THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP IN THE JOHANNINE CORPUS

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

Samuel Joseph Roy Newton

May 2017

APPROVAL SHEET

THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP IN THE JOHANNINE CORPUS

Samuel Joseph Roy Newton

Read and Approved by:

_____
Michael A. G. Haykin (Chair)

_____
Bruce A. Ware

_____
William F. Cook

Date_____

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and my church.

To my mother and father, whose love, support, encouragement, and prayer for me has provided a firm foundation on which I have stood throughout life and this process.

To my precious wife, Trish, and three girls—Ellie, Bethany, and Brooke—whose support, patience, and prayer for an often absent, usually distracted, and sometimes discouraged husband and father has been a source of unending encouragement.

To my gracious church family, who has made every provision necessary, been faithful in prayer and encouragement, and endured a distracted pastor.

To our gracious God and Savior—Father, Son, and Spirit—who has walked with me closer than any other, borne with me in patience, and—even in his providential humbling and my discouragements—is unfailing in his mercy and kindness. Without his saving grace in Christ, applied by the Spirit, I would not have had the desire, the provisions above, or the deep soul encouragements from which endurance comes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
DBSJ	*Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*
ExAud	*Ex auditu*
EGT	Expositor's Greek Testament
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HvTSt	*Hervormde teologiese studies*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
NAC	New American Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTTE	*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by Moisés Silva. 2nd ed. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 2014.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentaries
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature

TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittle and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976.
TNCT	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

PREFACE

Since the beginning of my Christian life, I have had an interest in the work of the Spirit and the reality of possessing eternal life in Christ. In tandem with this interest has been a particular drawing to the writings of the apostle John. After entering the Ph.D. program in Biblical Spirituality and reading various books related to adoption and the Spirit's work in the life of Christ, it all came together in what is now explored in this present work. The topic itself is so vast and so deep that I finish with a strong sense of all that is not said and explored. However, it is my hope that this thesis makes a contribution to the discussion of sonship and lays a foundation to build on for my own study in the years ahead, should the Lord tarry.

Many people have influenced and helped me in completing this dissertation, but it is both appropriate and true to first acknowledge my deep gratitude and love for our triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—whose love in granting me faith, forgiveness, and life in Christ is the most profound and precious gift of grace I could receive. He, as only he could, has patiently borne with me in failure, sin, and weakness, encouraged my soul and heard my cries in times of deep discouragement and uncertainty; he has humbled me with both inward and outward trials to lovingly grow me in spiritual maturity and faith, as well as shown himself faithful, merciful, and kind in every way. I would never have finished this dissertation were it not for his sovereign grace and will that made it so.

I am also deeply thankful for my family: to my mother and father, who have loved, encouraged, prayed, and patiently guided me throughout life and in the process of writing this dissertation; and to my wife, who is a source of never ending encouragement, occasional chastisement, and who thinks far too highly of her husband. I am thankful, as well, for our children, who have never begrudged the time I have been away in my study,

although they miss having their dad home more often.

I am thankful for my Newtown Bible Church family, who have for eight years endured me as their pastor and, especially, for the past four years provided the financial resources and time necessary to complete my work. They have done this with generosity, prayer, and encouragement, never begrudging or showing the least bit of resentment for all it has required of me. I would particularly like to thank Barbara Curtis, who edited every page, helped me get over walls of formatting confusion, and whose tireless, humble, and self-sacrificing service has my great gratitude and appreciation. It is my hope that the fruit of this labor is an honor and blessing to this dear body of believers as it bears fruit in my soul and service to these beloved saints.

I am thankful to those who have challenged and gently rebuked me when I did not have the motivation to continue on, both my family and my fellow friend in ministry Bryan Simms.

Finally, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Michael Haykin, for his guidance and encouragements along the way, which have meant so much; Trevor Burke, my external reader, has sharpened my thinking and been a help and encouragement in many ways—even before being an external reader; and Bruce Ware and Bill Cook, whose willingness to read, comment, and serve on my committee has been both heartening and helpful.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Joey Newton

Newtown, Connecticut

May 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Importance of Sonship

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1).[1] These magnificent words point to a central and glorious reality of salvation and theme in John's corpus: the Father's placing the elect in the Son by the Spirit to live in present and eternal fellowship with them as sons and daughters in the Son. Indeed, the ending of God's redemptive purpose is summed up in these words: "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son" (Rev 21:17). Sinclair Ferguson captures the importance of this reality to the Christian: "the notion that we are children of God, his own sons and daughters, lies at the heart of all Christian theology, and is the main spring of all Christian living."[2] Because sonship is central to God's redemptive purpose and to the Christian life, it bears significant exploration to gain greater clarity on the path to greater worship of God.

Overview of Sonship: Creation to Christ

To begin, it is helpful to establish a broad biblical framework for such a grand statement on sonship. The high point of God's creative acts was the making of man "in

---

[1]All Scripture quotations are taken from the NASB, unless otherwise noted.

[2]Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Children of the Living God: Delighting in the Father's Love* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 5. Packer similarly states, "A Christian is one who has God as Father" (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 20th anniversary ed. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993], 200).

His own image, in the image of God He made him, male and female He made them" (Gen 1:26).[3] Whatever else "image" may mean, it includes two essential elements: to "subdue" and "rule" over everything else God made (Gen 1:28) and to live in relationship with God and one another (Gen 2:15–25; cf. Matt 22:37–39).[4] The fact that this declaration is made in response to God's counsel with himself—"let us make"—indicates that God is not a solitary being, but exists in relationship or communion within his being. Thus, being made in his image, man is created to participate—in some way—in this relationship with God.[5] However, the entrance of sin into the world destroyed the sinless harmony that initially existed. Man experienced separation from God (Gen 3:8–10, 24), was placed in a condition of death (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12), and his dominion over creation was corrupted (Gen 6:5, 11–12; 11:3–5). Yet, God made a comprehensive promise of redemption that included, not only the removal of wrath, but restoration to a relationship with himself through the Son (Gen 3:15; 1 Cor 15:20–22; Col 1:19–20).

This restoration was dramatically advanced in God's choosing and forming the nation of Israel (Gen 12:1–3; 15:5; Ezek 16:3–15). Significantly, this relationship—at significant points—is framed within familial language.[6] Thus, on several occasions Israel

---

[3]Anthony Hoekema, whose work I will largely borrow from in this section and with whom I am in essential agreement, notes, "The concept of the image of God is the heart of Christian anthropology" (Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986], 66).

[4]The discussion regarding the "image of God" in man is vast and varied. It is not the purpose of this chapter to enter into that discussion, but I would agree with Hoekema's statement that "the concept of man as the *image* or *likeness* of God tells us that man as he was created was to *mirror* God and to *represent* God" (Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 67. Italics in original).

[5]Robert Letham notes, "Because man was created in the image of God, he was made for communion with God, to rule God's creation on his behalf . . . made in his image and living in communion with him. The implication of Genesis 2 is that there was regular communication between God and Adam before the Fall" (Robert Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011], 15).

[6]It is also framed within covenantal language, but central to the idea of covenant—particularly in relation to redemption—is relationship. Therefore, the concept of covenant provides a conceptual redemptive paradigm for the familial language. Thus, God as "Father" of the nation and the nation as "sons and daughters" is uniquely so within the covenant that God established with them.

is identified as God's son (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1; cf. Deut 32:19; Rom 9:4) and God as the nation's Father (Isa 63:16; 64:8). However, the depth of this relational imagery of sonship is not fully realized until the appearing of the Son of God in flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:34). At the revelation of Christ, the very concept of sonship is shown to be an eternal relationship inherent to the nature of God who lives in communion with Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (e.g., Matt 3:16–17; John 1:18, 33; 17:5)—a reality hinted at in Genesis 1:26–27. Moreover, this relationship is extended to humanity in Christ, the eternal Son who came into union with humanity at the incarnation (John 1:1, 14; Phil 2:6–7) through which he perfectly reflected the Father and the image of God in man.[7] Indeed, in a striking manner, Luke links Christ's humanity to that of Adam within the language of sonship: "Jesus Himself . . . being . . . the son of Adam, the son of God."[8]

This places the concept of sonship within a comprehensive framework that encompasses the creation of man in God's image and the revelation of Christ as the perfect man who completely and comprehensively reflects that image in humanity. In Paul's words, he is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15; cf. John 1:14, 18; 14:9–10; Heb 1:3);[9] and in Jesus's words, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:10). It is "in Christ," the Son, that God revealed himself and accomplished salvation, it

---

[7]Hoekema makes this same assertion: "In Christ . . . we see clearly what is hidden in Genesis 1: namely, what man as the perfect image of God should be like" (Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 73).

[8]The text reads, τοῦ Ἀδὰμ τοῦ θεοῦ with "son of" being carried over from ὢν υἱός in v. 23. Darrell Bock succinctly states, "Nearly all commentators see an identification of Jesus with all humanity in this reference" (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994], 360). This statement is also connected to Paul's argument in Acts 17:24–29 and "foreshadows the universal scope of God's salvation that comes through Jesus" (David E. Garland, *Luke*, ZECNT [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 172).

[9]As Hoekema states, "If . . . we wish to know what the image of God in man is really like, we must first look at Christ . . . the human Jesus holds a mirror before us . . . it tells us what God's intentions are for each of us" (Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 73).

is to the image of the Son that all the redeemed are being conformed (Rom 8:29; Col 3:10; 1 John 3:2), and it is the relationship of the Son to the Father that believers are brought to share in by the Holy Spirit (John 20:17; Gal 4:5–6; Rom 8:15–17; cf. 1 John 1:3–7). Such a comprehensive foundation demonstrates that the concept of sonship is central to the eternal purpose of God in creation, redemption, and the nature of God himself (Eph 1:3–5).

In summary, in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ, salvation was shown to be, not only the legal accomplishment of justification (Rom 3:21–26), but a sharing in the life of God through participation in the Son's own relationship with the Father (John 15:10; 16:27).[10] Salvation is to be brought into the family of God through union with the Son, participation in His life, by means of His Spirit, the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15–17).

The Spirit of Sonship: Paul and John

In spite of its importance, the doctrine of sonship has been a largely neglected theme in soteriological studies because it is often subsumed into other categories, such as justification or regeneration, for example. To fill this gap several works have come forth addressing sonship through Paul's metaphor of adoption.[11] However, there is divergence

---

[10]Todd Billings puts it this way: "We are actually incorporated into the Son's own life—that's what union with Christ is" (J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 30). Robertson states the same idea: "The relation of Father and Son is an eternal relation, not attained in time, nor ceasing with this life, or with the history of this world. The love of God, thus released in history, brings people into the same unity of which the relation of Father and Son is the eternal archetype" (S. Robertson, "Sonship in John's Gospel," *The Asia Journal of Theology* 25, no. 2 [October 2011]: 327).

[11]For example, see Robert S. Peterson, *Adopted by God: From Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001); Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in Its Social and Political Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background in the Pauline Corpus* (Tübigen: Mohr, 1992) is an older, but standard work dealing directly with sonship in the Pauline epistles in light of the Davidic promise in 2 Sam 7:14. However, it fails to offer an extended view of the Spirit's role. Other works with helpful chapters on adoption or sonship include: J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*; John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955); Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989);

on how the Pauline metaphor of adoption is related to the overall concept of sonship in the NT. More specifically, there is disagreement regarding how Paul's metaphor of adoption relates to John's presentation of sonship in the Son by begetting. Trevor Burke, for example, insists on keeping Paul's metaphor of adoption distinct from John's imagery of begetting, which

> delineates the imagery of *natural birth.* . . . Adoption, on the other hand, is a forensic term . . . and denotes a legal act or *transfer* from an alien family . . . into the family of God. . . . Thus Paul and John use two very different metaphors to express ways by which the Christian becomes a member of God's family.[12]

In agreement with Burke, Robert Peterson, *Adopted by God*, sees a distinction between Paul and John in how believers become children:

> Adoption and regeneration are two ways of describing how we enter the family of God. Both ideas conceive of God as Father and of believers as his children. In regeneration, he begets his children giving new life to those who were spiritually dead. . . . Adoption is a legal action, taking place outside of us, whereby God the Father gives us a new status in his family.[13]

However, Burke critiques Peterson for detecting the concept of adoption in Johannine passages, such as in John's use of ἐξουσία in 1:12–13, and 1 John 3:1–3, about which Peterson states, "To 'be called children of God' by God the Father is to be adopted by

---

Billings, *Union with Christ*; and James D. Gifford, *Perichoretic Salvation: The Believer's Union with Christ as a Third Type of Perichoresis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011). David A. Höhne, *Spirit and Sonship: Colin Gunton's Theology of Particularity and the Holy Spirit* (Farnham Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2010) directly addresses the Spirit and sonship, but from a philosophical rather than exegetical foundation.

[12]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 27. This is in contrast to James Gifford, who sees in adoption *more than* just legality: "Thus adoption is not merely a legal pronouncement—it is a real participation in the Son." Gifford goes on to note, "Christian believers are children of God because of their inclusion in the Son of God. The sonship of the Christian is fully derived from the sonship of Christ. Because a perichoretic relationship exists between the believer and Christ, the believer actively participates in Christ's sonship. All aspects of Christ's relationship with the Father, with the exception of the ontological differences noted above, are preset in the adoptive relationship as well. . . . Again, the *origin* of the sonship is different (Son by nature vs. children by grace), but the *relationship* is not, for the children by grace participate in the sonship of the Son by the Spirit" (Gifford, *Perichoretic Salvation*, 157).

[13]Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 109.

him (1 John 3:1)."[14] Thus, while Peterson maintains a distinction between the metaphors, he places both concepts under the umbrella category of adoption.[15] Burke, on the other hand, strives to keep them distinct, which is, surely, correct.

The imagery of adoption and begetting are, in fact, distinct metaphors, but bound to the single concept of sonship in the incarnate Son.[16] This is to say that each metaphor uniquely relates to the *status* and *experience* of sonship in Jesus Christ and each is inextricably bound to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.[17] Thus, while the incarnate Son is the center and foundation of sonship, the Spirit is the essential *link* who unites the believer to Christ and brings the two images of Paul and John together.[18] Burke makes a similar assertion, arguing that both the Spirit and sonship are eschatological gifts—inextricably bound:

> Sonship and the reception of the Spirit are not regarded as separate in the mind of Paul, but are instead inextricably linked: '*the Spirit comes with sonship* . . . (Cosgrove 1988: 52; my emphasis). Put another way, sonship and the Spirit are not

---

[14]Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 53.

[15]Billings also seeks to make adoption an overarching concept: "The God of the Bible has no 'natural' or 'begotten' children apart from Jesus the Son; all the rest of us need to be adopted" (Billings, *Union with Christ*, 16). However, he does later emphasize the legal aspect inherit in the adoption metaphor (Billings, *Union with Christ*, 21). Campbell, on the other hand, keeps the metaphors of Paul and John distinct, identifying the unifying reality as union with Christ (Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 417–20).

[16]Peppard comments, "Among NT authors, Paul and John represent the closest we have to ideal types of portraying divine sonship, with one preferring adoptive imagery and the other begotten imagery" (Michael Peppard, "Adopted and Begotten Sons of God: Paul and John on Divine Sonship," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 [January 2011]: 94).

[17]John Murray picks up on this same trajectory: "It may be that the Scripture represents us as entering into the family of God by both—by generation and by adoption. However, this does not appear to be conclusive. In any case, there is a very close interdependence between the generative act of God's grace (regeneration) and the adoptive" (Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 133).

[18]Peterson makes this same observation: "The Holy Spirit is the bond of living union with Christ . . . the Spirit is the nexus that links believers to Christ" (Robert Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit: Union with Christ* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015], 211).

> "two stages in the Christian life, but two mutually dependent and intertwined features in the . . . experience of salvation" (Longnecker 1990: 174).[19]

The goal of this thesis is to examine the particular ministry of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of sonship within the Johannine corpus. There have been several works that helpfully address the Spirit in the life of Jesus with application to the Christian[20] and the role of the Spirit of sonship in the Pauline corpus through the adoptive metaphor.[21] However, in this dissertation primary attention will be given to the Johannine corpus, since this is the least developed regarding this theme in current scholarship.[22]

Thesis

John's high Christology, Trinitarian emphasis, and teaching on the Holy Spirit stand out among the gospel writers and often his emphasis on the believer's relationship to the Son by the Spirit is eclipsed in Johannine studies in the light of these other truths. The goal of this dissertation is to provide a textual and exegetically-focused treatment of sonship in the Johannine corpus that gives special attention to the role of the Spirit in bringing God's children to participate in the life of the Son and his relationship with the

---

[19]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 139.

[20]For example, see James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975); Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003); and Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013). These works fit into a larger theological category of Spirit–Christology, which finds its roots in John Owen and has garnered renewed attention in contemporary Trinitarian and Christological discussion. For example, see Oliver D. Crisp, "John Owen on Spirit Christology," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 5 (2011): 5–25; Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010); Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds., *Christology Ancient & Modern: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), which are published lectures from the Los Angeles Theology Conference.

[21]For example, see Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), and Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (1994; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996).

[22]This is excepting the excellent work by Matthew Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, Analecta Biblica 72 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977).

Father. The central thesis is that John, in a manner that is unique from Paul's metaphor of adoption, presents the sonship of believers as the result of the Spirit's work of regeneration out of which flows faith and participation in Christ's life as Son. While John emphasizes the particular work of the Spirit in regeneration, he does not make regeneration the basis of sonship, but rather being engrafted into Christ. New birth brings the child into the experience of Christ life as the incarnate Son of God. This clarifies the tendency to speak of sonship in John as a direct result of regeneration and corrects the tendency to place John's view of sonship under Paul's rubric of adoption.

Indeed, in light of John's high Christology and Trinitarian emphasis his presentation of the Spirit of sonship finds a particular glory.[23] By focusing on the role of the Spirit, the persons of the Father and Son are not diminished, but brought into clearer focus, which is, itself, consistent with the Spirit's ministry to glorify the Son (John 16:14). Thus, John presents the Spirit as the divine person who brings about life in the elect, out of which comes faith in the Son and participation in his life, salvation, and the status "children of God" (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1). The Father is the divine initiator, the Son the divine accomplisher, and the Spirit the divine mediator of every spiritual gift and reality that is in the Son. At the center of the Spirit of sonship, then, is the glory of the Son that reveals the glory of the Father in the hearts of the children.

Methodology

The heart of this study is an exegetical examination of eight Johannine passages from the gospel, first epistle, and Revelation: John 1:12–13; 3:3–8; 14:16–23; 20:17; 1 John 3:1–3, 24; 4:13; and Revelation 21:7. These eight passages were chosen

[23] Brandon Crowe picks up on this same trajectory in relation to the incarnation: "The loftiness of Johannine Christology underscores the extraordinary humiliation of the Son" (Brandon D. Crowe, *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017], 118). Similarly, John's high Christology magnifies the humiliation and condescension of the eternal Son in becoming a substitute by which his sinful people could participate in his riches, glory, and salvation.

because of their direct and foundational teaching related to the Spirit and sonship in John. Within the exegesis of these passages there will be a particular concentration on the role of the Spirit in bringing the children to share in the Son's life, as well as the characteristics of this life that affirm the Spirit's presence. Although the exegetical portion will form the bulk of the dissertation, chapter 2 will consider the same passages as handled by John Calvin and John Gill because of their unique contribution to the doctrine of the Spirit and production of key works related to theology and biblical commentary. A third chapter will identify three primary themes from these passages and briefly synthesize them with other key texts in the Johannine corpus. To begin, a brief survey of significant and popular works on sonship will be reviewed to set the landscape to which this dissertation seeks to contribute.

Survey of Literature

Several works, ranging from the academic to the popular, have addressed the topic of sonship, although primarily through the metaphor of adoption.[24] In each of these some space has been devoted to the Johannine passages or the topic sonship general that includes John's teaching. Although these works largely focus on Paul, there is considerable overlap with John in understanding the Spirit as the eschatological gift and essential link to every soteriological blessing that is in Christ, the Son. In order to establish the context for this present work, the most recent works that focus specifically on the topic of sonship will be provided with the intent of showing how they bear on the thesis of this dissertation.

[24]Many works that address the related concept of union with Christ are not included because they do not fit within the narrow focus of the topic at hand (e.g., Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit: Union with Christ* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015]; Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*).

Trevor Burke—Adopted into God's Family:
Exploring a Pauline Metaphor

Burke has written a foundational study of sonship via the lens of the Pauline metaphor of adoption. Embedded in his work is an excellent treatment of "Adoption and the Spirit." In this chapter he ably and exegetically defends the inseparability of the Spirit from sonship, both in Christ and the elect in Christ: "Just as it is inconceivable to think of the Spirit separated from God's Son (Gal 4:6), so it is equally unimaginable to consider the Spirit apart from the believer's adoption as son."[25] The reason? Both the Son and Spirit are "eschatological gifts . . . viewed as indissoluble."[26]

This perspective is defended on three premises. First, drawing from Paul's argument in Romans 8, the Spirit is a personal member of the Trinity inseparable from all divine operations.[27] Thus, it is the Spirit who intimately extends God's presence in believers bearing witness to sonship, leading, enabling them to kill sin, interceding for and causing them to cry out, "Abba! Father!"[28] Second, Paul juxtaposes the epoch of the Spirit as an advancement of the epoch of the Law. Although grounded in the Person and work of the Son, it is the Spirit who applies the righteousness of the Son to believers and enables them to live it out in life and experience. Third, this work of the Spirit marks him as a central eschatological gift of salvation, who, though "subservient" to the role of the

---

[25]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 151.

[26]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 151.

[27]Synonymous with the thrust of this dissertation, he notes, "Theologians tend to focus more on the roles of the Father and the Son in relation to the Christian's adoption into God's family. This is due to the fact that it is easier to conceive of the Father and Son in personal terms" (Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 126). See also, Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 86.

[28]Along these lines, Burke states, "The Holy Spirit is not only God's empowering presence . . . but God's *personal* (and inseparable member of the divine family) presence at work in and through adopted offspring" (Burke, *Adopted into God's Family,* 128).

Son, is inextricably bound to the actuality and experience of the "eschatological blessing" of sonship.[29]

Burke solidifies this unity of the Spirit and Son to the believers' sonship in an answer to his own question that begins the chapter: "Is the Spirit responsible for *making* Christians God's sons by adoption, or does the Spirit merely enable the believer to *express* or confirm an already existing relationship to God?"[30] His answer is that "sonship and the reception of the Spirit of God are not regarded as separate in the mind of Paul but are inextricably linked . . . all who are God's sons have the Spirit and all those who have the Spirit can rightly be called the sons of God."[31] Thus, Paul's phrase, "Spirit of adoption," a "genitive of quality," means that "the Spirit and adoption . . . are in fact inseparable . . . [and] reciprocally related. . . . Adoption and the Spirit are mutually dependent and interrelated aspects of the Christian's experience of salvation."[32] As the Spirit is bound to the incarnate Son,[33] so he is to sons in Christ, to whose image he is conforming them (8:29).[34]

In summary, Burke's chapter ably demonstrates the inseparable relationship of the Spirit and the Son, and the Spirit of the Son to the sonship of believers. This inextricable relationship—of the Spirit and the Son—forms an organic link with the Spirit of sonship in John. Yet, Burke correctly keeps the Pauline metaphor of adoption distinct from the Johannine presentation of begetting. Although he does not specifically address

---

[29]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 136.

[30]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 125. Italics in original.

[31]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 139–40.

[32]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family,* 142–43.

[33]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family,* 143.

[34]Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 147–48.

this in the present work, he does maintain the priority of the larger category of sonship that transcends the specific metaphors of either Paul or John.[35] In this way, Burke's presentation of adoption in Paul undergirds and comes alongside the Johannine teaching of the role of the Spirit bringing the elect to participate in the sonship of Christ.

Robert A. Peterson—*Adopted by God: From Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children*

Peterson places sonship at the heart of the Triune work of salvation,[36] defining it as "an overarching way of viewing the Christian faith."[37] At the center of this sonship is the Spirit, whom "God gave us . . . so we might become his children"[38] by binding the elect "to the Son in salvation."[39] Indeed, through this union with the Son, the Spirit confers every spiritual blessing of sonship, which includes: regeneration, justification, sanctification, preservation, glorification, and adoption.[40]

Although less exegetical than Burke, Peterson also appeals to Romans 8 as a principal text and understands the Spirit as subjectively confirming adoption through internal testimony and objectively by producing "A Family Resemblance," leading

---

[35]In another work, he states, "We consider Paul's 'adoption' term because it falls under the umbrella of sonship, the latter being the larger, overarching theme in Scripture. In other words, the hierarchy runs sonship → adopted sons and daughters, not vice versa" (Trevor J. Burke, *The Message of Sonship: At Home in God's Household,* The Bible Speaks Today [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011], 140).

[36]In his words, "The Son of God redeemed us, the Spirit of sonship opened our hearts, and the Father made us his own" (Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 34).

[37]Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 6–7.

[38]Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 9. He later repeats this same point: "We become sons and daughters of God by the work of God the Holy Spirit" (*Adopted by God*, 87). Clearly, Peterson understands the Spirit as the means of sonship by granting faith in Christ and uniting believers to Him.

[39]Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 50. See Gal 3:26–27 and Rom 8:17.

[40]Peterson, *Adopted by God,* 64–66.

"God's children in paths of righteousness and kindness . . . to do the Father's will . . . [therefore] children of God obey the Spirit. They walk in his ways and follow his commandments."[41] However, he diverges from Burke in that he understands the Pauline metaphor of adoption as a broad category for sonship that includes the Johannine metaphor of begetting:

> Both ideas conceive of God as Father and of believers as his children. In regeneration, he begets his children, giving new life to those who were spiritually dead. In adoption, the Father places adult sons and daughters, former children of the devil, in his family. . . . Adoption involves a change of legal standing; regeneration is a change of heart. Both are the result of grace and occur in union with the Son of God.[42]

Yet, Peterson also asserts the simple equation, "To 'be called children of God' by God the Father is to be adopted by him (1 John 3:1)."[43] Based on this, he sees adoption in the "right to become children of God" in John 1:12–13,[44] the movement from being children of the devil to children of God in John 8:44 and 1 John 3:8–10,[45] and the final and fullest expression of adoption in Revelation 21:7, which states, "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son." In short, the Spirit of sonship, according to Peterson, will bring to full reality the intimate fellowship of God's children with the Father and the Son, fully conformed to the Son's image.[46]

Peterson's study has much that is commendable, and his presentation of

---

[41] Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 139–40. In another place, Peterson notes, "The Holy Spirit personally, supernaturally, individually, and inscrutably assures us of our sonship. It is as if the Spirit of God whispers deep within our hearts, 'I love you. You are mine. I am Father to you, and you are my beloved child'" (Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 88).

[42] Peterson, *Adopted by God,* 109.

[43] Peterson, *Adopted by God, 53*.

[44] Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 85.

[45] Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 33–34.

[46] Peterson, *Adopted by God*, 160–72.

sonship as the essential and overarching theme of Paul and John is in agreement with the thesis of this dissertation. However, his understanding of the Pauline υἱοθεσία metaphor as an umbrella concept that is equally applied to all of Scripture's teaching on sonship seems incorrect. To be sure, there is an overlap of concepts between Paul and John since each include the Spirit's work and the spiritual realities of regeneration, union with Christ, being conformed to Christ's likeness, and being taken from Satan's family and brought into God's family by grace. However, it is mistaken to apply the metaphor of adoption to John's begetting—a point Peterson seemed to confirm in the quote above. Rather, the metaphors should be kept distinct while highlighting the broader essential concepts related to sonship. Moreover, while several of the passages examined in this dissertation are mentioned by Peterson, he does not handle them with detail or allow them to make their own contribution.

Sinclair Ferguson—*Children of the Living God: Delighting in the Father's Love*

As with Burke and Peterson, Ferguson places sonship as central to salvation: "*Our sonship to God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption.*"[47] At the heart of sonship is the work of the Triune God, yet it is the specific role of the Spirit to unite believers to the Son and cause them to "*share in the risen life and power of Jesus Christ, and to enter into vital fellowship with him.*"[48] Like Peterson, Ferguson amalgamates the Spirit of sonship in the Pauline and Johannine metaphors, forming a single concept:

---

[47]Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*, 5–6, italics in original. This book is a popular treatment of Ferguson's more academic chapter, "Reformed Doctrine of Sonship," in *Pulpit & People: Essays in Honour of William Still on His 75th Birthday*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron and Sinclair B. Ferguson (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1986), 81–88. However, this work was chosen because its greater length allows for more detail and expression of his thought and is reflective of the chapter mentioned.

[48]Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*, 18, italics in original.

> We are born into God's family through the work of the Spirit. But we are also brought into that family by a decisive, legal act on God's part. The apostle Paul thought this latter dimension illuminated Christian experience, and he used the concept of *adoption* (*huiothesia* – to be placed as a son) to describe it. . . . There are, then, two dimensions to our sonship. The first is re–creation (or regeneration); the second is adoption, God's acceptance of us into his family.[49]

The impulse to see the work of the Spirit uniting the believer to Christ as the binding reality of sonship in Paul and John is fundamentally correct. However, the assumption that the Pauline metaphor of adoption is an umbrella concept for sonship in both Paul and John is misguided and not adequately demonstrated from the text.

Therefore, in his rush to make adoption the foundation of John's description of believers as God's children, Ferguson ignores John's own grounding of this status in Christ and the Spirit's work of regeneration. For example, Ferguson states, "In both sections of John's letter where he describes the Christian as 'not sinning,' he does so in the context of his adoption out of the family of the Evil One into the family of God."[50] However, the immediate context of 1 John connects this to the Spirit's work of regeneration (1 John 2:29) and the larger context to the Spirit's presence in believers (1 John 3:24; 4:13), although Ferguson never addresses these texts. Therefore, it seems inconsistent to insist that Paul's metaphor of adoption is distinct from John's begetting while at the same time applying the Pauline metaphor to John's discussion of sonship without grounding it in the Spirit's work of regeneration, as John does (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). [51]

Furthermore, when Ferguson does ground the necessity of bearing "Family

---

[49]Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*, 24–26.

[50]Ferguson, *Children of the Living God,* 44.

[51]He does acknowledge, though, that a child of God does "not sin" because "he shares in the holy nature of God through his fellowship with his glorified Saviour" (Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*, 45). Yet, he never conceptually correlates how this simultaneously refers to this condition as proof of adoption without also grounding it in the reality of regeneration. See Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 136, and Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 185.

Traits" to the new birth, he fails to make a strong connection with the Spirit:

> The basic structure of John's thought is that we have been born again. The new life we have received works itself out in a variety of ways. The structure of much of the apostle Paul's thought is that since we have a new Father, and have been brought into a new family, we ought to live in a new way as his children.[52]

This statement is followed by a discussion of Paul's imperatives for walking as God's children, but without a single mention of the Spirit. Ferguson does, however, insinuate this connection by linking the Spirit in Christ to the Spirit in adopted sons:

> Paul is, therefore, thinking about the Spirit of sonship in relation to the idea of our *adoption* rather than our *regeneration*. . . . What is in view . . . is the presence in our life of the One who was present in the life and ministry of *the* Son of God, supporting him, assuring him, enabling him, too, to cry, *"Abba,* Father" (*Mk*14:36, cf. Rom 8:15).[53]

His comment is in response to Paul's use of υἱοθεσία and πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας and is made to highlight the Spirit's role of persuading believers they "really are the sons of God."[54]

In summary, Ferguson maintains a distinction between the Pauline and Johannine metaphors and highlights the overarching concept of sonship. He also acknowledges the central role of the Spirit. However, he fails to consistently show how the Spirit of sonship connects to the effects of sonship either in Paul and John. Moreover, there is an ill-defended and sometimes confusing tendency to impose the metaphor of adoption on John while ignoring John's own emphasis on regeneration and faith in Christ.

---

[52]Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*, 49.

[53]Ferguson, *Children of the Living God,* 70–71. Italics in original. He goes on to defend the use of πνεῦμα in Rom 8:15 as a reference to the Holy Spirit.

[54]Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*, 71. Regarding chronology, God adopts and "then the Spirit assures us this is true, and enables us to live in the enjoyment of such a rich spiritual blessing" (*Children of the Living God*, 71).

Michael Peppard—*The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in Its Social and Political Context*

Peppard takes a unique approach to the issue of the Spirit and sonship. He argues that the discussion of "divine sonship and the term 'Son of God'" has been too narrowly understood by "conceptions from the elite theological debates of later centuries."[55] This tendency has obscured conceiving these categories within "the social practices with which that concept interacts,"[56] namely, that of the Roman idea of adoption in general and imperial ideology specifically. This methodology provides interesting parallels with the role of the Spirit in the life of Christ and those who belong to him, as well as the metaphors of adoption and begetting:

> That the Spirit–sonship connection can be fruitfully understood by reference to the Roman concepts of the *genius* and *numen*, especially as they were combined in the emperor . . . *genius* is an unseen spiritual power, often personified as an object of worship, which unifies the members of a family . . . *numen* . . . is best defined as 'the expressed will of a divine being.' . . . Like the *genius*, the Spirit is the unifying life–force of a family, the divine family inaugurated by God's election of Jesus as Son. The Spirit is possessed by Father, Son, and all the new members of the family. . . . Like the *numen*, the Spirit expresses the will of God in the world. It has endowed Jesus with God's power, and others who possess it also do God's will (Mark 3:35).[57]

Therefore, according to Peppard, the Spirit of sonship in believers is reflective of the spirit in the adoptive sonship within Roman general and imperial society. More important to the present thesis, he asserts that, in parallel fashion, the Spirit is the uniting and empowering reality of sonship in Christ and Christians.

---

[55]Peppard, *Son of God*, 3.

[56]Peppard, *Son of God*, 3. He later states, in regard to his methodology, "A presupposition stands behind my method. By examining the political–family ideology of Roman society together with the Christian theology that grew and eventually flourished in that society, I presuppose fundamental connections between them. I presume that political ideology and religious theology are almost always related; at the same time, they are almost never related in a simplistic way" (*Son of God*, 30).

[57]Peppard, *Son of God*, 113–14. He also proposes that this reality is, in part, what led to the persecutions of Christians, since "having been united by the Spirit into the family of the Father and Son, they would not honor the guardian spirit of the imperial family" (*Son of God,* 115).

Building on this point, Peppard directly examines the Pauline and Johannine metaphors, arguing that each metaphor was "used to portray divine sonship" and "based on actual human practices."[58] Indeed, "*both* metaphors were used to refer to the divine sonship of Jesus Christ *and also* to the divine sonship afforded to all Christians."[59] Thus, he states,

> Among New Testament authors, Paul and John represent the closest we have to ideal types of portraying divine sonship, with one preferring adoptive imagery and the other begotten imagery. They do not mix metaphors—or mix them the least . . . [yet] their visions of divine sonship have key similarities . . . for both authors divine sonship unites Christ with Christians more than it divides them.[60]

In examining Paul's metaphor of adoption, Peppard gives little attention to the role of the Spirit, but instead labors to demonstrate that "the imagery is perfectly in line with our knowledge about adoption in Roman society."[61] The most he says about the Spirit comes when commenting on Galatians 4. There he suggests that Paul's argument revolves around the idea of inheritance, which includes the "family spirit" and rests on "the *certainty* of an adopted son's right to inherit from his adoptive father."[62] The imagery in Romans "emphasizes the adult age, even eschatological–age, time frame of adoption into God's family."[63] In other words, "The divine family spirit has been given already—'the spirit of adoption' (Rom 8:15)—but the ultimate adoption has not yet occurred."[64] The

---

[58]Peppard, *Son of God*, 132.

[59]Peppard, *Son of God*, 132. Italics in original.

[60]Peppard, *Son of God*, 135.

[61]Peppard, *Son of God,* 135.

[62]Peppard, *Son of God*, 136. Italics in original.

[63]Peppard, *Son of God*, 136.

[64]Peppard goes on to argue for the imagery of adoption in the term πρωτότοκος and unites believers to the Son. He approvingly quotes Scott's work, *Adoption as Sons of God*: "It seems that πρωτότοκος in 8:29c expresses the same adoption of the Son according to the Davidic promise at the resurrection as ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ in 1:4, except that in 8:29c πρωτότοκος is used to draw in the relationship of the Son to the sons, that the sons follow the destiny of the Son at the resurrection" (Peppard,

Spirit, then, is the pledge, or down payment, of the inheritance that will be fully experienced in the eschaton.

Next, he moves to John's metaphor of begetting, which is "used to describe both Christians and Christ himself."[65] Peppard begins by noting that the idea of Christ as "begotten" is "*not* found in John's Gospel."[66] Rather, one must turn to 1 John 5:18, where the connection is made explicit.[67] He then notes, "In this text, then, the author links the divine sonship of Christ and Christians in their begottenness, but he distinguishes the two with the tense of the participles: a Christian '*has been* begotten' (perfect tense, ὁ γεγεννημένος) while Christ '*was* begotten' (aorist tense, γεννηθεὶς)."[68] Thus, he undergirds his position that "John is never explicit about a divine begetting that occurred before the earthly life of Jesus . . . [but] regardless of when the divine begetting occurred, the parallel use of begotten metaphors in 1 John 'underlines the solidarity' between the divine sonship of God's son and God's children."[69] As with Paul's metaphor, however, Peppard does not emphasize the role of the Spirit, although he clearly implies it when he mentions the Spirit's work of begetting in John 3:5–8.

Son of God, 140).

[65]Peppard, *Son of God*, 140–41.

[66]Peppard*, Son of God*, 141. Italics in original.

[67]Peppard addresses the textual issues in John 1:12–13, 1 John 5:18, and John 1:14–18, confirming the plural ἐγεννήθησαν in 1:13, the majority readings in 1 John 5:18, and the translation of Jesus as "unique" and not "only begotten" in 1:14 (*Son of God*, 142–43).

[68]Peppard, *Son of God*, 142. Italics in original.

[69]Peppard, *Son of God*, 143, interweaving a quote from Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 286. On this point, Peppard addresses the oft–noted distinction John makes between his use of υἱός for Christ and τέκνα for believers: "υἱός is different from τέκνα in gender and number, not nature. Whether 'son' or 'child,' all are 'begotten' of God in John's understanding" (Peppard, *Son of God*, 145). Gifford, *Perichoretic Salvation*, 154, connects this idea to the similarity of the Christian's sonship and Christ's in kind: "Everything Christ possesses in his sonship (the ontological differences excepted) is available to the adopted children of God because of their participation in the sonship of the incarnate Son."

Peppard follows this discussion with a helpful review of the historical tendency to mix the Pauline and Johannine metaphors. He argues that the metaphor of adoption began to take priority due to the ensuing Christological debates that relied heavily on the eternal begotteness of Christ the Son of God. Indeed, due to the concept of "made" in the metaphor of adoption, "the divine sonship of Christ was also officially pronounced as *not* adoptive."[70] The result of this bifurcation was that adoption became the overarching metaphor for salvation and begotten was reserved almost exclusively for the Son of God.

In summary, Peppard's work sheds light on the concept of adoption, the distinction of the Pauline and Johannine metaphors, as well as the unique role of the Spirit within the first-century Roman concept of sonship and adoption. He also, helpfully, follows the development of the different metaphors through the thought and debate of the early church. However, he gives little attention to the Spirit within the relevant Pauline and Johannine passages, or sustained attention to Johannine texts of this dissertation.

Matthew Vellanickal—*The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*

Vellanickal's work is an older but seminal exegetical study of the concept of sonship in the Johannine corpus.[71] As with others, such as Burke, Peterson, and Ferguson, he understands the concept of sonship as central to Christianity and as the Triune work of God. Moreover, at its core, sonship is a sharing in the divine life of the Father and Son, through union with the Son, mediated and confirmed by the Spirit.[72] Unlike so many

---

[70]Peppard, *Son of God,* 163. Italics in original.

[71]In light of the exegetical nature of this work, it seems helpful to note a point by Ferguson: "Perhaps more than any other influence, the impact of biblical theology on systematic theology has demanded a reorientation of soteriology towards the concept of sonship" (Ferguson, "Reformed Doctrine of Sonship," 84).

[72]On this point, he notes, "Hence the divine sonship certainly points to a community of nature

others, Vellanickal avoids confusing the Pauline and Johannine metaphors, while maintaining the essential work of the Spirit in sonship.[73] However, in this delineation between Paul and John on sonship, he does not consistently keep the overarching ministry of the Spirit in view.

Thus, in Paul's use of υἱοθεσία, Vellanickal notes, "The Holy Spirit is the Witness and Cause of this adoption and remains the active principle of this life of sonship."[74] Yet, in an extensive discussion of John 1:12–13, he gives little attention to the role of the Spirit.[75] This is left as inferred from his exegesis of John 3:3–10 where he identifies the Spirit as "the life giving power in Jn" and the one apart from whom faith "would be impossible."[76] Refreshingly, Vellanickal links the work of the Spirit in John 3 to Paul's teaching on begetting in Romans 8:15–16 and Galatians 4:6, but avoids making a direct connection with the concept of sonship that conflates the metaphors.[77]

Moving to John's epistles, Vellanickal understands the central work of the Spirit as communicating the life of familial relations, which is at the heart of eternal life.[78] Thus, John 1:3 is "the leading idea of the Epistle, namely, that of having an

---

and life with God . . . Christ becomes the mediator of the divine sonship of man . . . the Holy Spirit stands out as the cause of our sonship" (Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians,* 59, 67, 75, 80).

[73]For example, "Taking as the determinative concept Jesus' favorite name for God, Father, John interprets the ideal relationship of men to God as that of spiritual children, having the Life—eternal—from the Father. According to Jn this life of sonship to God . . . defines the very being of a Christian" (Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians,* 1).

[74]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 87.

[75]This may be due, in part, to his textual decision for the singular in v. 13, which he understands as a reference to Christ. Interestingly, he later makes an exegetical point on the possibility that 1:13 is a plural (cf. 178n59).

[76]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 177. He then adds, "Thus the action of begetting (3:5) and life-giving (6:63) by the Spirit seems to consist in the action of bringing man to the life of faith" in the Word of God, in Christ (*Divine Sonship of Christians*, 178).

[77]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 177–78.

[78]Commenting on 1 John 4:12–13, Vellanickal says, "So this experienced knowledge of the

intimate fellowship like that of a family, which is at once human and divine."[79] The Spirit of sonship in the believer produces the life of Christ in the "children of God." In this way, to share in Christ's nature as a child is to demonstrate his righteousness:

> If Christ in his quality of being "Righteous" stands in a filial relationship to God, it is quite natural that those who do righteousness also stand in such a filial relationship to God. . . . It is the very righteousness of Christ, the sinlessness and triumph over sin, that is shared by the believer, and which is active in him throughout his life, and which becomes a real criterion of divine sonship.[80]

In relation to the present thesis, Vellanickal recognizes the similarities in Paul and John regarding the Christian's new relationship to God as Father through spiritual union with Christ, as well as the eschatological hope of the full experience of sonship in the future (1 John 3:2; Rom 8:29). However, he makes too sharp of a distinction between John's presentation of likeness through nature and Paul's through the dignity of adoption,[81] although he later softens this apparent disparity.[82]

---

presence of God is a knowledge of the divine sonship, namely, man knowing that he possesses the same life as that of God, arrives at the knowledge of God as his Father. It is this filial knowledge of God as Father that is caused by the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit that is imparted to the believers becomes the principle of the divine life" (Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 192–93).

[79]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 196. The Holy Spirit is "the permanent principle of the new life of faith – life of sonship" (224). This spiritual reality in 1 John is given full treatment by Edward Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant: A Study of* εἶναι ἐν *and* μένειν ἐν *in the First Letter of Saint John*, Analecta Biblica 69 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978).

[80]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 261. Although he does not make the role of the Spirit explicit in his discussion of 1 John 4:7 and 5:1, he does in 3:1–3, for it is by the "action of the Spirit" that the begotten "become like to him" (*Divine Sonship of Christians*, 326–30, 332).

[81]For example, "The Johannine use of τέκνα θεοῦ for men in the state of sonship . . . seems to emphasize the community of life and nature with God the Father, as distinct from the Pauline emphasis on the dignity of the divine sonship through adoption" (Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 332).

[82]Such as when he says that "Paul emphasizes also the fact that our sonship is based on the sonship of Christ, and is a participation of it. It is by becoming one with Christ through faith, that men become sons of God. Now, it is the Holy Spirit who is the principle that brings about this union, and thus becomes the principle of the life of sonship (cf. Rom Ch. 8). In Jn too the Holy Spirit remains as the principle of the life of sonship, and that working through faith, which brings about the communion with the Son. The only difference is that Jn presents it as a 'begetting'" (Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 363).

In the end, Vellanickal provides an important exegetical and theological work on sonship in John that rightly keeps from incorporating John's begetting metaphor into Paul's adoption. However, his work skips over significant passages—such as John 14:16–23 and Revelation 21:7—that are relevant to his points and places an undue emphasis on baptism in John 3. Also, while he addresses the relationship of the Spirit of sonship in Paul and John, he has a tendency to leave the Spirit's role undeveloped.

James M. Scott—*Adoption as Sons of God*

In this influential work, James Scott labors to establish 2 Samuel 7:14 as an adoptive formula that links the concept of adoption to Israel, Israel's Messiah, and New Covenant believers who are in Him.[83] This link between adoption and sonship is comprehensive enough within OT theology to embrace all that is revealed in the NT regarding Christ and the Pauline use of υἱοθεσία. Thus, Scott states, "Actually, the whole complex of ideas—divine adoption, the Spirit, and participation in the messianic sonship of the Son—is accounted for by the 2 Sam. 7:14 tradition."[84] The important connection for the present thesis is how he binds the Spirit to Christ and those who participate in Christ's saving work.

The Spirit, for Scott, is the bond of the believer to Christ through which they participate in his life, resurrection, and inheritance. This bond is explicitly stated in Romans 8:

> The present aspect of υἱοθεσία (v. 15) is integrally related to the future aspect (v. 23), for, once again, the adoption of believers involves participation in the messianic

[83]Scott explains, "In order to stress the interrelationship between the king and the people of God, 2 Sam 7 uses what has been called 'the formula of national adoption' (the Covenant Formula) in v. 24 to contextualize the Adoption Formula in v. 14 . . . the father-son relationship between Yahweh and the Davidide might well be described as adoptive" (Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 100). He also argues that the adoptive formula in Exod 2:10—Pharaoh's "adoption" of Moses—is a parallel link to the formula in 2 Sam 7:14 (*Adoption as Sons of God*, 102).

[84]Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 185.

> Son of God by means of the Spirit. In fact, the Spirit provides a bridge between the two aspects, so that the one necessarily leads to the other. For having established that the present work of the Spirit is the guarantee of the life to come (v.13), Paul substantiates this thesis in a section introduced by γὰρ (vv. 14–17) which proceeds almost syllogistically from present sonship to eschatological heirship and glorification. . . . Hence there is actually more continuity than discontinuity between the two aspects of υἱοθεσία.[85]

The Spirit is involved in the manifestation of Christ's own sonship and the reality of the believer's sonship. Thus, the Spirit brings about an almost seamless link of participation in the present and future experience of sonship. Scott argues that the Spirit

> is not meant as a condition of sonship, but rather as an indication that the Spirit is inseparable from sonship. This integral relation of the Spirit to sonship is substantiated (γὰρ) in vv. 15–16 by examples of how the Spirit mediates believers' present experience of sonship. The Spirit . . . is so integral to adoption that it can now be called πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας which the sons have already received (ἐλάβετε) in a complete and final way.[86]

At present, the important concept to highlight from Scott is that the Spirit "mediates [the] believer's present experience of sonship." This is so because the Spirit is an essential part of the New Covenant of which sonship is a key concept.[87] Thus, there is no understanding of sonship that is complete apart from the Spirit: "Just as in Gal 4:6, the Spirit mediates the present experience of divine adoptive sonship by effecting the same cry of 'Abba' with which the earthly Jesus addressed God . . . showing again that sons share in the sonship of the Son."[88]

In summary, Scott's work makes a thorough and articulate argument that lays

---

[85]Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 259–60.

[86]Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 260–61.

[87]Commenting on a citation of Hos 2:1 in Jubilees 1:25 Scott notes, "Israel would be restored to a new covenant relationship with God expressed in terms of divine *sonship* . . . rather than the 'people of God'" (Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 109; italics in original). Later, he makes the linkage to 2 Sam 7:14 and sonship even more explicit: "Whereas 2 Sam 7 subsumed the Davidic promise under the covenant with Israel, the subsequent Jewish tradition based on 2 Sam 7:14 oriented the renewal of the covenant relationship, including Israel's divine sonship (cf. Hos 2:1), to the messianically-interpreted Davidic promise" (*Adoption as Sons of God*, 117).

[88]Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God,* 261–62.

an OT foundation for understanding sonship as an essential way of comprehending the Messiah, covenant, and redemption. His primary OT text is God's promise in 2 Samuel 7:14, which incorporates every other OT passage that anticipates both the Messiah and the coming of the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit is inextricably bound to the revelation of the Son and to the engrafting of the elect into the full experience of that sonship the children share with the eternal and incarnate Son of God.[89] Scott's thesis is well argued and defended, and his treatment of sonship in Paul and John is consistent with the present thesis. However, his work is narrowly focused and does not develop the role of the Spirit or the Johannine passages addressed in this dissertation.

Present Work

Each of the above works makes a significant contribution to the concept of sonship and rightly acknowledges the essential role of the Spirit. They also expose consistent themes related to the Spirit of sonship, such as: the Spirit and the Son being inseparably bound in their work and as eschatological gifts. However, there is no sustained focus on the role of the Spirit and primary attention is given to the Pauline use of υἱοθεσία. Vellanickal's work concentrates on the Johannine corpus but only addresses the Spirit in a few select passages. Moreover, in all the works, individual Johannine passages are mentioned in light of sonship or the role of the Spirit but are not textually linked. The following will give sustained attention to the work of the Spirit through select Johannine passages that are organically linked and provide a comprehensive understanding of the Spirit of sonship through the eyes of the apostle John.

---

[89]On the language of "engrafting," Scott leaves himself open to the possibility of adoption in Rom 11:17–24 "there may be a connection between Paul's illustration of ingrafting into the olive tree . . . and υἱοθεσία (Rom 9:4)" (Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 81).

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 will establish a historical context through the exegesis of John Calvin and John Gill related to the eight selected Johannine passages. Each author will be treated individually and be preceded by a short introduction to the primary elements of his key works. Within the discussion of each author, his work will be presented and evaluated based on internal consistency and in relation to the present topic.

Chapter 3 is the core of the dissertation and provides exegesis of the key Johannine sonship passages. The discussion of each passage will be with a specific view to mind how John understands the relation of the Son to the Father, the Spirit to the Son, and the Spirit's specific role in sonship. It will be argued from the text that sonship is a status that comes from the Son's own relation to the Father and that the Spirit's role is to grant participation in the Son's life. This shared life in the Son by the Spirit is the source from which comes faith in the Son, the status of sonship, and a relationship to the Father that is bound to and reflects his relation to the eternal Son.

Chapter 4 provides a brief synthesis of three key themes that are drawn from the passages covered in chapter 3: obedience, love, and life. First, it will show how each of these topics comes from within the eight Johannine passages of chapter 3. Second, each theme is connected to the life of Christ as the foundation and model for the Spirit of sonship. The argument is that while Christ maintains a unique status and glory as the eternal Son of God, his spiritual and moral life stands as the exemplar for all God's spiritual children. The Spirit is the divine person who links and empowers the children to experience and demonstrate the character of sonship.

Chapter 5 offers a brief conclusion and suggests paths for future study.

CHAPTER 2

PURITAN AND REFORMED EXEGESIS: JOHN CALVIN AND JOHN GILL

Introduction

A consideration of two men who well represent the Reformed and Puritan understanding of the Spirit is appropriate to begin with for three reasons. First, because it was during these two eras, particularly, that the work of the Spirit was given a prominence and clarity that was lacking in previous generations.[1] Second, these men were both instrumental in advancing the church's understanding of the Spirit and stand as exemplars, in many ways, of their generations. Third, these men were voluminous in their literary output and, significantly, are among the few authors in church history to produce both key theological works *and* commentary on the whole—or nearly the whole, in the case of Calvin—Bible. In short, John Calvin and John Gill provide an excellent introduction and important historical background to the study of the Spirit of Sonship in the Johannine writings.

---

[1]This is not to be unmindful of important patristic contributions to the church's understanding of the Spirit, particularly Basil the Great's *On the Holy Spirit* or Augustine and Hilary of Poitier on the Trinity. However, these eras and these men have been chosen for at least two reasons. First, because of the limits of space and time allotted for the present work, the addition of these early fathers would have been too much. Second, because these build extensively on the work of the fathers. Therefore, to focus on these eras is not to ignore what went before but to show the best of what was gleaned from them and how it was moved forward. A third reason could be added, namely, that these eras, in some ways, most directly affect the contemporary understanding of the Spirit, particularly in the Reformed tradition. Although the Reformed tradition is not always clearly defined in contemporary Christianity, Mark Husbands states, "Well aware of the fact that the term 'reformed' is contested and that there are numerous, and sometimes competing, ways of identifying with *the* Reformed tradition, there is no dispute that John Calvin stands at the headwaters of Reformed theology" (Mark Husbands, "Calvin on the Revelation of God in Creation and Scripture: Modern Reception and Contemporary Possibilities," in *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New Possibilities*, ed. J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012], 25.

John Calvin (1509–1564)

This section will briefly introduce the works and theology of John Calvin with particular attention given to his contribution regarding the person of the Spirit and his role in Salvation. The teaching that the Spirit is the bond between Christ and His people is drawn from Scripture and, in that sense, is not new. Calvin, however, brought greater clarity to the topic and, in this way, advanced the concept of the Spirit of sonship.

Calvin's Works and Theology

John Calvin was a second-generation reformer who is largely attributed with giving the church a coherent and systemized theology of the Reformation,[2] or, as one has put it, "to give a body to their ideas, and expression to their faith."[3] Although standing on the shoulders of such first-generation notables like Luther, Zwingli, and Bucer, he was—with them—firmly committed to the Reformation pillar of *Sola Scriptura*. This commitment to the authority of Scripture formed the foundation of his two most notable achievements: first, a twenty-two volume set of commentaries that addresses most books of Scripture, excepting several historical books (Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah), some of the wisdom books (Job, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes), as well as 2 and 3 John and Revelation;[4] and second, the *Institutes of the*

---

[2]Contra Timothy George, who states, "When Calvin became a Protestant in the early 1530s, he inherited a tradition and a theology already well defined by nearly two decades of controversy" (Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988], 165).

[3]M. Buisson, quoted in B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, in *The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* 5 (1932; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 8. He later adds that "he was able, as none other was, to cast this common doctrinal treasure of the Reformation into well-compacted, logically unassailable, and religiously inspiring whole . . . he who gave the Evangelical movement a theology" (Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 22). Comparing Calvin to Luther and Zwingli, Schaff states, "They cut the stones in the quarries, he polished them in the worship. They produced the new ideas, he constructed them into a system" (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 8, *The Swiss Reformation: 1519–1605* [repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002], 258).

[4]Warfield comments, "His exspositions of Scripture were accordingly a wholly new phenomenon, and introduced a new exegesis—modern exegesis" (Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 9). Quoting an unknown writer, he adds, "In his sober grammatico-historical method, in the stress he laid on the natural sense of the text, by the side of his deep religious understanding of it—in his renunciation of the

Christian Religion. The latter work served as a defense of the Reformation[5] and an instructional guide "for God's church"[6] and theological students.[7] In Calvin's own words to the reader of the fourth and final Latin edition (1559), Calvin says, "It has been my purpose in this labor to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the divine Word, in order that they may be able both to have easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling. For I believe I have so embraced the sum of religion in all its parts."[8]

Calvin's goal, then, was to provide a theological framework that would shine light on the study of Scripture, which was his ultimate aim. In fact, it was only upon the completion of the *Institutes* that he endeavored to more fully dedicate himself to work on the commentaries: "If, after this road has, as it were, been paved, I shall publish any interpretations of Scripture."[9] Indeed, by clearing a theological path to understand

---

current allegorizing, in his felicitous, skillful dealing with difficult passages, the humanistically trained master is manifest, pouring the new wine into new bottles" (Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 9).

[5]Schaff notes, "Calvin gives a . . . vindication of the evangelical faith in particular, with the apologetic and practical aim of defending the Protestant believers against calumny and persecution to which they were then exposed, especially in France" (Schaff, *Swiss Reformation*, 330). Latourette rightly states that Calvin "was not so much concerned with refuting what he believed to be the errors of the Roman Catholic Church and of Protestants with whom he was in disagreement as he was in stating positively and giving the reasons for what he maintained was true Christianity" (Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Reformation to the Present*, rev. ed., vol. 2 [Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2005], 753).

[6]Ford Lewis Battles, trans., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1:3.

[7]It is interesting that Philip Schaff plays down the usefulness of Calvin's *Institutes* for the common person, noting, "The *Institutio* is not a book for the people, and has not the rousing power which Luther's Appeal to the German Nobility, and his tract on Christian Freedom exerted upon the Germans, but it is a book for scholars of all nations" (Schaff, *Swiss Reformation*, 330).

[8]Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:4.

[9]Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:5. Although these words are from the 1559 ed., the editor notes that they first "appeared in the second edition of the *Institutes*, published in August 1539, and thus before Calvin's first Scripture commentary (Romans), which was dedicated October 18, 1539, and published in 1540" (ed. note, Calvin, *Institute*, 5n4).

Scripture, he was able to bring simplicity and clearness to the commentaries so that "the godly reader [would] be spared great annoyance and boredom, provided he approach Scripture armed with a knowledge of the present work, as a necessary tool."[10] It is this interrelationship between theology and Scripture that is distinctly Reformed and Calvinistic. Emphasizing this point, William Barker states, "It is this relation between theology and exegesis of Scripture that gives the distinctive character to the Reformed faith. And the Reformed faith is aptly termed 'Calvinism' because it is Calvin's *Institutes* that establish this relation."[11] Put another way, it is theology that is inextricably bound to and drawn from the plain meaning of Scripture that marks Calvin's works.

Calvin's relentlessly theological mind, brought to bear on Scripture, bore the fruit of making key contributions to theology.[12] Two of these contributions had to do with the doctrines of the Trinity and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Regarding the Trinity, B. B. Warfield notes, "He made an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity: by his insistence on 'self-existence' as a proper attribute of Son and Spirit as well as of the Father."[13] Thus, Calvin brought arguments that clarified the deity of the Son and the Spirit in their own right and not as derived from the Father. He accomplished this by building on the distinction of Cyril of Alexandria (375–444) between the ontological and

---

[10]Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:5.

[11]William S. Barker, "The Historical Context of the *Institutes* as a Work in Theology," in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*, ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 14.

[12]It is important to note that Calvin's extensive use of the church fathers was to show that the theology of the Reformation was not a new invention, but consistent with proclamation of the church from the earlier times. The perversion was, in fact, laid at the door of the Roman Catholic Church. Although in his prefatory address, he acknowledges the fathers had errors, he accuses the Catholic Church of worshiping "only the faults and errors of the fathers. The good things that these fathers have written they either do not notice, or misrepresent or pervert. You might say their only care is to gather dung amid gold" (Calvin, *Institutes, 18)*.

[13]Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 21.

economic Trinity.[14] In this way, he departed from the tendency in earlier theologians to make the Father the font or cause of the divinity of the Son and Spirit by making a distinction between the essence of God and the persons of the Godhead. Kelly suggests that this "clear distinction (though not division) between God's essence and God's personhood—and in how he applies it to the full deity of the Son and the Spirit," is Calvin's "great contribution to Trinitarian theology."[15]

More specifically, with this clarification Calvin silenced the voices of subordinationism by attaching the divine taxonomy to the persons of the Godhead, for "it is only when the three persons are spoken of in relationship to each other that a certain 'order' is in view."[16] In Calvin's own words,

> Let us not, then, be led to imagine a trinity of persons that keeps our thoughts distracted and does not at once lead them back to that unity. Indeed, the words "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" imply a real distinction . . . but a distinction, not a division . . . this distinction is so far from contravening the utterly simple unity of God. . . . By these appellations which set forth the distinction (says Augustine) is signified their mutual relationships and not the very substance by which they are one. In this sense the opinions of the ancients are to be harmonized. . . . Sometimes, indeed, they teach that the Father is the beginning of the Son; sometimes they declare that the Son has both divinity and essence from himself, and thus has one beginning with the Father. . . .[17]

He then borrows from Augustine to clarify this point: "Christ with respect to himself is called God; with respect to the Father, Son. Again, the Father with respect to himself is called God; with respect to the Son, Father."[18] In other words, in their persons each member of the Godhead is fully identified as God; in respect to their relationship they are

---

[14]Douglas F. Kelly, "The True and Triune God: Calvin's Doctrine of the Holy Trinity," in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*, ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing), 85.

[15]Kelly, "True and Triune God," 75.

[16]Kelly, "True and Triune God," 78.

[17]Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.17, 19.

[18] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.19.

Father, Son, and Spirit. It is within these relationships—as the one God—that the order of persons is set forth. Again, in Calvin's own words,

> Therefore, whenever the name of God is mentioned without particularization, there are designated no less the Son and the Spirit than the Father; but where the Son is joined to the Father, then the relation of the two enters in; and so we distinguish among the persons. But because the peculiar qualities in the persons carry an order within them, e.g., in the Father is the beginning and the source, so often as mention is made of the Father and the Son together, or the Spirit, the name of *God* is peculiarly applied to the Father. In this way, unity of essence is retained, and a reasoned order is kept, which yet takes nothing away from the deity of the Son and the Spirit.[19]

It is this relationship of persons that provides a pattern by which God relates to himself and to men. Since "the Son differs from the Father only by this property of sonship (or being begotten),"[20] it is significant that believers relate to the Father through the Son as "children of God" (John 1:12; 20:17) and ultimately as sons (Rev 21:7). The relationship of the Son to the Father becomes the substance and pattern for the believer's participation in the life of God.

This introduces another of Calvin's theological contributions, namely, union with Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. While some have seen this as a center to Calvin's theology, Billings suggests,

> Calvin does not have a sharply defined "theology" of "union with Christ," in the same way that he has a "theology" of baptism, or even a "theology" of justification by faith. . . . The phrase "union with Christ" is best seen as a shorthand for a broad range of themes and images. . . . [therefore] To speak about Calvin's theology of union with Christ is to speak about a cluster of related thoughts and images in his thought related to participation, union, engrafting, and adoption.[21]

---

[19]Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.20. In an earlier section, Calvin put the distinction in these terms, "to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.18).

[20]Kelly, "True and Triune God," 87.

[21]J. Todd Billings, "Union with Christ and the Double Grace: Calvin's Theology and Its Early Reception," in Billings and Hesselink, *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception*, 50.

It is not so much that Calvin has a conscious or obvious "center" to his theology, but, rather, it is that he sees every benefit of salvation as flowing out of the believer's union with Christ. In other words, there is no part of salvation or communion with God or hope for the future that is not mediated through Christ to the believer. This intimate connection is then implicitly or explicitly essential to every doctrine of salvation. Yet, it is Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit that brings the believer into actual participation with Christ and moves Warfield to say, "Above all he gave to the Church the entire doctrine of the Work of the Holy Spirit."[22]

The Spirit, for Calvin, is the divine person who communicates the saving benefits of Christ to believers by uniting them to him by faith.[23] Therefore, Christ is the one in whom the believer has life, but it is the Spirit who regenerates and grants the faith that brings about union with Christ and enables believers to share in Christ's life.[24] Indeed, apart from the Spirit, none of the benefits of Christ can be possessed. Calvin asks, "How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son–

---

[22]Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 21.

[23]In fact, Richard Gaffin suggests, "The internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, by which we are brought to a saving conviction of the divine origin and truth of Scripture . . . is a particular doctrine the church owes to Calvin" (Richard B. Gaffin, "The Holy Spirit," *WTJ* 43, no. 1 [Fall 1980]: 60).

[24]In terms of soteriology, Calvin importantly linked both justification and sanctification to union with Christ: "Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.1). Yet, each has its own distinct nuance and role in salvation. Union in terms of justification is the application of Christ's righteousness—an alien righteousness—to sinners, such that they are fully and completely counted righteous before God based on the person of Christ and through the instrument of faith. Union in terms of sanctification is the font and source of the believer's communion with God and conformity to righteousness, and each is the work of the Spirit. Calvin notes, "We confess that while through the intercession of Christ's righteousness God reconciles us to himself, and by free remission of sins accounts us righteous, his beneficence is at the same time joined with such a mercy that through his Holy Spirit he dwells in us and by his power the lusts of our flesh are each day more and more mortified; we are indeed sanctified" (3.14.9; cf. 3.2.8; 3.11.6, 14; 3.16.1). Also see Billings, "Union with Christ and the Double Grace," in *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception*, 49–67.

–not for Christ's own private use, but that he might enrich poor and needy men?"[25] His answer is that it is by "the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits . . . the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself."[26] This last statement seals the indissoluble unity of Christ and the Spirit. It also transitions into Calvin's argument that Christ was endowed with the Spirit by the Father, that the gift of the Spirit may be given through him: "God the Father gives us the Holy Spirit for his Son's sake, and yet has bestowed the whole fullness of the Spirit upon the Son to be minister and steward of this liberality."[27]

Moreover, Christ has the Spirit in fullness in his humanity, which is the vehicle through which he brings men, by the Spirit, to participate in his own life with the Father and the benefits of his work as mediator. Yet, as Joel R. Beeke notes, it is not through some kind of absorption: "Union with Christ in his humanity is historical, ethical, and personal, but not essential. There is no crass mixture (*crassa mixtura*) of human substance between Christ and us."[28] Rather, as Beeke continues, it is "actual union and communion not because believers participate in the essence of Christ's nature, but because the Spirit of Christ unites believers so intimately to Christ that they become as flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone" (Eph 5:30).[29] The means, or instrument, through

---

[25]Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.1.

[26]Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.1. In a discussion regarding the deity of the Spirit, Calvin earlier noted that "through him we come into communion with God . . . Our justification is his work; from him is power, sanctification . . . truth, grace, and every good thing that can be conceived" (1.13.14).

[27]Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.2.

[28]Joel R. Beeke, "Appropriating Salvation: The Spirit, Faith and Assurance, and Repentance," in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*, ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback, 272. See also, J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 44–50.

[29]Beeke, "Appropriating Salvation," 273.

which the Spirit brings this about is the faith he—the Spirit—works within those given to Christ.

Thus, Calvin says the Spirit "may rightly be called the key that unlocks for us the treasures of the Kingdom of heaven"[30] because he unites those given to Christ by the Father to the Son. In this way, Calvin notes the Spirit is called the "spirit of adoption because he is the witness to us of the benevolence of God with which God the Father has embraced us in his beloved only-begotten Son to become a Father to us."[31] It is the Spirit's ministry to spiritually grow believers, conforming them into the image of Christ and a fuller experience of his life by faith. In other words, by the Spirit's uniting the believer to Christ, he works in him an increasing experience of Christ's own sonship and relationship with the Father. In Calvin's words,

> He is called the "Spirit of adoption," because he is witness to us of the free benevolence of God with which God the Father has embraced us in his beloved only-begotten Son to become a Father to us; and he encourages us to have trust in prayer. In fact, he supplies the very words, so that we may fearlessly cry, "Abba, Father."[32]

This brief theological introduction seeks to be consistent with Calvin's desire for theology to "clear a path" to understanding Scripture. Through this lens the following consideration of Calvin's exegesis of selected Johannine passages demonstrates his understanding of the Spirit of sonship as drawn from John's gospel and first epistle. While Calvin's discussion of sonship is usually bound to the Pauline presentation of

---

[30]Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.4.

[31]Calvin, *Institutes,* 3.1.3.

[32]Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.3. Indeed, it is the Spirit's particular role within the Trinity that uniquely qualifies him to fulfill this role. Speaking of the unity of the three distinct persons of the Godhead, Calvin notes, "This distinction is so far from contravening the utterly simple unity of God as to permit us to prove from it that the Son is one God with the Father because he shares with the Father one and the same Spirit; and that the Spirit is not something other than the Father and different from the Son, because he is the Spirit of the Father and Son" (Calvin, *Institutes,* 1.13.19).

adoption, the following advances his view of sonship through John's emphasis on Jesus as the eternal Son in flesh and his unity with the Spirit.

Calvin's Exegesis of Selected Johannine Passages

In light of Calvin's theology, noted above, the following section will consider his exegetical work regarding the eight Johannine passages considered in this thesis. The primary focus will be on Calvin's commentaries since this is the place he most fully dealt with the text of Scripture. However, it will also consider his use of these passages in the final form of his *Institutes*.

John 1:1–11

The most immediate and notable aspect of Calvin's treatment of John's prologue is his translation of λόγος as the "Speech" of God—departing even from the Geneva Bible.[33] Yet, for Calvin the idea of "Speech" is justified on two grounds. First, because the Son is the "eternal Wisdom and Will of God" and, second, because "he is the lively image of His purpose; for, as *Speech* is said to be among men the image of the mind, so it is not inappropriate to apply this to God, and to say that He reveals himself to us by his *Speech*."[34] In other words, the "Speech" was concealed and hidden in God until manifest to men by the "external operation" of creation and redemption. Yet, far from an impersonal power, the "Speech"—later revealed as the Son—was eternally with God as

[33]In fact, Calvin later opines, "I wonder what induced the Latins to render ὁ λόγος by *Verbum* . . . for that would rather have been the translation of τὸ ῥῆμά. But granting that they had some plausible reason, still it cannot be denied that *Sermo* . . . would have been far more appropriate" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:28).

[34]John Calvin, "Gospel According to John," in Calvin's *Commentaries*, trans. William Pringle (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005), 17:26. Calvin makes a similar statement that reflects this same logic of differentiating the relation between Father, Son, and Spirit: "For the mind of each human being is naturally inclined to contemplate God first, then the wisdom coming forth from him, and lastly the power whereby he executes the decrees of his plan. For this reason, the Son is said to come forth from the Father alone; the Spirit, from the Father and the Son at the same time" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:13.18).

"a distinct personality from the Father,"[35] for he was said to be "with" (πρός) God. On this point Calvin speaks of Christ as "subsisting" in God and so acquiesces to the language of philosophy in the fathers, such as "hypostasis" (ὑπόστασις), *"Substantia,"* and "Persons" (πρόσωπα).[36]

Thus, the "Speech" is eternally with the Father as a distinct hypostasis and, in fact, as God's wisdom.[37] He then argues that because God cannot be conceived of apart from his wisdom, the Son's eternal existence as God is manifest. Therefore, John's use of "beginning"—contra Servetus—marks not the beginning of the Son, but the revelation of the Wisdom that was always with God and equal to God.[38] In this sense, the "beginning" is no "beginning" in reference to time, "for though, in the order of nature, the Father came before his *Wisdom*, yet those who conceive of any point of time when he went before his *Wisdom*, deprive him of his glory. And this is the eternal generation."[39]

---

[35]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:28.

[36]Italics in original. Calvin does not prefer to use non-biblical words to describe God, but recognizes that the "ancient writers" were forced to do so in order to speak truth against the "perplexed and ambiguous phraseology of the heretics" (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 17:28). He provides his own example of this in *Institutes*, 1.13.22, when using John 1:1 and 17:5 to affirm the personhood of Christ against Servetus.

[37]On this point Calvin echoes his argument in the *Institutes*, 1.13.18: "To the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity." So, here, the Son, who is the wisdom of God, is manifest as the agent of God in creation.

[38]Referring to the imperfect (ἦν), he further notes, "The Evangelist sends us to the eternal secrets of God, that we may there learn that *the Speech* was . . . hidden, before he revealed himself in the external structure of the world" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:27). He then attaches—following Augustine—the eternal *logos* to the wisdom of God that was manifest as shadow to the Father and more clearly revealed in the flesh (v. 28). It is interesting that, although he attaches to Christ the appellation wisdom, he refrains from attaching wisdom to Prov 8:22–31, although he does use this reference in the *Institutes*, 2:14.8, noting that "the eternal begetting of wisdom of which Solomon speaks."

[39]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:28. In contradiction to Servetus, Calvin argues both in his commentaries and the *Institutes* that the sonship of Christ is based on his eternal generation and precedes the hypostatic union. Moreover, the hypostatic union allowed men to be adopted sons in the only-begotten Son of God, who, by virtue of being creator and redeemer as the Son by nature, is able to bring all the adopted sons by grace to glory (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.14.5–6).

Calvin's more interesting points in relation to sonship, however, come in his discussion of Christ as the "life" and "light" of men.[40] Having established in verse 3 that the Son is the one through whom God created all things,[41] he is also the mediator of "life" (v. 4), which he sees in a two-fold sense. First, the Son preserves all that he has created, maintaining the physical universe (Heb 1:3) and sustaining all living things by "his *life*-giving power [that] causes them to remain in their condition."[42] By this "life" that is in the Son all men exist and so Paul exerts that "*in him we are, and move, and live* (Acts xvii. 28)."[43] Second, in that this "life" is the "light of men," Calvin sees a reference to man's reason—"light of understanding"[44]— and conscience,[45] by which "men excel other animals."[46] Yet, for Calvin this—more than understanding and conscience—is an ongoing reality whereby God "makes himself to be felt within us."[47] Thus, he takes the phrase "enlightens every man" in verse 9 as a reference to the Son's work in the

---

[40]Calvin seems to make a change in the translation on this verse from the *Institutes*, while retaining the same general meaning. In the 2.2.19 of *Institutes* he quotes the phrase as "Life was in God from the beginning," but here, "in him was life." In both cases, however, he maintains the argument that the "light" is the vestige of the knowledge of God in man that is, yet, covered over and made of no consequences because of the pervasive darkness, by which "he denies them any ability of spiritual understanding" (Calvin, *Institutes,* 2.2.19).

[41]On a textual note, he takes ὃ γέγονεν with v. 3 as with the majority of mss (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 17:30–31).

[42]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:31.

[43]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:32.

[44]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:32.

[45]Calvin says, "The *light* that still dwells within corrupt natures consists chiefly of two parts; for, first, all men naturally possess some seed of religion; and, secondly, the distinction between good and evil is engraven on their consciences" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:34).

[46]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:32.

[47]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:32.

conscience of men—departing from Augustine who understands it in a positive salvific sense.[48]

It is interesting that Calvin—as with many contemporary commentators—does not mention or develop the idea of relationship that is consistent in John's use of ζωή and implied by Calvin's own explanation. In other words, he argues that this "light" is intimately "felt within us" and to the end that God's image bearers would "acknowledge Him who is the Author of so excellent a blessing."[49] That is to say that the "light" in man through Christ should compel men to love God and serve him for whom their hearts were created and their lives are sustained (cf. Acts 14:14–17). Indeed, God restores this very reality in sending Christ and the Spirit that men may know him as Father, through the Son, being brought into this life and fellowship by the Spirit. Man, as God's image bearers and in whom he makes himself known, longs for relationship with God as a reflection of being in the image of God who is revealed in the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit. In fact, the image of God in man, for Calvin, is the capacity and privilege to live with God in a loving relationship of obedience.[50] Yet, in spite of this, Calvin is mute on the relational aspect in his discussion of "light."

---

[48]Calvin, *Commentaries,* 17:38. This has the advantage of consistency on Calvin's part, but it is not at all clear—nor defended by Calvin—that the participle ἐρχόμενον should be taken with ἄνθρωπος rather than φῶς. In other words, the meaning is, more likely, that "the true light coming into the world enlightens every man," rather than "the true light enlightens every man coming into the world."

[49]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:32.

[50]In other words, "Because the heart of created man was turned to his Lord, a reflection of the divine glory was visible in him, and he stood forth as the image of God on earth. . . . Man's similitude to God implies something more than his psycho-physical constitution, it signifies his right attitude towards his Creator and thus his right attitude towards all other creatures" (Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956], 67). While a full treatment of Calvin's view of the image of God in man is beyond the purpose of this section, it is relevant to note that he understands the image as referencing, primarily, that which is stamped upon the soul of man. It is there, in the soul of man, that he is endowed with understanding and a will that was made to seek the knowledge of God and delight in serving him and man's neighbor—who also bears that image—in this world (cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.2–8). Margaret Miles aptly stated, "The body is, for Calvin, quite simply the habitation of the soul, it depends on the soul for life," and thus this inner part of man is the locus of the image of God (Margaret R. Miles, "Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body in Calvin's Institutes of the Christian

Calvin then argues that the "darkness" into which the "light shines" is the corrupted conscience of each man, who, in corruption, seeks to suppress the true knowledge of God (Rom 1:18). However, "the *light* of understanding is not wholly extinguished" and men are all accountable, though unable to respond rightly to God.[51] It is for this reason that when Christ came and should have been loved by his creation and his special people, the Jews (v. 9), he was rejected because of the darkness within man. Yet, his coming was consistent with his glory as the light and mediator of creation, in which the Son retains "two distinct powers": first, to maintain the order and structure in the universe; second, in relation to his new office of mediator, "to renew, by the Spirit of regeneration, man who had been ruined."[52]

John 1:12–13

The apostle now turns to the work of renewing men to a right relationship with God as "children" through the Son. Specifically, Calvin places great stress on the John's intention of establishing a contrast in verses 12–13 with what immediately preceded: the Jews' rejection of the Son as their God and Messiah, but whose rejection "was the life of the whole world (Rom xi. 12)."[53] Thus, verse 12 is largely a polemic against the Jews trust in their Jewishness for salvation, who, by rejection of the privileges of their adoption, have extended that honor "throughout the whole world" to all who receive Christ by faith. On this point Calvin understands John's use of ἐξουσία to mean "right, or claim," but not in the sense of ability, as if Christ gave men the option of free will—

Religion," *HTR* 74, no. 3 [1981]: 310). Moreover, for Calvin, the image of God in man is most clearly and irrefutably known by what is revealed and restored in Christ, to whose image the regenerate and redeemed are being conformed.

[51]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:33.

[52]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:34.

[53]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:40; cf. 41, 43.

contrary to the Papists[54]—although Calvin acknowledges the immediate "plausibility" of this interpretation. Rather, as stated in verse 13, the ἐξουσία is not something potential in man, but rendered secure by God through faith in his Son that is inextricable from regeneration.[55]

However, he seems less clear at first when he refers to "the grace of adoption as something offered to us by Christ."[56] Yet, if offered, then the interpretation of the "Papists" seems to be supported. In fact, there seem to be two problems with this language. First, John does not use the language of adoption and there is no necessity to insert a Pauline metaphor into his gospel. Second, adoption, even within Paul, is something granted, not "offered" (cf. Rom 8:14–23; Gal 4:1–6; Eph 1:3–5). In either case, Calvin's main point is that this new status is something wholly accomplished by the sovereign grace of God. This is evident in that God supplies all that is necessary in obtaining it. First in that it is only through the Son who was sent into the world. Second, in that the faith that obtains it is his gift, since "man's keenness of mind is mere blindness as far as the knowledge of God is concerned. For when the Spirit calls them 'darkness,' he at once denies them any ability of spiritual understanding."[57]

In addressing the latter, Calvin exerts much effort to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and regeneration. When discussing verse 12 he stated, "If faith

---

[54]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:41. Commenting on Gal 3:26 Calvin does refer to the status of "children" as having the freedom of adoption. Yet, by this he means the freedom from the curse of the law and the freedom to serve God freely as true sons (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:110).

[55]He later allows for the sense of "power" in the term ἐξουσία, but by this he infers the power to believe and "be fit" because of regeneration (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:42; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.36).

[56]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:41.

[57]Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.1.19. He then adds that "man's mind can become spiritually wise only in so far as God illumines it . . . [for] nothing is accomplished by preaching him if the Spirit, as our inner teacher, does not show our minds the way" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.20).

regenerates us, so that we are *the sons of God*, and if God breathes faith into us from heaven, it plainly appears that not by possibility only, but actually . . . is the grace of adoption offered to us by Christ."[58] Thus, he seems to favor the idea that regeneration is a *result* of the gift of faith.[59] However, he acknowledges that at various times John seems to speak of regeneration as the result of faith and then faith as the *result* of regeneration.[60] Calvin resolves this tension by arguing, "faith is a part of our regeneration." In other words, the "illumination of our minds by the Holy Spirit belongs to our renewal, and thus faith flows from regeneration as from its source."[61]

This statement seems clear enough on the face of it: faith flows from the font of regeneration—i.e., that renewal of nature that makes it possible to receive Christ and is attended with the grace of faith to do so. However, he then traverses into confusion: "For when the Lord breathes faith into us, he regenerates us by some method that is hidden and unknown to us, but after we have received faith, we perceive, by a lively feeling of conscience, not only the grace of adoption, but also newness of life and the other gifts of the Holy Spirit."[62] In this latter statement, regeneration is made the result of faith and is connected to the *perception* that one has life in the Son.[63] Nonetheless, while Calvin

---

[58]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:41. Italics in original.

[59]In fact, Herman Bavinck asserts, "Calvin even made that his starting point and in the order of redemption placed regeneration after faith" (Herman Bavinck, *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, vol. 4, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 64).

[60]Indeed, he says in another place that "faith does not proceed from ourselves, but is the *fruit of spiritual regeneration*" (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 17:43; emphasis mine).

[61]Calvin, *Commentaries,* 17:44; cf. 22:51: "No one can have faith, except he is born of God." And, since faith cannot be separated from regeneration, which cannot be separated from the Spirit, wherever faith is mentioned, the presence of the Spirit is to be discerned. Calvin is very strong on this point: "What else is it, then, than to do injury to the Holy Spirit if we separate faith, which is his peculiar work, from him?" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.39).

[62]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:44.

[63]This same kind of confusion regarding regeneration and faith is evidenced in his discussion

never seems to gain consistent clarity on the precise relationship between regeneration and faith, he is consistently clear on the overall thrust of John's main points. First, the work of grace that brings one to be a "son of God" by faith in Christ is wholly the work of God through faith and the new birth (v. 13)—"the Evangelist ascribes the whole of our salvation to the grace of Christ alone."[64] Second, the whole of sonship and relation to God is bound to Christ, the Son of God: "they will find nothing that is worthy of the children of God, except what Christ has bestowed on them."[65]

Here, then, Calvin gives a clear description of sonship, commenting on verse 12b and faith in Christ's name: "Having been ingrafted into Christ by faith, we obtain the right of adoption, so as to be *the sons of God*. And, indeed, as he is the only-begotten Son of God, it is only so far as we are members of him that this honor at all belongs to us."[66] In short, Calvin's doctrine of sonship could be stated this way: the elect are granted every endowment of grace and engrafted into Christ by faith through the inner working of the Spirit by which the believing attain the status "sons of God" in the only-begotten. Sonship is completely bound to the only-begotten Son of God. So, inasmuch as only-begottenness reflects the Son's deity, it is unique to Christ; inasmuch as it reflects his sonship and eternal relationship with the Father, it becomes a pattern for the elect and the essence of their own participation in eternal life.

Although Calvin acknowledges John's penchant for reserving υἱός for Christ,

---

of regeneration in connection with the baptism of infants (Calvin, *Institutes,* 4.16.16–17, 30).

[64]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:44. Calvin maintains his stance of seeing vv. 12–13 as a polemic against the false hopes and confidences of the Jews. Thus, the plural of "bloods" is interpreted in this way, "that he might express more fully a long succession of lineage; for this was a part of the boasting among the Jews" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:43).

[65]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:44.

[66]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:42. Spelling is in the original. To be engrafted into Christ is to "return to that source" of life that is in Christ (John 1:4) and in Christ alone to return to and attain to the "rank of children" (Calvin, *Institutes,* 2.6.1).

he—like many older writers—uses "son" to translate τέκνον because of the inextricable link to the Son of God. In fact, he makes this point strongly in a provocative comment on verse 16, "what we receive from Christ he does not bestow upon as being God, but the Father communicated to him what would flow to us as through a channel."[67] The "channel" is through Christ—the Son—and by the Spirit. Put another way, the Father ordained that all the elect would experience—in the fullness of salvation—what was present and demonstrated in the Son's incarnation and in his future glory (1 John 3:1–3). Thus, in light of the fact that the Son's incarnation was consistent with being the Son of God in terms of his relation to the Father, and that the sum of salvation is to be united to Christ through the Spirit he gives and that was in Him; then, the elect's experience of sonship is shown to be entirely consistent with Christ's own sonship with the Father. In fact, Calvin makes this even more explicit in the following statement: "This is the anointing with which he was anointed, that he might anoint us all along with him. Hence, too, he is called Christ (*the Anointed*) and we are called Christians."[68]

John 3:3–8

John expands his teaching on regeneration and faith introduced in the prologue and now advanced through the encounter of Jesus with Nicodemus. Although Calvin sees in Nicodemus a proud religious leader coming under the cover of night, ignorant of true spirituality and life, yet he is not with "some seed of piety."[69] It is this piety that Christ recognizes and so engages him so that he might prepare him by clearing "many thorns" so that "nothing might prevent him from profiting by the doctrine" of the new birth.[70] For

[67]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:51.

[68]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:51–52. Italics in original.

[69]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:105.

[70]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:107.

Calvin, to see the kingdom is to enter the kingdom and to enter the kingdom of heaven is to enter into "spiritual life, which is begun by faith in this world."[71] Jesus is moving Nicodemus to realize that "no man can be truly united to the Church, so as to be reckoned among the children of God, until he has been previously renewed."[72] For Calvin, the need for the "whole nature" to be renewed is a testimony to both the utter corruption of man's fallen state and the absolute necessity of God to do everything for the sinner, who is helpless, left to his own. The language of corruption and renewal is not, for Calvin, limited to Nicodemus but is universal for all men.

On John's use of ἄνωθεν, Calvin argues for the translation "born *again*,"[73] which he grounds in both the Hebrew language—in which Christ spoke—and Nicodemus's response.[74] Despite the fact that the precise "form of expression" is not used in the OT, the concept of renewal is, and Nicodemus should have recognized the essence of Jesus's thought. Yet, the ignorance of this leader reflects the spiritual ignorance of the scribes and Jewish religion of that day (cf. 1:11). Thus, Jesus's use of the concept "water and Spirit" *should have* been more readily perceived as a "simple statement that we must be born again."[75] Regarding the precise meaning of "water and spirit," Calvin reviews various options, such as a reference to "two parts of regeneration," or allegorically referring to earthly and spiritual realities, or that "water" is a reference to baptism.[76] He

---

[71]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:108.

[72]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:108.

[73]Emphasis mine. He acknowledges the term is ambiguous but sees the translation of "from above" in Cyril and Erasmus as improper, primarily because Christ spoke in Hebrew and not Greek.

[74]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:109.

[75]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:110. In an interesting aside Calvin seeks to get into the mind of Nicodemus through Jewish thought at the time and suggests he was thinking of Pythagoras's migration of the soul, which Jesus is here correcting.

[76]Interestingly, although Calvin acknowledges the importance of baptism to salvation—"it is true that, by neglecting baptism, we are excluded from salvation"—he argues that it would be

rejects these and suggests that Jesus rather "employed the words *Spirit* and *water* to mean the same thing . . . By *water*, therefore, is meant nothing more than the inward purification and invigoration which is produced by *the Holy Spirit*."[77] Man needs a total, not a partial, renewal.

The primary contrast is Calvin's strong emphasis on the difference between the "flesh" and the "Spirit." For Calvin, "Flesh . . . is meant in this place not the body, but the soul also, and consequently every part of it."[78] Yet, because it is contrasted with the "uncorrupted" Spirit, the "flesh" represents man's fallen and corrupt faculties, every part of which is infected with sin: "as the contagion of wickedness is spread through every part, there will be found in us nothing that is pure and free from every defilement."[79] By contrast, the "*Spirit* is used here in two senses, namely, for grace, and the effect of grace. For in the first place, Christ informs us that *the Spirit* of God is the only Author of a pure and upright nature," and afterwards he states that "we are *spiritual*, because we have been renewed by his power."[80] Thus, the illustration of the "wind" is meant to picture the

---

"inappropriate" for Christ to speak of baptism in this passage (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:110).

[77]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:111. Calvin finds justification for this in Matt 3:11, where Christ "*baptizeth with the Holy Ghost and with fire* . . . where *fire* means nothing different from the Spirit, but only shows what is his efficacy in us" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:111. Italics in original.). It is interesting that Calvin follows the reasoning of Ezek 36:24–27 but does not reference the passage.

[78]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:112. For Calvin, the soul of man consists of two parts, the intellect and will, each of which is utterly corrupted by sin (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.1).

[79]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:113; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.1.6; 2.3.1. Calvin is unclear, however, on the precise way that men receive Adam's corruption. While rejecting the Traducian view, although not supporting or denying the creationist view of the soul, he sees the corrupt nature of man inherited from Adam as simply being "deprived . . . of his gifts" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:113). In the *Institutes* he explains man's corrupted nature as something not established by God, but "vitiated in Adam" (2.1.6). Calvin clarifies, "Instead of saying . . . that each of us draws vice and corruption from his parents, it would be more correct to say that we are all alike corrupted in Adam alone, because immediately after his revolt God took away from human nature what He had bestowed upon it" (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 17:113). It is difficult to see the need for the precise distinction he is making, although the primary point is clear: man is spiritually corrupt and helpless from birth: "In the whole of our nature there remains not a drop of uprightness" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:114).

[80]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:114.

visible fruit of the Spirit's secret work of regeneration.[81]

This all-encompassing work of regeneration is extended in the same trajectory of John's statement in 1:12–13, namely, that what is corrupt and alienated from God is renewed by the Spirit to participate in the life of the only-begotten Son of God (3:15–16) by faith and so be formed into "new men." This supports the idea of sonship already established in 1:12–13 but now sets it more firmly in the inseparable operations of the Father, Son, and Spirit. This particular point is made plain at the end of the chapter in verse 34: "God gives the Spirit without measure." Calvin understands in this reference that God gives the Spirit in unmeasured fullness to Christ as the incarnate Son, so that he may give it in measure to his own and they can "*draw out of his fulness*."[82] Moreover, in the Son the child is loved by the Father, "For that love with which, embracing the Son, he embraces us also in him, leads him to communicate all his benefits to us by his hand."[83] The Spirit is from the Father to the Son and from the Son—and Father—to the children and binds the children to the Son and through him grants participation in the Son's communion with the Father and every spiritual blessing designed to flow through him to his own.

John 14:16–23

Calvin opens this section with a straightforward statement that will run as a theme throughout the passage, namely, that the Spirit will come to bring about a new way that Christ will relate to his disciples and his disciples to him and the Father: "though he

---

[81]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:116. Italics in original.

[82]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:140. Spelling in original.

[83]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:41. A similar idea is conveyed in his comments on Galatians 3:27, regarding the believer's union with Christ, "What belongs to him is communicated to us" (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 21:110).

be absent from them in body . . . he will be present with them by his Spirit."[84] Here the Spirit is called "the gift of *the Father,*" because the Father sends the Spirit through the Son's request, when once he returns to the Father's side. In this way, Christ displays his role as mediator in the flesh, obtaining the grace of the Spirit "from the Father," and as God in that he "bestows that grace" of the Spirit from himself. Thus, the Spirit's presence will continue Christ's own ministry to the disciples while he was with them, yet, at an even deeper level.

Calvin marks this ministry through his translation of παράκλητος as "*Comforter*," which he notes is "here applied to both Christ and the Spirit . . . it is an office which belongs equally to both."[85] Yet, there is a distinction in the blessings that come through the particular work of each. Regarding Christ, he was to "appease the wrath of God by atoning for the sins of the world, to redeem men from death, to procure righteousness and life."[86] For the Spirit, it is to "make us partakers not only of Christ himself, but of all his blessings."[87] It is this particular work of the Spirit in making the believer a partaker of "Christ himself . . . [and] all his blessings" that forms the foundation of how God communicates all of his grace to his children. By contrast, the unbelieving world is not able to receive the Spirit because earthly men "despise heavenly illumination" and have the "death of blindness."[88] Conversely, the Spirit can be and is known through "the experience of faith," which is a gift of God to his children.[89]

---

[84] Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:92.

[85]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:92. He draws this conclusion from the use of the demonstrative ἄλλος.

[86]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:92.

[87]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:92–93.

[88]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:95.

[89]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:93.

Therefore, the children who have begun to "live by the Spirit" and have received "eyes to see Christ" are united to him by faith.[90] In this way, the promise of Christ that he will "not leave you as orphans" and that his disciples will "see" him is fulfilled in the risen Christ sending the Spirit. Thus, although the world may no longer be able to "see" Christ physically, his disciples will see him with the "eyes of faith . . . [and will] always have Christ present by his Spirit"[91] and be helped by his protection and care through the Spirit. Although Calvin recognizes the unity of the ministry of the Son and the Spirit, he is also careful—as always—to make a distinction of persons within the Godhead. This exposes several important theological points that are significant to Calvin. First, the work of both the Son and the Spirit gives evidence of their equality with the Father regarding the divine nature.[92] Second, the unity of nature and even of mission between the Son and Spirit does not diminish the "distinction of Persons; for there must be peculiarity in which the Spirit differs from the Son so as to be *another* than the Son."[93] A third point, although Calvin does not use this precise language, is the notion of the inseparable operations of God. The Father, for example, sends the Son to accomplish redemption by the power of the Spirit; the exalted Son, after accomplishing redemption, receives the Spirit whom he sends with the Father to the children to communicate every

---

[90]Calvin gives a tacit argument of the need for regeneration preceding faith, when he later says, "as soon as any man begins to live by the Spirit, he is immediately endued with eyes to see Christ" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:95).

[91]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:94.

[92]As noted above in the introduction to Calvin, this is one of his key contributions to the doctrine of the Trinity. Amid a discussion of Calvin's views against the opposition of Bellarmine and Petavius regarding Calvin's position on the "begotten" referring to person and not essence, Warfield states, "His conception was that, because it is the Person of the Son, and the Person of the Spirit which proceeds from the Persons of the Father and Son, it is precisely the distinguishing property of the Son which is the thing begotten, not the essence common to the Father and Son, and the distinguishing property of the Spirit which is the product of the procession, not the essence which is common to all three persons" (Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 258).

[93]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:93. See also, Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.17.

blessing of the Father that comes through the Son. Each person of the Godhead performs a particular part of redemption—the Father plans, the Son executes, the Spirit enables the Son to fulfill his role in humanity and applies his redemptive accomplishments. Thus, no part of the work can be rightly perceived or accomplished in isolation from the other, and when the work of each person viewed together constitutes the overwhelming grace of God in the Son.

When considered in light of sonship, this gives a striking picture of the divine communion that the children are swept into. Thus, the Spirit who was with the Father enabled the incarnate Son to reveal the Father and, through the Son, he brings believers to share in his life with the Father. In other words, believers share in Christ's own life with the Father through Christ—the Son—with whom the Spirit brings them into union: "Our life is closely connected with the life of Christ, and *proceeds from it*."[94] Calvin brings this out most clearly in reference to verse 20; "that day," for Calvin, is not a reference to Pentecost, but rather the "uninterrupted course, as it were, of a single day, from the time when Christ exerted the power of his Spirit till the last resurrection."[95] However, it appears that Calvin is referring to a time that began at the resurrection, since he immediately marks its initiation as the time in which the disciples had only a "feeble beginning, because the Spirit had not yet wrought so powerfully in them."[96] Although, it may also refer to the time of his baptism by the Spirit when the "power of his Spirit" was manifest to them during his ministry. He is not clear on this point. However, he is clear that the reciprocal language of verse 20 means that by the "efficacy of his Spirit . . . he is the Author and the cause of our life,"[97] which only takes place as a post-ascension reality.

---

[94]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:95. Emphasis mine.

[95]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:95.

[96]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:95.

[97]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:95.

Moreover, it is participation in the life, even the "Divine power" that was manifested in his humanity, through which, by the Spirit, the "Son has conveyed himself entirely to us."[98]

By this same "Divine power" the Spirit enables the children to walk in obedience to the Father out of love for the Son—the only proper motivation. Jesus needs to give this repeated reminder, Calvin notes, since there is "nothing to which we are more prone than to slide into carnal affections, so as to love something else than Christ under the name of Christ."[99] Thus, obedience out of love is the necessary mark of spiritual life and increases the child's experience of God's love. However, the gospel teaches that God's love is antecedent (Rom 5:10; 1 John 4:10) and the believer's love is consequent of having eyes opened by the Spirit to see Christ by faith and, so, to know the love of the Father in the Son and have "the testimony of his love to them . . . engraven on their hearts."[100] He does not deny the evident "cause and effect" relationship inherent in Christ's words, but this refers to the believer's "progress in the knowledge of Christ" (cf. John 15:9–10), not how one merits God's love.[101] In other words, the more full the obedience, the more full the child's knowledge of Christ and the Father's love in him; that is, the Father's love to his children in the Son.

This interlocking of love and obedience and the knowledge of Christ forms the essence of spiritual life in the child of God and is the "extraordinary reward of our love to

---

[98]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:95. Calvin argues forcefully that it is to the church's advantage and the good of Christ's body that he rule over them in a manner different from when he was bodily present (cf. John 7:38–39). In other words, when he would rule from heaven by the Spirit through whom his presence and power enables them to "live blessedly" and "die happily" (Calvin, *Institutes,* 2.16.14).

[99]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:96.

[100]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:96. Spelling in original.

[101]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:97.

Christ."[102] Calvin's statement has three important components. First, Christ himself is at the center of understanding the kind of love the Father has for his children. Second, the knowledge of the Father through the Son is the very essence of spiritual life. Third, it is the Holy Spirit who affects this life and inner spiritual delight in Christ and the Father within the child of God.

The climax to this loving dynamic of sonship through shared life in Christ is found in the declaration of verse 23. Calvin sees here the Father's encouragement to his children that their obedience through the Son is pleasing to Him; for in this obedient response to the Spirit, "they may continually expect from him free additions of gifts."[103] What are these gifts? That the child "will feel that the grace of God dwelleth in him, and will every day receive additions."[104] Such is the overwhelming love of the Father for those in his Son, for the love of which he speaks is from "the time he seals it on our hearts by making us partake of his adoption."[105] In other words, it is the love that specifically comes through our union with the Son, for it is not the Father alone who comes in deep, intimate fellowship, but "he and the Father will come, to confirm believers, in uninterrupted confidence in his grace."[106] For Calvin, the deep inner fellowship of the child with the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit is essential to sonship—as this fellowship is essential to the Son's relationship with the Father (1:1).

---

[102]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:97.

[103]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:98.

[104]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:98.

[105]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:98.

[106]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:99.

John 20:17

In this final statement of Christ, John culminates all that has been revealed regarding the believer's sonship in Christ. Indeed, in dramatic terms, Jesus affirms that the "children of God" (1:12) completely share in his own relationship with the Father, as demonstrated in his humanity. Calvin's first concern is to harmonize Christ's rebuke to Mary with Matthew 28:9 in a way that transitions to John's true intent. Thus, Jesus's rebuke for Mary to "touch me not" was not a prohibition against touching him *per se*, but her excess that sought to keep the resurrected Lord in his present state. In other words, this first appearance was but "half of his resurrection;"[107] its fullness would not be known until he ascended back to the Father and his "heavenly glory." Only upon this latter ascent would he "enter into possession of the kingdom . . . [and] govern the Church by the power of the Spirit" having sat "down at the right hand of the Father."[108] According to Calvin, Jesus is seeking to lift Mary's eyes from this world to the things above (Col 3:1), because it is only upon his return that she will know the greater experience of fellowship with him through the coming ministry of the Spirit. Thus, the full experience of sonship will only be known at the coming of the Spirit upon the Son's return to the Father.

The fact that Christ sends Mary to the "brethren" has, for Calvin, two significant points. First, he is struck with the "mild chastisement" of Christ by sending a woman to the disciples, which is an "inconceivable kindness of Christ, in choosing and appointing *women* to be the witnesses of his resurrection to the Apostles."[109] Second, Jesus's uses of "brethren," Calvin argues, cannot refer to his natural half-brothers and has an echo of Psalm 22:22, applied later in Hebrews 2:12 and is reflected here in Jesus's

---

[107]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:259.

[108]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:259.

[109]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:260. Italics in original.

words. Thus, in the term, "brethren," Calvin sees those with whom Christ is in spiritual fellowship, even as David's "brethren" were fellow Israelites bound together by their common religion and spiritual fellowship. Stated simply, by Christ's use of "brethren," the "right of fraternal alliance with Christ has been confirmed to us" who are "true believers."[110] Calvin does not state it explicitly, but there is a link in John 1:12 and the ἐξουσία that Christ bestows on his own to become sons in him.

Yet, the term "brethren" implies more than the new relationship of Christ to the disciples; it also bears witness to the human nature taken on by the eternal Son.[111] Calvin draws this doctrine from Christ's reference to the Father as his "God," which should be seen in light of his permanent union with humanity. Commenting on this reference in Ephesians 1:17, however, Calvin guards against any diminishing of Christ's divine glory in the hypostatic union: "Let us remember . . . that this relates to his human nature; so that his subjection takes nothing away from his eternal godhead."[112] Nor does it diminish the fact that complete Humanity and complete Divinity apply to his "whole person," maintaining the distinction that Christ is Son by nature and believers are sons by "adoption." Again, Calvin uses the Pauline metaphor to speak of sonship, but while there may be reason to quibble on this point, the essence of Calvin's statement is this: sonship

---

[110]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 4:379.

[111]In the *Institutes* Calvin makes a strong use of this language of "brethren" to argue for the true humanity of Christ, referencing Christ's sharing in "flesh and blood" so that "he might gather his children unto himself to obey God. . . . In these words Christ is clearly declared to be comrade and partner in the same nature with us" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.13.2). Yet, it is not merely the sharing in "flesh and blood" that makes men "brethren" of Christ: "For we know that the children of God are not born of flesh and blood [cf. John 1:13] but of the Spirit through faith. Hence flesh alone does not make the bond of brotherhood . . . when we say that Christ was made man that he might make us children of God, this expression does not extend to all men. For faith intervenes, to engraft us spiritually into the body of Christ" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.13.2). Here, then, the disciples and all the children are "brethren" because the eternal Son did truly share in humanity, redeem it through his sacrifice, and apply this redemption by the Spirit, by whom men are brought to share in his life and kingdom, constitute his body, and participate in his relationship with the Father.

[112]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:212.

is obtained by grace through Christ for "our Father . . . hath adopted us through his Only-begotten Son."[113] This also implies that Calvin sees a parallel between sonship revealed in the Son's humanity that reflects his eternal sonship and in which the children share.

The heart of Calvin's understanding of sonship shines through his comment on Jesus's statement of "My Father and your Father." In his return to the Father, Jesus enters back into the "heavenly life" and draws "believers to heaven along with him," for this is the reason he "rose from the dead."[114] By this drawing his own, the "children of God" come into the "spiritual kingdom, to the heavenly glory, to God himself."[115] In other words, the children come into the full experience of God's presence and fellowship. Christ thus "stretches out his hand to his disciples that they may not seek their happiness anywhere else than in heaven."[116] For it is by the designation of the God and Father of Christ as the believer's own Father in Christ that "he imparts to us the very fountain of blessings."[117] It is in this that the full wonder of sonship in Christ, fellowship with the Father, and the full experience of the Spirit's ministry in the children is known.

First John 3:1–3, 24; 4:13

The theology of John's Gospel regarding sonship is applied and given fuller expression in the first epistle, particularly in the declaration of 1 John 3:1–3. Calvin begins chapter 3 as a new section but understands it as continuing an argument that began in 2:29, namely, that God calls his children to a "holy and pure life," first because "we are gotten after the likeness of Christ" (2:29b); and second, from the "dignity and

---

[113]Calvin, *Commentaries,* 18:263.

[114]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:261.

[115]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:261.

[116]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 18:261.

[117]Calvin, *Commentaries,* 18:262.

excellency" of being "adopted . . . as his children."[118] Thus, the dignity, excellency, and wonder of the new status of "child of God," as well as bearing a nature after the likeness of Christ as an impetus to worship and righteousness, are the reasons for Calvin's inclusion of the passage. Corresponding to this, Calvin emphasizes the "gratuitous" nature of God granting this privilege, which flows only from "mere love of God" in adoption and is utterly apart from human works.[119] In other words, it is not God's response to anything in man but an expression of his own free love in Christ to sinners.

Calvin links the verb καλέω, "to call," to God's promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3), in that God called Abraham "what he was" in the same way he calls believers "sons."[120] As Abraham was called and given a name through which the world should know that he was the recipient of God's grace and the vehicle of God's work in the world, thus the children share in this privilege. And, as with Abraham, the world was unable to see the true glory of his status and so it is with the children of God who are the recipients of his love, unknown by the world. However, the world's ignorance and hostility could cause some of God's own to grow weak and doubtful. Yet, for Calvin, the failure of the world to see the glory of God's children does not diminish the confidence and security they have, though they endure a "thousand miseries . . . [and] innumerable evils" in this world. Thus, the children must be encouraged to look upon what is the true

---

[118]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:201–02. Regarding the former, Calvin uses the language "born of Christ . . . born of God in Christ," which is a bit confusing. Calvin himself acknowledges the ambitious use of the personal pronoun: "It is at the same time uncertain whether he means Christ or God, when he says that they who are born of him do righteousness" (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 22:202), although, the phrases noted above give the impression of the birth as related to the Person of Christ. The editor felt compelled to note that "the new birth is never ascribed to the Son . . . but to the Father or to the Spirit" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:202n1).

[119]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:203.

[120]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:203. Commenting on the promise of Genesis 12:2 in his commentaries, Calvin sees the blessing regarding Abram's name as that "they shall introduce the name of Abram . . . into their formularies of pronouncing benediction" (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 1:347).

state of affairs: "For the Apostle's meaning is this, that we act very foolishly when we estimate what God has bestowed on us according to the present state of things, but that we ought with undoubting faith to hold to that which does not yet appear."[121] John writes as well, then, to encourage the children to have confidence in the status they have been given and God's love for them in bringing it about.

The full experience of what God has granted to the children, however, will be known only when Christ appears.[122] For at his appearing, the children will be like Christ in his glory, in a new body, and free from present corruption.[123] Calvin is careful to explain that this does not mean "that we shall be equal to him . . . but we shall be like him, because he will make our vile body conformable to his glorious body."[124] While the idea of deification is not entertained, he nonetheless places no limits on the future glory

---

[121]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:204. Calvin does not develop it in this section, but in reference to Abraham argues that it is faith in the promise of God alone that compels obedience (*Commentaries,* 1:346). So here it is faith in the promise of God made; yet in context, it is more: it is the power of spiritual union the children share with the Son. Calvin makes a similar point when addressing wrong perceptions of the Christ during the crucifixion (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 17:305–7).

[122]The verb φανερόω "refers to Christ," but Calvin seems to indicate that this is different than its last usage in 2:28 when he says, it "*now* refers to Christ." It is unclear whether Calvin is suggesting the Father as a referent in 2:28. However, this would make little sense, since his comments on v. 28 allude to the "apprehension of Christ" in reference to confidence at "his" coming. This point is of little consequence to the argument, however. The main thrust of his argument is that God bids his children to wait for their glory to be revealed until such a time as Christ is "manifested in the power of his kingdom" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:205).

[123]Calvin does not, by this, cross the bounds of deification that have Christians sharing or being absorbed into the divine nature. He is careful to make this distinction while commenting on 2 Pet 1:4, "Let us then mark, that the end of the gospel is, to render us eventually conformable to God, and, if we may so speak, to deify us. But the word *nature* is not here essence but quality" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:371. Italics in original.). In other words, there is no absorption of the human into the divine any more than Christ's human nature was absorbed into his divine nature. Rather, there is the quality of glory and righteousness that is intrinsic to God's essence, communicated to and experienced in man inasmuch as humanity was designed with the capacity to be reflected; that is, as much as it is reflected through the humanity of Christ (cf. Derek W. H. Thomas, "The Mediator of the Covenant," in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*, ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback, 215–19; Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12–15).

[124]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:205. In fact, he places much emphasis on the remaining corruption within the believer that awaits final destruction.

of adopted children in sharing in the full experience of the glorified humanity of Christ. Calvin notes, "For the Apostle intended shortly to shew that the final end of our adoption is, that what has in order preceded in Christ, shall at length be completed in us."[125] In typical fashion, Calvin refrains from esoteric speculation and stays tethered to the text of Scripture. From this position he acknowledges the apostle's simple point, namely, to encourage God's children with the unfading hope for Christ's return and the pursuit of holiness in light of it: "This hope will excite and stimulate us to follow purity, for it leads us straight to Christ, whom we know to be a perfect pattern of purity."[126]

The latter statement more specifically links the life of Christ to the life of the believer in the practical outworking of the Son's life in believers in the world. This certainty of faith in the children and the evidence of Christ's life worked out in the world is the work of the Spirit, from whom union with Christ and every benefit is granted. Nothing the believer does, has, or experiences is apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, John's statements in 3:24 and 4:13 are, for Calvin, summaries of the spiritual life and proof of the Spirit in the children. Indeed, there is no abiding of God in the children, or the children in God, apart from the presence of the Spirit. This is a paradigmatic point that establishes the presence of the Spirit throughout the epistle in all of the works that are credited to him—e.g., faith, love, etc.—even though he is not specifically mentioned by name.

---

[125]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:205. Interestingly, Calvin feels the need to address those who claim that the sight spoken of here will not differ from believers, for both shall see him in glory. However, Calvin makes this distinction: the wicked will see him in dread and terror, while the children will see him in "a new and an ineffable manner" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:206). He seems to mean by this that the children will see him in a more pure and full sight of his essence and with far superior comprehension than the children can now enjoy only by faith. Thus, Calvin compares the littleness of sight now with Paul's statement in 1 Cor 13:12, "We see now through a glass, darkly," and Moses's experience of seeing God's "back" on the mountain (Exod 33:23). Indeed, "God now presents himself to be seen by us, not such as he is, but such as we can comprehend" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:106).

[126]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:207.

In tandem with Paul's emphases on the believer's confidence that is sourced in the presence of the Spirit by he prompts an obedient life and the inner cry of the child, "Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:14–15), John also grounds this confidence in the fruit the Spirit produces. Calvin established this same point in the *Institutes*,[127] "One can know they are a child when his Spirit rules and governs our life."[128] Of course, Calvin does not deny the internal testimony of the Spirit evident in the reciprocal language of "abiding," but neither does he emphasize it as one might expect—particularly in light of his tendency to appeal to what the children "feel" within themselves by the motions of the Spirit.[129] Thus, "Whatever good works are done by us, proceed from the grace of the Spirit,"[130] through whom the children are united to the Son and by whom God abides in the children and they in him.

In an almost parallel statement in 4:13, Calvin affirms, "Since love is from the Spirit of God, we cannot truly and with a sincere heart love the brethren, except the Spirit puts forth his power. In this way he testifies that he dwells in us."[131] Indeed, in one of the most comprehensive statements regarding the Spirit and the children, Calvin aptly states, "God does not abide in us, except his Spirit dwells in us." In other words, there is no life, power, love, or presence of God the Father or of Christ the Son apart from the indwelling ministry of the Spirit. Thus, while the Spirit is not directly addressed, he is rightly seen as the divine agent or Mediator that communicates every benefit and blessing of God that comes to the children through Christ. The Spirit is the one through whom the life of the Son is communicated and abides in the children in Christ.

---

[127]Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.43.

[128]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:227.

[129]Cf. Calvin, *Commentaries,* 22:174, 204–5, 219, 220, 224, 239, 257, 261.

[130]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:227.

[131]Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22:243.

John Gill (1697–1771)

The following section introduces the person, works, and context of John Gill. While Gill has a distinct emphasis in his theology—the *pactum salutis*—and context in which he writes, he, like Calvin was instrumental in advancing the understanding of the Spirit and the idea of sonship, particularly as it relates to Christ. The similarities and distinctions between Gill and Calvin will be briefly addressed, although not stressed; the primary goal is to consider Gill's thought and treatment of the same Johannine texts on its own merits.

Gill's Works and Theology

John Gill, a Particular Baptist, stands in the line of Reformation theologians who guarded and advanced the doctrine of the Trinity and, consequently, the Spirit of sonship. He is, also, one of the most prolific writers of the Christian church.[132] Recognized to possess an extraordinary intellect from a very early age, this giftedness—mixed with deep devotion, diligence, and spirituality—produced a massive treasury of biblical and theological material.[133] Indeed, this literary fruit affords him, among others,

---

[132]Particular Baptists were a part of the dissenting movement consisting of Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, and were distinguished by antipaedobaptism, congregationalism, and affirmation of Calvinistic doctrines of grace. Relating the Particular Baptist to the dissenting groups, Robert W. Oliver says that "in their understanding of salvation . . . [they] were closer to the Independents and Presbyterians than they were to the General Baptist" (Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists (1771–1892): From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* [East Peoria, IL; Versa Press, 2006], xviii).

[133]Gill's massive output of written material caused the prolific Spurgeon himself to proclaim, "He was always at work; it is difficult to know when he slept, for he wrote 10,000 folio pages of theology" (C. H. Spurgeon, *Commenting on Commentaries* [London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876], 9, quoted by Robert W. Oliver, "John Gill (1697–1771)," *The British Particular Baptist: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin [Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998], 160). In fact, John Rippon suggests, "It would, perhaps, try the constitutions of half the *literati* in *England* to *read*, with care and attention, the whole of what he *wrote*" (John Rippon, "Memoir of Dr. Gill," in *The Baptist Commentary Series,* vol. 1, *John Gill's-Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* [repr., Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989], lxxxii). The "Memoir" material that begins the nine-volume set of commentaries is anonymous, although the same content was published by Rippon under the title, *The Life and Writings of the Rev. John Gill D.D.* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1992). All the quotations in this paper will be taken from the article "Memoirs" in volume 1 of the commentary set and assigned to Rippon.

these two distinctions: he is "the first person to complete a verse-by-verse commentary on the whole of Scripture in the English language"[134] and "the first Baptist to write a complete systematic theology."[135] Like Calvin, Gill understood the intimate and inextricable relationship between sound exegesis and the necessity of systematizing the body of truth found in Scripture.[136]

There is one interesting distinction between Calvin and on Gill on this point. For Calvin, the *Institutes* were written in nascent form at the beginning of his literary career, with the intention of providing a framework of theology by which to shed light on his commentaries. Gill, on the other hand, "having completed an Exposition of the whole Bible" only then had the idea "to enter upon a Scheme of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity," and in that order.[137] Moreover, Gill's commentaries are "twice the length of Calvin's own comments,"[138] which highlights yet another practical distinction. For

---

[134] Oliver, "John Gill," 161.

[135]Thomas K. Ascol, "John Gill's Approach to New Testament Exposition," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 113. Ella notes that this places him "in the traditions of the Reformers and Puritans" (George M. Ella, *John Gill and The Cause of God and Truth* [Durahm, NC: Go Publications, 1995], 112).

[136]Gill begins his significant work *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* with a defense of the task of systematizing the Bible's teachings. Muller helpfully summarizes this apology, noting that "for Gill, the justification of theology or, as he calls it, 'systematical divinity' arises from the fact that virtually all arts and sciences are presented in systematic form, which is nothing other than 'an assemblage or composition of the several doctrines or parts' of the discipline. Inasmuch as 'evangelical truths' are 'scattered about' in Scripture, there can be no harm in presenting them 'in a regular, orderly method, for the sake of understanding, indeed, of retaining these truths in the memory. . . . Systematic Divinity intends to be nothing other than an orderly exposition of the doctrinal contents of Scripture" (Richard M. Muller, "John Gill and the Reformed Tradition: A Study in the Reception of Protestant Orthodoxy in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin [Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997], 57). Gill goes on to argue from examples in Scripture, such as the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, and the NT mention of "a *form of doctrine delivered*" (John Gill, *A Complete Doctrinal and Practical Body of Divinity: Or A System of Evangelical Truths Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* [repr., Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1984], xxxvi–xxxviii).

[137]Gill, "Introduction," *Body of Divinity*, xxxv.

[138]Ascol, "Gill's Approach to New Testament Exposition," 115. The relationship between Gill and Calvin as significant theologians and exegetes within the Reformed tradition is fairly simple to observe

Calvin, the goal of his commentaries was brevity and clarity; for Gill, it was to leave no stone unturned and to demonstrate "scholarly integrity in handling sacred texts."[139]

However, in spite of the utmost commitment to Scripture as the foundation of theology, Gill's rigorous theological system—as with Calvin—was, at times, imposed upon the text itself.[140] This tendency is noted by Richard Muller, who observes that the *Pactium Salutis*, or the eternal covenant of redemption between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, "tended in Gill's system to become the basis for interpreting all other doctrine."[141] While this propensity can be observed in many places throughout his commentaries, this priority of the *Pactium Salutis* in his theology also bore several other theological

---

(cf. Ascol, "John Gill's Approach to New Testament Exposition," 124n48). However, the question of Gill's dependence on Calvin in either his ministry or theology is a disputed matter. Richard Muller argues that the "heritage on which Gill drew is rightly identified as 'Reformed' rather than as 'Calvinist,' and that, given the breadth of this tradition, attempts to assess Gill's theology by appeals to or comparisons with John Calvin (1509–1664) as well as the frequent identification of Gill's thought as 'Hyper-Calvinist' are, at best, less than helpful" (Richard A. Muller, "John Gill and the Reformed Tradition: A Study in the Reception of Protestant Orthodoxy in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, 52). He goes on to note that "Calvin's theology, though obviously an antecedent, does not loom as large among Gill's sources as does the theology of major English and continental Reformed thinkers of the era of 'Scholastic orthodoxy,' primarily of the seventeenth century" (Muller, "Reformed Tradition," 53). The comparison with Calvin, in this paper, is not to use Calvin's theology as a starting point to understand Gill, but, rather, to note the parallels and divergences between the two men as important theologians and exegetes of the same "Reformed" tradition.

[139]Ascol, "John Gill's Approach to New Testament Exposition," 116. George Ella identifies this same tendency in relation to Gill's defense of the deity of Christ and baptism, when he notes, "the massive amount of work Gill put into refuting them lacks the skill and polish of his more scholarly and less controversial works. Often we find Gill in his thoroughness bogged down in the mire of non-essentials in his effort to give a through refutation of anti-Baptist criticism" (Ella, *John Gill*, 110).

[140]This potentiality is also recognized by Ascol, who notes, "Gill was both an exegetical theologian and a theological exegete. . . . Gill's theological understanding always informed his exegesis by operating as the framework for biblical interpretation" (Ascol, "John Gill's Approach to New Testament Exposition," 124). Later, he adds, "At times . . . this zeal causes him to find doctrinal significance in words and phrases which are best regarded differently" (Ascol, "John Gill's Approach to New Testament Exposition," 126). Oliver, also, identifies this tendency in relation to Gill's supposed hyper-Calvinism; referencing Gill's *The Cause of God and Truth*, Oliver notes, "The work retains its usefulness although there are places where Gill bursts the limits of sound exegesis to sustain a Hyper-Calvinist position" (Oliver, "John Gill," in Haykin, *The British Particular Baptist 1638–1910*, 160).

[141]Richard A. Muller, "The Spirit and the Covenant: John Gill's Critique of the *Pactum Salutis*," *Foundations* 24, no. 1 (January–March 1981): 4.

consequences.[142] Some of these are (1) equating the eternal decrees of adoption and justification with their essence—i.e., they are eternal realities realized in time by the elect; (2) the covenant of grace was made equally by the will of the Father, Son, and Spirit giving a strong sense of the inseparable operations of God; and (3) it also left him open to accusations of hyper-Calvinism[143] and "Doctrinal Antinomianism."[144]

Gill's Trinitarian proclivity also made him a passionate defender of the doctrine of the Trinity and the eternal sonship of Christ against the revived error of ancient Arianism and the contemporary error of Sociniasm in his day.[145] It is also within

---

[142]Gill also engaged in several other theological battles in the course of his ministry that will not be addressed separately here—e.g., supralapsarianism and the "Modern Question," good works and salvation, paedo-baptism—but will be briefly mentioned in the review of Gill's Johannine exegesis. However, regarding the question of supra– or sublapsarianism, Gill, himself, saw elements of truth in both positions. Rippon, quoting from Gill, writes, "For my own part, I think both [schemes] may be taken in" (Rippon, "Memoirs," xlviii). In other words, Gill saw truth in each system, but the material point was that salvation is totally a gracious act of God utterly apart from human merit and to God's glory alone.

[143]The issue of whether Gill was a hyper-Calvinist or not is debated. Oliver notes that hyper-Calvinism was a peculiar problem for the Particular Baptist (Oliver, , *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists (1771–1892)*, 14–15), and even Rippon records that Gill often failed to call men to repentance and faith (Rippon, "Memoirs," xlvi–xlviii). However, Oliver also notes that Gill was not cold to the plight of the unregenerate, and Ascol argues that Gill implicitly called men to faith, referencing particular sermons (Ascol, "New Testament Exposition," 122). In another work, Oliver suggests that the lack of explicit evangelism may have historical reasons as well, noting that the Act of Toleration (1689) did not allow Dissenters to extend their worship beyond the bounds of an assigned meeting place, which contributed to their deficiency in evangelism (Oliver, "John Gill," in *The British Particular Baptist 1638–1910*, 147). Nonetheless, according to Oliver, "There can be no doubt that Gill denied the free offer of the gospel. . . . Modern attempts to argue that Gill was not a Hyper-Calvinist have not been convincing" (Oliver, "John Gill," in *The British Particular Baptist 1638–1910*, 161). However, it appears that Gill's implicit calls "couched . . . in second-person address with its imperative mood" were clear enough, but his disagreement with universal calls and lack of the clarity found in, say, Whitfield, or the later Spurgeon, seems to be the source of much of the confusion (Gregory A. Wills, "A Fire That Burns Within: The Spirituality of John Gill," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill*, 205–10).

[144]Distinguishing between "Practical Antinomianism," which was a justification for licentiousness, and "Doctrinal Antinomianism," which was a strong denial of works as having a part in salvation, Curt Daniels argues that Gill was neither (Daniels, "Calvinistic Antinomianism," 187). Following the Reformed three-fold distinction of the Law as ceremonial, judicial, and moral, Daniels summarizes Gill: "The law has been done away with as a Covenant of Works, in the hands of Moses, and as a source of terror and cursing to the believer. Yet it continues as a rule of walk and conversation, in the hands of Christ" (Daniels, "Calvinistic Antinomianism," 187).

[145]Haykin argues that the Particular Baptists' commitment to Trinitarianism kept them moored to orthodoxy "while other communities, such as the Presbyterians and General Baptists largely ceased to be

this Trinitarian focus that he specifically advanced the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by including him in the *Pactum Salutis*, giving him an equal role along with the Father and Son in the eternal covenant of redemption.[146] However, Gill's emphasis on the individual participation of each person of the Godhead in the *pactum salutis* was so strong, it also left him open to the charge of Tritheism.[147] This accusation was clearly false, but his emphasis produced interesting language that over communicated a sense of consensual obligation among the persons of the Trinity. A foretaste of this can be seen in Heinrich Heidegger (1633–1698), an antecedent theologian in Gill's theological ancestry, noted that the Father agreed with the Son, requisite the Son's perfect obedience, to give him a people and seed; the Son, "In promising this obedience to God the Father and producing it in the literal act, *demanded of him in turn* the right to demand this seed for himself as an inheritance and perquisite."[148] While Gill's language is softer than that of Heidegger,

---

Trinitarian" (Michal A. G. Haykin, "Andrew Fuller and the Defense of Trinitarian Communities," *American Baptist Historical Society* 32, nos. 3–4 [Fall–Winter 2013], 260). For an overview of the various theological and contemporary issues of this time, see also, Tim J. R. Trumper, *When History Teaches Us Nothing: The Recent Reformed Sonship Debate in Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 1–32.

[146]Muller identifies Gill's concern that the "*pactum* did not give proper place to the Spirit and that when that place was described the antinomian structure could only be strengthened" (Muller, "Spirit and the Covenant," 5). Haykin summarizes Muller as putting forth the inclusion of the Spirit as Gill's "distinctive contribution" to Trinitarian understanding and wonders why some contemporary authors, such as Robert Letham, fail to recognize Gill's advancement to the doctrine of the Trinity (Michael A. G. Haykin, "'Glory to the Three Eternal': Benjamin Beddome and the Teaching of Trinitarian Theology in the Eighteenth Century," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 [Spring 2006]: 74). Although not attaching this statement to Gill's revision of the *pactum salutis*, Ella suggests that Gill "must certainly be listed with the earliest and greatest pioneers of the work of the Holy Spirit in the eighteenth century" (Ella, *John Gill*, 17).

[147]Muller, "The Spirit and the Covenant," 9. Gill's strong emphasis on the consent of each person to participate in the plan of redemption presented by the Father in the covenant of grace makes the charge understandable, even if untrue (cf. Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.7–14).

[148]Heinrich Heinrich Heidegger, *Corpus Theologiae*, quoted in Muller, "Spirit and Covenant," 5. Emphasis mine. In this statement, the Son makes a demand on the Father, which appears to eliminate the eternal distinction of authority and submission within the persons of the Godhead. In other words, it seems to remove the idea that the revelation of the Godhead *ad extra* is consistent with their relation *ad intra*. However, although Gill gives general approval of Heidegger (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.6), Gill himself does not always speak consistently on this point. For example, when addressing the Father as the focus of prayer in Mattthew 6:9, Gill notes that in one sense each person of the Godhead is a Father to men because

he often speaks of the Son agreeing with and making requests of the Father based on the Father's promises and entering into discussion about the Father's will.[149]

However, Gill is not always consistent on the precise relations between the Godhead regarding *ad intra* and *ad extra*. In one sense, he suggests the distinct roles of the persons of the Godhead exhibited in redemption are assumed only within the structure of the covenant and are not precisely reflective of eternal relations regarding authority and submission. Yet, in other places, the roles are consistent with the nature of personhood within the immanent Trinity. Muller touches on this by noting, "Gill adapts to his exposition of covenant as an immanent and personal act of the Trinity the early orthodox distinction between the Son considered as God according to essence and the Son subordinated to the Father in his mediatorial work."[150] Thus, for Gill, it is only in the Son's role as mediator that he assumes the role of submission to the Father. However, Gill is careful to dismiss the idea that the roles are arbitrary, arguing,

> Those who place it to the economy of the Persons in the redemption of men, have been urged with this, that if it was so, he that is called the Father, might have been called the Son; and he that is called the Son, might have been called the Father; which has so pressed them, that they have been obliged to own, that so it might have been, if it had so seemed to God, and been agreeable to his will.[151]

---

of the shared act of creation, but in relation to the spiritual children in prayer "the true order and manner of prayer . . . is to be made to the Father, the first Person; not because of priority of nature, but of order in the Deity" (Gill, *Practical Divinity*, 3.6). This statement is placed within the context of their roles in redemption, but demonstrates Gill's sense of relational priority that is intrinsic to their eternal person's. Thus, while Gill argues that each person is equal and without "superiority and inferiority" (Gill*, Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.6), nonetheless the Father's council is "debated and advised about" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.6) among the Godhead.

[149]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 5.11.

[150]Muller, "Spirit and Covenant," 7. However, in his treatise on the Trinity Gill argues, "The Mediatorfhip of Chrift is not the foundation of his Sonfhip, but his Sonfhip is the foundation of his Mediatorfhip" (John Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity, Stated and Vindicated. Being the Substance of Several Discourses on that Important Subject; Reduc'd into the Form of a Treatise*, a digitally scanned copy from the British Library by ECCO print editions [London: Aaron Ward and H. Whitridge, 1731], 166). Spelling in original has been kept. This would seem to imply that the *characteristics* of his role as mediator reflect those of his sonship that are, in turn, shared by those who are children in Christ.

[151]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6. In a succinct manner, Gill stated just prior to the above,

This is to say that whatever distinguishes them in their persons "must be as early as the existence of God itself . . . [it] must exist from eternity.[152] Indeed, regarding the "works of God *ad extra* . . . had they never been wrought, he would have been just the same as he is in his Being, Perfections, and Persons."[153] For Gill, the distinction lies in the designation of begetter, begotten, and spirated:

> To come to the point; it is the personal relations, or distinctive relative properties, which belong to each Person which distinguish them one from another; as paternity in the first Person, filiation in the second, and spiration in the third; or more plainly, it is *begetting* . . . it is being *begotten* . . . the relative property, or personal relation of the third Person is, that he is *breathed* by the first and second.[154]

Of these distinctions, Gill places particular emphasis on the Son as begotten, in understanding the revelation of the Trinity: "Upon the whole, it is easy to observe, that the distinction of Persons in the Deity, depends on the generation of the Son; take away that, which would destroy the relation between the first and second Persons, and the distinction drops."[155] He goes on to note that this "Sonship of Christ is an article of the greatest importance in the Christian religion."[156] It is on this basis that Gill argues for the eternal generation of the Son by which he is eternally the Son of the Father. Moreover, this eternal generation is reflective of a priority of order, not of time—contra Arianism.[157] Although, regarding order, he is careful to present the work of creation and the plan of redemption as originating with the Father who stands as first among the persons of the

---

"From generation arises the relation, and from relation distinct personality," which speak of "modes of subsistence; and so distinguish persons" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6).

[152]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.1.

[153]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.2. Yet, each work is "common to all the three Persons" (Gill, *Divinity*, 1.28.2).

[154]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6.

[155]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6.

[156]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6.

[157]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6.

Godhead.[158]

Gill's argument from the eternity of God also encompasses another, more controversial, aspect of his theology. In chapters 4 and 5 of Book 2, under a section titled, "Of The Eternal Union of the Elect of God Unto Him" and "Of Other Eternal and Immanent Acts in God, Particularly Adoption and Justification," Gill insists on using language that equates God's immanent and eternal will with the essence of the thing willed.[159] Specifically, Gill spoke often of eternal justification, eternal sonship/adoption, and eternal union with Christ.[160] In Gill's words, "The union of God's elect unto him, their adoption by him, justification before him, and acceptance with him, being eternal, internal, and immanent acts in God."[161] This is to say that the justification and union of the adopted in Christ is an eternal reality that is *realized* in time through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.[162] Thus, the Holy Spirit, in Gill's understanding, bears witness to the

---

[158]For example, Gill states, "The Father, the first person in the Trinity, takes the first place and gives the lead in this covenant . . . they are of him originally, they begin with him; all things in creation . . . and so all things in the salvation of men" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.8). Indeed, the consent of the Son and Spirit is to the presentation of the Father's plan and their consent is to yield to the will and authority of the Father in that plan. It is difficult to see why the implication of this regarding the Son's personal relation to the Father *ad intra* is denied by Gill. Regarding the sonship of the children, it appears that, for Gill, it is reflected in Christ's role as Son in mediation only. However, the Son's role in mediation, according to Gill, is reflective of his eternal divine person and his economic relationship with the Father and Spirit.

[159]In Gill's own words, he introduces the topic of eternal union, writing, "The union of God's elect unto him, their adoption by him, justification before him, and acceptance with him, being eternal internal, and immanent acts in God; I know not where better to place them . . . than next to the decrees of God, and particularly the decree of election" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.5.4).

[160]It is these positions that also left Gill open to the charges of antinomianism, since, as Oliver notes, "The doctrine of eternal justification had been fiercely debated in the previous century when it was associated with antinomianism" (Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists [1771–1892]*, 7).

[161]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.4.

[162]Relating this scheme to justification, Curt Daniels clarifies the distinction within Calvinism: "Most Calvinists would sketch the *order salutis* thus: regeneration-faith-justification. Gill, however, would make it justification-regeneration-faith. . . . Gill's order serves to place all the emphasis on divine grace rather than human response" (Daniel, "Calvinistic Antinomianism," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill*, 185).

reality that *already is*; he does not bring it about essentially, but experientially. Gill's language is, admittedly, problematic, although his multiple clarifications exonerate him of many of the accusations leveled against him.[163]

When discussing the eternal union of the elect with Christ, Gill begins by noting that he is not talking about "any time-acts of union," whether of the Son becoming incarnate, or the moment in time when the elect are made to experience the reality of adoption or justification.[164] Rather, he continues, "I shall consider the union of the elect to God, as it is in its original, and as an eternal immanent act in God; and which is no other than the going forth of his heart in love to them, and thereby uniting them to himself . . . it is of a cementing and uniting nature; and, indeed, is the bond of union between God and his chosen people."[165] As with every act of God, this love-bond is fully Trinitarian and as eternal and real as the love that exists between the persons of the Godhead.[166]

Although strongly Trinitarian, Gill maintains a distinctly Christological focus in his explanation of this union. This is because "union to Christ is the first thing, the first blessing of grace flowing from love and effected by it; and hence is the application of all others."[167] Therefore, in discussing the "several branches" of the eternal union of the elect to God, he begins with "election-union in Christ," which Gill understands as "a

---

[163]Interestingly, Gill's use of language falls under the same criticism he issued in defense of charges of Antinomianism leveled against Tobias Crisp, in which Gill stated, "I do not like the expressions, but am of the opinion they ought to be disused" (quoted in Daniel, "Calvinistic Antinomianism," 180–81).

[164]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.4.

[165]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity,* 2.4.

[166]Indeed, Gill states, "The love of Christ to the elect, is as early as that of his Father's love to him and them," and later, "for it is the everlasting love of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, which is the bond of the union of God's elect to the sacred three; they have all three loved the elect with an everlasting love" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity,* 2.4.).

[167]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.4.4.

being in Christ, a kind of subsistence in him," not, however, an "actual," but rather a "representative being."[168] By this Gill means to say that although the elect were not yet in existence—for election took place in eternity and before the foundation of the world—they were represented in the mind and will of God and, therefore, partakers of "grants of grace made to them in Christ."[169] From this "election-union," flows the remaining "conjugal union," "federal union," and "legal union."[170] The essential theological point undergirding each of these is this: the bond of union of love between God and the elect is the foundation of every act of redemption throughout the history of man and ultimately accomplished in Christ.

This assertion is advanced by Gill in two key areas: adoption and justification.[171] Adoption "stands next to election" and, therefore, is chief among the two. Yet, these two doctrinal points are paired because they share this in common: both are eternal, but distinct, acts that find their essence in the will of God and take place outside the sinner.[172] Relating this point to adoption, Gill notes, "It is an act of God's will, and has its complete essence in it."[173] Marshaling support from Baxter, he argues that, as with adoption, justification is an eternal act in the mind and will of God and, therefore, a

---

[168]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.4.1. He later explains that "when these grants were made, and blessings bestowed, they were not in actual being, only had a representative one in Christ their head; hence grace is said to be given them *in Christ Jesus*, before the world began" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.10).

[169]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.4.1. Quoting Goodwin with approval, Gill notes the elect were, in a real sense, in the womb of Christ.

[170]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.4.2, 3, 4. The various aspects of these "branches" will be briefly discussed in the review of Gill's Johannine exegesis.

[171]Oliver notes that eternal justification was condemned by the "confessions of the seventeenth century" (Oliver, "John Gill," *The British Particular Baptists 1638–1910*, 161).

[172]Gill states, "I am of the opinion they are distinct blessings of grace, and so to be considered; adoption is a distinct thing from either justification or pardon" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9).

[173]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.5.1.

reality before its execution in time.[174] Thus, he notes, "Faith is not the cause, but an effect of justification; it is not the cause of it in any sense; it is not the moving cause, that is the free grace of God . . . nor is it the efficient cause . . . nor even the instrumental cause."[175] In other words, "The reason why any are justified, is not because they have faith; but the reason why they have faith, is because they are justified . . . faith is the evidence and manifestation of justification."[176] He later emphatically states that "a man is as much justified before as after it, *in the account of God*,"[177] which he then defends on the grounds that the OT saints were justified before the actual death of Christ, but based on the surety of it through the same instrumentality of faith.

Gill uses this same argument in relation to adoption: the elect are eternally sons in Christ, although this sonship is only realized in time when the Spirit applies the work

---

[174]Gill answers the objection "that strictly and accurately speaking, it cannot be said that justification is eternal, because the decree of justification is one thing, and justification itself another" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.5.1.2.2). In other words, God's will of "non-imputation" of sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect give justification its "complete essence." Against the argument that the will to justify and justification even as the will to sanctify and sanctification are two different things, Gill makes a distinction between justification and sanctification: sanctification, though willed is not realized; for, "his will to sanctify, is not sanctification, because that is a work wrought in men" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.5.1.2.3). Gill does a valiant job defending the language of "eternal justification" and maintaining solidly Reformed definitions, but, in the end, fails to convince that this is the most helpful language to discuss the doctrine.

[175]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.5.1.2.

[176]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.5.1.2.

[177]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.5.1.2. He answers the objection more specifically in 2.5.1.2.5. There he essentially argues that he is speaking of the will of God *not the experience of it by men*. Secondly, that those Scriptures that speak if justification received through faith are speaking only of the individuals interest in and comfort from justification, not its actual accomplishment. Moreover, regarding the objection that all outside of justification are dead in sin, Gill answers that the elect are "considered under two different heads," namely, that of Adam and that of Christ. Those in Christ are justified in Christ before the experience of it; this is evidenced in the fact that the elect are loved by God while yet they were children of wrath. The essence of his position is that justification for the elect is sentenced and procured in Christ in eternity, accomplished in time by Christ death, and applied in time to those already justified in Christ as the federal head of his people. Gill's primary goal was to remove the very possibility of works or any kind of synergism in God's act of justification. Yet, it would have been better to simply say that faith is the instrument by which what was granted in eternity, settled in the heart of God, is made actual in the life of the elect/adopted; before this however, the elect were spiritually dead (Eph 2:1–3).

of Christ—consistent with his agreement in the *Pactum Salutis*. The end result of Gill's theology—in relation to the Spirit of sonship—is this: the elect's sonship in Christ is an eternal reality, grounded in Trinitarian love, accomplished in time by Christ, and applied and affirmed in time by the Spirit who brings the children into the experience and enjoyment of their eternal possession. In this sense, the Spirit is the Spirit of adoption in that he regenerates, grants faith, conforms to the image of Christ, and so affirms—in every way—the sonship of the elect. Although Gill advanced the role of the Spirit within a Trinitarian framework of redemption, the Spirit is presented, in a sense, more independent of Christ than in Calvin who placed a greater stress on his union with Christ. Certainly Gill acknowledges that every blessing is in Christ and that the Spirit is the divine person who applies these to the believer. Yet, his *stress* on the child's union with God in the bond of love, rather than with Christ by the Spirit, as well as his emphasis on the distinct work of each person of the Trinity, has the effect of creating a greater degree of separation in the believer's relationship with God than is found in Calvin. In other words, Gill's highlight on the covenant makes the believer's relation to the Godhead through Christ more about their covenant roles than their eternal personal relations within the Trinity.

Gill's Exegesis of Selected Johannine Passages

As will Calvin, the following section will consider Gill's treatment of the selected eight Johannine passages related to the Spirit of sonship. The primary focus will be Gill's arguments and explanations drawn from his commentaries. However, these comments will also interact with the same concepts and passages found in his *Body of Divinity*. Special attention will be paid to his understanding of the Spirit as the divine person who applies the work of Christ to the children and engrafts them into the life of the Son with the Father.

John 1:12–13

Gill begins his exposition of John's gospel with a strong and straightforward argument for the essential and divine nature of Christ as the eternal Son of God. The burden of his comments on verse 1 is to clearly demarcate what belongs to Christ in his divine nature from that which he assumed in the incarnation: "That this is said not of the written word, but of the essential word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is clear, from all that said from hence, to ver. 14, as that this word was in the beginning, was with God, and is God."[178] The eternal and divine Word is the eternal Son of God (cf. vv. 14, 18), distinct from the Father, but of the same divine essence.[179] With this beginning, Gill links the eternal Word with the identification of Christ as the Son and removes the argument that "begotten" is a reference to his human rather than divine nature. At this point, Gill follows—whether intentionally or not—the general argument of Calvin by asserting that the Word is the expression of the mind of God: "for as the word, whether silent or expressed, is the birth of the mind, the image of it, equal to it, and distinct from it; so Christ is the only-begotten of the father, the express image of his person, in all things equal to him, and a distinct person from him."[180]

---

[178]*John Gill's–Exposition of the Old & New Testaments,* in *The Baptist Commentary Series, vol. 1* (repr., Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989), 7:737. He then adds that "subsistence, deity, eternity, and the creation of all things" could never be ascribed to the humanity of Christ (Gill, *Exposition*, 7:37). Gill provides a fuller and clear orthodox statement regarding the person of Christ when commenting on v. 14: "When he is said to be *made* flesh, this was not done by the change of one nature into another, the divine into the human, or the word into a man; but by the assumption of the human nature, the word, taking it into personal union with himself; whereby the natures are not altered; Christ remained what he was, and became what he was not; nor were they confounded, and blended together, and so make a third nature . . . but are so united as to be but one person" (Gill, *Exposition*, 7:44).

[179]Gill notes the anarthrous use of θεός is repeated in vv. 6, 13, 18 in reference to the Father and shows that "the word *God,* is not the subject, but the predicate of this preposition" (Gill, *Exposition*, 739. Italics in original.). Therefore, John's statement affirms, not undermines the deity and distinction of the person of the Son as God.

[180]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:37. Whether Gill is thinking of Calvin's explanation of λόγος as the "Speech" cannot be verified since Gill makes no mention of him. However, Gill is very much like Calvin who explained that "he is the lively image of His purpose; for, as Speech is said to be among men the image of the mind, so it is not inappropriate to apply this to God, and to say that He reveals himself to us by his Speech" (Calvin, *Commentaries,* 17:26). Embedded in a discussion on the eternal generation of the Son,

This emphasis on the equality and distinction of the Son is taken up, again, in reference to the preposition πρός. Gill along with Calvin makes the distinction between the person of the Son from the Father within the one divine essence. Thus, the preposition highlights the eternal word in the "council and covenant of grace, and in the creation of the universe, and is with him in the providential government of the world; he was with him as the word and son of God in heaven, whilst he as man, was here on earth."[181] In this last statement, Gill suggests an insight into the spiritual life of the incarnate Son in fellowship with the Father. Commenting on verse 18, he states that the Son was in "the bosom of the father," which "denotes unity of nature, and essence, in the father and son . . . his being at the same time, as the son of God in the bosom of his father, when here on earth, as the son of man."[182] Thus, Gill maintains a distinction between the Son of God as the divine person incarnate, who was eternally with the Father in heaven, and the son of man, who is the incarnate son in union with humanity.[183] Yet, he also provides a link to the unbreakable bond of divine fellowship eternally known and enjoyed between the Father and the Son. While the form, in some sense, was adjusted and commensurate with the new condition of the incarnation, the essence of it was unchanged.

This connects, tangentially, to another common theme throughout both Gill's

---

Gill builds on this same concept of the relationship between the mind and thought: "Now if our finite created spirits, or minds, are capable of generating thought, the internal word or speech, and that without any motion, change, or alteration, without any diminution and corruption, without division of their nature or multiplication of their essence; then in an infinitely more perfect manner can God, an infinite uncreated spirit, beget his Son, the eternal Word, wisdom, reason, and understanding, in his eternal mind, which he never was without, nor was he before it" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6).

[181]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:738.

[182]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:746.

[183]Interestingly, Gill—in accord with his vast knowledge of Jewish literature—draws support for his arguments from both Philo and the Targums. In fact, Gill suggests that "it is much more probable, that Plato had his notion of the *Logos*, or word, out of the writings of the Old Testament than that John should take this phrase . . . from him" (Gill, *Exposition*, 7:737–38).

commentary and *Body of Divinity,* namely, the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Specifically, he is careful to show that every work of God is a manifestation of the one divine essence; yet, each work is in accord with the specific role of each person within the Godhead. Thus, in verse 3, while John's emphasis is on the creative power of the eternal Son, it is "not to the exclusion of the father, and of the spirit."[184] A little later he will refer to creation as "the conjunct operation of the word, or son, with the father, and spirit."[185] In this way, Gill intends for the reader to see in every act of God the three in unity of nature and distinction of person. Therefore, as with the work of creation, the possession of life in verse 4 is also the life of the Father, Son, and Spirit—not just the life of the Word/Son. Indeed, this is the eternal life of God that was manifest in Christ (see, 1 John 1:1–3) and comes through him as Mediator to the children. It is the life he eternally shares with the Father as Son and with the Spirit as God.

Although Gill does not develop the relational aspects of this shared life, it is inherently expressive of the eternal relations of the Trinity. However, for Gill, it is not strictly spiritual life, but a life manifest in three nuances: (1) Natural life by which all things "vegetive, animal, or rational" find their life from him, (2) Spiritual life, which is had by all the elect and consist in both "justification" and "sanctification," as well as "faith," and (3) Eternal life. Although eternal life is a central theme in John's gospel, Gill is least clear on this point. In the opening comments of verse 4, he is careful to suggest a reference to the aseity of Christ, noting that this life in the Son "not by gift, nor by derivation or communication; but originally, and independently, and from all eternity."[186] However, he goes on to say that the eternal life the Son bestows "was granted in

---

[184]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:739.

[185]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:739.

[186]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:740.

consequence of his asking it, and which he had by way of stipulation."[187]

Gill has been careful to maintain that John is referring to the divine essence of the eternal Son all the way to verse 14. Yet, he seems to imply that the life that is given by the Son is by request not necessity, although he states that because life is in him it "proves him to be the true God."[188] It is not clear how these statements fit together since John never mentions the Son as requesting life from the Father, but simply that the Father "gave" (ἔδωκεν) the Son to "have life in himself" (5:26). Nor does the Son's request of the Spirit in 14:16 form a link to verse 4. Moreover, since the Son is said to "bestow" this life, there may be an implicit reference to the Spirit, but Gill does not make this specific argument. It appears that he is referring to that life requested and granted to the Son by the Father in the covenant of grace of which he is Mediator.

Regarding the second half of the phrase, Gill argues that this "life is the light of men" by virtue of the "rational knowledge and understanding" implanted in all men.[189] There are three observations to make on this point. First, Gill ties the giving of life in Genesis 2:7 with the Son, noting, "Christ, the word, breathed into man the breath of life."[190] However, again, the text does not say this and the giving of life is most often associated with the Spirit in John (cf. 6:63). Second, while the link is implicit, Gill suggest the idea of relationship as essential to the natural life given at creation: "Adam had a knowledge of God; of his being, and perceptions; of the persons in the Trinity; of his relation to God, of his dependence on him, and obligation to him; of his mind and

---

[187]Gill, *Exposition,* 7:740.

[188]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:740.

[189]Gill, *Exposition,* 7:740

[190]Gill, *Exposition,* 7:740. This is interesting in light of the fact that in his treatise on the Trinity, after referring to the Spirit as the creative breath of God, states that he is also "the author of natural life . . . [and] of all spiritual life" (Gill, *Trinity*,192).

will; and knew what it was to have common with him."[191] Although, this life was "different from that which saints now have of God, through Christ, the Mediator."[192] Yet, this says too much sinc Gill assumes the extent of Adam's knowledge and fails to explain *how* the saint's knowledge is different; although it is presumed to be the greater manifestation of the Son as Mediator and the experience of the Spirit. Third, he refutes the Socinian usage of this passage to refer to the "light" as the preaching of the gospel and reiterates it as that which the Son gives to all men from the beginning of creation: "All spiritual and supernatural light, which any of the sons of men have had . . . was from Christ; even all spiritual light in conversion, and all after-degrees of light."[193]

Gill carries this last interpretation into verses 9–11, which immediately introduces the concept of sonship in verses 12–13. Thus, the light that is "the light of men" (v. 4) is the light that "enlightens every man coming into the world" (v. 9), which, after listing different options, he understands as "the light of nature and reason, which Christ as the word, and Creator and light of men, gives to every man that is born into the world."[194] Gill gets to this, in part, by asserting that John is still referring to the pre-incarnate work of the Son since John uses the "word *was* [denoting] past existence in the world, even all the time past from the creation of the world."[195] Therefore, it is his "essence, by which he fills the whole world," as well as his power and providence, by means of which "he was in it [i.e., the world] as the light and life of it." However, in reference to the Jews—"his own"—Christ came "in types, personal and real, and in promises and prophecies, and in the word and ordinances . . . in person" through various

---

[191]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:740.

[192]Gill, *Exposition,* 7:740. Interestingly, Gill does not make a reference to the Spirit.

[193]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:740.

[194]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:741–42.

[195]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:742.

appearances to chosen people.[196]

With this as context, Gill carries forward his exegetical conclusions of verses 9–11 to verses 12–13. Thus, the sons of verse 12 are linked to Genesis 6:2, 4 which comports with Gill's interpretation of "sons of God" as the descendants of Seth and reflects his understanding of the eternal adoption of God's own people. In other words, since Gill understands the appearance of God, in whom men of the OT believed, as a reference to the eternal Word, to believe in "his Name" encompasses all the righteous of all time who trusted God's promises by faith. Although Gill rightly defines the "Name" as "Christ, the word," he seems to suggest that it was also Christ that the OT believer trusted in as well and so gained the appellation "sons of God." Gill's justification for this is that he sees this faith as coming "by means of the electing grace, and the covenant of grace," by which believers are, "the children of God before faith."[197]

However, while this statement fits Gill's theological scheme it is not easily drawn from the text itself. This appears to be an example of Gill imposing his understanding of the covenant of grace on the text. Nonetheless, regarding the faith of the children, he correctly asserts that, "the son gives to them that believe in him power to become the sons of God."[198] Along these lines, the "power" (ἐξουσία) to become children is defined as "the honour and dignity conferred on such persons" who, through faith have free access to Christ's person and all the privileges of sons in him.[199] Indeed, this

---

[196]Gill, *Exposition*, 742.

[197]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:743. Cf. Gill, *Divinity*, 2.5.1. Gill, as with many writers, consistently applies the Pauline metaphor of adoption with John's begetting. Yet, interestingly, he makes a distinction between the two in relation to the divine relations: "If begotten, then not adopted; these are inconsistent" (Gill, *Divinity*, 1.28.6.3.1).

[198]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28. At another point, Gill will apply this verse to the act of taking the bread in the Lord's Supper: "This action of taking the bread, is an emblem of the saints receiving Christ by the hand of faith, and all the blessings of grace with him" (Gill, *Practical Divinity*, 3.2).

[199]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:743.

privilege of sonship exceeds all others—a point Gill repeats on occasion—but he is not clear on how the experience of the saints in the OT differs from those in the NT. The implication is, however, that the difference is a fuller experience based on their fuller knowledge of God and redemption in Christ.

Regarding verse 13, Gill—with Calvin—understands the tenor to be a Johannine polemic against the false assurances of the Jews, who rested in their physical lineage of Abraham for acceptance with God. Far from affirming confidence in Jewishness, Gill argues that John emphatically asserts that men are proved children only by experiencing the regenerating grace of the Spirit: "The birth here spoken of is regeneration." Referencing this text in *Divinity*, Gill asserts that "adoption gives the name of sons, and a title to the inheritances and regeneration gives the nature of sons, and a meetness for the inheritance."[200] In this way, regeneration is the proof of adoption: "The Spirit of God . . . is the author of regeneration; which, though it is not adoption, it is the evidence of it."[201]

He goes on to say, "This spiritual birth, which makes men appear to be the sons of God, is owing to the Spirit of God."[202] Yet, this is not apart from Christ, for "it is by faith in Christ that men receive the adoption as children . . . this receives and claims the privilege and blessing; which faith is of the operation of the Spirit of God."[203] In summary, for Gill, sonship in verses 12–13 is an eternal reality for the elect, granted in the covenant of grace, secured by the promised and accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ, and, though eternally real by the nature of the covenant, it is brought to reality in the experience of God's children through the regenerating work of the Spirit and the gift

---

[200]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9.1.2.

[201]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9.

[202]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9.1.2.

[203]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9.

of faith in Christ—in whom sonship finds its greatest reality.

John 3:3–8

In line with his extensive knowledge of Jewish literature, Gill introduces this passage with the interesting historical suggestion regarding the identity of Nicodemus. Namely, that he is the brother of "Joseph ben Gorion, the writer of the Wars and Antiquities of the Jews."[204] Outside of this observation, Gill addresses the substance of Jesus's response to Nicodemus. Namely, that though this leader was convinced of Christ's messianic credentials through his miracles, he did not yet understand the spiritual nature and requirements of the kingdom of God. As in John's argument found in 1:12–13, Jesus is addressing the erroneous Jewish confidence in their physical linage with Abraham as the surety of their reception of covenant blessing. Although they are physical descendants of Abraham, Gill notes they are the spiritual descendants of Adam: "Vile, polluted, carnal, and corrupt, being conceived in sin, and shaped in iniquity."[205] It is this blindness to spiritual realities that Jesus exposes in the straightforward statement: "You must be born again" (John 3:3).[206]

The idea of the "new birth" was already superficially present among the Jews in their understanding of proselyte baptism. Yet, according to Gill, this was understood

---

[204]Gill, *Exposition,* 7:766. Cf. Richard Bauckham, "Nicodemus and the Gurion Family," in *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 137–72.

[205]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:767. The natural state of man in depravity is a common theme in Gill: "Having proved the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, what follows upon this is, the corruption of nature derived unto them form him; by which is meant, the general depravity of mankind, of all the individuals of human nature, and of all the powers and faculties of the soul, and members of the body" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 3.11).

[206]Regarding the translation of ἄνωθεν, Gill acknowledges the possibility of "from above," as it is in v. 31, but opts for "*again*, or a *second time*," in this context. However, it is rendered, the point is that without this birth by which "the heavenly image [is] instamped on him," there is no entrance into, or enjoyment of the kingdom.

"not in a spiritual, but in a civil sense."[207] In contrast, Jesus asserts that "meetness" for the kingdom—to be a true partaker of the covenant—one must experience the new birth, which is requisite for "*enjoyment* of the kingdom of God, such being free from all natural and civil relations, and from all obligations to parents [and] masters."[208] This regeneration consists in being "renewed in the spirit of [the] mind" having "Christ formed in [the] heart" and being a "partaker of the divine nature; and in all respects a new creature."[209] Gill understands the work of regeneration to be the Spirit's particular role in making the children of God spiritually fit for the kingdom; giving them "a nature, temper, and disposition of mind, suitable to the inheritance they are to enjoy."[210]

In agreement with Calvin, Gill interprets "of water and the spirit" as two words expressing the "same thing" and, together, signifying the "grace of God."[211] Also in agreement with Calvin, Gill does not see a reference to baptism or the material sense of water at all, nor does it have any "regenerating influence." However, consistent with his Baptist convictions, he is careful to separate the idea of baptism from any saving efficacy—unlike Calvin. On this point, Gill asserts that "a person ought to be born again, *before* he is admitted to that ordinance: and though submission to it is necessary, in order to a person's entrance into a Gospel church-state; yet it is not necessary to the kingdom of heaven, or to eternal life and salvation."[212] Thus, "water," is here strictly "metaphorical"

---

[207]Gill, *Exposition,* 7:768.

[208]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:768.

[209]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:768; cf. 7:743. Gill clarifies what participation in the "divine nature" in *Doctrinal Divinity*, it is "not of the nature of God essentially considered . . . nor of the divine nature . . . in such sense as Christ is a partaker of it, by the personal hypostatical union . . . but in regeneration there is that wrought in the soul, which bears a resemblance to the divine nature, in spirituality, holiness, goodness, kindness, & c." (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.11).

[210]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:769.

[211]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:768.

[212]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:768. Contrast with Calvin: "It is true that, by neglecting baptism, we are

and equated with the "grace of God," in connection with Ezekiel 36:25 and John 4:14, and understood as a part of *the picture* of the cleansing nature of regeneration, making one fit to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yet, by the "grace of God," Gill assigns a more comprehensive sense to the metaphor and encompasses the Spirit who "convinces of sin, sanctifies, renews, works faith, and every other grace."[213]

Regarding the comparison of "flesh" and "spirit" in verse 6, Gill picks on the theme of man's corruption and sees a contrast with the purity and holiness of the "Spirit." In this sense, πνεῦμα takes on two senses. The first "signifies the Holy Spirit of God, the author of regeneration and sanctification."[214] In the second is intended "the internal work of grace upon the soul, from whence a man is denominated a spiritual man."[215] On this last point, Gill draws on the principle of representation, or like producing like that is usually reserved for the idea of sonship. Thus, a regenerate man is spiritual in this sense: "As a child bears the same name with his parent, so this is called the same, as the author and efficient cause of it"[216]—i.e., they are spiritual because they are born of the Spirit. This likeness is a "must" (v. 7)[217] for the adopted children of God, who are taken into the "family of God." Moreover, it is a birth that emphasizes the sovereign freedom of God:

> And so the spirit of God is a free agent in regeneration; he works how, and where, and when he pleases; he acts freely in the first operation of his grace on the heart

---

excluded from salvation" (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17:110).

[213]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:768. Gill is, as in every work of God, careful to include the Father and Son in the act of regeneration, although the Spirit's role is in focus here—"sometimes ascribed to God the Father . . . sometimes to the Son . . . and here to the Spirit" (Gill, *Exposition*, 7:768).

[214]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:769. On this point, Gill is consistent with Calvin regarding the double grace of the Spirit, but is less quick to attach it to union with Christ.

[215]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:769.

[216]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:769.

[217]Gill rejects the plural "we" of Beza's four copies because of the theological inconsistency with the person of Christ requiring new birth.

> and in all after-influences of it . . . this grace of the spirit in regeneration, like the wind, is powerful and irresistible; it carries all before it; there's no withstanding it; it throws down Satan's strong holds, demolishes the fortifications of sin; the whole posse of hell, and the corruptions of man's heart, are not a match for it; when the spirit works, who can let?[218]

In this way, the Spirit demonstrates his own will and is the sovereign agent in preparing the elect to participate in Christ.[219]

Gill concludes this chapter by bringing the Spirit's role into the context of the eternal relation of the Father and Son. Whatever the children experience of the Spirit, it is in measure, or part; however, the true Son has the Spirit from the Father "without measure" in his human nature (3:34) to enable him to fulfill his role as Mediator.[220] This was according to the plan of the Father to which the Son agreed and is consistent with the distinction of the Son as begotten and the Father's eternal love for him (v. 35). Gill then takes the opportunity—speaking of the Father's love for the Son and granting him "all things"[221]—to emphasize the equality and individual subsistence of each divine person of the Godhead. However, regarding sonship, Gill refers to the elect as children of Christ, rather than of the Father, because of Christ's role as federal head.

This emphasis is a product of Gill's understanding of the covenant and shows up in his discussion of Revelation 21:7 as well. Indeed, John does use the diminutive τεκνίον "little children," in John 13:33, but that is not properly a reference to sonship.

---

[218]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:769.

[219]Gill maintains, as with the Father and Son, a distinct will for the Spirit, which proves his personhood (Gill, *Trinity*, 193).

[220]Gill, *Exposition*, 7:779. He also states, "As the work assigned him was to be done in human nature, which needed qualifications for it, strength to do it, help and assistance in it, support under it, preservation from enemies, and encouragement of success: all this was promised him, that as his human nature should be formed by the Holy Ghost without sin, so it should be filled with his gifts and graces" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.8).

[221]Gill takes πάντα in its fullest sense, including all angels, men, temporal, and eternal things as having been entrusted to the Son by the Father.

Also, the Messiah is referred to as "Father" in Isaiah 9:6, but the reference is too remote to receive the priority Gill assigns to it. Moreover, Gill is not always consistent in how he speaks of these relationships. Although the status of sonship is in Christ, men are particularly the "children of God," because of the Father's electing love (1 John 3:1). In either case, Christ is the covenant head and one in whom "all the promises and blessing of the covenant," and sonship are found; and the Spirit is the one who makes the children fit to receive them and participate in the spiritual realities of the kingdom; of the children of God.

John 14:16–23

In these words of Jesus, Gill finds no "inconsiderable proof"[222] of the doctrine of the Trinity and the glory of Christ set forth as Mediator. Regarding the Trinitarian implications, the "father is prayed unto, the son in human nature praying, and the Holy Ghost the Comforter prayed for," who is also "another comforter like the first—Christ."[223] Gill recognizes the different options for translating παράκλητος, but opts for "comforter . . . as being more suited to the disconsolate condition of the disciples."[224] Thus, the "Comforter" is promised to be with the disciples upon the departure of Jesus back to the Father and to remain with them "forever," which Gill asserts is "unto the end of the world . . . [and] proof of the saints' final perseverance."[225] The Spirit's parallel role with Christ is not, however, to replace Christ, but, rather, to continue Christ's ministry to them by "taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to his people."[226]

---

[222]Gill, *Exposition,* 8:59.

[223]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:59.

[224]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:59.

[225]Gill, *Exposition,* 8:59.

[226]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:59.

On this point, Gill takes a turn from Calvin in three ways. First, as aslready stated, Gill does not see the Spirit's return as encompassing the return of Christ's presence with his disciples, but rather the Spirit will exclusively continues Christ's ministry—i.e., the emphasis is not on the *presence* of Christ, but the *power* of Christ to continue his ministry on the earth. Second, the promise that Christ "will come" to them is limited to the resurrection and the second coming. Third, rather than emphasizing the Father as the Father of the children of God, Gill, again, emphasizes Christ as standing "in the relation of a father to his people, and they are his children, his spiritual seed and offspring."[227] However, it is difficult to see how this promise of Christ can be limited to the physical resurrection of Christ, since it would remove the promise of Christ presence from those disciples who live between his ascension and second coming, and it makes little sense of the promise of verses 20, 23.

It is interesting to observe that while Gill acknowledges the children's communion with Christ and the Father, he does not explicitly link it to the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. In fact, in the passage that brings the New Covenant ministry of the Spirit into its greatest focus in the gospel, Gill seems to diminish the Spirit's role in mediating the blessings of Christ presence to his people. Even in Christ's words "because I live, you shall live also," Gill sees a portrait of Christ glory as he who lives "as God, as man, and as Mediator."[228] "As God," Christ shares the life of the Father as from all

---

[227]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:59. Gill makes this comment in reference to v. 18, namely that he will not leave them as "orphans." This emphasis by Gill of the fatherhood of Christ is related to his view of the covenant of grace and the federal headship of Christ: "In consequence of fulfilling the condition of the covenant . . . it was promised to Christ . . . that he should have a spiritual offspring, a seed that should serve him, and be accounted to him for a generation; that he should be an everlasting Father to them, and they be his everlasting children; as the first Adam was the federal head of all his posterity . . . so the second Adam becomes the Father and federal Head of a spiritual offspring" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 2.8). It is this prominence of the covenant that causes Gill to emphasize Christ rather than the Father as the Father of his people—something Scripture does not do. Thus, it is an example of Gill letting a theological system influence a plain exegesis of Scripture.

[228]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:59.

eternity; "as man," he lived in obedience to God in suffering and now he lives with God "forevermore;" and "as Mediator," he has the life he received "from the father" and as Mediator, he shares his life with his people who "also live a spiritual life now; a life of grace and holiness from Christ; a life of faith on him, and sometimes of communion with him . . . and shall hereafter live an eternal life of perfection and pleasure, with Father, Son, and Spirit."[229] This spiritual life of the believer is "maintained" by Christ, who is the head and who also "lives in them," and guarantees their future bodily resurrection. Moreover, Gill asserts, in relation to the children, "Their bodies, as well as their souls, are untied to Christ."[230] There is no mention of the Spirit and little mention of how Christ's life is actually shared with the children and fails to give the warmth of Calvin's emphasis on the intimate bond established by the Spirit between the child and Christ.

Regarding verse 20, "I am in My Father and you are in Me," Gill remains consistent with a focus on Christ as Mediator. He sees in the first phrase a reference to Christ's divine nature and in the second his living and dwelling in his people. Yet, on this point, Gill's commitment to the covenant of grace is, again, displayed and the eternal union of the elect with God is sought in the text. Thus, from these words Gill states that though the knowledge of this union will be more perfect in the future—supposedly after his ascension—

> This does not suppose these unions between the father and Christ, and between Christ and his people, shall then begin to be; for as the union between the father and the son is as eternal as themselves; so the union between Christ and his people, as he is the head and representative of them, is as early as his investiture with the office of a Mediator, and his suretyship-engagements for them, which were from eternity.[231]

In other words, this union is *not* to be thought of as having a beginning upon

---

[229]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:60.

[230]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:60.

[231]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:60.

his ascension or the coming of the Spirit, but one that has already existed in eternity past and will only be experienced in greater measure. Regarding the future time of "that day" when the greater knowledge of these realities will be known, Gill lists the options of the resurrection, Pentecost, or the "last day," but decides on none. It would appear that either each remains a viable option, or that each comprise a certain element of the promise.

While the union is spiritual, the reality of it is manifest in real acts of obedience to Christ. Commenting on verse 21, Gill ties in Ezekiel 36:25—mentioned in reference to John 3:3–8—and identifies the commandments as "not merely the external" word, but what "has been written on the heart, by the finger of the spirit of God."[232] It is the loving response of the elect to these commands of Christ that demonstrate the reality of their love to him. Moreover, Christ motivates the children to loving obedience with the promise of a greater knowledge of himself: "He that loves Me shall be loved by My Father." This is not to say that the child's love "is the cause, condition, or motive of the father's love to his people . . . but this expression denotes some further and greater manifestations of the father's love."[233] It is the same with the love of Christ, "Their love and obedience to him spring from his love to them; which love of his towards them was from every lasting;" yet their obedient love elicits from him "clearer discovery of his love to them, which passeth knowledge."[234]

On this point, Gill takes an interesting turn. He acknowledges that this manifestation will not be in a "visible way, or in corporeal form, as he did to his disciples after his resurrection," but, rather, will be "in a spiritual manner."[235] What is this spiritual

---

[232]Gill, *Exposition,* 8:60.

[233]Gill, *Exposition,* 8:60.

[234]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:60.

[235]Gill, *Exposition,* 8:60–61.

manner? It is akin to that which his people experience "when he makes himself known . . . in ordinances" and "favours them with communion with him, and they see his beauty, his fulness, his grace and righteousness, his power, and his glory."[236] By this Gill seems to imply it is the experience of Christ in the supper and baptism, by means of the faith of his people. Although even here, he makes no specific mention of this faith or the ministry of the Spirit.[237]

Indeed, this is only slightly mitigated in verse 23, where, Gill notes, Christ continues his teaching of verse 21, but now focuses on the Father's love. This love is not, according to Gill, only the love of the Father, but rather the love of the Father that was in Christ from all eternity. It is this love that will be known by "greater manifestations of it to them, and a quicker sense of it in their hearts . . . to be enjoyed by them in an higher manner; such as larger measures of grace, more communion with him here, and eternal honour and glory hereafter."[238] Moreover, it is not only the love of the Father in Christ, but also the love of each person of the Godhead, which is "a trinity of persons . . . being neither more nor fewer than three."[239] Thus, Gill notes, "The saints are the dwelling places or temples of the living God, Father, Son, and Spirit."[240]

Gill's Trinitarian focus and emphasis on the believer's communion with the Godhead comprises the heart of the New Covenant promise and encouragement Christ gives his disciples. Indeed, Christ is regarded as the only and perfect Mediator through whom the saints have life and communion with God. However, Gill is less clear on the

---

[236]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:61.

[237]While Gill does not expand on his meaning in John, he gives much attention to the spirituality of the ordinances (cf. Gill, *Practical Divinity*, 1.24; 3.2).

[238]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:61.

[239]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:61.

[240]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:61.

specific role of the Spirit, which reflects more his penchant for emphasizing the distinction of the three, though always including the presence and activity of each person according to their agreement in the covenant of grace. Interestingly, the spirit of sonship is made less clear and distinct in the climatic Johannine passage on the subject. Although Christ and Trinitarian communion is emphasized, Gill seems reticent to link it to the exclusive ministry of the Spirit, or to make the Spirit the divine mediator of the presence of Christ and of God.

John 20:17

The final passage to be considered in John's gospel presents a climatic statement regarding the spirit of sonship in Christ. For Gill, this is one of the first instances of the promise in 14:18–19, namely that Christ would appear to the disciples again in the resurrection. In fact, it is for the purpose of sending Mary to the disciples that the risen Christ forbids her to cling to him. Indeed, Gill notes that she would have plenty of time to express affection later, but the most pressing issue that "required haste" was that of informing his disciples that he had risen from the grave.[241] Yet, Christ does not refer to the disciples as such, but, rather, uses the term "brethren," which confirms his "affection to them" even in light of their recent failure.[242] However, of even greater consequence, the title affirms and highlights the nature of the disciple's relationship with the Father through Christ.

The essence of Christ's statement—"I go to My Father and your Father; My God and your God"—is an affirmation that his own disciples now participate in his relationship to the Father. Yet, Gill maintains the clear distinction between what is Christ's by nature and the disciples by the grace of adoption. On the lips of Jesus, the

---

[241]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:125.

[242]Gill, *Exposition,* 8:125.

statement "My Father," refers not to creation, nor adoption, nor even his role as Mediator, but according to Gill, "his father by nature."[243] In other words, it is a statement reflective of his eternal relationship with the Father as the Son of God (John 1:1). However, for the disciples it is an affirmation of God's "adopting grace, in virtue of the covenant of grace made with Christ, through their spiritual relation to him, as the natural and eternal son of God."[244] This implies that Christ's relation to the Father as the son of God in both eternity and in the flesh, is shared by adoption with those in him.

Whereas Gill sees in the first phrase an affirmation of Christ divine nature, in the second—"My God and your God"—he affirms the relation Christ has with the Father as a man. It is in this sense that Christ can refer to God as his God, as he is of the disciples. Far from diminishing the reality of Christ full equality with the Father as the God of Israel, it rather establishes his divine nature. This is so because the God of the covenant to whom Christ—as a man—"prayed . . . believed . . . loved and obeyed" is the God who made covenant with Christ by which he, Christ, would be the head and representative of his people: "So that their interest in God, as their covenant God and father, was founded upon his being the God and father of Christ."[245] In other words, the God of Christ the man is such to Christ and his own because Christ is, as that man, the one with whom the Father made an eternal covenant of redemption—as son of God—to be so to those given to the Son.

However, this relationship of the disciples with Christ and the Father is not one of merely fact, but deep spiritual intimacy. Gill has already established this point in reference to chapter 14, but now gives it even greater expression. Indeed, it is a

---

[243]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:125.

[244]Gill, *Exposition,* 8:125.

[245]Gill, *Exposition,* 8:125.

relationship that carries "the strongest marks of affection, and expressions of nearness of relation."[246] In other words, there is the utmost closeness between the risen Christ and his own. In the present, Christ is at the right hand of the Father—his Father and theirs—to "use all his interest and influence on their behalf" until the "proper time . . . that they might be with him, and with his God and father and theirs, where they would be to all eternity."[247] In every way the blessings of this relationship are bound to Christ:

> There is a union between them, a very near and mysterious one . . . and from this union flow all the blessings of grace to the saints . . . he is every thing to them, and they have everything through him to make them comfortable and happy . . . he and they being one, his God is their God, and his Father is their Father; he is a Son, and they are sons; he is an Heir, and they are joint heirs with him.[248]

It is to this reality that the Spirit bears witness in regeneration and the exercise of faith and assurance of their adoption. Gill does not emphasis this particular role of the Spirit here, but in other places equates this to the Spirit's role as the "Spirit of adoption."[249]

First John 3:1–3; 24; 4:13

As with Calvin, and most commentators, Gill marks John's mention of regeneration in 2:29 as the introduction to the theme of adoption carried forward in 3:1–3. The author of this regeneration is, for Gill, Christ who acts by his spirit. Therefore, the recipient of this grace is the one "being regenerated by his spirit, having his grace implanted in him . . . having his image instamped on him, and he himself formed in him, and so made like unto him."[250] In this way, the child is the "spiritual seed and offspring"

---

[246]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:125

[247]Gill, *Exposition*, 8:125.

[248]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9.2.

[249]cf. Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.16; 2.5.

[250]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:634.

of Christ—not specifically the Father—and the way to speak of adoption is opened.[251] Indeed, it is, as Gill notes, with "wonder and astonishment" that the one who has experienced the new birth should consider the great love of adoption bestowed by "the father of Christ, and the father of us in Christ, who hath adopted us in to his family and regenerated us by his grace."[252] It is this grace of adoption, for Gill, which stands as the chief grace of redemption and the covenant. This is so because "it is a privilege that exceeds all others, and is attended with many."[253]

Attendant with the privilege of adoption is the acquiring of a new name, "sons of God," which denotes not merely a title, but "the thing itself in reality."[254] In other words, to be a called a son is not merely a name, but a reality that marks the child's relationship to God and includes all that is implied by that relationship. Moreover, Gill emphasizes, it is a relationship established on no other grounds than the sovereign grace and "everlasting and unchangeable love of God."[255] Indeed, God was under no obligation to adopt, nor was their any "worth or loveliness" in the adopted, "they being by nature children of wrath."[256] This point comes with at least three observations. First, there is no sense in which human works can be the impetus or, in any way, advantageous to provoke God's electing love. Second, fallen man "whose portion is in this life, whom the god of this world has blinded" cannot recognize the work of God in his children any more than it

---

[251]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:634.

[252]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635.

[253]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635. Gill makes this same point with even more force in reference to Gal 4:6, where, speaking of adoption, he notes, "This is a privilege that exceeds all others; it is more to be a son than to be a saint . . . more to be a child of God, than to be redeemed, pardoned, and justified" (Gill, *Exposition*, 9:29).

[254]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635.

[255]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635.

[256]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635.

recognized his presence and work in Christ (John 1:10–11).[257] Third, since the unregenerate did not recognize either the Father or the Son, or the Spirit, but rather persecuted the "only-begotten of the father," then it should be so surprise that "the sons of God by adoption, should be treated in like manner" (cf. John 17:25; 15:21; 16:3).[258]

Indeed, the world's ignorance is born of their own rebellion against God, but also because the children themselves do not yet display the full glory that is truly theirs. The full expression of this glory awaits the time when "Christ will publicly own them as the children given to him, and when they shall be put in possession of the inheritance they are heirs of."[259] In this future time the sons revealed will "sit down on a throne of glory, and have a crown of righteousness, life, and glory upon them . . . the sentence of justification afresh pronounced . . . they will be perfectly holy and free from all sin."[260] Although these things are hidden from the world, even from the children themselves, they are clear and evident to God, who, from eternity past, "saw them in all the glory they were to be brought to."[261] For Gill, the subject of φανερωθῇ ("he shall appear") is Christ and his appearance will bring about, for the children, a whole conformity to his image as manifest in the Son's glorified human nature. However, the sight the sons will have of

---

[257]Wills captures Gill's thought concerning the inner experience of the regenerate and the unregenerate in relation to Christ: "Many wicked hypocrites might assent to the truths of reason and revelation concerning the law of God, the person and work of Christ, and the way of salvation. But only the saints loved God. Only true believers yearned affectionately for the presence of the Lord Jesus. Only they were spiritual . . . their regeneration . . . manifested itself in the exercise of their godly feelings: 'they have their spiritual senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling; and therefore must have life'" (Wills, "A Fire That Burns Within," *The Life and Thought of John Gill*, 193). This distinction between the inner experience of believers and the world is the essence of why the world does not know the children who share the life of the Son.

[258]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635.

[259]Gill, *Exposition,* 9:635.

[260]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635.

[261]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635.

Christ "as he is" is not merely physical, but "with the eyes of understanding . . . through those beams of light and glory darting from him, with which the saints will be irradiated."[262] Christ is the source of the radiance, yet it is a radiance of glory and sonship that is reflected with Christ in all the sons in him.

The effect of this sight for the child is more than wonder, it "will be unspeakably glorious, delightful, and ravishing, soul-satisfying."[263] Sonship is, for Gill, a deeply spiritual reality that engages the soul and affections of the children at the deepest spiritual level. It is participation in the spiritual delights of the divine glory and intimate relationship that comes through union. The fullness of this sight and experience of the children is equal to the fullness of their capacity as creatures created in God's image; and the glory, itself, is mediated through Christ. That is to say, "God will be seen as he is in Christ; and Christ will be seen as he is in himself, both in his divine and human natures."[264] Christ, himself, is both the mediator and model of sonship and its delights and, therefore, the greatest "happiness . . . [is] likeness to Christ," which is the hope of all who are born again.[265] It is also a hope that purifies, not by human effort, but by "the grace of God and blood of Christ," which is the only true font of purity.[266]

However, Gill sees in the phrase "purifies himself" (ἁγνίζει ἑαυτόν), three immediate options. First, it could refer to the man who is "conversant" with these graces through the reality of "faith and hope" upon Christ. Second, it could refer to one who

---

[262]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635.

[263]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:635. Gill captures the inner experience of these things in the children now, commenting on 3:9, noting that it is "to breathe after divine and spiritual things, and have their sense to discern them; they see, hear, feel, taste, and savor them; and desire the sincere milk of the word, for their nourishment and growth" (Gill, *Exposition,* 9:638).

[264]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:636.

[265]Gill, *Exposition,* 9:636.

[266]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:636.

seeks to imitate Christ as the pattern of holiness that he aims to follow and who is compelled by confidence in the hope of a son here given. Gill, however, opts for a third solution. Namely, that the word "as"—i.e., "*as* he is"—signifies "only some degree of likeness or similitude," either in this life or even the life to come.[267] This does not mean the other two options are not true and should not be evident—for they should—but, rather, that the best sense of the passage is "to engage the saints to purity and holiness of life and conversation, from consideration of the great love of God bestowed upon them in their adoption . . . their hope of eternal happiness."[268] Thus, for Gill, at the center of the child's experience of sonship is the love of God in making them sons and granting a share in the glory and spiritual realities of Christ who is Son and Mediator.

It is interesting to notice that Gill does not place much emphasis on the Trinitarian nature of this work, nor does he mention the Spirit directly in his comments on 3:1–3. However, commenting on 3:24, which picks up the themes of faith, loving obedience, and indwelling that were introduced in the gospel, he is more explicit. Consistent with John, Gill understands that the essence of obedience, or keeping "his commandments" (3:23) is to have "faith in Christ, and love to one another."[269] It is the one who demonstrates obedience to these commandments gives evidence of mutual indwelling of Christ—whom Gill takes as the reference in αὐτός in verse 24—and has the Spirit's witness of sonship.

On this point, Gill differs from Calvin in that for Calvin the Spirit is the bond of union between Christ and his own; for Gill the Spirit "is given in consequence of union and relation to Christ."[270] This divergence regarding the precise nature of the union

---

[267]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:636.

[268]Gill, *Exposition,* 9:636.

[269]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:643.

[270]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:643.

accounts for Gill's lack of emphasis on the role of the Spirit and has the effect, in a sense, of separating the feeling of unity and intimacy between the Spirit, Christ, and the child. The sense of separation seems to stem from the difficulty of comprehending spiritual unity with Christ apart from the Holy Spirit, and the intense individualization of the work of the persons of the Godhead. However, this does not mean that Gill diminishes the work of the Spirit, or his inextricable relationship to Christ or the believer, but places his work in a support of the union with Christ, rather than the essence of it, as Calvin.[271] Nonetheless, Gill affirms that "regeneration and sanctification . . . faith and love . . . adoption . . . [and] the earnest of the heavenly inheritance" are through the Spirit's ministry in the sons.[272]

In discussing the nature of the Spirit and the unity of believers to Christ, Gill is anxious to make a distinction between what Christ experienced by his divine nature and what believers experience.[273] So, in commenting on 4:12—"God dwells in us"—he points out that he does so in a manner different than he did in Christ "by union of nature" or the world by his "omnipresence and power."[274] Rather, God dwells in his people "by his spirit, and the communications of his love, and by his gracious presence and communion."[275] Moreover, his spirit energizes the love of the brethren and, together, by the spiritual fruit of this love, the children are made a "fit habitation for God."[276] In this

---

[271]Gill does, however, reference John 6:56 in relation to 1 John 3:24 and there assigns to the Spirit the work of drawing God's elect to Christ, granting them faith by which Christ dwells in their hearts "by his spirit, and by faith" (Gill, *Exposition*, 7:822).

[272]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:643.

[273]Gill states, "They are not the sons of God in so high a sine as Christ is, who is God's own Son, his proper Son, his only begotten Son; which cannot be said either of angels or men" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9).

[274]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:648.

[275]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:648.

[276]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:648.

way, Gill gently identifies the habitation of God as a place marked by divine love.

Gill makes this same distinction of nature when commenting on 4:13, while preserving the atmosphere of love when he notes, "There is a communion between God and us . . . for God dwells in his people by his spirit and grace, and they dwell in him by the exercise of faith and love."[277] This is because God has "given us of his spirit," but "not of the essence and nature of the Spirit," which he alone shares with the Father. Yet, as the Spirit works "faith, hope, and love" in the child, they serve as "proofs of the mutual in-dwelling of God and his people."[278] Gill, then, wants to keep a distinction between the Spirit's role in Christ and between the Spirit's own divine nature and what he communicates to the children. Nevertheless, the "graces of the Spirit, such as faith, hope, and love" are communicated to the children and prove their adoption and "the mutual indwelling of God and his people."[279]

Revelation 21:7

Gill brings the final Johannine passage on the spirit of sonship to a climatic focus on the glory of Christ and his people with him. Particularly, those who persevere to the end, conquering "through Christ" over "all temptations, trials, and difficulties," will inherit the "kingdom of Christ."[280] The great glory of the kingdom is everything entailed in the new heavens and new earth (21:1–4), but at its heart it is "God himself, who is the portion, and exceeding great reward of his people, and will be all in all."[281] Moreover, the

---

[277]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:648. In another place, Gill argues from this this verse that this work of the Spirit is itself evidence of the child's eternal union in the bond of love with the Godhead (Gill, *Practical Divinity*, 1.24).

[278]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:648.

[279]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:648.

[280]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:858.

[281]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:858.

presence of God will issue forth in never ending "freedom from all evils, and divine refreshments from the fountain of living water."[282] Although Gill does not expand on "living water" in this verse, he previously made implicit connection to the Spirit whom Christ would give, as promised in John 7:38–39. The indication is that, through Christ, the Spirit will be more fully enjoyed, or, better, through the Spirit Christ and the Father will be more fully known and enjoyed.

All of these blessings come through Christ and are captured in the great privilege of sonship. Thus, the great promise, "I will be his God, and he shall be my son," is the word of the risen Christ to his people.[283] Again, Gill understands the fatherhood of Christ as the consequence of his role as federal head of "his people [who] are his spiritual seed and offspring."[284] By applying the language of fatherhood to Christ Gill is not conflating the persons of the Trinity, but emphasizing the specific role of the Son in the *pactium salutis*. In fact, when commenting on verse 5 he asserts that "God the father . . . is by adopting grace the God and father of his people, and they are his sons and daughters."[285] Moreover, once Christ completes his mediatorial role, Gill notes that he will "present them to himself and afterwards to his father." In the future state the "sons of God and seed of Christ" will be conformed to his image (1 John 3:2) and Christ will be "the father of the world to come."[286]

---

[282]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:858.

[283]Although, referencing this passage in *Divinity*, he infers it speaks of the Father: "None can adopt in to the family of God, but God himself; none can put any among the children of God, but he himself; none but he can do it, who say, *I will be his God, and he shall be my Son*" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9).

[284]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:858.

[285]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:857.

[286]Gill, *Exposition, 9:858.* This phrase comes from Gill's translation from the LXX of Isa 9:6.

Gill's language easily slides back and forth with the imagery of fatherhood, at one moment assigned to the father, for they are the children of God; and another to the Christ, for they are his "seed and offspring." While Gill is right to draw on the language of Isaiah 9:6, his emphasis on the covenant brings in a certain vagueness regarding the precise nature of sonship in relation to Christ and the Father. In other words, the distinction of relationship within the Trinity becomes blurred in terms of how the children participate in and view themselves with the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. That is, it makes fatherhood related more to the idea of covenant than Trinitarian relations. In fact, this same kind of logic and vagueness comes forth in his discussion the distinction of the persons of the Godhead in creation: "Being the one God that has made us, they are the one Father of us, even the second and third Persons, as well as the first."[287]

However, when discussing the distinction relations of the persons, he does argue that the eternal distinction of begetter and begotten are attended with personalities that are reflective of this distinction: "As the distinct personality of the Son of God arises or his relation to his Father as such, so the distinct personality of the father arises from his relation to his Son as such . . . both arise from their mutual relation to one another."[288] The onus for Gill is the protection of divine equality and to preserve the submission and authority evident in redemption to the temporary role of Christ as mediator.[289] For Gill,

---

[287]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6. Although in commenting on Gal 4:6 he is much more clear, "Through his espousing their persons, they become the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty; and through his assumption of their nature they become his brethren, and so to be in the relation of sons of God; through his redemption they receive the adoption of children, and at his hands the privilege, the power itself, to become such" (Gill, *Exposition*, 9:29).

[288]Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6.2.

[289]In fact, he will say, "As to subordination and subjection, and inequality, which is supposed the Sonship of Christ by generation implies; it may be answered, that Christ in his office-capacity, in which he, as Mediator, is a Servant, and as he is man, and appeared in the form of one; it will be acknowledged, that he is subordinate and subject to the Father; but not as he is the Son of God; and whatever inequality sonship may imply among men, it implies no such thing in the divine nature, among the divine persons"

the submission of the Son is only in reference to his assumed role as mediator and as is manifest in his humanity. It would seem more consistent, however, to say that the very assumption of humanity, which is attendant with submission, is reflective of the eternal relations of the persons of the Godhead.[290]

Relative to the spirit of sonship, Gill sees the essence of sonship as having been bound to God by the union of love in eternity past. This eternal love consist of the Father setting forth a plan of redemption in which the Son would assume the nature of his people to redeem them through the suffering of the cross, rise from the grave to secure their justification, and provide every grace for them. Moreover, the Spirit would assume the role of regenerating and bearing witness to the work of Christ in the children of God, endowing them with every grace to know and serve him in this world. Although Gill has a tendency to so individualize the work of each person and emphasize the personal pact of the trinity that the precise way in which Christ's sonship reflects the children's sonship is not made clear.

It seems for Gill that Christ, as the Son of God, is the exemplar and essence of sonship for the children only in his role as mediator as manifest through his humanity. However, the particulars of his relationship with the Father as demonstrated in redemption are temporary and not of the essence of sonship—in terms of obedience to the Father. Nonetheless, Gill captures the great end of the sons of God as being "abundantly

---

(Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 1.28.6.3). In fact, Gill states this more plainly when speaking of adoption, noting that the Father "set him up as the pattern of their sonship, that as he partook of their nature, they should be partakers of the divine nature" (Gill, *Doctrinal Divinity*, 6.9).

[290]By noting the above, however, it is not to say that Gill dismisses the child's nearness to the Father. Discussing the communion the saints have with each person of the Godhead, he says of the Father that "He is the Father of Christ . . . and is the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace and comfort to them; and as he is their covenant-God and Father in Christ, through whom they have access to him as their Father, and address him as their Father in heaven, and call upon him for what they want, and under the witnessings of the Spirit of adoption, cry Abba, Father" (Gill, *Practical Divinity*, 1.24).

manifest" when "they shall see Christ in his glory, and be like him."[291] This is the end of sonship, likeness to Christ, in whom and through whom every blessing of sonship is found. It is interesting, however, in Gill's discussion of this passage—even of the "fountain of the water of life"—there is no mention of the Spirit.

Conclusion

The contributions of John Calvin and John Gill are distinct in emphasis, but united in their advancement of an understanding of the Spirit of sonship. This chapter has shown that Calvin's emphasis on the Son and Spirit as fully divine in their own right clarified the particular relationships of the divine persons. This clarity regarding the divine relations, in turn, shines light on the believer's own relation to the Father through the Son and by the Spirit. Calvin also stressed union with Christ and the Spirit as the bond that unites believers to the risen Christ. This emphasis uniquely and helpfully brings out the fullness and intimacy of Spirit's work both in Christ and in the believer.

Gill advanced the doctrine of the Spirit by arguing for his equal participation in the *pactum salutis* as a divine person who agreed to his role in applying the work of salvation to the elect. He also emphasized the eternal sonship of Christ and consistently maintained the inseparable operations of the Godhead. However, his emphasis on the eternal distinction of persons had the effect of diminishing the intimacy of union between the Spirit with Christ and the believer, in contrast to Calvin. Also, while Gill argued for the eternal sonship of Christ, his insistence on isolating the aspects of sonship displayed in the Son's incarnation as only temporary manifestations of his mediatorial role, is less helpful and seems inconsistent. Nonetheless, he advanced the understanding of the Spirit of sonship by demonstrating his equal and distinct role within the plan of redemption and strengthened the reality of his work in life of the believer as the children of God.

---

[291]Gill, *Exposition*, 9:858.

CHAPTER 3

EXEGESIS OF SELECTED JOHANNINE PASSAGES

Introduction

The Johannine corpus has long been recognized for its clear portrayal of Jesus as the eternal Son of God robed in the flesh of humanity (John 1:1, 14; 1:34; 1 John 1:3; 2:22–23; 4:15; 5:5; Rev 2:18). It has also been noted for its unique portrayal of the Holy Spirit in his work of the new birth (3:3–10), his bearing the exclusive title of παράκλητος (14:16), and his relationship to the Son. However, there is little textual work exploring the believer's relationship to the Son and Father by the Spirit, particularly within the paradigm of sonship. This section will consider the relationship of the Son to the Father as a paradigm for the believer's relationship to the Father in the Son, with special attention to the role of the Spirit. A study of eight Johannine texts—1:12–13; 3:3–8; 14:16–23; 20:17–23; 1 John 3:1–3, 24; 4:13; Revelation 20:7—will form the foundation of this investigation. This chapter will seek to establish two key points: (1) that Jesus's relationship to the Father as the eternal Son in flesh is unique, yet paradigmatic for the believer's relationship to the Father and (2) that the Spirit is the Divine Person that enabled Jesus to reveal himself as the Son of the Father and who enables believers to participate in the life the Son eternally shares with the Father.

Prologue

The prologue of John has been rightly noted as "a foyer to the rest of the Fourth Gospel . . . simultaneously drawing the reader in and introducing the major themes."[1]

[1]D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. G. Eerdmans,

Here the key concepts that John will unfold throughout the Gospel find their nascent form.[2] There has been a long history and voluminous writing regarding precisely what these themes are, as well as their background, relationship to the Johannine corpus, and the overall structure of the prologue itself.[3] Engagement with this material is beyond the purpose of this thesis and will only be generally addressed within discussion of the relevant texts.

However, regarding the structure of the prologue, Culpepper's argument that 1:12b—ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι "He gave them authority to become children of God"—forms the apex of a complex chiastic structure is accepted as probably correct.[4] This centerpiece of John's chiasm is between what some also see as the *inclusio*

1991), 111. Bultmann makes the same suggestion with a poetic flare: "the Prologue is an introduction—in the sense of being an *overture*, leading the reader out of the common place into a new and strange world of sounds and figures, and singling out particular motifs from the action that is now to be unfolded" (Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971], 13). Michaels departs from the main and argues for vv. 1–5 as a preamble and labels 1:6–3:36 as the "Testimony of John" (J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NINCT [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010], 45–46, 57).

[2]The relationship of the Prologue to the rest of John's gospel has been a matter of great discussion, which will not be entered into here. Stanley Porter has provided a helpful contemporary analysis through the four lenses of Form Criticism, Source Criticism, Musical-Liturgical Criticism, and Functional Criticism concluding that "it is not contradictory to say that this passage can be analyzed with profit from each perspective in order to see that its balanced formal features . . . create an introduction to the Gospel that . . . sets the tenor for the rest of the work" (Stanley E. Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In the Pursuit of the Johannine Voice* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015], 119). Hoskyns calls it a "summary" of the whole (Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Francis Noel Davey [London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947], 137; cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. [Philadephia: The Westminster Press, 1978], 151).

[3]See: Peter J. Williams, "Not the Prologue of John," *JSNT* 33, no. 4 (June 2011): 375–86 for an argument against understanding John 1:1–18 as the prologue to the gospel. He argues, primarily, from early commentaries, liturgical system, early manuscripts that show no recognition of vv. 1–18 as a literary unit, as well as the development of versification and chapter divisions in English translations. William's further suggests that the consensus of modern scholarship is more a product of a "herd mentality" than critical examination of a "minimally marked text" (Williams, "Not the Prologue of John," 382). Contrary to William's arguments, this paper maintains that John intended vv. 1–18 to function as a prologue to the central themes of the gospel.

[4]R. A. Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS*, 27 (October 1980): 1–31; also, R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 116; cf. Andreas Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 21; Colin G. Kruse, *John*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 59–63; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According*

of 1:1 and verse 18,[5] which emphasizes both the Deity of Jesus Christ—ὁ λόγος—and his intimate relationship with the Father.[6] The reference to the incarnation of the ὁ λόγος (1:14)—soon to be revealed as the "Son of God (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ)" through the witness of John the Baptist (1:34)—that stands between verses 12–13 and verse 18, marks the Son as the bridge between the human and divine, and whose nearness to the Father as the eternal Son suggests a paradigmatic relationship for those made τέκνα θεοῦ through him,[7] who "have been born of God" (θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν). The following exegetical analysis will seek to establish this premise by briefly reviewing the context and then the content of verses 12–13.

---

to John, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 113; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, rev. ed. (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 69, 75. This conclusion also finds support in what some identify as another *inclusio* with John's purpose statement in 20:30–31. R. Brown does not see Culpepper's chiastic structure, but recognizes a centrality of vv. 11–12 to the gospel, calling them "short summaries of the two parts of the Gospel: the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory" (Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: I–XII* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966], 29). Although offering a tweak from Culpepper regarding the whole, see also, Jeff Staley, "The Structure of John's Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel's Narrative Structure," *CBQ*, 48, no.2 (April 1986): 241–49.

[5]Köstenberger, *John*, 49, who also accepts the chiastic emphasis as a macrostructure (22). For those who observe the strong emphasis on the Father-Son relationship in the Prologue, see, Carson, *John*, 135, and Adesola Joan Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*, Library of New Testament Studies (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 155, who says, "The SFR encapsulates the Prologue, which begins and ends with vivid depictions of intimate, filial relationship (vv. 1–2, 18)." Appold notes, "It can be said that the Father–Son relationship appears as one of the most constitutive and significant features of Johannine theology" (Mark L. Appold, *The Oneness Motif of the Fourth Gospel: Motif Analysis and Exegetical Probe into the Fourth Gospel* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1976], 55).

[6]Approached from the angle of John's symbolism, Adesola Akala rightly states that the "import of the term λόγος is that it draws particular attention to the divinity of the Son, his mission, and his relationship with the Father in the Johannine narrative" (Akala, *Son–Father,* 133).

[7]In a discussion of λόγος in the prologue, C. H. Dodd, on this point, comments, "He mediates to men knowledge of God and union with God in the sense that His own relation to the Father is archetypal" (C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953], 279). Also, Hoskyns, "In this divine Sonship all human sonship receives it meaning" (Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 138).

John 1:1–5

John's use of λόγος as a reference to the pre-incarnate Son of God has been a matter of great interest to scholars.[8] The range of options for background influence has spanned Gnosticism, Philo, Hellenistic philosophy, Wisdom tradition, and the OT.[9] While a consensus regarding the precise background has proved elusive, there is general agreement that essential to John's intent is the idea of revelation. Specifically, it is revelation that comes from one who stands in an eternally intimate relationship πρὸς τὸν θεόν[10] and as θεὸς (1:1). The opening verse, then, establishes both distinction and equality—within unity—between λόγος and θεὸς. This relationship serves as an introduction to the relationship of the Father (vv. 14, 18; cf. 17:5, 24) and the Son (vv. 17, 34)[11], as well as the Son's revelation of the Father (1:18; 10:30; 14:10).[12] Indeed, this

[8]Dodd suggests vv. 9–13 should be taken as referring to the "pre-incarnate Logos," but also allows that vv. 11–13 could describe the "historical ministry of Jesus Christ" (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 281–82). Moving in another directly, Michaels "breaks with tradition" and suggests that the concept of φῶς is the "major theme" rather than λόγος, based, primarily, on the frequency of John's usage in the gospel (Michaels, *John*, 45–46). However, this point loses strength when the concept of λόγος is expanded to all the words of Jesus as well as a description of his person as equal to and in relation with the Father as revealer (cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 265–85). In other words, the φῶς is the revelation of the Father through the Son, a point on which Dodd correctly notes, "The rest of the gospel . . . [is] an account of the Logos under the form of a record of the life of Jesus" (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 285).

[9]Carson's common sense and biblical reasonableness are welcome when he concludes, "As helpful as the background study may be, it cannot determine exactly what John means by *logos*. For that information, while thinking through the background uses, we must above all listen to the Evangelist himself" (Carson, *John*, 116).

[10]The preposition πρὸς can be understood in the sense of motion with the translation "toward God" and the idea of relationship, or it can have the sense of accompaniment and the translation "with God" (cf. R. Brown, *John I–XII*, 4–5). BDAG (3rd ed.) lists 1:1 with the nuance of accompaniment and the translation "by, at, near," or "with." There is a characteristically Johannine ambiguity in the phrase. Indeed, the remainder of the gospel and the Prologue (cf. v. 18; 17:5) demonstrate the unity of the Father and Son, both in proximity (cf. 14:11) and relationship (15:10). Therefore, although the translation "with" is best, it clearly includes the idea of in *relationship "with"* as well. Harris comes to this same conclusion and offers the translation, "The Word was in fellowship/active communion with God" with the explanation that it "spells out the implication of with," but without making an explicit ontological statement about the Father and Son (Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 191–92). Contra: Waetjen who rightly recognizes the emphasis of relationship, but wrongly imports an explicit statement of union (Herman C. Waetjen, "Logos πρὸς τὸν θεόν and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," *CBQ* 63, no. 2 [April 2001]: 265–86).

[11]In John there is a continual emphasis on the fact that all Jesus does as the Son, he does out of

revelation of the Father is not less than that he is the Father in relation to the Son and the Son is so in relation to the Father.

This revelatory role of λόγος is, however, first united to the work of creation (v. 3)[13] and the possession of ζωή "life" (v. 4).[14] The fact that ζωή is in such close proximity to a statement about creation has led some to emphasize physical life as John's primary intent in verse 4. In light of the parallels with the creation account in Genesis 1–2, the idea that the λόγος is the source of physical life *could* be included in John's meaning, since all things were made δι᾽ αὐτοῦ (1:3, 10).[15] However, at least two points lead away from this as John's *primary* emphasis. First, he simply says that ζωή is "in

---

his relationship with the Father (5:17, 36, 43; 6:32, 37, 40, 42, 44–45; 8:16, 18–19, 28, 38, 42, 49, 54; 10:15, 17–18, 25, 29, 30, 32, 37–38; 11:41; 12:49–50; 14:9–12, 16, 20–21, 23–24, 28, 31; 15:1, 8, 10; 16:32; 17:21, 24; 20:21). George Stevens comments, "He thus affirms a distinction of person, but an identity of essence, between the Logos and the Father" (George B. Stevens, *The Johannine Theology: A Study of the Doctrinal Contents of the Gospel and Epistles of the Apostle John* [repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock: 2005], 91).

[12]Michaels is correct to point out that the reader was likely to read "Jesus" as the "Word" from the outset since he is introduced in v. 17 "without explanation or fanfare" (Michaels, *John*, 50).

[13]While the focus of the opening verses places emphasis on the creative activity of the Son, the emphasis throughout the gospel, epistles, and Revelation is on the Son acting under the authority of the Father. This role of the Son is manifest in the prologue as well, as he came to reveal the Father (v. 18). The reason for this initial emphasis on the creative activity of λόγος establishes his equality and may anticipate his incarnation (v. 14), as well as His role of mediating God's work and will in creation and toward man (cf. Col 1:15–17; Heb 1:2–3; 1 Cor 15:28).

[14]Barrett's arguments for taking ὃ γέγονεν with v. 3 and beginning v. 4 with ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν are affirmed as correct (Barrett, *John*, 156–57; also, Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Freiburg: Freiburger Graphische Betriebe, 1994], 167–68; Michaels, *John*, 51–54). Contra: Patristic authors through the fourth century, and Butlmann who calls the above punctuation "impossible" (Bultmann, *John*, 39n2), Schnackenburg (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:240n67), and Hoskyns (Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 143).

[15]Bultmann correctly states this, but wrongly derives it from a misplacement of ὃ γέγονεν to begin the thought of v. 4 (Bultmann, *John*, 39). Thompson identifies the λόγος as the "agent or instrument of bringing the world to life," which is also displayed in his signs and, ultimately, as mediator of eternal life (Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001], 120). Thus, the link between Jesus as possessor and giver of life cannot be divorced from his being the agent of eternal life, a concept that cannot be separated from the use of ζωή in 1:4. The Spirit, though not mentioned in the Prologue, is also inextricable to human life as those created in God's image (Gen 2:7) and alive to God (John 3:5; 6:63).

Him"—i.e., in his Person—not something that He gives or did.[16] Second, this ζωή "in Him" (ἐν αὐτῷ) is revelatory as the "light of men" (τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων), but in a way distinct from creation, since the physical universe has already been dealt with in verses 1–3. For Bultmann, the connection between ζωή and φῶς is man's capacity for spiritual perception:

> The Prologue . . . affirms that the significance that the Logos has in his incarnate state has been his from the beginning . . . to say he was the light as the Creator, as the ζωή, is to say that the possibility of the *illumination* of existence . . . was inherent in its very *origin*. Creation is at the same time revelation, inasmuch as it was possible for the creature to know of his Creator, and thus to understand himself. Thus the self-understanding that would have been decisive for man, would have been knowledge of his creatureliness.[17]

The idea of man's inherent ability to perceive God is another *possible* point of connecting ζωή and φῶς, but there is no reason why it should be limited to man's knowledge of his "creatureliness." Murray Harris expands on this idea linking it with the image of God:

> Having said that creation owes its existence entirely to the Logos (v. 3) and that he is the source of all life, physical, spiritual, and eternal (v. 4), John now affirms that "this life" . . . gives light to human beings . . . presumably in the sense that Jesus Christ the Logos endows everyone with the divine image (Gen 1:27) as part of their constitution, and through his incarnation brings spiritual enlightenment to all of humanity, male and female, Jew and Gentile (v. 9).[18]

---

[16]Cf. Edward W. Klink, *John*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 95.

[17]Bultmann, *John*, 44; cf. Bultmann, "ζάω," in *TDNT*, 2:871–72. Thus, the revelation of the life in John 1:4 corresponds to the revelation of creation in Rom 1:18–21 (Bultmann, *John*, 44n2; also, Carson, *John*, 118–19). However, even knowledge of the Son as Creator cannot exhaust John's meaning for ζωή in v. 4 since this knowledge is bound to his revelation of the Father and as redeemer within the context of his sonship (e.g., 8:12–30). Moreover, even though the change from the imperfect ἦν to the present φαίνει in v. 5 indicates that 4a is a pre-temporal reality made evident at the appearing of Word incarnate (1:14; cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:244; Mark L. Appold, *The Oneness Motif of the Fourth Gospel: Motif Analysis and Exegetical Probe into the Fourth Gospel* [repr., Eugene, OR: Wifp & Stock Publishers, 2011], 34n1), what is ultimately revealed is the Son as the Son of the Father; the Son through whom the work of creation, redemption, and revelation is accomplished. In this knowledge and in this relationship with the Father through the Son, is the reality of this life and light known. Stated succinctly, the "light" aspect of "life" is probably best understood as objective rather than subjective.

[18]Harris, *John*, 23.

Harris's linking of ζωή and φῶς to the image of God is helpful, but not obvious from the text and still does not explain precisely how this ζωή is the "light of men." Dodd's statement that ζωή and ζωή αἰώνιος are used in John "without any apparent difference of meaning"[19] seems closer to John's idea. In other words, ζωή in John cannot be, in any way, divorced from the concept of relationship—both God's life and relationship within Himself (v.1) and the relationship in which man was created to participate (vv. 12–13).[20] Life (ζωή) cannot be limited to bare existence, nor conscience, but to the experience of fellowship with God—at least the inherent prompting for relationship. This essential relational element highlighted by the fact that it is only received by faith in Christ (3:15) who himself shares it with the Father (5:26; 6:57) and presumably the Spirit (6:63).[21] Thus, the "life" is God's life, which is—by his own nature—relational. This is not to say that these other things—human existence and conscience—are not a part of John's meaning in any way, but that they are not likely the primary, or certainly not the

---

[19]Dodd, *Interpretation*, 144; also, Michaels, *John*, 54.

[20]Koester makes this same assertion in a discussion of the relationship of "light" and "life," noting, "Light manifests the 'life' given to people through God's Word. In John's Gospel, 'life' has a physical dimension . . . but the text emphasizes the theological dimension of life, which is God's relationship to human beings . . . those who receive Christ enter into a relationship with God . . . Light means knowing God through faith in Christ. This is implicit in the prologue, and later in the Gospel light is connected with 'seeing.' According to John's Gospel, to believe in Jesus is to believe in God; to see Jesus is to see God; to know Jesus is to know God (12:44–46; 14:7). And those who come to know God in Jesus receive the light of eternal life" (Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd ed. [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003], 143). The problem with this is that "light" itself is objective—Christ is the "Light of the world" (8:12). The question is simply whether men reject the light or receive it, but it is light either way (1:5, 10–13). Also, Hoekema observes in relation to the image of God: "Human beings reflect God, who exists not as a solitary being but as a being in fellowship—a fellowship that is described at a later stage of divine revelation as that between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986], 14). This statement anticipates the climatic description of salvation in v. 12, "children of God."

[21]Michael Heiser, discussing the image of God, notes that God's plan was always to "live among" men; thus, to be redeemed as a child of God "*reflects the original vision of Genesis*" (Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015], 43). Westcott makes this same observation in relation to v. 2, "Creation itself was (in some sense) the result of the eternal fellowship expressed in the relation of the Word to God" (B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* [repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950], 3).

exclusive meaning. The reason these are secondary is because John spends the rest of the gospel and epistles defining ζωή in terms of relationship (17:3) and φῶς in terms of that which Jesus evidences in his life among men; namely, the revelation of God (=Father/=Truth) and God's redemption of men (=grace) (cf. 3:16–21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36, 46). Therefore, the essence of ζωή should be seen as inherently relational—as manifested in the relationship of the Father and Son. It is this life that is extended to men through the incarnate Son. The very reason men were brought into existence was to participate in this life, which is what God brought about in sending the Son (3:15).[22]

Since this "life" is ἐν αὐτῷ (1:4), John's statement may be anticipating Jesus's words in 5:26, "Just as the Father has life in Himself even so He gave to the Son to have life in Himself (ἐν ἑαυτῷ)." The context of that statement being the Son's unity with the Father in will, judgment, work, life, resurrection, and witness. In reference to the "life," it certainly includes *aseity* (cf. 8:58; Exod 3:14), but this self-existence is inextricable from the relationship that defines their persons and, thus, is life the Father gives.[23] In other words, the ζωή given (ἔδωκεν) to the Son by the Father necessitates an eternal and dynamic relationship (cf. πρὸς τὸν θεόν, v. 1) with distinct relational properties specific to the Father as the Father of the Son and the Son as Son of the Father.[24] It is this

---

[22]Koester gets close to this when he acknowledges, "In John's Gospel life is understood relationally. To have life is to relate to the God who is the source of all life" (Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008], 31). He makes this statement in the context of the life of creation, even as demonstrated in 1:4, but does not state it explicitly—although it is strongly implied—that this sense of relationship is inherent to the life in the eternal λόγος.

[23]Many commentators suggest Ps 36:10 as background to John's statement in 1:5, which is possible. Less likely background is the OT and rabbinical portrayal of the Torah as light and life (cf. Barrett, *John*, 157) since the "light" is directly attached to the person of the Son (= λόγος). Etienne Trocmé, following Bultmann, suggests, "Life is defined as 'the light of men' which suggests that it should not be understood simply in a biological sense, but as a symbol of supernatural guidance granted to human beings . . . We are not far from the 'Light of the World,' as 8:12 says" (Etienne Trocmé, "Light and Darkness in the Fourth Gospel," *Didaskalia* 6, no. 2 [Spring 1995]: 8). He later defines this "light" as human reason and makes John the Baptist the "light that enlightens every man."

[24]John, along with the entirety of the NT, maintains a consistent relational dynamic that places the purpose and authority with the Father and submission and mediation with the Son. Commenting on

relationship that is at the heart of John's revelation of Jesus as the Son of the Father and the life that is extended to those who believe (cf. 5:24; 11:25–26; 14:23; 17:3; 1 John 1:1–3). The meaning of John's statement, "in Him was life," then, is this: in the λόγος is the eternal existence that consists of the fellowship between God the Son with God the Father; a fellowship in which man was created to participate (cf. 11:25–26; 1 John 1:1–3)—and man is inherently prompted toward internally (cf. Rom 1:18).[25] It is this ζωή that is revealed in the person of the incarnate λόγος and is extended to men by the Father through the Son and applied by the Spirit.

This understanding of ζωή fits the imagery of φῶς as the τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων and indicates that ἐν αὐτῷ anticipates verse 14 and the uniting of the λόγος to flesh, because it is ultimately revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, ζωή is the revelation of the Son as equal to and in eternal relationship with the Father, manifest in

---

5:26, Schnackenburg helpfully states, "The Father is the one from whom the movement of life goes out" (Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:112). Thus, it is the Father who "gave His only begotten Son" to the world for salvation (3:16; 19:11); God who gives to the Son the "Spirit without measure" (3:34) and "all things" (3:35; 13:3) so that He can speak the words of God (3:33; 12:49; 17:14; cf. Rev 1:1) and carry out His mission; the Father gives the Son "all judgment" (5:22) and to "have life in Himself" (5:26), even "authority to execute judgment" (5:27), as well as works to do (5:36; 17:4); the Father gives "true bread out of heaven," which is the body of Jesus (6:32; 18:11) through which life will come to the world; the Father gives all those who will come to Jesus and believe in Him (6:37, 65; 10:39; 17:6, 9, 24; 18:9) and they will not be lost (6:39); the Father will give the Spirit at the request of the Son; the Father will give the request of the disciples in the name of the Son (15:16; 16:23)—the disciples will also know that everything that Christ gave them was from the Father (17:7). Moreover, the Father has given his name to Jesus and it is into that Name the children have believed in order to have life (17:11; cf. 1:12b); the Father gave glory to the Son that the Son shares with his (17:22) so that they may share in his—relational—unity with the Father (17:24). Consequently, the Son gives to his disciples what the Father has given to him to give to the disciples: "living water" (4:10, 14), which is eternal life (v. 14b) that comes from the Spirit (7:38–39); the Son gives his life/body in order to give eternal life (6:27, 51); the Son gives eternal life to his sheep (10:28; 17:2); the Son gives peace to His disciples (14:27); He has given the words of the Father to the disciples (17:8, 14); the Son gives the glory that the Father has given him (17:22, 24).

[25]Akala places the relationship of the Father and Son as central to the "theological and revelatory purpose of the gospel, which is to reveal the Son *through* his relationship with the Father" (Akala, *Son–Father*, 223, italics mine). The concepts of φῶς with ζωή are linked to Torah and Wisdom in the OT (Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 1:382–86) as well as creation (Barrett, *John 157*), but neither of these seems to be John's main point here.

the historical Jesus.[26] This explains the dramatic change to the present in φαίνει and makes the most sense of κατέλαβεν in context,[27] which can be translated as either a statement of the world's ignorance of Christ (vv. 10–11) or hatred of him. Indeed, Carson's comment that this verse is "a masterpiece of planned ambiguity,"[28] has merit. However, the ideas are coalesced in the reality that ignorance of the true nature of Jesus did not produce indifference, but hostility. Hoskyns aptly states, "The opposition of the Jews which effected the death of Jesus was rooted in their failure to apprehend Him or His teaching"[29] (cf. 12:35; also, 7:30, 45; 8:20, 28, 37, 44, 58; 1 John 3:12). Indeed, those in the σκοτία are characterized by hostile ignorance (8:12, 28, 37, 44, 58; 12:46; 1 John 2:8; 3:12) and in the spiritual linage of the Devil (8:44; 1 John 3:10–13).[30] It is this

---

[26]Schnackenburg comes to the same conclusion in the sudden use of the present and aorist in v. 5, but unnecessarily sees it as a digression in John's thought (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:245). The use of οὗτος (v.2) and αὐτός (v.3) leaves open the possibility to see the incarnate Son—Jesus Christ—in the mind of John throughout vv. 1–13. In other words, there does not need to be such a strong bifurcation between the eternal and incarnate Son in John's mind prior to v. 14. The emphasis is clearly on the divine nature and reality of the Son's relationship to the Father in eternity, but this is known and manifested to men now only in the Person of Jesus Christ, who certainly was in the mind of John's first readers from the very outset of the gospel, since he wrote at the end of the apostolic era and in recognition of the already established synoptic testimony.

[27]BDAG, 520, list two possible meanings in relation to this verse: "catch up with, seize" and "understand, grasp," but prefer "seize w. hostile intent, overtake, come upon." Schnackenburg ignores the possibility of "seize" and lists only "grasp" and "master (=overwhelm)," preferring the former (Schnackenburg, *John*, 246). Koester, *Symbolism*, 144. Jacob Dyer suggests the translation, "the darkness has never appreciated it," based on the idea of acceptance in ἔγνω and παρέλαβον in vv. 10 and 11 (Jacob A. Dyer, "The Unappreciated Light," *JBL* 79, no. 2 [June 1960]: 170–71; also, Schnackenburg, *John*, 246). However, this seems to lessen the impact of both the intensive form of the verb as well as the context of John in which darkness "hates the light" (3:19–21) and is the realm of the devil (8:44). Ridderbos argues for the translation "understand" based on the present tense φαίνει and its relationship to "did not know" of v. 10 (Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997], 39–40n69); Beasley-Murray of "acknowledging" and "receiving" (George R. Beasley Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., WBC [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000], 11).

[28]Carson, *John*, 119, 138; cf. Barrett, *John*, 158; Keener, *John*, 1:387.

[29]Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 143.

[30]Koester rightly describes it as "lethal estrangement from God that begins while a person is breathing and eventually leads to a termination of the relationship" (Koester, *Symbolism*, 144).

σκοτία that John associates with spiritual death of the world (5:21, 24; 8:52; 1 John 3:14; cf. 1 John 5:19; Luke 22:53) that includes hatred (μισέω) of Jesus (John 7:7; 15:18, 24–25) and His followers (15:19–20). The primary point to note for this thesis is that the statement sets the stage for the contrasting spiritual realities of men under John's filial rubric of "children"— τέκνον (1:12; 11:52; 1 John 3:10; cf. John 8:44).

John 1:6–11

The φῶς motif is advanced in verses 6–11 through the introduction of John the Baptist and the anticipation of verse 14 with the λόγος appearing as the τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν rejected by the world and the Jewish nation (vv. 10–11). This expansion on verse 5 serves as a transition to prepare the reader for the ministry of John the Baptist in verse 15 and the conflict concerning Jesus that will ensue through the remainder of the gospel. However, John is also establishing a contrast between the world in σκοτία that rejects the testimony (μαρτυρία) concerning the Son and those who will receive him and become "children of God" (τέκνα θεοῦ) by virtue of a spiritual birth (v.13); a contrast between those who enter into the experience of ζωή and those who remain estranged to it (cf. 12:46). Thus, in verses 6–11, there is anticipation of the intimate and spiritual connection between "children of God" and the Son of God that stands in direct opposition to the unbelieving world and leads to the centerpiece of the prologue in verses 12–13.

John 1:12–13

The opening δὲ highlights the contrast between the response of world to the incarnate λόγος and the τέκνα θεοῦ—"those who receive Him (αὐτόν)," whom John announces.[31] The constative aorist ἔλαβον marks a new group drawn from the two classes

[31]Cf. Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel* (repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978), 264.

identified as rejecting the light: the "world" (ὁ κόσμος) and "His own" (τὰ ἴδια[32]; cf. 3:11, 32, 41; 5:43–44; 12:48; 14:17). That is, the Gentiles and Jews respectively. The significance of this observation is two-fold: First, this new identity— τέκνα θεοῦ—is bound to a divine Person, the incarnate λόγος (v. 1, 14) and not Jewishness or participation in the OC.[33] Second, this identity is corollary with an internal change, a shared nature—in some sense—with the incarnate λόγος. In fact, Vellanickal rightly suggests, "The main thrust of the Gospel and the Prologue . . . is to show the gift of divine sonship or Life shared by those who give a positive response to Christ. . . . Christian sonship holds the central place in the Prologue [and] shows how integral it is to the message of the Evangelist."[34]

New Identity in the Incarnate λόγος

The verb ἔλαβον is immediately explained as "believing into His name" (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ); that is, those who have accepted God's witness to the Son as the Son of God and Messiah (1:7, 34; 3:33; 5:31–39).[35] This marks the introduction to John's stated purpose in writing the gospel and forms an inclusio that establishes the key themes found throughout both the gospel and epistles (20:30–31; 1

---

[32]Tenny notes the phrase εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν could be translated, "He came home" and cites 16:32 and 19:27 (Merrill C. Tenny, *John: The Gospel of Belief, An Analytic Study of the Text* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948], 68). However, the following statement, "His own did not receive Him," places emphasis on the individual persons who make up the nation. However, he then identifies God's right: "He had come to visit His own property, thus asserting inherent right and ownership" (Tenny, *John,* 69). The phrase τὰ ἴδια is best understood as his coming to the Jews, contra: Bultmann, *John*, 56n1.

[33]For example, Marianne Thompson states, "This is the first hint that John reshapes the identity of the 'children of God,' neither linking that identity to ethnic heritage nor denying it to any on that basis" (Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015], 32).

[34]Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians*, 136.

[35]Dodd's definition of πιστεύω in this passage is surely correct and corresponds to John's gospel and the rest of the NT: "πιστεύειν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ would be not simply to accept His claim, by intellectual assent, but to acknowledge that claim by yielding allegiance" (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 184).

John 5:11–13). First among these themes is the connection between faith and sharing in the life (ζωή)—"eternal life"—that is in Him, which he has with the Father and that he revealed to the world (3:15–16; 5:24 [40]; 6:40, 47 [63; 7:38]; 11:25–26; 17:3, 8; 20:31). John notes that there is a wrong kind of belief (2:23–25; 8:31–47) that leaves one in the category of σκοτία and τέκνα of the Devil (8:44; cf. John 3:10; 5:19). However, the believing (πιστεύω) he envisions here is the believing that serves as the vehicle, or instrument through which one exercises faith in all that is revealed in the "name," and so obtains the status τέκνα θεοῦ in and from the incarnate λόγος. The present participle relates directly back to the aorist ἔλαβον and marks a continuous—contemporaneous—condition that necessarily attends the new status.[36] In other words, believing describes the action of receiving, which is the basis on which ἐξουσία is granted by the λόγος.

John has not yet introduced the historical Jesus, although the "name" (ὄνομα) clearly refers to the λόγος manifest in flesh (v.14)—which suggests that John has the historical Jesus in mind throughout verses 2–11.[37] Yet, the ὄνομα is not to be limited to the Son revealed in the historical Jesus, but encompasses the Father (5:43; 10:25; 12:13, 18; 14:13–14; 17:6, 11–12, 26) with whom the Son is in eternal communion (1:1). Thus, ὄνομα is a concise way to capture the summation of all that he is as the Son sent into the world by the Father to reveal the Father's name—even as the Father is in relation to the Son (1:34–36a; 2:23; 3:18; 5:43 [1:18]; 10:25; 17:6, 11, 12, 26; 20:31). Indeed, to believe in the Son is tantamount to believing in the Father (12:44–45; 14:15) and will later be associated with the ministry of the Spirit (14:26). The critical element in verse 12, however, is the *change in status* that comes about through the ἐξουσία given by the incarnate λόγος to those who believe.

---

[36]Cf. Wallace, *Grammar*, 621n22.

[37]So Harris, who notes, "The αὐτὸν of 1:10–12 must refer to the Jesus of human history" (Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1992], 59).

Interestingly, John does not use δύναμις to communicate the idea of power or a special ability granted, but ἐξουσία, which emphasizes the concepts of "right" or "authority." BDAG gives seven nuances to the term but associates "potential or resource to command, control, or govern, *capability, might, power*" with John 1:12. Foerster, in TDNT, suggests the essential idea of "enablement" and makes a connection with the Person of Christ: "The authority imparted to the community [with] the outstanding characteristic . . . that the Church owes its existence and nature to Christ."[38] The connection with Christ is essential, for in verse 12 the λόγος is the subject of ἔδωκεν and the source of the ἐξουσία that brings about the status of τέκνα θεοῦ. Thus, there is an inextricable link between the nature of the Person of the λόγος (=Son) and the status of the τέκνα that transcends mere identity. Indeed, it encompasses the Son's relationship to the Father and God's redemptive purpose in Him—that of extending the scope of his eternal fellowship with the Son to those given to him—picking up on the idea of verse 4.

While not immediately evident in verse 12, John will establish that the ability of the Son to extend ἐξουσία to believers is based on the ἐξουσία he has himself received from the Father. Yet, the ἐξουσία of the Son is a distinct and inherent property of his sonship and equality with the Father, which is not the case for believers. As the eternal Son, the Father gives ἐξουσία to him to execute judgment (5:27), to lay down his life and take it up again (10:18), and over "all flesh" in order that (ἵνα) he may give eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον) to those the Father has given to him (δέδωκας αὐτῷ).[39] The ἐξουσία

---

[38]Foerster, "ἐξουσία," in *TDNT*, 2:569. *NIDNTTE* follows the same course.

[39]This last verse (17:2) sheds light on v.12 in several ways. First, the "eternal life" given by the Son likely corresponds or is in tandem with the ἐξουσία given to become τέκνα, for it is the essence of being a τέκνα to possess life. Second, the giving of eternal life is implicitly connected to the giving of ἐξουσία. Third, the ἐξουσία given by the Son finds its impetus with the Father, so in v. 12 the act of the Son is just as much a decision of the Father and is in harmony with the idea τέκνα. Fourth, the result of the new status of τέκνα is commensurate with participation in the divine fellowship of 17:3. Fifth, the present tense of γινώσκω (γινώσκωσιν) in 17:3 links comfortably with the description of τοῖς πιστεύουσιν in v.12; knowing and believing are often linked in John (6:69; 10:38; 17:8; 1 John 4:16). Thus, the Father gave the Son to the world (3:16), to purchase a people (cf. 6:36) that He would give eternal life and ἐξουσία to

granted to the "believing" appears to be a "form of liberty"[40] to receive the benefits of divine life and the new status of τέκνα θεοῦ through the link of faith in the incarnate λόγος.

This "liberty" is most directly illustrated in Rev 22:17, where ἐξουσία / "liberty" is demonstrated by access to the "tree of life"—"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right (ἐξουσία) to the tree of life, and may enter the gates into the city" (Rev 22:14[41]; cf. 10:9). In this case, the "right" is a freedom of access to the Father and the full presence and blessing of God based on a new relationship bound to the Son (cf. John 20:17; Rev 21:7),[42] and in which the language of "My Son" is used. The essence of the ἐξουσία granted in 1:12 is organically connected to the status and Person of the λόγος and his own relationship to the Father as Son.[43] Put another way, ἐξουσία is not an independent ἐξουσία exercised by the individual, but is grounded entirely on the status and relationship of the λόγος to God and extended through faith in

---

become "children of God."

[40]Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John*, ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 33. She then says of this authority, "One who accepts Jesus as God's agent has the right to call oneself a child of God" (Brant, *John,* 33). Yet, this seems to make ἐξουσία related to the right of identity rather than the ability to participate in the reality.

[41]Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1221. Beale adds, "It is not the saints worthiness that makes them fit for the heavenly city. It is rather Christ's worthiness that qualified him to suffer the penalty for their sins, so that they would not be cast outside the city and suffer in the 'lake of fire' (20:15)" (Beale, *Revelation*, 1139). That the right to eat from the tree is mentioned before entrance into the city "is a case of referencing the greater privilege first because it includes all others, including entrance into the city" (Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995], 506).

[42]It is also demonstrated in prayer as the believer has free access to God the Father opened up through the Son: "If you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you" (16:23). This new access to the Father is grounded on the believer's new relationship with the Father in the Son: "I do not say that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from the Father" (John 16:26–27). There are tangential links to this idea of mediated ἐξουσία in Rom 13:1 in which the ἐξουσία of government is found in the ἐξουσία of God and 1 Corinthians 8:6, 9 where the ἐξουσία of Christian freedom is found through union with Christ.

[43]On this Keener correctly observes, "Becoming God's children entails receiving the divine nature or character of which Jesus is the perfect image" (Keener, *John*, 1:403).

the Son.[44] Therefore, those who bear the status τέκνα θεοῦ receive every privilege in the Son and that is commensurate with the Son's own relationship with the Father. The implied plurality of θεός in verse1 is now explained in terms of a Divine Father-Son relationship, in which the children participate in the Son (λόγος).

This filial relationship is advanced even more by identifying the λόγος as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ through the witness of John the Baptist (1:34; cf. v. 14, 18), which was introduced in verses 7, 15. This identification of υἱὸς must be included in the ὄνομα "name" of verse 12 and helps establish the content of the τέκνα θεοῦ, who receive the extended status of the Son. This link is made explicit in verse 16, "of His fullness we have all received (ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν)." John's use of πάντες ἐλάβομεν ("we have all received") cannot be confined to the apostles, but forms a link with those who ἔλαβον him in verse 12 and bear the status "children of God." The term "fullness (τοῦ πληρώματος)" embraces all John will reveal about the nature of Jesus and the relationship of the children to him and the Father.[45] In fact, Köstenberger rightly identifies an *inclusio* of verse 17 and 17:3,[46] in which the relational knowledge (γινώσκωσιν) of both the Son and Father is the essence of eternal life. This point is strengthened by the intimate relationship of the λόγος and θεός that picks up the filial language–"only begotten God[47]

---

[44]Godet, commenting on the use of ἐξουσία, rightly notes that it is "more than a simple possibility, and less than a power properly so called. What is meant is a new position, that of being reconciled, justified, which the believer gains through faith, through this it is that he receives the power of asking for and receiving the Holy Spirit, by means of which he becomes *a child of God*" (Godet, *John*, 265).

[45]This is strengthened when the preposition ἀντὶ in v. 16 is taken in its usual sense—"instead of"—rendering the meaning of v. 16 in context: the grace known under the Mosaic Law is replaced with the grace now introduced in Christ (Carson, *John*, 130–34). This is a grace that has, at its heart, the redemption and filial relationship that comes to believers in and through Christ. Namely, that they are "children of God" in and through the "Son of God."

[46]Köstenberger, *John*, 48.

[47]Metzger gives this reading a [B] rating, noting that the term υἱὸς was likely "the result of scribal assimilation to Jn 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9" (Metzger, *Commentary*, 169). The reading of θεός rather than υἱὸς is of no real consequence to the point made here, or John's overall presentation of the relationship of

who is in the bosom of the Father (ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς)" (v. 18)—introduced in verse 14 with the incarnation of the λόγος. It is interesting to observe that John presents the filial language of Father–Son (vv. 14, 18) immediately after identifying the filial status of the "children of God" who receive this identity from the λόγος and by being "born of God."

However, John makes a clear distinction between the incarnate λόγος as υἱὸς and believers as τέκνα. On this point, Vellanickal rightly notes, "First of all we have to exclude from 'τέκνα θεοῦ' a meaning that is equal to 'υἱὸς θεοῦ.'"[48] Unlike Paul, John—with the possible exception of "sons (υἱὸς) of light" in 12:36—refrains from using υἱὸς for believers.[49] His intention to reserve υἱὸς for Christ is consistent with his emphasis on the unique status of Jesus as the eternal Son of the Father, while Paul's free interchange of the terms is consistent with his legal framework of adoption.[50] However, the distinction in terms regarding the nature of the relationship is not as sharp as it might appear. Michael Peppard makes this point clearly: "Hurtado argues that John distinguishes the unique divine sonship of Jesus, 'the Son' (ὁ υἱὸς), from the divine sonship of Christians, 'the children" (τὰ τέκνα). Yet the term 'children' is different from 'the Son' in number and gender, not nature."[51] Indeed, the idea of nature is found in the

---

the Son and Father throughout the gospel. And the use of πατήρ with μονογενής makes the idea of Sonship introduced in v. 34 plain in any case.

[48]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 92. Emphasis mine.

[49]The implications of the believer's sonship in 20:17 and Rev 21:7 will be discussed later.

[50]Leon Morris makes this same point: "By contrast, Paul speaks of people as both υἱοὶ and τέκνα. He uses the former term to refer to the rights Christ confers on those adopted into the heavenly family rather than the community of nature they share" (Morris, *John*, 87; see also, Hendriksen, *John*, 81; contra: A.T. Roberston, *Word Pictures* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1932], 11). Also, see Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 27.

[51]Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in Its Social and Political Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 22. Robertson suggests that it "is possible that John prefers *ta tekna tou theou* for the spiritual children of God whether Jew or Gentile . . . because of the

source of this status at the end of verse 13 with the metaphor of birth: "but have been born of God (ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν)."[52]

To be born of something is to share in its nature—like begets like. To be "born of God" is to share, in some way, in God's nature (cf. 2 Pet 1:4) by virtue of the metaphor.[53] The tension lies is the infinite gap that exists between God as Creator and man and creature—the infinite and finite. This problem, however, begins to find a solution in the incarnation of the λόγος. God (1:1) is made to participate, or share in the nature of humanity (v. 14). This introduces the reality—already suggested in verses 12–13—that in the λόγος this bridge is built; it is the λόγος / υἱὸς that takes flesh and is the one by whom the status τέκνα is gained. This is the likely reason why verse 14 follows the statement of verses 12–13—the Son in flesh is both the object of faith and grounds for the new status and relation of the "children of God." This implies that the kind of relationship that the τέκνα have with God is established, or typified, by the relationship of

---

community of nature (*teknon* from root *tek*-, to beget)" (Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 11). The genitive θεοῦ is probably a genitive of relationship, but the idea of source is also embedded into John's meaning.

[52]Metzger summarizes well the textual variant regarding the plural of v. 13: "All Greek manuscripts, as well as the other versional and patristic witnesses, attest to plural number . . . On the basis of the overwhelming consensus of all Greek manuscripts, the plural must be adopted, a reading, moreover, that is in accord with the characteristic teaching of John. The singular number may have arisen either from a desire to make the Fourth Gospel allude explicitly to the virgin birth or from the influence of the singular number of the immediately preceding αὐτοῦ" (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 168–69). Vellanickal argues for the singular reading, citing second century Patristic writers as earlier witnesses than third century Gk. mss. (Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians*, 113–16). He also argues from grammar and context, which he concludes in these words, "It is this combined generation of Christ, both eternal (from God) and temporal (from Mary), namely, the eternal generation from God expressed and continued in the temporal generation, that becomes the object of faith for the believers, and the source and prototype, for their sonship and generation. Combining the eternal and temporal generation, v. 13 forms a good transition to the explicit declaration of the Incarnation in v. 14" (Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians*, 131). The plural reading is accepted as correct with v. 14 beginning a new thought that makes explicit what was implicit in vv. 7–11. Namely, that the λόγος announced, rejected, and believed in is the Word made flesh, from whom the children received the fullness of God's grace in and through Him.

[53]Michaels perceptively comments on the strong filial overtones: "God must become Father to those who would 'see the kingdom of God'" (Michaels, *John*, 182). Akala notes that the verbs for "seeing" and "hearing" refer to the Son's relationship to the Father and mark those who are born into the kingdom through the Son (cf. Akala, *Son–Father*, 198).

the υἱὸς to the Father. However, John does not make this connection explicit or develop it at this point.

Nonetheless, John strengthens the distinction between ὁ υἱὸς and τὰ τέκνα by reserving the use of μονογενής ("only-begotten") for the Son alone (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). The meaning of this term is best expressed by the translation "unique," or "one and only."[54] Yet, the idea of sonship is inherently drawn from the context, as observed by Vellanickal, "In Jn 'μονογενής' is connected directly with the notion of sonship, from the fact that it is joined to 'υἱὸς' (cf. Jn 3:16,18; 1 Jn 4:9), or is in correspondence with 'πατήρ' (Jn 1:14,18)."[55] Thus, the idea of a unique sonship is attributed to Christ by virtue of His archetypal and eternal relationship to God and essential attribute of equality with God (5:17–18).[56] However, the attributes of relationship manifested through the incarnation of the μονογενής—the very context of verse 14—will be shown to be transferred to τὰ τέκνα who have their filial status in Him. Thus, while the language of υἱὸς is reserved primarily—not exclusively (Rev 21:7; cf. John 12:36)—for Jesus due to John's Christological purposes, the idea of sonship in the experience of believers as modeled in Christ is inherently implied. This is to say that the filial relationship of the τέκνα to the Father is bound to the filial relationship of Jesus, who is the "only begotten Son of God." Some of these relational attributes include calling God Father (20:17), knowing the love of the Father (16:27), having intimate spiritual fellowship (14:23), as well as the responsibilities of sonship as modeled in Christ (15:9–10)—such as

---

[54]Both glosses are listed as the only options in BDAG, 658, with "unique (in kind)" connected with 1:14. However, see Charles Lee Irons, "A Lexical Defense of the Eternal Generation of the 'Only Begotten' Son," paper delivered at ETS, April 11, 2014, Providence Christian College, Pasadena, CA.

[55]Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 129.

[56]See Stevens, *Theology*, 102–26 for a defense of Son in John as primarily a reference to Jesus's eternal, metaphysical relationship to the Father as the foundation of his ethical union.

obedience—all of which will be unfolded as John develops these incipient ideas of the prologue.[57]

A New Nature with the New Identity

The metaphor of birth is emphatically marked as something spiritual and *not* physical in nature. John uses three distinct phrases designed to completely eliminate the idea of a human cause for this birth, stating that it is "not from (ἐξ) blood, nor from (ἐκ) the will of the flesh, nor from (ἐκ) the will of man." Each of these phrases has been variously understood in its nuance, but nearly all agree that the primary purpose of John is to remove the idea that the birth that brings about the status of τέκνα θεοῦ finds its origin in man and not God. God is the cause of the spiritual birth that is the condition out of which man believes in the λόγος and so becomes a τέκνα θεοῦ. The relationship between the constative aorist and the present participle (ἐγεννήθησαν . . . πιστεύουσιν) is best understood as one of cause and effect. In other words, John establishes the birth as the cause of the effect of faith that brings one into the status of "child."[58] Interestingly,

---

[57]Godet, commenting on v. 14, moves in this direction when he states that "this *only Son* is the only one, not merely as the sole son of this father, but inasmuch as He is the absolute model and prototype of every one who among the sons of men bears the name of only son . . . There was seen in Him, as never in any man, the assurance of being loved paternally by God, of the power of asking everything of Him with the certainty of being heard, and at the same time the most perfect filial fidelity towards Him" (Godet, *John*, 273; cf. Stephen C. Barton, *The Spirituality of the Gospels* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005], 114–16).

[58]Carson suggests, "These verses refrain from spelling out the connection between faith and new birth" (Carson, *John*, 126; contra: Ridderbos, *John*, 48; cf. Marinus de Jonge, *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God* [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977], 153). However, besides the grammatical implication between the aorist and present, the conceptual connection is strong. John uses γεννάω 24x in his gospel, 19 of which refer to natural birth and 5 are metaphorically speaking of spiritual birth—here and ch. 3. The idea of begetting forms a direct link with the status of "children" in v. 12, which is brought about through the instrumentality of faith. In light of John's description of those in "darkness" (3:19–21) and his later emphasis on the necessity of the Father's drawing (John 6), it is difficult to see faith in Christ as the cause, or origin of the spiritual birth. In fact, the very imagery of birth, in which the person born is passive, seems to argue against faith being the cause. Godet goes so far as to say that placing regeneration before faith in this verse is "impossible" (Godet, *John*, 266). However, his argument seems inconsistent when he asserts that the truth of Christ can only come by "perception of a moral nature" (Godet, *John,* 266), yet it is the communication of life—ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν—that gives man such a moral nature that can rightly perceived the truth about Christ. The more difficult problem is having moral and spiritual perception of

John does not mention the Spirit in relation to this "birth" in the prologue, but he does elaborate on the concept in 3:3–8.

John 3:3–8

John 3:3–6 provides the second use of the verb γεννάω in the gospel and it serves to explain the concept introduced in the prologue related to the τέκνα θεοῦ—although interesting this latter phrase is not used. Rather, the context of Jesus's conversation with the Jewish leader regarding the "kingdom of God" (v. 3), which replaces the τέκνα language. However, the central interest of John 3 is the spiritual requirement for entrance into the kingdom, not the identification of its true citizens. Yet, the concept of sonship is inherent in the metaphor of birth and is inferred by the Jewish understanding of being in the kingdom (cf. Exod 4:22; Isa 63:16; 64:8; Rom 9:4).

Although John leaves the filial status of the believer as simply implied in this section, he immediately moves to the Son–Father language and concepts (cf. 1:12–14) as Jesus's teachings about God's redemption expands and regains its central purpose of revealing himself and the Father in salvation (3:16–18, 35–36). In the case of Nicodemus, he The crucial points—in relation to this thesis—are the link between the Holy Spirit and the Divine act of giving "birth" to spiritual "children," as well as the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit in redemption and revelation. This necessary link with the Spirit compels the reader of John's gospel to recognize the presence and work of the Spirit in 1:12–13. It also further explicates the unique status of the Son and the believer's relationship to the Father through Him, by the Spirit.

---

faith apart from the prior work of the new birth that removes the natural darkness and rebellion. This prior work of the Spirit may be implied by Jesus's words in 6:45, when he speaks of those who come as having "heard and learned from the Father."

The Holy Spirit and the Birth "From Above"

Jesus quickly moves the conversation with Nicodemus to the necessity of a spiritual birth (γεννάω) to both "see (ἰδεῖν)" and to "enter . . . the kingdom of God" (3:3, 5). Each of these terms relates to the spiritual ability to perceive and believe in the Son (vv. 12–18) and his revelation of the Father (1:18; 8:42; 14:9–11), as well as to partake of the privileges that come through this faith (v. 36).[59] Nicodemus had already "seen" the "signs" (σημεῖον) with his physical eyes (v. 2), but he had not yet come to the place of *perceiving* their significance and *believing* (πιστεύω) on Jesus (cf. vv. 10–12, 32, 36; cf. 6:26–40).[60] The language of verse 11 places Nicodemus within the category of "his own" (τὰ ἴδια) who "did not receive (οὐ παρέλαβον)" the "witness" (μαρτυρία) concerning him that John established in the Prologue (1:7–11)—"our witness you do not receive" (τὴν μαρτυρίαν . . . οὐ λαμβάνετε). In other words, Nicodemus represents the unbelieving Jew—who is part of the ὁ κόσμος (1:10)—who is *not* spiritually among the τέκνα θεοῦ. This is also indicated in verse 36 in what could be seen as an *inclusio* with verse 3, in which "he who does not obey (ὁ . . . ἀπειθῶν) the Son shall not see life (οὐκ ὄψεται ζωήν)." This language forms a textual link with 1:4–18 places 3:3–21 within the conceptual framework of sonship—both of Jesus and the "children . . . born of God."

[59]To "see" requires that one have a "new endowment of faculties" that entails the removal of darkness (12:35) that hides the inner perception of spiritual truth made "impossible" because of the "moral characteristic of the man" (Westcott, *John*, 48).

[60]The context of 2:23–25, the opening δὲ of 3:1, and John's later testimony of Nicodemus (7:50; 19:39) suggest that Nicodemus did experience the new birth and come to believe in Christ, which would mean that unlike those to whom Jesus would "not entrust (οὐκ ἐπίστευεν)" in v. 24, He will to Nicodemus.

Table 1. Comparison of terms in 1:4–18 and 3:3–34

1:4–18	3:3–34
μαρτυρίαν / μαρτυρέω (7, 8, 15)	μαρτυρίαν / μαρτυρέω (11, 26, 28, 32, 33)
κόσμον (9, 10)	κόσμον (16, 17, 19)
λαμβάνω (12, 16)	λαμβάνω (11, 27, 32, 33)
πιστεύω (7, 12)	πιστεύω (12, 15, 16, 18, 36)
πατήρ (14, 18)	πατήρ (35)
μονογενής (14, 18)	μονογενής (16, 18)
φῶς (4, 5, 7, 8, 9)	φῶς (19, 20, 21)
ζωή (4)	ζωή (15, 16, 36)
σκοτία (5)	σκότος (19)

Nicodemus is *not* a child at this point and can only be one through a new γεννάω, which would bring him into the status of τέκνα θεοῦ and into the kingdom by believing in the Son. Thus, there is an explicit link with Christ, the work of the Spirit, and the experience of coming into the genuine filial relationship with God in 1:12–13. To be in the "kingdom of God" is to be a son of God in the Son by the Spirit.

Jesus presents the language of spiritual birth—γεννάω—as the essential qualification for entering into the kingdom. Although the essential idea of spiritual birth is clear, Jesus's use of the adverb ἄνωθεν has been the subject of much discussion.[61] The term can be rightly understood as having a temporal nuance rendering the translation "born again," or as an adverb of place, rendering "from above." It is a decidedly ambiguous term in this context. Although the response of Nicodemus (v. 4) suggests the temporal sense, the idea of place ("from above") seems clear in verses 7–8, 31, and 19:11, and corresponds better to Jesus's argument (cf. vv. 12, 13, 27, 31).[62] In either case,

[61]The discussion regarding the Aramaic background for the term, or the suggestion that the redactor of John is borrowing from the concept presented in such passages as 1 Pet 1:3, 23 and Titus 3:5 is irrelevant to this thesis. This paper assumes *a priori* that the apostle John is the author, he is recording the actual words of Jesus, and that ἄνωθεν is the term chosen by the Holy Spirit and should be treated in its Greek and Greek NT context.

[62]BDAG, 92; *NIDNTTE*, 1:339; Büschel, "ἄνωθεν," in *TDNT*, 1:378; Michaels, *John*, 181n32.

the material point of Jesus is unchanged by either translation—each of which includes the concept of the other.[63] Namely, that the new spiritual life and nature required to "see" and "receive" the "witness" of Jesus is of heavenly origin (1:13), is effected by the Holy Spirit (vv. 5, 6, 8), and is described by the metaphor of spiritual birth.

Jesus explains the metaphor γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν within a framework of spiritual cleansing and the work of the Holy Spirit: "Unless one is born from the water and Spirit (ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος)" (v. 5). The precise meaning of ὕδατος and its relation to πνεύματος has been diversely understood,[64] with three primary options that rise to the surface. First, ὕδατος is understood as a reference to either the semen or the natural fluids of birth and is set in contrast to spiritual birth by the Spirit—i.e., natural birth constrasted with spiritual birth. However, this would be highly unusual since John has already made an explicit contrast between physical and spiritual birth in 1:13 without reference to "water." Moreover, ὕδατος was not a typical Jewish idiom for natural birth.

A second option is that ὕδατος refers to water baptism, which may link to proselyte cleansing, the ministry of John the Baptist, or Christian baptism. The baptism interpretation finds support in the connection between the Spirit and water baptism in 1:31–34, as well as John's focus on baptism in 3:22–26 and 4:1–2, and some Qumran literature. However, there are several textual and conceptual elements that make a link to baptism less likely. One, the verb γεννηθῇ links ὕδατος . . . πνεύματος to the idea of birth,

---

Contra: Bultmann, who directly states, "in 3.3, 7 it can only mean 'anew' . . . The misunderstanding comes when someone sees the right meaning of the word but mistakenly imagines that its meaning is exhausted by the reference to earthly matters …" (Bultmann, *John*, 135n1).

[63]To be born "again" would require the work of the Spirit is who is "from above"; conversely, to be born "from above" would require that one be born "again" from the original corrupt state.

[64]See Carson, *John*, 190–96, and Köstenberger, *John*, 123–24 for a list of the various views and those who support them. A detailed examination of each view on this point is beyond the purpose of this thesis.

which has no immediate connection to the concept of baptism.[65] Nowhere in John is baptism spoken of as regeneration, nor is regeneration included in the baptism of John the Baptist. Two, NC baptism is unknown in the OC (John 1:33), but Jesus rebukes Nicodemus for being ignorant of the connection between ὕδατος . . . πνεύματος, though he is "the teacher of Israel" (v. 10). Three, the later discussion (vv. 25–26) among the Baptist's disciples displays their erroneous understanding of water baptism, purification, and the ministry of Jesus—a point Jesus is correcting, not encouraging.[66] Keener suggests the imagery of "*spiritual* proselyte baptism,"[67] but, again, Jesus is directing the conversation and speaking in language that Nicodemus should have understood on OT terms and the eschatological implications of Jesus's ministry in relation to the "kingdom of God" (v. 2, 3, 5; cf. Matt 11:3–6; Isa 35:5).[68] Moreover, there are too many significant differences between proselyte "baptism" and the baptism of John.

A third option appears to best fit the language and context: Jesus is explicitly referring to the promise in Ezekiel 36:25–27.[69] The need for spiritual cleansing (Ps 51:2, 7, 10; Ezek11:19) and the eschatological hope of the Spirit (Isa 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Joel

---

[65]Thompson candidly makes this same point: "Jesus speaks here of being 'born' or 'begotten,' not baptized" (Thompson, *John*, 80; cf. Brown, *John I–XII*, 140–44).

[66]Köstenberger makes a similar observation, noting that the discussion about "purification" is "peripheral to the ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist" (Köstenberger, *John*, 136). He then suggests, "More likely, questions arose regarding the connection between John's baptism and more traditional ceremonies practiced in contemporary Judaism" (Köstenberger, *John,* 137; cf. Matt 9:14–17).

[67]Keener, *John*, 1:551.

[68]It is possible that Jesus could be associating the ministry of John the Baptist and the promise of Mal 3:1 and 4:5 with the presence of the Messiah in the power of the Spirit (John 3:2; cf. Isa11:1-5; 42:1), both of which Nicodemus should have understood as a Jewish teacher. However, the baptism of John, in fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy, did not include the new birth or the work of the Spirit, which Jesus is bringing together.

[69]Harris, *John*, 73; also, Thompson, *John*, 80; Kruse, *John*, 109, and Keener, *John*, 1:550, identify it as a hendiadys; Lincoln, *John*, 150; David Alan Black, *It's Still Greek to Me: An Easy to Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 87.

2:28) are ideas and themes scattered throughout the OT (cf. v. 10). However, Ezekiel 36:25–26 brings these concepts together in a way that precisely corresponds to the New Covenant, as well as the language and context of John 3:5. The primary exegetical issue is how to understand the relationship of the preposition ἐκ with the two genitive neuter nouns it governs (ὕδατος . . . πνεύματος). It is rightly observed that the two nouns governed by the single preposition are best understood as a conceptual unit—otherwise, Jesus would be referring to two births, which is foreign to Scripture. Rather than a hendiadys,[70] both nouns provide a singular and comprehensive explanation of γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν of verse 3. Thus, ἐκ has the nuance of *means* with this idea: the γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν consists of deep spiritual cleansing that utterly transforms the heart to love God, walk in his commandments, and know—all of which is contained in the promise of Ezekiel and corollary passages such Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 37:14 (cf. John 6:45; also, Isa 49:1–5) and assigned to the work of the Spirit.[71]

Regarding the use of πνεύματος in verse 5, it is possible to take it as either a reference to the Holy Spirit, or the human spirit. The former is probably correct[72] since the verb γεννάω is consistently attached to the activity of the Spirit. Also, ὕδατος is dropped in verse 5 and Jesus makes the Spirit the exclusive source of γεννάω in verses 6, 8— τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος "that which is born of the Spirit." However, the

---

[70]Harris, *Prepositions*, 111; contra: E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 664.

[71]In Ezek 18:31 God commands the individual to produce a "new heart and new spirit." The condition of the nation and the promise of the eschatological aid, however, made clear that this was a work that could only be accomplished by God. The inability of the individual to fulfill the command was intended to drive them to seek God's grace of divine enablement.

[72]Harris, *Prepositions*, 111; contra: Carson, *John*, 194–96. Wuest provides a rather awkward translation that tries to bring out the idea of source and retain a reference to the Holy Spirit, "Unless a person is born out of water as a source, even out of the Spirit as a source, he is not able to enter the kingdom of God" (Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1961], 214).

second use of πνεῦμα in verse 6 is clearly the human spirit—the central loci of regeneration—made spiritually alive by the lone action of the Holy Spirit, not by any human means (1:13).[73] In verse 8 Jesus, again, expands on the Spirit's work by linking this new birth with the necessity of external manifestations using now a third meaning of πνεῦμα: "wind."[74] Here the basic picture is this: as wind causes visible affects, so does the new birth.[75] The primary manifestation of being γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν is belief in the testimony concerning Jesus (vv. 11, 15, 16–18, 36) and "practicing truth" (v. 21). This is a significant move forward from the OT. The concept of spiritual regeneration was evident in the OT (Deut 29:4; 30:6; Jer 24:7; Ezek 11:19; cf. Gal 4:29) and something Nicodemus should know about. However, it is now being presented by Jesus as a specific work of the Holy Spirit and centers on faith in him as the Son of Man and Son of God (vv. 13–18, 34–36), an absolute requirement for entrance into the kingdom of God—which marks Nicodemus and other leaders as outside the kingdom. Moreover, this new birth and faith in the Son brings one into the possession of God's own eternal life (v. 16), and is placed within a framework of filial language for God—Father and Son (vv. 16–18, 34–36) and enlarges the paradigm for understanding the significance of the title τέκνα

---

[73]The comparison with the flesh in v. 6 echoes the language of 1:13, but with an added nuance, picked up by Godet: "We must not forget that the question here is of humanity in its present constitution, according to which sin is connected with the fact of birth more closely than with any other of the natural life (Ps. li. 7) . . . *the flesh*, seems to me, therefore, to denote here humanity in its present state, in which the flesh rules the spirit" (Godet, *John*, 381). In 1:13 the primary emphasis was on the origin of the birth, an idea that is present here, but with a greater concern for the moral nature of the birth.

[74]Both the Greek πνεῦμα and its Hebrew counterpart רוּחַ have the lexical range of "spirit (human or angelic), Spirit, breath, wind." Interestingly, the use of πνεῦμα in is given almost its full range in John 3. The idea that τὸ πνεῦμα is should be translated as "the Spirit" at the beginning of v. 8 is both unnecessary and does not fit the imagery—"hear the sound of it"—nor the metaphor of birth by the Spirit.

[75]πνεῦμα is used in the sense of physical "wind" and of the Holy "Spirit," both of which produce effects on the objects they encounter. The physical πνεῦμα is felt as it blows across the body, is seen and heard as it causes the rustling of leaves in the trees, for example. The Divine πνεῦμα is felt as He brings about a change of understanding in the mind and feelings of the heart toward Jesus and produces spiritual life shown by faith in Jesus and walks in his light (3:19, 21; cf. 1:4–5; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9–10; 12:35–36, 46; 1 John 1:5, 7; 2:9–10; Rev 21:24; 22:5).

θεοῦ in 1:12–13.

This filial language and linkage of the Spirit to believers and Christ is further extended when verse 8—"the πνεῦμα blows where it wishes"—is compared with Jesus's words in 8:14. In 8:14 Jesus is unrecognizable to the religious leaders because he knows "where I came from and where I am going," while they do not (ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ οἴδατε πόθεν ἔρχομαι ἢ ποῦ ὑπάγω). The reason for the leaders' ignorance is their inability to discern the true nature of Jesus as from the Father (1:1, 14, 18; 5:18; 7:28–29, 47; 8:42, 58) because their nature is still of this world. They have not experienced the spiritual birth "from above" that enables them to "see" the Son. The nature of Jesus as "from the Father" (παρὰ πατρός; 1:14) and the Son of God on whom the Spirit rests (1:32–34), which places emphasis on his Divine nature that is uniquely manifest in his humanity through the work of the Spirit.[76] Similarly, the children "born from above" by the Spirit demonstrate the spiritual reality and nature of heaven and participate in the same life of the Spirit demonstrated in the Son of God: "So it is, in his own measure, of every child of God who is begotten of the Spirit. So it refers to the quality of the Spirit which is shared by the one who is begotten of the Spirit."[77] The point is this: the Divine nature of the

[76]This emphasis on the origin of both the Son and the Spirit is established in the prologue (1:1, 14, 18) and the baptism of John 1:34 and the Spirit's descent "from heaven." There is a question as to whether ἐξ οὐρανοῦ should be taken with καταβαῖνον, or περιστερὰν, (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, rev ed. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995], 133n73). Köstenberger notes, "The question . . . is ultimately an academic issue with little consequence" (A. Köstengerber, *John*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic: 2004], 69n47). Even still, the opening of the heavens in the synoptic baptism accounts (Matt 3:16; Mark1:10; Luke 3:21-22) and the presence of the Spirit and Christ when heaven opened for Stephen (Acts 7:55-56) seem to make the implication in John fairly clear: the Spirit descended as a dove from heaven, emphasizing His origin and linking the Person and ministry of Christ to the Father by the Spirit.

[77]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 202. This is also implied in v. 21 in which the works (τὰ ἔργα) of those who have "come to the Light"—the Son—and have eternal life (v. 17) are manifest as having been "wrought in God." The perfect passive participle of ἐργάζομαι (εἰργασμένα) points back to Jesus's statement regarding the new birth by the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit produces works in the "children of God" that are consistent with the nature of God as revealed in Christ—the "Light" (cf. 1:4). John elaborates on this teaching in the epistle (1 John 2:4–5; 3:4–10).

Son—on whom the Spirit rest—is shared by those "born of the Spirit"—τέκνα θεοῦ—and believing in the Son, and is a spiritual reality the world is unable to rightly discern (cf. 1 Cor 2:14).

Relationship of the Son to the Father and Spirit in Redemption and Life

The prologue established the eternal relationship of the λόγος with the Father (1:1, 18) as Son (1:14, 34), which laid the foundation for revelation (1:18, 34). Jesus now speaks of the Father–Son relationship within the structure of redemption. The kingdom of God—which one is able to "see" and "enter" by the Spirit—is the specific work of the Father in the Son. In verse 13, Jesus establishes a subtle link with the Spirit—as the "birth" by the Spirit is "from above (ἄνωθεν)," so Jesus is the one who "descended (καταβάς) from heaven" (v. 13). In other words, both the source of spiritual birth and the origin of Jesus are the same (cf. vv. 27, 31; cf. 7:38–39; 15:27; 16:7; Acts 2:33).[78] However, the purpose of the Son's "descent" is to be "lifted up (ὑψωθῆναι) so that whoever believes (ὁ πιστεύων) in him should have eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον)" (vv. 14–15).

Although the concept of "life" is inherent in the idea of "birth," this is the first explicit reference to "eternal life" as something extended to believers. In 1:4 John noted ζωή as the unique possession of the eternal λόγος and his unique relationship to the Father as Son. Jesus now links the life he has as an eternal possession with God as a reality given for the world made available through believing in him and His Father's

[78]There is also a subtle link to the divine nature of the Son in 1:1–3, 14 in vv. 13 and 31. John the Baptist was sent from God (ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ) to bear witness of Christ, while Christ was "sent" by the Father (ὁ πατήρ με ἀπέσταλκεν; 5:36). Yet, John makes a clear ontological distinction between his "earthly" ministry and Christ's, "He who comes from heaven is above all" (v. 31). In other words, John is sent by God who is in heaven, Jesus himself comes from heaven as the Son sent by the Father, the eternal λόγος made flesh (cf. Leander E. Keck, "Derivation as Destiny: 'Of-ness' in Johannine Christology, Anthropology, and Soteriology," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996], 274–88).

work through him.[79] In other words, the "life" that he has by nature, as the Son, is extended to those who believe in him, who have been "born of God (1:13) . . . of the Spirit (3:8)." A subtle distinction needs to be noted: while life is implied and the necessary consequence of birth (γεννάω), John always links the life of believers to the Son and the Spirit. This is to say that the spiritual life of the believer is never received or experienced apart from faith in the Son—which is the product of the Spirit and the words of Jesus (6:63) that he received from the Father. The one "born of the Spirit" in some way experiences the life of the Son that the Son has always shared with the Father from eternity.[80]

Jesus does not immediately explain the meaning of his being "lifted up" as crucifixion but makes this clear at the end of the gospel (8:28; 12:27–33; 13:1–2, 27; 18:1–19:42).[81] It is unclear whether Nicodemus would have understood the reference at the time of Jesus speaking. However, he would have readily recognized the Messianic self-reference "Son of Man" (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). Jesus has already used this title to show his unique connection with heaven to Nathanael in 1:51 (cf. 3:13), but this is the first time he associates it with his death. However, the title is distinctly designed to link with the υἱός language already established in the prologue (1:14, 18), the testimony to Nathanael (1:51), and the Baptist (1:34). While Nicodemus would not have been aware of

---

[79]Schnackenburg's suggestion that John has inserted these words as a "kerygmatic formula" is unnecessary and arbitrary (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:395). Jesus would later note that this is the very reason he came to the world (12:27).

[80]Schnackenburg, commenting on 5:26, summarizes this reality well: "Both the Father and the Son equally have 'life in themselves, but the Father is the one from whom the movement of life goes out . . . The Son has life fully in himself and, therefore, is a source of life for those who believe (7:37ff.). Believers have life, but not in the same original fullness and power as the Son has life 'in himself,' but they receive it from his fullness (see 1:16; 7:39; 10:28; 17:2; 20:22) and they possess it in union with him (3:15; 6:53; 14:19; 20:31)" (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:112).

[81]The term ὑψόω is employed by John—on the lips of Jesus—in the context of glory and not humiliation (8:28; 12:32–34), yet another feature that causes John to stand out from the Synoptics.

the development of John's thought, the reader already has a firm association of the υἱός language with the eternal λόγος as one who stands in a unique divine relationship with God as Son (1:18) and would make the connection to the prologue in verse 16.[82] The shocking element is that the sacrifice takes place within the Father–Son reality of the Divine community (3:16).

While this "life" is in and through the Son (1:4; 3:15, 17) it originates in the Father (5:26).[83] The opening γὰρ of verse 16 identifies θεὸς as the giver (ἔδωκεν) of the "only begotten Son." John's use of θεὸς is often a reference to the Father, but also speaks more generally of the divine nature (1:1–2), of which both the Father and Son share as such (1:18). However, the term μονογενής is reserved for the Son of the Father, whom John identifies as Jesus Christ in verses 17–18. It is God the Father who gives God the Son to the world out of love (ἀγαπάω) in order that those who believe may be spared from judgment and share in the "eternal life" he shares with the Son (ἐν αὐτῷ, verse 15; cf. ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν 1:4; ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, 5:26). The entirety of the believer's experience of life, salvation, and fellowship with God is exclusively in the Person of the Son (1:14; 6:51; 20:27–28).[84] The sonship of Jesus is the vehicle through which believers enter into a filial relationship with the Father and the experience of spiritual life, which may expand on the idea of ἐξουσία in 1:12.

While the life of God is centered in Jesus, it is important to observe that it is

---

[82]The elastic presentation of υἱός in the chapter argues for this primary, or essential, identity of Jesus as the Son of the Father: "Son of Man" (vv. 13, 14), "only begotten Son" (vv. 16), "only begotten Son of God" (v. 18), and "the Son" (v. 17, 35, 36). Since each of these is found on the lips of Jesus, the language of μονογενής in 1:14, 18 is derived from Jesus and hints at his own self-identity.

[83]The theme of the Father's role of primacy within the gospel of John will not be addressed here, but is a point of interest in recent studies and well documented in Paul A. Rainbow, *Johannine Theology: The Gospel, The Epistles, and the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 72–114.

[84]Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:397–98.

the Father who initiates this life. It is the Father who so "loved the world that He gave His τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ" that men may have "eternal life" by believing in the Son. There are at least three observations along these lines that relate to the τέκνα θεοῦ. First, the life believers' share in and with the Son is an expression of the Father's love (ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς)—who is the originator of the τέκνα status. Second, the experience of spiritual life and its filial dynamic for the believer is encompassed in the Son (ἐν αὐτῷ . . . δι᾽ αὐτοῦ, 15, 18) in such a way that the Son's experience of Divine life—as manifested in his humanity—particularly as demonstrated in his relationship to the Father, is paradigmatic to those who believe in Him. Third, the impartation of this life to believers is the work of the Spirit (3, 8; 6:63), which implies that the Spirit is a full participant in the life that the Son has eternally shared with the Father and has "in himself" from the Father (5:26; 6:57). Moreover, while the life imparted is inextricably bound to the Spirit, it is, in fact, the life of the Son (4:13–14; 6:57–58; 7:38–39). Therefore, there is continuity between the life the Son shares with the Father and the life that believers in Christ share with him by the Spirit.[85]

This unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit is more explicit in verses 34–35.[86]

---

[85]Cf. Thompson, *God*, 76–80. She goes on to note, in relation to eternal life, "To be gathered into the life of one is inevitably and simultaneously to be caught into the life of the other (Thompson, *God*, 82). Yet, each in the proper order, for this life is mediated through the Son. Thus, the relationship of the believer to Father is a reflection of the Son's own relationship to the Father. The Son becomes the paradigm in which the believer's relationship with the Father is to be understood, though in the context of grace and creatureliness. In other words, the Son's relationship is his by divine nature. Indeed, the Father is not properly understood apart from His relationship to the Son. It is a relationship of necessity and, therefore, essential to the very nature of God. This is not so with those who are made children. Again, John's own penchant for keeping these terms separate highlights this distinction. Yet, it is also to say that the life of the believer, by the Spirit, becomes immersed in and part of the life of the Son. See also, Thompson, *God*, 97.

[86]There is disagreement over whether vv. 31-36 are the words of John continued from v. 30, the words of John by means of reflection, or the words of Jesus that are to be taken with 13-21. An extended treatment of this problem is beyond the scope of this paper, which takes the position that vv. 31-36 are a continuation of John's speech begun in v. 27. It is the most natural reading of the text, and the similar material of 13-21 is easily explained by the fact that John's understanding of Jesus's ministry as the Spirit revealed it to him is commensurate with Jesus's ministry and his own understanding of it. Arguments for taking 31-36 as the reflection of John can be seen in H. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 148-49; D. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 212-14; and G. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary,

John the Baptist begins this pericope (v. 27) explaining the superiority of Jesus's ministry. He does this by acknowledging the pre-existent status of the Son in heaven—"He who comes from above is above all" (v. 31; cf. v. 13). The specific contrast is between the divine authority of Jesus's words grounded in the nature of his origin from heaven and John's from the earth—"He who comes from heaven (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ)," speaks directly from what "He has seen and heard (ἑώρακεν καὶ ἤκουσεν)" (v. 32).[87] The perfect ("has seen") and aorist ("heard") with the present suggests that Jesus speaks not only by what He has been given, but as one who shared the counsel of heaven, even the Father, before his descent to the earth. This is yet another indication of Jesus's unique relationship to the Father as Son (1:18) that enables His revelation of the Father.[88] Thus, what Jesus speaks as His own words are in fact the words of the Father (v. 33). What John adds is the inextricable presence of the Spirit in the Father–Son relationship. In other words, though Jesus received this unique access to knowledge because of his origin as Son, he received it from the Father only through the Spirit.[89]

The Relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit in Revelation

This link is made explicit in verse 34—Jesus speaks the words of the Father

---

36:53, although he does not see the contrast as between John and Jesus as does Carson.

[87]This union with heaven has already been noted in 1:18, which noted the Son ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, and 1:51, though presented through the ministry of angels (cf. Gen 28:12–16).

[88]Cf. Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press: 1998), 164–70.

[89]In other words, though Jesus received this unique access to knowledge because of his origin as Son, he received it from the Father only through the Spirit—the same Spirit he will give after his ascension (7:38–39; Acts 2:33) and is the agent of Spiritual life (3:3–8; 6:63). John does not develop it at this point, but this lays the foundation of Jesus and the Spirit as a model of what humanity can experience through the Spirit and what believer's share with Christ in a measure as "children."

because the Father gives the "Spirit without measure" (οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου δίδωσιν τὸ πνεῦμα).[90] It is the unlimited and unqualified presence of the Spirit in the Son that gives divine authentication and authority to his words. Michaels correctly notes that "the point is not that God 'gave' the Spirit to Jesus 'once upon a time' at Bethany beyond the Jordan . . . but that God 'gives' the Spirit to Jesus always and everywhere in the course of his mission to the world."[91] This does not diminish the priority of the Father and Son relationship behind Jesus's words and deeds, but includes the Spirit as the dynamic agent or Person through whom the Father supplies the Son with spiritual power in his humanity. The fact that the Son is the eternal Son of the Father is, indeed, the reason why this relationship with the Spirit is what it is and able to be what it is.[92] Yet, no part of the Son's revealing the Father—nor man's reception of this revelation (3:3–8)—is apart from the Spirit. It is necessary that every part of Jesus's activity as the Son be understood as intimately involving the ministry of the Spirit—the revelation of the Son as the Son of the Father, the Father as the Father of the Son, and faith in the Son as the specific ministry of

---

[90]While some understand the subject of δίδωσιν to be Jesus, it is better understood as the Father. Nowhere is the believer said to receive the Spirit without measure and it to take this as a reference to Jesus's activity is unnatural to the context. G. Beasely-Murray aptly sums it up: "While it is possible grammatically to view the subject of δίδωσιν to be 'the one whom God sent,' and so to see the Son as the giver of the Spirit, the context demands that the Son is here the receiver of the Spirit. This is confirmed in the next sentence: the Father has given 'all things' into his hand" (G. Beasely-Murray, *John*, WBC, 54; Thompson, *God*, 170–71).

[91]Michaels, *John*, 226. The present δίδωσιν may be perfective if linked to Jesus' new experience of the Spirit from the baptism (1:33–34). However, this reception of the Spirit is not limited to the Son's humiliation, but extends to his exaltation (7:38–39; 15:26; Acts 2:33). Indeed, this provides a power testimony to the divine nature of Christ as the Son who will also baptize in the Spirit (1:33) and indwell his people in the Spirit (14:18; cf. Rom 8:9–11).

[92]Thompson hits on this: "He speaks words of life not because he is possessed by the Spirit but because he possesses the Spirit even as he possesses life and has the power to give it" (Thompson, *God*, 187). This fits with her larger point that the Father does His work in the Son, such that the work of the Son is the work of the Father (14:10); there is a distinction, but a unity that reveals God—necessarily as Father–Son (see Thompson, *God,* 187–88). In connection with the words of God, Jesus then does not say, "Thus says the Lord," but "Truly, truly I say to you." The point Thompson makes seems not to give adequate weight to the fact that this is possible because of Jesus's relationship to the Spirit.

the Spirit which shows the Spirit's unity with the Father and Son.[93]

Marianne Thompson suggests, "John does not credit Jesus' doing and speaking to the work of the Spirit, as though he were an inspired prophet, but rather to the unique relationship of the Father and Son."[94] This is true, in terms of direct statements and Jesus's own affirmation in 5:19–20, which Thompson cites and is crucial to grasp. However, taken alone, this position fails to adequately account for the comprehensive statement in 3:33–34 regarding the place of the Spirit. When the γὰρ is allowed to have its full significance, then verse 34 functions as a paradigmatic statement about the reality behind Jesus's words—not unlike the situation regarding blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:31–32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10). They are a product of His unique relationship with the Sprit whom He received from the Father *because* he is the Son. Jesus's later statement that he speaks only what he hears from the Father echoes verses 3:32–34 and should include the ministry of the Spirit.[95] So, while the relationship of the Father to the

---

[93]Although references to the relationship of the Spirit to the ministry of Christ are rare in John's gospel—particularly as compared to the Synoptics, especially Luke—the reference in John 3:34 is paradigmatic and presents a clear link to essential aspects of the Son's ministry from the Father and thus warrants the above statement. Also, the rarity of John explicitly linking the Spirit to the ministry of the Son can be attributed to his emphasis on the Father Son relationship, the presence of the Synoptics, which have already made the point clear, the strength of 3:34, and the necessary implications of ch. 14.

[94]Thompson, *God*, 97, 174. Thompson argues that Jesus's relationship to the Spirit is primarily that of giver and the Spirit as one who testifies to Jesus. However, while there is much to agree with in Thompson's argument, there are some weaknesses. First, while acknowledging 3:33–34 is Jesus receiving the Spirit from the Father, she does not give adequate weight to the flow; namely that the words Jesus speaks and the rule Jesus exercises as the Son is directly related to the ministry of the Spirit in 34b not as giver but as one who received the Spirit from the Father (Thompson, *God,* 174–74). Second, while she correctly points out that "it is the relationship between Father and Son that means that Jesus has and gives the Spirit" (*God*, 176), she does not give adequate weight to the incarnation of the Son (1:14). In other words, she does not address the fact that the Spirit is "given" by the Father, unless she understands this as an eternal giving. Yet, the facts that Jesus had the Spirit abide on Him (1:32–33) and speaks the Words of God because God has given His Spirit (3:33–34) certainly magnify His unique relationship to the Father as Son and also as the Son incarnate who fulfills His mission by the unlimited power of the Spirit given to him.

[95]There may be an allusion to Isa 50:4–9, which, if a prophetic portrait of Christ, should be understood in light of the unique role of the Spirit in the Messiah (cf. Isa 11:2; 42:1). In an important parallel, those things said here of Jesus will be said of the Spirit to the disciples in 16:13-15. Here Jesus speaks of what He sees and hears from the Spirit who is from heaven; after the ascension, the Spirit will

Son and the Son to the Father is the priority in terms of the Son revealing the Father (1:18), it is not apart from the silent ministry of the Spirit in the Son. This connection is not often made, even by those who understand 3:32–35 as linking the ministry of the Spirit to the ministry of Jesus. It is interesting that this dynamic is reversed after the ascension of Jesus (16:13–15). In the future the Spirit who enabled the Son to speak the words of the Father in heaven will enable the disciples to speak the words of the Son from the Father in heaven.

In relation to the Spirit of sonship in believers, the nature of the Son's possession of the Spirit as the eternal Son enables him to be the giver of that Spirit—who is also from the Father—to his own who are a gift to the Son (6:35).[96] Thus, the Spirit of sonship in the eternal Son by nature as the Son, is the Spirit of sonship in God's children by grace (3:3–8). At this point, the full connection of the Spirit and Christ to the believer is left largely implied but undeveloped. Yet the Spirit is further established as essential to the Person and ministry of the Son and those who believe in the Son by virtue of the new birth and faith in him—which is to believe in God.

Thompson rightly notes, "The virtual limitation of 'Father to the relationship of God to Jesus as Son moves toward reshaping of the content of the word 'God.' What it means to know God is to know God as the Father of the Son, and this inevitably implies a reconceptualization of the identity of God."[97] Also, it should be added, the believer's

---

give what he sees and hears from Jesus, who has all that the Father has. In the incarnation, Jesus receives; in the exaltation He gives; in both he is in a divine and dynamic relationship with the Spirit, as well as with the Father.

[96]Godet perceptively notes that the Son is he whom the Father has "given all things into His hand" so that "by the Spirit, the Son reigns in the heart of believers" and sovereignly reigns over all things for his people (Godet*, John*, 413). This last concept brings in the idea of "inheritance" (Rev 21:7) and builds on the idea that what Christ is and has as the Divine Son uniquely, the "children" in him share by grace and participation in his life, making him the model of Sonship into which the children partake through relation to him and the Father in the Spirit.

[97]Thompson, *God*, 51.

relationship to God is encompassed in the Son. In tandem with this change the Spirit's relationship with the disciples will also change after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus (7:38–39; 14:16–17; 20:22; also, 16:13–15) and will bring about a change in the disciples' relationship with both Jesus and the Father (14:23; 20:17).[98] Indeed, the nature of this new birth and new life comes with "its own characteristic practices and commitments."[99] That is to say, it manifests in fruit that is consistent with walking consistent with the "Light" (3:21; 8:12; 12:36; cf. 1:4), which is tantamount to walking consistent with the truth of God revealed in the Son. Although this is true in terms of obedience, it is also true in terms of communion with God. The new relationship bears new levels of spiritual reality in fellowship with the Father and the Son (17:3; 14:23). Referring to John 5:25–26, Thompson writes, "When Jesus *confers* life on those who believe, they also participate in and have to do with the life of the Father because the Father has given the Son to have life *in himself*, even as he has it."[100] Yet, even more, the life from the Father, in the Son, is extended through the Spirit (4:10; 6:63).

John 14:16–23

The unique relationship and intimacy of the Spirit to the Son, Father, and believers—hinted at and implied in 1:12–13 and 3:3–8, 34–35—is advanced as Jesus anticipates his return to the Father and the coming of the Spirit (7:38–39; 14:16–17). This future presence of the Spirit will bring about a new intimacy in the believer's relationship with Jesus and participation in Jesus's own relationship with the Father. The Spirit will also fill the role left vacant upon Jesus's return to the Father and empower believers to continue Jesus's ministry to the world, declaring God's salvation through faith in him—

[98]Cf. Harris, *Prepositions*, 135–36.

[99]Thompson, *John*, 81.

[100]Thompson, *God*, 78.

and judgment for unbelief.

John 13:1–14:14

Jesus's final hours on the earth with his disciples commence with an affirmation of his soon return to the Father, whose presence he left to come to earth (13:1, 3). The purpose of his coming was to redeem a people given to him by the Father (6:35–37; 12:27–28; 17:1–24). Yet, the redemption of his people would require his death (19:30) and, ultimately, his return to the Father from whence he came (13:31–33). This news discouraged the disciples who had not yet fully grasped the nature of his ministry (13:36–38) or the true nature of his Person (14:9–10). Jesus, understanding the anxiety this caused, assured them that his separation was not permanent (14:1–3) but necessary to bring about the greater works that he has for them to do (14:12).

These "greater works" will come about because of a new relationship that Jesus will share with his disciples and, consequently, they with Jesus and the Father (14:20), after the Spirit is sent. Thus, at the heart of this new relationship is the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus's ascension to the Father—just as he had promised (7:38–39; cf. 20:22). It is this change that will occupy Jesus's discourse in chapters 14–16. This next section will focus primarily on 14:15–24 and consider the new relationship believers have with Jesus and the Father by the Spirit.

John 14:15–24

The previous teaching of Jesus about his relationship to the Father and his mediating role with the Father (vv. 9–14) on behalf of the disciples is now transferred to the substance of the disciples' relationship to himself and the Father. It is a relationship authenticated in obedient love (v. 15), which will result in the exalted Son's request for the Father to fulfill the promise of the Spirit.[101] The connection with verses 12–14 may

[101]For some reason, the conjunction κἀγὼ is left untranslated in the NASB, obscuring both the

seem disjointed at first glance, but it is linked by the mutual fellowship of the Son with the Father and the disciples with the Son—a point made clearer in verses 21, 23—as manifested in love and obedience (cf. 15:7–10).[102] Therefore, the promise of Jesus that the Father will send "another παράκλητος" at his request is guaranteed by his own relationship with and perfect obedience to the Father (cf. 8:29; 10:17; 14:31). Since Jesus has already made clear that the coming of the Spirit is subsequent to his return to the Father (7:38–39; cf. Acts 2:33), this request is placed after the ascension. In other words, the context is his completion of redemption—including his death and resurrection—and physical absence from his disciples on the earth.

The Coming παράκλητος and the Presence of Jesus

It is in this future situation that he encourages them with the promise that though he is physically absent, they will not be left alone (v. 18). He and the Father will send ἄλλον παράκλητον (v. 16; 15:26; 16:7), who is also the "Spirit of truth" (v. 17), the "Holy Spirit" (v. 26). This new relationship with the Spirit marks a new epoch in the spiritual experience of God's people that extends beyond the earthly existence into eternity, "that he may be with you forever" (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα).[103] The eternal duration of the Spirit's presence in the disciples marks this new reality as the very warp and woof of the

---

logical and grammatical link between vv. 14 and 15.

[102]Lenski rightly observes, "This is nothing less than the mystery of the Trinity itself, in which we do not see three Fathers but only one; not three Sons but only one; not three Spirits but only one. One in essence, the three are yet diverse. They work to one end, yet, as in this case, One requests, One gives, One comes" (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943], 996–97). This is not to deny the uniqueness of the incarnation but to see even the incarnation in light of eternal relations. It is the specific relationship of the Son that believers participate in and find a paradigm for our relation to the Father, in Christ.

[103]While the term αἰῶνα can refer to an age—i.e., "with you to the end of this age"—when it is accompanied by the article (John 4:14; 6:51, 58; 8:35, 51–52; 9:32; 10:28; 11:26; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16; 1 John 2:17; 2 John 1:2; Rev 1:6, 18; 4:9–10; 5:13; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5), it has the idea of eternity (cf. Godet, *John*, 839).

believer's relationship to the Father through Christ. It is, then, of the very essence of the NC and sonship, and implies that the Spirit will mediate the presence of Jesus and fellowship with him and the Father throughout all eternity.

Jesus explains the nature of this new spirituality as the change from the Spirit abiding "with you and shall be in you (παρ᾽ ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται)" (v. 17b). The change from the present (μένει) to the future (ἔσται) illustrates the fundamental advancement that will take place when the Father grants the Son's request for the παράκλητος.[104] What the precise nature of this change is depends on what stress is placed on the preposition παρά. Jesus could be referring to the Spirit's presence with the disciples as OC saints, which has precedence in the OT. For example, the Spirit was present with God's people in the tabernacle and temple (Exod 35:31; 40:34–35; 1 Kgs 8:10) and the various theocratic and prophetic ministries of the judges (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29), kings (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 16:13; Ps 51:11), prophets (1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:15; Neh 9:30), and leaders (Num 11:25; 1 Chr 12:18; 24:20) of Israel (cf. Isa 63:10, 11, 14; Acts 7:51). The Spirit was also active and "with" God's people in the sense of regeneration (Deut 30:6; Ps 51:10–11; Ezek11:19; 36:25ff.; John 3:3–8; note the spiritual death emphasized in the NT was true of all men since the Garden—Eph 2:1–3; cf. Jer 13:23; 17:9),[105] as well as in the tabernacle and temple which contained the ark (e.g., Exod 40:34–35; 1 Kgs 8:10–11).

---

[104]Godet correctly sees this as an increase in spiritual intimacy that will come at Pentecost: "The more intimate relation which He will form with them from the day of Pentecost . . . The whole meaning of the sentence lies precisely in the antithesis between the present *dwells* . . . and the future *shall be*" (Godet, *John*, 840).

[105]Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck succinctly, and correctly, notes, "The idea of rebirth has its roots in the Old Testament . . . in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, while there is a difference between them in language and manner of presentation, there is essentially complete agreement" (Herman Bavinck, *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, vol. 4, *Reformed Dogmatics,* ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 46, 52; cf. Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* [repr., Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2012], 119).

However, the heightened presence of the Spirit in the Person and ministry of Jesus—who is the eschatological bearer of the Spirit (Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1/Luke 4:18; John 1:34; 3:34)—places the weight of παρά on the Spirit's presence in the incarnate λόγος.[106] While the change would undoubtedly include the broader shift from the OC to the NC ministry of the Spirit, the emphasis here is focused on the particular manifestation of the Spirit in the life of Christ.[107] This would appear to be the precise point of verse 17a, "whom the world cannot receive (οὐ δύναται λαβεῖν),[108] because it does not see Him or know Him (οὐδὲ γινώσκει)." The concepts of "receive . . . see . . . know" all relate to spiritual perception and experiential knowledge. Interestingly, what the world is unable to perceive and experience is the Spirit himself through his presence in Christ and the children of God.

In what way did the world fail to perceive the Spirit? John does not explicitly state how they failed to receive him. However, the context of the entire gospel shows that their not receiving or knowing the Spirit was demonstrated in their failure to receive and know Christ and his words (1:9–12; 2:24, 25; 3:11, 32; 5:43, 44; 8:27, 43; 10:6; 12:48; 13:20). The Spirit who descended and remained upon the "Son of God" at the baptism (1:34) is the Spirit who enabled Jesus to "speak the words of God" (3:34-3–35; 6:63) and reveal the Father (1:14, 18; 14:9–10) and himself (5:18–47) to the world. Therefore, to not receive Christ as the Son of God is to not receive the Spirit who bears witness to Christ (cf. 16:13–15)—and, implicitly, to the Father. This reality is highlighted in chapter

---

[106]Godet, *John*, 840.

[107]The suggestion that Jesus is making a comparison between "the Spirit-Paraclete in the midst of the disciples as a community . . . and its presence within the individual disciples" is interesting, but unsupported by the context (Rekah M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as Covenant Relationship* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006], 105).

[108]The inability (οὐ δύναται) of the world to receive the Spirit is logically linked with the divine necessity of the Spirit's work of regeneration—"unless one is born from above . . . you must [δεῖ] be born from above" (3:3, 5, 7).

8 and Jesus's conflict with the Jewish leaders: "If I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me? . . . because you are not of God" (8:46–47). The "truth" (ἀλήθεια) the Jews refuse to accept is his testimony about himself and his relationship to the Father and therefore to Israel and the world (8:12–14, 18–19, 23, 27–29, 38, 40, 42–43, 54–55, 58; cf. 10:38). Indeed, they failed to receive the "Spirit of truth" (v. 17) in the one who is "truth" (v.6) and is revealing the Father who is true (17:17).

The material point for the purpose of this thesis is to note that reception and experience of Christ is tantamount to receiving and experiencing the Spirit and the Spirit's witness to Christ. Although the disciples do "know" (γινώσκω) the Spirit because they know Jesus (6:69; 10:14, 27; 17:7–8), it is not—at that point—a perfected, or mature knowledge (13:7; 14:7, 9; 16:12) as it would be (vv. 20–23). This perfected, or mature and intimate knowledge of Jesus would come after the resurrection and the future ministry of the Spirit. Indeed, the greater spiritual experience and knowledge of Christ would come, largely, *after* Christ's departure to the Father and the coming of the Spirit. This is the essential point of verses 18–24 and is captured in the Spirit's title of "another Paraclete" (v. 16).

The precise meaning and translation of παράκλητος in the context of John has been a matter of great discussion. On the face of it, the term is a verbal adjective and has the literal meaning "to call along side." This idea is captured in the NASB and ESV translation of "Helper."[109] The ASV, KJV, and Geneva's "Comforter" and the NET "Advocate" are also correct, though more nuanced.[110] Whatever the translation, the

---

[109]This is also captured in the German translation "Beistand."

[110]The Douay–Rheims decision to stay with a transliteration of the term may prove to be the wisest. Deissmann mentions"advocate, our representative in the trial, our intercessor, comforter," but places "advocate" as primary (Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978], 336). Behm's comes to the same conclusion, "The history of the term in the whole sphere of known Greek and Hellenistic usage outside the NT yields the clear picture of a legal adviser or helper or advocate in the relevant court . . . in the NT the most clearly etched is that of the advocate at the bar of God in heaven" (Johannes Behm, "παράκλητος," in *TDNT*, 5:803). This is

salient point for this thesis is how the Spirit's presence and work within the disciples relates to the Person of Christ. It is on this point that the demonstrative ἄλλος becomes the more pertinent consideration. BDAG gives four nuances to the term with the first being applicable to this context: "pert. to that which is other than some other entity, *other*."[111] In other words, the coming παράκλητος will, in some way, be similar to Jesus, although distinct. Thus, it would be wrong to simply equate the Spirit with the Son, or the Son with the Spirit. Yet, the presence, character, and ministry of the παράκλητος is so intertwined with the Person of the Son that to have the Spirit is to have the Son.

Although the similar function of "Advocate" is picked up in 1 John 2:1, where the term is applied to the ascended Christ, John gives a more comprehensive picture in the gospel. Indeed, the coming ministry of the παράκλητος parallels that of Christ's own to the disciples—noted in the chart below:

Table 2. Similarities between the Spirit and Jesus

παράκλητος	Jesus
Teach (14:26)	(3:2; 7:14, 16, 17)
Testify (15:26)	(3:11, 32)
Convince (16:7–11)	(7:7)
Guide into truth (16:13)	(1:17; 8:40; 14:6)

clearly the idea of 1 John 2:1 in reference to Christ and it is supported by the Spirit's witness of Christ to the world through the disciples (16:7–11). However, the full orbed sense is best captured by Godet: "What Jesus will ask of the Father on their behalf is . . . another supporter, ever within their reach, ever ready to come to their aid . . . in their conflict with the world . . . [thus] the following applications easily proceed: support in moments of weakness; counselor in the difficulties of life; consoler in suffering" (Godet, *John*, 839).

[111]BDAG, 46. This idea is captured in Trench's statement, "*Allos* indicates that which is numerically distinct" (R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* [repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989], 375). Trench goes on to make a sharp distinction with ἕτερος, which he holds to speak of a "qualitative difference" (Trench, *Synonyms*, 375; contra: Friedrich Büchsel, "ἄλλος," in *TDNT*, 1:264, who states, "ἄλλος and ἕτερος are also used interchangeably with no recognizable difference"). Trench's distinction is difficult to maintain as absolute, although the use of the term in John 5:32 bears a resemblance to 14:16—a point recognized by BDAG—in which the Father is ἄλλος . . . ὁ μαρτυρῶν.

As the incarnate Son revealed the Father to the world and the disciples, so the Spirit would resume this task of revealing the Son too and through the disciples upon the Son's return to the Father. Moreover, and more to the point, the Spirit who enabled Christ to complete His task as the incarnate Son is the same Spirit who will enable the disciples to complete their task of bearing witness to Christ in the world—which will engender the same reaction (15:18; cf. 13:20). However, the Spirit will accomplish this by more than empowerment, but also by bringing to the disciples an internal experience of the presence of Christ and Christ's own relationship to the Father. In other words, the presence and power of Christ would no longer be *external* to the disciples, but *internal* and permanent––"He will be in you." This is the essence of the new spirituality, the internal experience of Christ, his life, and his fellowship with the Father.

This new internal experience of the Spirit in Christ's absence is immediately followed by the promise, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." The first part of the statement could be understood as either a reference to "being deprived of parents" or "being without the aid and comfort of one who serves as associate and friend"[112] or even being a disciple without a teacher.[113] Each of these has merit and fits the idea of Christ's absence and some aspect of the future ministry of the Spirit. However, the imagery should not be stripped of its familial overtones,[114] which play a

---

[112]BDAG, 725. The LXX uses the term—as far as I can see—exclusively of a child without a father (=fatherless) or parents (cf. James 1:27). The second meaning seems to be supplied almost exclusively from its usage in John 14:18. BDAG cites a similar usage in Socrates, but the quote uses the literal meaning metaphorically, which is not the context of John 14:18.

[113]Keener, *John*, 2:973; also, Köstenberger, *John*, 439. Keener states, "Great teachers who died could be said to leave a generation fatherless" (2:973). However, the primary sense, to Keener, is the fact that "Jesus will overcome death and bring his eternal presence to them, they will not be fatherless in this manner" (Keener, *John,* 2:973). He also sees a "forensic" element of Jesus and the Spirit as the advocate of his own, who would otherwise be defenseless against the opposition of the world.

[114]Contra: Ridderbos, *John*, 505. Ridderbos rejects the familial connection to the term "orphans" because "Jesus is nowhere called their father." However, this seems to miss the larger point of the passage, in which through Jesus believers share his relationship with the Father by the Spirit of Christ—and the Father. This also fails to account for the strong connection with 1:12–13 and the title "children of

dominate role throughout this pericope—indeed, throughout the entire gospel. The relationship has already been established under the rubric of "children of God" (1:12–13) and accomplished by being "born of the Spirit" (3:3–8). In fact, Jesus hints of himself in "fatherly" language in 13:33 (cf. Isa 9:6), although that should not be pressed too far.[115] The greater weight of the familial imagery may fall, however, on the new intimate relationship the disciples will have with the Father through Jesus, by the Spirit (14:23; 16:26–27; 20:17).

It is, then, the second phrase, "I will come to you," that forms the substance of the promise. There are three primary ways this statement has been understood. First, largely held by the Latin Fathers, is to relate it back to verses 2–3 and see it as a reference to the *parousia*. However, Jesus's statement that "the world will no longer see Me" cannot fit the circumstances of his return (Rev 19:11–19).[116] Moreover, the promise relates to the disciples as they remain on earth, not their situation in glory. The realization of their relationship with the Father through Jesus (v. 20), surely, will not wait until the *parousia*. A second option, largely held by the Eastern Fathers and many contemporary commentators, is to see this as a reference to the resurrection appearances of Jesus to the

---

God" who have been born of the Spirit (3:3–8). Gruenler follows this same line of thinking, "The family image of interpersonal communion and love is heightened by a literal translation of *orphanos* . . . which, expressed positively, means that Jesus the Son in the divine Family is promising his disciples adoption as children in the Family circle" (Royce Gordon Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986], 101).

[115]Although Westcott observes, "Christ presents Himself to the disciples as a Father of 'children' (xiii. 33), no less than a brother (xx. 17; comp. Hebr. ii. 11 f.) . . . The very word that describes their sorrow confirms their sonship" (Westcott, *John*, 206). Todd Billings suggests the concept of adoption, "All of God's people are adopted, both in Israel and in the church (Rom 9:4; Eph 1:5). Thus it is good news when Jesus tells us in John's Gospel, 'I will not leave you orphaned; I will come to you' (John 14:18). Instead, through the Spirit, we can be united to Jesus Christ, becoming daughters and sons of God through our union with the one perfect Son of God" (J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 16). However, this seems to read too much of the Pauline concept into John and to miss the metaphor—they will not be left orphans, not that they are orphans who will be adopted.

[116]Brown, *John*, 646.

disciples. These appearances are clearly in view in the statements, "you will see Me . . . because I live," and form the foundation for any future relationship of the disciples with Jesus.[117] The problem with making the resurrection a complete fulfillment is that it limits the non-orphan status to Christ's physical presence. Moreover, it does not account for the permanent spiritual nature of Christ's presence with the disciples in verses 20–23. A third option understands the coming of the Spirit as the fulfillment of the promise. [118] However, this conflates the Person of the Spirit and the Son and does not give adequate weight to the resurrection.

A better option is to see that the resurrection "appearances are not an end in themselves; they initiate and point to a deeper type of presence,"[119] one that will remain with them throughout the end of the age (cf. Matt 28:20). As noted, the resurrection appearances would be of little comfort by themselves because of their temporary nature of only forty days (Acts 1:3). Moreover, it would mean the non-orphan status would be a permanent condition of all future followers of Christ, since Christ did depart back to the Father. However, their non-orphan status is dependent on his *ongoing* presence with the disciples and believers through the ages (cf. v. 28). It is entrance into participation in Christ's own experience of Sonship, fellowship with the Father. Therefore, the best sense of the promise—"I will come to you"—is to see the resurrection as the first instance of fulfillment that secures and guarantees the future ministry of the Spirit.[120] This

---

[117]Carson, *John*, 501; Morris, *John*, 578; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 258; Ridderbos, *John*, 505–6; Tenny, *John*, 221.

[118]E.g., Kruse, *John,* 303.

[119]Brown, *John*, 2:646.

[120]As Godet rightly states, "The purpose of these appearances was only to establish the faith of the disciples in the resurrection of Jesus, and thereby to prepare for his return in spirit into their hearts, but not to accomplish it . . . All that can and must be granted is, that the appearances of the Risen One served to *prepare for* and render possible His return through the Holy Spirit, and that this spiritual coming of Christ will have its consummation in the coming of the glorified Savior" (Godet, *John*, 841; emphasis in original).

understanding allows the resurrection to have its full significance, while maintaining the ongoing presence of Jesus in his disciples upon his return to the Father.[121] It is the future ministry of the Spirit that affirms the presence of Jesus and, in him, the Father to the disciples—forever (v. 16)—a fact that occupies the remainder of Jesus's teaching in verses 19–24.

However, to place emphasis on the abiding presence of Jesus in the disciples is not to conflate the Persons of the Spirit and Jesus. In other words, the Spirit and Jesus are not identical, but share an intimate union of such a nature that to have one is to have the other (cf. 2 Cor 3:18)—not unlike the Son's unity with the Father (vv. 9–10). Godet offers a helpful distinction, noting,

> The Word is the principle of outward revelation, the Spirit that of the inward revelation. Jesus is the object to be assimilated; the Spirit is the power by which the assimilation is accomplished. Without the objective revelation given in Jesus, the Spirit would have nothing to fertilize in us; without the Spirit, the revelation granted in Jesus remains outside of us and is like a parable, which is not understood. Hence it follows that the Spirit who comes is, in a sense, Jesus who comes again; from one without us, Jesus becomes one within us . . . Jesus' *being in* the believer is of the same nature as God's *being in* the person of Christ, according to xvii. 22, 23.[122]

To this could be added Jesus's own words to Philip in verse 10. Jesus is not conflating the Persons but highlighting the identity that comes through unity of purpose, fellowship, and love.[123] However, the Son is not the Father and the Father is not the Son, so with the Spirit and the Son.

---

[121]Burge captures this sense: "While some scholars debate whether this return refers to the resurrection . . . or the Spirit . . . the truth of the matter is that the two concepts spill into one another. 'I will come to you' in 14:18 initially refers to the return from death; but John develops this reference into a doctrine of personal indwelling. Now the relationship between Jesus and his disciples will have a permanency . . . the coming of Jesus is portrayed as a tangible resurrection appearance, but it includes a personal epiphany of Christ to the believer in the Spirit . . . Ερχομαι thus involves the dual movement, first of God in Christ (resurrection), then of Christ in believer (indwelling)" (Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987], 138–39; also, Westcott, *John*, 206).

[122]Godet, *John*, 842.

[123]Again, Burge helpfully comments, "In his eschatology John moves very close to a binitarian theology. To have the Spirit is to have Jesus (and the Father) dwelling within. . . . But this binitarian danger

Jesus transitions into this new intimate reality of his presence by restating the dual nature of his appearing and presence—resurrection and indwelling Spirit—in verses 19–20. As with verse 18 the language most naturally brings to mind the resurrection appearances but cannot be exhausted by those alone. The "world" (κόσμος) is the mass of unbelieving humanity, as in verse 17, and would soon (ἔτι μικρὸν) be deprived of the presence of Jesus (cf. 8:21–22) along with the disciples (16:16). In this way, the physical presence of Jesus is the immediate sense of his statement. However, there is a double sense in the use of θεωρέω that was already introduced in verse 17. There, the unbelieving world did not θεωρέω the Spirit because they lacked the spiritual perception to do so. Thus, although they physically saw Jesus and the work of the Spirit in him, they did perceive it by faith and did not θεωρέω him (cf. 3:1–3). [124] It will be different for the disciples; they will θεωρέω him again in the resurrection (20:14–29; 21:1). Yet, this seeing will be more than physical. It will be attended with a heightened spiritual perception of Jesus and themselves in relation to him—highlighted by the emphatic use of ὑμεῖς (cf. 20:25–29). The present tense—as throughout—is best seen as timeless: "You will see Me and continue to see Me and have fellowship with Me—a fellowship that will never end."[125]

It is this ongoing nature of Christ's presence that is highlighted in the final phrase, "because I live you also will live (ὅτι ἐγὼ ζῶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ζήσετε)." The ὅτι is likely prospective and looks forward to their participation in his resurrection life. The future

---

is only apparent. John understands the persons of the Godhead as closely unified. The unity and distinction of Jesus and the Spirit is paralleled but the same close relationship as between Jesus and the Father. There is oneness . . . and at the same time there is separation" (Burge, *Annointed*, 147).

[124]Morris correctly states in relation to v. 17, "'Sees' is equivalent to 'perceives.' The world is quite unaware of the Spirit's activities" (Morris, *John*, 577).

[125]Barrett, who sees the resurrection as the primary reference, yet notes in relation to vv. 19–20, "In both places the primary reference is to the resurrection, but the thought is extended . . . to the permanent presence of Christ with his own" (Barrett, *John*, 464; cf. Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 459).

tense of ζάω likely points to the full experience of his resurrection life that awaits the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost when the disciples will be "baptized in the Holy Spirit" as promised (Acts 1:4–5)—an event symbolically affirmed in 20:22 and consummated at the Spirit's coming.[126] The life Jesus speaks of is "eternal life" that brings them into the intimate experience of fellowship with the Father through himself (17:2–3; cf. 11:25–26; Rom 6:4, 10–11). Thus, the completed sense of θεωρέω is to "see" or "behold" Christ in his essence; it is to perceive him as the Son of God who is "in the Father" and in whom the "Father" abides in unique Divine oneness.

This new perception begins at the resurrection but awaits this promised presence of the Spirit to be realized in its fullness, "In that day" (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ; 14:20). There is a sense in which the disciples' understanding began to deepen before the resurrection (16:30), but even after the appearances of Christ there was the need to anticipate the coming Spirit to gain the totality of all that his presence brings (20:22). Thus, it is best to see the phrase ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ as referring to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the disciples would have understood the language of verse 20b "you in Me and I in you" while Christ was still physically present with them.[127] Moreover, the phrase is used several times in chapter 16 to speak of the new relationship the disciples would have with the Father through Jesus. For some this cements the understanding of 14:20 as an easter interpretation.[128]

However, Jesus marks that "day" as when the disciples will call upon the

---

[126]Keener, *John*, 2:974; Carson, *John,* 501.

[127]Thompson correctly points out, "Thus, the Gospel explicitly states that true understanding of Jesus' death, resurrection, and exaltation occur only after these events and in light of the teaching of the Spirit" (Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988], 114).

[128]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 258–59, 285–86; Ridderbos, *John*, 506; Carson, *John*, 501–2; Thompson, *John*, 314–15; contra: Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 459; Godet, *John*, 841–44.

Father "in My name," which is consistent with the period following the ascension. This does not minimize the reality of the post-resurrection appearances, which function as the initial instance, or guarantee of this promise, but cannot serve the termination of his meaning. The disciples were still full of questions that they asked Christ during the time from his resurrection to the ascension. The move to ask solely of the Father came later during his *physical* absence. Even Beasley-Murray, who sees the primary reference to the Easter appearances notes, "Naturally this renewal of spiritual life and perception is not confined to the Easter Day experiences. Easter initiates a new era . . . the new age."[129] However, it is not the resurrection that commences the new age, but the coming of the Spirit. The resurrection establishes the grounds and makes certain the fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit and Jesus's abiding presence (7:38–39).

It is the reality of this abiding presence of Jesus in his disciples—and they in him—that occupies the final clause: "I am in My Father and you in Me and I in you" (20b). Again, this statement would be unintelligible to the disciples while Jesus was physically present with them during his post-resurrection appearances.[130] What they were to realize "in that day" is the inner spiritual fellowship of Jesus and the Father through Jesus that would take place through the ministry of the Spirit in them. It is important to notice that Jesus does not say that believers will be directly "in the Father," as if they shared equal status with the Son.[131] John has gone through great lengths to make clear the

---

[129]Beasley-Murray, *John,* 258.

[130]Contra: Morris, *John*, 579 who maintains that this state would be understood "when he is risen" (*John*, 579).

[131]Talbert is keen to establish the point that "Christ and Christians are not on the same footing in salvation history. Jesus possess a soteriological priority that is expressed in terms of the chronological priority of Jesus's going . . . because he both prepares a place for his disciples with God and is himself the way to the Father . . . [and is superior because of] (a) his revelatory role (vv. 7–10), and in (b) his empowering role (vv. 12–13)" (Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, rev. ed. [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005], 210–13).

unique status of Jesus as the τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ alone has with the Father—the very identity of Jesus as the eternal Son is what gives the Father his own identity as Father.[132] In tandem with this, however, it is the Son's relationship with the Father that gives the τέκνα θεοῦ their identity and paradigm of relationship to the Father.[133] In other words, the disciples' relationship and experience of the Father is only by their being in the Son and the Son in them, which in turn, is only by the ministry of the Spirit.[134] Jesus will later capture this flow by acknowledging that the Father's love to them is founded in his love for the Son (v. 21; 16:27). "The disciples . . . share in Jesus' living community with the Father."[135]

Jesus is always careful to keep this inner fellowship from being confined to a mystical experience and immediately reasserts the ethical manifestation of this fellowship

---

[132]On this point, Thompson notes, "God is not understood as God in the Gospel of John unless the relationship of Father and Son, construed in terms of the Father's conferring upon the Son the power to give life and to send the Spirit, is taken as essential to the very identity of God" (Thompson, *God*, 187–88).

[133]Hoskyns starts down this line of thinking, but falls short of making the Sonship of Christ paradigmatic, "The author of the Fourth Gospel is less concerned with the relation between the Father and the Son, than with the relation between the Father and Son and the disciples" (Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 464). Talbert also comes close by relating the position of the disciples in Jesus to his preparing a place for them with the Father and receiving them to Himself, but does not specify the disciples' relationship to the Father as consisting in their relationship to Jesus (Talbert, *Reading*, 216–17). On the other hand, Malatesta captures the idea broadly, "In the Gospel the personal reciprocal expressions are expressed most frequently by εἶναι ἐν, with the relationship of Father and Son providing the model and source of every other relationship" (Edward Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978], 32).

[134]On this point Donald Fairbairn notes, "Jesus links the Holy Spirit's dwelling within Christians to the fact that the Father and the Son are in each other. Because of the indwelling the Holy Spirit, we will recognize that the Son is in the Father and the Son is in us. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the link between the Son's relationship to the Father and the Christian's relationship to the Son. As Jesus continues speaking He will make this link much clearer" (Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], 24). Ridderbos adds, "It is that unbreakable unity of the Father and the Son that will effect the resurrection and into which from now on the disciples will be incorporated—a unity of life between him and them that will be expressed in the same 'reciprocal formula of immanence' as that of the unit of the Father and the Son (cf. 17:21ff.)" (Ridderbos, *John*, 506).

[135]Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:79.

in obedient love—as he himself demonstrated (14:31; 15:10).[136] Thus, he reiterates his statement in verse 15 that love will produce obedience, but now gives the additional thoughts: "the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father . . . and I will manifest Myself to him" (21b). As throughout this pericope there is a first instance of this revelation of Jesus that involves his physical presence (21:1, 14).[137] However, the future tense ἐμφανίσω should be seen, primarily, as anticipating the period following Jesus's ascension and a spiritual reality available to all believers throughout the ages (cf. 17:3).[138] The general use of αὐτός marks anyone who loves and obeys Christ and cannot be confined to the disciples or only those who physically saw the risen Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:6). This use of ἐμφανίσω, then, must be understood as referring to a personal inner disclosure of Christ the Son to all who have the Spirit—the Spirit of the Son. There is a real sense in which this is an advancement of the kingdom realities mentioned in 3:3–21 that are related to the new birth. In John 3 the concern was entrance into the kingdom of God that required birth "from above" by the Spirit and faith in the Person of Christ and provision of the Father (v.16) for redemption. Now, the Spirit brings the fuller reality of the kingdom: fellowship with the Son and Father (cf. Luke 17:20; Rev 3:20).[139] And it is a fellowship that increases commensurate with obedience—not unlike the love of the Father for his obedient Son (cf. 10:17; 15:10).

However, obedience is not to be seen as the foundation of love—as if it elicits the love of the Father (3:16; 13:34; 15:9, 12; 17:23; cf. 1 John 4:7–10)—but the response

---

[136]Carson states, "They love and obey Jesus, and he loves them in exactly the same way that he loves and obeys his Father, and the Father loves him (*cf.* 3:35; 5:20; 8:29; 14:31)" (Carson, *John*, 503).

[137]These verses use the parallel term φανερόω and not ἐμφανίζω as in 14:21, 22.

[138]Keener, *John*, 2:976; Carson, *John*, 503.

[139]As Barrett notes, "They enjoy the Father's love merely as his creatures (cf. 1 John 4:10); but as Christians they have entered into the same reciprocity of love that unites the Father and the Son" (Barrett, *John*, 465).

to the reality of the familial love that results from a genuine relationship with the Son by faith (1:12–13).[140] That said, Jesus makes clear in 15:10 that there is a correlation between obedient faith and the experience of divine love (cf. 14:31). As noted in verse 20, however, the dynamic of the Father's love is centered on His Son: "He who loves Me will be loved by My Father." Barrett captures the idea well, "Their love for Christ and union with him, means that the Father loves them in him."[141] The Father loves the Son with infinite love (17:24b) and loves those who love the Son (14:21b); the very ones the Father gave to the Son in love (6:35; 17:2b, 23b; Eph 1:3–5) and who gave the Son for them in love (3:16; 1 John 4:7–10; cf. 8:42). Reciprocal love is the mark of being in the family of God (13:34) and brings increased knowledge of the Son and Father.[142]

This inner experience of fellowship reaches a climax in verse 23b. After repeating 21a in slightly different words and in response to Judas's question, Jesus adds: "We will come to him and make Our abode in him." The future middle ἐλευσόμεθα, again, cannot be confined to the *parousia* of verse 3, since the promise is for all who "keep My word." It is a present experience for those who have the Spirit "in" them (v. 17). The noun μονή, "abode," is also used in verse 2 and highlights the realized

---

[140] De Jonge makes an important observation: "No other single Christological expression appears so often in the Fourth Gospel, and it is worthy of note that this actually is a theological term. Equally noteworthy is the fact that an active participle . . . is used. Nowhere is the passive participle 'sent' connected with Jesus" (de Jonge, *Stranger,* 147). This, significantly fits with the NT presentation of Jesus as obeying the Father within essential equality. Equally significant is the fact that this sending takes place before the incarnation.

[141] Barrett, *John*, 465.

[142] The Spirit comes from the Son and the Father (14:16; 15:26; 16:7, 13–15), but he particularly manifests the Son to the believer (v. 21b). However, because of the Son's relationship to the Father (vv. 10, 20), the more knowledge and experience of the Son the believer has, the more knowledge and experience of the Father he gains as well. Yet, the knowledge of the Father is only through the believer's relationship to the Son and the believer's knowledge of the Son is only through the Spirit—the believer experiences the love and fellowship with the Father through the Son's relationship to the Father. The Spirit of Sonship brings the believer to participate in the Son's relationship to the Father as sons and daughters, or in the language of 1:12 "children." Indeed, "children" who would relate to Him as Father through His own Son by the Spirit.

eschatology that is so frequent in John. What the believer has now in Christ is a foretaste of what he will have more fully at the eschaton. This statement suggests a connection to the intimacy of the "only begotten in the bosom of the Father" of the prologue (1:18). What the Son has eternally with the Father is manifested through his humanity (1:14) and is extended through the Spirit—even to those whom he gives "authority to become the children of God." It is the Spirit of sonship that "effectuates in the believer this higher manifestation of Christ . . . [and] the love of the Father to the disciple."[143]

In other words, this kind of intimacy with God comes about through the Son (1:12) and the Spirit of the Son and of God and suggests the *telos* of the Father's purpose for sending the Son into the world. Carson captures this well: "However conceived, this is an anticipation, an inauguration, of the final consummating experience of God after the parousia, when the words of the Apocalypse will be fulfilled . . . (Rev 21:3, 22)."[144] This coming (ἔρχομαι) should not be made an exact parallel to verse 18. However, it should not be so sharply divided either. The union of the Son with the Father is such that to be in spiritual fellowship with the Son necessitates fellowship with the Father (14:9–10). That is to say, believers experience their relationship to the Father through Jesus. It is for this purpose that the Father sent the Son into the world, the Son came, and the Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son (14:16; 15:26; 16:7).[145]

---

[143]Westcott, *John*, 207.

[144]Carson, *John*, 504. Ridderbos sums it up as "the restoration of human fellowship with God Himself" (Ridderbos, *John*, 508).

[145]Kuyper helpfully shows this to be a reality that came into existence at Pentecost and is fundamentally distinct from the OT saint: "This spiritual union of the elect did not exist among Israel, nor could it exist during their time. . . . This spiritual union of the elect was made possible only by the incarnation of the Son of God . . . only when in Christ the perfect man was given, who could be the temple of the Holy Spirit in body and soul, did the inflowing and outpouring of the Holy Spirit become established in and through the body thus created" (Kuyper, *Holy Spirit*, 120).

John 20:17

The ideas related to the sonship of believers throughout the gospel, here find their final and most succinctly stated form: "I ascend to My Father and your Father, My God and your God." A startling statement that makes a clear distinction between the unique sonship of Jesus and the shared Sonship of the "children of God."[146] The Spirit is not directly mentioned in connection with Jesus's declaration to Mary, but is immediately following in relation to his sending them into the world (vv. 21–23). Moreover, the Spirit's presence is implicit in the fulfillment of Jesus's promise of nearness during his physical absence, which is essential to his statement here. This tight binding of believers to the Son's own mission and relationship to the Father brings to a glorious culmination the theme of believers' incorporation into the sonship of Jesus and sharing in his life with the Father by the Spirit

Jesus's words to Mary Magdalene (v. 1) anticipate the future relationship of a "child of God" with both Jesus and the Father. "Stop clinging" is the best translation of μή μου ἅπτου—the negative with present imperative indicates stopping an action already in progress.[147] The verb indicates that Mary had physically grasped the risen Jesus[148] and he now commands her to stop. However, the command is not a prohibition to stop worshipping (cf. vv. 28–29), but Jesus is addressing her ignorance of the new situation

---

[146]Schnackenburg rightly states, "The 'Father-Son relationship' is the key to the understanding of Jesus as portrayed by the evangelist" (Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:172).

[147]This command is not, of course, to be compared with the very different situation of Thomas in v. 27 (Michaels, *John*, 1001), nor with the acceptance of physical embrace in Matt 28:9. It is not the physical embrace, the worship, or an address to doubting faith that is in view, but a wrong perception of the implications of his resurrection and the new relationship his followers were to have. He is instructing her sincere ignorance.

[148]BDAG gives the basic ideas as "touch," "have contact with," "make close contact with," bearing the added nuance of cling to, or take hold of (126). Any attempt to make this a metaphorical clinging is misguided. Mary is physically clinging to Jesus and is told to stop (Westcott, *John*, 292; contra: Bultmann, *John,* 687n1, "The present imperative does not necessarily imply that she has already touched him"; also, Porter, *Idioms*, 227).

and newness in the kind of relationship she is to have with him. Bultmann is correct to say that, "she does not grasp who he is as the Risen One. She still misunderstands him, insofar as she thinks that he has simply 'come back' from the dead, and that he is again the man she knew as 'Teacher.'"[149] Although Mary does not now understand, the resurrection has laid the foundation and is the guarantee of the new relationship, or manner of relating to Jesus and the Father that believers will now have—as Jesus anticipated in 14:16–23.[150]

This new way of relating to Jesus and the Father is anticipated in the reason given for the command, "For I have not yet ascended to the Father." The γὰρ is explanatory[151] and the perfect of ἀναβαίνω (ἀναβέβηκα) with οὔπω[152] emphasizes that he has not yet entered into that future state πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. At first glance it appears as though he is informing Mary that the time to cling to him is after he ascends to the Father, but this would be an error since his physical absence would preclude the fellowship previously enjoyed. Jesus has already indicated in 14:23 that his future relationship with his disciples was going to take a new form. The concern, then, is not that Jesus does not want her to be detained in going to the brethren (v. 17b), or to keep him from going about his task—he would remain forty days—but rather that she would

---

[149]Bultmann, *John*, 687. Lenski, *John*, "She clasps him as her own, never, never to lose him again" (1360).

[150]Lincoln, *John*, 493, states, "A new form of encounter with him is about to begin."

[151]Köstenberger, *John*, 569n13, cites Lee who takes the γὰρ as "anticipatory" and translates it as "since." Keener, *John*, 2:1193n249, rejects this use of γὰρ here, noting, "Johannine style makes that suggestion less likely." Whether it is taken as explanatory or anticipatory does not change the overall point: Mary is not to cling to the physical Jesus because/since that is not the final way he will relate to them in this new stage that will soon end in his ascension to the Father.

[152]The use of οὔπω ("not yet") may reflect back on 2:4; 7:6, 39 (cf. Bultmann, *John*, 687n2), with 7:39 bearing the most pertinent link: "For the Spirit was not yet (οὔπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα) because Jesus was not yet glorified." This is to say, the future ministry of the Spirit, indeed, the future ministry of Christ, was not yet in place until his return to the Father.

stop trying to hold onto him in a manner consistent with the characteristics of her previous relationship.[153]

Jesus had made it clear that his goal was to return from whence he came (3:13; 6:62; 13:36; 17:5, 23) and until that took place he could not send the Spirit (7:38–39; 14:16–23; 15:26) and enter into this different manner of relating to his people.[154] These ideas are not yet fully comprehensible to Mary or the disciples, but Jesus is slowly bringing them along to see that there is something better ahead. She, likely representing the disciples as well, may still have been envisioning the promise of 14:18, "I will come to you," exclusively as a return to the conditions and relationship precisely as it was before Jesus's death.[155] There is no indication they were yet thinking or able to grasp the significance of his glorified state after the resurrection and upon his return to the Father (16:12). As noted in the discussion of 14:15–23, this is the first instance and guarantee of what is yet to come at Pentecost.[156] Indeed, the "intimacy of Jesus' relationship to God is now made available to believers."[157]

---

[153]Brown, *John*, 2:1012; Köstenberger, *John*, 570n18; Ridderbos states, "He has not yet arrived at his goal; his 'ascent to the Father' has not yet been completed. While he is on that journey Mary must not hold him back or want to keep him with herself" (Ridderbos, *John,* 678).

[154]It says too much, as Hoskyns does, to say the Supper illustrates a new physical presence: "Both she and the disciples will be concretely united with Him in a manner which can actually be described as 'touching,' and of this the eating of the Lord's Body and the drinking of His Blood (vi. 51–8) is the most poignant illustration" (Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 543).

[155]Köstenberger captures this thought well: "The disciples now find themselves in a transition period in which they cannot revert to their familiar pattern of relating to their Master during this earthly ministry, yet at the same time they cannot fully grasp the nature of the new spiritual relationship with their Lord that soon will be mediated to them by the Holy Spirit. This transitory condition explains the awkwardness that surrounds the interim between the resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit." He later cites Lee: "His permanent abiding with her is to be not in the flesh as she supposes . . . but in the Spirit" (Köstenberger, *John*, 569).

[156]Cf. Barrett, *John*, 566; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 542–43. Although John places great stress on the eschatological realities already present in believers, this statement yet shows the *already*/*not yet* tension that is so prevalent throughout the whole of the NT (cf. Rom 8:14–25 relating this to Sonship).

[157]Lincoln, *John*, 494; cf. John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 367–72; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 227: "It is only in connection with the incarnation that the

The address of "brethren" speaks to the new spiritual relationship of spiritual kinship Jesus now shares with his followers in a heightened sense. It is a strong statement of the spiritual familial bond that exists between Jesus and those who share his life.[158] In one sense, it is the bond that already exists because of who Jesus is, because he has already atoned for sin, because he has risen from the dead, and because there are a people already given to him yet to come. Yet, this is the first use of "brethren" (ἀδελφός) in John in reference to the disciples and highlights a new paradigm of relationship and is an advance on φίλος in 15:13–15 (cf. Matt 12:48). Indeed, by the use of "brethren," Hoskyns rightly points out that Jesus now acknowledges his followers to "be in truth very sons of God."[159] The address gives the sense of sharing in his life and relationship to the Father, not independently, but through his own person.

Thus, the full significance of the title "brethren" is brought out in the final declaration: "My Father and your Father, My God and your God" (17b).[160] In saying this, Jesus is making a direct statement regarding the mutual relationship to the Father he shares with those who belong to him. Though careful to maintain the distinction of nature regarding this relationship, the unity of experience is not to be diminished.[161] The

---

idea of birth ἐκ πνεύματος makes sense. Accordingly, the gift of the Spirit to the Church is represented, not as if it were a separate outpouring of divine power under the forms of wind and fire . . . but as the ultimate climax of the personal relations between Jesus and His disciples."

[158]Godet, *John*, 978. He is not referring to his physical half brothers as in 7:5 who, even at this point, are "not believing in Him." Lenski quotes a beautiful passage from Luther on this point: "If now Christ is our brother, I would like to know what we still lack? Brethren in the flesh have common possessions, have together one father, one inheritance, otherwise they would not be brethren; so we have common possessions with Christ and have together one Father, and one inheritance, which does not grow less when divided, but whoever has one part of the spiritual inheritance has it all" (Lenski, *John*, 1361). This anticipates Heb 2:11: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (cf. Eph 4:4–6).

[159]Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 543.

[160]Schnackenburg rightly sees the relationship between Jesus's use of "brethren" and the declaration of God's shared Fatherhood, but wrongly applies it to the work of redaction (Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:320).

[161]As Carson notes, "It is not the language, the form of address to God, that is new . . . but the

distinction is noted in the pronouns: μου[162] and ὑμῶν. He could have easily said "our Father," which would have been appropriate were he not Creator (1:1–3) and eternal God the Son (1:14, 18). Yet, this distinction is only to acknowledge the superior glory of his nature as τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ, not to place an impassable furcation between his own experienced relationship with the Father and that of his followers. The message Mary is to carry declares emphatically a relationship of shared sonship.[163] The key distinction of this sonship was captured in the Augustinian distinction reflected in Westcott's concise statement:

> He who is *the Father* is Father of Christ and father of men in different ways; of Christ by nature, of men by grace. And just as the Lord separated Himself from men while He affirmed His true Humanity by taking to Himself the title of 'the Son of Man,' so here, while He affirms the true divine sonship of believers, He separates their sonship from his own.[164]

Albeit, the statement "My God" is from the perspective of Christ's humanity and the sonship of believers is through the humanity of Christ.[165] However, the text gives no

---

theology and *eschatological experience* that are new" (Carson, *John*, 645n1).

[162]Jesus's unique Father-Son relationship has been highlighted throughout the gospel: 1:14, 18, 33–34; 2:16; 3:35; 6:27, 32, 37, 40, 44, 46, 57; 5:17–31; 8:16, 18, 19, 27–28, 36, 38, 42, 49, 54; 10:15, 17–18, 25, 29–30, 32, 36, 38; 12:49–50; 13:1, 3; 14:2, 6–7, 9–13, 16, 20–21, 23–24, 26, 28, 31; 15:1, 8–10, 15–16, 23–24, 26; 16:3, 15, 17, 23, 25–28, 32; 17:1, 5, 11, 21, 24–25; 20:17 cf. Rev 2:28; 3:5, 21; 14:1.

[163]S. Robertson states, "The distinction is of great importance because it rules out the view that Jesus' sonship was of the same kind as that of a human, but developed to a greater intensity . . . he is (the) Son of a different kind" (S. Robertson, "Sonship in John's Gospel," *Asia Journal of Theology* 25, no. 2 [October 2011]: 327)). However, he later notes, "The relation of Father and Son is an eternal relation, not attained in time, nor ceasing with this life, or with the history of this world. The love of God, thus released in history, brings people into the same unity of which the relation of Father and Son is the eternal archetype" ("Sonship in John's Gospel," 327). While Jesus is the eternal Son and there are properties of his divine being that cannot be experienced, yet, the sonship Jesus demonstrated in the flesh reflected accurately his eternal sonship and it is into the sonship displayed in his flesh that believers participate.

[164]Westcott, *John*, 293.

[165]Christopher Cowen states this sharply: "As Son he has a Father; may we add, as man he has a God?" (Christopher W. Cowan, "I Always Do What Pleases Him: The Father and Son in the Gospel of John," in *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life*, ed. Bruce A. Ware and John Starke [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015], 63).

reason to think the sonship of Christ through his humanity is fundamentally different than what he has eternally shared in terms of core relational dynamics. This same idea is reflected throughout the NT epistles in the statement, "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:13; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3), which itself comes in address to the people of God. The "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the "God and Father" of those who belong to Christ. What Jesus demonstrated and experienced as the Son in flesh, he here holds out as the experience and reality for those who have God as Father through him (6:57; 14:6).

However, while the essence of this new status is established in Jesus alone as the τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ, the full participation in this Sonship awaits a future event. This is, again, behind his words to Mary: "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father." The perfect ἀναβέβηκα is now changed to the present ἀναβαίνω in Mary's message to the disciples. Although some have seen in this change a clear statement of the ascension as a progression that begins with the resurrection and extends to the final departure to the Father,[166] the idea is more probably that of certainty.[167] The ascension requires the resurrection, to be sure—and cannot be viewed apart from it—but when the present is seen in tandem with the perfect—which points to a future remaining state "when I ascend to the Father and stay"—it functions, rather, to assure the disciples of what will take place in the future and of the promise of the Spirit (7:38–39; 14:16–23).[168] Jesus will send the Spirit only when he has returned to the Father's side—this is the material point. The resurrection and post-resurrection appearances have the function

---

[166]Schnackenburg, *John*, 319.

[167]Harris, *John*, 328; Lenski, *John*, 1362; contra: Schnackenburg, *John*, 319.

[168]Schnackenburg links this statement to Jesus's promise in 14:3 to go and "prepare a place" in the Father's house: "Now is the hour of Jesus' ascent to the Father, and that means for his 'brethren' that he is preparing a place for them also with the Father, that he mediates that fellowship with Go for them, which he had foretold them to be the fruit of his departure (14:21, 23, 28) . . . the announcements of the farewell discourse find their Easter confirmation and realization" (Schnackenburg, *John* 319).

of solidifying the faith of the disciples and the church and the present and future promises of Christ (cf. vv. 30–31; 21:24; cf. 10:38; 14:11). However, it is not until he returns to the Father's side to stay that he will inaugurate the new phase of his relationship and rule of his people through the Spirit.

Indeed, Jesus makes clear in verse 22 that the Spirit was not yet given and they were not yet prepared to fulfill their task. The imagery of Jesus breathing on the disciples picks up on 15:26 and the Spirit as coming through Jesus and illustrates the promise "I will baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (1:33; Acts 1:4–5).[169] It is not likely this was the time of their reception of the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:8), but it, rather, anticipates Pentecost (cf. 7:39; 16:7).[170] In this action, Jesus demonstrates that the new relationship announced in verse 17 requires more than the resurrection to be fully known. Although Jesus was with them in his resurrected state, this did not constitute the full experience of their life with him. The Spirit was still necessary for them to fulfill the task before them and know the significance of this new relationship with the Father (14:20, 23; also, 4:14). Moreover, the Spirit would communicate to them their life in Christ (6:63), which consists of relational knowledge of Jesus and the Father (17:3; 20:17) and expression of that life in this world as possessing a filial unity with Jesus and through him the Father. Indeed, this brings to a climax the idea of ἐξουσία introduced in verse 12. It was stated there that the ἐξουσία granted by Christ to become "children of God" is specifically attached to his person and status as the "only begotten Son." In these closing words that link is given full expression.

---

[169]This statement alludes to the "breath" (נפח) of God in Gen 2:7 (cf. Ezek 37:9) and forms a link with Paul's identification of Jesus as the "last Adam" and "life-giving spirit" in 1 Cor 15:4.

[170]This is not a Johannine Pentecost, as is sometimes asserted. Nor is it the time of their regeneration (Lincoln, *John*, 499), as if that were only a NC reality. Hamilton rightly notes that this is not the point of regeneration, but wrongly sees it as the time of the indwelling Spirit in the disciples (James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old & New Testaments* [Nashville: B & H Academic, 2006). Harris's suggestion that it could be "an inward and limited anticipation of the outward and general effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost" may have some merit, but is too general to be useful (Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection & Immortality in the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983], 90).

First John 3:1–3

In his first epistle, John applies the theology of the Spirit and sonship in Jesus, established in the gospel, to the church.[171] The precise occasion and content of the attacks that form the background to the letter is a matter of debate and has little relevance to the purpose of this thesis.[172] What is important are two central propositions of the letter regarding (1) believers as "children of God" (3:1–2, 10; 5:2) and (2) the paradigmatic role of the Holy Spirit as the one who communicates the life of the Son to believers (3:24; 4:13). Perhaps Smalley states it the most concisely by identifying "three motifs . . . taken up and developed in the present passage. . . . These are sonship (3:2–9), love (3:10–24), and the separation of Christians from the 'world' (4:1–6)."[173]

Although the Holy Spirit is referred to in only seven of the twelve uses of πνεῦμα (3:24; 4:2, 6, 13; 5:6, 8), his presence is presented as essential and paradigmatic to the reality and expression of the Christian's life in God.[174] Moreover, outside of direct references, the Spirit is implicitly referred to in the terms χρῖσμα[175] "anointing" (2:20,

---

[171]The debate regarding the relationship of the gospel and the epistles will not be entered into here. This paper assumes that the apostle John is the author of both the gospel and the three epistles that bear his name. Moreover, it also assumes that the gospel was written first and the epistles followed, building on the theology established in the gospel. For arguments in favor of the unity of the gospel and epistles, as well as a single author, see Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 5–16; Köstenberger, *Theology,* 72–93. For arguments against such unity and authorship, see Rudolf Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles*, 1–3; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, Anchor Bible Series (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982), 14–35.

[172]It is commonly held that John is addressing an incipient form of Gnosticism that attacked the nature of Christ's Person (1:1–2; 4:2–3), the doctrine of sin (1:8, 10; 3:14–15), the authority of apostolic doctrine (2:24; 4:1–6), and a mystical approach to spirituality that denied the concrete demonstration of righteousness and love (2:3–10). The suggestion that John is opposing a spiritual experience of God through the Spirit, but unmediated by Christ, is also plausible and will be addressed briefly in comments on relative passages (cf. Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective*, JSNTSup [New York: T & T Clark, 2003], 235–59).

[173]Smalley, *1, 2, 3, John*, 133.

[174]Contra Lieu, who states, "The spirit is not a key theme, and little is said about it" (Judith Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, New Testament Theology [repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 45).

[175]Brown, *Epistles*, 369; Parsenios, *John*, 87; Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 141; contra: Brown,

27), γεννάω[176] "born" (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; cf. John 1:13; 3:3–8), and σπέρμα[177] "seed" (3:9).[178] Thus, John's epistle develops the relationship between believers as God's children in Christ and the Spirit that was established in nascent form in the gospel (1:12–13; 3:3–8; 14:15–23; 20:17). This link between sonship and the Spirit is developed in John's use of the term τέκνα θεοῦ in 3:1–3 and two paradigmatic references to the Spirit in 3:24b and 4:13.

Sonship and the Father's Love

The opening statement of 3:1 is stunning in its grandeur and implications to those in Christ: "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be

---

Spirit, 240–41, who identifies the anointing with "the 'word', not the Spirit"; Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 102, leans toward an emphasis on the Spirit, but suggest John may be ambiguous to "signify *both* the Spirit and the word of God . . . indicating that the objective word of God's truth cannot be detached from the interior testimony of the Holy Spirit, present in the believer"; contra: Malatesta, *Interiority*, 204, follows this same trajectory, but places primary emphasis on "the word of God interiorized . . . under the action of the Holy Spirit"; cf. John Painter, *1, 2, and 3, John*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 197–98; Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 149, calls it "the effect of the apostolic message they have received," which is unclear; Ignace de la Potterie and Stanislaus Lyonnet, *The Christian Lives by the Spirit*, trans. John Morriss (Stanton Island, NY: Alba House, 1970). Although some see a connection with baptism stems from the association of the ritual of pouring oil symbolizing the Holy Spirit on an individual at baptism, Akin is correct to say, "There is nothing in the text . . . to indicate a ritual connection" (Daniel Akin, *1, 2, 3, John*, NAC [Nashville: B & H Publishers, 2001], 118).

[176]This is undoubtedly a reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in producing spiritual life introduced in Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus (3:3–8), which was Jesus's first and last use of γεννάω metaphorically before its appearance here.

[177]Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 141, 175; Christopher D. Bass, *That you May Know: Assurance of Salvation in 1 John* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), 114. It is a difficult phrase (cf. Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 148–49) but is best understood as the new nature given and sustained by the Holy Spirit through Jesus. This interpretation bodes best in the context of birth (2:29; 3:9) and "children" (3:1–2), as well as the close association with Jesus (3:7–8).

[178]The precise meaning and relationship of these terms to the Spirit is sometimes debated, which will be briefly addressed in this section. However, when understood as implicit references to the Spirit, the Spirit is detected in every aspect of the believer's life in 1 John—knowing (2:3, 5, 29; 3:6, 19, 24; 4:2, 6, 7, 16; 5:2, 20), loving (4:1–13), spiritual reciprocity with the Father and Son as "in him" (1:5; 2:5–6, 8, 10, 15, 27–28; 3:5–6, 9, 15, 17, 24; 4:13, 15–16), light (2:10), truth (2:27), and the obedience of God's children (2:3–5; 3:23–24). In other words, the total reality of spiritual life in the believer—including faith—the believer's confidence of his life in Christ, and his abiding in the Father and the Son is the direct result of the ministry of the Spirit (cf. Donald W. Mills, "The Holy Spirit in 1 John," *DBSJ* 4 [Fall 1999]: 33–50).

called children of God." John's use of the aorist imperative of ὁράω, "to see" (ἴδετε), is a call to spiritual perception, to consider the implications of the grace that has been extended by the Father to those who have believed the testimony of the Son (5:9–13). The emphasis on the Father's initiative is consistent with Johannine and NT theology. It is the Father who "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (4:10b) because he "loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16) to be the sacrifice for sin.[179] Here John focuses on the motive of the Father's action, namely, His "great love" that consists (ἵνα)[180] in granting a people the status of "children of God." The following phrase καὶ ἐσμέν should be kept as original[181] and emphasizes both the present state and blessedness of the condition.

Children of God and Children of the Devil

The title is used again in 3:10 and forms an *inclusio* for this pericope that began in 2:29, moving forward the themes of righteousness (vv. 7, 9; cf. 4–6, 8 and the contrast with those characterized by sin) and the contrasting nature of God's children with those in the world (vv. 9–10) as distinguished by spiritual birth (v.9). In John's typical style he marks this distinction in absolute terms: there are only two spiritual children in the world—τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου (v. 10). In each case the spiritual fruit of an individual's life—righteousness or sin—evidences their spiritual nature and lineage (cf. John 3:8). Understanding this clarifies the lavish language

[179]In 3:16 it is the love of the Son in laying down his life that is the model of love; in 4:11 it is the Father's love in giving the Son that is the pattern his children are to follow. Although 3:1 highlights the role of the Father in the initiation of the love that makes a child; the love of the Father and of Christ are, each in their respective roles, an expression of the love of God.

[180]ἵνα is best understood as epexegetical and not telic—it expresses content (Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 141; Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 217) and not purpose (Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 175).

[181]So with Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 642, who notes the strong external witnesses and gives it an [A] rating.

of verse 1. That is to say, John never uses the language of γεννάω to describe how one is a "child of the devil," because this is the natural state of all men when entering into the world. Through Adam, one is born into the family of the devil (cf. 5:19; John 8:44; Eph 2:1–3)—as it were—by natural birth, but into the family of God by supernatural birth.

This contrast forms the background between the new birth mentioned in 2:29 and the lavish love of the Father in 3:1. The immediate context introduced the first use of the verb γεννάω and concept of the new birth (2:29).[182] This close proximity of spiritual birth with the status of children harkens back to the prologue of John's gospel (1:12–13) and suggests that the apostle is linking his thoughts to the earlier statement in the gospel. By introducing the concept of spiritual birth in the middle of the first reference to "eternal life" (2:25) and the status of believers as "children of God" (3:1), as well as an explanation for the necessity of demonstrating God's righteousness, John is establishing that believers share in God's nature as it is in Christ (cf. 2:1).[183] Therefore, the realities of spiritual life, spiritual birth, and righteousness, as befits the nature of God, are all imported into and introduce the idea of believers as τέκνα θεοῦ.[184]

---

[182]John's use of this verb is always in the passive and highlights the sovereign initiative of God—it's not in any way conditioned upon the behavior or personal righteousness of the individual (cf. 3:10). Moreover, in John's epistle, γεννάω is always in the perfect tense, which marks the ongoing effects of this birth that John emphasizes as the confidence of true children of God. The one exception is the aorist found in 5:18, which is best understood as a reference to Christ.

[183]R. Brown rightly emphasizes the idea of the shared nature of God's children with God in comparison to Paul's adoption metaphor, but wrongly insists on linking birth to baptism based on his exegesis of John 3: "John's language of begetting by God makes more realistic the imagery of 'children of God' than if he spoke of adoption; it also brings the status of the Christian children close to that of Jesus, God's Son. Both Paul and John, despite the adoption/begetting difference, relate the Christian's status to baptism and the Spirit (see Gal 3:26–27; 4:6; Rom 8:14–16; John 3:5)" (R. Brown, *Epistles*, 388–89; cf. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 715; Robert Peterson, *Adopted by God; From Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001], 53). The tendency to want to import the Pauline idea of adoption into John's presentation of sonship is understandable. There are many similarities because both Paul and John are dealing with the overarching category of sonship in Christ. However, there is no need to either conflate the metaphors, or force the idea of adoption on John—who could have expressed adoption easy enough if that were his intention.

[184]The vocative τεκνία of τεκνίον, used once by Christ (13:33) in the mouth of John (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), reflects the spiritual status of his hearers, but even more his relation to them as

Children and the Sonship of Christ

There is a tendency by many to make the new birth and the status as children an exclusive link.[185] In other words, some see the status of children as the exclusive result of the new birth. It is true that both the context of 2:29 and the concept of birth as bringing forth life give credence to such a strong link—life begins at birth. However, this unmediated conception fails to fully appreciate John's presentation of the Son as central to the redemption, righteousness, fellowship, life, identity, and relation to the Father the children share. Regeneration apart from Christ, the incarnate Son, is insufficient to attain the status and experience of a "child of God."[186] John made this point abundantly clear in the prologue (1:12–13) in which the status of "child of God" is the direct result of the ἐξουσία of Christ granted to those who believe by virtue of the new birth. The pattern is this: the Spirit grants life that enables faith in Christ who grants by His own Person the ἐξουσία to become "children of God."

This same pattern holds true in the epistle. While John places a clear priority on the work of the Father and the believer's fellowship with the Father, this is never apart

---

an earthly spiritual father (cf. 3 John 4, although he uses τέκνον, as well as in 2 John 1, 4, 13 in reference to Christians). John uses παιδίον twice in his epistle (2:14, 18) as a reference to spiritual maturity (cf. John 21:5).

[185]Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 175; Painter, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 217.

[186]Tricia Brown cogently argues that a key error of the opponents in 1 John was the claim to have direct access to God—and thus revelation (4:1–6)—unmediated by the Son (Brown, *Spirit*, 246–49), which John contradicts. Although she sees the epistles as later than the gospel (Brown, *Spirit*, 259) and written by an author other than John, she does maintain a close affinity between the two (Brown, *Spirit*, 258), but with different emphases. Regarding the Farewell Discourse, she notes, "Every benefit he makes available to believers emanates directly from Jesus, and the spirit's work of brokerage continues the work of Jesus as broker in that the benefits Jesus provided in his ministry continue to be made available to the disciples from the glorified Jesus, only now through the mediation of the Paraclete" (Brown, *Spirit*, 247). In the epistle the concern is to show the Spirit "functions to enable a proper confession of Jesus and serves as evidence of the community's abiding relationship with God," but does not take on a mediating role between the believer and either Jesus or God (*Spirit*, 257). Brown, probably rightly, sees the uses of παράκλητος for Jesus (2:1) as a means to counter the opponents who sought to dismiss the continued importance of Jesus (*Spirit*, 259). Although Brown places too great a furcation between the Gospel's and the Epistles' presentation of the Spirit as mediator to Jesus, she rightly understands the centrality of Christ to the reception of the Spirit by believers and the Spirit's ongoing ministry.

from the mediation of the Son. Thus, it is in the Son that the life of God was manifested and is extended to the world (1:1–2; 5:11), that believers have their righteousness (2:1–2; cf. 1:7), by whom God's children believe (2:23; 4:14–16; 5:1, 5–6, 9–12, 20), and in whom they have fellowship with the Father: "God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son . . . we are in Him who is true in His Son Jesus Christ" (5:11, 20).[187] The believer's spiritual life initiated by the Spirit in regeneration is a reality lived in and through the Son; to be born of God enables the believer to "live through Him (ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ)" (4:9). Vellanickal states this indissoluble union well:

> If Christ in his quality of being 'Righteous' stands in filial relationship to God, it is quite natural that those who do righteousness also stand in such a filial relationship to God. . . . Thus the righteousness of the believer is not only moral, though it is of moral character. It is the very righteousness of Christ, the sinlessness and triumph over sin, that is shared by the believer, and which is active in him throughout his life and which becomes a real criterion of his divine sonship. This solidarity between Christ and the believer shows that the divine sonship of man is essentially dependent on Christ's sonship . . . the father-son relationship created by this birth from God, and thus the community of nature between God and man that is the principle of his moral life. . . . The measure of sonship to God is the life of sonship in Christ.[188]

Thus, although the new birth is the beginning of life and marks one as a child, this life is only in the Son and finds its substance and shape through union with his Person by the Spirit.[189] The context points to the believer's relationship to the Father and

---

[187]Campbell rightly asserts, "Christ is the instrument of the Father's will, and all his acts toward humanity are mediated through the Son," including—and especially—the children's relation to the Father (Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 360). This point is later correctly and clearly stated: "Union with Christ involves the inner life of the Trinity. It refers to the Father's relationship to the Son, and their union in the Spirit; it does not merely pertain to the relationship of believers to Christ. The Father's will is enacted through the Son, by the Spirit, for the glory of Christ and the benefit of humanity" (Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 409).

[188]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 261–62.

[189]R. Brown comes close, but falls short of linking Jesus as Son to the status of God's children: "*Teknon* is the technical term covering divine sonship/daughterhood, since *huios*, 'son,' is reserved for Jesus in relationship to God. . . . John's language of begetting by God makes more realistic the imagery of 'children of God' than if he spoke of adoption; it also brings the status of the Christian children close to that of Jesus, God's son" (Brown, *Epistles*, 388–89).

the Spirit through Christ.[190] Indeed, John grounds the righteous living of children in the work and person of the Son (cf. 2:1). In 3:8b, the destruction of the "work of the devil" comes through the "Son of God." From this statement, the apostle immediately addresses the issue of new birth: "everyone (πᾶς) who has been born (γεγεννημένος) of God does not practice sin." This is because the "Son of God" has destroyed the work of the devil. In other words, the righteousness that demonstrates the shared nature of the children through birth is the righteousness that was manifested in the Son and through his work and Person is manifested in God's children. John established this in 2:1, noting that the righteousness of the believer is through the παράκλητος, who is πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον. Because there is "no sin in Him" (3:5), those born of God abide in him and cannot sin (3:6)—for the children share in his life.[191]

The use of παράκλητος for Jesus is likely—at least in part—to link the believers' union to him with the ministry of the Spirit who is the source of that union and the spiritual life in them (14:16). Indeed, this union is reflected in the particularly Johannine language of "in him" (2:5, 6, 8, 27–28; 3:24; 4:13, 15–16; cf. John 3:15; 6:56; 15:5; 17:23, 26). Thus, the pattern established in the gospel is beautifully worked out in the epistle: the Father gave the Son to the world (3:16), a people out of the world to the Son (6:35; 17:6), the Spirit to the world through the Son to unite them to the Son (15:26; cf. Gal 4:4–6), so that they would share in his fellowship with the Son in holiness (14:23; 1 John 1:3).

Here then is the "great love"[192] of the "Father" that He gave the Son to the

---

[190]Thus, the believer relates to the Father as a "child" only through the Son, "As the Father indwells the Son, so the Son indwells his people. Consequently, there is some sense in which believers participate in the 'divine-nature-of-relating', while not themselves becoming divine" (Campbell, *Union*, 410; cf. 366–67). Commenting on the present verse, Brooke states, "The emphasis on the direct relation of Christians to God is characteristic of the Epistle, though *the writer conceives of this relationship as realized in and through Christ*" (Canon A.E. Brooke, *Johannine Epistles*, ICC [repr., Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1964], 80, emphasis mine).

[191]The present tense is best captured with the translation, "cannot practice sin."

[192]ποταπός, used only here in John and has the basic meaning "what sort of, what kind of."

world to redeem men from their sin. He gave the Spirit through the Son to grant them life, faith in and union with the Son so that they could be "children of God" and know His fellowship with and love for the Son for all eternity (1:3).[193] Thus, to be born from above, by the Spirit, is the initiation of life that ushers forth faith in the Son—who gives "the right to become children of God" (John 1:12–13). John expands on the theme of this love in 4:7–10, establishing God's nature and act of love in the Son—mentioned here—as the initial cause of love in those who are children (cf. 5:1). Again, the knowledge (γινώσκω) of this love that enables the child to "see" and perceive its greatness, is the *result of* the new birth (γεγέννηται) and centers on faith in God's work in the Son.[194]

John's thought is this: those who have experienced the regenerating work of the Spirit have seen God's love manifested in the Son and believed; by believing in the Son the individual is granted to become a child of God and live to God through the Son. The Son is the propitiation for the sin of the believing sinner and the child lives in vital spiritual relationship with God through the Son; it is within this fellowship—marked by righteousness and love that were manifested in the Son—that eternal life consists and is manifest. In relation to 3:1, the "great love" and status as "children" are not only by the new birth, but the new birth initiates the spiritual life that is attained and experienced only in the Son. In other words, there is no experience of being a "child of God" apart from faith in and union with the Son, nor is the experience of God's love apart from its

---

[193]Schnackenburg, *Johannine,* 64.

[194]John uses the term γινώσκω 25x in this epistle (1 John 2:3–5, 13–14, 18, 29–3:1; 3:6, 16, 19–20, 24; 4:2, 6–8, 13, 16; 5:2, 20) that, distinct from οἶδα, highlights the relational centrality of eternal life (John 17:3) and expresses the kind of knowledge shared between the Father and Son that is shared with his children (John 10:14–15; cf. 14:20, 23). Abbot suggests, "In the Epistle, γινωσκω is constantly used for the spiritual instinct by which we feel, or recognise, spiritual truths" (Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary; A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with those of the Three* [Cambridge: University Press, 1905], 124) and is the "result of walking with Him in fellowship" (Dirk G. Van der Merwe, "Early Christian Spiritualties of Sin and Forgiveness According to First John," *HvTSt* 70, no.1 [2014]: 3n18). Contra: Parsenios, *John*, 82 who sees no distinction between John's use of γινώσκω and οἶδα.

manifestation and accomplishment in and through the Son (4:7–12; cf. John 3:16). The greatness of the love is the initiation of the Father to send the Son and redeem a people through him, who are—in the Son—spiritual children who share in his life and fellowship with the Son (5:20)—the children of the devil are made the children of God in Christ.[195]

This sonship, or "child" status in the Son, includes sharing in the nature of the Son. This point has already been implied through the necessity of the "child" demonstrating the righteousness that is consistent with God's nature.[196] It is also demonstrated through the world's inability to know—recognize—the "children of God" for what they are: "For this reason[197] the world does not know us, because it did not know him." As usual, it is difficult to determine whether αὐτός is a reference to Christ or the Father. In one sense, it is true of both (2:22–24; cf. John 8:42; 14:10), but the particular emphasis is probably on the Son through whom the Father was revealed—although John never separates the knowledge of the Father from the Son, or vice versa—and toward whom the unbelieving world's ignorance of God was focused.[198] This implicitly links the

---

[195]Vellanickal states this same conclusion. Commenting on the phrase δέδωκεν ἡμῖν, he rightly notes, "Thus we have here a description of the actual participation of the believers in the life of God, manifested as love in the redemptive work of Christ, and hence, the description of the divine sonship of believers" (Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 314).

[196]Smalley picks up on this idea, "The 'lavish' nature of God's love is indicated by the fact that he, as Father, is the author of spiritual sonship. . . . The privilege and position . . . may be even greater if there is an implied allusion in this verse to Christians as those who share God's nature" (Stephen Smalley, *1, 2, 3, John*, WBC, rev. ed. [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008], 134).

[197]διὰ τοῦτο, like ἐν τούτῳ (3:24) may look forward (Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 157; Brown, *Epistles*, 392; Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 218; Lieu, *I, II, III John*, 124) or backward (Bultmann, *Epistles*, 48n17; David Smith, "The Epistles of John," in *Expositor's Greek Commentary*, vol. 5 [repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002], 183), but like ἐν τούτῳ, it does not appear crucial to make a sharp decision (so, Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 135). The phrase acts as a bond between the two ideas of v. 1. In other words, the status of being a child of God, which is to share the nature of the Son of God, is not known by the world because as children they share the same nature as the Son, whom the world did not know either, along with the Father. However, the phrase is probably best seen as carrying the idea forward to the ὅτι.

[198]The phrase οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτόν is most likely a reference to Christ with the ὅτι clause as causal ("because"), noting the reason for the world's ignorance of God's children. There is no real need to be absolute on the ambiguity of αὐτός due to the unity of the Father and Son (John 10:30). The world's ignorance of the Father is manifest by its rejection of the Son and of those who belong to the Son and truly

status "children of God" to the Son; as he was, so are his children in the world—the unbelieving world is ignorant of both. John's primary point here is this: because the children share in the spiritual nature of the Son and so the truth, the world does not spiritually perceive the life that is in them. There is a filial status that stands in contradiction to the world (3:10; 2:15–16; 5:19).

Sonship and the Son's Likeness

The shared nature of God the Son and the τέκνα θεοῦ finds its greatest expression in 3:2 "we shall be like Him (ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα), because we will see him just as he is." As is often the case, the αὐτὸν could refer to either the Father[199] or the Son. Here it seems to be a clear reference to Christ, picking up on an antecedent usage in verse 1 ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτόν.[200] It is right to say that the unbelieving world did not know the Father, but it was the revelation of the Father through the incarnate Son that was rejected (5:37; 7:28; 12:45; 14:24; 15:21). The use of φανερόω is likely a reference to the *parousia* (cf. 2:28). The world did not know God because they did not know the Son of God. Similarly, the image and perfection of God were reflected in the world through the humanity of the Son, and it is that perfection of God manifested in humanity that

---

have God as Father and have eternal life in them.

[199]Culy rightly observes, in an introductory section entitled "Trinitarian Ambiguity," that "One of the most difficult challenges of the letters of John relates to the writer's use of the pronoun αὐτός and third person verbs without an explicit subject . . . it is frequently difficult to determine whether he intended to refer to the Father or the Son. . . . Assuming common authorship for the Fourth Gospel and 1 John, we can conjecture that the writer's emphasis on the absolute unity, mutuality, and equality of the Father and the Son evidenced in the Fourth Gospel . . . has led him to feel under no compulsion always to distinguish between members of the Godhead within his letter" (Martin M. Culy, *I, II, III John: A Handbook on the Greek Text* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004], xx; also Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 176, who also quotes Culy favorably).

[200]So Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 157–58; Culy, *I, II, III John*, 69; Bultmann, *Epistles,* 48; contra: Brown, who is one of the few who takes αὐτὸν here and in v. 1 as a reference to God the Father (Brown, *Epistles*, 394–95).

believers know and will attain to through union with the Son.[201] Although it is often difficult to be precise, the key references to the Son in the remainder of the chapter support a reference to Christ (cf. vv. 5–6, 8b, 16, 23).

John's use of ὅμοιοι is striking but does not imply unqualified equality in every sense, since the divine nature of the Son as God is non-transferrable. We shall be "like," not equal too. The creature could never be the Creator (John 1:1–3) and whatever is shared is done only through mediation and within the limits prescribed as creatures. The uniqueness of Jesus as the Son is established by the fact that "no one can come to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Yet the reality of Jesus as the Son in full humanity (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1–2) displays the potential of likeness and communion possible between God and his image bearers.[202]

The conjunction καθώς plays an important role in Johannine theology.[203]

---

[201]Brooke, *Johannine*, 83. The key point is that the children find their identity in the present and the future in the Son: it is his righteousness and his likeness and his relationship to the Father that the children enter into and experience spiritual life—now and throughout all eternity.

[202]This parallel's Paul's argument in Rom 8:18–23 that places the resurrection as the climatic event in which sonship—"adoption"—is realized. Commenting on this Garner notes, "What the believer actually awaits is the very climax of redemption—redemption consummated, when by the Holy Spirit the redeemed is transformed in his resurrection as a *son*. This bodily redemption is not merely an aspect of adoption, but the very culmination of it" (David B. Garner, *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016], 141). He goes on to say, "Put into Pauline shorthand, adoption is the singular goal of redemptive history, an adoption that changes the state of the sons, the hearts of the sons, and even the bodies of the sons" (Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 143). A statement that equally applies to the Johannine concept of sonship in this passage—a connection Garner also makes.

[203]Köstenberger also notes the importance of καθὼς in John's gospel, "The relationships drawn in the Fourth Gospel by way of καθὼς between Jesus and the disciples, besides sending in 17:18 and 20:21, include those of life (6:57), knowledge (10:14-15), love (15:9; 17:23), and unity (17:22)" (Andreas Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998], 186). Later, commenting on Jesus's prayer to the Father in John 17, he notes, "the term καθὼς establishes a correlation containing elements of participation and of analogy or correspondence. The disciples are brought by Jesus into the unity and love of the Father-Son relationship . . . this spiritual participation places the entire mission of the disciples in the orbit of the love and unity between Father and Son" (Kostenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples,* 189). This sharing of mission out of communion with the Father and Son is placed within the ministry of the Spirit (cf. Kostenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 191, 192).

Children's lives are to be patterned after the Son (2:6), demonstrate the same nature of righteousness (3:7), and be in the world καθώς he was (4:17). Children's lives find their shape and identity in the Son who was the perfect image of God in humanity. The Person of the Son incarnate demonstrated the high degree to which humanity can reflect divine perfections and participate in communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit. It is to this perfect humanity as it is reflected in the resurrected glory of Christ that believers will attain (cf. Phil 3:21).[204] This likeness is demonstrated in the present situation of believers as they live in obedience to God's commandments, as did Christ (2:6). As "children of God" live out the spiritual life they possess through the Son (3:24; 4:13), then there is a dim reflection of that which they will be.[205] To say the children "shall see Him as He is" does not mean that they presently have a distorted view, only one that is imperfect in its limitation (1 Cor 13:12). There is probably an echo of Jesus's own words in his prayer to the Father (John 17:24).

However, John says "we do not know" what that likeness will entail. This picks upon the Pauline idea of the future resurrection glory, which he about to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 15:35–49). John simply states that believers cannot go beyond

---

[204]This idea is helpfully stated by Vellanickal, "This does not in any way mean that men becoming children of God, cease thereby to be what they are by nature, but that remaining human beings as they are, they receive within themselves something (the divine life-giving principle) which inwardly renews their whole being and turns it to the likeness of their divine begetter. . . . The community of life producing a similarity of nature between the begetter and the begotten seems to be emphasized in the different expressions of v. 1 of I Jn ch. 3. . . . The very term 'τέκνα θεοῦ' . . . to signify the divine sonship of men points to this . . . but also seems to emphasize the community of life and nature with God the Father, as distinct from the Pauline emphasis on the dignity of the divine sonship through adoption" (Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 331n2, 333). This is not unlike the Pauline idea expressed in Rom 8:17–19, 21, 28–29.

[205]Since the Son is both the revelation of the Father and the mediator of the children's relationship to him, there is a connection as well with John's opening declaration: "God is Light and in there is no darkness at all" (1:5), which also harkens back to Jesus's own declaration (John 8:12). Therefore, to be like Christ in his glory is to share in both the holiness and moral purity of God's nature (1:5) as well as the deepest experience of fellowship with the Father and Son (1:3) and one another (1:6) in the glorious realities of redemption in Christ (1:7).

what the mind can conceive and what God has revealed, but the "children" do have the perfect image of Christ on earth to consider. It is the wonder of the perfect image of Christ on earth and the great privilege of being in God's family that causes the "children" to also look forward to that day when the revealed glory of Christ will far exceed even what can be known here (cf. Col 3:1–3). This future anticipation has the effect of producing increasing purity in God's children now: "Purifies himself just as he is pure" (v. 3).[206] The ultimate goal of the children is to become like the Son in moral perfection of righteousness and love, and that is itself a demonstration of perfect fellowship with the Father and Son (1:3–7) and shall "see Him just as (καθώς) He is." Thus, in both moral purity and unhindered fellowship with the Father through the Son, both the vision and experience of the Son will belong to the children. Indeed, as meditation on this day produces greater purity on earth, so the eternal gaze of Christ in glory will have an eternal effect of producing the Son's glory in the children (cf. 2 Cor 3:18).

First John 3:24

John has already alluded to the fact that the believer's faith, righteousness, and status are the result of a prior work of God of the Spirit, which he identifies as "anointing," "seed," and spiritual birth ("born"). However, he reserves his first use of πνεῦμα until almost the middle of the book in 3:24. Yet, this first mention is comprehensive and paradigmatic[207] and the language of obedience and reciprocity

[206]Lieu sees the idea of purification as preparation for the future state (Lieu, *I, II, II John*, 125–26). However, this seems to miss the point of this spiritual gazing, which is not talking about preparedness to see God, but the *effect* on the child of God who set his mind on this future reality (cf. Col 3:1–3).

[207]Contra: Lieu who seems to make a concentrated effort to distance John's teaching in the gospel and the clear implications of the Holy Spirit from the language here (Lieu, *I, II, & III John*, 159–60). She later notes, "There has been no sense that the spirit is a personal form of the presence of God, such as is developed in the Fourth Gospel (John 16:13–15), and it would be wrong to find such an idea in the terse phrase here" (Lieu, *I, II, & III John*, 187). This position of Lieu is fueled by the rejection of the gospel as a foundation for the theology of the epistles. However, the gospel background laid in 4:14; 7:38–39; 14:16; etc., should not be theologically dismissed.

reflects the farewell discourse (14:15–23), is applied to the "children of God" and grounded in the ministry of the Holy Spirit.[208]

Spiritual sonship is evidenced in a life of obedience: "The one who keeps His commandments." The substantive participle ὁ τηρῶν parallels verses 6 (ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων) and 7 (ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην), 10 and the customary present of verse 9 (οὐ ποιεῖ). The one who ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται and has his "seed" abiding in him, is marked by obedience to his commands; it is a necessary mark of filial reality. Obedience to God's commands is another way to speak of "righteousness" (2:29; 3:7, 10) and is paramount in John as the concrete evidence of the subjective internal spiritual experience of the Holy Spirit and abiding in God. This concern of John is likely designed to combat his opponent's claims to have genuine spiritual experience while failing to produce concrete evidence of righteousness and love in their lives.[209] The focus on holiness and obedience was introduced at the very opening of the letter and is indissolubly linked to the nature of God (1:3–7), which the believer shares. Therefore, to say that "God is Light and in him there is no darkness at all" (1:5) is to say that those who truly have fellowship with him will "walk in the Light as he is in the Light" (1:7). Also, to say that one abides inGod and he in the child is to say child will "keep his commandments."

The immediate reference in 1:5 is to the Father, yet John never thinks of the Father nor detaches the role of the Father from the concrete accomplishment of the work of the Son, nor does he allow for any sense of relationship with the Father as something is grounded in the child himself. Therefore, "the blood of Jesus His Son" spiritually cleanses those who "walk in the light"[210]—obedience flows from inner communion with

---

[208]Donald Mill perceptively says this verse, "Constitutes the macrostructure of the book, i.e., it concisely summarizes its main idea" (Mills, "The Holy Spirit," 33).

[209]Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 216.

[210]This should be seen in light of the believer's relationship to Jesus who is the "Light of the world" (John 8:12; cf. 1:4–5, 9; 3:19–21; 9:5; 12:35–36, 46). Indeed, those who share in his life are "sons

the Son. Moreover, the righteousness of Jesus the παράκλητος—who is with the Father (πρὸς τὸν πατέρα)—is the continuous means of this cleansing for those who "confess their sins" (1:9; 2:1) and the concrete example of Jesus the Son is the model of those "in Him" (2:5). The hallmark of Jesus's life is that he always does "what is pleasing to the Father" (John 8:29) and so it is for the children (cf. 2 Cor 5:9). Jesus proved his love for the Father by always doing what "the Father commanded Me" (John 14:31; cf. 15:10) and, in the same way, those who have his life in them "walk in the same manner as He walked" (2:6). Indeed, as has already been noted, it is obedience to God's commands, which is itself the mark of "righteousness" and being in the "Light," that identifies one as sharing in the life of the incarnate Son and as a child of God.

John's reference to "his commandments" (τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ) could be understood as either the commandments of God the Father or the commandments of Jesus the Son. In reality, precision on this point is not important to John because of the unity of the Father and Son.[211] In the gospels, John has already established that all the commands and words of the Son were given by the Father (John 8:28; 12:49–50) and delivered in a life engulfed in the Spirit (3:32–34). The words of Christ, then, really had a "triple" authority—which is the single authority of God—as the words of the Son (12:48; 14:10), which are the words of the Father, empowered by the Spirit (6:63).[212] Even after his ascension, the words given by the Spirit to the apostles are the words of Christ from heaven, which he himself has because he shares all things with the Father (16:13–15).

---

of light" (12:36).

[211]Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 216, sees commandments as "to believe in Christ" and to love one another; Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*,167–68, relates them to love for God and others given by both the Father and Jesus.

[212]The flow of thought is this: the words Jesus speaks from the Father as the Son from heaven (v. 62) and in connection with his having the Spirit without measure. This is to say that the "words" (τὰ ῥήματα) find their origin in the spiritual realm (Lindars, *John*, 274; cf. Westcott, *John*, 110, who states that they "belong essentially to the region of eternal being") and, thus, in the broad teaching of John, involve the Father, Son, and Spirit and reveal the Son and the Father's life giving work in him.

Thus, the phrase τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ is probably best understood as the commands of the Father given through the Son as mediated by the Spirit to God's children—with the Son at the center (13:14–15).[213]

However, the heart of John's theology of sonship is not simply external deeds of obedience or conformity but the internal realities out of which those deeds flow. It is this interest of John that immediately leads him to the language of reciprocity that Jesus introduced in the farewell discourse (14:20). Thus, the one who "keeps His commandments" is the one who gives evidence that he "abides in him and he in him" (ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ). The language of abiding is prevalent in John's epistle and has already been associated with "the Light" (2:10), the "Word of God" (2:14), what they "heard from the beginning" (2:24), the "anointing" (2:27), God's love (3:17), and "God" (4:12, 15). Each of these is organically linked to the Person of the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit, although the first and most immediate link for 3:24 is found in John's first use of μένω in 2:6, "The one who says he μένειν in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked." The last phrase makes this a clear reference to the incarnate Son, but the language of 3:24 is not so obvious. However, the earlier—and the most likely antecedent to verse 24—use of αὐτός in verse 23 is necessarily a reference to the Father since the command is to "believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Therefore, this immediate reference is probably to God the Father, but John never separates the presence or work of the Father from Christ. Therefore, the idea of 3:24 is this: the one who keeps the Father's commandments through the Son abides in the Father through the Son in whom believers have their righteousness (2:1–2, 29), their life (4:9b; 5:11), and their example (2:6).[214]

---

[213]Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 169–70. There is an echo here of the inseparable operations of God—Father, Son, and Spirit—that lies behind the "Trinitarian Ambiguity" (Culy, *I, II, III*, xx) of John.

[214]Harris correctly notes, "The intimate and reciprocal relationship that God and Christ enjoy as Father and Son is the pattern for a comparable relationship between Christ and the believer (cf. Jn 17:21:

To abide "in him and he in him" (αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ) is the language of relationship and internality; it is the experience of real and vital spiritual fellowship with the Father and Son[215] and is at the heart of being a child of God, in God's family[216]—as perfectly displayed in Jesus the Son. In fact, John's other uses of the μένω language (2:14, 24, 27; 3:9; 4:4) suggests more than relationship, but some level of participation in those things that are also inherent in the nature of God and were revealed in the Son/ It involves a new nature that is commensurate with Christ's as the eternal Son and, therefore, the Father's. Communion is the reality of life and is manifest in obedience (John 14:31). Indeed, this fellowship is established by John as the goal of his message and the foundation of believers' fellowship with one another (1:3). At the core of a child of God is that he "abides in him and he in him" and this abiding includes "fellowship (κοινωνία) . . . with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1:3).[217] It is this

---

Christian unity mirrors Father-Son unity . . . as the member common to both relationships, Christ acts as the mediatory of the paradigm" (Harris, *Prepositions*, 135). The only deficiency of the statement is that it fails to identify Christ's own sonship as the model for believers. Not only is he the mediator, he is the very archetype of how the believer relates to the Father as a son in the Son.

[215]Culy correctly suggests, "Where the referent is God, the function of the preposition should not be pressed. It is better to take such language of indwelling as an idiomatic means of highlighting the intimate nature of a relationship" (Culy, *Handbook*, 29). Commenting on the "abide in" language, Munzer notes, "The statement that Christ abides in the believer is a statement with an indubitably mystical element; it creates an inner unity, a *unio mystica*" (K. Munzer, "Remain," in *NIDNTTE* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978, 1986], 3:225). While caution is necessary to not go beyond the text, Munzer rightly recognizes that the language of John indicates something more than relationship or nearness. However, "To have God dwell within the believer and the believer within God is not a reference to some mystical experience, but to the fact that the believer partakes of the eternal life that characterizes God" (Jobes, "1, 2 & 3 John," 88). Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 63–64, links the μένω language with the κοινωνία of 1:3, 7.

[216]Burge notes that this language "introduces the entire subject of John's theology of God's immanence" wherein "the mutual indwelling of the Father and Son (14:10-11) . . . becomes the paradigm . . . of the believer's abiding in God . . . in Jesus . . . and even in Jesus' word," which involves "God's communing in the believer through the Spirit (3:24) as well as Jesus' mystical unity with each of his followers (John 15:4ff)" (Burge, *Anointed Community*, 54). Gifford, commenting on John 15:1-11, identifies the same participation and places it in the theological category of perichoresis: "The idea of supplying his own life implies and active participation of Christ in the believer that is so intense it may best [be] described as perichoretic" (Gifford, *Perichoretic Salvation*, 48).

[217]BDAG defines κοινωνία as "close association involving mutual interests and sharing . . . an

fellowship that produces holiness of character and obedience of life (1:7). Indeed, the compulsion to obediently remain in communion is itself a fruit of the communion with the Father and Son by the Spirit.[218] Yet, the means of this fellowship—left undefined in 1:3–7—is explained in the context of abiding at the end of 3:24, "by this we know that we abide in Him, from the Spirit which he has given."

The use of ἐν τούτῳ is best understood as pointing the reader backward rather than forward,[219] but as with διὰ τοῦτο (v. 2), this makes little real difference in understanding the verse. John has already established, implicitly, the work of the Spirit as the reality behind the child's existence and expression of life through such metaphors as anointing, birth, and seed. Here he makes it explicit. The total idea of the verse is this: the obedient child displays a real relationship and fellowship with the Father and Son. This fellowship and spiritual obedience is the fruit, or evidence of the Spirit and consists, essentially in faith in the Son and love for the brethren (3:23).[220]

Thus, the καί is copulative and carries forward the idea that obedience is how the child "knows" (γινώσκω) that they abide in God through Jesus. The use of ἐκ is not partative, but indicates source.[221] While the Spirit is the agent and activator of the

---

attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship" (BDAG, 22). Commenting on 1:3, Plummer is correct to note, "The title of the Son is given with solemn fullness. . . . Perhaps to indicate that the Christian Church is a family in which all in their relation to God share in the Sonship of Christ" (A. Plummer, *The Epistles of S. John*, digital reprint [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 20).

[218]Commenting on 1 John 3:24, Malatesta notes, "Such obedience and devotion are a reply to His own continued presence within us. His remaining within us is not a reward given for our obedience; it is rather a source of this obedience" (Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant*, 274).

[219]Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 216; contra: Brown, *Epistles,* 465.

[220]Akins, *1, 2, 3, John*, 168. In this way, the reference to the Spirit in 3:24 seems to act as a transition, since the Spirit is shown to be the reality behind keeping the commandments, which v. 23 laid out as believing "in the name of His Son Jesus Christ" and to "love one another." Each of these components of obedience is then addressed in order in 4:1–13, which ends with a parallel statement about the Spirit. However, even though 4:13 acts as somewhat of an inclusio with 3:24b, the ideas of both faith and love are continued from 4:14 to the end of the epistle in 5:20.

[221]Bultmann, *Johannine*, 59, as well as NASB and ESV translate as an instrumental, which can

regenerate human spirit, the focus is on the Spirit that Christ gave (ἔδωκεν) from the Father (14:16–17; 15:26).[222] Yarbrough states it well: "Believers know, by the Spirit that God (or Christ) gives them, that they abide in Christ and Christ in them as they keep the commandments to trust and love."[223] This fits with the centrality of obedience in the Sonship of Christ (John 14:31) and supports the idea that an argument of the opponents was that one could have the Spirit without demonstrable righteousness (John 14:16–23).

Here, then, the ὅτι expresses the content of knowing, namely that he abides in the child and the source of the obedient abiding is "from the Spirit which He has given to us." This is the first use of πνεῦμα and it is best understood as the Holy Spirit rather than the human spirit.[224] By this John establishes the Spirit as the enabling power behind the obedience that is itself the testimony of the believers abiding in God (cf. John 15:1–11).[225] The composite picture is of the child receiving from God the birth of the Spirit issuing forth in faith in the Son that brings the believing child into fellowship with the Father and Son, and produces love for the brethren. Moreover, the Spirit that gave life sustains that life through the Son in whom he brings the child into living union. This

---

overlap with the idea of source: "If something is the origin or source of something, it may often be possible to say that it is the instrument, cause or agent by which something comes about" (cf. Porter, *Idioms*, 155).

[222]Cf. Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 170–71. Lieu wrongly detaches any reference to the Holy Spirit, but rightly sees the centrality of Jesus own relationship with the Father as the paradigm of obedience for his children (Lieu, *I, II, & III John*, 160). Since this paper holds to the single authorship of the gospel and epistles, there is no need to separate the pneumatology of John established in the Farewell Discourse from the epistle, though it applies to a new situation.

[223]Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 216.

[224]Brown captures this idea of the verse well: "On our part the abiding is conditioned upon keeping the commandments given by God; but on God's part our abiding stems from His giving the Spirit, which is not conditioned. The same God who *gave* the commandment (3:23c) *gave* the Spirit that enables us to live out the commandment" (Brown, *Epistles*, 482).

[225]On this point, Ferguson rightly explains, "The Spirit works within the broad context of mind, will and emotions. . . . There is an appeal through the word of the gospel to the mind, the senses are affected by Christian testimony and care, so that faith is constrained" (Sinclair Fergusen, *The Holy Spirit*, Contours of Theology [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996], 124).

living union consists of sharing the nature of God in the Son and was manifest during the Son's incarnation. The manifestation of this life is obedience, which flows from fellowship and love that was initiated by God and from faith in God's redeeming work in the Son.[226] It is this latter reality that John confirms in 4:13.

First John 4:13

John uses an almost parallel construction in 3:24b and 4:13.[227] He also links the nature of God to both what was demonstrated in the Son and the child of God who, through the new birth and faith in the Son, manifests that same life in the world.

Table 3. Comparison of 1 John 3:24 and 4:13

3:24	4:13	Difference
ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν	Ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν	No difference
ὅτι μένει ἐν ἡμῖν	ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν,	Same interior reciprocal language. The singulars of 3:24 are changed to plurals in 4:13, but with no change in meaning. The articular participle of 3:24 opens it to all who possess the Spirit and suggests the plurals of 4:13, which addresses the recipients of the letter directly.
ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος οὗ ἡμῖν ἔδωκεν	ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν	The additional ὅτι of 4:13 is stylistic and fits the structure of argument, but does not change the meaning. The change from the aorist in 3:24 to the perfect of δίδωμι adds the grammatical nuance of present reality, but does not change the meaning. The greatest distinction is the addition of αὐτοῦ in reference to the Spirit in 4:13, but this may reflect the relative οὗ of 3:24. Johannine theology makes clear that the Spirit is His Spirit—the Spirit of God (4:2) and the Holy Spirit (John 1:33).

[226]In support of this, Brown notes, "The spirit serves as evidence of one's abiding in God, and God in oneself, because the spirit facilitates the proper confession that is a precondition of that abiding . . . it is only in the pure confession of Jesus that the 'evidence' of God's spirit can be discerned" (Brown, *Spirit*, 246).

[227]There is no need to follow Schanckenburg and see a "stereotyped formula" from which the author borrowed and added his own comments (Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 219).

Love is intrinsic to God's nature—as was demonstrated in sending the Son into the world as a propitiation for sin—and the confirmation of the Spirit of God in the child of God is love: "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (4:13).[228] Schnackenburg feels awkwardness in the inclusion of the last phrase concerning the Spirit and sees in the *possibility* that one who is born of God "can possess his Spirit and experience it internally."[229] However, John shows no uneasiness in equating possession of the Spirit as a *sine qua non* of sonship.[230] Here, the Spirit affirms by bearing in the true child the love that flows out of a reflection on the love of God for believers in Christ (Rom 5:4–10). [231] Vellanickal captures this well:

> Since "God is love" and since it is the participation of this Love (Life) of God (I Jn 3:1) and its perfection in them (I Jn 4:12), that makes men children of God, love is a need of the very nature of those who are born of God (I Jn 4:7–8). So the divine sonship is not only manifested in love, but in a way defined by love. This means that the life of sonship (life of love) leads men more and more to an experiential knowledge of God the Father, who is "Love."[232]

This love, in connection with 3:24, is part of a total life of obedience, which has Christ as both its measure and motive (3:16). [233] Again, the model for the children is the Son and it is through the Son that His life, through the Spirit, flows (4:9; 5:13). In the gospel Jesus received the Spirit οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου "without measure,' (lit. "not from part"), the children receive him in measure, but also in fullness.[234] Moreover, it is a love that flows

---

[228]The change from the aorist in 3:24 to the perfect in 4:13 relates more to style than substance.

[229]Schnackenburg, *Epistles*, 218–19.

[230]He mentions Paul's statement in Rom 8:16ff but does not mention the context, namely that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit in both the internal and external sense; and what he bears witness to is that we "are sons of God."

[231]Brooke, *Johannine*, 121.

[232]Vellanickal, *Divine Sonship of Christians*, 357.

[233]Jobes, *1, 2, & 3*, 196.

[234]Cf. Plummer, *Epistles of S. John*, 104.

out of Spirit-enabled faith that, in reflection, gives the sense and conviction of the truth that translates into loving action.[235]

In these two verses, John links two primary evidences of spiritual life to the presence of the Spirit: righteousness (3:24) and love (4:13). Each is also equated with the nature of God (2:29; 4:8) and each was manifest perfectly in the Son through his humanity and God's in him (2:6, 29; 3:16). It is no surprise that each is a fundamental characteristic of the "children of God." Indeed, it is these that manifest they are "children," have "fellowship with the Father . . . and the Son." They are the marks of family likeness evident most clearly in the Son and all who "abide in Him" and the Father (John 14:20). In summary: the obedience of the "child" of God is the manifestation of the life of the Son in them; and it is the Spirit who gives this life in and through the Son (cf. John 6:57). It is "the fruits of salvation which the Spirit imparts, assuring the believers of their fellowship with God"[236]—even their possession of the Spirit of sonship. It is the life of children in the Son who have tasted of the Father's "great love."

Revelation 21:7

This final reference to sonship in John is striking and comprehensive. The language is strongly relational and consummates every promise of the NC to the elect concerning the end and fullness of salvation in Christ.[237] It is also the only direct link of

---

[235]Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 246.

[236]Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 191.

[237]The matter of the authorship of Revelation has been long debated and largely centering around the third century critique of Dionysius of Alexandria (?–265/6), a pupil of Origen (cf. B. F. Westcott, "Dionysius of Alexandria," in *Dictionary of Early Christian Biography*, ed. Henry Wace and William C. Piercy [repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers], 263–64). Although Revelation received strong second century support (D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], 700–1), Dionysius wrote against Johannine authorship presenting four primary arguments, which still occupy much of the discussion today: (1) "the writer's self-identification; (2) the general construction of the Apocalypse as compared with the authentic writings of John the apostle; (3) the character of these writings; and (4) the nature of the language in these writings" (Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 3–4). Thomas provides a concise answer to each of these claims in support of Johannine

the term υἱός to believers in the Johannine corpus, but incorporates everything established concerning the τέκνα θεοῦ, which is through the eternal and τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ and granted from the Father by the Spirit of God. John's use of the term κληρονομέω also incorporates all of the Pauline concepts of sonship, while maintaining the Johannine characteristic of filial intimacy and interiority.

The immediate context of 21:7 is John's description of the new heaven and new earth following the final judgment of 20:11–15 and the "passing away" (ἀπῆλθαν; 21:1, 4) of the first creation.[238] In the words of the Father, "Behold, I have made all things (πάντα) new" (21:5).[239] Within this newness God gives the astounding statement in verse 7 "He who overcomes shall inherit these things and I will be his God and he will be My son (υἱός)." Within this statement John identifies the one who overcomes (νικάω), inherits (κληρονομέω) the new heavens and earth, and experiences the full dynamics of sonship (μοι υἱός). Interestingly, he does not mention regeneration or faith in Christ, although each is presupposed as is the centrality of Christ the Son, in whom each of these realities of sonship finds its substance.

---

authorship (Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 4–19; Carson and Moo, *Introduction to New Testament*, 701–7). Koester rejects Johannine authorship and suggests the author was a non-apostolic prophet named John (Koester, *Revelation*, 68–69); Beale rejects a both an anonymous or pseudonymous writer and leaves the possibility open for either the apostle or a early prophet named John, but contends "The issue is not important to settle since it does not affect the message of the book" (Beale, *Revelation*, 35). The position of this paper, as on the gospel and epistles, is that John the apostle is the human author.

[238]Dispensational and Covenantal discussion of eschatology are not relevant to the point of this thesis and will not be entered into here. Both theological systems agree that this is the consummation of the ages and the ushering in of God's final redemptive purpose for the elect.

[239]The Father is certainly the subject of the aorist εἶπεν in vv. 5, 6—which continues into v. 7––while the present λέγει (v. 5b) is most likely the speech of the angel speaking to John (Swete, *Apocalypse*, 279; contra: Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Revelation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 540, who sees the speaker as the Father throughout this pericope.

Sonship and ὁ νικῶν

The concept of the "overcomer" (νικάω) is important in the theology of Revelation.[240] It describes the one who has remained faithful to the testimony of Jesus amid the temptations to sin, apostasy, and the persecutions that come under the system of antichrist (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12; 15:2; 1 John 2:13–14; 4:3; 5:4; cf. Rom 8:17). Therefore, as a result of this perseverance, the "overcomer" receives the full blessing of the NC. However, while the victory is a demonstration the faith of the individual and his perseverance through suffering, it is fundamentally a victory bound to their union with Christ (Rev 5:5; 17:14). In other words, they overcome because Jesus overcame (cf. 5:5; 6:2; 11:7; 12:11; 17:14). Therefore, because Jesus is the "firstborn of the dead" (1:5) and the "living One" (1:18), him "who was dead, and has come to life" (2:8), the one who overcomes through faith (cf. 2:3) "will not be hurt by the second death" (2:11) because they were faithful all the way through the first death (2:10).

Moreover, the overcomer will know intimate fellowship with the risen Christ and be marked with the "new name" (2:17) that identifies him as a "genuine" member of the "community of the redeemed" in the Son.[241] The "new name" likely indicates a new level of experiencing the fullness of the name of Christ and the believers relationship to him (3:12).[242] Indeed, this may find some support in 3:5 when the risen Christ will "confess his [the overcomer's] name before My Father and before His angels." The name

---

[240]In fact, the term is a particularly Johannine concept, the verb being found only 3x outside of John's writing in Luke 11:22; Rom 3:4; 12:21.

[241]Beale, *Revelation*, 254–55. In fact, Beale make the strong and correct argument in my estimation, that "the idea of Christians being loyal to 'my [Christ's] name' and not 'denying' . . . him occurs, not by coincidence, only in the letters to Pergamum and Philadelphia (2:13; 3:8), which are both like wise concluded with the promise that overcomers will inherit a 'new name.' This shows that believers already possess Christ's name before death (or the parousia) and that the future promise of the name refers to the time when they will be identified with Christ in a fuller way because of their perseverance" (Beale, *Revelation*, 255).

[242]Koester, *Revelation*, 290; Peter S. Williamson, *Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015], 74.

is likely the name of the individual, but the significance of the confession is that the individual belongs to him who is the divine Son and has received from him right to all that is his (cf. 7:14; 1 John 2:1–2; Matt 10:32; also, John 1:12).[243]

This connection with Christ and his own reward is settled in the message to Laodicea, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (3:21). In this final message to the churches, the risen Christ promises the overcomer that they will share in all that is his by demonstrating the reality of his same obedient life and, therefore, spiritual life. Specifically, the overcomer who through faith in Christ as the Son of God, who is in the most intimate connection with his person and life, also shares in his reward as the Son; in this case, ruling and reigning.[244] This keeps with the pattern already established in the gospel, namely, that Christ's own obedience and relationship with the Father is the pattern of believer's relationship with Him (cf. John 15:9, 10; 17:21, 22; 20:21).[245]

Yet, it is more than a pattern, it is also a sharing in his relationship with the Father, which is seen in the fact that those who belong to Christ share in what the Father gave to him (2:27).[246] The language of sonship is not used, but the idea already established because of Christ's own person and the nature of the overcomers relationship

---

[243]Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 99.

[244]Thomas maintains that the two thrones (θρόνος) represent two aspects of the future kingdom—one that Christ has as David's Son and, thus, the millennial throne; and one that he shares with the Father now and in the eternal state (Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, 325–26). However, believers reigning with Christ carries on into the eternal state (22:5) and there seems to be no immediate reason to make such a strong distinction. The throne Christ uniquely shares with the Father, he does as the Divine Son; the throne he shares with those who are his, he does through his eternal glorified humanity.

[245]Cf. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, 326.

[246]Swete correctly notes that "Μετ' ἐμοῦ might imply association only, but ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ μου implies a share in the same throne, i.e., in the glory and powers of Christ's own triumphant humanity" (Swete, *Apocalypse*, 64).

to him, which models his own to the Father.[247] By placing this promise—with all its implications—at the end of the messages to the churches, John may be giving the climatic and summary statement of the all seven messages to those who overcome among the churches.[248] In this way, it also bears witness to the fullness of the inheritance and blessing of the overcomer in 21:7, who also bears the status directly affirmed by the Father that is here indicated: sonship in the incarnate Son.

The same link is demonstrated in John's first use of the term in the gospel (16:33) in which Jesus' victory over "the world" is the "peace" of the disciples. In other words, their rest is in His victory because His victory over Satan's temptation (cf. 14:30; 16:11), the world's hostility (18:1–19:30; cf. 12:24), and ultimately the destruction that comes upon the world because of sin is their own and on their behalf (cf. 3:36; 12:31).[249] Again, this idea is carried forward in the first epistle where John gives the concept of νικάω its most complete treatment outside of Revelation. The first mention of the term in 2:13–14 is associated with believers identified as "young men" (νεανίσκος)[250] who have "overcome the evil one" (νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν). John's use of the perfect tense is probably intensive and draws attention to the present spiritual victory of those who not fallen prey to the deceit and temptations of the devil (cf. 2:15–17/5:19; 4:1–6). The

---

[247]Koester argues this same point from 2 Sam 7:14, "God said of the heir to David's throne, 'I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me' (2 Sam 7:14), and Revelation assumes that this promise is realized in Jesus, the Son of God (Rev 2:18), yet it is also extended to all the redeemed (21:7)" (Koester, *Revelation*, 341). In other words, this is promise is directly linked to the reality of sonship in the Son.

[248]Thomas and Macchia put it this way, "It appears to be the comprehensive promise to the one who overcomes" (Thomas and Macchia, *Revelation*, 133).

[249]Lenski, *Interpretation*, 1113; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:166; Brown, *Gospel*, 2:737–38.

[250]John uses four terms to identify his recipients: "little children" (τεκνίον [v.12], παιδίον [v. 14]), "young men" (νεανίσκος), and "fathers" (πατήρ). The discussion over whether John is referring to one group, two groups, three groups, or the entire readership is beyond the purpose of this paper (cf. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 112–25). However, what is generally agreed upon is that John—in the term νεανίσκος—is identifying specific age groups that reflect different stages of spiritual maturity (cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978], 134–41).

precise means of this victory is "our faith" (5:4), which is itself a demonstration that one has been "born of God." Moreover, the faith that overcomes is faith in the testimony of the Spirit and the Father that "Jesus is the Son of God" (5:5; cf. vv. 6–12).

This faith in Christ is then the instrument through which the life of God—eternal life—is communicated (5:11, 13, 20) and the individual is affirmed as a "child of God" (3:1–3) and a possessor of the Holy Spirit (3:24; 4:13).[251] The "overcomer," then, is so because of the internal change that has been brought about the Holy Spirit in the new birth (2:29), which brings forth faith in the Son in whom his life (5:11–13. 1:1–2) and through whom is the status of sonship (John 1:12), all of which is by the initiation of the Father (John 3:16; 1 John 4:7–10). The "overcomer" is a son through faith in Christ, by the work of the Spirit, according the plan of the Father.

The theology of overcoming in the gospel and epistle finds its culmination in Revelation. Here, the victory of the saint through faith in Christ and the work of the Spirit who brings the believer to the ultimate end of the NC and sonship and the experience of every spiritual blessing in Christ. The "overcomer" will eat from the "Tree of Life" (2:7; 22:2), will escape the "second death" (2:11; 20:6; 21:7–8), will eat of "hidden manna" and have a new name on a "white stone" (2:17; 19:9; 21:7, 11, 18–21, 23; 22:5), which speaks of close spiritual intimacy (cf. John 6:27, 35; 14:2, 20, 23; 1 John 1:3, 7; 3:24; Rev 3:12, 22), and will share in Christ's authority in the future kingdom, which he has from and uniquely with the Father (2:26–27; 3:21; 4:2–6, 9–10; 5:1, 6–7, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:10–11; *7:10–17; 8:13; 11:16–18; 12:5; 14:3; 19:5; 20:4–5; 22:1, 3, 5). Those who overcome do so because the Son overcame, whose brethren they are (John 20:17).

---

[251]Kruse rightly brings out the ontological nature of union with the Son. Commenting on what it means to "have the Son" (1 John 5:12), he notes, "We may say that 'to have the Son' means to be indwelt by the Son," which he earlier stated, "has ontological significance" (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000], 183). Although he stops at this statement, both the reality of the ascension and the promise of the Spirit (John 7:38–39; 14:16–23) necessitate that indwelling of Jesus by the presence of the Spirit.

Sonship and κληρονομέω

The concept of "inheritance"[252] is explicitly stated only here in John and comprises the end fulfillment for the one who "overcomes." While more typically a Pauline concept,[253] John's usage here forms a bridge between the two authors emphases regarding sonship in Christ.[254] However, in both Paul and John the substance of κληρονομέω is inextricably bound to the person of Christ and the covenantal promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:14.[255] In other words, the son promised to David is Jesus, the eternal and Divine Son in the flesh who becomes the source of sonship for the elect and the Mediator of every promise.[256] The comprehensiveness of the "inheritance" is captured with substantive use of ταῦτα and includes everything related to the new heavens and

---

[252]Or, it could be translated "heritage" as in the ESV (cf. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 313). This "inheritance" is variously linked with righteousness (Heb 11:7), the kingdom (Matt 25:34; Jas 2:5), the earth (Matt 5:5), eternal life (Matt 19:29; Mark10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18; Titus 3:7), a blessing (1 Pet 3:9), a reward (Col 3:24) as well as the Abrahamic promise of blessing and the land (Acts 7:5; Heb 11:8; 12:17), and belongs to the sanctified (Acts 20:32; contrast 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5), throughout the NT.

[253]Cf. Rom 4:13; 8:17; Gal 3:29; 4:1, 7, 30; Eph 1:14; also, Heb 1:2; 6:17; 11:7; Jas 2:5.

[254]On this point, Swete notes, "In the solitary instance where it occurs in the Apoc the word has the same reference is one indication among many of the radical agreement between St John and St Paul" (Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John; the Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices*, 3rd ed. [London: Macmillian and Co., 1917], 281).

[255]Aune, *Revelation*, 1129–130. However, Aune makes no specific mention of Christ and one would almost think the covenantal realities are found in a direct relation between the Father and His people. The ultimate reality is found in Christ as the eternal Son of God and the perfect Son of Man, in whom and through union with whom these covenantal realities are known.

[256]Foerster, commenting on the general usage of the term in the NT and particularly as portrayed in Mark 12:12, aptly comments, "The heir is the Son, and the inheritance is God's kingdom. A firm link is established between sonship and inheritance such as we hardly ever find in the OT and later Judaism, and this runs through the whole of the NT" (Werner Foerster, "κληρονόμος," in *TDNT*, 3:781–82). He also perceptively notes that the lack of John's usage of the "inheritance" language is likely due to his emphasis on Christ as the present Lord of all things and the believers present experience of the NC blessings. Therefore, since the idea of "inheritance" has a future connotation, it is reserved here in the context of the future post-resurrection reality of believers (cf. Swete, *Apocalypse*, 281). James Scott made the compelling argument that linked 2 Sam 7:14 to Paul's concept of υἱοθεσία, but, interestingly, does not make a strong connection with Rev 21:7 (James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background in the Pauline Corpus* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1992]).

earth, which began in 21:1.[257]

Indeed, John has already given a glimpse of the risen Christ as the one who alone has the right to open the seals of judgment (5:7) because he purchased men from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" with his "own blood" and is worthy to receive "power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing . . . and dominion for ever and ever" (5:9–13). He through whom all things (πάντα) were created (John 1:3), to whom all things (πάντα) were given (John 3:35), by whom all things were redeemed (John 3:16; 16:15; 17:10) inherits the world and every kingdom promise. All things that belong to Jesus, the Son incarnate, by nature, belongs to those who are his by grace. His inheritance becomes theirs.

However, here John directly links the inheritance to the Father. The reason for this probably lies in his desire to emphasis the Father as the ultimate source of the inheritance—since all things—even sending the Son for the elect (John 5:30; 8:28, 42; 12:49; 14:10)—find their initiative in the Father (cf. 4:11). Yet, the use of θεός instead of πατήρ is likely John's effort to preserve the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship to the Father as μονογενής, not to minimize the reality that the inheritance of the elect and their status as sons is only through Christ.[258] Indeed, in John's language there is a great emphasis on the intimate relationship with the Father that the elect enter into through the Son (cf. John 14:20; 16:27; 20:17; 1 John 1:1–3). The Father speaks this way and uses this language *because* they are his children (1 John 3:1) through the Son (John 1:12) in whom they abide (14:20; 15:4a) by the Spirit (John 14:16–17; 1 John 3:24; 4:13). Thus, as the Father brought the elect to himself through the Son, so he gives them the

---

[257]Aune, *Revelation*, 1129, understands it as looking back to v. 4.

[258]Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 313–14, "To John the uniqueness of Jesus as Son of the Father is expressed by reserving to Jesus alone the right to regard God as Father. Believers are God's sons, but derivatively through their relation to the Christ, who is the unique Son of the Father" (cf. Robertson, "Revelation," *Word Pictures*, 6:468).

inheritance in the Son, and brings them into the final blessing of sharing in the Son's own relationship with Him, particularly as it is experienced through the sons union with a redeemed humanity.

The Fullness of Sonship

The final statement of verse 7 is a climatic expression of sonship that highlights the full reality of the believers relationship to the Father in Christ.[259] Essentially, it is a restatement of John 20:17 from the perspective of the Father. The parent-child relationship is the most suitable relationship to highlight the love of the Father to the believer because it falls within the confines of God's own Self-revelation as Father, Son, and Spirit in eternal unity and distinction. Even more than the marital relationship (cf. 19:7–9; 21:2, 9b; 22:17), the idea of filial relationship includes the idea of shared nature and participation in God's own life.

Although John uses the term θεὸς instead of πατήρ—a point already noted—to preserve the uniqueness of Jesus relationship as the μονογενής, this should not be understood to minimize the shared experience of sonship of those who abide in Christ. Again, this language picks up on John 20:17 in which the resurrected Jesus referred to the Father as "My God." Even after the ascension in Revelation, God is identified as "His God and Father" (τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ; 1:6; cf. 2:27; 3:2, 12).[260] As in the gospel, this kind of reference—or manner of speaking—lays emphasis on the human nature of Christ as the vehicle through which we share in both his saving work and life, as well as his relationship to the Father as eternal Son.[261] It is this relationship of divine closeness (John

---

[259]Cf. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972), 277.

[260]Osborne suggests the statement in 3:12 simply means that "Christ's judgment is one with the Father's" (Osborne, *Revelation*, 176).

[261]Cf. Osborne, *Revelation*, 66.

1:1, 18) that is reflected in these words. The ontological distinction of divinity for the Son is not lost, nor blurred in any way, but the relational closeness that was extended through the Son's taking on flesh and applied through the Spirit is here given its fullest expression from the perspective of the Father. God the Father of Jesus is Christ, is the God and Father of those who abide in the Son, such that they are, through Christ, μοι υἱός.

The use of the singular υἱός emphasizes the personal and individual nature of this relationship. Although the redeemed are the body of Christ collectively (cf. 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 1:23), God relates to each as a son. By necessary inference, women are included in this sonship (Gal 3:26), but the use of υἱός emphasizes the centrality of Jesus as the mediation of the elect's relationship to God. Moreover, sonship is the singular greatest blessing of the NC because every spiritual blessing that comes to God's children is in the Son. In this way, there is a strong affinity with Paul's language of adoption (υἱοθεσία), although it is unnecessary to impose Paul's metaphor of adoption on John.[262] Rather, it is probably better to see the metaphors of adoption and begetting as coalescing into the greater reality of sonship through the shared ideas and terms present in Rev 21:7. Along these lines, although the Spirit is not mentioned in this context, Paul's references to the "Spirit of sonship" (Rom 8:17) and the "Spirit of His Son" (Gal 4:6), as well as John's references to the παράκλητος (John 14:15–23; 1 John 3:24; 4:13) are applicable to this status. Indeed, the intimate nature of communion and presence in the "new heavens and a new earth" (v. 1) serve as the ultimate end of the spiritual communion in John 14:23, "And we will come to him and make our abode with him"[263] (21:3–4, 6 [cf. John

[262]David E. Aune suggests, "This is probably a metaphor based on ancient adoption law, providing an appropriate basis for the right of inheritance mentioned in v7a" (Aune, *Revelation: 17–22*, 1129). He then suggests—in agreement with Vellanickal—an "adaptation of adoption language in the Davidic Covenant" (Aune, *Revelation,* 1129). Thomas avoids the language of adoption, but cites the same background and text for the covenantal language (e.g., 2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:7; 89:26–27). Aune affirms the practice of adoption in both Israel and ANE literature, as seen in the *"verba solemnia,"* which is a public verbal affirmation of a new relationship of son / father, or servant / master.

[263]Kistemaker calls it "a messianic allusion applied to believers" (Simon J. Kistemaker,

4:14], 22–23; 22:4; cf. 3:12; 7:15).[264]

Thus, the use of υἱός marks the believer's union with Christ and intimate filial relationship they enjoy with the Father.[265] It is the ultimate and final realization of being in the family of God[266] and receiving the "privileges of his sonship."[267] Although, the future tense (ἔσομαι . . . ἔσται) looks forward to the consummation of sonship, it does not anticipate a new relationship, but should be seen as realization of the full experience of that relationship that is already enjoyed in part, or measure in the present state.[268] So, while the use of υἱός for the believer indicates a new fullness of experiencing Christ's own relationship to the Father,[269] believers are, even now, τέκνα θεοῦ through the ἐξουσία of Christ the incarnate Son. It is a fuller experience of the relational unity and mutual sharing of the spiritual life, eternal life that God's children now have through the Spirit of sonship.

Revelation: Exposition of the Book of Revelation [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001], 560). And, it is consistent with the inheritance of the elect as "co-heirs with Christ" (συγκληρονόμος, Rom 8:17; Eph 3:6; cf. Titus 3:7).

[264]John Christopher Thomas and Frank D. Macchia, *Revelation*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 479, move in this direction, "Jesus bears the Spirit in order to impart the same Spirit to others, thus incorporating them into his communion with this heavenly Father."

[265]Thomas identifies this same note of intimacy, noting that the "Messianic overtones . . . [convey] the intimate relationship between the Father and Jesus," thus transferring "the Messianic formula from Christ to Christ's bride" (Thomas, *Revelation 8–22,* 450). Beale also picks upon the emphasis of communion, noting the echo of Isa 55:1, 3 and the combined promises to the overcomers in the churches of Rev 2–3, which "all referred to the salvific blessing of communion with God" (Beale, *Revelation*, 1057).

[266]Cf. Mounce, *Revelation*, 386n27.

[267]Beale, *Revelation*, 1058 (cf. 1056).

[268]So Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, 449–50.

[269]Beale comes close to this language, noting that "people" of v. 3 is changed to "son" in v. 7 on the principle of "representation," in which those "in Christ . . . receive the privileges of his sonship" (Beale, *Revelation*, 1058). Thomas and Macchia get closer and suggests that this "statement may also have implications for the close and intimate relationship between Jesus and the believer . . . the overcomer is even more intimate than anticipated to this point" (Thomas and Macchia, *Revelation,* 370.).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated, through the exegesis of eight Johannine passages related to the Spirit of sonship, that John's high Christology elucidates the extreme privilege of the "children of God" who have been brought to share in the Son's relationship to the Father, by the coming Spirit. John understands the relationship of the Father and Son to be the paradigm for the children's relationship to the Father in the Son as the Spirit unites them to the Son through the work of regeneration and granting faith. Although John is very careful to maintain the uniqueness of Christ's relationship to the Father as the eternal Son who is co-equal in nature, glory, and power, he is also the exemplar of this sonship as it is expressed through humanity, which is created in the image of God. The selected passages have shown that the Spirit is the Divine Person that enabled Jesus to reveal himself as the Son of the Father and who enables believers—as the "children of God"—to participate in the life he eternally shares with the Father.

CHAPTER 4

SYNTHESIS OF KEY JOHANNINE SONSHIP CONCEPTS

Introduction

John, the apostle, has presented a glorious picture of the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son. In this revelation Christ is the eternal λόγος who is equal to God and, yet, distinct (John 1:1). This distinction within God is presented in the most intimate terms of filial love and unity: Father and Son (John 1:14, 18). Indeed, the revelation is even more than this, for at the presentation of Jesus Christ to John the Baptist, God is revealed as three: Father, Son, and Spirit (1:34). Each one bears the full honor of the divine glory of God and each relates to the other with the uniqueness of personhood and the inseparable unity of will, love, and nature (14:10; 16:13–17). Within these relationships the Father sent the Son into the world (3:16) in the flesh of humanity (1:14) to redeem from fallen humanity a people given to him by the Father (17:2), and to whom he would send the Spirit.

Within this paradigm, the Son was empowered in his humanity by the Spirit to reveal the Father and accomplish the work given to him (1:18; 3:34–35; 5:18–30; 12:27–28; 17:4)[1] and, in so doing he also revealed himself and the Spirit to the world. Upon

[1]Contra Thompson, who argues, "The one who was with God, and who was God, does not need the filling of the Spirit to accomplish his mission; rather, part of his mission is to grant the Spirit of life to those who believe" (Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001], 160). However, this seems to run counter to Luke's teaching in his gospel (cf. Luke 4:1, 18). Thompson correctly asserts, "It is because of *who* Jesus is . . . that he has the Spirit and gives it to others" (Thompson, *God*, 160). However, her argument fails to appreciate the relation of the humanity of Jesus to the Spirit in the incarnation and interprets paradigmatic Spirit passages (e.g., 1:34; 3:34) in a way that eliminates the Spirit as the energizing power in Christ's ministry. While a detailed discussion of the precise relationship of the Spirit's role in Jesus is beyond the purview of this paper, see Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Presence and Power:The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Eugene, OR; Wipf & Stock, 2003), and Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on*

completion of this work, the Father and Son sent the same Spirit to apply the work of the Son to the elect and bring them to share in the Son's eternal relationship with the Father (7:38–39; 14:16–23; 1 John 1:3). It is this Spirit of sonship who grants the life and faith through which the Son gives the status of "children of God" to his own (1:12–13; 3:3–8; 20:17). Moreover, it is this same Spirit of sonship that enables the children to live as sons—and daughters—in this world and participate in the full blessings of sonship in the world to come, when they are fully conformed to the image of the Son (1 John 3:1–3, 24; 4:13; Rev 20:17).

The Spirit that was with the disciples during Christ's ministry is now the Spirit of sonship that is in them (14:16–17). Therefore, to have the Spirit is to participate in the life of Jesus's sonship that he manifested while on the earth. As John developed this reality through the gospel, the epistles, and Revelation, there are several themes of sonship that have come to the fore, such as obedience, love, and life.[2] While each of these themes will be considered alone none of them stands alone, but each is inextricably bound to the others as threads woven together in the beautiful tapestry of sonship. They are what the Spirit weaves within every child of God as he molds them into the image of the Son, who is the image of God (John 14:9; Heb 1:3; Col 1:15; 3:10).[3] Thus, to

---

the Humanity of Christ (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013). Although, Cole suggests, "Hawthorne has to make due with theological inferences about the Spirit's role . . . but there is not the textual evidence" (Graham Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, Evangelical Foundations of Theology [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007], 156). The exegesis and argument of this paper affirms the basic tenant of Hawthorne's position, namely that Christ was empowered in his humanity by the Spirit. See chapter one for a list of works that address the relationship of the Spirit to the humanity of Jesus.

[2]There are other important themes in John and the specific passages covered that could be added to this list, such as, abiding, missions, suffering, fellowship, unity, knowledge, and glory. However, instead of treating these separately, they will be briefly incorporated into the brief discussion of the three themes mentioned, which have a greater prominence in the key passages noted in ch. 3.

[3]In this sense, it is not only each regenerate and Spirit-indwelled individual that models sonship, but the church itself is the grand portrait and reflection of the Son: "The renewal of the image of God has an ecclesiastical aspect. It does not concern individuals in isolation; it has to do with believers as members of Christ. . . . This means that the image of God today is seen in its richest form in Christ together with his church, or in the church as the body of Christ" (Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986], 89).

understand sonship is to gaze on Christ both as he is presented in Scripture and longed for in glory (1 John 3:2). The following synthesis will briefly examine the three themes mentioned above through two lenses: first, as it was established in the eight Johannine passages considered in chapter 3; second, as they were modeled in the person of Christ and are reflected in the children of God.[4]

Spirit of Sonship and Obedience

In many ways, this aspect of sonship is the product, or fruit of other themes, such as love and fellowship (John 14:15; 1 John 1:3–7). This fact highlights the difficulty of arranging these characteristics in a specific order. Certainly, arrangements other than the one presented could be rightly devised. However, the reason for placing obedience first rests in its prominence in both the sonship passages covered in chapter 3 and in the life of Jesus, the incarnate Son (John 4:34). In terms of Johannine thought, the concept of obedience to God is tantamount with the identification "children of God" (1 John 3:1, 5–10). The following is a brief overview of the concept from the Johannine passages, followed by a concise review of obedience in the life of Jesus and the children.

Obedience in Selected Johannine Passages

Obedience to Christ—and thus to the Father—is a key theme throughout the Johannine text examined. One of the chief marks of the life of the incarnate Son is his obedience to the Father whom he loves (John 14:31). Therefore, it is a key mark of sonship in the children who share in his nature by the Spirit. The idea of obedience is both explicit and implicit in each passage covered.

---

[4]The following treatment of these characteristics of sonship is not intended to be exhaustive or detailed. Rather, the goal is to broadly present the ways that John sees the Spirit of sonship in the children as a reflection of the life of Jesus.

John 1:12–13. While not explicitly mentioned, the idea of obedience is implicit in John's identification of the "children of God" as those who have "received" and "believe in his name" of the eternal λόγος. Although John will only use the imperatival form of πιστεύω nine times,[5] the idea of believing as an act of obedience is a clear Johannine concept. Schnackenburg captures this idea, commenting on 3:36: "The synoptic summons to 'repent' and to 'believe in the Gospel' (Mark 1:15) is repeated in John, in as much as the Johannine 'faith in the Son' involves obedient submission to the saviour from heaven . . . acceptance of his revelation and commands . . . and the following of Jesus . . . [which] takes place when they unite themselves with the Son."[6] Therefore, to believe in the Son and his testimony of the Father and the Father's witness to his Son is to obey God. Moreover, to be a child of God is to demonstrate a like obedience as the Son.

John 3:3–8. Jesus made this even more explicit in 3:3–8 as he expands on the reality of the new birth introduced in 1:13. As stated in the prologue, the evidence of the new birth is faith in the testimony of Jesus (3:15–18) that is demonstrated in the one "who practices the truth . . . so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (v. 21; cf. vv. 8, 32–33, 36). In other words, the reality of new life—a new nature—in the children is shown by faith in Christ that produces obedience to him. This point is put in typical Johannine form in verse 36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (cf. v. 18)—note again the connection between faith and obedience.[7] In

[5]Three of these are directed toward unbelievers (10:37–38; 12:36), four toward the disciples (14:1, 11; cf. John 3:23), once to the woman at the well (4:21), and once as a prohibition of believing false spirits (1 John 4:1).

[6]Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1, trans. Kevin Smyth (repr., New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1990), 389.

[7]The translation of ἀπειθῶν as "does not obey" (NASB, ESV, ASV) follows its general translation in the rest of the NT (Acts 19:9; Rom 2:8; 10:21; 11:31; 15:31; Heb 3:18; 11:31; 1 Pet 2:8; 3:1;

fact, verse 36 functions "as a summary of what was stated in more detail previously"[8] namely that faith in Christ produces obedience and life, and unbelief produces sin and judgment (3:18; 6:36; 8:24, 43–47; 9:41; 10:25–26; 12:38–41, 48; 15:22–25; 16:2; 17:12). Moreover, in context, each of these is linked to the new birth by the Spirit. In short, true possession of the Spirit of sonship and true spirituality is reflected in obedience.

John 14:16–23. This link between the presence of the Spirit and obedience is most clearly established, however, in Jesus's teaching regarding the coming παράκλητος and John's application of the spiritual life in the epistles. Significantly, this coming of the Spirit (14:26) is attended with the strong exhortations: "If you love Me you will keep My commandments . . . the one who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me . . . if you keep My commandments you will abide in my love" (14:15, 21; 15:10).[9] Jesus marks the inextricable evidence of the internal reality of love for him as

---

4:17), although "rejects" (NET; cf. Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 86) is also possible. The choice of "refuses to believe" (HSCB) or "believeth not" (KJV) would be more appropriate if the term were ἀπιστέω. Bultmann notes the contrast between ἀπειθεῖν and πιστεύω by observing that ἀπειθεῖν is "refusing to believe the Christian *kerygma*: for faith is obedience to the divinely appointed order of salvation. . . . Hence ἀπειθεῖν often stands in antithesis to πιστεύειν" (Rudolf Bultmann, "ἀπειθέω," in *TDNT*, 6:11; cf. BDAG, 99).

[8]Edward W. Klink III, *John*, ZECNT [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016], 222.

[9]The plural of ἐντολή has reference to the general content of Jesus's commands and instructions, which includes the consistent use of the singular associated with the specific command of love and those found in the NC Scriptures (16:13–15) as given by the Spirit from Jesus (cf. Ted Bigelow, "The Sufficiency of the Scripture is the Sufficiency of the Trinity: An Exegetical Examination of John 16:12–15," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence, RI, November 2008). While Carson does not mention the distinct use of the singular in relation to the love command, he captures the plural of 14:15 well: "What the one who loves Jesus will observe is not simply an array of discrete ethical injunctions, but the entire revelation from the Father, revelation holistically conceived. . . . Nevertheless, the plural forms . . . likely focus on the individual components of Jesus' requirements," while the singular "keep My word" (14:23) focuses "on the Christ-revelation as a comprehensive whole" (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991], 498). Lincoln—and others—see a parallel with the Mosaic Law and Deuteronomy, with "Jesus' teaching as the new norm for disciples" (Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 393). For a persuasive argument that places 13–17 within the context of covenant, see Rekah M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 89–139. One notable distinction between John and Deuteronomy is that to love God in Deuteronomy is the commandment *to love* that issues forth in obedience (Deut 11:1; cf. 6:5; 11:13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16),

obedience to his commands, which are also the commands of the Father (John 12:49–50). The love of spiritual life and sonship is never left in the realm of the subjective or abstract, but it is united to concrete expressions of obedience, which authenticate the Spirit of sonship. Indeed, within the context of intimate spiritual relationship, obedience is the necessary and prescribed means of greater fellowship with the Father through the Son (v. 21, 23), experience of the Father's love (15:10; cf. 10:17), and proof of being a disciple (14:24; 15:8), which is tantamount to being a child of God.

John 20:17. The idea of obedience is not explicitly mentioned by either John or Jesus, yet the risen Lord clearly possesses the place of authority while Mary and the disciples are portrayed as gladly yielding in submission. Mary's strong reaction of clinging to the risen Jesus is a display of affection, ignorance, as well as acknowledgement of his lordship. Jesus's command to Mary is given with the expectation of obedience, which is promptly recorded in verse 18. Immediately following this scene the gathered disciples—presumably in obedience to the Lord's command through Mary. These disciples are then given both the responsibility and power—symbolically—for ministry, which is most dramatically displayed—prophetically—in Jesus's interaction with Peter (21:15–19). Indeed, the final scene of John is a conversation that portrays the essential elements of faith, love, and obedience, which are the hallmarks of sonship.

First John 3:1–3, 24; and 4:13. John's strongest and most concentrated statements regarding obedience come in the epistle. In the introduction to sonship in verses 3:1–3, the apostle first establishes the principle of righteousness, which will be developed in verses 4–10 as the outward mark of sonship: "If you know that he is righteous (δίκαιος), you know that everyone also who practices righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) is born

---

whereas in John it is the *reality of love* to Jesus that will produce obedience. The implicit affirmation of Jesus' deity should not be missed.

(γεννάω) of Him" (2:29). The correlation between righteousness and the new birth (1:13; 3:3–8; 1 John 3:1–3) is essential to identifying a child of God from a child of the devil (cf. v. 10).[10] To share in the nature of the Son—and of God (1:5)—requires evidence in life.[11] John then explicitly attaches the obedience of sonship to abiding in God as the proof of possessing the Spirit: "The one who keeps His commandments. . . . We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given" (3:24). In verse 23 the commandment (singular) from the Father is to have faith in the Son and demonstrate love to one another. John picks up on these moral requirements, again, in 4:7–21. There John highlights God's love in providing "propitiation" in the Son as the model behind the command for the children to love (2:7–10; 3:11–18; 4:7–11; 5:1–3) in a way that reflects the atoning love of God in the Son, as an affirmation of the Spirit in 4:13.[12] John's epistle stresses the indivisible link between new birth, sonship, the Spirit, faith, and love as a display of the obedience of sonship.

Revelation 21:7. The centrality of obedience in the child culminates in Revelation, as inherent to the identity of the one who "overcomes." John already established the theology of the overcomer in his epistle (1 John 2:13–14; 4:4; 5:4–5), holds it as necessary to receive the promise to the churches (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), and links it to keeping the commandments of God. Thus, in 12:17 the rage of the devil at the end of the age is against "those who keep the commandments of God and

---

[10]Wahlde suggests that "the theme of commandment becomes a major element in the shaping of the theology and the literary structure of the document" (Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Johannine Commandments: 1 John and the Struggle for the Johannine Tradition* [New York: Paulist Press, 1990], 49).

[11]Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 50.

[12]In fact, Wahlde concludes a survey of the commands in 1 John by noting, "We have come to see a commandment tradition within the Johannine community which focuses on only two requirements: that the members of the community 'keep the word of Jesus' and that they 'love one another'" (Wahlde, *Commandments*, 69). This includes the act of faith in Jesus (3:23): "To 'believe in the name of Jesus' and to 'keep the word of God' . . . [are] functionally synonymous," and he later adds, "love is then shown to involve correct faith" (Wahlde, *Commandments*, 54, 215).

hold to the testimony of Jesus," and those who persevere are the "saints (τῶν ἁγίων) who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." In other words, it is those who overcome by persevering in faith in Christ and obedience to him, who are affirmed as sons of God (21:7). Indeed, the obedience that overcomes is an outflow of the life of Jesus who also overcame for his own (Rev 5:5; cf. John 16:33).

Obedience of Sonship in Christ and the Children

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is the perfect model of the obedience of sonship.[13] This is to say, in his humanity, he demonstrated the fullest possible expression of sonship as one who also had the "Spirit without measure" (3:34; cf. 1:34).[14] Although the obedience of Christ is related to his sonship, his life was lived in perfect fullness and in union with the Spirit. Thus, it can be fairly concluded that Jesus is the perfect model of the obedience of sonship as one in full possession of the Spirit. This is to say, his life displayed the fullest expression of sonship through humanity as one energized and enabled by the Holy Spirit.[15] Indeed, the very end of sonship in the children is "to be like

---

[13]Van der Watt captures this well when he says, "Socially speaking the Father, Son, and believers form a patriarchal family. The active love of the Father applies to the whole family. The child cannot prescribe to his Father, but shows his love by obeying the Father. As this was the paradigm for Jesus so it also for believers" (Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics and Ethos in the Gospel According to John," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 97, no. 2 [2006]: 163).

[14]Thompson isolates the Spirit's ministry at the baptism solely to his witness to Christ: "The result of the Spirit's 'descending' ought not to be classified under the rubric of inward illumination, filling, endowment, equipping, or any of a number of other terms redolent of Pauline or Synoptic descriptions of the Spirit's work" (Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 164). However, her treatment of the Spirit and Jesus places an overly narrow view of the Spirit that rightly recognizes the significance of Jesus as the one who would "baptize in the Spirit," but not of the OT anticipation of the Spirit-anointed Messiah whose life was a demonstration of the Spirit's power (Isa 11:2; 42:1; cf. Matt 12:22–32).

[15]Jesus, of course, lived perfectly as a son *before* his baptism and had full possession of the Spirit from birth. At least two observations support this. First, the Spirit is directly responsible for the seed from which his union with humanity was formed in Mary's womb (Luke1:35). Second, even John the Baptist experienced the Spirit in womb and it is not reasonable to think of the sinless Son of God with a lesser experience from birth to the baptism (cf. Hawthorne, *Presence and Power*, 53–111).

him" (1 John 3:2) in moral purity and love, which is to have the Spirit (3:24; 4:13). John, in this light, clearly established Christ's obedience as the Son of the Father in the gospel:

Table 4. Jesus as obedient model of sonship

Verse(s)	Text
4:34	"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work"
5:30	"I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me"
6:38	"I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me"
7:28	"I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true"
8:29	"He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him"
8:55	"I do know Him and keep His word"
10:18	"No one has taken [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father"
12:49–50	"I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me"
14:31	"So that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me"
15:10	"I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love"
17:4	"I have glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do"

Thus, the sonship of Jesus is expressed in a life of perfect loving obedience to the Father, and the children share in this same life through the same Spirit that indwelled the person of Jesus Christ.[16] Therefore, there is a correlation between his sonship and union with the Spirit and that of the children in union with Christ by the Spirit. Albeit with this

[16]Jesus's uniqueness as the eternal Son of God, however, cannot be duplicated in terms of his divine nature. For example, only the obedience of Jesus can atone for the sins of his people (1:29) and only he could say, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (5:17). Nonetheless, the children can and must emulate the attitude and posture of obedience and submission to his will as he did to the will of the Father.

distinction: while he demonstrated perfect Spirit-empowered obedience through his humanity, he did so as the incarnate Son of God. In other words, there is an ontological similarity and distinction. A similarity in that there is a shared humanity, but not the essential divine nature (John 1:1).[17]

This distinction is most noted by the fact that Jesus offered obedience to the Father as the Son who shares in his divine glory (John 5:23a), receives personal glory for that obedience (12:28–29; 17:4–5), and in whom the glory and privileges of the children are found (17:24, 26). Moreover, the children offer obedience *to Christ*—which is obedience to the Father—through whom they have access to the Father and in whom their sonship is established (1:12). In this way, the obedience of Christ was of a similar and yet distinct nature. It is distinct because, his obedience flowed from an inherent equality of being with the Father in which he eternally exists as God with the Father and Spirit (John 1:1), but reflective of his personhood as the Son. [18] The obedience of the children is both

[17]Regarding the reality of the humanity of Christ, Thompson wisely notes, "Although Jesus shares his humanity in common with all other human beings, that humanity does not finally limit or define him; nevertheless, his uniqueness or *un*likeness does not efface his humanity" (Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988], 128). In other words, Jesus' humanity is real and fully so, but he is more: he is the God-Man, the Word made flesh.

[18]The question of whether the obedience of the Son in the Person of Jesus Christ is reflective of his eternal personal relationship with the Father within the divine economy or whether it is a temporary condition of his role as mediator within the framework of redemption is beyond the purview of this chapter. Orthodox proponents on both sides affirm that the testimony of Jesus in the NT is to the obedience of the Son of God to the Father within the composition of ontological equality. It is the position of this paper that the submission of the Son is grounded in sonship and not only his redemptive mission. Michael Ovey, summarizing a discussion regarding the charge of Arianism and within the historical Trinitarian debate, states, "The difference between an Arian account of the Son's submission and a non-Arian, orthodox account . . . lies in the rationale on which that submission is asserted. In the Arian account, the Son submits because he is a creature . . . in the orthodox account, the Son submits because he is truly a son" (Michael J. Ovey, "True Sonship—Where Dignity and Submission Meet," in *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life*, ed. Bruce A Ware and John Starke [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015], 150). He goes on to ground the Son's submission in the "father-son relationship" and not the "Creator-created relationship" (Ovey, "True Sonship," 151; cf. John Starke, "Augustine and His Interpreters," in Ware and Starke, *One God in Three Persons*, 166–67). See also the excellent article by Swain and Allen that builds on the "more general Trinitarian rule: mode of acting follows mode of being (*modus agenda sequitur modus essendi*)" and asserts that "the obedience of the Son is the economic extension of his eternal generation to a Spirit-enabled, creaturely life of obedience unto death" (Scott Swain and Michael Allen, "The Obedience of the Eternal Son," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 2 [April 2013]: 117). Swain and Allen, in agreement with this paper, rightly apply this to sonship: "The

through and to the Son not as equals, but as those who participate in his life and sonship by grace. Thus, it is similar in that it shares in the communicable attribute of sonship in love and righteousness as expressed through and in humanity.

It is because the believer's sonship is sharing in the sonship of Christ and the Spirit of sonship in Christ that John unambiguously establishes the conduct of sons in the conduct of Christ. In other words, Jesus offered to the Father a life of perfect submission and obedience to His will as an expression of His love for the Father and those the Father had given him to love. This submission to the Father has the affect of providing an acceptable sacrifice for sin and as a template for the filial obedience of the children.

Table 5. The reflected spirituality of sons

Verse(s)	Text
13:34	"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another"
15:10	"If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love, even as I kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love"
15:12	"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have love you"
1 J 1:5–7	"God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all . . . if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin"
1 J 2:6	"The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked"
1 J 2:29	"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him"
1 J 3:3	"Everyone who has this hope on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"
1 J 3:7	"The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous"
1 J 3:16	"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"
1 J 4:11	If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"

final cause of the Son's economic mission . . . is to communicate to creatures a distinctly creaturely fellowship in the Son's eternal relation to Father through union with him . . . the Son's economic obedience is the means whereby other sons and daughters come to share as creatures in his filial relationship to the Father" and so model that same obedience as reflected in the Son (Swain and Allen, "Obedience," 132–133; see also, Michael Allen, "From the Time He Took on the Form of Servant': The Christ's Pilgrimage of Faith," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 1 [January 2014]: 1–24).

For John, there is an inextricable link between the obedience of Christ to the Father and the obedience of the children of God to the Son.[19] However, in 1 John 1:5–7 the apostle highlights a striking feature mostly implied by the Gospel of John: Obedience is the manifestation of those who share, reflectively, in the same nature of God through Christ (5:11–12). This is to say that the child born of the Spirit (1 John 2:29–3:1) shares in the life of the Son who eternally possesses life with the Father (John 1:4; 1 John 1:1–2). Possession of this life produces in the child a deep inner love for righteousness (1 John 3:9), a taste for things divine (John 6:68; 1 John 2:15–17) and a will that desires to conform to truth and all that comports with the pleasures and glory of God as revealed in Christ (John 14:31; 1 John 3:22).

It is this inner reality of the Spirit of sonship that comprises the essence of obedience. John has already anchored the idea of "Light" to the person and ministry of Jesus in the gospel (John 1:4-5, 7-9; 3:19-21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36, 46) and here gives specific application to the Son in 1 John 2:6 as the model of the instruction in 1:7. To "walk in the light" is to walk consistent with God's nature, ultimately, as it is revealed in Christ and is more than mere obedience.[20] Rather, "it depicts the environment around Him that His nature creates; light is, as it were, His home."[21] It is to manifest the

---

[19]Thus, Wahlde comments, "What Jesus does in fulfillment of the commandment given him by the Father becomes the model for the disciples' own obedience both in their faithfulness to his word and in their living out the command of community love" (Wahlde, *Commandments*, 31).

[20]Scripture makes clear that God "dwells in unapproachable light" (1 Tim 6:16), but the transcendent holiness of God is mediated through Christ's humanity. Thus, Jesus is the "Light of the world" (John 8:12) and the children are "sons of light" (12:36) who can have fellowship with God together through Christ and reflect his moral purity, glory, and love to the world. This very fellowship is indicative of having received the benefits of Christ's atonement (1:7) and share in the moral nature of God (cf. Christopher D. Bass, *That You May Know: Assurance of Salvation in 1 John* [Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008], 66).

[21]D. Edmond Heibert, *The Epistles of John: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press,1991), 62. Plummer, reflecting the later exhortation in v. 7a notes, "Of the many beautiful and true ideas which the utterance 'God is light' suggests to us, three are prominent in this Epistle; *intelligence, holiness, and communicativeness*. The Christian, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and in communion with God in Christ, possesses (1) knowledge, (2) righteousness, and (3) necessarily

beauty of holiness. Therefore, to possess the Spirit of sonship is not simply obedience to a standard, but conformity of the will to the deepest realities of the soul that has been recreated to behold the glory of God, to love him, to love the things he loves, and to have fellowship with the Father through the Son by the Spirit (1:3; 3:24).[22]

In summary, the life of Jesus, the perfect Son, was a life of perfect submission to the will and commandments of the Father, perfect love to neighbor and especially for his own given to him by the Father (John 13:1). He lived as the eternal Son in union with humanity and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God as the Son equal to God (John 1:1) and in intimate fellowship with the Father (14:10; 16:32).[23] The children—though ontologically distinct—are made to share in the life of the Son by that same Spirit and, in union with the Son and fellowship with the Father, are marked by the same character of obedience of faith and love.[24] In John, then, obedience is an essential mark of the Spirit

---

communicates to others the truth which he knows and the righteousness which he practices" (Alfred Plummer, *The Epistles of St. John* [1886; repr., Cambridge: University Press, 2010], 24).

[22]In an excellent treatment of this love and obedience, Dodd, in response to the potential legalism of Bauer, on the one hand, and the pure mystical notions of love and union with God, on the other, notes: "It is his special characteristic that he combines these two aspects of the religious life in so remarkable a way. The idea is which they meet is that of the divine ἀγάπη" (C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: University Press, 1953], 199). The love of God is supernatural "yet plants its feet firmly in this world . . . the crucial act of ἀγάπη was actually performed in history, on an April day about A.D. 30, at a supper-table in Jerusalem, in a garden across the Kidron valley, in the headquarters of Pontius Pilate, and on a Roman cross at Golgotha" (C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: University Press, 1953], 200). Thus, the love of the children is firmly planted in alike obedience manifested in this world (1 John 2:15–17).

[23]Paul Meyer notes, "Behind Jesus' life and activity lie the Father's will (6:40), the Father's life (6:57), the Father's acting (14:10), the Father's word (14:24), and the Father's love (15:10). . . . Throughout his life on earth, Jesus was the Son portrayed as remaining in uninterrupted and direct association with the Father (8:16, 29; 16:32b)" (Paul W. Meyer, "The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996], 260).

[24]In fact, John is careful to keep a distinction between God and the child that is grounded in the atonement of Christ, adding that "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Schnackenburg states, "He insists that fellowship with God means walking in the light . . . [yet] no Christian can claim to be without sin. The solution to the dilemma lies . . . in the fact that the Christian is not immune from sin, but that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin" (Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary*, trans. Reginald and Ilse Fuller [New York: Crossroad,1992], 79). It is significant that John refers to Jesus as the Son, as it highlights the centrality of Jesus in both his person and his

of sonship and takes on the form of believing in Jesus and the totality of his revelation (1 John 3:23; 4:6; 5:0–11)—which is to believe the Father and includes Scripture (16:13–15)—to love, especially the brethren, by gladly obeying God's commandments (1 John 5:1–3), and to manifest a corollary love for truth and righteousness as they were in Christ.

Obedience of Sonship and Missions

Although it will not explored here in any detail, the theme of missions is also a crucial aspect of obedience (John 20:21–22; cf. 17:18).[25] Indeed, as Köstenberger has well argued, a significant consequence of participation in the "unity of the Father-Son relationship"[26] and to have the Spirit of sonship, is to be enabled to continue Jesus's ministry in the world: "Doubtless the sending of the Spirit is presented by the fourth evangelist as the key element in the disciples' mission."[27] The promise of the

---

atonement/righteousness (cf. 2:1–2, 29) as the sole mediator of the believer's sonship and fellowship with God. Bauckham connects this reality in a discussion regarding John 10:10, 38 and the consecration of Jesus through the language of purification and the imagery of Hanukah, in which he gives the following summary: "All of this Gospel's holiness language coalesces around the consecration of Jesus and himself so that the disciples also may be consecrated, participating in the holiness of Jesus and the Father through the Holy Spirit" (Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 269). In other words, through his sacrifice, Jesus becomes "the new 'place' of God's dwelling with his people" (Bauckham, *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 264).

[25]Although Ridderbos asserts, "All the stress here falls on the idea of authorization, not on their being sent into the world" (Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend [repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997], 643). He is right to stress authority, but carries it too far in letting authority almost completely eclipse the idea of commission.

[26]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 189. Klink argues along similar lines and sees Christ's command as a reflection of the immanent Trinity. He notes three specific characteristics of this reflection: "First, the apostolic mission given to the church is in direct relation to the eternal life of God. . . . Second, the church does not merely imitate the sending of the Son but participates directly in the very same mission of God. . . . Third, the logical conclusion is that he church's participation in the mission of God is a response to the nature of God . . . the church participates in the missionary life of God by *remaining* in Christ (15:4) and *receiving* the Spirit (v. 22)" (Klink, *John*, 861, italics in original). In other words, the church's mission is an extension of God's own nature to reach out to the world in love as he did in the Son. What the Son accomplished, the church proclaims in the power of the Spirit.

[27]Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 192.

παράκλητος, in addition to communion, is to empower the disciples to follow Christ as his witnesses to the world and through that witness the Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8–10).

As Jesus was "sent" into the world to reveal the Father (3:34; 4:34; 5:23–24, 30, 36–38; 6:29, 38–39, 44, 57; 7:16, 18, 28–29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44–45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 1 John 4:9–10, 14), so the children are "sent" to proclaim the Son with the enabling provision of the Holy Spirit (4:38; 15:8; 20:21–22).[28] Indeed, even "the need for believers to love one another and to be unified . . . [are] prerequisites for the church's mission in and to the world."[29] Thus, the obedience of the Spirit of sonship is the witness to the reality of the Son of God through faith, love, and proclamation.

Obedience of Sonship and Suffering

Yet, in spite of the testimony of the Father's love, "grace and truth" in the Son, and the love of the church for one another, the obedience and mission of sonship will incite the world's hostility. Suffering is part of the Spirit of sonship. The fundamental reality of this opposition from the world was established in the Prologue with the introduction of "light" (φῶς) and "darkness" (σκοτία) in verse 5 and the failure of both Jew and Gentile to receive the revelation of the Son (vv. 6–11). Opposition to the revelation of the Son is a central theme of John that finally ends with the Son being crucified by Jew and Gentile (John 18–19). Moreover, this opposition for the children is marked in the epistles (1 John 3:10–13) and ultimately in the suffering that comes from

[28]Rainbow captures this well: "The church is the human organ of the Spirit's mission. The witness of the Spirit to the Son fuses with the witness of Jesus' disciples (15:26–27). Jesus has sent his disciples endowed with the Spirit (20:22). It is the Spirit and the bride who invite anyone and everyone to come to the water of life (Apoc 22:27)" (Paul A. Rainbow, *Johannine Theology: The Gospel, The Epistles, and the Apocalypse* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014], 409).

[29]Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 188.

the "beast" and "false prophet" in Revelation (Rev 6:9; 11:7; 13:1–18; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 20:4).[30]

Jesus's revelation of the Father and of truth brought him into conflict with a world in darkness and under the influence of the devil (1 John 5:19). It is as Jesus told his brothers: "The world (κόσμος) cannot hate (μισέω) you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil" (John 7:7; cf. 3:19–20).[31] Indeed, by the witness of the Spirit of Christ through the disciples (John 16:7–11), the world will hate them even as it did Christ (John 15:18–25; 1 John 3:13). Yet through that same obedient witness God will draw all the children to the Son (6:37; 12:32; cf. 10:16; 11:52). The obedience of the Spirit of sonship brings opposition from the world and suffering that reflects fallen man's rejection of the Son of God.[32]

The Spirit of Sonship and Love

The importance of love to sonship is closely related to obedience, since obedience is the necessary fruit of love. In fact, the first condition of the soul toward God is the disposition of faith and love for God in Christ and for his people that issues forth in

---

[30]John's main teaching about the "antichrist" (ἀντίχριστος) is found in his first epistle. For John the antichrist is one who is coming and yet who is already at work in the world (2:18) through false prophets (2:22; 4:1–5; cf. 5:19). The central characteristic of this spirit is to "deny (ὁ ἀρνούμενος) that Jesus is the Christ" (2:22) and so equally deny the Father since they are one God (2:22). This denial and false teaching brings a distortion of the gospel that is a kind of suffering in itself through blinding men to truth, leading to schism, weakening the faith of some, and taxing the resources of the teachers of truth. However, as noted in ch. 3, ignorance of God also breeds hostility from both false religion (cf. John 16:2; Rev 13:4, 12, 15) and the world in general. For an argument that understands ἀντίχριστος as a reference to apostates, see Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 122–24; that they are those who rejected the content of the liturgical rite of *chrism*, see Martin R. Connell, "On 'Chrism' and 'Anti-Christs' in 1 John 2:18–27: A Hypothesis," *Worship* 83, no. 3 (May 2009): 212–34.

[31]Within John's gospel this exposure of sin and error is dramatically displayed in Jesus's confrontation with hypocrisy in the temple (2:13–16), the true spiritual nature of the leaders (8:37–59), and his testimony to his own divine relationship with the Father and authority (5:1–18).

[32]It is this link between the worlds hatred of the children as hatred of Christ that explains Paul's statement, for example, to the Colossians that he is "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Col 1:24).

a transformed life that emulates the Son's self-sacrifice in redemption. Indeed, the very concept of love, within Johannine thought, is contained in the sacrifice of the Son for the sin of his people. In fact, the context of the Son's appearing was, from the lips of God's messenger (1:6–8), to be the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29).[33] And Jesus declares the purpose, namely, because "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (3:16).[34] Finally, the essential demonstration of this love is this: that as "He laid down His life for us . . . we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 3:16; 4:11). God's love is shown in the Father giving the Son as the atonement for the sin of his people and the Son's love in being the atonement is the measure of the love of the Spirit of sonship. The love of the Spirit of sonship, then, is Christo-centric and self-sacrificing.

Love in Selected Johannine Passages

John 1:12–13. Although no term for love is mentioned in the Prologue, the idea is implicit in the incarnation of the eternal λόγος who came as both the final manifestation of "grace and truth" (v. 14) and the revealer of the Father (v. 18). Moreover, the concept of love is inherent in the Father's divine act of begetting (1:13) and work of the λόγος—the μονογενής—in granting those who believe in "His name" to become "children of God" (1:12). In fact, acknowledging the identification of the λόγος as the "Son of God" (v. 34), the opening 18 verses of John are permeated with familial terms for both God and the children that evoke an atmosphere of familial and filial love

[33]See D. A. Carson, "Adumbrations of Atonement Theology in the Fourth Gospel," *JETS* 57, no. 3 (September 2014): 513–22, in which he argues against the influential work of Forestell who essentially sought to eliminate the idea of substitutionary atonement from John's gospel, including the present verse (Carson, "Adumbrations," 518–20).

[34]Contra Klink who takes the γάρ at the beginning of v. 16 to be "an explanatory conjunction, serving to introduce the narrator's comments" (Klink, *John*, 205), rather than Jesus's own words.

with the appearing of Jesus.[35]

John 3:3–8. John's first use of the term ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη[36] comes in 3:16 in the context of Jesus's discussion of the new birth (3:3–8). Although John does not linguistically link ἀγαπάω (3:16) and γεννάω (3:3), he does establish a contextual attachment that advances the connection of love to the Spirit of sonship. For example, the new birth by the Spirit (3:5–6) is required for entrance into the kingdom of God and is inextricably attached to faith in Christ (1:12–13; 3:15–18, 36), who is the "only-begotten Son" given by the Father to the unbelieving world in love so that men would "not perish, but have eternal life" (3:16; cf. 1:14–18; 3:15).[37] Thus, the Spirit gives spiritual life that leads to faith that spiritual perceives the Son who is the expression of the Father's

---

[35]Brendan Byrne captures this emphasis on familial love in the Prologue: "What is being suggested here is in fact the central notion of the gospel. The entire human life of Jesus Christ will be a playing out—literally, an 'exegesis' (*exēgēsato*)—in the field of time of the divine communion of love that exists between the Father and the Son. Played out in the human sphere it will be accessible to human beings, so that they, as 'children of God' (1:12; 20:17), may be drawn into Jesus' filial communion of love with the Father and so come to share the divine eternal life" (Brendan Byrne, *Life Abounding: A Reading of John's Gospel* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014], 35).

[36]The significance of this term to Christian theology and its relationship to φιλέω has been a matter of much discussion among theologians and exegetes. John's use of ἀγαπάω in 3:10 and 12:43 precludes an absolute meaning that gives the exclusive sense of a higher divine love. Also, the use of φιλέω in 5:20 and 16:27 demonstrates that this term can describe both divine affections among the Godhead and divine love toward his children. However, the fact that ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη is the overwhelming choice of John––and the rest of the NT writers—to describe the love of God for the world and the love that is to be manifest among Christians for God and one another, does seem to give it a distinctive nuance as an expression of Divine love. This uniquely religious sense for ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη is generally recognized and consistent in the NT (cf. Ethelbert Stauffer, "ἀγαπάω," in *TDNT*, 1:27–35). Although there is some overlap, "It appears that ἀγάπην relates rather to the judgment or the will; φιλειν rather to the emotional or sensuous nature. In general these distinctions seem applicable in John" (George B. Stevens, *Johannine Theology: A Study of the Doctrinal Contents of the Gospel and Epistles of the Apostle John* [1895; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005], 268). Regarding the NT use of ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη it may be wisest to say that "witnesses to the significance of the theological *concept*, not to any positive qualities inherent in the *word* itself" (*NIDNTTE*, 1:107). Many contemporary commentators understand the uses of ἀγάπη and φιλέω in John 21:15–17 as synonymous and argue that the interplay is representative of stylistic decisions. Others argue that the original conversation took place in Aramaic; therefore, the terms would not have produced such fine distinctions. However, this paper holds that the Spirit inspired the Greek text and, thus, such a striking change in terms indicates an intentional nuanced meaning (cf Klink, *John*, 913–15).

[37]Although Jesus uses θεός rather than πατήρ, the sense of πατήρ is evident in the use of υἱός in vv. 16–18 and the relationship is made explicit in v. 35.

redeeming love and in whom is eternal life.[38]

Thus, John advances idea of love in sonship from the Prologue by explicitly connecting the mission of the Son to the Father's love for the world by bringing redemption to men. He also notes—significantly—the Father's antecedent love to the Son, to whom he has "given all things" (πάντα; 3:35; cf. 1:1–3, 18). Thus, the Son given to the world is the Son the Father has eternally loved (17:2).[39] This point will be addressed later in this chapter. The issue to note here is that in 3:3–8 the Spirit gives life and faith in the Son, producing the ability to perceive this love of the Father (3:16) and to embrace the Son in his person and work. Thus, through faith, the child participates in the spiritual life and benefits of the Father's divine love in the Son. In this way, John expands the Spirit's role in the ministry of Christ, since he is the person of the Godhead given to the Son to baptize his people (1:33), to regenerate the children (3:3–6; cf. 1:13; 6:63), to produce faith in the Son (3:12–18) through whom they have their status as "children of God" (1:12), and to work in them the fruits of spiritual life (3:21). Thus, John sets the familial and filial terms of the Prologue in the context of redemption (3:16–18), eternal life (3:15, 36), and the inseparable work of the Father, Son, and Spirit, motivated by divine love.

John 14:16–23. John moves the idea of love in sonship forward most intensely in the revelation of the παράκλητος whom the Father will send at the Son's request upon his ascension (14:16–17; cf. 7:38–39). The apostle has just established Jesus's love for "his own" (τοὺς ἰδίους) in 13:1–12, as well the command for the disciples to show an emulating reciprocal love for one another (13:13–17, 34–35). However, in 14:15–23

[38]Cf. Christopher W. Morgan, "How Does the Trinity's Love Shape Our Love for One Another?" in *The Love of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 131–38.

[39]Köstenberger is correct to say, "It is possible to understand how great God's love is for people only when a person understands the greatness of the Father's love for the Son" (Andreas J. Köstenberger, "What Does Jesus Teach about the Love of God," in Morgan, *The Love of God*, 65).

Jesus specifically addresses the relationship of obedience and the experience of sonship within the context of authenticating and increasing in the experience of the fullness of his and the Father's love (14:21, 23; 15:9–10). In other words, Jesus places love within the dynamic of both obedience and intimate fellowship with the Son and Father (vv. 21, 23) that is attendant with the presence of the Holy Spirit (14:16–17, 26).

By making these connections, John advances the love of sonship in at least three ways. First, Jesus explicitly correlates love for and obedience to Christ in a manner that evokes OC language (Deut 6:5; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16) and is an implicit affirmation of his deity (cf. 5:23; 8:42; 14:6; 17:24).[40] Second, he draws attention to the specific love of the Father for those who love the Son, which highlights the more fundamental truth that the love the children share in is the Father's own love for the Son (v. 20, 23). In other words, the Father's love for the children is because of his love for the Son and contingent on their love and obedience to Jesus. Moreover, obedient love for the Son produces in the child a progressing experience of the filial love the Father and Son have for them.

Thus, obedience is emphasized not only as proof of love, but the means to greater inner experience of the love of the Father and Son. In fact, this dynamic love relationship parallels Jesus's own relationship to the Father that he demonstrated in the incarnation (15:10). Third, this particular experience of the love of sonship is characteristic of the children *after* the ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit (14:16–18; cf. 7:38–39). In summary, the love of sonship is to be engrafted into the intimate love of the Father and Son commensurate with the ascension of Christ and coming of the Spirit and through obedience to reflect and experience this love to ever increasing measures.

---

[40]This point was already noted within the discussion of obedience, but is repeated here because it applies equally to the concept of love here presented, as well as to the obedience that it produces.

John 20:17. The conclusion of the gospel provides Jesus's most conclusive statement regarding the love of sonship by an explicit incorporation of the disciples into his own relationship with the Father: "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (20:17). Although the use of personal pronouns (ἐγώ . . . σύ) maintains a distinction between the unique (μονογενής) sonship of Jesus and that of the disciples, it is a clear affirmation of full relational participation. Again, none of the terms for love are mentioned, but the inclusion of the children into this relationship includes every affirmation of the filial love between the Father and Son and all its implications to the children that have already been established (14:21, 23; cf. 1:18; Rev 21:7).

First John 3:1–3, 24; and 4:13. These dimensions of love in the Spirit of sonship are brought into their greatest focus in John's first epistle—where the verb ἀγαπάω (28) and the noun ἀγάπη (18) are used 46 times in 105 verses. In this context, John gives the climatic statement of the Father's love for the children in 3:1: "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God." In this remarkable declaration John establishes—in the clearest terms—the particular love of the Father for the "children of God." What was general in John 3:16 is now made specific. This is also John's second use of the precise phrase τέκνα θεοῦ[41]—the first being in the Prologue (1:12) in reference to Christ granting the status. When placed together (1:12; 3:16, 35; 1 John 3:1) this love of the Father is founded in his love for the Son whom he sent to grant the children their status and conform them to the likeness of the Son.[42] In this latter statement, John advances the love of sonship by identifying the

[41]Jesus's use of υἱοὶ φωτὸς in 12:36 is similar, but this particular phrase in 1:12 and 1 John 3:1 finds its only use in those two passages.

[42]Segovia goes too far to say that "ποταπὴν ἀγάπην is Jesus Christ," but is correct to identify the content of this love as the "coming of the Son of God and his redemptive death, which define God's love for man" (Fernando F. Segovia, *Love Relationship in the Johannine Tradition*, SBL Dissertation Series 58 [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982], 48–49).

goal of the Father's love: conformity to the moral and spiritual purity of the Son in his glory (3:2–3). Thus, the greatest expression of the Father's love is to know and be conformed to the image of the eternally loved Son.

Far from love being simply a subjective or mystical experience, the spiritual perception of the Father's love in the Son makes the children long to see and display the righteousness of the Son's glory upon his return. This gaze has a transforming effect that is demonstrated in righteousness and love: two moral realities that are intrinsic to the Son's—God's—nature (cf. 2:29), in which the children share through spiritual birth (cf. 3:9). John explicitly links righteousness and love as both the affirmation and the fruit of fellowship with God and the presence of the Spirit (3:24; 4:13).[43] In other words, the Spirit, who initiates this life commensurate with faith in Christ, is also the hidden person of the Godhead who produces righteousness and love within the children—a love that finds its greatest expression in God's accomplishment of redemption (4:7–10).

Revelation 21:7. Finally, in Revelation 21:7 John again does not use the specific language of love, but advances an understanding of the love of sonship in a manner similar to the Prologue and end of the gospel.[44] In fact, Rev 21:7 acts as a summary statement of sonship that encapsulates and engrafts all the concepts discussed in the gospel and epistles. In the context of the new heavens and new earth (21:1), God affirms in strong covenantal and personal language, "I will be his God and he will be My son." In light of the personal presence of God to comfort his people (21:2–5; cf. Lev

[43]Stevens rightly notes, "The life of love and the life of sin are essentially incompatible. . . . To [John's] mind, love and righteousness are inseparably intertwined; in fact, they are essentially one" (Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, 281). Stauffer picks up on this same idea, commenting on Jesus's command to love: "He demands love with an exclusiveness which means that all other commands lead up to it and all righteousness finds in it its norm" (Stauffer, "ἀγαπάω," in *TDNT*, 1:44).

[44]Smalley goes so far as to say that "John's revelation is, above all, a triumphant disclosure of God's love, expressed through his judgement" (Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005], 35).

26:12; Exod 4:22), the promise of eschatological newness (21:5), intimate union of Christ and his people (21:9), and fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit (Rev 22:1–5), the imagery of John 14:1–2, 21–23, 1 John 3:1, 24 and 4:13 is brought to mind. Indeed, even the love of the Father to give the Son "all things" (πάντα) in John 3:35 is now realized in the children's participation with the Son in his "inheritance." Thus, God's love for the children is brought to culmination in the eternal, holy, intimate fellowship they will enjoy with the Father who gave his Son that he might engraft the children into his eternal love relationship with the Son and the Spirit—and all the fruits of his love to the Son in his redeeming work. John has thus provided a link with the Gospel (14:15–15:10) and the love of the children for Christ in the opening chapters.[45]

Love of the Father, Son, Spirit, and Children

At the center of John's revelation of the love of God is this: the Father gave the Son for the children's redemption and participation in his eternal love for the Son. This single reality comprises the fullness of the concept and expression of love in the Spirit of sonship—both as its foundation and exemplar (John 13:34; 15:13; 1 John 3:16; 4:11). Specifically, it is the Father's love for the Son that he gave him a people (John 17:2–3, 23–26). It is the Father's love that sent the Son to reveal the Father, redeem the children, and bring them to himself in the Son. It is because of the Son's love for the Father and the children given to him that he came and accomplished redemption (John 13:1; 14:31; 3:35). It is the love of the Spirit whom the Father gave to empower and sustain the Son in his work (3:34) and who is given by the Son and Father to apply Christ's work of

[45]Accordingly, the very outset of the Revelation includes the praise for Jesus as the "one who loves us"—the present participle (ἀγαπῶντι) emphasizing the present and eternal love of the risen Christ for his people that was displayed in the redemption through "His blood" (1:5; 3:9). Yet, while the love of Christ is without fail, the love of the church is prone to coldness (2:4) and imperfection (2:19) that even incites the loving discipline of the Lord (3:19). However, the children are secure through the redemption in Christ, the election of the Father, and will, in the end, know the fullness of his love, which has the presence of God as its greatest prize (John 14:1–2, 23).

redemption (14:16–17; 15:26; 16:7) and bring the children to share in and demonstrate the love of the Father and Son for each other and for the children (1 John 4:13).[46] Thus, the love of the Spirit of sonship is a Trinitarian love.

However, it is important to emphasize that the foundation of this love is not first centered on men as the recipients of it. Rather, it is the eternal love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father that makes sinful man's participation in this love through the Son's sacrifice so astounding.[47] The accent in John 3:16 is that God gave his "only-begotten Son" to be sacrificed for the salvation of his people.[48] It is the infinite value of the Son and the Father's love for him that gives redemption its particular glory and wonder. Indeed, the very love that characterizes believers now and in glory is shaped by and finds its source in the Father's love for the Son (17:23–26).[49]

This emphasis on the Father's love for the Son is manifest in the juxtaposition of John's first two uses of ἀγαπάω in 3:16 and 3:35. As noted earlier, here the love of the Father for the world in giving the Son (v. 16) is set alongside the ultimate love of the Father for the Son in giving him "all things" (v. 35). In other words, even the love of the Father for the world in *giving the Son* is so that he might give the world and those he

---

[46]The "work" the Father sent the Son to do was the "work" of revealing and redeeming (3:16; 4:34; 12:27–28; 17:1–5).

[47]Moloney recognizes this point, but he sees the greater emphasis in John on God's love for the world (v. 16) rather than the Father's love for the Son (v. 35) (Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013], 59–60). The greatness of God's love in the Son is the infinite value of the gift: "The Church has correctly seen in μονογενής, as applied to God's Son, deep metaphysical meaning. The special emphasis, however, in this connection is to show the surpassing value of God's gift" (Victor Bartling, "'We Love Because He Loved Us First' (1 John 4:7–21)," *CTM* 23, no. 12 [December 1952]: 874).

[48]Michaels captures this same idea: "The effect of the notice that 'The Father loves the Son' is not to subvert the message of John 3:16, but to further define the term 'One and Only Son,' and thus to heighten the reader's wonder at the breadth and depth of God's love" (J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010], 227).

[49]Cf. Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008], 47–51; Morgan, "How does the Trinity's Love Shape Our Love for One Another," in Morgan, *The Love of God,* 131.

gave out of the world *to the Son* (17:2, 6, 9, 12), through whom he created all things (John 1:1–3) and shares all things (John 17:10).[50] John draws attention to this same love in 10:17–18 in which Christ loves his own and lays down his love for them in the context of his mutual love for the Father: "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again." John has already established the antecedent and eternal love between the Father and the Son (1:1, 18; 17:4). Thus, the Διὰ τοῦτό does not establish a condition by which the Father loves the Son, but gives expression to that eternal love of the Father for the Son's obedient act that is itself an expression of their oneness and the singular work of salvation (cf. 10:30).[51]

It is the Son's accomplishment of redemption that forms the epicenter of love in the Johannine conception of the Spirit of sonship. However, most often when John mentions the love of God in Christ it is attended with the ethical necessity of God's children to demonstrate that love to one another. This establishes an important principle: the essence of love in the Spirit of sonship is to reflect the love that was displayed between the Father and the Son in the work of redemption for one another, as well as his image bearers. John makes this pivotal shift in focus at the beginning of his record of the upper room discourse in 13:1,[52] which establishes the context with these words: "having

---

[50]This focus on the love of the Father and Son is expressed in 5:20 with φιλέω, likely to emphasis the affectionate aspect of the Father's love.

[51]Carson captures the idea well, "If Jesus has just mentioned the unique intimacy he enjoys with the his Father, he is now at pains to elucidate *why* the Father loves him. It is not that the Father withholds his love until Jesus agrees to give up his life on the cross and rise again. Rather, the love of the Father for the Son is eternally linked with the unqualified obedience of the Son to the Father, his utter dependence upon him, culminating in this greatest act of obedience now just before him: willingness to bear the shame and ignominy of Golgotha, the isolation and rejection of death, the sin and curse reserved for the Lamb of God" (Carson, *John,* 388). Beasley–Murray is a bit more succinct: "This event is naturally not represented as the origin of that love but its supreme manifestation and enactment" (George R. Beasely-Murray, *John*, WBC, 2nd ed. [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000], 171).

[52]Culpepper says, "Interpreters generally agree that 13:1 marks the most significant transition in the Gospel, introducing not only the scene of the foot washing, but the entire second half of the Gospel" (R. Alan Culpepper, "The Johannine Hypodeigma: A Reading of John 13," *Semia* 53 [1991]: 135).

loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end (εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς).[53] Within the Johannine revelation of Christ, when Jesus washes the feet of the disciples marks his most dramatic witness to the humble nature of his coming sacrifice. It is also the occasion when Jesus establishes the necessary effect his love must have on his disciples both to prove their participation in his life and to demonstrate the reality of his person and redemption to the world.[54] Love among the children, by Jesus's own explicit teaching, is the essence of this revelation.

Thus, the stunning episode of Jesus washing the disciples' feet is not simply a moral example, but an anticipation of laying down his life as an atoning sacrifice. As Jesus "laid aside" (τίθημι; 13:4) his garments to take the form of a slave and wash their feet, so he would "lay down His life" for them at the cross (τίθημι; 15:13). This greater act of redemption is hinted at in Jesus's words to Peter, "You are already clean," speaking of his status that was certain because of events that lay soon before him (12:27–28; cf. 1:29; 1 John 1:7; 2:1–2). Indeed, although Peter and the disciples would not fully understand the implications behind Jesus' act, Jesus affirms, "You will understand hereafter" (v. 7).[55] In this way, the command to love as he loved them is not specifically

---

[53]Referring to the opening Johannine editorial— εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς—Moloney rightly notes that it "transcends all possible human explanation. This is what it means to love εἰς τέλος, consummately, in a way that the world can never comprehend. The love of Jesus εἰς τέλος for his own is the revelation of the incomprehensible love of God" (Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John*, 108–9).

[54]It also marks a shift in John's use of the term ἀγάπη to refer to love between brethren as a reflection of God's love in Christ's sacrifice, which becomes a dominate theme in the use of the term from this point forward (cf. Walter W. Sikes, "A Note on AGAPE in Johannine Literature," *Shane Quarterly* 16, no. 3 [July 1955]: 139–43).

[55]Barrett takes the aorist (ἠγάπησα) as an "immediate reference" to the foot washing, which is certainly the immediate context (C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978], 452). However, John's editorial note in v. 1 and Jesus's explanation in v. 7—"What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter"—point beyond the act of foot washing to the sacrifice of himself on the cross. Indeed, it is only the cross—attended with the insight of the Spirit (13:7; 14:26; 16:12)—that will give the disciples the ability to understand, in fact, to live out what was displayed in that stunning event of washing their feet. The greater idea is this: that the spiritual perception and embrace of the cross and Christ's work as the Son and the Father's love in giving him, will enable the children to follow through with the kind of service to one another Christ displayed. It is the cross that gives the washing meaning and

the act of performing the role of a servant at dinner, but refers to the supreme act of humble sacrificial love he displayed at the cross—where the shame of crucifixion far exceeded the humility and love necessary to wash the disciples' feet. The crux of the Lord's instruction is that the children of God are to love to the same degree as the Son loved them: unto death—i.e., without measure (13:34). This love reflects the love of the Father and Son[56] displayed at the cross and manifests the reality of sonship and serves as a prominent means of Christian witness (13:35).[57]

John expands on Jesus's example and teaching in his first epistle. In 1 John 4:7–21—in concert with the rest of the epistle—John anchors the love of God in the Son's atonement (4:7–11) and as the necessary evidence of spiritual life among the community of God's people. It is a display of love that reflects the Father's love for the Son and the children by means of sacrifice. However, this love is more than an act. It is an expression of an essential aspect of God's own divine nature and is, therefore, the necessary fruit of regeneration—being born by the Spirit (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4; John 1:13; 3:3–8). In verses 7–8 John gives two causal ὅτι clauses, thus providing the reason the children love: "ὅτι love is from God"[58] and "ὅτι God is love" (ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν).[59] The two clauses place the source of love within God Himself. In a derivative

---

power. Note Culpepper's convincing argument that the ὑπόδειγμα of Christ (13:15) is not the act of foot washing, but his sacrificial death to which it pointed (Culpepper, "Johannine Hypodeigma," 141–43).

[56]Barrett rightly captures this focus: "The mutual love of Christian disciples is different from any other; it is modeled upon, and in some measure reveals, the mutual love of the Father and the Son" (Barrett, *John,* 452).

[57]This love is so central to sonship that it is "not incidentally . . . the most persuasive form of evangelism" (D. Moody Smith, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on its Setting, Sources, and Theology* [Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984], 217).

[58]John L. Anderson, *1, 2, & 3 John: An Exegetical Summary* (Dallas: SIL International Publications, 1992), 150.

[59]As has been well noted, John is not giving an absolute definition of the fullness of God's nature—anymore than in 1:5, "God is Light," and John 4:24, "God is Spirit"—but is identifying an aspect of God's nature that is essential to it. God is not only love, but neither is he anything less than love. However, Stevens seems to go too far when, arguing from this point, he asserts that this attribute of God

way, the person who has experienced redemption and participation in the nature of God loves because it is inherent to their new nature created and sustained by the Spirit through Christ (v. 13). The present subjunctive ἀγαπῶμεν[60] likely picks up on its most recent appearance in 3:23, in which love is one of the two elements of God's command, "that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another."

Here, faith and love are the necessary evidence of sharing in this essential aspect of God's nature. It is for this reason, the children obey his commands related to love and "His commandments are not burdensome" (5:3). However, as with the corollary idea of righteousness, the content of love is not exhausted by a feeling—likely a claim of the opponents to John—but the tangible act of God giving the Son to "be a propitiation (ἱλασμὸν) for our sins."[61] Thus, God's love is not left in the abstract but displayed in the concrete act of the Son's sacrifice. This work of Father and Son provides both the means and the model of love within the Christian community (3:16; 4:11; cf. 1:7). Moreover, it is by the demonstration of this Christo-centric love in the community that "divine nature shines through" them and God's own presence is manifest (4:12).[62]

---

makes man's redemption in Christ essentially unavoidable (Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, 282–85).

[60]John uses this exact form 9x in the epistle (1 John 3:11, 14, 18, 23; 4:7, 12, 19; 5:2) and once in 2 John 5. Moreover, his use of Ἀγαπητοί right next to ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους is surely meant to highlight the reality that the ἀλλήλους the children are to love are the very ones who have received the same love of God and are loved by Him—as is each child. This is consistent with John's theme of reciprocity. To love others is to participate in the Father and Son's own love for them. To love is to exist and function within the very atmosphere of the Godhead, even of heaven (John 17:23–26).

[61]Although Dodd is correct to see a purifying element in the use of ἱλασμὸν, he is not correct in removing from the term the idea of Christ absorbing the wrath of God for sin (cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles*, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1945], 25–29, 112). Morris, after an extensive study of the term and related concepts in the OT, LXX, and NT, is more accurate in this summary: "Thus, the use of the concept of propitiation witnesses to two great realities, the one, the reality and the seriousness of the divine reaction against sin, and the other, the reality and the greatness of the divine love which provided the gift which should avert the wrath from men" (Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965], 211; cf.144–213).

[62]Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 206. He goes on to add, helpfully, that John's grounding of love in the moral nature and actions of God "gives the moral admonition a profound basis more so than 3:11ff. This is because it leads to ultimate ontological connections" (Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 206).

Within Johannine thought there are three primary characteristics to the love of the Spirit of sonship. First, the love of sonship originates within the giver's own nature, not the virtue of the one to whom it is expressed (1 John 4:8b, 10). In others words, the love of the Father and the Son are free and unprovoked acts that find their origin in the nature and freedom of God. John noted that the unbelieving have "the wrath of God" abiding on them (3:36). All unbelievers outside of the regenerating work of the Spirit are properly objects of the same wrath. It is to these that God expressed his love in the Son.[63] The expression of love was an eternal choice to act contrary to what is deserved and is provoked by nothing other than the love that is inherent to God's own nature.[64]

Therefore, the expression of Christian love finds its genesis in two sources. First, a shared nature with God through the new birth, by which Christians are provoked to love because it is an inherent aspect of sharing in God's moral nature in Christ through the Spirit. Second, having received the love of God in Christ "who laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16), the new nature is also guided and provoked by the Spirit to actual expressions of love to the child.[65] It was in a display of sacrificing love that God manifests (ἐφανερώθη; 4:9) his nature and became the means of the children sharing in his own divine life through the Son—"in order that we might live through Him" (ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ; cf. John 6:51, 57–8; 11:25–26) and participate in the divine life of

[63]It is true that men bear God's image and in that sense have the value that would elicit salvation, but as image bearers their character has been deformed and is, by nature, rebellious and distorted; thus, what the unregenerate experience as consequences would rightly be experienced by all.

[64]Bartling notes, "God's love is an everspringing fountain. . . . It is love that shows its true character by being lavished upon the unattractive, the unworthy, the repellent, and the rebellious" (Bartling, "We Love," 875–76).

[65]Again, Bartling helpfully states, "Though we cannot love God in the same way in which He has loved us, yet if we are 'begotten of God,' we have in us the same nature of Love that He has manifested toward us in Christ. . . . God's children partake of His *agape* nature. God's children will love not merely the lovable, but will actively see to help men irrespective of their merit or demerit, their attractiveness or their ugliness. . . . If we have *Agape*, it has its source in God, and it will in its own way copy God's *agape*" (Bartling, "We Love Because He First Loved Us," 879, 881–82).

love demonstrated at the cross. When the children display this kind of love of the Father and Son, they give evidence of the new birth and the presence of the Spirit in them (4:7, 13). The Spirit of sonship, then, is the Spirit of love; to be a child of God is to love God and those born of him (4:20–5:3). It is to love those in the world and desire the salvation of men (John 3:16).

Second, the love of sonship is not self-protecting, but self-sacrificing and Christocentric. The central proof, accomplishment, and example of divine love is the death and resurrection of Christ the Son for the redemption of his children (1 John 4:9–10). Christ's death was the *purposeful* act of the Father in giving the Son to endure His own just wrath against sin; it was the *purposeful* sacrifice of the Son to assume flesh and endure the shame, suffering, and sense of separation from the Father on the cross that would atone for the sin of his people. The cross demonstrates the greatest possible and conceivable act of self-sacrifice for the benefit of another. Indeed, because of the infinite divine glory and nature of God, it is an act of self-giving and sacrifice that could never be equaled in its totality on a human scale.

The Holy Spirit gives to the children the life and faith that spiritually perceives the greatness of this sacrifice and embraces God's love in Christ as the Son of God who laid down his life for them. Faith that spiritually perceives the love of the Father in the Son's sacrifice produces the same disposition of God's love in the children as was demonstrated in Christ's death (1 John 3:23; 4:13). Thus, the love of the Spirit of sonship is not left in a realm of subjectivity, but finds its very character in the person of God's Son and God's revelation in him (1 John 3:18). Moreover, it is given shape by the specific commands of God that "are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3), but the delight of the children, because obeying them comes from a deep inner love for God, for righteousness, and for others born of him.

Third, the love of sonship consists of a deep, intimate fellowship with the Father and Son (John 14:21) that is displayed in a "love for the brethren" (1 John 2:10;

3:14, 16; 4:21; John 13:34). This sense of intimate relationship is evidenced by the very filial terms that describe it. It is the language of intimacy found in 14:21, 23 and is expressed by the verb μένω, "abide/remain." Interestingly, the first use of μένω by John is in reference to the Holy Spirit "remaining" on Jesus at his baptism as a witness to John the Baptist (John 1:32–33) that identified Jesus as the "Son of God" (v. 34). In addition to affirming Christ's identity, the Spirit "remaining" pictures the close intimate participation the Spirit would have in both the earthly (cf. 3:34) and heavenly (1:33; 7:38–39; 14:16–17; 15:26; 16:7; Rev 1–3) ministry of Jesus.[66] In a significant statement that marks the period of his transition from earth to heaven, Jesus tells the disciples that the Spirit "abides with you and will be in you" (John 14:17). The point being that the Spirit's presence, which was with them through Jesus while he was on earth, will become more intimate once he ascends back to the Father.[67] This intimacy is captured in the language of love and of abiding.

The particular interest here is John's uses of the noun (μονή) in John 14:23, in which the Father and Son are said to make their "abode" in the child, which corresponds to the verb in 1 John 3:24 and 4:13.[68] In these two passages John expresses the intimate, inner, personal relationship the child has with God—Father and Son—that affirms the

---

[66]This same idea is captured in its non-theological uses that communicate the ideas of fellowship or remaining in a location (e.g., 1:38–39; 2:12; 4:40).

[67]See ch. 3 for an explanation of this passage. After this point Jesus speaks of his words "abiding with you" (14:25) and "in you" (15:6; cf. 1 John 2:14, 24; "truth" 2 John 2; "teaching of Christ" 2 John 9), of the disciples abiding in Jesus and he in them (15:4–5, 7; 1 John 2:6, 28; 3:24; 4:13; or "God" 1 John 4:16), abiding in his love as he abides in the Father's love (15:9 –10), abiding in love and the "Light" (1 John 2:10; cf. 3:17; 4:12), the anointing abiding in his children (1 John 2:27) as well as "his seed" (1 John 3:9). While there are a variety of nuances in these usages, the overarching idea is that of intimate experience of the persons—Father, Son, and Spirit—truth/Word, and love of God.

[68]There is a real sense in which John's emphasis on this intimate fellowship with the Father and Son, as well as with all the children, is a key component of what is often recognized as his emphasis on realized eschatology. That is to say, the spiritual life and fellowship that the children have as a present possession is the foretaste of what God has promised in the gospel and will be realized in fullness in glory. More will be said on this in the next section.

presence of the Spirit and brings together the reality of faith, love, and obedience (1 John 3:23). Indeed, this language of reciprocity expressed by μένει ἐν identifies the interiority and relational aspect of the Spirit of sonship that is an integral aspect of love.[69] In fact, John as already established that obedience is an expression of love (John 14:15–23; 1 John 3:23–34; 5:1–3) to the Son and the Father as well as the means to greater experience of his love that issues forth in love for the other children.[70] John also expresses this intimate relationship with the term κοινωνία (1:3, 6, 7),[71] which follows the same pattern: fellowship with the Father and Son is fellowship with the children (1:3)[72] and issues forth in holiness that reflects God's nature (1:5–7).[73] Each of these expressions give insight into the intimacy of an inner experience of the love of the Father and Son opened up to and known by those who posses the Spirit of sonship.[74] In summary, the Spirit of sonship

---

[69]Malatasta observes, "All the *reciprocal relationships* in the Letter are expressed by μένει ἐν" (Edward Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978], 34). In fact, reciprocity is essential to love, for love is something that is both felt and expressed toward another: "The love commandment is characterized by reciprocity" (van der Watt, "Ethics and Ethos," 159).

[70]Although, van der Watt correctly observes that in the gospel "believers are not explicitly said to love the Father, but their actions of obedience to Jesus who reveals the will of the Father follow the lines of what love is. Obedience is indeed love in action" (van der Watt, "Ethics and Ethos," 160.

[71]John uses the term in 2 John 11 to express personal "participation" and, therefore, culpability for the one who receives and aids a false teacher. After an extensive and detailed consideration of the abstract noun κοινωνία in classical and biblical writers, Campbell suggests, "Its meaning . . . is '(the) having *something* in common with *someone*.' The ideas of participation and of association are both present, and the main emphasis may fall upon either of them, sometimes to the practical exclusion of the other" (J. Y. Campbell, "KOINΩNIA and Its Cognates in the New Testament," *JBL* 51, no. 4 [December 1952]: 356). Applying this to 1 John 1:3–7, Campbell affirms the translation of "fellowship," but finds it "difficult" to see "any idea of participation at all" (Campbell, "KOINΩNIA," 372).

[72]Plummer captures the idea of this current thesis well when commenting on v. 3: "The title of the Son is given with solemn fulness, as in iii. 23 and 2 John 3; perhaps to indicate that the Christian Church is a family in which all in their relation to God share in the Sonship of Christ" (Plummer, *Epistles of S. John*, 20; spelling in original).

[73]The fact that John uses κοινωνία at the very outset of the epistle (1:3–7) and to highlight the very purpose of writing (ἵνα clause in v. 3) gives the concept reciprocal relationship an authorial prominence in the epistle. Indeed, John's use of μένει ἐν picks up on this idea throughout the epistle and may even be a unifying theme (cf. Peter Rhea Jones, "A Presiding Metaphor of First John: μένει ἐν," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 37, no. 2 [Summer 2010], 179, 183, 188–89).

[74]Dodd states, "The life that is shared exists only as shared . . . the life of the Church is the

brings the children to share in the eternal love of God that has been eternally known and shared among the Father, Son, and Spirit. A love that is supremely expressed in the Father giving the Son as a sacrifice for the sin of those he ordained to share in his own relationship with the Son. Participation in this love through the Spirit of the Son results in intimate fellowship with God that is expressed by a corollary, self-sacrificing love for others, but especially the brethren who share in the same Spirit.

The Spirit of Sonship and Life

Inherent in every aspect of sonship and the very idea of salvation is spiritual participation in the life of God, particularly as it was manifest in the incarnate Son. The Lord Jesus Christ said his purpose for coming was so that his sheep "may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10) and, as noted previously, the purpose for God sending the Son into the world is so that in him, fallen, man may "not perish but have eternal life" (3:16).[75] John established life as the very essence of the eternal λόγος in the Prologue to the gospel: "in him was life" (1:4). It was argued there that this life, while including the idea that all things live through Christ as the agent of creation and that he sustains the inner soul of man—including the conscience associated with being made in the image of God—is essentially a statement that encapsulates the idea of relationship. God has eternally related to himself as the "Word [who] was with God and the Word [who] was God" (John 1:1)—even Father and Son (1:18)—and he has placed within man the inner impulse of soul that inclines the heart to long for and to seek God in relationship. This was the very purpose of God in making man in his image and giving him life.

---

divine life disclosed . . . in the incarnate Christ and communicated through His Spirit" (Dodd, *Johannine Epistles*, 7–8). This life is the essence of what Christ revealed and is in Christ (1:1–2; 5:12) and consists—at its center—of a common life and fellowship with God and other children through Christ. Hoekema helpfully relates the idea of fellowship with God and men to the act and divine design in creation and God's Trinitarian nature (Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 76–82).

[75]Dodd also notes, "For John this present enjoyment of eternal life has become the controlling and all-important conception" (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 149).

Life in Selected Johannine Passages

John 1:12–13. In the Prologue, the life that is in the Son is the "light of men" (v.4). Yet this light of the Son "shines in the darkness" (v. 5) that hates the exposure of its evil (3:19–20; 7:7) and rejects the offer of life and salvation that is extended through him (vv. 6–11; 3:32). Within this context, John introduces the striking contrast of those who do "receive" and "believe" the testimony of the Light and are thereby granted to become "children of God" (v. 12). This new status is the result of faith in the incarnate Son (v. 14) and antecedent—or at least coterminous—to this faith is the sovereign act of God's begetting or giving spiritual birth (v.13). The necessity of God's work in granting and accomplishing this spiritual birth highlights the "darkness" and rebellion that John has already established as the natural condition of man. However, the conspicuous observation is that spiritual birth results in spiritual life—by necessity of the metaphor of the "birth" (γεννάω; v. 13). Spiritual life comes to the spiritually dead (5:25).[76] More importantly, this life gives rise to faith in the Son in whom is life (v. 4) and through whom the "children" attain their status. At the outset of the gospel, then, the concept of life has the overtones of filial love, intimacy (v. 18), and the experiential knowledge that comes from personal relations. To be a child of God is to have spiritual life from God through the Son who is in intimate relation with the Father—life is to share in this filial intimacy.

John 3:3–8. John expands on this idea of the new birth and spiritual life in chapter 3. In this context he explicitly attaches the work of spiritual birth to the Spirit (3:3–8) and faith in the eternal λόγος becomes faith in the Son who was given by the Father for redemption (3:16). It is also the first reference to the phrase "eternal life"

[76]Michaels, *John*, 316–18; Barrett, *John*, 262.

(ζωὴν αἰώνιον; cf. 3:15–16, 36)[77] and makes a patent link with spiritual life in the Son to the believer (3:15). The phrase ζωὴν αἰώνιον is used 17x in John's gospel (3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2-3)[78] and likely reflects the Hebraic idea of the eschatological life to come (cf. Mark 10:30).[79] However, the appearance of the person of Christ brings the notion of "eternal life" into its fullest meaning, expression, possibilities, and—significantly—*present* and future experience of God's children in the Son (cf. 6:47, 51, 58).[80]

---

[77]The basic meaning of ζωή is to possess a degree of conscious existence that interacts and experiences one's environment and stands in contrast to death (John 4:50–51, 53). In John 12:25 ζωὴν αἰώνιον stands juxtaposed to ψυχή, the latter speaking of one's existence, pleasures, and experiences in this world, which can be given up; the former speaking to the experience of existence in the future that is bound to the individual's relationship to the Son (v. 26), which can never be lost (Marianne Meye Thompson, "Eternal Life in the Gospel of John," *Ex auditu* 5 [1989]: 38–39; cf. John 11:25–26). The adjective αἰώνιος speaks of "(1) a long period of time . . . (2) a period of time without beginning or end . . . (3) a period of unending duration" (BDAG, 33). However, when describing ζωή, the idea of time gives way to that of quality. This is so, because it describes that which God possess atemporally as Father, Son, and Spirit, not only existing (*a se*) but relating to one another in a manner consistent with their persons and in perfect holy love. Thus, the ζωὴν αἰώνιον offered in the Son is entrance into a dynamic filial relationship with the Godhead that involves forgiveness of sin (3:16; 1 John 4:9) and the experience of intimacy and love (14:21, 23). The concept of quality is dramatically illustrated in 5:29, in which some will experience a resurrection ζωῆς and others a resurrection κρίσεως; each has existence, but of a completely different experience (Rev 20:5, 15).

[78] Where ζωή stands alone in context of spiritual life without the adjective αἰώνιος the meaning is unchanged (cf. J. G. van der Watt, "The Use of ΑΙΩΝΙΟΣ in the Concept ΖΩΗ ΑΙΩΝΙΟΣ in John's Gospel," *Novum Testamentum* 31, no. 3 [1989]: 217–28).

[79]Dodd, *Interpretation*, 146; U. E. Simon, "Eternal Life in the Fourth Gospel," in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. L. Cross (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1957), 97–102; contra: Schnackenburg, *John*, 521n5). Thus, this idea of life in John speaks of the quality of life that consists of the Hebraic sense of experience and not mere knowledge (Dodd, *Interpretation,* 152) and produces effects consistent with its nature in the individual's life. In John, Jesus is clearly and powerfully held forth as "the divine Object of man's knowledge, and at the same time the Subject of God's knowledge of man . . . the representative 'Son of Man' in whom all mankind is comprehended in its relation to God" (Dodd, *Interpretation,* 160). Indeed, as the one who fully knows God and is known by God as man: "In Christ therefore we have, realized, the archetype of that true relation of man to God which is henceforth made possible in Him . . . as the eternal mediating Logos . . . He can reconstitute that relation for men by Himself standing in the place of God, as knower and known" (Dodd, *Interpretation,* 166; Rainbow, *Theology*, 278).

[80]For a helpful discussion of life as the key theme of salvation, John's description of the kingdom of God—though not synonym—and the present possession of the children as a foretaste of the coming eschatological fullness, see G. R. Beasley–Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 1–13.

Thus, John introduces life as bound to the Son in a way that deepens the filial language and relationship introduced in 1:12–13. This is particularly heightened by John's further linkage of the Spirit to the Father and the Son in verse 35. The Father, who gives the Son—in whom is eternal life—to the world, also gives the Spirit to him "without measure" (v. 34); the Spirit gives life through birth (3:3–6), which is made evident by faith in the Son, who will also baptize in the Spirit (1:32–34). Thus, John establishes that eternal life is uniquely revealed in the Son and mediated through him to the children through faith. He also places this within the context of the work of the Spirit in the new birth and the Father's redemption in the Son.[81]

John 14:16–23. The life of the children through the Son and Spirit is advanced in chapter 14 through the connection of the Jesus and the coming Spirit. After speaking of his departure from this world and his return to the Father following the cross, Jesus binds his resurrection life to the life of the disciples within the context of the coming Spirit: "because I live (ζῶ), you also shall live (ζήσετε)" (14:19). His life is the source of the disciples' life. There are several points to observe. First, Jesus says this within the context of the promise of the coming Spirit/παράκλητος, whom both the Son (15:26; 16:7; cf. 1:33; 7:38–39) and the Father (14:16, 26; 15:26; cf. 3:35) will send. Thus, the Spirit in Jesus, which he as from the Father, will be in the disciples and be the source of power and fellowship that exceeds their experience prior to the ascension of Jesus. Second, the future tense—ζήσετε—relates to the time of Jesus speaking and anticipates the post-resurrection/ascension realities for Jesus's disciples, thus affirming this life as the present

[81]The synoptics often place the "Kingdom of God" and "eternal life" on an almost parallel plane (e.g., Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Mark 10:17–30; Matt 19:23–29; Luke18:24–30). Although John does not make an explicit connection between the kingdom and life, it is clearly implicit in this chapter. Thompson is correct to say, "In Johannine thought, no less than in the Synoptic Gospels, kingdom of God, eternal life, and salvation may be used interchangeably" (Thompson, "Eternal Life," 38; Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life*, 1–4; Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015], 70–71). This is not to say, however, that the terms are precisely synonymous.

experience of the children that corresponds to the Spirit's presence (7:38–39). Third, the life Jesus makes available to the children is the same life he possesses as the divine Son (1:14; 5:26) that was revealed through his humanity and in which the children share (1:14; 20:26–29). Thus, the children's experience of life is in the Son as the Son of the Father—it is an experience of the life of sonship. Fourth, this life includes not only the Spirit's enablement to bear witness to Christ (14:26; 15:26; 16:7–11) but also a more intimate fellowship with the Father through the Son (14:20–21, 23), which reveals the content and essence of this life.

This is to say that the life of the children is inextricable from the life of the Son, is experienced at the coming of the Spirit, and involves intimate fellowship with the Father in the Son and with the Son in a way that models the Father and Son's relationship (14:20–23). It is within this intimate spiritual fellowship that the idea of "eternal life" is most clearly displayed and comprehends being swept into the Son's own eternal filial relationship that exists between him and the Father. Here is an echo and extension of the Prologue's portrayal of the Son's intimate nearness in the bosom of the Father (1:18). In short, this life, at its core, is relational and reflective of the eternal Father-Son relation within the Godhead.

First John 3:1–3, 24; and 4:13. Although ζωή is not found in the passages covered in 1 John, it is used 14 times in the epistle and the concept is central to the letter. Within this context, 3:1–3, 24 and 4:13 do move the concept of life forward. John opens the letter spotlighting the "eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us" in the Son (1:2). In this way, the apostle picks up on the Prologue of the gospel (1:4, 14).[82] This life is then described as consisting of fellowship with the Father, Son, and other believers (1:3, 7),[83] holy obedience (1:5–7; 2:3–6),[84] love (2:7–10; 3:14–15), and

[82]Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 56–61.

[83]Schnackenburg suggest, "The Father is mentioned first (cf. 2:22b) because he is the ultimate

the experience of the new birth,[85] which reflects the character of Jesus (2:29). Within this context, John speaks of the Father's great love for the children and their conformity to the Son's likeness in his glorified humanity (3:1–3). In reference to "eternal life," this places greater emphasis on the Father's love in granting participation in his relationship with the Son and presents the Son as the epitome of spiritual life and reality in the children. Regarding the Father's love, it is worth noting that the life of the Spirit of sonship is just as much about being awakened to the glorious reality of God as Father—whom the Son came to reveal—as it is to the wonder of the Son. It was the love of the Father in sending as much as it was the love of the Son in coming, dying, and rising for the people given to him. To understand this is to grasp the filial love and life of sonship—even as Jesus knew it as the Son.

There are several points to observe. First, as with the Gospel of John (14:15–15:10), this life comes through faith and requires obedience (2:3-4, 7-8; 3:22-24; 4:21; 5:2-3). Yet in the epistle there is greater stress on this obedience as flowing from the new nature that comes via the Spirit in the new birth.[86] Second, John distills the teaching of

---

goal of the unity desired and the primary place is appropriate to his dignity" (Schnackenburg, *Johannine*, 62). This is consistent with John's presentation of the Father as sending (3:16), giving Christ all things (3:35), which includes the Spirit (3:35), life (5:26), judgment (5:22, 27), words (12:49), works (5:36; 14:9–10), and a people (6:37; 17:2).

[84]The concept of light comprehends both the idea of truth and moral holiness (cf. A. E. Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, ICC [repr., Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1964], 12). John will later add the concept of love, which is inherent to the idea of moral purity (e.g., 1 John 2:9–10).

[85]This is a key concept in John's epistle. The term γεννάω is used 10x in only 5 chapters and is provided as the necessary reality behind the primary manifestations of spiritual life: faith in Christ (5:1, 4), righteousness (2:29; 3:9; 5:18), and love (4:7; 5:1).

[86]A key emphasis in John is his emphasis on the new nature out of which the spiritual life flows. Judith Lieu captures this idea: "This means that 'being children of God' is not just likeness to or a relationship with God . . . but is to do with the very nature of the believer. . . . Similarly, the consequent freedom from sin is not just freedom from committing certain acts but belonging to the sphere where sin has no place and were the evil one cannot touch the one born of God (5:18)" (Judith Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, in New Testament Theology [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 36).

the gospel and concentrates the experience and expression of life into three primary regards. One, life is expressed by faith in the Son, which is faith in the Father (2:22–24; 3:23). Two, righteousness and love are more explicitly attached to a new nature that is commensurate to the moral perfection of God as manifest in the Son (1:5–7; 2:6; 5:1–12, 11). Three, the concept of abiding (μένω) in the Father and Son is more explicitly attached to the presence of the Holy Spirit (3:24; 4:13).

A final observation should be noted: these emphases—as in the gospel—place the internal experience of life firmly within the physical realities of this world (cf. John 17:14–15). Thus, in contrast to John's opponents, spiritual life and the Spirit of sonship, while consisting of an inner experience, can only be affirmed in the child as it produces tangible expression of faith (3:23), fellowship (1:3–7; 3:24), righteousness (3:4–10), and love (3:11–4:21). In this way, "eternal life" is the present possession of the life of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the believer that displays its character in wholehearted love for God and his children—even as it was displayed in Christ.

Revelation 21:7. The culmination of this life in sonship comes in the final passage in Revelation. Once again, the term is not used in 21:7, but the concept is present and reflects the gospel and epistle.[87] As with the gospel and epistle, Revelation begins with a striking statement that presents the Son in the glory of his possession of life reflective of his divine nature.[88] Thus, after establishing the shared glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit (1:4–6),[89] John focuses on the glory of the risen Christ as the "living one"

---

[87]Smalley, *Revelation*, 38–40.

[88]Cf. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999], 214–15.

[89]The identification of the "seven Spirits" in 1:4 has been a matter of much discussion. Many interpreters take this a reference to angelic beings (e.g., Aune, *Revelation*, 1:34; Moffat, "Revelation," 5:338; Mounce, *Revelation*, 47). However it is rightly noted that angels are never referred to as πνεῦμα, only ἄγγελος and the placement of these "Spirits" alongside the Father and Son with a salutation of grace and peace to the churches without mention of the Holy Spirit is quite unthinkable (e.g., Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7* [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992], 66-67; Beale, *Revelation*, 189; Simon J. Kistemaker,

(1:18; ὁ ζῶν).[90] The present participle highlights the life as an inherent quality of the divine nature of the Son, who is "alive" (1:18; 2:8) because he conquered death and has the power over life and death (1:18). This description applies John's opening statement in the gospel that "in him was life" (John 1:4) and marks the "eternal livingness"[91] that the risen Christ has with and from the Father (5:26). Thus, Christ is the "Living One," who is one with the "Living God" (7:2, 17; 10:6; 15:7) and has authority to give the children to eat from the "Tree of Life" (2:7). He is the sovereign Christ who promises life to his children who prove themselves to be so by enduring in faith and righteousness until the end (2:7–8, 10; 3:5; 7:17)—pictured in the description of "overcomers" (21:7).

The highest concentration of the term, however, is found in chapters 21–22 and the final end of creation and redemption in the "new heaven and new earth" (21:1). In this concluding scene the "water of life" (21:6; 22:1, 17) and "tree of life" (22:2, 14, 19) are the prominent pictures of the children's final rest in the presence of the Father and the Lamb (22:1, 3–4). The former is likely a reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. 4:10) and carries the imagery of life, refreshment, cleansing, and motion. The latter picks up on the imagery of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2–3[92] and suggests that the life and fellowship with God that was lost through Adam is now restored beyond its original form and now in the

---

Revelation, New Testament Commentary [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001], 81-82). Although, Luke 9:26 and 1 Timothy 5:21 speak of the prominent role of angels in judgment and the display of Divine glory, this falls far short of placing them alongside the Father and Son in the injunction to grace and peace from heaven.

[90]John uses the present participle of ζάω 4x times in the phrase τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων "the one who lives forever and ever" (4:9, 10; 10:6; cf. 15:7 ζῶντος) and once to refer to the "beast" and "false prophet" who were thrown alive into the "lake of fire" (19:20).

[91]Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, in *New Testament Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 55.

[92]The imagery of chs. 21–22 is certainly meant to reflect a restored and glorified Eden. However, it is difficult to fully embrace Beale's argument that this is a literal fulfillment of the temple of Ezek 40–48 in that it is a "completion or fulfillment of intended design" (Gregory K. Beale, "Eden, The Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *JETS* 48, no. 1 [March 2005]: 5–31).

fullness of all its intended possibilities through Jesus Christ the Son. Together these form the context of 21:7, in which the Father affirms his intimate filial relationship with the children: "I will be his God and he will be My Son" (cf. John 20:7). In this way, the end of children's spiritual life is consummated fellowship with the Father, through the Son, in the full eternal pleasures and spiritual blessing of the Spirit, as the "children of God."

Eternal Life in Jesus and the Children

The essence of John's presentation of the life of sonship is this: Jesus uniquely possesses life—with the Father and Spirit—as the eternal Son of God, manifests this life through his union with humanity, and extends this life to the children through the Holy Spirit.[93] In this way, Jesus was the "Light of the world" (John 8:12) that pulls men from darkness and makes the believing "sons of light" (12:36; cf. 1 John 1:5–7). These statements highlight an obvious, but important distinction in John. Although Jesus is the perfect model of the life of sonship that men can follow, his life as the eternal Son of God was unique in four key ways. First, as already noted, he has life "in himself" eternally with the Father (5:26; 1:4). This reality separates him from all humanity and places him into the category of deity. Second, as the eternal Son he both *defines* and *gives* life to the children as mediator; the life of the children is only in the Son.[94] Third, his life as Son is such that his death could atone for the sins of his people—he could not be destroyed by death, but rather would overcome and be the destroyer of death (John 5:24; 11:25–26;

[93]As it has already been noted, the position of this paper is that while there were unique aspects of humiliation and limitation in reference to Jesus's incarnate life in the gospels, the basic relationship of loving submission to the Father, while being equal in power and glory, is reflective of his eternal relationship as the Son. In other words, the essential relationship Jesus demonstrated with the Father is reflective of his eternal relationship to the Father as Son: it is related to his sonship and not simply the incarnation.

[94]It is worthwhile to clarify a point regarding sonship that is often not clear in discussions that, at times, make sonship exclusively the result of the life received at the time of new birth. This is true inasmuch as the new birth is necessary and is the instance of life in terms of spiritual awareness. However, John only conceives of the life of sonship through the mediation of the Son—"because I live, you shall life" (John 14:19), or "God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11)—and not apart from him. John 1:12 established that the status of child comes only from the Son in whom spiritual life is realized.

Rev 1:18; 20:14). Fourth, as the Son, his resurrection life is the means by which he receives the Spirit from the Father and sends the Spirit to impart his life to his, to communicate spiritual grace and fellowship (John 14:19).

However, these distinctions noted, his life on earth—and in heaven—is a quintessential expression of spiritual life expressed through humanity. He was exactly what every human should be in terms of moral holiness and in relationship with God. This is to say that he lived in perfect unbroken fellowship with the Father—*excepting* the cross—and perfect and spotless loving obedience to the Father—*expressed* always, even on the cross where he laid down his life for his own (John 10:11, 15, 17–18). His life was an embodiment of the fullest possible expression of truth, holiness, and love for God and man as fellow man (John 13:1; 14:31). In this way, Jesus exemplified the eternal life that he gives to the children. John established at the outset of the gospel that this life is granted to the children through "receiving" or "believing" in the testimony and words of Jesus (1:12–13; 3:15–16; πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων); and this reality has been briefly addressed in the earlier survey of Johannine passages.

Yet in John's gospel Jesus emphasizes two other aspects that were reflected but not directly—or only lightly—addressed in that survey. The first of these is found in John 10:3–4, 16, 27 and 18:37: "the sheep hear (ἀκούει) his voice . . . the sheep follow him because they know (οἴδασιν) his voice . . . I have other sheep . . . and they will hear (ἀκούσουσιν) My voice . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know (γινώσκω) them, and they follow Me . . . Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." When speaking to the crowds, Jesus says "everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me" (6:45) and "Whoever is from God (ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) hears the words of God" (8:47a). The children "hear" the "words" of the Father in the "voice" of Christ.[95] The children of

[95]Since the words Jesus speaks are from the Father and coterminous with the ministry of the Spirit (3:35; 5:24), to believe the words of Jesus is to believe the Father and the Holy Spirit.

the devil (John 8:44; 1 John 3:10) do not: "Why do you not understand what I am saying? Because you cannot hear My word . . . for this reason you do not hear, because you are not of God" (8:43, 47b; cf. 1 John 4:5–6). This is another way of saying they are "dead" (5:25); that is, without spiritual life and the ability to "hear" and "receive" his words, a heart of stone (Ezek 11:19; 36:26) and darkness (John 3:19) remains.

However, "he who hears My words and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life . . . Has passed out of death into life" (5:24). The possession of spiritual life in the children is manifest by the fact that they spiritually hearing Christ's word with the ring of truth and spiritual power. In the children, God's word impresses itself on the mind, affections, and will in a way that draws out faith, a desire for fellowship, forgiveness, obedience and entrusting oneself to his care (cf. 17:6–8, 14, 17, 20, 25–26). A second passage (John 12:25–26) describes eternal life in terms of self-abandonment: "He who loves his life (ψυχή) loses it, and he who hates his life (ψυχή) in this world will keep it to life eternal (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον)."[96] In other words, the believing and following (v. 26) inherent to spiritual life involves the exchange of the temporal life (ψυχή) for the "eternal life" that is in Jesus (cf. 1 John 2:15–17). This life of sonship is evidenced by a settled disposition of faith and spiritual reality that finds the pleasures, graces, and glory of God as far greater treasure than the passing pleasures of this world and self-gratification (1 John 2:15–17).

---

[96]The contrast between ψυχή and ζωὴν αἰώνιον is between the loss of the self-centered, temporal experiences and connections in this world in exchange for what is gained in Christ—forgiveness of sin, a relationship with the Father through the Son, and a deep inner reorientation of affections, hopes, and perspectives that find their center and fullness in God's revelation in the Son. Jesus knew that all things were his and that he was going back to the Father (13:1) whom he loves (14:31) and would once again share in his glory (17:22–24) and so laid down his ψυχή (v. 24; cf. 10:11, 15, 17–18). Although the child's self-abandonment is not redemptive, it is an expression of faith and spiritual life that lays hold of the redemption in the Son and that follows (ἀκολουθέω) him in obedience. The reward is the motivation of life: "Where I am there My servant will be also" (v. 26), which includes future glory (Ridderbos, *John*, 433; Schnackenburg, *John*, 384–86), as well as present fellowship (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 212). Since the abandonment includes the real possibility of death (cf. 15:18–25; 16:2), the idea of hope is intrinsic to the possession of "eternal life."

John also describes the experience of this life through two metaphors. The first is that of "living water" (ὕδωρ ζῶν), which Jesus offered to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:10, 11, 14).[97] Although John has mentioned "water" several times in relation to baptism, that is not the context of Jesus's conversation here. He is not speaking of literal water, but using it as an apt metaphor for spiritual life.[98] The imagery of water in relation to the Spirit (Ezek 36:26–27), salvation (Isa 12:3; 55:1), cleansing (Isa 1:16–18), spiritual satisfaction (Ps 46:4; Isa 44:3; Jer 2:13), or God's presence (Isa 8:6; Zech 14:8)[99] is well attested in the OT, as well as in rabbinic literature.[100] Most recently Jesus has linked "water and the Spirit" (3:5) in his conversation with Nicodemus, and he will make an even more explicit reference in 7:38–39, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water (ὕδατος ζῶντος)[101] . . . this He spoke of the Spirit."[102] In John 4, the imagery of water is most likely a reference to every spiritual grace of eternal life that consists in joyful fellowship and spiritual satisfaction that is in the Son, mediated by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rev 7:16–17; 21:6). The Spirit is the divine person through whom every

---

[97]John uses this precise participial form 4 other times: again in v. 11 to refer to "living water," then in 6:51 as a reference to Christ as the "living bread," v. 57 to the "living Father," and lastly in 11:26 to identify those who share in Christ's life by faith. The first four references are linked to each person of the Godhead—the Spirit, Son, and Father. Yet, interestingly, only in the references to the Spirit and the Son is it used adjectively in reference to a metaphor: water and bread, respectively.

[98]On the use of water, Carson notes, "This diversity in the proposed backgrounds . . . betrays the esteem attached to fresh water in a country where so much land is terribly arid, and where most of it is arid for much of the year. In such an environment 'living water' is an expression waiting to become a metaphor for highly diverse religious values" (Carson, *John*, 218).

[99]The streams of Zechariah have both a physical and spiritual sense, each picturing life, refreshment, and blessing (George L. Klein, *Zechariah*, NAC [Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2008], 410–12).

[100]Cf. Barrett, *John*, 233 and Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 602–4, who also notes that the rabbis associated the Torah with both the concepts of "gift" and "water," although neither of these fit the present context.

[101]The question of whether the source of water is Jesus (see Joel Marcus, "Rivers of Living Water From Jesus' Belly (John 7:38)," *JBL* 117, no. 2 [Summer 1998]: 328–30), or the believer is debated.

[102]Notice that what Jesus offers to give the woman in 4:10, 14 is spoken of as the possession of those in 7:38–39—hence the change in direction of the water's flow.

spiritual grace in the Son is brought into the experience of the child.[103] Jesus accentuates the spiritual blessing of the gift in verse 14 by noting the permanent and self-replenishing nature of the gift. In contrast to rainwater collected and stored in cisterns that will eventually need to be replenished, Jesus gives imagery of a never-ending supply of water for the woman at the well as an individual.[104] In other words, it is an offer of the continual spiritual renewal of spiritual life in Christ through the Holy Spirit.[105]

A second metaphor to describe this life is "living bread" (ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς; John 6:35)[106] through which Jesus affirms life as inextricably bound to receiving him by faith, corresponds to his life with the Father, and as with water, addresses the inward experience of the soul. The imagery of "bread" (ἄρτος; vv. 32–33, 35, 41, 48, 50–51, 58) is a picture of daily sustenance for physical life and would have been well understood by the people. However, Jesus qualifies this "bread" in several ways to point the crowds past the mundane to life in him: he is the "true bread out of heaven . . . which comes down out of heaven . . . the bread of life . . . the living bread" that if one eats it they "will live forever (ζήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)."[107] Each of these descriptions is designed to present Jesus

---

[103]Carson states, "The water is the satisfying eternal life mediated by the Spirit that only Jesus, the Messiah and Saviour of the world, can provide" (Carson, *John*, 219; also, Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel* [repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978], 423; B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950], 69; Klink, *John*, 238–39).

[104]The present middle participle ἀλλομένου (ἅλλομαι) presents a splendid picture of an ever flowing and renewing source of life.

[105]Note the repeated used of the future tense in v. 14 (δώσω, δώσω, γενήσεται), which locates the time of fulfillment to after his death, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Spirit. The aorist of v. 10 (ἔδωκεν) is probably proleptic—in anticipation of Pentecost—in the sense of an assured promise, as with all who truly believed in the course of Jesus's earthly ministry.

[106]It is possible that Jesus's reference to drinking in 6:35 is meant to form a link to the living water in 4:10, 14 (Dale C. Allison Jr., "The Living Water (John 4:10–14; 6:35c; 7:37–39," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 30, no. 2 [1986]: 144), although, Jesus specifically attaches this imagery to his "blood" later in the chapter. Allison makes some helpful observations but wrongly views the words of Jesus as drawing spiritual gaze to the Eucharist.

[107]As with 4:14, the future tense ζήσει looks forward to the coming of the Spirit.

as the substance of spiritual life and satisfaction to those who receive him. As with the woman in chapter 4, the metaphor of daily physical needs satisfied in food and drink are apt parallels to the daily spiritual needs and desires met in Christ. [108]

Indeed Jesus defines this bread and participation in his life in two striking ways. First, picking up on the language of 3:13 and 31, the "bread " he "will give for the life of the world (τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς)" is his "flesh" (6:51; cf. 3:16), which anticipates his atoning sacrifice for his people (18–19; cf. 1:29; 10:11, 15, 17; 11:50–52). Second, one receives this "life" when he "eats My flesh and drinks My blood" and so "has eternal life" (v. 54).[109] While striking language, the context of the statement is that of faith (vv. 29, 35) and abiding (v. 56) in him as the one who was given to the world by the Father so that he may give eternal life to those given to him by the Father (vv. 32, 38–40, 44–45, 57, 65). In concert with verse 35 and the entire context of the chapter and gospel, as well as the language of eating and drinking is that of believing in Christ as God's provision for spiritual life and living in him by faith. It also communicates the promise of satisfaction, refreshment, and the necessities for sustaining life.

In a provocative statement, Jesus, reflecting his words in 5:26, engrafts his life into the life of the Father that corresponds with the life the children have through him:

---

[108]Carson, "Adumbrations," 516: "In first-century Israel, bread was one of only two staples: again, eat bread or die. In the same way, either Jesus dies and we live, or he does not die and we do. We must eat his flesh and drink his blood if we are to enjoy his eternal life, or we cannot live. His death is substituted for our death. The way the extended metaphor of eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood remains powerful while avoiding any hint of cannibalism turns on the power of first-century assumptions about food."

[109]A discussion regarding the sacramental interpretations of this passage is beyond the purpose of this paper. Bauckham provides a helpful and concise overview of the various views (Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 77–82, 94–107) and supports a non-Eucharistic view as the primary meaning of the text, but suggests "the Eucharist can be relevant to a reading of the text only insofar as the Eucharist is understood precisely as an expression of faith in the crucified Jesus and as a symbol of participation in his life" (Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 103). Bauckham's treatment of the passage is commendable and helpful but strays in understanding John as borrowing from Jesus's words of institution and not representing his actual words (Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory,* 98–99), which fails to hold the truthfulness of the text as representing Jesus's actual teaching.

"Just as the Living Father (ὁ ζῶν πατὴρ) sent Me and I live through the Father (ζῶ διὰ τὸν πατέρα), so also the one who eats Me, he shall live through Me (ζήσει δι᾽ ἐμέ)" (6:57; cf. 1 John 4:9; Jer 10:10a; Hos 1:10). Again, the Trinitarian nature of this life is highlighted, but always with the careful distinction of the Father as its progenitor and Christ as its mediator and the object of faith.

However, following this statement and addressing the matter of the unbelief in some disciples (τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ), Jesus discloses that the Spirit is the divine means of communicating this life in the Son to the children through faith in his words: "It is the Spirit who gives life (τὸ ζῳοποιοῦν) . . . the words I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (6:63–64).[110] These are the very words that reveal the Father (1:18) and his salvation in the Son (3:16; 6:51), and the words through which the Spirit grants life through faith in Jesus (cf. 1:12–13; 3:3–17, 36; 14:6; 20:31).[111] John's mention of the Spirit provides the reason behind why some believe and remain (vv. 59–65) and others do not (vv. 66, 70–71). In other words, to "hear" the voice of Jesus and to be "taught by God" (v. 45) and to come to Jesus is the work of the Spirit in the children.[112]

---

[110]Jesus uses the verb ζῳοποιέω found in 5:21 to speak of the Son giving life "to whom He wishes." When correlated with John's other statements—the Son who has life in himself from the Father (1:4; 5:26), gives life to whomever he wishes by giving the Spirit (5:21; 6:63)—it is in concert with the will of God. This is another example of the inseparable operations of the Godhead that exposes the fullness of the Spirit of sonship as the ordered work and love of the Father, Son, and Spirit in bringing the children to life in Him. It is interesting that Schnackenburg's discussion of faith rightly acknowledges the necessity of an encounter with Christ and the election of the Father (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:569–75), but makes no room for the work of the Spirit as the giver of the life out of which faith springs (1:12–13; 3:3–8) and he does not consider the Spirit as the agent of giving life in 6:63 (Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:71–74).

[111]Thus, the first use of "Spirit" with the article (τὸ πνεῦμά) is a reference to the Holy Spirit, while the second anarthrous use is a reference to the spirituality of Jesus's words as from the Spirit (Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004], 219n94; Carson, *John*, 301–02; cf. John 3:33–35). This pattern reflects Jesus's words to Nicodemus (3:6; see exegesis there) and Paul's explanation to the Corinthian (1 Cor 2:6–16; 2 Cor 3–4). The contrast between "flesh" and "spirit" is best understood as between human effort and Spirit enablement (Ridderbos, *John,* 246–47; cf. John 1:12–13; 3:3–8); contra those who see "flesh" as a reference to either the sacraments or the cross.

[112]Thompson, *John*, 162; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible Commentary [repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995], 273–74.

Jesus's teaching on believing and his metaphors of "living water" and "living bread" fill out and bring color to the reality of spiritual life, which consists of faith, intimate fellowship with the Father through the Son, and the essential role of the Spirit in the child. However, there is another key aspect of the life of sonship that Jesus puts in its most concise form in his prayer to the Father:[113] "This is eternal life, that they may know (γινώσκωσιν) You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (17:3).[114] In light of 1:12–13; 3:3–18, 36; 14:16–23; and 20:7, this statement could be rephrased: "This is what it means to be a child of God, to know the Father through the Son who he sent into the world to bring them to share in his relationship with the Father." Consequently, Jesus establishes an essential element of spiritual life: knowledge (γινώσκω).[115] There are two immediate and interesting observations: first, John only uses the verb and not the noun, γνῶσις in the Gospel, Epistles, and Revelation, which suggests living and continuous activitiy—it is the active knowledge of relationship. Second, his introduction to the concept of knowledge is negative—he came into the world and the ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω (1:10; cf. 5:42; 8:27, 43, 55; 14:17; 16:3; 17:25; 1 John 3:1).[116]

---

[113]This is rightly viewed as a definition of eternal life that encapsulates the teaching of John. Westcott goes so far as to say, "The definition is not a sphere …, but of the essence of eternal life" (Westcott, *John*, 239).

[114]Hoskyns correctly points out that "this knowledge of the Father and of the Son is no double knowledge . . . It is one faith in God and one knowledge of Him" (Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 498), although by this he does not intend to deny the distinct persons of the Godhead. It is precisely here that one encounters the mystery of the Triune nature of God.

[115]In addition to the specific uses discussed in this section, John also uses this verb to speak of Jesus's divine/prophetic knowledge of others (1:48; 2:24–25; 5:6, 42; 16:19; 21:17; Rev 2:23) or of a general perception of others or circumstances (4:1, 53; 6:15; 11:57; 12:9). The general nuance of this knowledge is that of experience or cognition. There is some overlap with the term οἶδα, which has a general nuance of having knowledge or understanding, but without, necessarily the experience of the thing known. These general distinctions hold true in John's pairing of the two terms (John 7:27; 8:55; 13:7; 21:17; 1 John 2:29; 5:20).

[116]The κόσμος here refers to the collective mass of unbelieving humanity (cf. 1 John 2:15–17) that is under the spiritual influence of the devil (1 John 5:19; cf. John 12:31; 16:11). John will refer to the ignorance of the disciples on some matters that would be clearer after the coming of the Spirit (12:16; 13:7, 28; 14:9; cf. 10:7); however, this was an ignorance of spiritual immaturity, not rebellion and unbelief—except in the case of Judas.

As John's Gospel will unfold, the world does not know Jesus because it is unable to perceive the true nature of his life or rejects that knowledge because of moral rebellion, which John describes as "darkness" (John 1:5; 6:17; 8:12; 12:35, 46; 20:1; 1 John 1:5; 2:8-9, 11). In contrast to the world, the children do believe and, therefore, "receive" the words of Jesus and "know" the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (6:69; 10:14–15, 27; 14:7, 17, 20; 17:7–8, 25; 1 John 2:13–14; 3:24; 4:13; 5:20). Moreover, this knowledge and faith are manifested through obedience to his commands (14:15; 1 John 2:3–5; 3:6, 24; 5:2; cf. 7:17; 8:31–32) and a righteous character that flows from an inner experience of his love in Christ (1 John 2:29; 3:16, 19–20; 4:7–11, 16) and dynamic inner fellowship (1 John 3:24; 4:12–13) through the Spirit.

Indeed, the Spirit's work in the new birth brings children into a spiritual condition in which they are able to perceive the reality of God in the works and words of the Son in a way that they are able to trust him and commit their lives to him in dependence, love, obedience, and delight.[117] These themes are strengthened in John's epistle, but there the "knowing" is related to the assurance that one does truly possess eternal life—noted by the repeated phrase, "that you may know." John begins the letter emphasizing that eternal life consists of fellowship with the Father and Son, as well as holiness of life. However, the first use of the term comes in the context of gaining certainty through obedience (2:3). The children "know" the Son and the Father with inner confidence and enjoyment because this knowledge demonstrates itself in concrete acts of faith, righteousness, and love, which give assurance of the Spirit's presence (1 John 1:1–

[117]There is a real sense in which this work of the Spirit—both in regeneration and union with Christ—completes the idea of John 1:4 and the purpose for which man was created—to live in delighted fellowship and harmony with him. John moves in this direction in 1 John 3:2–3. This also brings together the idea of physical and supernatural life in a way that removes any sense of dichotomy: from creation the life of God—Father, Son, and Spirit—was always intended for expression within the physical world, as Jesus displayed (contra: Louis A. Brighton, "Three Modes of Eternal Life," *CTM* 27, no. 4 [October 2001]: 300–2, who seems to confuse both the imperfect expression of the life here with its absence and the essence of what eternal life is). The new creation (Rev 21–22) is an expression of the fullest potential and design of creation in man's experience of life and fellowship with God—Father, Son, and Spirit.

2; 2:25, 29; 3:4–10, 14, 23–24; 4:7–12; 5:2, 11–13, 20).

Throughout the Gospel, First Epistle, and Revelation John has established that the life of the Godhead was manifested and extended to the children through the Son by the Spirit, who gives life through faith in the Son—his person and atonement. This life is entrance into a rich and intimate fellowship with the Father and Son, through the Spirit; received by faith in the Father's revelation in Christ; and is manifested in the display of Christ's character in righteousness and love. Jesus Christ the Son is the perfect and full manifestation of the life of God. He expressed this life most fully in the atonement in which the righteousness and love of God—Father, Son, and Spirit—was made manifest and became the means through which this life is extended to the children by the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit of sonship is the experience of the relational life of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in Jesus Christ, and in love, holiness, and glory.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Spirit of sonship in the Johannine corpus is a glorious, yet underdeveloped theme often eclipsed by John's equally glorious presentation of the deity of Christ and the triune glory of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. To the best of my knowledge, there is no other work that concentrates exclusively on the Spirit's role in bringing the elect to share in the Son's relationship with the Father by tracing its development through specific texts—particularly the eight chosen for this study. Usually the focus of sonship is Paul's five uses of υἱοθεσία (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5), or studies that are primarily concerned with systematic theology or historical theology. Also, there are—from my perspective—two common deficiencies in sonship studies. First, there is a tendency to conflate the metaphors of Paul and John, often subsuming John's teaching under the Pauline metaphor of adoption. Two, there is a tendency to make a direct equation between regeneration and sonship in John without clearly establishing Christ as the one through whom the status of children comes.[1] This dissertation is an effort to begin filling that gap. It is hoped that it makes a contribution to the discussion.

Both Calvin and Gill brought the work of the Spirit in sonship into a sharper focus, although from different angels. Calvin, who, in my estimation, most clearly captured the work of the Spirit in John, did so by emphasizing the Spirit's role of binding

[1]Garner typifies this tendency: "Of course, we must avoid conflating Johannine and Pauline sonship motifs. They overlap and enrich each other, operating from distinct yet wholly compatible paradigms. John highlights the transformation by Spirit-wrought new birth; Paul highlights that transformation by resurrection/adoption flowing out of union with the Son of God" (David B. Garner, *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016], 144). This language fails to recognize the essential linkage of sonship through relation with Christ by the Spirit in John.

the children to Christ. In so doing, he maintained the clear distinction of their persons, while apprehending the spiritual intimacy of the Spirit's relation to Christ and the children. Gill acknowledges this intimacy, but places such emphasis on the distinction of the persons of the Trinity, as well as the generation of the Son as essential to understanding the person's of the Godhead that the intimate work of the Spirit in union with the Son is sometimes diminished. Nonetheless, his strong emphasis on the inseparable operations of the Godhead brought the Spirit to a greater place of prominence in the eternal work of salvation. Thus, both advanced the person of the Spirit and the concept of sonship in their times.

John's high Christology and accent on the glory, distinction, and divine equality of the Father, Son, and Spirit, rather than eclipsing, brings to climatic glory his doctrine of the Spirit of sonship in the children of God. It elevates the glory of the children's eternal status and experience. Moreover, his "silence" regarding the Spirit at times is in fact a support of his stated ministry, which is to "glorify" the Son (John 16:13–15), even as the Son glorified the Father and the Father glorified the Son and the Son the Father. In as much as the Spirit draws the children to behold the wonder and glory of the Father's love in providing the Son for redemption, of the Son's glory in revealing and loving those given to him, brings the children to share in the fellowship of the Father and Son and to reflect the holiness and love of God to the world, then he magnifies his ministry as the Spirit of sonship. This study has demonstrated the presence of Spirit of sonship is manifest when feeding on Christ as the "living bread," delighting in knowledge of the "only true God and Jesus Christ" who was sent, in keeping God's commandments to righteousness and love for the brethren, and the proclamation of Christ to the world. This is the evidence of the Spirit of sonship.

This dissertation has been narrowly focused, although presenting a fairly comprehensive exhibition of sonship, and skipped over many other important areas of study related to this topic. Therefore, a variety of areas are open for exploration:

A thorough comparison—textually and theologically—of the Spirit of sonship in Paul and John in a way that does not conflate the metaphors, but shows their distinct yet harmonious presentation of the Spirit of sonship.

A study of sonship with a focus on ecclesiology, applying the Spirit of sonship to the church's theology, practical ministry, and her self–perception.

A historical development of the Spirit of sonship traced from the fathers through contemporary theologians both in theology and through the lens of their exegesis of sonship passages.

An examination of the Spirit of sonship through the lens of systematic theology, particularly in relation to the hypostatic union, Spirit Christology, and union with Christ.

A thorough comparison of how the Spirit of sonship was experienced by the OT saints before the coming of Christ and the eschatological gift and indwelling of the Spirit.

The vast landscape of Scripture, theology, and history leaves unending possibilities for the discovery of the full glory of sonship. Although, the true glory will not be fully realized until that day when all the children will "be like him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2b). Then, basking in the glory of God—Father, Son, and Spirit—participating in eternal worship of the Father and Son with all of heaven, filled with the Spirit and gazing on the glory of Christ, all the children will feel and know the fullness of sonship and say together, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Commentaries

Akin, Daniel L. *1, 2, 3 John*. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.

Anderson, John L. *An Exegetical Summary of 1, 2, & 3 John*. Dallas: SIL International Publications, 1992.

Arnold, Clinton E. *Ephesians*. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Aune, David E. *Revelation 1–5*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997.

_____. *Revelation 6–16*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

_____. *Revelation 17–22*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

Barrett, C. K. *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978.

Barth, Markus. *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1–3*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1974.

_____. *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4–6*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1974.

Beasley–Murray, George. *John*. Word Biblical Commentary. 2nd ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000.

Bernard, J. H. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*. 2 vols. The International Critical Commentary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929.

Best, Ernest. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*. International Critical Commentary. Paperback Edition. Edinburgh: T & T Clark International, 2004.

_____. *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*. The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Brant, Jo-Ann A. *John*. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Brooke, Canon A. E. *The Johannine Epistles*. International Critical Commentary. Reprint, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1964.

Brown, Raymond E. *The Epistles of John*. The Anchor Bible Series. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982.

_____. *The Gospel According to John I–XII: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible. Vol. 29. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966.

_____. *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible. V ol. 29A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1970.

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982.

_____. *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983.

Bruner, Frederick Dale. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012.

Bultmann, Rudolf. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray. Edited by R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971.

_____. *The Johannine Epistles.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973.

Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries*. 22 vols. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005.

Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991.

Cranfield, C. E. B. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Vol. 1. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T & T Clark Limited, 1975.

_____. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Vol. 2. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979.

Culy, Martin M. *I, II, III John: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004.

Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Reprint, Cambridge: University Printing House, 1972.

_____. *The Johannine Epistles.* The Moffatt New Testament Commentary. Reprint, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966.

Dunn, James D. *Romans 1–8*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988.

_____. *Romans 9–16*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988.

Edwards, Ruth B. *The Johannine Epistles*. New Testament Guides. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

Fung, Ronald Y. K. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988.

Gill, John. *John Gill's Exposition of the Old and New Testaments: Complete and Unabridged*. The Baptist Standard Bearer. Reprint, Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989.

Godet, Frederic Louis. *Commentary on John's Gospel*. 1886. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978.

Grayston, Kenneth. *The Johannine Epistles*. The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publ. Co., 1984.

Gruenler, Royce Gordon. *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986.

Haenchen, Ernst. *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1–6*. Translated by Robert W. Funk. Hermenia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Harris, Murray J. *John*. Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. Edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough. Nashville: B & H, 2015.

Hendriksen, William. *John*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2004.

_____. *Romans: Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002.

Hiebert, Edmond D. *The Epistles of John: An Expositional Commentary*. Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1991.

Hoehner, Harold, W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Hoskyns, Edwyn Clement. *The Fourth Gospel*. Edited by Francis Noel Davey. Rev. ed. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947.

Houlden, J. L. *A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*. 1973. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988.

Jobes, Karen H. *1, 2, & 3 John*. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

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

Klink, Edward W., III. *John*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Vol.4. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.

Koester, Craig R. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Yale Bible. Vol.38A. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. *John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Kruse, Colin G. *John*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Vol.4. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

_____. *The Letters of John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000.

Ladd, George Eldon. *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972.

Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943.

Lieu, Judith M. *I, II, & III John*. The New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

Lincoln, Andrew T. *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990.

_____. *The Gospel According to Saint John*. Black's New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Lindars, Barnabas. *The Gospel of John*. The New Century Bible Commentary. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Longenecker, Richard L. *Galatians*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990.

Marshall, Howard I. *The Epistles of John*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978.

Martyn, J. Louis. *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Yale Bible. Reprint, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

Meyer, F. B. *Gospel of John: The Life and Light of Man Love to the Uttermost*. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1970.

Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The Gospel of John*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010.

Moffatt, James. "Revelation." In vol. 5 of *Expositor's Greek Testament*. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002.

Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996.

_____. *Galatians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. Rev. ed. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. Rev. ed. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.

Murray, John. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Combined paperback ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997.

O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999.

Osborne, Grant R. *Revelation*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Painter, John. *1, 2, and 3 John*. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002.

Palmer, Earl F. *The Intimate Gospel*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978.

Parsenios, George L. *First, Second, and Third John*. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014.

Pink, Arthur W. *Exposition of the Gospel of John*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975.

Plummer, A. *The Epistles of St. John*. Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. 1886. Reprint, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Ridderbos, Herman N. *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997.

Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Gospel According to St. John*. Vol. 1. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1990.

_____. *The Gospel According to St. John*. Vol. 2. Translated by Cecily Hastings, Francis McDonagh, David Smith, and Richard Foley. New York: The Seabury Press, 1980.

_____. *The Gospel According to St. John*. Vol. 3. Translated by David Smith and G. A. Kon. New York: Crossroad, 1982.

_____. *The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary*. English trans. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1992.

Schreiner, Thomas R. *Galatians*. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

_____. *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998.

Smalley, Stephen. *1, 2, 3, John*. Rev. ed. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

_____. *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005.

Stott, John R. W. *The Letters of John*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Reprint, Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Swete, Henry Barclay. *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan and Co., 1917.

Talbert, Charles H. *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*. Rev. ed. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005.

Tasker, R. V. G. *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction and Commentary*. 1960. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976.

Tenney, Merrill C. *John: The Gospel of Belief: An Analytic Study of the Text*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977.

Thielman, Frank. *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.

Thomas, Christopher John, and Frank D. Macchia. *Revelation*. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016.

Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992.

_____. *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. *John: A Commentary*. The New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1966.

Westcott, B. F. *The Gospel According to St. John: The Authorized Version with Introduction and Notes*. 1881. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1950.

Wiles, M. F. *The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

Williamson, Peter S. *Revelation*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.

Witherington, Ben, III. *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

Yarbrough, Robert W. *1–3 John.* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Books

Abbott, Edwin Abbott. *Johannine Vocabulary: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with Those of the Three*. Reprint, Miami: HardPress Publishing, n.d.

Akala, Adesola Joan. *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John*. The Library of New Testament Studies. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014.

Allison, Gregg A. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

Anderson, Paul N. *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996.

Appold, Mark L. *The Oneness Motif of the Fourth Gospel: Motif Analysis and Exegetical Probe into the Fourth Gospel*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1976.

Barrett, C. D. *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.

Barth, Karl. "The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part 1." In vol. 4.1 in *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.

Barton, Stephen C. *The Spirituality of the Gospels*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005.

Basil the Great. *On the Holy Spirit.* Popular Patristics. Translated by Stephen Hidlebrand. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011.

Bass, Christopher D. *That You May Know: Assurance of Salvation in 1 John*. New American Commentary Studies in Bible & Theology. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008.

Bauckham, Richard. *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.

_____. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

_____. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. New Testament Theology. Edited by James D. G. Dunn. Reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Bauckham, Richard, and Carl Moser, eds. *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008.

Bavinck, Herman. *God and Creation.* Vol. 2 of *Reformed Dogmatics*. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

_____. *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*. Vol. 4 of *Reformed Dogmatics*. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Carlisle, Cumbria: The Paternoster Press, 1999.

_____. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Beasley-Murray, G. R. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans; and Carlisle, Cumbria: The Paternoster Press, 1999.

_____. *Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. Peabody, MA: Hendriksen Publishers, 1991.

Beckwith, Carl L. *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity: From* De Fide *to* De Trinitate. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. New ed. containing *Systematic Theology* and the original *Introductory Volume to Systematic Theology*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996.

Bettenson, Henry, ed. and trans. *The Later Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Billings, J. Todd. *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Blomberg, Craig L. *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Breck, John. *Spirit of Truth: The Origins of Johannine Pneumatology*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991.

Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospels and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988.

Brown, Tricia Gates. *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series. New York: T & T Clark International, 2003.

Burge, Gary M. *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987.

_____. *Interpreting the Gospel of John: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.

Burke, Trevor J. *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Burke, Trevor J., and Keith Warrington, eds. *A Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014.

Burns, Lanier. *The Nearness of God: His Presence with His People*. Explorations in Biblical Theology. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009.

Burns, Paul C. *A Christology in Hilary of Poitiers' Commentary on Matthew.* Studia Ephemeridis "Augustinianum," 16. Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1981.

Byrne, Brendan. *Life Abounding: A Reading of John's Gospel*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014.

Calvin, Jean. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2 vols. The Library of Christian Classics. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960.

Cameron, Nigel de S., and Sinclair B. Ferguson, eds. *Pulpit & People: Essays in Honour of William Still on His 75th Birthday*. Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1986.

Campbell, Constantine R. *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Carson, D. A. *Jesus the Son of God: A Christological Title Often Overlooked, Sometimes Misunderstood, and Currently Disputed*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Carson, D. A., and Douglas J. Moo. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Chennattu, Rekha M. *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006.

Chester, Tim. *Delighting in the Trinity: Why Father, Son and Spirit Are Good News*. Rev. 2nd ed. Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2010.

Cole, Graham A. *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007.

Cook, James I., ed. *Saved by Hope: Essays in Honor of Richard C. Oudersluys*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978.

Corduan, Winfried. *Mysticism: An Evangelical Option?* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1991.

Crisp, Oliver D. *Divinity and Humanity*. Current Issues in Theology. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Crisp, Oliver D., and Fred Sanders, eds. *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Exploration in Constructive Dogmatics*. Lectures from the Los Angeles Theology Conference. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Cross, F. L., ed. *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*. London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1957.

Crowe, Brandon D. *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.

Culpepper, R. Alan, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

_____. *The Gospel and Letters of John*. Interpreting Biblical Text. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Culpepper, R. Alan., and Clifton C. Black, eds. *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Culver, Robert Duncan. *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical*. Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2005.

Dabney, R. L. *Systematic Theology*. Reprint, Avon, Great Britian: The Bath Press, 1996.

de Jonge, Marinus. *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God: Jesus Christ and the Christians in Johannine Perspective*. Edited and translated by John E. Steely. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977.

Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Dods, Marcus. "The Gospel of St. John." In vol. 1 of *The Expositor's Greek Testament*. Edited by W. Robertson Nicoll. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002.

Due, Noel. *Created for Worship: From Genesis to Revelation to You*. Reprint, Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2009.

Dunn, James D. G. *Jesus and the Spirit: A study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Company, 1975.

Edwards, Ruth B. *Discovering John: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. Discovering Biblical Texts. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014.

Ella, George M. *John Gill: And the Cause of God and Truth*. Durham, NC: Go Publications, 1995.

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.

Evans, William. *Epochs in the Life of Christ*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916.

Fairbairn, Donald. *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Fee, Gordon D. *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994.

_____. *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996.

Feinberg, John. *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. *Children of the Living God: Delighting in the Father's Love*. East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2011.

_____. *The Holy Spirit*. Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

_____. *John Owen on the Christian Life*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987.

Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of God*. A Theology of Lordship. Vol.2. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002.

Hamilton, James M. *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old & New Testaments*. New American Commentary Studies in Bible & Theology. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2006.

_____. "He is with You and He will be in You: The Spirit, the Believer, and the Glorification of Jesus." Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003.

Hawthorne, Gerald F. *The Presence & The Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003.

Haykin, Michael A. G., ed. *The British Particular Baptist: 1638–1910.* Vol. 1. Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998.

_____, ed. *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*. New York: Brill, 1997.

_____. *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.

Holmes, Christopher R.J. *The Holy Spirit*. New Studies in Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

Gifford, James D. Jr. *Perichoretic Salvation: The Believer's Union with Christ as a Third Type of Perichoresis*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011.

Gill, John. *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity: Or A System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures*. 1809. Reprint, Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2007.

_____. *The Doctrine of the Trinity, Stated and Vindicated; Being the Substance of Several Discourses on that Important Subject; Reduc'd into the Form of a Treatise*. 1731. Eighteenth Century Collections Online Print Editions. Reprint, n.d.

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *The Son of God and the New Creation*. Short Studies in Biblical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

González, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day*. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.

Habets, Myk. *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010.

Harris, Murray J. *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of* Theos *in Reference to Jesus*. Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1992.

_____. *Prepositions and Theology: In the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Hill, Wesley. *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letter*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986.

_____. *Saved by Grace*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989.

Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

Johnson, Darrell W. *Experiencing the Trinity*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2002.

Kistemaker, Simon J. *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

Koester, Craig R. *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

_____. *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. *The Mission of Jesus & The Disciples: According to the Fourth Gospel with Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.

_____. *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Köstenberger, Andreas J., and Scott R. Swain. *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.

Kuyper, Abraham. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. 1900. Reprint, Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2012.

Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of Christianity: Beginnings to 1500*. Vol. 1. Rev. ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005.

Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship.* Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004.

_____. *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011.

Levison, John R. *Filled with the Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009.

Lieu, Judith. *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*. New Testament Theology. Reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Lindars, Barnabas. *John*. New Testament Guides. Reprint, Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.

Malatesta, Edward. *Interiority and Covenant: A Study of* εἶναι ἐν *and* μένειν ἐν *In the First Letter of Saint John*. Analecta Biblica 69. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978.

Martyn, J. Louis. *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel.* 3rd ed. The New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Meijering, E. P. *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity*. In vol. 6 of *Philosophia Patrum*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1982.

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

Moore, Russell D. *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009.

Morgan, Christopher W., ed. *The Love of God*. Theology in Community. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

Morris, Leon. *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969.

Oliver, John W. *Giver of Life: The Holy Spirit in Orthodox Tradition*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2011.

Oliver, Robert W. *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists: 1771–1892 from John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon*. East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2006.

Owen, John. *The Work of the Spirit*. Vol. 4 of *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold. Reprint, East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2013.

Packer, J. I. *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in our Walk with God*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005.

_____. *Knowing God*. 20th Anniversary ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Packer, J. I., and Loren Wilkinson, eds. *Alive to God: Studies in Spirituality*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

Peppard, Michael. *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in Its Social and Political Context*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Peterson, A. Robert. *Adopted by God: From Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011.

_____. *Getting to Know John's Gospel: A Fresh Look At Its Main Ideas*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1989.

_____. *Salvation and the Spirit: Union with Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

Peterson, David. *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1995.

Porter, Stanley E. *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015.

Rainbow, Paul A. *Johannine Theology: The Gospel, The Epistles, and the Apocalypse*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014.

Relton, Herbert M. *A Study in Christology: The Problem of the Relation of the Two Natures in the Person of Christ*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002.

Reymond, Robert L. *What Is God: An Investigation of the Perfections of God's Nature*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2007.

Rippon, John. *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D.D.* Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1992.

_____. *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Reverend and Learned John Gill, D.D.: xxix–lxxxiii*. In vol. 1 of *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments by John Gill: Complete and Unabridged*. Reprint, Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989.

Roberts, Alexander, and James Donaldson, eds. *The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325: Ante–Nicene Fathers*. 10 vols. Rev. ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004.

Ross, Allen P. *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006.

Rusch, William G. *The Trinitarian Controversy*. Sources of Early Christian Thought. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

Sanders, Fred. *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

_____. *The Triune God*. New Studies in Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.

Sanders, Fred, and Klaus Issler. *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007.

Schaff, Philip, ed. *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*. 3 vols. 2nd ed. Rev. by David S. Schaff. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007.

_____, ed. *A Select Library of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers*. 14 vols. 1st Series. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012.

Schaff, Philip, and Henry Wace, eds. *A Select Library of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers*. 14 vols. 2nd Series. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004.

Scott, James M. *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background in the Pauline Corpus*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1992.

Segovia, Fernando F. *Love Relationships in the Johannine Tradition*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.

Sherman, Robert. *Covenant, Community, and the Spirit: A Trinitarian Theology of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.

Smith, Moody D. *Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources, and Theology*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984.

_____. *The Theology of Gospel of John*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Stevens, George B. *The Johannine Theology: A Study of Doctrinal Contents of the Gospel and Epistles of the Apostle John*. 1895. Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.

Stevenson–Moessner, Jeanne. *The Spirit of Adoption: At Home in God's Family*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Talbert, Charles H. *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*. Rev. ed. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005.

Tannehill, Robert C. *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006.

Taylor, Richard S. *Life in the Spirit: Christian Holiness in Doctrine, Experience and Life*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1966.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. *The God of the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001.

_____. *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.

Toon, Peter. *Puritans and Calvinism*. Swengel, PA: Reiner Publications, 1973.

Torrance, James B. *Worship, Community, & the Triune God of Grace*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Trumper, Tim J. R. *When History Teaches Us Nothing: The Recent Reformed Sonship Debate in Context*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008.

Vellanickal, Matthew. *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*. Analecta Biblica 72. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977.

Wahlde, Urban C. von. *The Johannine Commandments: 1 John and the Struggle for the Johannine Tradition*. Theological Inquiries: Studies in Biblical and Theological Problems. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.

Ware, Bruce A. *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, & Relevance*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005.

_____. *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.

Ware, Bruce A., and John Starke, eds. *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

Warfield, Benjamin B. *Biblical Doctrine.* Vol. 2 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.

_____. *Calvin and Calvinism*. Vol. 5 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.

_____. *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*. Vol. 4 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.

Weedman, Mark. *The Trinitarian Theology of Hilary of Poitiers*. In vol. 89 of *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae: Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007.

Weinandy, Thomas. *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1995.

Wells, David. *God in the Whirlwind: How the Holy-Love of God Reorients Our World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

Wiles, M. F. *The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960.

Wilken, Robert Louis. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

Williams, David J. *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999.

Wu, Siu Fung. *Suffering in Romans*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015.

Articles

Allen, Michael. "'From the Time He Took on the Form of a Servant': The Christ's Pilgrimage of Faith." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 1 (January 2014): 4–24.

Allison, Dale C. "The Living Water (John 4:10–14; 6:35c; 7:37–39)." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1986): 143–57.

Anatolios, Khaled. "Divine *Disponibilité*: The Hypostatic Ethos of the Holy Spirit." *Pro Ecclesia* 12, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 287–308.

Attfield, D. G. "'I in You and You in Me' Perichoresis and Salvation." *Theology* 109, no. 852 (November/December 2006): 421–29.

Bartling, Victor. "We Love Because He First Loved Us." *Concordia Theological Monthly* 23, no. 12 (December 1952): 868–83.

Bass, Christopher D. "A Johannine Persepctive of the Human Responsibility to Persevere in the Faith, through the use of μένω and Other Related Motifs." *Westminster Theological Journal* 69, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 306–27.

Beale, G. K. "Eden, The Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation." *Journal of Evangelical Theology* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 5–31.

Behm, Johannes. "παράκλητος." In vol. 5 of *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Freidrich. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977: 800–14.

Bigelow, Ted. “The Sufficiency of the Scripture is the Sufficiency of the Trinity: An Exegetical Examination of John 16:12–15.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence, RI, November, 2008.

Bobrinsky, Boris. “The Indwelling of the Spirit in Christ: ‘Pneumatic Christology’ in the Cappadocian Fathers.” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1984): 49–65.

Bourassa, François, S. J. “Adoptive Sonship: Our Union with the Divine Persons.” *Theological Studies* 13, no. 3 (September 1952): 309–35.

Bracken, Joseph A. “Trinitarian Spirit Christology: In Need of A New Metaphysics?” *Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (December 2011): 750–67.

Bray, Gerald. “The Double Procession of the Holy Spirit in Evangelical Theology Today: Do We Still Need It?” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 3 (September 1998): 418–26.

Brighton, Louis A. “Three Modes of Eternal Life.” *Concordia Journal* 27, no. 4 (October 2001): 298–309.

Brown, Colin. “Remain.” In *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, edited by Colin Brown. Translated, with additions and revisions, from the German *Theologisches Begriffslexikon um Neuen Testament*, edited by Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard, 223–29. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.

Büchsel, Friedrich, “ἐλέγχω.” In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 473–76. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976.

Bucur, Bogdan G. “Hierarchy, Prophecy, and the Angelomorphic Spirit: A Contribution to the Study of the Book of Revelation’s *Wirkungsgeschichte*.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 1 (2008): 173–94.

Bultmann, Rudolf. “ἀπειθέω.” In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10–11. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976.

Burke, Trevor J. “Adopted as Sons (υἱοθεσία): The Missing Piece in Pauline Soteriology.” In *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman*. Edited by Stanely Porter, 259–287. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

_____. “The Characteristics of Paul’s Adoptive–Sonship (Huiothesia) Motif.” *Irish Biblical Studies* 17 (January 1995): 62–74.

Cahill, Joseph P. “The Johannine *Logos* as Center” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (January 1976): 54–72.

Campbell, J.Y. “KOINΩNIA and Its Cognates in the New Testament.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51, no. 4 (December 1952): 352–80.

Carson, D. A. “Adumbrations of Atonement Theology in the Fourth Gospel.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 3 (September 2014): 513–22.

Charles, Dayrl. “An Apocalyptic Tribute to the Lamb: Rev. 5:1–14.” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society.* 34, no. 4 (December 1991): 461–73.

Coffey, David. “The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son.” *Theological Studies* 51, no. 2 (June 1990): 193–228.

Connell, Martin F. “On ‘Chrism’ and ‘Anti-Christs’ in 1 John 2:18–27: A Hypothesis.” *Worship* 83, no. 3 (May 2009): 212–34.

Constantelos, Demetrios J. “Toward the Convocation of the Second Ecumenical Synod.” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 395–405.

Crisp, Oliver D. “John Owen on Spirit Christology.” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 5 (2011): 5–25.

Crump, David. “Re-examining the Johannine Trinity: Perichoresis or Deification?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 59, no. 4 (2006): 395–412.

Culpepper, R. Alan. “The Johannine Hypodeigma: A Reading of John 13.” *Semia* 53 (1991): 132–52.

_____. “The Pivot of John’s Prologue.” *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 1 (October 1980): 1–31.

Davis, J. C. “The Johannine Concept of Eternal Life as a Present Possession.” *Restoration Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1984): 161-69.

Dean, Robert, Jr. “Abiding in Christ: Dispensational Spiritual Life.” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 7, no. 1 (January 2001): 24–50.

DelCogliano, Mark. “Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti–Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 2 (October 2010): 644–58.

de Smidt, Kobus. “Hermeneutical Perspective on the Spirit in the Book of Revelation.” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7, no. 14 (April 1999): 27–47.

Dusen, Henry van. “The Trinity in Experience and Theology.” *Theology Today* 15, no. 3 (October 1958): 377–86.

Dyer, Jacob A. “The Unappreciated Light.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79, no. 2 (June 1960): 170–71.

Ettlinger, Gerard H., S. J. “The Holy Spirit in the Theology of the Second Ecumenical Synod and in the Undivided Church.” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 431–40.

Geanakoplos, Deno J. “The Second Ecumenical Synod of Constantinople (381): Proceedings and Theology of the Holy Spirit.” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 407–29.

Gordon, Joseph Kenneth. “Deifying Adoption as Impetus for Moral Transformation: Augustine’s *Sermons* on the Christological Ethics of ‘Godhood.’” *Stone–Campbell Journal* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 193–206.

Gregg, Robert C., and Dennis E. Groh. “The Centrality of Soteriology in Early Arianism.” *Anglican Theological Review* 59, no. 3 (July 1977): 260–78.

Gundersen, David A. “Adoption, Assurance, and the Testimony of the Holy Spirit.” *The Journal of Family Ministry* 2, no. 1 (Fall–Winter 2011): 18–35.

Gustafson, A. Henry. “The Means to Eternal Life: A Study of John 3:1–18.” *The Covenant Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (February 1968): 3–14.

Hanson, R. P. C. “Basil’s Doctrine of Tradition in Relation to the Holy Spirit.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968): 241–55.

Harman, M. Allan. “Speech about The Trinity: With Special Reference to Novation, Hilary and Calvin.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26, no. 4 (November 1973): 385–400.

Harrison, Nonna Verna. “Greek Patristic Foundations of Trinitarian Anthropology.” *Pro Ecclesia* 14, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 399–412.

Hauck, F. “μένω.” In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Freidrich. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 574–88. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977.

Haykin, Michael A. G. “Andrew Fuller and the Defense of Trinitarian Communities.” *American Baptist Quarterly* 32, nos. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 2013): 258–78.

_____. “‘Glory to the Three Eternal’: Benjamin Beddome and the Teaching of Trinitarian Theology in the Eighteenth Century.” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 72–85.

Heim, Mark S. “Salvation as Communion: Partakers of the Divine Nature.” *Theology Today* 61, no. 3 (October 2004): 322–33.

Hoeferkamp, Robert. “The Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel from the Viewpoint of Christ’s Glorification.” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 33, no. 9 (September 1962): 517–29.

Irons, Charles Lee. “A Lexical Defense of the Eternal Generation of the ‘Only Begotten’ Son.” A paper presented at far west regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence Christian College, Pasadena, CA, 2014.

James, John L. W. “An Examination of *Homotimia* in St. Basil the Great’s *On the Holy Spirit*, and Contemporary Implications.” *Westminster Theological Journal* 74, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 257–76.

Jones, Peter Rhea. “A Presiding Metaphor of First John: μένει ἐν.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 179–93.

Kaiser, Christopher. “The Development of Johannine Motifs in Hilary’s Doctrine of the Trinity.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 29, no. 3 (1976): 237–47.

Kapic, Kelly M., and Wesley Vander Lugt. “The Ascension of Jesus and the Descent of the Holy Spirit in Patristic Perspective: A Theological Reading.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (January 2007): 23–33.

Kärkäinnen, Veli-Matti. “Trinity as Communion in the Spirit: Koinonia, Trinity, and Filioque in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue.” *PNEUMA The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 22, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 209–30.

Kelly, Douglas. “Adoption: An Underdeveloped Heritage of the Westminster Standard.” *The Reformed Theological Review* 52, no. 3 (September–December 1993): 110–20.

Kuehn, Evan F. “The Johannine Logic of Augustine’s Trinity: A Dogmatic Sketch.” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 572–94.

Lawyer, John. “The First Celtic Theologian: Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity.” *Fides et Historia* 38, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2006): 1–22.

Lee, Dorothy. “In the Spirit of Truth: Worship and Prayer in the Gospel of John and the Early Fathers.” *Vigiliae Christianae*: *A Review of Early Christian Life and Language* 58, no. 3 (2004): 277–97.

Loader, W. R. “The Apocalyptic Model of Sonship: Its Origin and Development in New Testament Tradition.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97, no. 4 (1978): 525–54.

Marcus, Joel. “Rivers of Living Water from Jesus’ Belly (John 7:38).” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 328–30.

Marie, Jean. “St. Cyril and the Liturgy.” *Orate Fratres* 1, no. 4 (February 1927): 103–8.

Marshall, Molly T. “Participating in the Life of God: A Trinitiarian Pneumatology.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 139–50.

McDonald, Suzanne. “Historical and Theological Studies: The Pneumatology of the ‘Lost’ Image in John Owen.” *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (2009): 323–35.

McDonnell, Kilian. “Does the Theology and Practice of the Early Church Confirm the Classical Pentecostal Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit?” *Pnuema: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 21 no. 1 (Spring 1999): 115–33.

McKenzie, John L. “Divine Sonship and Individual Religion.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (January 1945): 32–47.

Menken, Maarten J. J. “‘Born of God’ or ‘Begotten by God?’ A Translation Problem in the Johannine Writings.” *Novum Testamentum* 51 (2009): 352–68.

Mills, Donald W. “The Holy Spirit in 1 John.” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 (Fall 1999): 33–51.

Morrison, Hector. “The Ascension of Jesus and the Gift of the Holy Spirit.” *Evangel* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 36–38.

Müller, Hermann. “ταράσσω.” In *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Colin Brown. Translated, with additions and revisions, from the German Theologisches Begriffslexikon Zum Neuen Testament. Eng. language ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.

Muller, Richard A. “The Spirit and the Covenant: John Gill’s Critique of the Pactum Salutis.” *Foundations* 24, no 1 (January–March 1981): 4-14.

Misner, Paul. “Newman and the Tradition Concerning the Papal Antichrist.” *Church History* 42, no. 3 (September 1973): 377–95.

Peppard, Michael. “Adopted and Begotten Sons of God.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (January 2011): 92–110.

Peterson, Robert A. “Toward a Systematic Theology of Adoption.” *Presbyterian* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 120–31.

Price, Charles P. “Some Notes on Filioque.” *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 515–35.

Pryor, John W. “Of the Virgin Birth or the Birth of Christians? The Text of John 1:13 Once More.” *Novum Testamentum* 27, no. 4 (1985): 296–318.

Redman, Robert R., Jr. “Participatio Christi: H. R. Mackintosh’s Theology of the Unio Mystica.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49, no. 2 (1996): 201–22.

Rheaume, Randy. “John’s Jesus on Life Support: His Filial Relationship in John 5:26 and 6:57.” *Trinity Journal* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 49–75.

Rickabaugh, Brandon L. “Eternal Life as Knowledge of God: An Epistemology of Knowledge by Acquaintance and Spiritual Formation.” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 6, no. 2 (2013): 204–28.

Roberts, J. W. “Some Observations on the Meaning of ‘Eternal Life’ in the Gospel of John.” *Restoration Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1963): 186–93.

Robertson, S. “Sonship in John’s Gospel.” *The Asia Journal of Theology* 25, no. 2 (October 2011): 315–33.

Schneiders, Sandra M. “The Foot Washing (John 13:1–20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (January 1981): 76-92.

Scholer, David M. “1 John 4:7–21.” *Review & Expositor* 87, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 309-14.

Schweizer, Albert. “πνεῦμα.” In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Freidrich. Translated and edited Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 389–455. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977.

Seesemann, Heinrich. “οἶδα.” In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited. by Gerhard Freidrich. Translated and edited Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 116–19. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977.

Sikes, Walter W. “A note on AGAPE in Johannine Literature.” *Shane Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (July 1955): 139–43.

Speidell, Todd H. “A Trinitarian Ontology of Person in Society.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47, no. 3 (1994): 283–300.

Staley, Jeff. “The Structure of John’s Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel’s Narrative Structure.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (April 1986): 241–49.

Swain, Scott, and Allen, Michael. “The Obedience of the Eternal Son.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 2 (April 2013): 114–34.

Tenney, Merrill C. “Topics from the Gospel of John, Pt. 1: The Person of the Father.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January 1975): 37–46.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. “Eternal Life in the Gospel of John.” *Ex auditu* 5 (1989): 35–55.

Toom, Tarmo. “Hilary of Poitiers’ *De Trinitate* and the Name(s) of God.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 64, no. 5 (2010): 456–79.

Trocmé, Etienne. “Light and Darkness in the Fourth Gospel.” *Didaskalia* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 3–13.

van der Merwe, Dirk G. “Early Christian Spirituality According to the First Epistle of John: The identification of Different ‘Lived Experiences.’” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 69, no.1 (2014): 1–9.

_____. “Early Christian Spiritualties of Sin and Forgiveness according to 1 John.” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): 1–11.

van der Watt, Jan G. “Ethics and Ethos in the Gospel According to John.” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 97, no. 2 (2006): 147–76.

_____. “The Use of ΑΙΩΝΙΟΣ in the Concept ΖΩΗ ΑΙΩΝΙΟΣ in John’s Gospel,” *Novum Testamentum* 31, no. 3 (1989): 217–28.

van Oort, Johannes. “The Holy Spirit and the Early Church: The Experience of the Spirit.” *Theological Studies* 68, no. 1 (2012): 1–7.

Waetjen, Herman C. “Logos πρὸς τὸν θεόν and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (April 2011): 265–86.

Wainwright, Geoffrey. “The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church.” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 441–53.

Walvoord, John F. “The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Person and Work of Christ.” Part 4 of “The Person of the Holy Spirit.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 98, no. 389 (January–March 1941): 28–56. Accessed on Accordance software prepared by OakTree Software, version 2.0.

_____. “The Person of the Holy Spirit, Pt. 1: The Person of the Holy Spirit.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 97, no. 386 (April–June 1940): 166–88.

Watson, John H. “Baptist and the Bible: As Seen in Three Eminent Baptists.” *Foundations* 16, no. 3 (July–September 1973): 239–54.

Webster, John. “Illumination.” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 5, no. 3 (2011): 325–40.

Weedman, Mark. “Hilary and the Homoiousians: Using New Categories to Map the Trinitarian Controversy.” *Church History* 76, no. 3 (September 2007): 491–510.

Williams, Peter J. “Not the Prologue of John.” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 4 (June 2011): 375–86.

Wilson, Paul Scott. “Living Water in John 4:7–30.” *Ex Auditu* 30 (2014): 165–67.

Wittman, Tyler R. “The End of the Incarnation: John Owen, Trinitarian Agency and Christology.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 3 (July 2013): 284–300.

Yarden, Ophir. “Adoption in Judaism.” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 276–83.

Yong, Amos. “‘The Light Shines in the Darkness’: Johannine Dualism and the Challenge for Christian Theology of Religions Today.” *The Journal of Religion* 89, no. 1 (January 2009): 31–56.

Zaprometova, Olga M. “Experiencing the Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Reading of the Early Church Fathers Part 1: Gregory the Theologian.” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 29, no. 2 (2009): 4–13.

Dissertations

DeKlavon, David Raymond. “The Holy Spirit as a Means of Confirmation in the Letters of Paul.” Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998.

Ripee, Ryan Lowell. “That God May be All in All: A Paterology Demonstrating that the Father is the Initiator of All Divine Activity.” Ph.D. diss.,The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016.

Tuppurainen, Riku Pekka. “The Role(s) of the Spirit–Paraclete in John 16:4b–15: A Socio–Rhetorical Investigation.” Ph.D. diss., University of South Africa, 2007.