

The Unity of Jesus And God In The Fourth Gospel

PREFACE

This exegesis was originally written in the Spring of 1974. Though I have considerably rewritten the body of the paper before posting to the Internet, I have not expanded the Bibliography. There are many later resources that might shed further light on the topic. But I have not attempted to evaluate current literature.

– OBJ, Johannesburg, October 2007

INTRODUCTION

A prominent and basic theme of the Fourth Gospel is that Jesus is one with God. This unity is expressed in terms of Father and Son. In this Gospel Jesus says that he and the Father are one, and this unity is assumed throughout the Gospel (ex. 17:22, 10:38). When people have heard the words of Jesus, they have heard the words of God (14:10), and when they see the things Jesus does, they are seeing the things God does (5:17, 19-20).

Believing in Jesus is also equated with believing in God (12:44). It seems to be the purpose (or at least one of the purposes) of this theme to defend the notion that following Jesus means following God. This defense appears to be necessary for the believing community because they are being rejected by the Synagogue.

We will look at this theme of Unity of God and Jesus and examine the terms used to develop the theme. In conclusion, we will see how this reflects or relates to the Jewish-Christian problem assumed in the book. This will lead to the implications for the believing community of the Evangelist.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEME

We find that the meaning of the oneness of Jesus with God is primarily a matter of **function** in the Fourth Gospel. The term *character* might be adjoined to “function” to indicate the moral base of the same issue. Thus, not only is Jesus *doing* the things God does (5:17ff – working for man’s benefit and good), but his deeds are seated in *God’s own will* (5:19, 30).

Divine Agent

Further illustration of the function-relatedness is in 10:37, 38 (cf. 10:25), referring to Jesus’ works, which are God’s works – involving who God is and the fact that he is in Jesus. In 10:27-30 Jesus acts as God’s agent or representative to give eternal life. We will also see that the Son is given the authority to judge. John 5:19-25 shows Jesus as the one who has been given God’s power and authority; in 8:28, the authority on which he operates is God’s, and this authority extends over all

living creatures (17:1).

All these references indicate, in fact, that Jesus is considered as a separate being from God himself, and dependent on him, but one with him in will, purpose and work, and this because he *is* dependent.

Descent-Ascent

Jesus refers to God (the Father) as “the one who sent me” (*ὁ πέμψας με*) and says he will go back to him (7:31, 8:23, 6:38, 41-42, 50 and particularly 13:3). Coming from heaven and going back emphasize the divine origin of Jesus in John’s Gospel. This “descent/ascent” separates Jesus from all earthly men.¹ (See John 17:8, 16:5, 8:14.) This is presaged in the hymn-prologue as the *Logos* comes into the world from God.

Jesus is God-in-the-world: if you see him you have seen God (14:6-11). “The three passages put on the lips of Jesus (1:51, 3:13, and 6:62) are clearly meant to indicate the writer’s belief in the heavenly origin of the Son of Man and his return to that place of origin.”² *In principle*, this is doubtless correct, but we need to look at one other aspect of John’s construction of this oneness.

Essential Union

If we read the ascent and descent verses cited above in conjunction with 10:30, it appears at first that the evangelist goes beyond simply function and means to include ontological, or mystical, union. And some commentators have dissolved the idea of agent into a Platonic, eternal relationship, e.g., C. H. Dodd.³ And Wayne Meeks tends toward this in his analysis of the descent/ascent motif.

We are not prepared to disprove or substantiate that possibility in this paper, but it should be considered that in Jesus’ prayer, this same unity is to extend to the disciples, (*ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθῶς ἡμεῖς* (so they may be one as we are), 17:11, and *ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν, καθῶς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ κἀγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὧσιν* (that may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I am in you. May they be one in us.), 17:21). This unity could easily be understood in terms of function and character in life. The mystical view is usually based on the *logos*’s identification in Ch. 1, giving a kind of “*Logos-Christ*” bias to the interpretation of this gospel.

But Ernest Colwell aptly observes that it would be equally reasonable to call him the “*Rabbi-Christ*,” since *λογός* is used *only* in the prologue. John does not apply the term *logos* to Jesus, whereas “*Rabbi*” is used eight times.⁴ However we understand the oneness, we must allow the relation to extend to the disciples just as to Jesus.

Unity of the Community

This extension of Divine Unity to the disciples is foundational in John's Gospel. The "high-priestly" prayer of Jesus (ch 17) before his Passion focuses on this Oneness. His last command to his core group is to be one and to love each other just as Jesus and the Father love each other in their unity (15:9-13). Jesus, in his final prayer for his followers, says he is praying not just for the immediate followers, but for those that would believe through their word (17:20-21).

These would be words of encouragement to the Johannine community undergoing persecution and undergoing a crisis of identity as they are rejected by the synagogue, though they themselves feel they are only being good Jews by following Jesus as the Messiah. We will see in the concluding section of the paper how the community becomes one in function with God (and Jesus).

THE COMMISSIONED AGENT

Peder Borgen has examined the Jewish rules of agency, and shows that these offer a framework for understanding the Fourth Gospel's relation of Jesus to the Father, and a perspective on the "descent/ascent" motif.⁵ The first rule of agency is that "an agent is like the one who sent him."⁶ This has to do primarily with judicial function and effects. Some Jewish *Halakah* commentators did go beyond this to suggest a mystical identification. (cf. 12:44 – believe; 13:20 – receive; 5:23 – honor.) If Jesus is seen as God's agent and God as being in heaven, the term "come down" would be expected to make the analogy fit.

In the Gospel the use of the Son as the agent emphasizes two factors consistent with the principles of agency:

(1) The personal element is deepened because the Son is closer to the Father than another agent might be

(2) and yet the Son is subordinate to the Father (cf. John 13:16, 5:19). The unity in relationship is deepened, while the identification is modified by the superiority of the sender.

Further, the agent performs faithfully the mission he is assigned. Jesus does the will of his Father, God (6:38, 7:16, 8:29, 8:42). In the context of a lawsuit, "according to the *Halakah* the sender transferred his own rights and the property concerned to the agent,"⁷ thus coming to Jesus as agent is the same as being given to the Father (12:31-32, 17:6, 6:44). Jesus says, "I am the way to get to the one who sent me" (14:1-6) and "You do not love God because you reject me" (5:40-43).

Then the agent must always report back to the sender. Thus Jesus must *μεταβῆ ἔκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα* (return from this world, to the father, 13:1). He is in effect already making the report "in preview" in the prayer (17:4).

Finally, an agent can appoint an agent. Thus Jesus sends his disciples into the world to do the work of the Father also (17:16), and they are thus one with the Father also (17:21). This again is a **functional** unity, as with Jesus, doing the work of the Father. It can entail, as reflected above, their mystical union with the Father, just as Jesus. This might be reinforced with the image Jesus draws

for them of the Comforter, or Encourager, whom he will send.

It seems possible from this study that the motif of sending in John is a **coalescence** of the *descent/ascent* motif (as seen in the Son of Man) with an *agent motif* of commissioning-sending forth/reporting which has up/down aspects due to the analogy with God (who is up in heaven). At any rate, the point is that the agent motif would be *familiar to the Jewish world*, and seems to point out in this Gospel that Jesus *was* a special occasion for decision, as he was God's operating agent in the world.

THE SON

In John the relationship of God and his commissioned agent is portrayed as that of Father and Son. Even at the point of Jesus' direct claim at oneness with God, this figure is used: "I and *my Father* are one" (10:30). Jesus is always the Son. This is distinctive in John, as there are only two occasions in the Synoptics where this figure is used: Luke 10:22/Matt. 11:27 and Mark 13:32/Matt. 24:36. Perhaps this was used by John to emphasize the intensity of the relation of Jesus to God. In 3:16, he is the *only (or unique, μονογενῆ)* Son – Jesus' person and character are extraordinary.

Post-Prophetic

Borgen sees the Old Testament prophetic role in John's Jesus, with the sending and commissioning of the Son at the very center of the message of the book. But the role has been further developed along lines reflecting the early stages of "merkabah" mysticism, and according to the post-prophetic rules of agency.⁸ He suggests that rather than John's Gospel drawing on gnostic ideas of heavenly agents, both gnostic thought and the evangelist drew upon these Jewish rules of agency.

Authorized Agent

The figure of the Son emphasizes the intimacy of the agent with the sender, and makes more personal the message the agent bears. Jesus is portrayed as the Son. But two variations on this are also used, "Son of Man" and "Son of God." All three terms are used interchangeably to refer to Jesus, as in John 3:13-18, where they are used in turn, and in John 5:25-27, where the concepts are adjoined by a stated identification: the Son of God will call the dead, for the Son has been given authority to judge, because he is the Son of Man.

The last example seems to indicate that the evangelist has taken different terms entailing separate, or at least variant, concepts and unified or equated them, and having done so, applies all the connotations of these various titles to the one Jesus. The next two sections will examine the concepts entailed by each of these terms of sonship.

SON OF GOD

The Synoptic Gospels are restrained in their use of the title "Son of God," but in John the term is

used throughout the book. It is early on given greater importance than in the Synoptics as it is spoken by two early witnesses in the Gospel, John the Baptist and Nathanael. John Howton, believing the term was actually applied to Jesus by these men, says that John “wanted to show the comprehensiveness of the title used by these early followers ... and to give its meaning a content far fuller than they could have imagined.”⁹

Howton suggests that the readers or hearers of the Fourth Gospel would have an understanding of the term based on its use in the Old Testament. The term does not occur there as a *title* like Messiah, as an office, but expresses *an association* with human sonship, emphasizing **relation**.

Relational Identity

Israel is God’s son; because God not only chose, but actually¹⁰ created the people Israel. From the concrete relational character of Hebrew culture, and general Semitic culture, we would expect that the relationship aspect would be of high value. This would entail the interpersonal relationship, but also the covenant obligations, the resulting identity and the sacred character of identification with Yahweh in this special relationship.

Direct statements that Israel is God’s son are only five:

- Hos. 11:1 – I called my Son out of Egypt
- Jer. 31:9, 20 – God is father, Ephraim his first-born
- Ex. 4:22-23 – Israel is God’s eldest, thus God will kill Pharaoh’s eldest
- Ex. 8:5 – God chastens as a father
- Deut. 1:31 – God bore thee as a son

But there are a number of other passages which assume this concept and relation.¹¹

David’s Descendant God’s Son

In addition (Howton does not mention this one), the promised descendant of David is *called God’s son* (2 Sam. 7:14). This would provide a messianic connotation for the term applied to Jesus. Howton notes that God’s choice is the initiating and defining factor in “Sonship” in the Old Testament.¹² The testimony of the Baptist in the Gospel would emphasize the appointing, defining, choosing or declaring of Jesus as God’s Son. (Though the term “Son of God” is not specifically used, the figure is evident, 1:14-18.)

As God had chosen Israel (the man and the nation) to be his witness, so he has now “chosen only one individual who in himself represents God active in the world. It is this meaning of the title ‘Son of God’ that is primary for the Evangelist and the one he wanted to bring out.”¹³

Individuals

The term also came to be applied to the *individual members* of the nation of Israel, so that in 8:41 the Jews can respond that God is their father. But this identification even for the individual is a *national* one, thus Jesus is seen as representative of Israel. This would be important to John, for to

identify with Jesus is to identify with Israel. “From the Christian point of view it is interesting to note that the Israelites are sons in the son, Israel, just as Christians also are sons in the Son”¹⁴ (cf. 17:11-23).

The national identification is critical to the community’s crisis. They are Jews, they continue to worship in the synagogue. They continue to meditate on the Torah as ever. But they see the new era of God’s Rule in the coming of the Messiah. John develops this in a separate theme in the Gospel. The arguments in the Gospel declare: you truly accept Moses, you will accept Jesus.

Reserved Use

Because the use of the term “Son of God” was subject to abuse, it tended to be reserved for special *representatives of God*. Thus to call Jesus “Son of God” could also indicate that he was a representative of God *to man*. Jesus could thus be seen as Israel, representing God to the nations, *and* as an individual emissary from God to Israel. This would fit the *agent* role.

Suffering Servant

The suffering servant is connected with the Son of God concept in the Old Testament. The term *servant* tended to be applied more commonly than “Son of God.” Thus Jesus is seen as true Israel (as opposed to the Jews who refused to believe in him), suffering for the sins of the other nations. This also involves the “idea of creation and the forming of the people”¹⁵ (cf. Is. 43:1, 41:8, 44:1), in the new community of believers (John 15:6-11, 16:1-4, 17:20-23). Jesus may be seen as both the initiator and representative figure of the new people of God expected to arise at the end of the world.

The King

The title also came to be applied to the king of Israel, as the ruler and representative of the whole nation. Thus the use of the term by the evangelist would for some readers carry this connotation of king when applied to Jesus.¹⁶ R. E. Brown notes that “Ps. 2:6-7 would be excellent background for joining the titles ‘Son of God’ and ‘King of Israel.’”¹⁷ And Nathanael does just this in John 1:49.

SON OF MAN

The Old Testament also appears to be the source of major Jewish concepts of the Son of Man. The term appears minimally in poetry (Is. 51:12, 56:2, Ps. 8:4), where it seems simply to refer to *mankind*. In Ezekiel, it is the title by which Yahweh addresses the prophet. It is used much less in Daniel, but because this figure is apocalyptic, it received the most attention. And Bruce Vawter acknowledges that “The New Testament Son of Man is doubtless derived basically from Daniel.”¹⁸

In Dan. 7:13 “one like a son of man” (RSV) is to receive the kingdom from the “Ancient of Days.” Brown points out that he is a special agent of God, and yet in less “loaded” terms than “Son of

God,” for in 7:1S the interpretation is that it is Israel who will receive the kingdom. Thus “in Dan. 7 a ‘son of man’ is a human figure who represents the whole of God’s people, and is thus a corporate person”¹⁹

On the model in Daniel, then, the designation would not carry so much of an overt messianic connotation. As Pierson Parker observes, it is more *apocalyptic* than messianic. The term indicates **prophetic leadership**. This title is applied to Daniel himself in 8:17 and in the book of Enoch, the prophet of that name is called son of man, These, along with Ezekiel, are prophets, “each of whom has received a divine revelation.” Jesus would thus be marked “as one who ... envisaged the Kingdom.”²⁰

Not a Judge

The son of man in Daniel is not given authority to judge, and yet is this very one who is said in John to have all judgment (5:27 *inter alia*). Vawter suggests that this is consistent with the *prophetic* image, but drawing upon Ezekiel, rather than Daniel. Ezekiel is a sign for Israel (Ez. 24:24). “He is identified with the people of God, figuring their destiny in himself” (4:4-15, 12:1-7, 17-20).²¹ The judgment of Israel is in his words and works, and he reveals so that they may know Yahweh. Compare John 8:16-19, 26-29 and *ἐγὼ εἰμὶ* (I am) statements. The reason the Son of Man can be Judge in John is because in the prophetic character: “it is by confronting Israel with the word of God that he is judge. Therefore John has used the formula of Ezekiel.”²²

Book of Enoch

The Son of Man figure in Enoch is a judging figure, and it is possible John drew on this image. The judging in John, however, is more in reference to *the words and deeds of Jesus*. Thus it seems that the title “Son of Man” as applied to Jesus is more like the figure of Ezekiel as a prophet. The use of the *term* may have evoked the Enoch figure in the minds of some readers. This would not, in my opinion, detract from John’s emphasis that judgment occurs in relation to Jesus’ words and response to him.

Ezekiel

The Son of Man in Ezekiel formed a pattern by which to understand the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel: exemplar of obedience, filled with the word of God, teaches in parables, etc. At this point the Son of Man concept approaches the servant of Is. 53 in his identification with the people of God.²³

In Ezekiel God addresses the prophet as Son of Man. This seems to indicate an idea of representation and responsible relation, thus entailing service and mediation. The prophet seems to be in a “middle” position, serving as God’s messenger *to* Israel, identified *with God* in his prophetic role, but *with the people*, also, as their protector and watchman.²⁴

This interpretation of Ezekiel’s Son of Man position comes close to one of our earlier interpretations of the Son of God. Philo also used the terms “son” and “firstborn son.” And he sometimes characterized the Son as God, or as “the Man after God’s image.” This figure also *sees* God, and is identified with *logos*. The Nag Hammadi texts also refer also to “a firstborn who is

named Israel, the man who sees God.”²⁵

In John 6:45-46 the one who sees God fits this model, which was well known in hellenistic Judaism. Also, here as with the Son of God motif, Jesus could be identified with Israel, the one who sees God and, as “Israel” to the world, reveals this vision to man.

From Above

An important difference here is that in Philo, Moses was drawn ever up till he transcended mere humanness, and Ezekiel, from earth, was called from above as the Son of Man. But in John, Jesus, Son of Man, comes from *above* – this descent brings the new birth.²⁶ Ernst Käsemann states it thus: “Jesus is the Son of Man because in him the Son of God comes to man.” He goes further (restricting the term more than we have to make his point), “The Son of Man is neither a man among others, nor the representation of the people of God or of the ideal humanity, but God, descending into the human realm and there manifesting his glory.”²⁷

Revealer

This means that the Son of Man figure is the one who has seen God and comes to earth to reveal him to men. This concept would not contradict the idea of the Son of God being the agent from God, but rather the Son of Man concept becomes the vehicle for the Son of God attribute of Jesus.

The agent function of the Son of God could be fulfilled along with the revealing function of the Son of Man. Jesus also tells his disciples in his last session with them, “I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father (15:15). This motif was later exploited by the Gnostics who used Jesus as a model of the Revealer-Savior.

It also seems that two views of the Son of Man merge in John’s Gospel. The descent/ascent motif is prominent, but the judgment appears also.

THE COMPOSITE SON

In surveying the functions associated with each name by the evangelist, we make the following observations.

1. The title “Son of Man” appears to be simply assumed to be identified with Jesus. It is never a matter of discussion, except in 12:34, where the term is the basis of confusion in the hearers.
2. Of the two terms, only “Son of God” is an attributed title, associated with confession (1:34, 49). It is the sons hip with God that becomes a matter of contention (10:36, 19:7). It is only the Son of God who is identified with the Christ and king of Israel (1:49, 11:27, 20:31).

3. The Son of Man seems to be the primary descending and ascending figure in John's Gospel (3:13, 14, 6:62, 12:23, 34). In 3:17, this motif carries over to the Son of God.
4. The anointing as a messenger appears to apply to both figures (1:32-33, 51).
5. All the qualities and characteristics of both titles are referred to more often by the simple term "Son." And they are attributed simply to Jesus by no other title (13:1, 3 – descent/ascent; 12:44-49 – revealer of God, occasion of judgment; 10:27-30 – agent of God to give eternal life, protector (as Ezekiel's Son of Man) of God's people; etc.).
6. Judgment appears only *one* time with either of these titles, and then with Son of Man (5:27). Everywhere else, it is simply the *Son* who judges (e.g., 5:22).

From these observations, it appears that John uses the figure "Son of Man" as an assumed framework upon which to cast his confession of Jesus as Son of God. The Son of Man is the Revealer who comes down from heaven to reveal God and speak God's word. But the Son of God – as Messiah and King – seems to be God's agent and is the one in whom believing can bring life (3:18, 20:31, 5:25). "Son of God" also seems to emphasize the closeness and depth of relation of the agent to God, while "Son of Man" may emphasize the critical importance of Jesus (*viz.*, judgment).

It seems the Son of God is a more messianic concept, indicating authority as well as relation. And the Son of Man more apocalyptic, judging as well as revealing God in his life. As pointed out above, the two titles both seem to involve the idea of the Suffering Servant, serving as a messenger of God's prophetic word *to* the people, *and* being involved himself in vicarious suffering, receiving the judgment as member of the community and representative of it.

The two concepts are so closely intertwined that it is difficult to be more conclusive at this stage concerning the relation of the functions of one title to the functions of the other. The fact that the term "Son" takes up the functions of both seems to indicate that what is of great importance is that both be attributed to Jesus.

The Power of Synthesis

We have shown by our references in parenthesis that there are examples of each concept of Son of Man and Son of God appearing in this Gospel. A detailed and definite conclusion of the relation would entail a study of the Eucharist in this Gospel (6:27-53), the Relation of Moses to the Son of Man, of the Wisdom motif to Son of Man, and other contemporary uses of these titles.

The term "the Son" appears to be meant to encompass the multiple connotations, and as common in relational cultures, the term is consciously ambiguous. The generic term *Son* would draw upon the common understandings of the two titles Son of Man and Son of God among the Jewish populace. The intent was no doubt to make the widest possible impact in the testimony. Let us remember this does not appear to be a theological treatise. This is not an analytical rational and

objective philosophical theology (a systematic Theology). These titles are power terms, with powerful emotional and mystical meaning.

Dramatic Narrative

This is a powerful narrative testimony in the common dramatic oral format of the Jewish Eastern worldview. The Fourth Gospel testifies to the common experience of the believing community, and serves as an encouragement to them. It appears meant to strengthen their faith and sense of identity with Jesus as Jesus was one with the Father. Whatever each concept meant to indicate to whatever segment of the Jewish community, John wanted to relate that to Jesus. In his own understanding of Jesus, it seems he sees Jesus as encompassing all of these and uses any one of the titles to refer to him.

Freed says this use of many names is simply another example of the variation of style in the Gospel,²⁸ but when the meanings of each are included, they seem to be more important than that. He does rightly illustrate, however, that in the evangelist's usage, they are meant to overlap. This, I feel, emphasizes that John wanted to *coalesce* all the concepts and connotations into **one great view** of Jesus as **the one who had seen God** and was *one with him* and who in turn presented this oneness to believers *in him*.

Making the Connection

For instance in Ch. 3 and 5, eternal life is associated with *both* the Son of Man *and* the Son of God. And the simple term *Son* is²⁹ used as well. Also, "God is spoken of as Father of the Son of Man," and glorification is mentioned with reference to the Son of God and the Son of Man (12:20-23 and 11:4). I hasten to explain, again, that while both terms are used in the same way, each term might make the writer's point with *a different set of readers*.

THE JEWISH CONFLICT

The occasion for the writing of this Gospel appears to be the conflict developing between the Christian believers and the non-believing Jews. The anachronistic "cross-references" and the closed metaphors, double entendres, and misunderstandings indicate that it is written for an "in" community; it is not a general theological treatise.

Identity

The group John refers to as the Jews are shown as a problem-group. Of course, the believers were also Jews. So this is not just an ethnic distinction. The use of this term by the Evangelist is a literary device, pointing to the shift in identity the community is now dealing with.

In light of this, one is led to conclude that the *social identity* of the believing community is at stake. Louis Martyn suggests that the book may even have been written as a direct response to the Benediction against Heretics.³⁰

The book could be both a defense of the gospel and those who believe it, and a judgment against the Jews who disbelieve Jesus and persecute the Nazarenes. It could also be a message of comfort and encouragement to the believers. For one passage which shows all these, see John 15:18-16:4. The words of comfort, with a warning to expect the excommunication from the synagogue, come from Jesus. The Comforter is promised, and judgment is passed on the Jews.

Challenge to Believe

The book could be a challenge to believe (10:37-38), and a defense of Jesus as teaching the same thing Moses taught, and in fact being the one Moses promised (5:44-47, 12:44-49). And the Jews are seen more and more as rejectors of God himself. No doubt the need to show how Jesus was the expression of the Father was a defense against the charge of idolatry, as well as a word of comfort for believers. The whole question turns out to be whether they believed Jesus was sent by the Father.

Jesus is the Sign

Finally, it is clear that Jesus is himself a *sign*, he is the revelation from God to man (17:21, 23, 25, 26). “The total 'testimony' of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, the sole object of his mission in 'the world' (18:37), is in fact about himself, and the presentation of that self-testimony is depicted as the *krisis* of the world.”³¹

In the gospel narrative Jesus appears to represent the believing community. Jesus becomes progressively alienated from the Jews, 32 and this expresses the situation of the Johannine community. Thus the identity of the believing community is shifted from a Jewishness to a Jesusness, comforting and encouraging this community by showing that following and believing in God is not tied to being a Jew, but to being a believer in Jesus.

True Israel

Jesus, as Son of God, is representative of the people of God (Israel), thus the believers, whose identity centers in faith in and oneness with Jesus, are the true Israel. The Jews reject God's manifestation (Jesus, his Son) and are therefore not truly God's children (8:42, 5:39-43). Being “of this world” equals remaining a (non-Christian) Jew.

Further, Jesus' rejection means to show that the Johannine community are simply being identified with Jesus when they suffer rejection or even death as he did (15:18-20).

THE COMMUNITY'S IDENTITY

The followers are meant to be like Jesus – *not* of the world (15:19, 17:14, 16). There is a play on words with the dual meaning of *ἐκ* (out of, from, of). cf. 17:11, 15). They are to be the revealer-redeemers whose ultimate source and goal are outside the world in God. Having become one with Jesus and with God, they function to enable others to believe and to reveal God's "sign," or manifestation to the world (14:20, 17:11, 20-23). In this they fill Son of Man functions.

This is evidently meant to be done in and through love (15:12, 17, 17:26), as God loved the world, they will love the world (cf. 3:16). They will also fulfill Jesus' commands (which are God's commands) as an example to the world (12:26, 15:16), just as Jesus fulfilled his Father's commands (15:9, 10). They evidently will function as "Sons of God," since they are identified with *the* Son of God (1:12), representing God in the world.

They have been appointed as agents to do his work in the world (14:19-20, 15:12, 16-17, 17:18), serving as witnesses. Jesus is in them and his word and witness still continue in them (15:26, 27).³³ This will entail their being persecuted as he was and being hated (15:18-20). It seems that the judgment function of the Son of Man also applies to the community, as continual confrontation with Jesus' words occurs in the world through the community (17:6-8, 14, 20, cf. 3:19, 8:43, 45, 47, 12:48).

As Jesus is in will and purpose "not of this world," so he has chosen his disciples to be "not of this world." Here an investigation of the Paraclete function would be required.

Since Jesus is the true Israel (Son of God) and the Christ, his followers are the true Israel. For they are one with him. The true community of God follows Jesus, for Jesus and God are one. For those who come to him, there is the experience of that oneness with God which Jesus himself has. We see Jesus being thrown out of the Jewish community as the Christians were being pushed out of the Jewish community.

But the conclusion is that God is with those who are with Jesus and those who reject him reject God (8:36-42). Thus a new identity is being formulated for the people of God, an identity which is dependent not on previous ethnic identity with the synagogue, but identity with the Son of Man, who is God's Son, and the revelation of God to men.



FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Meeks, p. 65.
- ² Freed, p. 407.
- ³ Borgen, p. 137, citing Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 254-262.
- ⁴ Colwell, pp. 129-130.
- ⁵ Borgen, pp. 137-148.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138, quoting Jewish *halakah*.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 148.
- ⁹ Howton, p. 227.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 228.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 232.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 233.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 235.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.
- ¹⁷ Brown, p. 88.
- ¹⁸ Vawter, p. 452.
- ¹⁹ Brown, p.
- ²⁰ Parker, p. 157.
- ²¹ Vawter, p. 452.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 454.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 453, citing Walther Eichrodt, "Zum Problem des Menschensohnes," *Evangelische Theologie*, XIX:1-3.
- ²⁴ Vawter, p. 458.
- ²⁵ Borgen, p. 147.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- ²⁷ Käsemann, p. 13.
- ²⁸ Freed, p. 403.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 405.
- ³⁰ Martyn, p. 46.
- ³¹ Meeks, p. 56.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- ³³ Brown, p. 698 (Vol. 2).

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