

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CHALLENGE OF A SYSTEMATIZED BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSION: Missiological Insights from the Gospel of John*

Introduction

Missiology currently appears to be suffering from an acute identity crisis. This crisis is exacerbated by at least two major factors: the increasing interdisciplinary nature of missiology and the rapid pace of change in the world around us. Each of these has significant implications for the church's missionary task. While few would oppose in principle the efforts made to draw upon the valid findings of the various social sciences, there is a mounting concern among missiologists and other Christian thinkers that missiology, as a discipline, should be rescued from drifting (and drowning!) in a sea of social science data and be anchored once again to its theological foundation.¹

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¹Cf. David J. Bosch, "Reflections on Biblical Models of Mission," in *Toward the Twenty-first Century in Christian Mission: Essays in Honor of Gerald H. Anderson* (ed. James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 175–92; D. A. Carson, "Church and Mission: Reflections on Contextualization and the Third Horizon," in *The Church in the Bible and the World* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 213–57; David J. Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 139–44; Edward Rommen, "Missiology's Place in the Academy," *Trinity World Forum* 17/3 (1992): 1–4; idem, "The De-Theologizing of Missiology," *Trinity World Forum* 19/1 (1993): 1–4; David Wells, "The D-Min-Ization of the Ministry," in *No God but God: Breaking with the Idols of Our Age* (ed. Os Guinness and John Seel; Chicago: Moody, 1992), 175–88.

External trends and changes, such as the world's urbanization, globalization, modern computer technology, and the pervasive influence of the mass media, have also presented Christian missions with unprecedented challenges and opportunities. While the potential for global Christian outreach has never been greater, these external pressures have led to a rising degree of secularization in the church's self-understanding and strategizing.² Lured away from its theological moorings by the explosion of knowledge in the social sciences and overwhelmed by the breathtaking pace of technological and sociological changes, missiology, after gaining much the world has to offer, needs to save its soul.³

How can the church's reflection on its missionary task be again properly grounded? The answer lies in a carefully constructed biblical theology of mission that is hermeneutically sound, yet oriented toward the challenges facing the contemporary church. It has been increasingly recognized in recent years that it is inadequate to quote the great commission passages of the New Testament in an isolated fashion.⁴ Instead, one ought to understand a given biblical writer's teaching on mission *as a whole*, first within the framework of his overall theology and then within the context

²Thus, John Piper writes his book, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), "for college and seminary classes on the theology of missions that really want to be *theological* as well as anthropological, methodological and technological" (p. 8; emphasis Piper's). Peter Beyerhaus, *Shaken Foundations: Theological Foundations for Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 30, already had written over 20 years ago, "Our one-sided concern with man and his society threatens to pervert mission and make it a secular or even a quasi-atheistic undertaking. We are living in an age of apostasy where man arrogantly makes himself the measuring rod of all things. Therefore, it is part of our missionary task courageously to confess before all enemies of the cross that the earth belongs to God and to His anointed."

³This perhaps hyperbolic statement is not intended to discredit missiology as an entire discipline nor to label negatively the efforts of all current missiologists. The assessment is also not intended to detract from the efforts by noted writers to stem the trend of a "de-theologizing of missiology" (Edward Rommen's term), such as Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974 [1962]); J. Herbert Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976); and Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

⁴Cf. Mortimer Arias and Alan Johnson, *The Great Commission. Biblical Models for Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992).

of the entire canon.⁵

To reconstruct the mission theology of the Scriptures in this more sophisticated manner requires a considerable amount of effort. It is necessary to study, for example, the mission theology (not just terminology) of John as well as the mission theologies of Luke-Acts, Matthew, Mark, Paul, and others individually before attempting to synthesize these various biblical theologies into a systematized biblical theology of mission that gives adequate consideration to the various perspectives contributed by the respective biblical writings.⁶

The present article seeks to contribute to such a project some insights from a detailed study of John's mission theology.⁷ After a discussion of

⁵Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Der Missionsgedanke des Johannes-evangeliums im heutigen Horizont," in *Das Johannesevangelium. IV. Teil. Ergänzende Auslegungen und Exkurse* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1984), 58-72; Gerald Anderson, ed., *The Theology of the Christian Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961).

⁶While the constraints of this article do not permit a defense of this position, the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, is held to be the author of the Gospel bearing his name. If this thesis is correct, the mission theology presented in the Fourth Gospel represents apostolic authority as well as an essentially single authorial intent. If the author were, for example, John "the elder," as Martin Hengel has recently sought to demonstrate (*Die johanneische Frage: Ein Lösungsversuch* [WUNT 67; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993]), the former, apostolic authority, would not characterize the document while the latter, a single authorial intent, would be safeguarded. Many redaction-critical theories, however, yield both aspects. They place the responsibility for the final form of the Fourth Gospel into the hands of a committee so that the document becomes a conglomerate of disparate sources and redactions. According to those scholars, whatever unity can be found in the Gospel of John as we now have it, resides in the collective mind of the final board of editors. In this case, it would appear to be precarious to speak of a coherent, consciously set forth "mission theology" of John's Gospel.

⁷The essay is based on the author's dissertation (Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Missions of Jesus and of the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel" [Deerfield, IL, 1993]), published as *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). It is unfortunate that the magnum opus of the late David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), while claiming to be comprehensive, treats only the mission theology of three New Testament writers, viz., Matthew, Luke, and Paul. Bosch justifies the omission of John by maintaining that these authors "are, on the whole, representative of first-century missionary thinking and practice" (p. 55). While Bosch's work is generally admirable in its scope, his neglect of John's teaching on mission is a serious deficiency which is an instance of the frequent neglect of John as a relevant document for mission in favor of Luke-Acts or Paul's writings.

John's concept of mission and of its relation to the purpose of the Gospel of John, we will explore some of the more salient features of John's mission theology. This will be followed by a discussion of a number of important missiological implications. Here we will deal with the question of what constitutes the proper theological focus for the church's mission (i.e., whether John's mission theology is theocentric or Christocentric). We will also examine the frequent claim that John teaches an "incarnational" concept of mission.

While the scope of the present treatment is primarily theological, it is hoped that those interested in the church's mission will find some of the insights presented from the Gospel of John foundational, practical, and relevant for formulating the missionary task of the church today.

Preliminary Issues

John's Concept of Mission

The term "mission," while frequently used, is rarely defined in academic studies on the subject. DuBose's assessment still holds true:

Despite the excellent studies on the subject, most writers who in some way deal with the meaning of mission reflect the following weaknesses: 1) some assume rather than give a definition; 2) some give or imply definitions but do not employ them consistently in the development of their material; 3) some imply more than one working definition without clearly demonstrating their conceptual relationship; 4) some state a definition but do not give any biblical basis for it; 5) some use biblical words but define them in terms of concepts of traditional North Atlantic mission administration.⁸

This lack of precision has contributed to a certain amount of ambivalence in recent discussion. Part of the difficulty may be traced to the fact that the term *mission* itself does not appear in Scripture.⁹ Nevertheless, as John Stott rightly maintains, "Although 'mission' is not, of course, a biblical word (any more than 'trinity' and 'sacrament' are), yet the concept is biblical."¹⁰ Indeed, properly defined, the term *mission* is "a useful piece

⁸Francis M. DuBose, *God Who Sends* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), 15.

⁹The term *ἀποστολή* is no real exception, since in its four occurrences in the New Testament it is always used in a technical sense to denote "apostleship" (cf. Acts 1:25; Rom 1:5; 1 Cor 9:2; and Gal 2:8).

¹⁰John R. W. Stott, "An Open Letter to David Hesselgrave," *Trinity World Forum* 16/3 (1991): 1. In his very influential earlier work, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Church Pastoral Aid Society, 1975), 30, Stott defines mission as "everything the church is sent into the world to do." Whether

of shorthand for a biblical concept."¹¹

Hermeneutically, one must take care not to impose one's own definition of mission onto a book of Scripture, nor should one expect one general definition of mission to fit all the biblical writings.¹² One should therefore primarily speak of John's concept of mission, or Luke's concept of mission, rather than of the biblical concept of mission. Only secondarily might one be able to relate the various concepts of mission found in the respective biblical books and thus arrive at a biblical concept of mission, as long as one keeps in mind that such a concept will of necessity be rather broad and general.

How should one go about tracing the concept of mission in a given book of Scripture? The task is one of a careful inductive study of the terminology of a given writer (here John) while remembering that the concept of mission may still be found where certain words are not present (cf., e.g., 4:1–30).¹³ What then is John's concept of "mission"? An inductive study of John's Gospel suggests that mission in John may be understood as *the specific task which a person or group (as sender or sent ones) seeks to accomplish, involving various modes of movement*.¹⁴ This

Stott is correct in defining mission as broadly as he does, is another question. Cf. David J. Hesselgrave, "Holes in 'Holistic Mission,'" *Trinity World Forum* 15/3 (1991): 3.

¹¹John R. W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God's Word to Today's World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 342.

¹²This is inadequately considered by DuBose, *God Who Sends*, 37, who fails to distinguish clearly between the distinct conceptions of mission by the different New Testament writers. Defining mission simply as sending, he writes, "No matter how it is used, the word send always has a threefold idea: 1) an intelligent sending source, 2) a sending medium or agent, either personal or impersonal, 3) a sending purpose . . . The language and idea of the sending convey exactly what the language and idea of mission convey. A mission always has a source, a medium, and a purpose."

¹³This invalidates studies that equate "mission" with "sending," as if one word could adequately and comprehensively express a biblical writer's thought on mission as a whole. Note that Scripture references in this article are to the Gospel of John unless indicated otherwise.

¹⁴John uses words occupying two semantic fields to develop his mission theology: for the mission task, *ἔργον* or infrequently *κόπος* ("work") and related verbs as well as *σημείον* ("sign"); for modes of movement, the two Johannine words for sending, *ἀποστέλλω* and *πέμπω*, as well as various words for "come" and "go" (*ὑπάγω*, *ἔρχομαι* and cognates); and the metaphorical equivalents "descend" and "ascend" (*ἀνα-* and *καταβαίνω*); "follow" (*ἀκολουθέω*); and "lead" or "gather" (*ἄγω* or *συνάγω*). For a complete account, see my *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 27–41; see also my "The Two Johannine Verbs for

suggests that John does not limit mission to the *cross-cultural* proclamation of the gospel. A mission is rather accomplished whenever a person or group seeks to carry out a certain task or purpose.

This general conceptual framework of mission is fleshed out in John's Gospel in the following way. In Jesus' case, his task is one of revelation (cf., e.g., 1:18; 17:6–8, 14) as well as redemption (cf. 1:29, 36; 6:51, 53–58; 10:15, 17–18).¹⁵ Regarding the latter aspect of Jesus' mission, John's favorite expression is the giving of life (cf. 3:16; 6:57; 10:10; 17:2; cf. also 14:6).¹⁶ In the case of Jesus' followers, their task is that of continuing Jesus' mission by re-presenting Jesus' revelation and redemption through their proclamation of the gospel (cf. 18:20; 20:23).

Making use of his terminological framework, John constructs his treatment of mission along certain theological lines.¹⁷ Thus, John's Christology has an important missiological dimension. Jesus is the Son sent from the Father; he came into the world and returned to the Father; and he is the eschatological shepherd-teacher who called others to follow him in order to help gather the eschatological harvest. John's concept of discipleship, too, is missiologically constrained. Jesus' disciples are to follow him (even past his earthly mission; cf. 21:10, 22) and are sent by Jesus into the world as he was sent into the world by his sender (17:18; cf. 20:21).

Sending; A Study of John's Use of Words with Reference to General Linguistic Theory," in *Linguistics and the New Testament: Critical Junctures* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson; JSNTSup 168; Studies in New Testament Greek; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 125–43. For these categories, cf. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols. (2d ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989). Note also that the term "missionary" is used in this essay merely as the noun (a "mission-ary") or adjective ("missionary") to "mission" as defined here without necessary implications regarding the cross-cultural nature of the work (as is the usual practice; the exception to this use is the rare occasion where we accommodate our usage to current conventions as in the opening paragraph). The term "mission" is generally avoided.

¹⁵J. Terence Forestell, *The Word of the Cross: Salvation as Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (AnBib 57; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), following Bultmann, claims that the notion of a substitutionary atonement is absent from John's Gospel; cf. the helpful critique by Max Turner, "Atonement and the Death of Jesus in John: Some Questions to Bultmann and Forestell," *EQ* 62 (1990): 99–122.

¹⁶Cf. James McPolin, "Mission in the Fourth Gospel," *ITQ* 36 (1969): 118: "the primary purpose, to which all others are subordinated, is to confer life."

¹⁷See note 14 above.

It may appear that an inordinate amount of space has been given to definitional matters. However, diligence and precision in delineating one's terms are imperative. In the light of the considerable terminological confusion that still exists in missiological discussions, it seems appropriate to call for greater methodological rigor and accountability. Before John's mission theology can be examined in greater detail, one more preliminary issue should be briefly considered: the relationship between John's concept of mission and the purpose of John's Gospel.

Mission and the Purpose of John's Gospel

How does John's emphasis on mission function within the intention of John's Gospel as a whole? Some have argued that the missionary theme in John seeks to counteract a tendency among John's audience to neglect their own mission.¹⁸ Perhaps, it has been speculated, the Johannine Christians were recovering from their traumatic expulsion from their Jewish parent synagogue and needed to reconfigure the understanding of their mission in the surrounding world.¹⁹ Others have sought to locate John's mission theology within the framework of an evangelistic purpose for his Gospel, directed especially toward diaspora Jews and Gentiles.²⁰ In that case, John would have sought to show prospective converts that to be incorporated into the new Messianic community means to have a part in its mission to the world. While it is not possible here to give a full-fledged defense, the last alternative appears to be the most plausible.

Reconstructions of the life setting of a so-called Johannine community underlying the Fourth Gospel must of necessity remain highly speculative,

¹⁸Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1–42* (WUNT 2/31; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1988), 232. Perhaps the best recent study of mission in John's Gospel, Okure's work is nevertheless flawed in at least two ways: first, she arbitrarily limits the focus of her study to John 4:1–42 rather than treating mission in John more comprehensively; and second, she occasionally sets forth rather eccentric views on the supposed background of the Fourth Gospel such as the one referred to in the text above.

¹⁹Takashi Onuki, *Gemeinde und Welt im Johannesevangelium: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der theologischen und pragmatischen Funktion des johanneischen "Dualismus."* (WMANT 56; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1984); David Rensberger, *Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John* (London: SPCK, 1988).

²⁰W. C. van Unnik, "The Purpose of St. John's Gospel," in *Studia Evangelica I* (TU 73; ed. Kurt Aland et al.; Berlin: Akademie, 1959), 382–411; John A. T. Robinson, "The Destination and Purpose of St. John's Gospel," *NTS* 6 (1959–60): 127–31; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), *passim*.

especially since there is no shred of evidence for as much as even its existence either in the Church Fathers or in documents of the community itself (as is the case for the Qumran community).²¹ Moreover, the argument that John could not have written an evangelistic Gospel to diaspora Jews and proselytes at a time when Christian-Jewish relations were severely strained remains far from convincing. If Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the gospel message would be perennially relevant for Jews, even at a time when Jewish sentiments toward Christians were generally rather hostile. But we must move on to a more detailed discussion of John's presentation of the missions of Jesus and of his followers.

Theological Observations on Mission in John's Gospel

The Sent Son Carries Out His Mission

Even a cursory reading of John's Gospel reveals that it is the mission of Jesus that is central in John's presentation. Jesus is shown to carry out faithfully the mission given him by God, his sender. The metaphor of the sent son would have been well understood in its original Jewish setting. A father, when wanting to ensure the faithful execution of a commission, would send not a slave or other messenger, but his son, especially his first-born, oldest son (cf. Mark 12:1–11, especially v. 6).²² Thus, Jesus claims to be the unique Son of the Father, fully obedient to this charge.

In carrying out the commission entrusted to him "by the Father who sent" him, Jesus provided his followers with a missionary paradigm, i.e., that of complete obedience and dependence on their sender.²³ In the Johannine commissioning passage, John 20:21, the resurrected Jesus, up

²¹Cf. the recent assault on the "Johannine community hypothesis" by Martin Hengel, *Johanneische Frage* (1993) and this author's forthcoming review in *JETS*. Of course, the identity of the community behind the Qumran documents, after a time of apparent consensus, is itself again the subject of debate: cf. Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (New York: Penguin, 1992).

²²Anthony E. Harvey, "Christ as Agent," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 239–50; Helen S. Friend, "Like Father, Like Son: A Discussion of the Concept of Agency in Halakah and John," *Ashland Theological Journal* 21 (1990): 18–28

²³Compare the occurrences of the phrase "the Father who sent me" in 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 37; 6:38, 39, 44; 7:16, 18, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44, 45, 49; 14:24; 15:21; and 16:5.

to that point the “sent one,” becomes the one who sends; his followers are to emulate the sender-sent relationship Jesus had modelled with the Father.

This relationship encompasses the following components.²⁴ The sent one is to:

- bring glory and honor to the sender (5:23; 7:18);
- do the sender’s will (4:34; 5:30, 38; 6:38–39) and works (5:36; 9:4);
- speak the sender’s words (3:34; 7:16; 12:49; 14:10b, 24);
- be accountable to his sender (chap. 17);
- bear witness to his sender (5:36; 7:28=8:26);
- represent him faithfully (12:44–45; 13:20; 15:18–25);
- exercise delegated authority (5:21–22, 27; 13:3; 17:2; 20:23);
- know the sender intimately (7:29; cf. 15:21; 17:8, 25);
- live in a close relationship with the sender (8:16, 18, 29; 16:32);
- follow the sender’s example (13:16).

To fulfill their God-given role as sent ones of Jesus, Jesus’ followers need the Spirit (20:22). Using Jesus’ followers as his instruments, the Spirit will convict people in the world of their sin, (un)righteousness, and judgment (cf. 16:8–11).²⁵ The mission of the Messianic community is that of extending to unbelievers the forgiveness of sins made possible through Jesus’ completed work (see 17:4; 20:23).²⁶ The roles of individuals within the overall Messianic mission will differ: Peter is assigned a shepherding

²⁴Jan-Adolph Bühner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium: Die kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Entwicklung* (WUNT 2/2; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1977); Josef Kuhl, *Die Sendung Jesu und der Kirche nach dem Johannes-Evangelium* (St. Augustin: Steyler, 1967); Juan Peter Miranda, *Der Vater der mich gesandt hat: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den johanneischen Sendungsformeln: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur johanneischen Christologie und Ekklesiologie* (EHS 23/7; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1976); idem, *Die Sendung Jesu im vierten Evangelium: Religions- und theologieggeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Sendungsformeln* (SBS 87; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977); Yu Ibuki, “Die Doxa des Gesandten—Studie zur johanneischen Christologie,” in *Annual of the Japanese Bible Institute XIV* (ed. Masao Sekine and Akira Satake; Tokyo: Yamamoto Shoten, 1988), 38–81.

²⁵Cf. D. A. Carson, “The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7–11,” *JBL* 98 (1979): 547–66.

²⁶Contra Barry Sullivan, “Ego Te Absolvo: The Forgiveness of Sins in the Context of the Pneumatic Community” (Th. M. thesis; Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, 1988).

role and will die a martyr's death; John will witness in his own way (21:15–23).²⁷ The community of believers as a whole is to be united in love, not as an end in itself, but for the purpose of witnessing to Jesus (chap. 17).²⁸

What are the implications from these observations for the contemporary church's apprehension of its task? The general contours are the same: obedience and dependence on Jesus as well as unity and love toward one another remain the essential prerequisites and characteristics of the church's missionary mandate. In his role as the Sent Son, Jesus lived out before his followers the role he wanted them—and us—to fulfill, i.e., that of a faithful messenger who carries out his commission humbly and dependably. However, a discussion of John's presentation of Jesus' mission would be incomplete without also highlighting the importance assigned to the exalted Jesus in the mission of his followers.

The Exalted Jesus Continues His Mission

The Gospel of John falls rather neatly in two distinct parts. The first 12 chapters present the earthly Jesus' mission to the Jews while chapters 13 through 21 depict the mission of the exalted Jesus to the world. The sent one turns sender (20:21); the one who came now returns to where he came from (16:28); and the shepherd appoints an under-shepherd (21:15–19). This perspective is not unique to John. In an often-overlooked aspect of Matthew's great commission passage, Jesus assures his followers that he will be with them until the end in their discipling of all nations (Matt 28:20).²⁹ Jesus does not say, "The Holy Spirit will be

²⁷This is not the place to argue for an identification of the "beloved disciple" with the apostle John (though such a case can be convincingly made). The issue is, in any case, marginal for the point made here. More substantially, note the similarities in wording between John's description of the missions of Jesus (12:33: "he was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which he was to die") and Peter (21:19: "now this he said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God"), on the one hand, and between John's presentation of the missions of Jesus (1:18: "the one who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him") and the "beloved disciple" (13:23: "there was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved"), on the other. While the analogies should not be stretched too far, these similarities nevertheless underscore the aspect of continuity between the missions of Jesus and those of his followers.

²⁸Contra Wiard Popkes, "Zum Verständnis der Mission bei Johannes," *Zeitschrift für Mission* 4 (1978): 63–69.

²⁹But see Bosch, "Reflections on Biblical Models of Mission," 185.

you." He says "I will be with you." Likewise, Jesus asserts, "I will build my [Messianic] community" (Matt 16:18).

Luke, too, in his two-volume work, presents "what Jesus *began* to do and teach" (cf. Acts 1:1) in his Gospel and, by implication, "what Jesus *continued* to do and teach" in the book of Acts. Thus, for Luke, Jesus is not absent during the mission of the early church.³⁰ Through his Spirit, Jesus directs the mission of the church. In Saul's conversion, Jesus took an even more active part (Acts 9:3–6). And the entire book of Acts is presented by Luke as the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction uttered shortly before the ascension that his followers would be his witnesses "unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

This emphasis on the mission of the *exalted* Jesus in the second part of John's Gospel accounts for the absence of much of the shame-language in John's passion narrative that is found in the synoptic Gospels.³¹ John's is not, as Käsemann has speculated, a docetic Christ, "a god striding upon the earth."³² John's mission theology is rather pervaded by the understanding that, from a post-resurrection perspective, Jesus' cross-death is not shameful but glorious, since it constitutes the culmination of Jesus' obedient fulfillment of his mission (cf. 19:30).

John claims that it is only after Jesus' resurrection, with the aid of the Spirit, that Jesus' disciples understood the true significance of Jesus' mission. In this, John concurs with the other evangelists, especially Mark (cf. e.g. Mark 8:31–33; 9:32; 10:35–40; cf. John 2:22; 12:16). What John therefore gives us is not merely a historical narrative of Jesus' passion, but a theological interpretation of it. It is true that Jesus' contemporaries saw in his cross a shameful curse. In hindsight, however, the cross was a place of glory and exaltation where the Son of Man was "lifted up," not humiliated (cf. 3:14; 8:28; 12:32; see also 17:1, 4–5).

As the Son of Man would soon be glorified, Jesus instructs his followers regarding their identification with him in this world (13:16, 20), particularly in their suffering of persecution (15:18–25). He also urges

³⁰Oscar Cullmann, *Der johanneische Kreis* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975), 14–15.

³¹Cf. Grant R. Osborne, "Redactional Trajectories in the Crucifixion Narrative," *Evangelical Quarterly* 51 (1979): 92; Godfrey Carruthers Nicholson, *Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema* (SBLDS 63; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

³²Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus in the Light of Chapter 17* (trans. Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968). But see Marianne Meyer Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

them to demonstrate love and unity for the sake of carrying out their mission to the world (13:34–35; 17:20–23). The mission of Jesus' followers shares with Jesus' own mission a profound spiritual dimension. Like Jesus, the Messianic community is to live a spiritually separated life in a world hostile to God and Jesus (17:13–19). Moreover, Jesus' followers, too, are to embark on a mission while remembering that God's love is not merely to be experienced personally, nor even merely to be expressed toward fellow-believers, but is a message to be carried into a world that is spiritually dark and dominated by the evil one (cf. 17:18, 20; 20:21–23).

The Universal Scope of the Gospel and John's View of the Jews

John places the missions of Jesus and of his followers squarely in the framework of salvation history. In his opening statement, John asserts that Jesus' "own," i.e., the Jewish people, "did not receive him" (1:11). He concludes the first part of his Gospel by maintaining that even after Jesus had done a number of "signs," the Jews would still not believe in him (12:37).³³ In the important allegory of the vine in chap. 15 (cf. Isa 5), John presents Jesus as Israel's representative. Now Jesus is the vine whose branches constitute the new Messianic community. John's frequent use of covenant language for Jesus' followers amply substantiates such a conclusion.³⁴

John's movement from Old Testament Israel over Jesus to the Messianic community climaxes in the assertion that the scope of the gospel has now taken on universal dimensions. Everyone who receives Jesus becomes a child of God (1:12); everyone who believes will be saved (3:16); again and again, mere believing is presented as the characteristic criterion for the one who has come to Jesus and received his message. Indeed, Jesus also has other sheep which he must bring as well (10:16, a probable reference to the Gentiles who, by the will of God, would be incorporated into the Messianic community by the exalted Jesus); the scattered children of God will be gathered (11:51–52).

What then is John's view of the Jews? Is the writer of the Fourth Gospel anti-Jewish, as some have suggested?³⁵ This contention is hardly

³³Cf. Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Seventh Johannine Sign: A Study in John's Christology," *BBR* 5 (1995): 87–103.

³⁴Cf. John W. Pryor, *John: Evangelist of the Covenant People: The Narrative and Themes of the Fourth Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992); Edward Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant* (AnBib 69; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978).

³⁵Cf. Erich Grässer, *Der Alte Bund im Neuen: Exegetische Studien zur Israelfrage im Neuen Testament* (WUNT 35; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1985).

credible in a Gospel where an acknowledgment is made that “salvation comes from the Jews” (4:22) and where there is no lack of positive Jewish identification figures, such as Nicodemus, the twelve, or several individual disciples (e.g., Peter or the Beloved Disciple; Martha, Mary, and Lazarus). John rather makes an important theological point: Jews must not presume upon their Jewishness; belonging to God’s old covenant people by itself is not enough. Faith, not ethnicity, is the indispensable characteristic of a true member of God’s people (cf. also Rom 2:28–29; 9:6b–8). Rather than presuming upon their ethnic heritage, a Jewish person should acknowledge his or her innate sinfulness which can only be taken away by the Lamb of God, Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah (cf. 8:21–59; 1:29, 36; 20:30–31).

Placing one’s descent from Abraham and one’s discipleship of Moses in necessary antithesis to one’s acceptance of Jesus as Messiah, amounts to rejecting God’s final revelation (1:18; cf. Heb 1:1–4). What is attacked in the Fourth Gospel, therefore, is not the Jews as *Jews*, but the Jews’ ethnic presumption which represented a major stumbling block in acknowledging the legitimacy of Jesus’ Messianic claims. This was motivated not by hatred and anti-Semitism (which is hardly conceivable of Jews like Jesus or John), but by love that agonized over this powerful obstacle to faith which was unique to the members of God’s old covenant people (cf. also Rom 9:1–5). Ultimately, according to John, the Jews, in their rejection of their own Messiah, are representatives of the unbelieving world (1:10–11).³⁶

Finally, for my part, I remain unpersuaded that the so-called anti-Jewish polemic allegedly found in John’s Gospel stems from the dialogue between a non-Messianic Jewish synagogue and believing Jewish Christians at the end of the first century.³⁷ It appears that there is ample evi-

³⁶On the Fourth Gospel’s alleged anti-Semitism, cf. especially Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 92, 141–42, 575–76; Reinhold Leistner, *Antijudaismus im Johannesevangelium? Darstellung des Problems in der neueren Auslegungsgeschichte und Untersuchung der Leidensgeschichte* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1974); and Urban C. von Wahlde, “The Johannine ‘Jews’: A Critical Survey,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 33–60.

³⁷Contra J. Louis Martyn, “Glimpses into the History of the Johannine Community,” in *L’Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie* (ed. Marinus de Jonge; Louvain: University Press, 1977), 149–75; idem, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (2d ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1979 [1968]); and Raymond E. Brown, “‘Other Sheep Not of This Fold’: The Johannine Perspective on Christian Diversity in the Late First Century,” *JBL* 97 (1978): 5–22; idem, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979).

dence from the other Gospels (especially Matthew; cf., e.g., 21:23–23:39) that Jesus during his earthly ministry repeatedly confronted the Jewish leadership. It appears therefore at least equally plausible that John urges his readership to do better than the Jewish religious leadership during Jesus' earthly mission and to believe in the Messiah they so stubbornly rejected.³⁸

Missiological Implications from John's Mission Theology

Equipped with a better understanding of John's mission theology, we are now able to explore some missiological implications. It has been shown that John's mission theology focuses on Jesus, especially on his role as the Son sent from the Father. At the same time, it has become apparent that, in John's perspective, Jesus is now exalted and continues his mission through believers. The scope of Jesus' mission is universal so that Jews as well as Gentiles enter his Messianic community by believing in Jesus as Messiah, i.e., the Son of God sent by God (cf. 20:30–31). If the purpose of John's Gospel was in the first place primarily evangelistic, the message to prospective (Jewish) believers would have been that every person who chooses to believe also joins the community's mission to the world.

From this apprehension of the first horizon of the text we must now move to our own, second horizon. What can we learn from John's teaching on mission? While it is impossible to be exhaustive here, we will attempt to deal briefly with the following questions. First, regarding the focus of mission, should the church consider the focus to be theocentric or Christocentric? Second, regarding the model of mission, does John teach an incarnational or a representational model of mission, or are there elements of both? Third, regarding the scope of mission, does John conceive of the church's outreach as universal or as ethnically con-

³⁸In this context it is very significant that John, like the other evangelists, as well as Paul, argues that even this rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish nation fulfilled biblical prophecy (cf. 12:37–41, quoting Isa 6:9; cf. also the parallels in the other Gospels as well as Acts 28:25–28 and Rom 9:6–33). Just like Stephen in his speech to the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 7:2–53) and Jesus in his parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1–11 par.), John challenges the Jews' own version of salvation history wherein they are featured as righteous and pious. Not so, John argues: the Jews, in accordance with biblical prophecy, already resisted Isaiah's message, just as they now reject the evidence that Jesus is the Messiah sent from God. To identify with such a spiritual heritage is undiscerning. Even Abraham and Moses are mistakenly claimed by the Jews as their own. If they truly want to follow those great men of faith, let them believe in the Messiah who antedates Abraham (8:58) and who was anticipated by Moses (5:46; cf. Deut 18:18).

strained? And what are the missiological implications of these issues for today?

The Focus of Mission: Theocentric or Christocentric?

Is God or Jesus the central figure in John's mission theology? This is an important question, since in the recent past frequent attempts have been made to provide an ecumenical agenda that deemphasizes the centrality of Jesus Christ in the church's mission. A case in point is the recent gatherings and resolutions of the World Council of Churches as well as the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in the late summer of 1993.³⁹ It may be argued that the question just raised is largely a matter of a proper perspective. Surely *both* God *and* Christ are to be central. Nevertheless, the issue must be probed further in order to identify more precisely the relationship between God and Christ in the way the church conceives of its role in the world.

At the outset, it is apparent that, indirectly, John emphasizes God's mission, since Jesus constantly refers to the Father as his sender. Nevertheless, in a very important sense it is Jesus' mission that is John's focus, since John's purpose is to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Sent One par excellence (cf. 20:30–31; 9:7). The Jews, during Jesus' earthly ministry as well toward the end of the first century when John wrote, already believed in God—the key question was whether Jesus was God's authentic authorized representative or not.⁴⁰

The church faces a similar situation today. Generally, it is not the message of God's existence or of God's love that is offensive, but whether God's love has found its decisive and ultimate expression *in Jesus*. Any ecumenism that is achieved at the expense of lessening the centrality of Jesus' work, claims, and requirements is not only of little value but is actually misleading and deceptive. The church's (missionary) proclamation must be theocentric by being Christocentric, since according to Scrip-

³⁹Cf. David J. Hesselgrave et al., "The 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions—Our Response to Invitations to Participate," *Trinity World Forum* 18/2 (1993): 1–5; John Zipperer, "The Elusive Quest for Religious Harmony," *Christianity Today* 37/11 (1993): 42–44.

⁴⁰Thus, I disagree, at least in part, with C. K. Barrett, "Christocentric or Theocentric? Observations on the Theological Method of the Fourth Gospel," in *Essays on John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 3 and 8, who contends that "John is writing about, and directing our attention to, God" in the sense that "For John . . . Jesus is central; yet he is not final." Barrett's essay appears to be primarily systematic in nature while giving perhaps insufficient consideration to the Fourth Gospel's purpose and life setting.

ture, God's revelation and redemption were ultimately and finally accomplished in Jesus (cf. 1:18; 14:6; cf. also Heb 1:1-3). Thus it is clearly illegitimate to re-imagine God and replace Christ as the center of Christian worship with the goddess Sophia, as recent participants at an ecumenical conference attempted to do.⁴¹

In interaction with adherents of other religions, we should not be embarrassed by Jesus, trying to keep references to him to an absolute minimum in order not to offend non-Christians. Rather, following the example of the early church (cf. the sermons in Acts), we should accentuate Jesus' relevant characteristics when communicating to a given target culture. John, in his interaction with diaspora Jews and proselytes, contextualized the message about Jesus in terms of Greek philosophy (Jesus as the "logos"; 1:1, 14) and Jewish Messianic expectations (the Christ is Jesus; 20:30-31). What is the appropriate Christocentric emphasis in our respective mission contexts? There is room for exploration, experimentation, flexibility, and creativity in adapting our message to a given audience. At the same time, we must beware not to drain our proclamation of its distinctively Christian character (cf. Rom 1:1-4, 16; 1 Cor 1:22-24; 2:1-2).

The Model of Mission: Incarnational, Representational, or Both?

Recent missiological discussion of John's Gospel has focused on John's alleged incarnational model for the church's mission. Indeed, the term *incarnational* has become a buzzword in missions circles. While there appears to be some diversity, if not confusion, regarding the sense in which the term is used, the following definition seems to be representative: "incarnational mission" is "an identification that transcends the superficial material culture and behavior roles and focuses on the underlying attitudes that should characterize missionaries as servants."⁴²

The commissioning passage of John 20:21, "As the Father sent me, so send I you," often functions as the point of departure in such discussions.⁴³ In his incarnation, it is argued, Jesus identified with humanity. He condescended to our level and came to serve us, and in this he became

⁴¹Cf. Susan Cyre, "Fallout Escalates Over 'Goddess' Sophia Worship," *Christianity Today* 38/4 (1994): 74.

⁴²Cf. Kenneth McElhanon, "Don't Give Up on the Incarnational Model," *EMQ* 27 (1991): 391.

⁴³Cf. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*; idem, *Contemporary Christian*, 264-65, 341-43, 357-74; Hesselgrave, "Holes," 1-5; idem, "Surrejoinder," 3-4; and Stott, "Open Letter," 1-2.

our model. In our mission, we should therefore emulate Jesus' example and become like those we seek to serve (cf. Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27; 1 Cor 9:19–22; Phil 2:7–8).

It should be stated at the outset that the underlying concern for the missionary's Christlikeness in going about cross-cultural ministry is highly commendable. Clearly, there are plenty of New Testament passages that support such a notion, as they do for all believers. The question that occupies us here, however, is not merely whether the concern underlying an "incarnational model" of mission is worthy, but whether the model itself as is it usually propagated properly reflects biblical teaching. In the ultimate analysis, the issue is not merely one of mission strategy, or pragmatics, but also, more importantly, one of biblical theology and terminology.

The rationale for an "incarnational model" presented above sounds plausible enough, but can it be substantiated from John's Gospel? Can it be shown that it was John's intent to teach an incarnational missiology? Is the incarnational model a case of getting "the right doctrine from the wrong texts"?⁴⁴ Or should John's—and the New Testament's—teaching on the subject be understood differently altogether so that it may be advisable to drop the term and to replace it with a more appropriate expression?

Does John teach an incarnational model of mission? Does he present the Word-become-flesh as a missiological paradigm to be emulated by Christians as they go about their mission? As a study of the relevant passages in the Fourth Gospel indicates, John's concern in his treatment of Christ's incarnation is demonstrably to highlight Jesus' uniqueness, not to set forth a model that links Christ's incarnation with the way every Christian should missionize (1:14, 18; cf. also 3:14, 18).⁴⁵ Likewise, in the Fourth Gospel's commissioning passage (20:21), it is *the kind of sender-recipient relationship maintained by Jesus during his earthly ministry* (i.e., his obedience, dependence, and faithfulness) that functions as a model for his disciples to follow, not Jesus' incarnation.

Believers thus are not enjoined in John's Gospel to emulate Jesus' incarnation, but to witness to him (15:26–27) and to spread the message of the good news of forgiveness of people's sins through Jesus (17:20; 20:23). If anything provides a pattern for the believing community's out-

⁴⁴This is the title of Greg K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

⁴⁵Cf. Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, Chaps. 3–5.

reach, it is the Father-Son relationship of mutual love and unity (cf., e.g., 17:21–23).⁴⁶ In one word, they are to be his representatives, sent by him into an unbelieving world to re-present his unique personal characteristics and his exclusive claims and requirements of discipleship.

In a narrow sense, therefore, the Gospel of John does not appear to teach an incarnational model of mission.⁴⁷ John seems far too concerned to preserve Jesus' ontological uniqueness (i.e., his unparalleled personal characteristics) to make his incarnation the model for the church's mission.⁴⁸ The role of Jesus' followers is rather presented as that of being representatives, messengers, and witnesses to their sender, Jesus, while great care is taken not to blur, much less obliterate, the ontological gap that forever separates Jesus and believers.⁴⁹

Where does that leave the contemporary discussion? As mentioned above, it appears that the term *incarnational* is often used in missiological circles in a broad sense that transcends biblical-theological categories, as connoting the need to identify with people who should be reached with the gospel. On its basis, missionaries are encouraged to become, in a sense, like those they are seeking to evangelize by voluntarily adopting certain customs or other external cultural conventions in order to build common ground, remove needless obstacles, and to facilitate the kinds of relationships within which the gospel can be best communicated, both by way of verbal proclamation and by the example of a godly, Christlike life.

While these concerns are legitimate, however, and while the procedure itself is unobjectionable, yes, desirable, it must be maintained that this kind of incarnational model is never taught in the Scriptures in those terms. The analogy between the theological necessity of Christ's becom-

⁴⁶Jesus' love for his disciples is presented by John as a model for the relationships of believers with one another, not as a model for their mission to the world (cf. 13:14–15).

⁴⁷Whether other New Testament writers do, is doubtful, but an investigation of this issue is beyond the scope of the present essay.

⁴⁸Note also the fine distinction preserved in 20:17: "I have not yet returned to the Father . . . I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

⁴⁹See the section *Theological Observations on Mission in John's Gospel* above. Cf. also Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 566, commenting on 17:18: "Use of the phrase *into the world* for the mission of the disciples shows that there is no *necessary* overtone of incarnation or of invasion from another world. Only the broader descriptions of the coming of the Son 'into the world' betray the ontological gap that forever distances the origins of Jesus' mission from the origins of the disciples' mission."

ing a man in order to be able to atone for the sins of the world and a contemporary missionary's practical expediency to build common ground between himself or herself and prospective converts to Christianity simply breaks down. Indeed, one is hard pressed to find even one New Testament passage where the connection between Christ's incarnation and human mission procedure is made explicit in this way. To the contrary, as has been argued, writers like John jealously guard the theological uniqueness of Christ's incarnation.

What then are we to make of the Pauline principle of "becoming all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:19–23)? it may be asked. While it is not the purpose of this paper to examine Paul's writings thoroughly, a look at this passage indicates that Paul does not mention Christ's incarnation at all, but rather provides a primarily pragmatic rationale for this procedure: "that I may by all means save some" (v. 22). Paul contends that while all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles have been obliterated in Christ, it is part of his Christian liberty to retain, or to forego, characteristics that would present unnecessary obstacles in his gospel proclamation. This simply makes good sense and maximizes the opportunities for preaching the gospel effectively. It does not, however, involve resorting to Christ's incarnation as a theological or missiological model.

The other passage frequently adduced as proof for an incarnational model in Scripture, Phil 2:5–11, likewise hardly supports such an interpretation. First, the context is not one of mission, but of relationships among believers. Second, Paul here exhorts Christians to emulate the humility expressed supremely in Christ's incarnation, rather than patterning their entire lives or mission after the Word-become-flesh. The focus is thus much more narrow and specific (i.e., the humility expressed by Christ's incarnation, rather than the incarnation as a whole) than advocates of an incarnational model would appear to suggest.

It would, therefore, seem to be advisable to drop the term "incarnational model" owing to the virtually inevitable ambiguity and theological imprecision created by its use. Why not replace the term by an expression such as "culture accommodation" or the like? This may not satisfy those who seek a closer tie-in along sacramental lines between Christ and his people today, but it is questionable in any case whether this kind of theology is in fact taught in the New Testament.

The Scope of Mission: Ethnically Constrained or Universal?

The universal scope of the gospel message and John's view of the Jews have already been discussed. It remains, therefore, merely to probe further some of the implications of these aspects of John's mission theology

for contemporary missiological thought and practice. Current approaches to mission tend to give significant attention to the different ethnic groups that need to be reached with the gospel. Interestingly, John focuses primarily on the universality of the Christian message and the non-discriminatory requirement of “believing” for Jew and Gentile alike (cf., e.g., 3:16).

John insists that, for Jews as for everyone else, the way of salvation is through believing in Jesus only—“no one can come to the Father except through me” (14:6). At the same time, John affirms that the Jews have not ceased to be God’s covenant people. Specifically, individual believing Jews are incorporated into Jesus’ new Messianic community. While John does not develop the intricacies of these issues to the same extent as Paul (see Rom 9–11), his theology in this regard does in no way contradict Paul’s.

In fact, John’s emphasis on the universal scope of the gospel resembles Paul’s dictum that in Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” (Gal 3:28). This universal dimension of the gospel precludes any ethnocentrism or parochialism in the way the contemporary church carries out its missionary task. Just like God did not inappropriately favor the Jews in John’s day, he does not favor the Western world, nor America, today.

At the same time, anti-Semitism cannot be supported from the Gospel of John.⁵⁰ John’s comments regarding the Jews pertain to the religious and political leadership of the Jewish nation, not to the Jews as a race. Nevertheless, according to John, the rallying point for Jewish and Gentile Christians alike is to be Jesus the Messiah, not Abraham or Moses (cf., e.g., 1:17; 5:45–47; 8:37–58). Therefore non-Messianic Judaism, in John’s day as well as in ours, should be challenged to consider the Messianic mission, claims, and demands of Jesus.⁵¹

⁵⁰See already the discussion and bibliographical references given above. See also Samuel Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

⁵¹The position advocated here runs counter to the World Council of Churches which, in a reversal of its founding position, declared in 1988, “The next step may be to proscribe all proselytism of Jews on the theological ground that it is a rejection of Israel’s valid covenant with God” (Allan Brockway et al., *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* [Statements by the World Council of Church {sic} and Its Member Churches; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1988], 186, quoted by Arthur Glasser, “Evangelical Missions,” in *Toward the Twenty-first Century in Christian Mission: Essays in Honor of Gerald H. Anderson* [ed. James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 18). This “Sonderweg” (German for “special way”) or

Conclusion

While John's Gospel does not provide us with detailed answers for specific contemporary missionary challenges, it can be used to help establish a more biblical foundation for the church's mission. John's mission theology draws our attention to the exalted Jesus who is present today in order to continue his mission, working through the Spirit and his Messianic community. John alerts us to our need for obedience, dependence, and faithfulness to Jesus and his commission. He also stresses our need for mutual love and unity. Are these emphases too vague and general? Are they too idealistic and simplistic?

To the contrary, we would do well to reflect on John's mission-theological message today. Only such reflection is able to fill the spiritual void often characteristic of the church's outreach today. The world will be confronted effectively with the claims and demands of Christ, not by an activism that elevates human need and the urgency of the task while finding little time to contemplate the truths of God's word, not by a can-do approach that confidently seeks to "manage" mission as if it were a merely human enterprise, but by a renewed reflection on the glory of God in Jesus.

Do we understand ourselves as Christ's emissaries, under his orders, or as actually in charge of the missionary enterprise? The spirit in which we carry out our mission ought to be one of humility and submissiveness to our sender, Jesus. Do we make room in our missionary practice for the exalted Jesus? Are we aware of his active efforts to provide us, from his exalted position, with all the resources needed for accomplishing his mission? Are we depending on his power by persistent prayer?

John's mission theology reminds us that to be a follower of Jesus means also to be sent into the world by Jesus, not merely individually, but

"bi-covenant" theology is frequently supported by reference to Rom 11:25–28, a passage whose import appears to be that "all Israel" (i.e., at least a substantial portion of ethnic Israel) will acknowledge Jesus as Messiah at the occasion of his second coming (regarding the issue of two ways of salvation for non-Jews and Jews, cf., e.g., H. J. Schoeps, *Paul. The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* [trans. Harold Knight; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961]; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* [New York: Seabury, 1974]). It must be maintained, however, that the terms of acceptance before God are the same for Jews as for Gentiles, i.e., faith in Jesus.

as a member of the new Messianic community. It challenges us to reflect on the great privilege that is ours to be chosen by the exalted Jesus to continue his mission. It rebukes us when we think the mission is ours rather than treating it as a charge to re-present Jesus by preaching *his* message, nor ours, in *his* name, not ours.

The task of reconstructing a truly biblical theology of mission has the potential of bringing together scholars in the fields of biblical studies and of missiology in fruitful cooperation. A focus on the biblical foundation of mission is also the major, if not only, hope for greater unity between Christians from various denominational and confessional backgrounds in mission. May the glorious, exalted Jesus be continually present in our hearts and minds as we carry out his mission in a world which has no other hope but Jesus.⁵²

⁵²On this final point, see the helpful chapter entitled "The Supremacy of Christ as the Conscious Focus of All Saving Faith" in Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 115–66.

PART II: STUDIES ON GENDER