement in 14:31 is curious, because he and his disciples *do not* literally get up and leave their setting, as some translations seem to imply (NIV and NRSV). Source critics could claim that this apparent misnomer is due to how the final compiler of John's Gospel arranged his material. Similar claims could be made with regard to redaction criticism. In either case, John 14:31 is the end of Jesus' farewell and the narrative picks up with Jn 18:1ff. The final compiler simply added chapters 15-17.

While this type of reconstruction is possible, what seems more likely is that the "departure" statement in Jn 14:31 is theological, not physical. If this is true, it is an example of the typical Johannine two-layered meaning. A translation like the ESV leaves room for a metaphorical meaning: "Rise, let us go from here" (14:31). In this case, Jesus may have delivered the contents of Jn 13-17 over a period of days, and the final compiler pulled all of his discourses together theologically. Thus, Jesus' words in 14:31 are thematic, and Jesus is changing emphasis from a focus on his departure to the fact that the disciples are staying. This comports well with what immediately follows in 15:1ff, where Jesus repeats to his disciples, "Remain *in me*" (15:4-5 emphasis mine). This language indicates a theological change. Now that they know Jesus is going, they must remain in him, the theme of the second section (Jn 15-17).

The phrase "*egeiresthe, agōmen enteuthen* (rise, let us go from here)" is often understood as a *spatial* description—"let us leave [this place]"—but Jesus is giving a theological and *logical* cue to the reader—"let us leave [this topic]." That is, Jesus has told them that he is leaving, and now he is communicating, *but you can remain in me, so let us leave together* (*egeiresthe, agōmen enteuthen*). This thematic and theological interpretation aligns with Dodd's assessment that *union with Christ* is the overarching theme of the Farewell Discourses (see below). As Jesus prepares to leave the world, he is preparing his disciples for his departure as well (13:3-14:30). Then, he moves on to a new topic and thus 'leaves' with them (15:1-17:26).⁷¹ In this case, the relationship

⁷¹ The contents from Jn 13:1 to 14:31 are focused on Jesus and his departure, but the focus in Jn 15:1-17:26 is on the fact that the disciples are remaining in the world:

between the two major sections of Jn 13-17 is causal. The emphasis on his departure in Jn 13-14, then, is the *cause* of his commands, comforts, and prayers in Jn 15-17. The themes of these two sections overlap in content in typical Johannine style, but the emphasis of each section stands as a helpful framework for understanding the parts, the second of which contains Jn 17, our present focus. The immediacy of Jesus' departure increases as the narrative moves toward his Passion in Jn 18. It is just before the crucifixion that Jesus prays for his disciples. Jn 13-17 builds toward the complete unity of his disciples.

B. Two Strategic Unity Texts Prior to John 17

C. H. Dodd labels the central theme of the Farewell Discourses as union with Christ.⁷² Union with Christ is emphasized throughout Jesus' entire ministry, but this theme is especially evident in Jn 13-17. The foot-washing event in Jn 13 and Jesus' discourse on the vine and branches in Jn 15 are two strategic passages within the narrative that illustrate this idea and support Dodd's conclusion. Together, these passages display importance and nature of union with Jesus and they bring clarity to Jesus' prayer for unity in Jn 17. First, Jn 13 describes how 'sharing in' Jesus means sharing God's love among one another. The follow examination describes the mystery that unity with God is integrally connected to unity with one another. This very unity is what Jesus prays for in Jn 17.

-
- 13:1-20 – Jesus sets the disciples an example of love for when he leaves
 - 13:21-38—Jesus predicts the betrayal and disowning of two disciples as he leaves this world
 - 14:1-7—Jesus is going to the Father and is the way to the Father
 - 14:8-14—Jesus declares that his disciples will do his works when he is gone
 - 14:15-31—Jesus describes the conditions and effects of his departure
 - 15:1-17—the disciples must abide in Jesus, which is abiding in love
 - 15:18-16:15—the disciples will be hated by the world, but the Paraclete will testify
 - 16:16-24—the disciples will grieve but their grief will turn to joy
 - 16:25-33—the disciples are prepared for his departure

⁷² *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 418. For unity as a theme in Jn 17, see C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: Camelot Press, 1955), 419.

1. Part as Participation: The Foot Washing in John 13

John begins a new section within the narrative of John with the foot washing of Jn 13.⁷³ The Farewell Discourses literally begin and end with love. John writes that Jesus' actions here are motivated by love (13:1). Then, in the final sentence of Jesus' prayer, he asks that God's love would be in the disciples (17:26). In this way, John employs *inclusio* to emphasize the dominant theme of love, which is repeated throughout: he shows them love by washing their feet (13:1ff); commands them to love (13:34; 15:12; 15:17); and he describes the multifaceted love of the Father into which the disciples are invited to join (15:9; 16:27) as they share this glorious love with the world (17:22). The ultimate sign of love of God is self-sacrifice for others (14:23, 31; 15:13). Thus, love pervades the narrative and discourse as a whole.

By washing the disciples' feet, Jesus not only shows them love, but he also invites them into his unity of love with the Father. In this way, the foot washing is a vital text for understanding unity in John's Gospel. Jesus begins in Jn 13 by washing the disciples' feet, which comes from the overflow of Jesus' connection to the Father, then commands them to do likewise. John writes, "Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God" (13:37). In this statement, the reader can see Christ's union with God. Dodd comments,

Proclaiming His own eternal unity with the Father, He explains to the candidates for initiation how they may become one with Him [in the Farewell Discourses], and so enter into that eternal unity. In union with Him they are not of this world, they belong to the sphere of *ta anō*, to which He belongs. He is ascending to the Father, and will take them with Him that where He is they may be also. Having thus prepared them, He offers the prayer in which He brings them with Him into the Father's presence, and accomplishes their union with God.⁷⁴

⁷³ While many limit the Farewell Discourses to Jn 14-17, Jn 13 includes dialogue and teaching that are vital to the section as a whole (e.g., the command to wash one another's feet and to love, 13:14, 34).

⁷⁴ *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 422.

By washing their feet, Dodd argues, Jesus is sharing his unity with the Father. If they do not allow him to wash their feet, they have no “sharing” with him.⁷⁵

John uses *meros* here, which is translated “share” by the NRSV and ESV and “part” by the NIV. While “part” and “share” connote slightly different meanings, one could argue that “part” carries with it a sense that the whole is divided into sections.⁷⁶ In this case, parts are taken from the whole, and the whole no longer exists. Then, “share” can emphasize that each person participates together in the thing they are sharing. In that case, the whole remains in tact, and constituents share in the whole. While “share” fits the context better, the choice between “part” and “share” is not a vital translational issue (because both can connote “participation”). The distinction in meaning is the important issue. Sharing in Jn 13 is a communal, participatory sharing in something that cannot be divided. It is sharing in the very love of God. As Dodd argues, Jesus is inviting the disciples to share something with him, not to take something from him. They are not taking from the love of God, but being united with God in love. Jesus is sharing love, not dividing it up into parts, and he is sharing the love that flows from the Father. That is why it was necessary for Peter to literally participate in what Jesus is doing, because otherwise, he has no union with God.⁷⁷ This idea of sharing in Jesus’ loving actions (“part as participation”) is important for relating to God, because union with God is inseparable from relationship with one another. Adrienne von Speyer writes of unity with God in the Son:

In the Son man is given the absolute and undivided essence of truth, because the Son has this double relation, looking both to God and to the world. And since he is thus the shared, communicated truth, he is for us the epitome of unity. For he is completely one with God’s truth and completely one with us. Because he mediates, he brings the immediate, the whole. As mediator he is unity. He is the unity of him who brings and what is brought.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ibid., 420.

⁷⁶ See “*Meros*,” BDAG, 633-634.

⁷⁷ Jesus is concerned about true holiness, not merely about outward perfunctory action to cleanse one another’s feet. This is part of Jesus’ purpose that Peter misses. Jesus speaks on a double level, as becomes clear in 13:10, and the deeper level is oneness with God by sharing in the self-giving love of Jesus.

⁷⁸ *John*, 351.

In this quote, von Spyer describes how Jesus serves as the mediator and the embodiment of unity with God.

So here, what is generally thought of as a text that emphasizes relationship with one another is actually about relationally joining in the unity of the Father-Son. The oneness that Jesus mediates is unlike that of another Second Temple community. The Qumran Community called themselves, “The Unity” (*Yahad*; *Rule of the Community* 5.3-5), but their unity was between saints below and angels above. The unity for which Jesus prays is between saints below and God above, not between saints and angels. Believers are spiritually connected to God himself through the person of Jesus. So this text emphasizes the primacy of unity with God over unity with other believers, and it offers an important caveat about Johannine oneness with God: a person cannot be so spiritually connected to God in love without showing that love to others. Von Spyer concludes, “The Lord admits no one into the unity between him and the Father without bringing him into the unity of the Church.”⁷⁹ The homily of 1 John also serves as a commentary on this point: “Those who love God must love their brothers and sisters” (4:21 NRSV). The theme of union with Christ is clear in Jn 15, as well, which begins the second half of the Farewell Discourses.

2. Remaining in Christ: The Vine in John 15

As soon as Jesus says, “Rise, let us go from here,” he transitions into a discourse that emphasizes his disciples’ need to remain in him after he leaves the world. The fact that they are instructed to remain in him implies that *they are already in him* (Jn 15:1-5). (This point becomes important for understanding Jesus’ prayer for oneness in Jn 17 below.)

Jesus begins his plea with the disciples to remain in him in Jn 15:4: “Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me” (NRSV). The image here is a vine and branches, connected as an organic whole. The fact that Jesus asks them to *remain*

⁷⁹ Adrienne von Spyer, *John*, 359. She makes this note about John 17:21, but it applies to Johannine theology as a whole.

in him necessarily proves that they were already *established in him* (cf. 13:10). Through their attachment to him, they are connected to God and to each other.

The foot washing in Jn 13 and the vine imagery in Jn 15 share the theme of love. Jesus states that remaining in him (“the vine,” Jn 15:1-5) is remaining in love (i.e., “part as participation,” Jn 13:1-20): “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love” (15:10). Abiding in Jesus is abiding in his love. Love is one of the central themes of the immediate context of Jn 15:1-17: God is the source of love, Jesus commands this love, and this love manifests in obedience. This emphasis on love and remaining in Christ in Jn 15:1-17 occurs in the center of the literary unit as a whole, so even its placement within the structure of the Farewell Discourses emphasizes its importance. Then, the opening segment of Jn 13-17 is about Jesus’ display of love and his command to love (13:3-34). In the final segment, Jesus prays that they would be protected, sanctified, and unified in the world to reveal God’s love (17:20-26). Finally, the means by which the disciples can love God and people is by abiding in him—by remaining unified with Jesus.

The crucial observation from this survey is that Jesus offers an interactive relationship with God *in himself*. He is the basis upon which the disciples can love and be loved by God and one another. Jesus does not pray for oneness with God when he asks for unity—he *assumes that it is already true*. He prays for the maintenance of this unity, which comes from already being in Jesus. Murray J. Harris supports the notion that “remaining in” implies already “being in”:

As to the difference between the two phrases, *menein en* presupposes *einai en*: only those who are already ‘in’ can be encouraged to ‘continue in.’ In other words, ‘being in’ depicts a status that should be recognized and appreciated; ‘remaining in’ points to a status that should be maintained.⁸⁰

So then, Jesus’ prayer for unity is not a prayer for a new type of relationship, but that group cohesion might be maintained. So then, by the time Jesus prays the Farewell Prayer in Jn 17, he is ensuring that those who are already attached to him relationally will remain attached to him when he leaves.

The reality that Jesus is leaving and his disciples are staying in the world is why Jesus prays for unity in Jn 17. His prayer parallels the parameters established in Jn 10

⁸⁰ *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 136.

and 11 about the protected and collected people of God, but it includes even more theological texture. My exegesis will focus on five characteristics of unity in Jn 17:11, 20-23. Together, these five elements of unity form the textual support for the primacy of unity with God as the source for unity among believers. Without the Son sent by the Father working with the Holy Spirit, the disciples are scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Without God, they are divided.

C. The Immediate Context of John 17:11, 20-23

Within Jn 17, the topic of unity is brought to the fore in a number of ways including literary structure. C. H. Wong offers a summary of the history of research surrounding the structural analysis of this passage, focusing especially on the works of Brown and Schackenburg.⁸¹ He notes that Brown gives a three-fold structure (17:1-8, 9-19, 20-26), while Schackenburg gives a six-fold structure (17:1-5, 6-11a, 11b-16, 17-19, 20-23, 24-26). Wong himself goes even further to propose a seven-fold analysis of the prayer.⁸² To make the matter more complicated, Jn 17 can be considered artistic according to C. H. Talbert's schema of John's Gospel, and artistic literature cannot always be easily divided into its constituent parts.⁸³ However one divides the structure of this passage, the important observation for my thesis is that Jesus' prayer focuses on three specific peoples, which are generally recognized as section markers: 1) Jesus, 2) his eleven disciples, and 3) all believers.

Brown divides the entire structure of the prayer based on these three groupings, and this is not unwarranted because those persons are, in fact, the focus of their respective sections using Brown's divisions (17:1-8, 9-19, 20-26). The groupings, though, do not mean that one grouping is excluded from all other parts of the prayer. For example, the eleven disciples are implicitly included in the prayer for all believers in 17:20-24. Similarly, Jesus includes *all* believers in his declaration that he has

⁸¹ "The Structure of John 17," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 27.1 (2006): 380-83.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ He says, "In the Fourth Gospel theology and aesthetics are mutually complementary" in his article, "Artistry and Theology: An Analysis of the Architecture of Jn 1,19-5,47," *CEQ* 32 (1970): 366. While Talbert's article is not specifically about Jn 17, the principle that John employs art for his theology applies.

authority to give eternal life (17:3), which is not part of the section where all believers are the focus (17:20-24). So whatever the structure is, the categories are not always exclusive. That Jesus prays with regard to himself and for two distinct groups is the important observation, which seems to be the essential point that Brown makes by a simple three-fold division.

Two passages, however, do not fit neatly into Brown's three-fold categories: 17:6-8 and 17:25-26. The first of these passages, 17:6-8, deals with the faith of the disciples. Does this go with Jesus' prayer about his glory in 17:1-5 or does it go with the passage about the disciples in 17:9-19? Jürgen Becker opens up the possibility that 17:6-8 is the "introduction" to 17:9-11, Jesus' petition for protection and unity, and this solution works in the immediate context.⁸⁴ In this case, 17:6-8 and 17:9-11 go together, which is different than in Brown's division. Then, the second section, 17:25-26, includes elements that are equally applicable to Jesus, the eleven, and the world, not merely believers in the Apostle's message. For this reason, 17:25-26 seems to be a conclusion to the prayer as a whole, not just the last section of 17:20-24.⁸⁵ So I modify Brown's structure as such:

Structure of John 17

Focus of Prayer	Citation
The Father and the Son	17:1-5
The Eleven Disciples	17:6-19
All Believers	17:20-24
Conclusion	17:25-26

⁸⁴ Cited in George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 295; J. Becker, "Aufbau, Schichtung Und Theologiegeschichtliche Stellung Des Gebetes in Johannes 17," *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 60, no. 1-2 (1969): 56–83. Perhaps the missing element is J. Becker's analysis of other prayers like this. He provides a four-fold framework that makes sense of the substructure of each petition:

- 1) Report of one's right
- 2) Introduction to the petition
- 3) The petition itself
- 4) The basis of the petition

⁸⁵ For 17:24-26 as the conclusion, see D. F. Tolmie, "A Discourse Analysis of John 17:1-26," *Neotestamentica* 27.2 (1993): 403-418.

The topic of unity occurs in two different sections of Jn 17, “The Eleven Disciples” and “All Believers” (17:11, 20-23), so it is a major topic in this chapter as a whole. In addition to the literary structure of the prayer, the frequency of times that unity is addressed also brings the topic of unity to the fore. The unity prayer is repeated four times, once in 17:11 and three times in 17:20-23. These petitions are essentially the same request made by Jesus for two different groups: the eleven disciples (17:11) and all believers (17:20-23). The kind of unity Jesus seeks for all believers is same kind of unity he seeks for the eleven. The only clear reason why this might not be true is if Jesus explicitly distinguished a difference between the two groups with regard to the nature of unity, but he does not. Instead, he uses very similar language. The unity for which he prays on behalf of the eleven disciples is parallel in terms of language with his prayer for all believers. In this line of reasoning, Bruner states that 17:20-23 is an expansion of the 17:11 prayer.⁸⁶ Jesus’ prayers for unity look like this when placed together:

... that they might be one as we are.	(17:11)
... that all of them together might be one...	(17:21)
... that they might be one as we are one...	(17:22)
... that they might be made completely one...	(17:23)

The prayer is simplest in Jn 17:11. Then, 17:20-23 adds other characteristics to 17:11. So first, while it seems obvious, the point must be made: the eleven disciples for whom Jesus prays cannot achieve ecumenical unity, because the church had not yet been formed.⁸⁷ John relates the two unities by literary similarities: he prays that both the disciples and all believers be one using almost identical language (*hina ōsin hen*, 17:11; *hina pantes hen ōsin*, 17:21) and the unity of Father and Son is a model for their unity because of *kathōs*. If it were a different type of unity between the two groups, one would expect an explicit contradistinction, but this is not present in the text. Unless specific evidence gives reason to believe these prayers are essentially different

⁸⁶ *The Gospel of John*, 301.

⁸⁷ As stated in chapter 1, I assume an historical reading of Jesus’ prayer. Thus, I believe his prayer for the eleven was not simply a Johannine rhetorical devise, but an authentic petition made by the historical Jesus in some form. If it were merely John’s rhetoric, an ecumenical reading might be more tenable.

in nature, they are to be read as essentially the same prayer made on behalf of all believers.

I suggest, then, that the unity for which Jesus prays in Jn 17:11 and 17:20-23 is the same basic prayer, and the primary essence of the plea is that Jesus' disciples and future believers might remain in him as one. By remaining in him they are unified together. This definition suggests that they are *already unified and that Jesus' prayer is a prayer of maintenance, and not of change*. Craig Keener argues for this and states that unity is already a reality when Jesus prays for it.⁸⁸ He notes that the nature of the community in Christ is cohesive (13:34-35; 17:21-23) in contrast with the world, which is characterized by division (7:43; 9:16; 10:19; 12:42-43).

The central verb of 17:11, 20-23, *ōsin*, allows for this meaning as well. The declension of *ōsin* is present subjunctive first-person plural in each occurrence in Jn 17:11, 20-23. Given that the Apostles are already in Jesus, he prays for all believers who enter into relationship with him that the present reality of unity with Jesus continue into completion in the future. But if they are already one, then why does Jesus pray? The subjunctive mood denotes a modal nuance, which generally includes the future but is not necessarily a future-in-time *only* nuance. That is because the present subjunctive in Greek denotes aspect, not time. So *ōsin* does not limit Jesus' petition to the future. So Jesus prays that they might be one *into* the future, not just *in* the future. His prayer includes the present reality.

The work of Daniel Wallace supports this conclusion by providing a linguistic category for this usage of the present subjunctive, which he calls, "mostly futuristic" or "ingressive-futuristic." This category seems to explain the subjunctive use of *ōsin* here.⁸⁹ He describes the ingressive-futuristic as "an event *begun* in the present time, but completed in the future."⁹⁰ Jesus wants to insure that those who are one in him will continue to remain in him. That is why he prays. Then, the ultimate unity for which he prays in 17:23 is a climax of the unity already present among believers in Jesus.⁹¹ Thus, the unity of believers is a unity of wholeness and diversity, which includes two

⁸⁸ *The Gospel of John* (vol. 2; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1061.

⁸⁹ *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 230.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ See Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John*, 428. I develop the idea of climactic unity in my exegesis below.

definitions from above, (2) “the whole one” and (3) “one of many.”⁹² The connection of believers with one another is rooted in and inseparable from their connection with the Father through the Son.

The Father makes believers’ unity possible, but apart from him, unity is not possible. Jesus and the Father are one, and believers are one in Jesus. Thus, Jesus being in the Father and in believers is the basis of group cohesion or wholeness. The contrast would be a group bound together by some other means without God—by creed, organization, or affiliation, for example. These common bonds create a united group, but *not the kind of unity for which Jesus prays*. He prays for unity that is inseparable from God’s activity in the world, his protective and collective will manifest in reality. That is, he keeps those who are *in* guarded against the attacks of the enemy, the devil, and he brings *in* all “other sheep that do not belong to this fold” (10:16). In addition, the whole group is given life and life in abundance (10:10). Understanding unity in terms of continued and expanding wholeness as such comports well with the five major characteristics of believers’ unity in Jn 17. Together, these five characteristics support my thesis that unity in John is primarily about connection to the Father through the Son.

D. An Exegesis of John 17:11, 20-23

1. Characteristic #1: Unity by Protection

Holy Father, protect them by your name, the name you have given me, that they might be one as we are. (17:11, my translation)

Protection is the first defining characteristic of unity in Jn 17, like unity in John 10. Jesus prays for this immediately before his plea for unity in 17:11. His petition here opens with “Holy Father,” which means, “God is the measure of holiness... and whatever is ‘holy’ is ‘separated’ to him.”⁹³ Keener relates the Father’s holiness to the

⁹² See chapter 1.

⁹³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:1057.

unity of the disciples: “Separation from the world naturally produces internal community cohesion.”⁹⁴

Just like protection is connected to oneness in John 10, so is protection connected to Jesus’ prayer in Jn 17. Jesus’ goal in Jn 10, as discussed above, is that none would be lost, and that is exactly what Jesus prays for here—that the *remaining* disciples might *remain* disciples.⁹⁵ That he wants no disciples lost when he leaves is confirmed by his statement immediately after the first unity prayer, “Not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled” (17:12 NRSV). Thus, Jesus’ concern for oneness starts with his concern for the disciples’ preservation. He is leaving and wants to secure them, and he asks the Father to do it because he is one with the Father. His prayer reveals six ways he was faithful to the Father, and these actions represent Jesus’ *ethos* to protect his people:

- Revealing the Father’s name to those given him (17:6)
- Giving the Father’s words to them (17:8, 14)
- Protecting them in the Father’s name (17:12)
- Guarding them (17:12)
- Sending them into the world (17:18)
- Showing glory to the world (17:22)

Jesus gives the first two of these, especially, to state his *bona fides* to God.⁹⁶ Out of his character and willingness to maintain and expand a unified community, he prays to the Father. His general goal, based on the evidence of his prayer throughout, is that the investment into which he sowed will continue on after he leaves (i.e., his disciples). The other Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, will come, but only from the Father in the name of Jesus (15:26). It is by his name that Jesus asks the Father to protect his disciples.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ For 17:6-19 as a prayer for the eleven Apostles, see Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* 417. I use “disciples” and “apostles” somewhat interchangeably here for the eleven.

⁹⁶ Brant, *John*, 225.

John uses *en* here in 17:11 to describe protection: “Holy Father, protect them by (*en*) your name,” which is probably both locative (*in*) and instrumental (*by*).⁹⁷ That is, the disciples are sustained by their location *in* the sphere of God’s reign and *by* God’s character manifest in their lives. By asking the Father to keep them, Jesus is asking God to maintain their group cohesion, or “group glue,” as Neyrey calls it.⁹⁸ The essence of unity, then, begins with God’s protection, which is the disciples’ remaining in Jesus and his work for them (15:1-8, 9-17; cf. 17:23). In summary, the first characteristic for oneness in Jn 17 is protection that maintains unity with the result that they would be one.

The first characteristic for oneness in Jn 17, then, is protection that maintains unity: *that they may be one*.⁹⁹ Protection in Jn 10 looked like Jesus laying his life down in order to keep every sheep in the fold. This is in strong contrast with the hireling, who runs away in the face of the wolf (10:12). The result of protection is that none will run away from the flock. Jesus had only lost one (Judas), but he was doomed to destruction (17:12). Without protection, unity cannot exist. Protection, then, characterizes oneness in Jn 17, which aligns with the second definition of unity listed above, (2) “the whole one.” Unity that is *whole* means that no one is separated from the group—no part is lost. This kind of unity is difficult for people in individualistic cultures to understand, but those in a collectivistic, or dyadic, culture think in terms of the group this way, as Malina and Neyrey observe (above).

Malina and Neyrey further describe the dyadic personality and assert that the main purpose of moral adherence within the group was the soundness, or wholeness, of the group itself, whether it is a village, a nation, or a family.¹⁰⁰ This wholeness was the purpose of the Father when he sent Jesus as the Good Shepherd. God sent Jesus, in part, to bring his flock and family into one place and keep them there, and he accomplished this task. Oneness, in this sense, is that the whole group stays together in Jesus. Now he asks God to continue the work of preserving the flock, in part by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (14:17; cf. 16:8-11). Protection is a

⁹⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (vol. 2; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 759.

⁹⁸ Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 283–84.

⁹⁹ I take *hina* here to indicate result, not purpose.

¹⁰⁰ *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 77.

necessary action that creates unity. Thus, unity, under the first characteristic, *protection*, is the whole group remaining in Jesus.

2. Characteristic #2: One Like the Father and Son

Holy Father, protect them by your name, the name you have given me, that they might be one as we are (*kathōs hēmeis*). (17:11)

After protection, oneness is qualified by comparison with the unity of the Father and Son, the second major characteristic of unity in Jn 17. The relationship between the two unities is defined by *kathōs*. Jesus prays, *hina ōsin hen kathōs hēmeis* (17:11). As noted above, *kathōs* carries three dominant meanings in the GNT: (1) comparison, (2) extent, and (3) cause.¹⁰¹ The following translations of 17:11b might be rendered for each of these meanings:

- (1) Holy Father, protect them in your name, the name that you have given me, so that they might be one *like* we are.
- (2) Holy Father, protect them in your name, the name that you have given me, so that they might be one *to the extent that* we are.
- (3) Holy Father, protect them in your name, the name that you have given me, so that they might be one *because* we are.

Major translations interpret *kathōs* comparatively here (e.g., NRSV, ESV, NIV). Evidence for this includes that fact that twenty-seven out of the other twenty-eight usages of *kathōs* in John are comparative.¹⁰² A causal interpretation, however, may also fit in context. That is, the unity of the Father-Son is the *cause* of believers' unity. Evidence for a causal usage is found in this chapter, because Jn 17:2 contains the only

¹⁰¹ “*Kathōs*,” BDAG, 493-494.

¹⁰² *Kathōs* occurs thirty-one times in John. Of the twenty-eight other usages, the only clearly causal usage of *kathōs* is in 17:2. The others are comparative (or cite scripture with a comparative sense, e.g., “*like* the prophet Isaiah said,” 1:23): 1:23; 3:14; 5:23, 30; 6:31, 57–58; 7:38; 8:28; 10:15; 12:14, 50; 13:15, 33–34; 14:27, 31; 15:4, 9–10, 12; 17:11, 14, 16, 18, 21–23; 19:40; 20:21.

clearly causal usage of *kathōs* in John. Jn 17:2 and 17:11 have the same sentence structure (cf. 17:21), in which *kathōs* is preceded by a *hina* clause:

Pater, elēlythen hē hōra; doxason sou ton huion, hina ho huios doxasē se, kathōs edōkas autō exousian pasēs sarkos, hina pan ho dedōkas autō dōsē autois zōēn aiōnion (Jn 17:1b-2).

And,

Pater hagio, tērēson autous en tō onomati sou ōh dedōkas moi, hina ōsin hen kathōs hēmeis (Jn 17:11; cf. 17:21).

The NRSV reveals the same similarity:

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son *so that* the Son may glorify you, *since* you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him (Jn 17:1b-2)

And,

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

Sentence structure alone, though, does not prove a causal translation. The point here is merely that a causal relationship is at least possible. The prayer may connote both a comparative *and* causal meaning at the same time as in Jn 10. John does this not only with nouns but also with prepositions (see *hina* in 12:40): he employed double entendre for nouns (e.g., “clean” and cleansed in 13:10 and 15:3 NRSV) and for prepositions (e.g., *hina* in 12:40; *en* in 17:11), so a double meaning is possible here. In addition to this, *kathōs* may relate the two unities by extent, the third possible meaning. All three meanings are true on a theological level: believers are one because of the Father and the Son working together as one, believers are one like the Father and Son are one, and believers are one to the extent that the Father and Son are

one.¹⁰³ The most natural reading, however, seems to be a comparative reading. The context allows for all three meanings, but this comports with the most common meaning of *kathōs* in John's Gospel—"like" or "as." *Kathōs*, therefore, is probably comparative here. As such, what does Jesus mean when he says he and the Father are one?

Perhaps this construction is not idiomatic to a general audience, but instead it is idiosyncratic for the unique Father-Son relationship. The reason is that the Father and Son relationship is so close in John's Gospel. But Jesus does not actually say that he and the Father are one in the Greek manuscript of 17:11. A wooden translation is, "that they be one as we." The word *hen* (one) is absent here, although the context indicates that it is implied. So what is Jesus saying here with this unusual and abrupt ending of a sentence that ends only the word "we" (*hēmeis*) without the expected ending to the sentence? Perhaps the reason is that regular word choice and grammar fail to describe what kind of unity they are as Father-Son, so he opens up the syntactical possibilities to let their personhood, as it exists together, define the Father-Son unity. Perhaps the Father-Son relationship is an example of Martin Buber's I-You word. They are "the You that is I to neither of them."¹⁰⁴ Buber's concept of the I-You word is a helpful analogy to understand Jesus' relationship with the Father. In this case, God spoke the I-You word with Jesus by giving him his glory (Jn 17:5); then, when God sent the *logos* in the flesh, he was speaking the I-You word to the world (Jn 1:14). By sending his Son, he gave others the authority to speak the I-You word. In this way they can "become children of God" by sharing in the I-You word of the Logos.

In order to communicate this truth, John records this simple word that Jesus spoke as he invited the disciples into his oneness with the Father, *hēmeis*. He prays, "Holy Father protect them... so that they may be one just as *we*." Their unity is like the Father-Son unity, which is such close fellowship that the description of their

¹⁰³ Bultmann seems to assume a double entendre meaning of *kathōs* here without stating it. He simply states that the Father-Son unity is "the paradigm and basis" for ecclesial unity, *The Gospel of John*, 504. For his argument about *kathōs* being comparative and causal in Jn 10:15, see p. 382, n. 2.

¹⁰⁴ *I and Thou* (trans. Walter Kaufman; New York: Scribners, 1970), 95. Originally, Buber said this about the relationship about a husband and wife—that neither uses the other, only relates to the other as a You and not as an It.

relationship of unity with one word. Believers are united like the Father and Son are united. They are one as the Father and Son are.

3. Characteristic #3: Unity in God

I do not ask for them only, but also for the ones who put their trust in me through their message, *that all of them might be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, that they too might be in us*, that the world might believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory, which you gave me, *that they might be one as we are one—I in them and you in me*—that they might be made completely one, that the world might know that you sent me and that you loved them like you loved me. (Jn 17:20-23, my emphasis)

The third characteristic of unity in Jn 17 is that believers are one in God the Father and the Son, which comes from 17:21 and 17:23. C. H. Wong divides the sentence structure of 17:21 as such:¹⁰⁵

hina pantes hen ōsin,
 kathōs sy, pater, en emoi
 kagō en soi,
hina kai autoi en hēmin ōsin,
 hina ho kosmos pisteuē
 hoti sy me apesteilas.

That all of them would be one,
 as you, Father, are in me
 and I am in you,
That they too might be in us
 That the world would believe
 that you sent me.

The first *hina* clause here is objective,¹⁰⁶ and the second is likely coordinate with the first.¹⁰⁷ *Pantes* represents “the ones believing in Jesus after them.” Since the prayer

¹⁰⁵ Adapted from “The Structure of John 17,” 379.

¹⁰⁶ The Gospel of John uses *hina* 145 times, which is about one quarter of the entire NT usages (663 total). Most of these occurrences in John are in the Farewell Discourses, 19 times in John 17 alone. John uses

is repeated from 17:11 and is now qualified by inclusion—that Jesus is bringing all believers together. This means that Jesus merely adds onto his original request, as if to say, *Not only do I want the eleven to be one, but also I want all believers to be one.* He and the Father are in each another, and the believers are in him. That is how he can pray that “that they also be in us.” This comprises the third qualification for oneness: oneness is *in God*.

Jesus has repeated the instructions “remain in me” several times in his Farewell (15:4–7, 9–10), and the Father is usually mentioned in direct connection with remaining in Jesus. For example, when Jesus promises what will happen to those who love him through obedience, he includes the Father, who will come with him as they “make their home” with believers (14:23). Also, Jesus’ vine analogy envisages Jesus as the vine, the disciples as the branches, and the Father as the gardener (15:1). While Jesus speaks only of the Father and Son in 17:20–23, the Holy Spirit also lives in believers (14:17). As the Farewell Discourses continue, Jesus seems to bring “Father” language more and more into the abiding relationship he shares with his disciples. So when he prays in Jn 17, unity is defined in terms of being in God. Bruce describes being in God: “If the Father is in him and he is in them, then the Father is in them: they are drawn into the very life of God, and the life of God is perfect love.”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, unity with one another is because of unity with God. Believers’ incorporation into Jesus creates unity with one another.¹⁰⁹ In 17:21 believers are one as the Father is in him and he is in the Father, and the result is that believers are also *in them*. That is the third characteristic of unity—being in the Father and the Son.

hina in different ways throughout John: he clearly marks purpose (e.g., 17:4), objective (e.g., 17:3), result (e.g., 12:40), and retroactive emphasis (e.g., 13:29). Sometimes, too, these categories can overlap—in the case of purpose and result, especially pertaining to the divine will (e.g., 12:40; cf. 4:36; 17:12). This is important because John has enough lateral space to utilize all four NT meanings to mark purpose, objective, result, or retroactive emphasis, “*hina*,” BDAG, 475–477.

¹⁰⁷ Contra Wong, 390; see John 17:3 for another explanatory *hina*.

¹⁰⁸ Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, 335–36.

¹⁰⁹ John Paul Heil goes as far as to claim the seamless tunic of John 19:23 symbolizes the unity of believers in John 17:20–21 in his “Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John.” Whether or not John intended Jesus’ tunic as a symbol of ecclesial unity, the image is helpful: “All who are drawn to the crucified Jesus believe in him, including the readers, may then be profoundly ‘one’ and may participate in the intimate, divine unity ‘from above’ that Jesus enjoys with his Father,” 10–11. This interpretation, if true, comports well with Johannine self-giving love, because that seamless tunic is then torn apart.

4. Characteristic #4: Unity Requires Glory

I have given them the glory, which you gave me, that they might be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—that they might be made completely one, that the world might know that you sent me and that you loved them like you loved me. (17:22-23)

The prayer continues in verses 22b and 23 with glory. This is the fourth major characteristic for oneness. Similar to protection, God's glory makes unity possible. The first *hina* in 17:22 is a purpose or result clause marker. That is, Jesus gave believers the glory that the Father gave him and this results in unity.¹¹⁰ But how exactly does glory create unity?

The theme of glory (*doxa*) dominates John 17:1-26, which provides context for Jesus' prayer for oneness.¹¹¹ In Jn 17, words with the *dox*- root occur eight times. For example, Jesus requested in 17:1 that God glorifies (*doxason*) the Son so the Son will glory him. Likewise, in 17:4, Jesus claimed that he had already glorified God by completing his assignment on earth. This glory is what the Father and Son shared together before the incarnation, and he also received glory among his disciples (see 17:5, 10). Glory comes from God and is made manifest on earth and in the place where Jesus says he is going (17:22, 24).

In addition to the eight times glory is mentioned in Jn 17, John uses *doxa* explicitly thirty-four other times throughout the gospel as a whole. Bultmann goes as far to say that glorification is the aim of Jesus' ministry for his disciples: "The *doxa* (of the Revealer) consists in what he is as *Revealer* for men, and he possess the *doxa*—as becomes clear towards the end of the Gospel (12:28; 13:31ff; 17:1ff)—when that which he himself is has been *actualized* in the believer."¹¹² The center of Jesus' ministry, then, is the center of his prayer: making God known to the world.

¹¹⁰ Often purpose and result meanings of *hina* are conflated. It is not clear here whether Jesus meant purpose or result or both here. See "*Hina*," BDAG, 475.

¹¹¹ Bultmann treats glory as the dominant theme throughout John 17, *The Gospel of John*, 490-523. See also Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 2, 746.

¹¹² *The Gospel of John*, 68-69.

Glory is the manifestation of God's nature. Johann Albrecht Bengel refers to glory as, *die aufgedeckte Heiligkeit* (uncovered holiness).¹¹³ Hannah K. Harrington calls glory, "holiness made visible."¹¹⁴ Humbert contends that glory is the character of God put on display for people to see. C. H. Dodd connects glory in the Gospel of John with glory in the OT as "the manifestation of God's presence and power."¹¹⁵ Various word groups throughout John 17 enhance and give meaning to this "holiness made visible," as Wong argues.¹¹⁶

This becomes important for the theme of unity in Jn 17, because the unity of believers is dependent on God's glory made visible through Jesus. The question becomes, *How did Jesus give them the glory?* First, his whole life and ministry displayed God's glory, culminating in his death and resurrection (cf. 17:1-4). If God's glory, then, is his character revealed, Jesus made it possible to be one with him by showing the world true love of and obedience to the Father (14:31). So, if the unity of believers includes being in God, then Jesus not only brings them in, but he also shows them *the meaning of being in*. Not only does he open up access to the Father, but he also shares the Father's glory with them. Thus, the unity for which Jesus prays includes unity with God through the giving of his glory. In that way, glory—the manifest holiness of God—is required in order for believers' unity, because without God's manifest activity in the world, unity cannot exist. Horizontal unity is inextricably dependent on God's character as revealed in the ministry of Jesus. Believers become one, because they experience the glory of God in the person of Jesus. That is the meaning of Jesus'

¹¹³ Johann Albrecht Bengels, *Dr. Johann Albrecht Bengels Sechzig Erbauliche Reden über Die Offenbarung Johannis Oder Vielmehr Jesu Christi* (Verlag der Evang: Stuttgart, 1870), 125.

¹¹⁴ *Holiness: Rabbinic Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 30.

¹¹⁵ *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 207. See also Edmond Jacob, who calls glory in the OT "a visible extension [of God] for the purpose of manifesting holiness to men," *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958), 79-80.

¹¹⁶ "The Structure of John 17," 374-392. He states that the following words in John 17 are extensions of the concept of glory: *phaneroō* (17:6), *gnōrizō* (17:26), *theōreō* (17:24), *onoma* (17:6, 11, 12, 26a), *logos* (17:6, 14, 17, 20), *rhēma* (17:8) and *alētheia* (17:17, 19). For Wong, *phaneroō* (17:6), *gnōrizō* (17:6), and *theōreō* (17:24) are synonyms that are concerned with making God's personality known. One's name represents one's character, so that when Jesus made the Father's *onoma* known, he was making his character known. *Logos*, *rhēma*, and *alētheia* are also terms that give substance and content to God's truth revealed in Jesus.

words to the Father: “I have given them the glory, which you gave me, that they might be one as we are one” (17:22).

5. Characteristic #5: Unity Includes New Believers

I do not ask for them only... that all of them might be one... that they too might be in us, *that the world might believe that you sent me.* (17:20-21)

I have given them the glory... that they might be made completely one, *that the world might know that you sent me and that you loved them like you loved me.* (John 17:22-23)

Finally, unity in Jn 17 includes new believers. This characteristic comes from two verses, 17:21 and 17:23. Together, these verses indicate that unity includes the faith and knowledge of the world—that the world know and believe that he was sent by the Father and know that the Father loves them. This is complete unity. The verb *teteleiōmenoi* is a perfect middle-passive participle, translated “become *completely*” by the NRSV. With more context, a wooden translation might read, “having been made complete into one” (*teteleiōmenoi eis hen*). As Keener suggests, the unity for which Jesus prays up to this point is a present reality.¹¹⁷ Thus, complete unity is the culmination of that unity which is already present among the disciples. Keener concludes:

One might think that ‘completed’ in unity suggests that such unity is a goal rather than a presupposition for believers (cf. 4:34; 17:4); but one might conversely take the perfect tense of the participle to suggest an established reality stemming from the divine indwelling (17:23), so that believers need merely guard a unity already accomplished by Christ (as in Eph 4:3). In either case, the sense would be the same in practice: Christ’s indwelling produces the unity among his followers, and believers must walk accordingly.¹¹⁸

His prayer is that the people be entirely one. Barrett makes a similar point to Keener’s with regard to total unity in 17:23. Unity includes the evangelization of the world:

¹¹⁷ *The Gospel of John*, 2:1063.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:1063.

The idea of completeness is all that is involved here. Final completeness and unity can of course be achieved only when the number of the elect is accomplished at the time of the end, but these words do not exclude the notion that the Church may be complete at every stage of its growth.¹¹⁹

Completed unity, then, does not result in the evangelization of the world, but involves and includes the evangelized people from the world. He is praying that those *from the world* be in the church. Although the world has a generally negative connotation in John, it is the place out of which believers come (Jn 3:16) and into which believers go (Jn 17:23).¹²⁰ They are *in* the world, as Jesus says, but not *of* the world (Jn 17:13-15). If “trusting” and “knowing” describe believers in 17:8-11, then it is likely that “trusting” and “knowing” also describe believers in 17:21-23. Jesus is giving a vision for the group that includes people who have come from the evil of the world, with all its darkness, into the community of faith that remains in the world. His vision for complete unity, then, does not *affect* evangelistic efforts—it *includes* them.

That is, the meaning of Jesus’ prayer for *complete* oneness is also characterized by the coming in of those who believe through the apostolic message (cf. 10:16). If 17:6-19 is about the connection and protection of those already in, then 17:20-26 is about the entire collection of the people of God who are not yet in at the time of Jesus’ prayer. Jesus is not referring merely to conversion of individuals, but about how the community as a whole will become completely one because believers who were once in the world believe and know along with the rest of the group.¹²¹ This is

¹¹⁹ *The Gospel According to St John*, 428.

¹²⁰ For Jerome Neyrey, the world is “wherever one finds enemies.” He says “almost all references to ‘world’ in the Farewell Address are dualistic contrasts between it and Jesus’s disciples; they are on opposite sides of every issue,” *The Gospel of John*, 285.

¹²¹ As Brown notes this has a striking parallel to Zechariah 2:6-12, where the glory of God among the nations results in *the community* that knows Zechariah was sent from him, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:771. The “you” here that knows is Israel:

Up, up! Flee from the land of the north, says the LORD; for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven, says the LORD. Up! Escape to Zion, you that live with daughter Babylon. For thus said the LORD of hosts (after his glory sent me) regarding the nations that plundered you: Truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye. See now, I am going to raise my hand against them, and they shall become plunder for their own slaves. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the LORD. Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

consistent with the fact he emphasizes “all” believers—not just those traditionally thought to be part of the fold (cf. 10:16-17).¹²²

Knowing and believing are used synonymously in Jn 17:8, where Jesus describes those whom God gave to him—they knew and believed Jesus came (and was sent) from God. They are synonymously here as well. Believing (*pisteuō*) in John’s Gospel connotes more than just an intellectual assent or mere cognitive adherence. For example, in John 6:29-30 and the surrounding context, the crowds believe in Jesus, but not in truth (cf. 6:60). Trusting in Jesus, according to John’s Gospel, develops over time and through encounter with Jesus. For example, Peter’s faith waivers throughout the Gospel narrative (Jn 6:68; 13:37; 18:17), but he grows over time and experiences with Jesus (e.g., Jn 21:1-25). Thomas, too, experienced a growing and developing faith (11:16; 20:26ff). In this way, faith in Jesus is a deep trust that affects one’s entire life. In a similar way, knowing (*ginōskō*) God is learning about him in an experiential way. It is a dynamic and holistic knowledge that involves more than cognitive assent, which acquires facts about a person. Instead, faith in Jesus is experiential knowing.¹²³ And this is the type of conversion that Jesus envisions for people who come out of the world into the unified church, the result of which is complete unity.

Thus, the end of the unity prayer is a vision for what the culminated unity of believers is—the collected people of God. Similar to statements about Gentiles inclusion in Jn 10:16 and the collection of the dispersion in Jn 11:52, his prayer for unity in Jn 17:21, 23 includes all those from the world who will believe.¹²⁴ The completed unity of believers is the fulfilled vision of God’s love in John 3:16: “For God so loved *the world*, that all of those [from the world] believing in me will not die but have everlasting life.” Jesus envisages people from the world who were once a

¹²² In this case, the third *hina* in 17:22-23 is objective and coordinate with the first two in 17:22-23. I adapt my sentence structure from Wong, “The Structure of John 17,” 379.

¹²³ F. F. Bruce describes the knowing of 17:3 as more than just intellectual knowledge about someone. Instead, “it involves a personal relationship,” *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, 329. Jesus says that oneness is directly connected to the trust and knowledge of the world that he was sent from God. Since knowledge here is experiential, I combined them together with “experiential trusting” to capture both meanings into one idea. This supports the personal nature of oneness that is necessarily horizontal with others but primarily vertical with God.

¹²⁴ Barrett points out the fact that the world coming to believe in verse 21 sounds like Universalism, but this must be tempered, he says, with John 16:33, *The Gospel According to St John*, 428.

part of a different flock but are now a part of the completely unified people of God. In the end, Jesus desires simply to be with his people: “Father, whom you have given me, I want them also to be where I am, so that they can look at my glory” (v. 24). The vision is the entire people of God, the one flock and one family, connected to God himself, protected from the evil one, and gathered together in Jesus. This is the unity Jesus seeks through prayer.

To summarize, these five characteristics comprise the necessary components of believers’ unity in Jn 17: the people must be *protected* from the evil one in the world so no more will be lost; believers’ unity is *like* the Father-Son unity (*kathōs hēmeis*); unity exists *in* Jesus (and the Father); unity requires the revelation of God’s *glory*; and the result of this glorification on earth is that the entirety of believers will be *completely* one. That is the unity of believers in Jn 17.

CHAPTER 5

V. Additional Possible Unities in John

Thus far, unity in John is essentially an spiritual unity of believers with one another by their relationship of unity with God in distinction from a primarily organizational unity merely between believers. The unity Jesus seeks for his disciples is first of all a unity with God the Father modeled after his unity with the Father, and out of their relationship of unity with God, the people are one with each other. Their unity is inseparable from their collective connection with God. The above surveys have focused on specific passages of relationship between the Father and his people, especially in Jn 10 and 11, but does John emphasize the organizational unity of believers in other ways and in other passages?

For example, when Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you” (15:12), he was perhaps offering an invitation for disciples to be one with each other through love, without requiring relationship with the Father. But is this kind of unity Jesus’ primary concern for believers in the Gospel of John—a horizontal unity merely between believers?

A. Ecumenism

One possible alternative to my thesis about Johannine unity is that Jesus was praying for ecumenical unity. The Johannine Community was apparently experiencing great opposition, and this opposition was from the Jewish community, some have suggested. A common reason for this assertion is that Christians were expelled from the synagogues (*ca.* AD 80) after the destruction of the Temple as a result of the “Benediction Against Heretics” (*Birkat ha-Minim*).¹²⁵ An ecumenical reading of unity in John, though, is difficult to support for at least two reasons.

¹²⁵ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). I will not provide a thorough analysis of the Johannine Community, but simply a general and cursory look at how their social context within Judaism and Christian sects closely associated with Judaism may have contributed to John’s rhetoric. Oscar Cullmann suggests another group dynamic. He claims that tension existed between the sect of John the Baptist and the Johannine “circle,” *The Johannine Circle*, 61.

First, evidence for an antagonism that would create a need for ecumenical rhetoric is not conclusive. Jo-Ann Brant argues that there is no empirical evidence that a Johannine Community even existed, let alone faced opposition from specific antagonists.¹²⁶ John wrote for a specific audience with particular difficulties as an emerging sect out of Judaism, but to assume particular details about that community is questionable at best. Not only are details regarding the Johannine Community itself largely speculative, but even the location of such a community is unknown.

Francisco Lozada and Tom Thatcher recount recent history of Johannine scholarship, which includes issues such as authorship and setting.¹²⁷ They note that in the first half of the twentieth century, scholars generally doubted that the setting for John's Gospel was Palestine before the fall of the Temple. John A. T. Robinson noted a change in the currents of Johannine scholarship around the middle of the twentieth century, claiming that scholars were again opening up to the possibility that the setting was indeed Palestine before AD 70.¹²⁸ Lozada and Thatcher, writing in 2006, describe how the currents of Johannine scholarship are changing yet again in the new millennium. That means that making assertions about the Johannine Community must be made with great caution, especially when making exegetical conclusions that are directly connected to historical claims, which is what the ecumenical interpretation of unity in Jn 17 seeks to do. The "new currents" of Johannine scholarship, as Lozada and Thatcher call them, are ever changing and unstable. The ecumenical reading under consideration comes largely from mirror reading and other questionable reconstructions, and mirror reading tends to be speculative rather than definitive. So an ecumenical reading finds no clear historical support.

Second, an ecumenical reading of unity is difficult to prove from the text of Jn 17. The prayer as a whole is generally divided up into four parts, as described above:¹²⁹

¹²⁶John, 10. She notes that this premise did not hold in Johannine studies, but thereafter, it carried significant influence in the discussion of Johannine polemics against Judaism. The focus in Johannine studies turned toward Graeco-Roman rhetorical analysis instead. For more on Graeco-Roman rhetoric, see George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*.

¹²⁷ *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1-17.

¹²⁸ He presented a paper called, "The New Look on the Fourth Gospel" at the "The Four Gospels in 1957" conference. For a summary of this paper, see Lozada and Thatcher, *New Currents Through John*, 1-17.

¹²⁹ While this is an oversimplified structural analysis, see "An Examination of Unity in John 17:11, 20-23" in this paper for a detailed treatment of the structure of Jn 17.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1) Jesus' prayer for himself | 17:1-5 |
| 2) Jesus' prayer for the eleven disciples | 17:6-19 |
| 3) Jesus' prayer for all believers | 17:20-24 |
| 4) Conclusion | 17:25-26 |

Jesus prays for unity four times—once for the eleven disciples (17:11) and three times for all believers (17:20-23). Whatever is essentially true of Jesus' prayer for all believers is essentially true of his prayer for the eleven, as I argued above. He does not, therefore, pray for ecumenical unity for all believers, because he cannot envision ecumenical for the eleven—they were not a church at the time of Jesus' Farewell Prayer, let alone different sects of believers needing unity.

For these reasons, an ecumenical reading of Jesus' prayer for unity in Jn 17 stretches the evidence, weak as it is, too far. The burden of proof, then, is on the one arguing for an ecumenical interpretation of unity. As it stands, ecumenical implications may come from this text, but to claim that Jesus is praying for denominational unity (or some other sort of organizational unification) is misreading this text. Yet, another alternative interpretation to my thesis remains.

B. Sectarianism

While Gert J. Malan rejects an ecumenical interpretation of unity in Jn 17, he still argues for another collectivist unity—that John wanted to create a sectarian boundary around his community *apart from other groups*.¹³⁰ For Malan, the social context of the Johannine Community is still the interpretive key for oneness. John's purpose in recording oneness talk in Jn 17, therefore, is not ecumenical unity with other groups, but sectarian division among Christian groups.¹³¹ Instead of a prayer for unity, Jesus is actually praying for sectarian division in order to maintain group cohesion among factions, Malan argues. It is important to note that his interpretation presupposes that Jesus' prayer in Jn 17 is not a directly historical account; it is a

¹³⁰ "Does John 17:11b, 21-23 Refer to Church Unity?" *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 67, no. 1 (March 2011): 1-10.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

reconstructed prayer. As such, John recounts this prayer, adapting it for his audience to reinforce solidarity within the Johannine community as it stood *against* other competing communities. He calls it an “antisociety,” which is a society “that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it.”¹³²

Malan lists four competing societies with the Johannine Community: John the Baptist’s society, Jewish Christians in the synagogue, Jewish Christians outside the synagogue who did not accept the divinity of Jesus, and Christians mixed with Jews and Gentiles who did not have the same level of understanding about Jesus and the Holy Spirit as the Johannine community.¹³³ He lists Hermetic, Mandaean, and Qumran communities as other examples of antisocieties, although not from the same time or place as the Johannine community.

Anti-language is a vital part of an antisociety, and it is present in John’s insider language of symbols and imagery and in John’s exclusive language (e.g., the recurrence of “the world” and “the Jews”).¹³⁴ Thus, from an historical and literary approach, he argues that Jesus’ prayer for unity was a rhetorical plea for the unity of an antisociety to distance themselves from non-Johannine Christian communities. In this way, Jesus’ prayer is interpreted the opposite from the typical reading and should be read as a “plea for ecumenical diversity rather than structural, or even theological or confessional unity.”¹³⁵

The sectarian interpretation of unity is untenable, though. Just like an ecumenical reading is dubitable for literary and historical reasons, so is a sectarian reading questionable for literary and historical reasons. Again the prayer for the unity of all believers in 17:20-23 is essentially the same as the prayer for only the eleven in 17:11, so a sectarian reading must assume the existence of a church at the time of the prayer or that the prayer is not representative of the historical Jesus. Evidence, however, for such a position is speculative, and clear textual support of such readings

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 7.

¹³⁴ Linguist M. A. K. Halliday coined the term “antilanguage”: “the imposition of specialized meaning on common words in order to exclude outsiders from understanding a group’s discourse,” says Brant, *John* 10. She references “Anti-Languages,” *American Anthropologist* 78 (1975): 570-584.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 9.

are non-existent in John's Gospel. Additionally, empirical evidence of a Johannine sect is non-existent. The sectarian view, therefore, must also be rejected.

What is helpful from both the ecumenical and sectarian arguments, though, is the emphasis on the group mentality, even if they neglect the Johannine emphasis of unity with God. A closer look at the text reveals an emphasis on unity with God as primary and unity among believers as secondary. Jesus was certainly not praying for the ecumenical oneness of the eleven with other groups, since distinct groups had not yet been formed at the time of Jesus' prayer in Jn 17. This does not mean, however, that ecumenical unity cannot flow from the oneness for which Jesus both prayed and died. Nor does it mean that sectarian cohesion is contra unity. In fact, ecumenical efforts might be a natural consequence of the unity for which Jesus prays. Perhaps Christian sects will grow closer together as they grow in unity among each other as well, not the exclusion of other believers. The point is that these other types of unity are not the primary meaning of the text, however relevant they may be for a particular community at a given time. The focus of Jesus' prayer for unity, then, is on abiding in God, not avoiding group tension for the sake of ecumenism itself or pressing into group tension to create a sectarian movement. If John 17:11, 21-23 is not an organizational plea, then what is it?

Oneness in Jn 17 is not just a protected and collected people, but also a people who are directly connected to the Father through the Son. It is not just unity, but God-like unity and God-sourced unity for which Jesus prays and seeks. Ecumenical councils and individuals getting along with each other can be merely human, but "just as we" oneness is divine.

CHAPTER 6

VI. Conclusion

Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus seeks the general well being of his people—not mere existence, but thriving. He tells the people, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10 NRSV). The life of Jesus centered on sharing relationship with God and resulted in unity with one another. He did this by sharing the glory his Father gave him to the world, so that they could know God. Eternal life that Jesus offers is knowing God and it is lived out in community among one another in love. In this way, the unity which Jesus seeks throughout John’s Gospel, particularly Jn 17:11, 20-23, is first about relationship with God and out of that unity with God, believers are united with each other. This truth is evident throughout Jesus’ ministry.

In the Gospel as a whole, Jesus offers to believers his intimate relationship with the Father. For example, like Jesus, believers can know God, share a home with the Father, abide in God, work for God, communicate openly with God, give glory to God through obedience, and love others like the Father and Son love one another. In this way, believers can be united like the Father and Son are united. The particular texts of Jn 10, 11, and 17, though, provide the full understanding of Johannine unity.

In Jn 10, where the shepherd and flock are both described as “one,” God is the source of believers’ unity. As one, the Father and Son protect the flock and bring in his sheep, even though they do not belong to the traditional fold. Jesus’ sheep know him, listen to his voice, and follow him. In this way, they are one. Without their connection to the Father through the Son—the Good Shepherd—they are scattered, killed, and destroyed by the attacks of the evil one. Similarly, Jesus’ death on the cross unites the people of God, so that they are gathered “into one.” His death mediates horizontal unity among believers. He died on behalf of all who were scattered apart in order to make them united under God.

That horizontal unity between believers is dependent upon unity with God through Jesus, and this application becomes increasingly clear as the narrative of John’s Gospel moves toward the Passion of Christ. The Farewell Discourses of Jn 13-17 accomplish precisely that emphasis—that unity is found in God. The washing of

the disciples' feet comes by sharing in Jesus' love from the Father (Jn 13), and remaining in Jesus (Jn 15) becomes the necessary background for being one as a group (Jn 17).

Jesus' prayer in Jn 17 accentuates the necessity of God's presence and action for the unification of believers. This is evident by the very fact that Jesus asks for unity in prayer. Only by connection with the Father can believers be connected with each other: God is the one who will protect the people in order to keep them one; the unity of God is a model and basis for the unity of believers; God is the very person in whom believers dwell as one; the glory of God is necessary for believers to be one; and complete unity depends on God, who draws all people to himself through Jesus. Christian unity is unity in Jesus, because he is the source, the paradigm, the place, the way, and the means for the unity of believers.

The unity Jesus seeks in John, then, is primarily spiritual, not organizational. Because of the ministry of Jesus, believers can now be one with God and with one another—they can be totally, truly, and finally one. Spiritual unity stresses being together. In the case of spiritual unity in John, believers in Jesus are connected to God and to each other, which manifests itself in loving action. Ecumenical unity—an organizational application—is a secondary or tertiary issue, because it comes from being connected to and even in God. John does not mention any type of ecumenical councils, denominational splits, or divided churches. Ecclesial issues like these, important as they are, remain possible results of the unity Jesus prays for in Jn 17, but not primary meanings.

What is this unity in Jn 17 then? Simply stated, it is remaining together as one—protected, collected, and connected as one in God through Jesus. Complete unity is unity that extends into the world as new believers come into the fold. So of the three definitions listed in the introduction, unity in Jn 17 includes definitions (2) and (3): “the whole one” (the protected people) and “one of many” (the entirely collected people). None are lost and everyone is included. Unity includes diversity, and then, is not about the differences, but what those in the group share in common. For Christian unity, in the Gospel of John in particular, God is the person on whom the community centers. So while believers share in one mission, love, and service in the world and to one another, the center of their unity is God himself. The unity Jesus seeks in the Gospel of John was not primarily about ecumenical councils, creeds, or

even a certain type of community among believers, but about remaining together under God in Jesus.

A. Essential Implications and Applications

How does this affect the church today? First, it affects the theology of the church, specifically putting primacy on the importance of believers' personal relationship with God. If Jesus' primary concern was connection with God as he left this world and returned to the Father, then God, too, is the primary concern of believers. This means that believers seek after knowing him and loving him individually. Jesus shows us clearly what living in relational proximity to God looks like, and it happens in the real world, made of real people, with real situations. The above survey shows that before every audience in John's Gospel, Jesus references his relationship with his Father. He makes that relationship available to all believers in various ways. If anything else is clear from Jesus' interactive relationship with the Father, it is that his life was integrally connected with the people around him, especially his disciples.

The second application pertains to ecclesiology. His interaction among people was not just *the context* in which he lived out unity with the Father, but *the very way* he lived in relationship with the Father. That is, community cohesion and interaction is the context and the means in which Christians today live out their relationship with the Father. Jesus himself says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." His command was to love, and we cannot love him without loving others. Believers must be in specific communities of other believers and remain there. While valid reasons exist for moving from one congregation to the next, remaining with particular people often fulfills the heart of Jesus' prayer for unity with God and others, because time contributes to depth of relational cohesion. The more we align ourselves with God's heart for unity, the more we will live into the unity Jesus sought.

When applied to church leadership, the characteristics of unity from Jn 10, 11, and 17 create a simple job description for pastors of congregations today. First, the pastor's job is to connect people to God by leading them to follow, know, and listen to God's voice. In practical terms, pastors will reveal the character of God by talking about his actions in salvation history, including their personal lives as they interact

with God. Second, shepherds who live within Jesus' prayer for unity today will embrace the importance of protecting the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers (cf. Acts 20:28; Ezek 34:1-31). This does not necessarily mean keeping the numbers of church membership steady, although it may include that; it is largely about protecting church members from the evil one. Jesus gives a negative example of this in Judas Iscariot, who was lost (17:12). Protecting people is often connected to helping them maintain relationships within a specific group of believers. Judas did, in fact, leave the group of disciples when he betrayed Jesus. Pastors will be concerned about keeping people in the group, because that is often associated with keeping people in Christ and connected to God, safe from the attacks of the enemy. For pastors this means chasing after "stray" believers, for example, and giving away one's life in sacrifice, instead living in self-indulgence. Keeping people together as one is part of keeping them connected to God. For it is only within a community whose people know each other well that can collectively mature in love and grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ (Eph 4:13). While staying together is the normal mode of existence for believers, the community also sends out disciples into world on mission, which is part of the third major application Johannine unity.

If Jesus seeks primarily to connect people to God and he does it in the context of the unity of believers, then mission will be accomplished by the fact that the group as a whole is unified in Jesus (spiritual). Christology precedes ecclesiology in John, and ecclesiology comes before missiology in John. Believers' focus, then, is on knowing God as a group, and out of that, power for mission comes from connection to the Father through the Son by the power of the Spirit, not from extrinsic forms of unity only. Knowing this will affect a proper connection between church unity and church mission from Jn 17. Some might apply Jn 17:23, for example, to imply that the organizational unity of believers inherently affects mission. The interpretation above, though, is that church unity *is* part of the mission. In other words, evangelism affects unity, not the other way around. The complete unity Jesus seeks is when people from outside are brought into Christ. That means, first, that we will not put the weight of world mission on church unity, as if the power comes from us. Instead, the weight is on the Father, who sends the Holy Spirit to testify through us, his people, as we remain unified in the love of Christ. This is the path to complete unity. Evangelistic effort is not just the result of unity, but at the heart of unity. Like with ecclesiology, God is the source of effective mission, and thus our focus is on interacting with God

as our source of power. In these ways believers can strengthen and enliven the church today, together as one.

With regard to NT scholarship, there exists room for advancing this thesis—that unity in John is primarily about believers’ connection with God—at least in Johannine studies. More specifically, the relationship between oneness and sanctification in 17:17-19 and the theme of glory in John as a whole may hold fruitful enquiry based on my interpretation of ecclesial unity in Jn 17. Similarly, my definition of oneness from John presents a somewhat nuanced perspective on Johannine missiology, which might be expanded into various other texts in John. Finally, with regard to biblical theology, my thesis on Jn 17 may receive some resistance from those who do not believe that disciples can break unity and go “out” of Christ once they are “in” Christ. May my thesis only encourage more conversation around the issues of eternal security and collective predestination, not discourage meaningful dialogue.

B. Translation

Every believer—whether a student, shepherd, or scholar—regardless of their level of understanding of Jesus’ plea for unity in Jn 17, must pay attention to his words. His prayer held weight for all who believed in him when he spoke the words originally in the first century, and they hold weight for us today in the twenty-first century. The words of the Son are effectual for us whether we fully understand them or not, but the degree to which we understand them teaches us how to live as a group of believers under his divine will. We live in an era in which we need to remain connected to the Father in the Son, protected as one from the enemy and collected into one from the ends of the earth. We must listen to, and perhaps even pray, the words Jesus prayed for believers as he looked into the future of the church:

Holy Father, protect them by your name, the name you have given me, that they might be one as we are.

I do not ask for them only, but also for the ones who put their trust in me through their message, that all of them might be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, that they too might be in us, that the world might believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory, which you gave me, that they might be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—

that they might be made completely one, that the world might know that you sent me and that you loved them like you loved me.

— John 17:11, 20-23

Works Cited

- Akala, Adesola. "The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John." PhD diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2012.
- Attridge, Harold W. "How Priestly is the 'High Priestly Prayer' of John 17." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75.1 (2013): 1-14.
- Barbara and Kurt Aland, eds. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.
- Barrett, C.K. *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. London: Camelot Press, 1955.
- Bauckham, Richard. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History and Theology in the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. *John*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999.
- Becker, Jurgen "Aufbau, Schichtung und theologiegeschichtliche Stellung des Gebetes in Johannes 17." *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 60.1-2 (1969): 56-83.
- Bengels, Johann Albrecht. *Dr. Johann Albrecht Bengels Sechzig Erbauliche Reden über die Offenbarung Johannis oder Vielmehr Jesu Christi*. Verlag der Evang: Stuttgart, 1870.
- Brant, Jo-Ann A. *John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel According to John*. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1966.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Gospel & Epistles of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Bruner, Frederick Dale. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.

- Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Translated by Walter Kaufman. New York: Scribners, 1970.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *The Gospel of John*. Translated by R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971.
- Burridge, Richard A. *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Chrysostom, Dio. *Orationes*. 2 vols. Edited by Hans Friedrich August von Arnim. *Dionis Prusaensis quem vocant Chrysostomum quae extant Omnia*. Berolini: Apud Weidmannos, 1893.
- Cullmann, Oscar. *The Johannine Circle*. Translated by John Bowden. London: SCM Press, 1976.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Feuillet, Andre. *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Garden City: Doubleday, 1975.
- Fredrick William Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: Chicago Press, 2000.
- Harrington, Hannah K. *Holiness: Rabbinic Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Harris, Murray J. *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
- Heil, John Paul. "Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57.4 (1995): 729-745.

Jacob, Edmond. *Theology of the Old Testament*. Translated by Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958.

Josephus. Translated by William Whiston. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999.

Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Kennedy, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Lincoln, Andrew T. *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in John's Gospel*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000.

Lozada, Francisco, and Tom Thatcher, eds. *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.

Malan, Gert J. "Does John 17:11b, 21-23 Refer to Church Unity?" *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 67.1 (2011): 1-10.

Malina, Bruce J. and Jerome H. Neyrey. *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991.

Martyn, J. Louis. *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1994.

Neyrey, Jerome H. *The Gospel of John*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

New Revised Standard Version (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1989).

Pindar. *The Odes of Pindar*. Translated by Dawson W. Turner. Bohn's Classical Library. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1915.

- Pope Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger. *Jesus of Nazareth*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011.
- Sophocles*. Translated by F. Storr. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912-1962.
- Talbert, C. H. "Artistry and Theology: An Analysis of the Architecture of Jn 1,19-5,47." *CEQ* 32 (1970): 341-366.
- Thatcher, Tom. *The Riddles of Jesus in John: A Study in Tradition and Folklore*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000.
- Tolmie, D. F. "A Discourse Analysis of John 17:1-26." *Neotestamentica* 27.2 (1993): 403-418.
- von Spyer, Adrienne. *John*. Translated by E. A. Nelson. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987.
- Wallace, Daniel B. *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Weber, Laura Ann. "That They May All Be One: John 17:21-23 and a Plotinian Application of Unity." PhD diss., Marquette University, 1996.
- Witherington, Ben. *John's Wisdom*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.
- Witherington, Ben. *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006.
- Wong, C. H. "The Structure of John 17." *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 27.1 (2006): 374-392.
- Wright, N. T. *New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.