

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**HOSPITALITY LANGUAGE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

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HOSPITALITY LANGUAGE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY¹

Introduction REDEFINING HOSPITALITY

For most people in the modern world, the concept of hospitality is something on the physical level, e.g. comfort, security or refreshment. Henri Nouwen notes that “at first the word ‘hospitality’ might evoke the image of soft sweet kindness, tea parties, bland conversations and a general atmosphere of coziness.”² Depending on the situation we might picture ourselves as guests at a pleasant country inn sitting next to a fireplace or in the garden of our neighbors, sipping a cup of hot tea on a cool evening. On the other hand, as Koenig notes, hospitality present in our world today has become largely a commercial concept (abundance of hotels, motels and lounges) or even “a kind of parody of the guest-host relationship” (e.g. prostitution).³ Yet, the world shaped by self-love, greed and animosity has gone far away from the real meaning and heart of hospitality. This is not just a cultural problem, however, but it is often a theological problem in our churches. A perversion of true Christian hospitality (that should be patterned after Trinitarian hospitality) occurs if hospitality becomes a tool for social advantage or manipulation, for showing off our ability or wealth, rather than showing genuine care.

¹ I owe thanks to my husband Davide for the title and the idea to view John’s Gospel in terms of hospitality, which set me on this most enjoyable spiritual journey.

² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: the Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 66.

³ John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: partnership with strangers as promise and mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1985), 2.

When we talk of hospitality our image inevitably includes other people: friends, family or even kind strangers who welcome us.⁴ It is notable that our choice of people whom we include in our image of hospitality demonstrates a curious difference between modern (particularly, though not exclusively, western) and first century Mediterranean understanding of hospitality. Malina notes that in the modern view, “hospitality normally refers to entertaining relatives, friends and acquaintances”, while ancient “hospitality normally refers to hosting a stranger.”⁵ In Russian, this cultural difference is reflected in two words that could be used for hospitality. A conventional word for hospitality today is *gostepriimstvo* basically meaning “receiving a guest,” while an older language, traditionally used in Bible translations uses *strannopriimstvo* (receiving a stranger) or *strannolubie* (corresponding more to the Greek term φιλοξενία).

Almost everyone will agree that hospitality is a good and positive thing. Most Christians would agree with the following statement: “if we love God and God meets us in the stranger, then we shall naturally (and even unconsciously) love the stranger.”⁶ But in real life everything is more difficult. In the midst of our contemporary society, how can we understand what hospitality is all about and live it the way we should? Where do we begin to learn it and how do we live it in our world today?

First, we must expand our understanding of hospitality beyond what we mean by it as members of modern society, because we are also (and primarily) members of the “new community” created by God. We need to turn to the gospel story and the practice

⁴ Koenig, 1.

⁵ Bruce J. Malina, “The received view and what it cannot do: III John and hospitality,” in *Semeia 35: Social-Scientific Criticism of the New Testament and its social world* (Decatur: Scholars Press, 1986), 188.

⁶ Koenig, 4.

of the early church, to contemplate the story of God's relationship to people and find in it an understanding of hospitality that is deeper and more powerful than modern (often shallow and watered-down) spirituality understands. We need to broaden our view of hospitality and see that in a wider sense it has to be defined as "the process by means of which an outsider's status is changed from stranger to guest"⁷ and not simply as an act of entertaining family and friends. And for the church community to be truly itself it will mean going beyond our conventional (and often limited) understanding of hospitality as holding nice gatherings with one another over a common meal, a special church event or even an occasional 'open house' for the community. While the word "hospitality" is not present in the Gospel of John, it will be argued that the notion of hospitality is prominent throughout the Gospel. Although Malina overstates his case, he notes that all of what John⁸ wants to say is found in the prologue,⁹ including his theme of hospitality, with variations of it found throughout the Gospel. John demonstrates that in the incarnation, God came into the world both as Guest (Stranger) and as welcoming Host. The prologue introduces a beautiful picture of the hospitable nature of the Triune God (which will be discussed in chapter two), demonstrating that in Jesus Christ God became vulnerable to the welcome of the world, which in turn failed to treat him with hospitality: *He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him (1:11)*¹⁰ while as many as

⁷ Malina, "The received view," 181.

⁸ References to 'John' or 'John's Gospel' point solely to the content of the Fourth Gospel and not to its author. The issue of authorship is completely irrelevant to this work.

⁹ Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 5.

¹⁰ Text in italics with references in the brackets will always be the text quoted directly from the NASB version of the Bible, unless indicated as NRSV.

*received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God (1:12). This reference to λόγος becoming flesh in John 1:14, as Ringe notes, is one of the ways to convey “the saga of God’s yearning for a home among humankind.”*¹¹

Beyond the prologue, John’s Gospel shows that those who receive divine hospitality and welcome “God-become-flesh” to be at home with them become the core of the “new community,” a community that has its life in the triune God himself (5:40, 17:21) and derives its character from its Life-giver (13:14, 34). This is where the church needs to begin its search for the meaning of hospitality and for the ways to live it out in personal as well as communal lives.

As we engage with the text of John’s Gospel, I hope we can go beyond the limited image of hospitality described above as receiving a guest or a stranger in our home (although it is one of its important practical expressions). I hope we can come to understand it as a fundamental attitude toward another being (which can be expressed in a great variety of ways) and in which we not only share our possessions and our space but also our heart, our own lives. This becomes clearer as we see the Gospel of John as a whole, hear what it is saying, note the language and reflect on how it might apply to our churches today.

¹¹ Sharon H. Ringe, *Wisdom’s Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 54.

Chapter 1

HOSPITALITY CONCEPT AND LANGUAGE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The “hospitality language” in John’s Gospel includes a great variety of terms and concepts all of which are knitted into the fabric of an attitude characterized by availability to others, being there for the other as servants and placing oneself at the other person’s disposal in an act of hospitality and generosity.¹² This chapter will look at a number of words and concepts that constitute “hospitality language” in order to define the theological framework as well as the scope for our dealing with the text of John’s Gospel.

Word-study has been widely criticized in recent studies but it also has its values and proves helpful for the purpose of this paper. While word-study focused in and of itself can lead to erroneous exegetical and theological conclusions (especially when meaning is derived from etymology) when properly considered in their immediate and larger literary context, words can be valuable. When placed within the wider context of the Gospel, the words John chooses to signify hospitality can lead us to a greater understanding of John’s theological intentions and lead to proper conclusions.

My interest in noting these words and concepts, therefore, will not be etymological, but semantic. The intention is not to do word study per se, but to point out how John uses and interrelates certain words and concepts in the context of his Gospel, and thereby creates an image of hospitality, which must not be overlooked. In the course of this study, it will be shown that John communicates the gospel message in a unique

¹² Royce Gordon Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), x.

way, using his own set of conventions and words that stand out against the background of its text.

What is intended in this chapter can be demonstrated by analogy. D.A. Carson points to a common fallacy in biblical interpretation comparing word studies with looking at the tree or even at the “third knot of the fourth branch from the bottom of the sixth tree from the left”¹³ with an intensity that totally misses the view of the forest as a whole. Aware of such danger, I do not intend to dissect John’s text into words, but to describe¹⁴ the nature of the whole text, to create a mental picture of the ‘forest as a whole’ by noticing that it consists of a special selection of ‘trees’ (interrelated words and concepts) pertaining to John. We deal with the narrative¹⁵ and as the narrative progresses, certain themes and concepts stand out in relief from the text and through them John’s Gospel gives a fresh insight of good news through the prism of ‘hospitality’. It is this embossed picture of ‘hospitality’ that I am intending to describe in this paper.

RECEIVING/NOT RECEIVING (λαμβάνω)

Hospitality language is, first of all, a language of invitation and welcome. Approximately thirty times John uses λαμβάνω both in the positive and in the negative sense, for a mental (3:11) or an actual reception (19:30). It has been noted that λαμβάνω

¹³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 100.

¹⁴ D. Hill also emphasized that the proper approach to biblical studies must be *descriptive*, rather than dogmatic. (See David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 22).

¹⁵ Culpepper notes that John shapes the plot both through the way he organizes his material and through recurring repetitions of Johannine themes (See Allan R Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, pp. 86-87).

is often used to refer to “the host’s initial reception of strangers or travelers”¹⁶ or to “showing hospitality to those with whom one is in solidarity.”¹⁷

This notion of hospitality is still present with λαμβάνω even when it is used in a sense of “accepting of the claim to one’s own existence,”¹⁸ for in John receiving the claim and receiving a person making this claim are very closely connected. We see the reception of the testimony of Jesus (3:11,32; 12:48; 17:8), of his messengers (13:20), or of Jesus himself (1:12; 5:43) that is also the reception of the Father (13:20). Λαμβάνω, thus, often reflects human hospitality or inhospitality towards God. It is notable that John expresses the notion of rejection by negation used with λαμβάνω emphasizing the deliberate nature¹⁹ of this rejection (see also 3:32, 12:48). On one occasion John peculiarly uses a negative counterpart of λαμβάνω to bring out the same idea. In 6:37 Jesus says: “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out* (ἐκβάλω ἔξω)”.

Even the idea of faith in John is often presented in terms of hospitality – as receiving Jesus. In John ‘not receiving the testimony’ (3:11) is immediately followed by ‘not believing’ (3:12). In John 9 a blind man receives his sight, which becomes the basis of his faith and worship of Jesus, ‘receiving’ Jesus for who he is (9:38). On the contrary, not to receive Jesus’ saying is not to receive him (12:48). Unbelief is also expressed in terms of failing to reciprocate Jesus’ hospitality, *receiving* the gifts from the Son but

¹⁶ Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 131.

¹⁷ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 32.

¹⁸ Gerhard Dellling, ‘Λαμβανω’ in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1967): IV, 6.

rejecting him. It was so in the case of Judas (13:30), who having received Jesus' hospitality in "receiving the morsel," went immediately to 'give Jesus up' to His enemies. John frequently uses λαμβάνω simply to demonstrate whether Jesus, and everything and everyone that belong to him, is hospitably accepted or rejected by those who encounter him: "*I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me*" (5:43a).

Therefore, all the way through, John speaks of God's dealings in the world demonstrating the hospitality of God, the source from whom we receive the fullness of grace (1:16) and everything that we might ask for in Jesus' name (16:24). In John's Gospel, as this God graciously invites and receives us to himself (6:37; 14:3) as a Host, we also see him coming as a Guest, to dwell among us in the flesh. John demonstrates both a hospitable reception of the Son (and in him the Father) (13:20) and the inhospitable rejection of the Son (and in him the Father) (12:48), of the Spirit (14:17) and of those associated with the Son (13:20).

COMING (ἔρχομαι, ἐξέρχομαι)

The theme of hospitable reception is interwoven with the idea of "coming" which then also becomes a constituent part of the language of hospitality in the Gospel of John. First, in many instances reception or rejection of Jesus is connected with his coming into the world. Many times John makes the absurdity of Jesus' rejection very obvious: *He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him* (1:11). Then, while it seems logical that people should be open to the light, when the Light (Jesus) comes to them, they neither love him, nor are willing to come to him (3:19-20; 5:40, 43). The

¹⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 395.

result is exclusion from eternal life,²⁰ rather than sharing in it. On the other hand, it is said, *so when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him (4:45a) and when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days (4:40)*. “Coming” entails a certain reaction, whether hospitable or hostile and both are in abundance in the Gospel of John. We see the image of God, coming into the world in his Son with open arms, coming in a hospitable manner, with good will. He comes generously in order to give the world a gift of Light (1:9), knowledge (3:2), eternal life (6:50-51, 58; 10:10b), salvation (12:47), fellowship with God (14:3, 18, 23), and help (15:26; 16:7, 13). For John, God the Father, the Son and the Spirit is the God that comes as a good will Guest (Stranger) to be received (e.g. 20:19b, *Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you,”* also 20:26).

It is clear on many occasions that an invitation is necessary in order for one to come to God and then, the Father “draws” (ἐλκω) people to himself (6:44; 12:32). While the verb “draw” may sound like an action against one’s will, it is more likely that John uses this word not in a sense of “making them to come,” but denoting the necessity of God’s initiative, who beneficently draws people to himself in love. Carson notes that the thought of 6:44 is the negative counterpart of 6:37a, stating that all whom the Father gives to the Son will come to him.²¹ In the same way, no one can come to the Son, unless the Father hospitably grants one to come (6:65).

In many instances, Jesus demonstrates hospitality by inviting the people to come to him to receive spiritual food (*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never*

²⁰ Johannes Schneider, “Ἐρχομαι” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1967): II, 672.

²¹ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 293.

be hungry, 6:35a, NRSV) and drink (*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in Me drink*, 7:37b-38a, NRSV). It is notable that John makes a great use of ἔρχομαι in the theological or figurative sense (especially in discourses).²²

There are, however, a number of occasions when it is used locally.²³ Jesus invites his disciples to come and have breakfast with him (21:12), comes to share a meal with them (21:22). Jesus-the-Host invites people to come with him and to receive his hospitality, *He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day...* (1:39). The same is done by his disciples in relation to those who were doubting about Jesus, *Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see"* (1:46). In the imperative it is a language of invitation.

Even when ἔρχομαι is used in John in the local sense to demonstrate the physical hostility of some people, when placed in the context of the whole Gospel²⁴ it becomes a part of a greater theological reality of rejection of divine saving hospitality. John mentions that some *were intending to come and take Him (Jesus) by force* (6:15), those who came before Jesus came as thieves and robbers (10:8) to steal and kill and destroy (10:10) (while Jesus comes giving life). The chief priests and the Pharisees fear that

²² God's saving activity is expressed in terms of Jesus 'coming' into the world (e.g. 1:9,11; 6:33,50; 11:27); people's belief or unbelief is spoken in terms of 'coming' or 'not coming' to Jesus (e.g. 5:40; 6:33; 8:21); some seeking salvation no longer available to them in terms of trying to 'come' where Jesus is (7:34,36) or others actually finding in him eternal life in terms of 'coming to him to receive a drink of living water' (7:37) are just some of the examples.

²³ Many scholars noted that John's language has more than one level of meaning (Keener, Leon-Dufour, Martyn). Some of the hospitality terms that we are looking at are used in John on both levels. Sometimes they are used 'locally', that is, in reference to actual events in the story. At other times, however, the same terms are used 'theologically', that is, not merely relating an actual event but signifying a greater reality.

²⁴ Jesus' benevolent coming into the world and constant rejection of him in a sense of unbelief.

because of Jesus *the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation* (11:48), while Jesus says that such malevolent coming is pertaining to the *ruler of the world* who has nothing to do with him (14:30). Also in the negative sense we see that just as the Son and the Father come in and remain in believers (14:20, 23), the devil ‘enters’ (εἰσῆλθεν) into the heart of Judas (13:27).

John explicitly demonstrates the hospitality of the Triune God who constantly comes and invites people to come to him and have fellowship with him and to receive his gracious gifts. Coming and being welcomed to come are interrelated, for the coming of persons to one another (whether it be Divine persons or humans) requires, first, hospitality on the part of the host and then receptivity on the part of the guest.

GIVING (δίδωμι, τίθημι)

“Coming” is closely connected in John with “giving gifts.” We find δίδωμι occurring in the Gospel of John with great frequency, creating an emphasized sense of generosity, significantly contributing to John’s hospitality language. “Giving” is closely connected with a concept of a gift denoting people’s gifts to one another as well as the gift of God to humankind (John 4:10). We also see, that the Son’s relationship with the Father is characterized by giving: the Father invests him with Life (5:26), gives him the name (17:11,12), the judgment (5:22), the authority (5:27), works to do (5:36), words to say (12:49), those who belonged to him (17:6), his glory (17:22), “the cup” (18:11) and in fact “all things” (3:35).

But the Father’s generosity is not limited to his Son and is abundantly expressed toward the world and particularly to those of the world who receive Jesus. God is constantly portrayed “giving” of himself. He generously gives his only begotten Son

(3:16) and the Spirit without measure (3:34). The Father gives “true bread out of heaven” (6:32) which “gives life to the world” (6:33). He gives hospitable gift both to the world that rejects him: Israel, his people who do not understand where the manna comes from (6:31), and to Judas, to whom Jesus gives a share of his bread (13:26).

The language of giving is pervasive in chapters 14-17 which are especially dedicated to those who believe and receive the Son. He gives them another Helper (14:16), peace (14:27), eternal life (17:2), the word of the Father (17:8), and all they would ask the Father in Jesus’ name (15:16). The ultimate act of giving is seen in the act of crucifixion, when Jesus’ death (19:30) is described as “giving up his spirit” (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα), denoting his willingness to die voluntarily (10:18) out of self-sacrificial love.

A similar idea is often expressed in contexts where John uses the word τίθημι. Local meanings of the word may vary between “put,” “lay out” or even “serve” (as in 2:10). But in several texts John uses it in a sense parallel both to Greek-Hellenistic use of “taking a risk of one’s life” and the Hebrew counterpart of it denoting “offering up one’s life,” deliberately echoing the sense of “hazarding one’s life” (10:11; 13:37).²⁵ However, John implies more than that and seems clearly to emphasize “the actual sacrifice of life” when Jesus is saying, “*I lay down My life for the sheep*” (10:15). Similar expressions are found in 10:11, 17, 18; 13:37, 38 and 15:13 and can only be rendered as “giving or offering up one’s life.”²⁶ All these sayings not only point out Jesus’ willingness to give

²⁵ Christian Maurer, “τίθημι” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1967): VIII, 155-6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

his own life for the sake of the estranged world, but also his point that those who accept this ultimate hospitality for his friends (his sheep) must be ready to do the same for their friends.

Arterbury notes in his study that giving of gifts between two parties was very characteristic of ancient Mediterranean hospitality encounters.²⁷ We find full evidence of that in the Fourth Gospel, but John not only uses “giving” as the mark of hospitality but also ironically as a mark of hostility. As in the case of John’s use of the verb ‘to come’, both local and theological use is made of the verb ‘to give’, occasionally creating an ironic image of “giving” in those who are inhospitable to Jesus. Judas’ pretentious generosity is seen in his suggestion that the perfume that was used for Jesus should have been sold and the money *given to poor people* (12:5). The chief priests and the Pharisees *had given orders* to do everything they could to seize Jesus (11:57). And the soldiers at the cross were *giving* him slaps in the face (19:3)!

John is pervaded by the language of hospitality in terms of giving, both in a positive sense on the part of God as the ultimate Giver of everything as well as in the ironic sense of the perverted generosity of the hostile world.

ABIDING (μένω, μονή, ἐν, οἰκία)

Hospitality is not limited to giving and receiving gifts. Another integral part of it is sharing one’s space, one’s being with another person. John presents a profound concept of mutual indwelling which is not found in other Gospels and makes a strong contribution to his language of hospitality.

²⁷ Arterbury, 115.

Scattered throughout John's Gospel we find forty instances of μένω (only 12 are found in the Synoptics), which in Christian texts often refers "to either the stranger's acceptance of or continuation in a context of hospitality."²⁸ The concept of abiding may take different forms according to the different relations and antonyms and can mean "to remain in the place," "to stay overnight," "to stay in the house," "to dwell," "to last".²⁹ The Old Testament demonstrates the religious significance of the word as the enduring nature of God and of things and persons related to God.³⁰ This meaning of immutability of God is also carried into the New Testament and particularly into the Gospel of John. The statement that Christ abides (12:34) points to his eternal character,³¹ and that the Spirit abides on Christ (1:32) "lifts Him above the prophets who are honored only with temporary inspiration."³² John, however, uses the concept in a wider sense; in his Gospel the theme of abiding envisages a sense of "givenness,"³³ or we may say, a sense of loyal, deep attachment to another and of hospitable invitation to be with another. Primarily, it is an expression of the hospitable relation between the persons of the Trinity who abide in

²⁸ Arterbury, 131.

²⁹ Friedrich Hauck, "Μένω" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1967): IV, 574.

³⁰ Ps. 9:7 speaks of the enduring nature of God, "*But the LORD abides forever...*" (also Dan. 6:26). Ps. 111:3,9 speaks of the permanence of things related to God, "*His righteousness endures forever...His praise endures forever...*" (also Is 40:8, "*But the word of our God stands forever*"). Ez. 43:7 "*...I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever*" (κατασκηνώση – a synonym of μένω is used here) and Zech 2:11 "*Many nations will join themselves to the LORD...and will become My people Then I will dwell in your midst...*" speak of dwelling as a relationship between God and people (see also Wisdom 7:27 that emphasizes both the Wisdom's 'remaining in herself' and 'entering into holy souls' relating them to God).

³¹ It reflects what in relation to the Old Testament Brown calls "the atmosphere of the permanence of the divine" (Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1 in *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 510).

³² Hauck, "Μένω", 576.

³³ Jey J. Kanagaraj, '*Mysticism*' in *the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into its Background*, JSNTSS 158 (Sheffield Press: Sheffield, 1998), 265.

one another.³⁴ The Spirit remains on the Son (1:33) (the idea may be that of “a building in which the Spirit dwells”).³⁵ This gives us an image of Jesus being a hospitable home for the Spirit. The Father and the Son are also said to be in one another (which is expressed through the Greek preposition ἐν). The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father (10:38; 14:10, 11; 17:21, 23). This relationship is always emphasized as reciprocal and portrays a hospitable relationship between the Father and the Son who are open to one another, and are willing and able to share common “space” or “place” with one another.

That is why Jesus, on the one hand, can point to the inhospitality of the Jews to him (and consequently to the Father) or to his word (5:38) by saying, “*you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you*” (8:37b). Ironically, they are hospitable to their own sin (9:41) that ‘remains’ and as a consequence will have to “host” God’s wrath, which will abide on them (3:36). The disciples, on the other hand, are said to be hospitable and Jesus says to them “*the Spirit of truth...abides with you and will be in you*” (14:17).

Another term, derivative from μένω, that contributes to the language of hospitality is μονή (dwelling place). It occurs twice (14:2, 23) in John’s Gospel, but gives a comforting picture of the hospitable God who prepares a place in his house for those who accept the Son and who expects them as a generous Host, a loving Father ready to bring his children home to be with him forever. John also uses the word οἰκία referring sometimes to the earthly temple as the house of his Father (2:16) and other

³⁴ Often referred to as Johannine theology of immanence (Brown, *John I*, 510).

³⁵ Margaret Pammet, “Path and Residence Metaphors in the Fourth Gospel,” *Theology* 88 (March, 1985): 121.

times to the heavenly home (14:2a), the Kingdom of God into which we are invited to come. Jesus uses both οἰκία and μένω in one sentence in 8:35, *the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever*, denoting that sharing the eternal dwelling with the Divine Host is the privilege of those who having received him by faith become his children (1:12). Even the unique Johannine phrase “believing *into* Jesus” connotes being “completely embedded in the group of which he is the central personage”³⁶ and gives a sense of being hospitably included in the family.

In his use of ἐν, μένω and μονή John emphasizes both the lasting nature of immanence between the persons of the Trinity and between the Trinity and believers, as well as a real sense of hospitality in the relationships of the Triune God that are offered to the world and particularly to those who receive Jesus by faith. This sense of openness to one another, so that being together becomes possible, draws further terms into John’s language of hospitality.

HEARING (ἀκούω) and SEEING (ὁράω)

Another pair of terms that expresses hospitality is “hearing” and “seeing,” which also implies interpersonal relationships in John. Gruenler notes, “listening and hearing are figures of speech that imply availability.”³⁷ Hearing another is a necessary basis for a hospitable relationship, while not being heard is often a result of the absence of such a relationship. In the story of a blind man who was healed, no matter how many times he tells his story, he is not going to be heard by those initially hostile both to him and to

³⁶ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 230.

³⁷ Gruenler, 80.

Jesus (9:27). Hearing implies a relationship, and if one is “not of God” he is not able to hear God (8:43,47; 18:37) and the sheep do not hear those who come as hostile thieves and robbers (10:8). On the contrary, we see that the Father who is in the Son *always* hears him (11:41) of which the Son has an absolute certainty (11:42). In the same way, the Son hears from the Father (8:38, 40) and those who are in a relationship of love and self-disposition to God are able to hear him (9:31, 8:47a), for one cannot love without listening. The sheep heed the voice of the one who loves them so much that he is ready to give his own life for them (10:3, 11, 16).

In the same way, John, in his expression of interpersonal relationships and mutual reception, places a great emphasis on seeing along with hearing. In John 5:37 Jesus makes it clear that his listeners’ unwillingness to accept him results from their not having any personal relationships with the Father who sent the Son, for they neither “heard his voice” nor “have seen his form.” In other words, they do not know the Father and therefore do not receive his testimony about the Son, nor the Son himself.

Thus, “hearing” and “seeing” are not only terms describing senses, but are also relational terms that express hospitality, readiness to place oneself at the disposition of another and a mutual relationship.

LOVING (ἀγαπάω, φιλέω)

The word “love” undeniably is a vast term to which a whole separate work could be dedicated (and much attention has been given to this topic).³⁸ My goal is not to give

³⁸ See, for example: F. Segovia, *Love relationships in the Johannine tradition: agapelagapan in 1 John and the fourth gospel* (Dissertation Series 58, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1978); Leon Morris, “Love in the Fourth Gospel” in *Saved by hope* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978): 27-43; D. Rensberger, “Love for one another and love for enemies in the Gospel of John” in *Love for enemies and nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992): 297-313; and

an exhaustive study of “love” in the Gospel of John, but only to note how John incorporates and uses “love” within his hospitality language. As noted earlier, the Greek word for hospitality is φιλοξενία, which combines the general word for love to people connected by kinship or faith (φιλέω) and the word for strangers (ξένοι). Thus, etymologically, semantically and practically, in the New Testament, hospitality is closely connected to love and it is to this connection that I will give a closer look.³⁹ It is, first of all, notable that John constantly uses the word “love” and sets it before the reader “with magnificent monotony,”⁴⁰ comparable to that of several hospitality terms that we discussed earlier: reception, coming, giving, and abiding.

Although John uses two words, ἀγαπάω and φιλέω, for love, he does not seem to make much distinction between them.⁴¹ John, unlike the Synoptics, uses φιλέω for the love of God for his Son (5:20) and for the believers (16:27). The relationship between Jesus and Lazarus is demonstrated in terms of φιλέω (11:3, 36) and is seen to be the relationship of friendship. The relationship of Jesus’ disciples with him was also that of love and friendship: *No one has greater love [ἀγάπην] than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are My friends [φίλων]...* (15:13-14a, NRSV). On the other hand,

C. Vogel, “Greek cosmic love and the Christian love of God: Boethius, Dionysius the Areopagite and the author of the Fourth Gospel” in *Vigiliae christianae* 35 no 1 (1981): 57-81.

³⁹ I intentionally limit my dealings with the theme of love in John to the passages where love is connected to other hospitality language, for a study of all the uses of love would be too general and diffuse and would have little value for the purpose of this paper.

⁴⁰ Ethelbert Stauffer, “Ἀγαπάω, ἀγαπή, ἀγαπητός” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1967): I, 53.

⁴¹ Keener, *The Gospel of John I*, 324. For examples of unconvincing attempts to drive a distinction between the two words for love see: Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975); Jack Wilson Stallings, *Randall House Bible Commentary: The Gospel of John* (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 1989) or notorious sermons on John 21 (e.g. http://russian.fgtv.com/sermon_text.asp?data=1a960303).

we can note this “special” love Jesus seemed to have had toward the disciple *whom Jesus loved* and who was *reclining on Jesus’ bosom* (13:23) as simply an expression of “intimacy of a unique relationship of trust.”⁴² John speaks of it most likely with an awareness of the similar expression of the Father’s love for the Son *who is in the bosom of the Father* (1:18). All this is said to point to the fact that we can only understand the meaning of love in John if we draw its meaning from the nature of relationships within which John places it, and those relationships as we have already noticed are generously colored by the idea of hospitality.

It is not by chance that “love” often occurs in this Gospel together with other hospitality terms. Love is not just a feeling or affection (though may include both of those) and has a more active element to it, as John’s preference for the verb ‘to love’ over the noun ‘love’ seems to suggest. Malina notes that there was no word for an internal state of love that did not entail a corresponding external action (for example, that of supporting the well-being of the persons whom one loves). Therefore, love always means doing something that reveals one’s attachment,⁴³ even when used in the negative sense of ‘loving darkness’ (3:17). John emphasizes that people’s love of the darkness is directly connected to their evil *deeds*, so their deeds express the perversity of their love.⁴⁴ In contrast, God’s love is hospitable; it “does not desire but gives,”⁴⁵ for God loves the world. And this love results in God generously giving his only begotten Son, so that

⁴² Gustav Stählin, “Φιλέω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1967): IX, 131.

⁴³ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 228.

⁴⁴ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), 51.

⁴⁵ Stauffer, “Ἀγαπάω, I, 55.

those who believe in him will receive the gift of eternal life (3:16). In the same way the Father's love for the Son gives him his glory (17:24) and gives *all things into His hand* (3:35). The love of the Son for his own expresses itself ultimately in him giving his life for them (13:1) who are his friends (15:13). True love is characterized by an attitude of disposability, the willingness to give everything, even life for the sake of a friend. To love is to die "to our own narcissism or self-love" and to find "our true self in serving others."⁴⁶ Love and giving go hand in hand in John and are both constitutive of the concept and the language of hospitality.

In the same way, John ties love with "abiding" so tightly, that often it is hard to separate between the two. The love of the Father for believers means that the Divine Community⁴⁷ comes to them to make their abode with them (14:23). Kanagaraj also makes this point saying, "the love of the Father to the disciples...is expressed in his coming with Jesus to anyone who loves Jesus and in their making their home with that person."⁴⁸ John uses interchangeably (15:9-12) "love" (ἀγαπάτε) and "abide in My love" (μείνατε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐμῇ). Loving is closely connected to (or may be even explained by) the indwelling of the believers' life by God (17:23). Love cannot be separated and understood apart from the intimate relationship of openness of one to another in which sharing can take place. The relationships of disciples to one another are

⁴⁶ George A. Maloney, *Entering into the Heart of Jesus: Meditations on the Indwelling Trinity in St. John's Gospel* (New York: Alba House, 1987), 113.

⁴⁷ God as the Trinity is referred to in this work in such interchangeable terms as "the Divine Community", "the Triune Community", "the Divine Society" and "the Divine Family", all of which are intended by different authors to emphasize the social and relational nature of God, the significance and prominence of which in John's Gospel will be discussed fully in Chapter 2.

⁴⁸ Kanagaraj, 275.

based on the fact that their relationships with the Son are friendship (15:14), and friendship is characterized by love and sharing. The Father shares everything with the Son, and the Son shares everything with believers, who, chosen by him on behalf of the Divine Family are accounted as friends.⁴⁹ Thus, Peter, being a friend of Jesus and loving Jesus, is to share in Jesus' task of taking care of his sheep (21:15-17). Love is clearly interwoven into the hospitality fabric of John's gospel.

KNOWING (γινώσκω, οἶδα)

While "knowing" is a very important relational concept, at first sight it does not seem to fit into the category of hospitality. But John so carefully links his concepts together, explaining one with the other, that following the chain of thought we inevitably come upon his use of the word "to know."⁵⁰ It has been noted that John's idea of knowing is closely associated with the reciprocal immanence between God and humans⁵¹ (which we discussed in the previous section). To know someone is to experience and to maintain a close personal relationship and Johannine knowledge does emphasize intimacy.⁵² On the one hand, a number of times John uses γινώσκω and οἶδα followed by ὅτι to describe the content of knowing (e.g. 3:2: *Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher*; also 4:42; 5:32; 9:24; 14:31; 15:8; 19:4). On the other hand, John uses "knowing" to depict mutual relationship of the Father and the Son, which, as we

⁴⁹ Gruenler, 10.

⁵⁰ John seems to use γινώσκω and οἶδα almost synonymously to describe both the relationship of the Son to the Father and believers to God and we will not take the time to study nuances about their possible differences.

⁵¹ Kanagaraj, 273.

⁵² Keener, *The Gospel of John I*, 239.

have already seen, he spoke of in terms of mutual hospitality. So, to know is not only to have information concerning the circumstances of one's life (though the passages above include also this meaning). For John, to know God is to know his internal hospitable unity of Father, Son and Spirit (10:38; 14:20; 16:3).

Kanagaraj notes, "God, having a deeper insight into the hearts of his people, intimately relates with them by choosing them, delivering them from their enemies, and leading them to himself."⁵³ This knowledge of people by God is primarily expressed through the statements of the Son "knowing his own" (10:14, 27). We also begin to see a clearer relation of "knowing" to John's language of hospitality when we understand that *γινώσκειν* in regard to people means "acceptance of the divine act of love in Jesus and obedience to its demand,"⁵⁴ that is, accepting God's hospitable love and responding by keeping his command to offer one another that same hospitable love (13:34). We see a clear connection between knowledge (or ignorance) of God and hospitable reception (or rejection) of him. Those who "do not know" God do not receive him and are therefore hostile to him (1:10-11; 14:17) and his new community (15:21). Truly "knowing" Jesus is to accept him for who he is – the Son intimately related to the Father in mutual hospitality (8:28). But to receive is only the first step of hospitality, for one has to remain hospitable, open to continuous reception and offering of hospitality. Mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son results in Jesus graciously giving his life for the sheep (10:15) who know him, know his voice and follow him (10:4), because he is not a threatening stranger to them (as those in 10:5). Jesus knows God because he is from him (7:29).

⁵³ Kanagaraj, 273.

⁵⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, "Γινώσκω, γινώσις, ἐπιγινώσκω, ἐπιγινώσις" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1967): I, 712.

Knowing the Spirit of God is directly connected with the Spirit abiding in the disciples (14:17b).

John's image of "knowing" seems to allude to biblical images of the people in covenant relationship with God, because for a Hebrew to know God is to be in an intimate relationship with him, to experience God's dealings with people in life, to listen and to obey his commands.⁵⁵ This kind of knowledge creates trust and creates the possibility of receiving another continuously and being with another, being in relationship, which continually arises from personal encounter. That is why John explains mutual indwelling in terms of *γινώσκω* and *οἶδα*. John seems to make an allusion to "a new Sinai theophany"⁵⁶ in 1:14-18 (see Exodus 33-34 where God in the context of giving Torah is making his character known to Moses). Such image of the Word tabernacling among the people is suggested by Sirach 24:8 stating that the Creator caused Wisdom to rest its tabernacle and to dwell in Jacob (identifying Wisdom with Torah, and here with the Word). Thus, Ringe says that in 1:10-12b John recapitulates "the age-old story of the relentless yearning of Wisdom to be "known" and to find a home among humankind."⁵⁷

TABLE FELLOWSHIP AND FOOD IMAGES IN JOHN

We cannot overlook John's extended use of the meal events as well as food and drink images as part of hospitality language.

⁵⁵ Keener, *The Gospel of John I*, 242.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁵⁷ Ringe, 50.

On the one hand, it is notable that the numerous meal-fellowship accounts of Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners found in the Synoptics are virtually absent in John. And when they are present (John 12, 13, 21) they lack many of the features, which in the Synoptic tradition seem to be essential for their hospitality theme. It is surprising, because meals were “a microcosm of everyday social relations”⁵⁸ and one of the main ways of expressing hospitality. But the only accounts of meal fellowship we find in John are the dinner in Bethany with Lazarus (12:1-11), the last supper of Jesus with his disciples (13:1-5) and the post-Resurrection breakfast with disciples on the shore (21:11-13). Nowhere does John emphasize that Jesus was eating with ‘tax-collectors and sinners’ in order to demonstrate Jesus’ hospitality to sinners. Even in the account at Bethany (anointing of Jesus during the dinner) “the very strong element of sinfulness and forgiveness that is essential to the Lukan story is totally missing.”⁵⁹ In Bethany he is simply a guest and shares a meal with friends; in John 13 and 21, while he acts as a host, he is there also with his closest friends (disciples). On the other hand, John has his own way of expressing the same idea and as we will see further, he presents Jesus’ (and in him the triune) hospitality in terms of food, not by relaying the accounts of actual table fellowships but using spiritual images and terms (e.g. the discourse on the Bread of Life or the Living Water).

Even today people use food and drink not only as nourishment, but also as an important method of communication. Malina notes that “a meal to which others are invited sends important social messages exchanged between the persons(s) issuing

⁵⁸ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 207.

⁵⁹ Brown, *John 1*, 450-451.

invitations and those actually invited, those who should/might have been invited but were not, and those who decline the invitation.”⁶⁰

Near the beginning of John we see Jesus participating in the wedding at Cana where he, first being a guest, becomes a host, providing the best wine for the other guests. Since wine was a symbol of joyous celebration, “its abundant provision points to the image of the kingdom of God as a banquet in which God’s people eat and drink in his presence.”⁶¹ But even at that moment, this event of hospitality becomes the sign that both reveals Jesus’ glory (demonstrated who he is) and brought the disciples to initial faith in him (2:11).

Another instance of a hospitable offering of the drink is found in the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. And again, at first Jesus is the Guest who asks for a drink of water and relies on this woman’s hospitality, but as the conversation progresses, he becomes the Gracious Host who desires to give “the living water” springing up to eternal life (4:14), for having life in himself, he gives life (5:21). What is notable is that in John’s Gospel water and food for Jesus seem to be “primarily symbolic of higher realities (4:7, 32; 18:11; 19:28)⁶² and pointing not only to God providing for the physical needs but offering even a more generous provision that gives eternal life (e.g. 4:9-10; 6:53). This theme of divine hospitality of Jesus is repeated again in 7:37 when he says, “*let anyone who is thirsty come to me*” (NRSV). This occurrence is all the more significant in view of its crossing of cultural boundaries. Strict Jews would not invite

⁶⁰ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 71.

⁶¹ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, one Gospel* (Downers Grove, InterVarsityPress, 2004), 497.

⁶² Culpepper Alan R. and Clifton Black, eds., *Exploring the Gospel of John* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 110.

Samaritans into a conversation, would not expect hospitality from them and would not offer it to them. All the more Jesus is crossing boundaries for he speaks to a woman in a public place and does so with a woman who is looked down upon in her community. Despite all these complications Jesus by the way of asking for her hospitality (a drink of water) is demonstrating and expounding on his own (divine) hospitality that is life giving.

In John 6 we see correspondence between the gracious provision of food, and the use made of the imagery of drinking water in John 4,⁶³ thus continuing the theme of Jesus' hospitality. Here he is the host feeding the multitudes through the generosity of a little boy ready to share his barley loaves and two small fish. Yet, the significance of this miraculous sign is revealed in the discourse on the Bread of Life, which demonstrates the hospitable nature of God who gives manna in the desert (6:31-32) and who now gives the *bread of God...which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world* (6:33). The feeding miracle is made into a symbol or sign of spiritual food, spiritual bread that is identified with Jesus and points to his hospitality, *the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out* (6:37). Divine hospitality is expressed not only in the fact that God gives "living water" and "bread from heaven" but in the fact that the Son himself is "the bread of life" (6:35, 48) that is offered to the world and satisfies the hunger of the one who comes to believe in him. It is clear that Jesus speaks of his death, of his giving up his life for the sake of people (6:51), for this bread is his flesh, which he will give for the life of the world.

Both discourses (chapters 4 and 6) are dominated by the verb δίδωμι, which, as we noted, is an important part of John's hospitality language. Marshall notes that "the

⁶³ Marshall, 501.

gift of salvation is equated with the giver, since ultimately salvation is a personal relationship with the giver of life rather than something that can be handed over by him.”⁶⁴ God is putting himself at the disposal of the believer, offering himself as eternal food, so that the believer may participate in his life. The image of eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking his blood cannot be torn from John’s hospitality language for it echoes such concepts as *to welcome, accept, receive, believe into*, and the like.

Chapter twelve contains an account of a meal given in honor of Jesus by Lazarus’ family and is followed in chapter thirteen by a special meal that Jesus held for his disciples. Malina notes that a ritual festive meal is one that marks some individual’s or group’s transition or transformation. As a ritual feature of hospitality, festive meals indicate the transformation of a stranger into a guest, of an enemy into a covenant partner. In John Jesus’ final meal is obviously a ritual signifying hospitality through which disciples become friends.⁶⁵

At the conclusion of his Gospel John tells us of another meal, the one that Jesus shared with his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. Saying “come and have breakfast” (21:12), Jesus gives them bread and fish (21:13), and as the meal progresses we learn of the greater extent of his hospitality, for at the end he has receives Peter back, offering him reconciliation and restoration (21:15-18) and inviting him to “follow him” anew (21:19).

On the one hand, John’s descriptions of Jesus’ table fellowship are fewer than those of the Synoptics. However, John combines these few descriptions of meals together with his multiple images of bread and water and portrays hospitality (both divine

⁶⁴ Marshall, 500.

⁶⁵ Malina, “The received view”, 71-72.

and human) as something more than simple physical reality. Thus, when John speaks of Jesus giving bread and water, he also implies (as he makes clear in other passages) that Jesus gives away not just physical bread and water but even his own life in ultimate hospitality.

Christine Pohl notes multiple levels on which the language of welcome and hospitality permeates the Gospel of John: “Jesus is portrayed as guest, host, meal, and dwelling”, and that “as the incarnate word of God, he came into the world and received a mixed welcome.”⁶⁶ Besides that we have seen the whole variety of John’s terms, which he uses in his Gospel and have begun to see a beautiful and rich picture of divine hospitality expressed inwardly (among the Persons of the Trinity) and outwardly (to the creation). This picture should begin to shake our preconceived and often rather narrow understanding of hospitality.

We must also note that John takes a very different route from the other New Testament writers, expressing a simple reality of faith in terms of “believing into Jesus” (where Paul speaks of “faith in Christ Jesus”) and explains it through such terms as: “abiding in him,” “loving him,” “receiving him,” “having him,” “seeing him,” “hearing him,” “knowing him,” etc. All of these are terms of hospitality, which describe one reality – believing in Jesus.⁶⁷

The investigation so far shows that hospitality is much more than just sharing a meal with someone but is sharing one’s whole life, being disposable to one another in

⁶⁶ Christine Pohl, *Welcoming Strangers: A Socioethical Study of Hospitality in Selected Expression of the Christian Tradition* (Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University, 1993), 80.

⁶⁷ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 4.

hospitable service. As we go on exploring John's presentation of the Triune hospitality and the nature of hospitality in the God-created community of faith, let us note the variety of terms he uses for his purposes: giving and receiving, coming and being with another, hearing, loving and knowing. For as Vosloo rightly notes, the Christian ethic of hospitality, while not to be equated uncritically with *a liberal, romantic openness towards otherness*, challenges the notion of an *enclosed identity* in which the aim is to protect our identity by insulating ourselves from what is different and other.⁶⁸ It is clear from John's use of such variety of terms that hospitality is "the welcoming of the other in his or her otherness."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Robert Vosloo, "Identity, Otherness and the Triune God: theological groundwork for a Christian ethic of hospitality," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 119 (July 2004), 69-70.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 71.

Chapter 2 INTRATRINITARIAN HOSPITALITY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

In the majority of literature that deals with the nature of the church, questions of hospitality and practical spirituality are addressed on the grounds of Christology rather than Trinitarian theology. Erickson notes that while our theoretical theology is trinitarian, “in actual practice, the doctrine of the Trinity has no bearing on the lives and practices of Christians” who in their practical lives, are almost mere monotheists.⁷⁰ Indeed, most theologians build their ecclesiology on the basis of Christology rather on that of Trinitarian theology, and as a result, ecclesiology reflects an individualistic type of Christianity, in which Christ is the model for each individual Christian in the church. This fits well with modern individualism, but when we come to John we realize that its ecclesiology is wrapped in the fabric of trinitarian language.⁷¹ If hospitality is a crucial dimension of the people of God as a reflection of the very character of God, the hospitable character of the triune God should illuminate our discussion. In fact, that is precisely what we find in the Gospel of John. And far from being an arcane doctrine best left alone, “the doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for the Christian life.”⁷²

⁷⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 112.

⁷¹ Many scholars argue against any doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament. Although that may be accurate in terms of its explicit formulation in Christian theology, the Gospel of John, as we will continue to see throughout this work, presents the Trinity in the most explicit way of all the New Testament books.

⁷² Cathrine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 1.

Beginnings are important and John begins his Gospel with a prologue (1:1-18),⁷³ which introduces many motifs that the author will use to express his theology, including the theme of Divine Community in hospitality terms already discussed in the previous chapter.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (1:1). This very first verse is “a statement of inclusion”⁷⁴ which introduces to us the Divine Community and establishes the equality and the social relationship of the Divine Trinity. The preposition *πρός* primarily simply refers to place or accompaniment, as well as disposition and orientation.⁷⁵ But many scholars agree that the Johannine *πρός τὸν θεὸν* does not simply speak about co-existence or nearness but about an active personal relationship, sharing, and having in common. It emphasizes the interaction and communion with, and yet, of course, the separateness from God.⁷⁶ John in this short phrase tells us that the Word and the Father on the one hand are “two distinct persons of the Godhead”, and on the other they share “in the most intimate relations.”⁷⁷

The prologue concludes with an expression of the continuous closeness and unity of the Father and the Son as well as their warm deference to one another in making the Divine Family known to the world: *no one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him* (1:18). From the very start

⁷³ Marshall, 492.

⁷⁴ Erickson, 199.

⁷⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 27.

⁷⁶ Erickson, 201.

⁷⁷ G.A. McLaughlin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint John* (Salem, OH: Convention Book Store, 1973), 8.

John presents us with a picture of God who is a community of Persons, a socially related being within himself⁷⁸ characterized as we will see further by mutual hospitality expressed in love, communication, respect, assistance, team-work, mutual service and enjoyment.⁷⁹

From his reading of the Gospel of John (particularly 10:30, 14:26 and 15:26) Augustine stated a principle that: “where Trinitarian persons are concerned, what is said of each is said of all,”⁸⁰ implying their **perfect unity and mutuality**. John’s Gospel, however, does not present us with such a perfectly balanced and symmetrical picture⁸¹ as Augustine does in this statement, for “the personhood of the Spirit is much more inferential than is the case with the Father and the Son.”⁸² At the same time, one of the first things one notices in John is the trinitarian paradox, something that seems to contradict Augustine’s balanced view of the Trinity. On the one side of the paradox, some passages speak of the Son being submitted to the Father (the most explicit of them is 14:28: *for the Father is greater than I*) as well as the number of texts (over 30) in John that speak of the Son being sent by the Father, *for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me* (8:42c). Similarly, the Holy Spirit is sent by the Son (16:7), “*if I go, I will send Him to you.*” In other cases we see that the Father has something that the

⁷⁸ Zizioulas refers to it as “being-in-communion” or “being as communion.” See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (New York: St.Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985).

⁷⁹ Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: relationships, roles and relevance* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 21.

⁸⁰ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “The Fourth Gospel as Trinitarian Source Then and Now” in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 308.

⁸¹ Plantinga (304) observed that while the picture is richer in John than elsewhere, it is also richer in regard to the Father and the Son than it is in regard to the Holy Spirit.

⁸² Marshall, 522.

Son only has because the Father grants it to him, *for as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself* (5:26). We note a seeming subordination of order in that *the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing* (5:19, also 8:28). All this gives one an impression of a continuing secondary status for the Son and the Spirit in relation to the Father, but this needs to be balanced by other passages in John's Gospel that support the other side of the paradox, as will be seen below. This impression, then, is not correct and essentially Augustine is right in asserting that God's whole and undivided essence belongs equally, eternally, simultaneously, and fully to each of the three Persons of the Godhead.⁸³

According to Erickson, it is very natural for us to assume that just the use of the term "Son" indicates subordination and derivation of being.⁸⁴ However, this is not the full picture, "for as the rest of the passages demonstrate, the dominant factor may be seen in terms of "likeness." So, when the term "Son" is applied to the second Person of the Trinity, it is his equality with the Father, rather than his inherent subordination being affirmed: "whatever the father is the son is also."⁸⁵ This is further confirmed in the number of texts where equality with the Father is claimed by the Son, for example, in 5:18, *for this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He...was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.*⁸⁶ On several occasions Jesus emphasizes his oneness with the Father (*I and the Father are one*, 10:30;

⁸³ Ware, 41.

⁸⁴ Erickson, 301-302.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Other NT texts such as Hebrews 1:1-4ff and 2 Corinthians 4:4ff support the view that the Son does not 'make' himself equal with God; he is equal, as His relationship to the Father demonstrates.

see also 17:11). Even when the Son reveals submission to his Father's will through coming into the world in his name, the Son at the same time claims the Father's name and therefore equality with him. Jesus' assertion of this truth results in his hearers' attempt to stone him for blasphemy, because they are not able to accept that God is not only one, but is also a "divine Family characterized by the generous hospitality and love of Father and Son in concert."⁸⁷

What is true of the Son is also true of the Spirit. "Spirit of God" in the Old Testament "certainly does not convey the idea either of derivation or of subordination, but is just the executive name of God – the designation of God from the point of view of His activity – and imports accordingly identity with God."⁸⁸ The Holy Spirit shares equally in the relationship with the Father and the Son (1:32-33) and in carrying out the work of salvation (14:16-17,26; 16:13-15).

Thus, the apparent subordination of the members of the Trinity is not to be understood as subordination of importance or nature. Rather, it is "voluntarily assumed and flows out of the dynamic and mutual hospitality of the divine Family as a unity" and does not make the Son and the Holy Spirit "second- and third-class members of the Family."⁸⁹ In light of this, a statement of Jesus, "*the Father is greater than I*" (14:28) perhaps does not only refer to something that pertains to Jesus as a result of the incarnation, but may be "due to a convention, an agreement among the persons of the

⁸⁷ Gruenler, 76.

⁸⁸ Warfield quoted in Erickson, 302. Charles Carter also notes a number of OT texts in which the Spirit's attributes and works affirm His personality and divinity (e.g. Gen. 1:2, Zech. 4:6, Is 43:16) which are further affirmed when the Spirit is placed in juxtaposition with God, e.g. Gen. 1:2 (Charles W. Carter, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: a Wesleyan Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974).

⁸⁹ Gruenler, xvii.

Trinity”⁹⁰ according to which they eternally place each other in a relationship of mutual dependence.

This could be understood as though all three Persons of the Divine Community made themselves dependent on each other’s hospitality and service, while at the same time hospitably acting on behalf of and always pointing to one another. The Son shows the very character and being of the Father, makes him seen and present to the world, for *no one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him* (1:18). He makes the invisible God visible to the world, *“And whoever sees me sees him who sent me”* (12:45, NRSV), and speaks up defending the Father’s interests, *“Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business”* (2:16). He acts on behalf of the Father *for He whom God has sent speaks the words of God* and *He [the Son] gives the Spirit without measure* (3:34).

It is significant that in quite a number of texts John speaks of all three Persons of the Divine Community, ministering to one another in hospitable love and acting on behalf of one another. Although quantitatively the Spirit seems to be less prominent in John’s Gospel, John the Baptist’s testimony (1:30-34) gives a trinitarian shape to Jesus’ baptism, suggesting that the Spirit also stands in an intimate and full relationship with the Son and the Father.⁹¹ In John 3:33-34, the Son who is loved, given all things and sent by the Father speaks the words of God and gives the Spirit. In 14:16 the Son defers to the Father and at his request the Father graciously gives the Spirit of Truth, *another Helper that He may be with you forever*. This Spirit, while sent by the Father, is sent in the

⁹⁰ Erickson, 303.

⁹¹ Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 373.

Son's name (14:26a) and also by the Son and will defer to the Son, testifying about him in reciprocal service (15:26). Pinnock notes that the Spirit "takes no special name and chooses to remain anonymous" deferentially turning away from himself and graciously pointing to the others.⁹²

It is becoming evident (and will be demonstrated further in this chapter) that John's hospitality language (discussed in chapter one) is used, first of all, in his presentation of the Divine Community in which distinct Persons are unified by such phenomena as reciprocal love, communication (hearing, seeing and speaking), mutual knowledge, giving and indwelling as well as glorifying one another and sharing their common will and work.

Despite the seeming hierarchy in the Trinity, we have enough grounds that "allow[s] us to infer the fundamental equality of the divine persons in their mutual determination and their mutual interpenetration."⁹³ Even if the Father is the source of the deity and accordingly sends the Son and the Spirit, he also gives everything to the Son and glorifies him, just as the Son also glorifies the Father and gives the reign over to him (13:31-32; 16:14; 17:1). And this "social glue"⁹⁴ that binds the Persons of the Trinity to each other is love.⁹⁵ *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand*

⁹² Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: a theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 26.

⁹³ Miroslav Volf, *After our Likeness: the Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 217.

⁹⁴ To use Malina's term.

⁹⁵ There is also the idea of Spirit being the bond of love between the Father and the Son that can be traced back to Augustine's reflections on the Trinity. He says (Book VI, chapter 5): "...the Holy Spirit consists in the same unity of substance, and in the same equality...He is...the love...through whom...the Begotten is loved by the Begetter, and loves Him that begat Him..." In Book VII, chapter 3 he continues: "The Holy Spirit also, whether we are to call Him that absolute love which joins together Father and Son..." Quoted

(3:35) is an equality statement, showing the loving deference of the Father to the Son in sharing all the divine prerogatives.⁹⁶ Time and again Jesus speaks of the mutual love between him and his Father. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father as well, which is expressed in laying down his life (10:17). The love of the Son is described as “abiding in the Father’s love”(15:10), which means accepting the Father’s love as well as its consequences and obediently allowing it to determine his own life.⁹⁷ The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world and has given him the glory (17:24b). Jesus’ love to the Father is expressed in making known to the believers the name of the Father who loved the Son (17:26). The Son’s love for the Father is demonstrated in his obedience to the Father, for he does *exactly as the Father commanded* Him (14:31). In the same way the Father’s love is demonstrated in the fact that he shows the Son all the things he is doing (5:20).

While in our society the word “love” is almost always assigned to a feeling or an emotion, something *internal*, in contrast with such conventional understanding, trinitarian love is active and outward; it is not simply some inner sentiment but an attitude that entails outward behavior.⁹⁸ We have seen that divine love is expressed in active terms (e.g. “giving”, “showing” etc.) and is intimately linked to acts of mutual hospitality. Within a community of perfect love between persons who share all the divine attributes, a notion of hierarchy and subordination is unthinkable. Within *relations* between the

from an English translation of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130106.htm>> (Accessed March 31, 2006).

⁹⁶ Gruenler, 33.

⁹⁷ Jan G. van der Watt, 306.

⁹⁸ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 87.

divine persons, the Father is for that reason not the one over against the other, not “the first”, but rather the *one among the others*⁹⁹ who are bound in love expressed in a mutual relationship of hospitality.

There is a very close connection between mutual love and reciprocal **knowledge**, which is another characteristic of the triune relationship of hospitality. The Son knows the Father for they belong together (*I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me*, 7:29; see also 8:55; 17:25) and this knowledge is mutual (*even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father*, 10:15).

Knowing and mutual indwelling are closely connected in John and explain each other, so that “in their mutual giving and receiving, the trinitarian persons are not only interdependent, but also *mutually internal*, something to which the Johannine Jesus repeatedly refers: ‘*so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father*’ (John 10:38; cf. 14:10-11; 17:21).”¹⁰⁰ The same concept elsewhere in John is described in terms of “being in” ([εἰναι] ἐν, e.g. 10:38; 14:11) and implies a mutually internal abiding and interpenetration of the trinitarian persons, thus determining the character both of the divine persons and of their hospitable unity.

Mutual knowledge in John is closely connected with the union of love, for it denotes ‘a thoroughly personal relationship’ in which personal integrity is preserved, yet partners are by nature bound together.¹⁰¹ Love presupposes a relationship and this relationship in John is described in terms of **mutual indwelling (abiding)**. Eastern

⁹⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 217.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁰¹ Kanagaraj, 276-277.

theologians in the fourth century began to speak of the social nature of the triune God. By the seventh century the term *perichoresis* was widely used to describe an intratrinitarian hospitality in which the divine persons engage in a constant interaction of mutual love, knowledge and endless dance of overture and acceptance.¹⁰² This notion of *perichoresis* seems to imply that there is reciprocity, inter-dependence, giving and receiving between the three persons of the Trinity. And no single NT document speaks more to this theme of God's fundamentally social nature than does John.¹⁰³ It discloses the Trinity as "a mystery of inclusion,"¹⁰⁴ and reveals that God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is essentially social, at once one and plural in everlasting love, fellowship and hospitality.

At the start of the Gospel, in the account of the baptism of Jesus, we see *the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him [the Son]* (1:32). Further, John the Baptist describes Jesus as *the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit* (1:33b) and as *the Son of God* (1:34b). Gruenler says that the whole Divine Trinity is present at the moment of Jesus' inauguration, "the Father and the Spirit are both deferring to the Son who is to act as spokesman for the divine Community, and the Son is deferring to the Father and the Spirit in accepting their commission to represent the one gracious will of the divine Family."¹⁰⁵

This mutual being of the Trinity is further described by John in terms of "being in" and "abiding" that appear throughout the Gospel: *the Father is in Me, and I in the*

¹⁰² Plantinga, 313.

¹⁰³ Gruenler, vii.

¹⁰⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 15.

¹⁰⁵ Gruenler, 28.

Father (10:38c, also 16:32, 17:23) and *do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? ...the Father abiding in Me does His works* (14:10-11). Volf notes that such “complete oneness is complete presence of the other in the self”,¹⁰⁶ the Father is so much present in the Son, the Son never stands on his own, his “I” is that of the Father. That is why looking at the Son one sees the Father (*whoever has seen me has seen the Father*, 14:9, NRSV) and to know the Son is to know the Father (*if you had known Me, you would have known My Father also*, 14:7a).

This mutual indwelling, however, is not only a matter of natural order, but of mutual deference and hospitality. John emphasizes the freedom of Jesus in what he chooses to do on behalf of the triune community (e.g. 10:17-18: *the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life...on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again*). Maloney notes that this freedom of Jesus cannot be understood except in his relationship to his Heavenly Father and says, “Jesus is perfectly free because at all times He turns inwardly and finds His Father at the center of His being.”¹⁰⁷

Related to the idea of indwelling is the image of ‘**coming**’ and ‘**going**’ which also expresses the internal character of divine hospitality. The Son being in the Father is going back to him (*then I go to Him who sent Me*, 7:33; also 14:12; 16:5). Jesus is conscious that *He had come forth from God and was going back to God* (13:3; also 16:28), ascending to his Father (20:17b). This coming and going is closely connected with the idea of ‘agency’, of **sending**. In the Gospel of John the agent is identified with

¹⁰⁶ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abindon Press, 1996), 178.

¹⁰⁷ Maloney, 56. (Note also that in 10:18 having spoken of His own freedom to lay down His life, Jesus once again turns to the Father, “...*This commandment I received from My Father*”).

the Sender (*whoever receives me receives him who sent me*, 13:20b, NRSV; see also 1:1) and is no other than God himself. This blends nicely into John's image and language of the triune hospitable relationship. The sending is not that of the superior sending the inferior, rather, the role of the agent is voluntarily assumed by the Son who is sent by the Father (e.g., 5:36; 6:38-44; 8:18; 10:36; 17:3, etc.) out of love and serves him by remaining faithful to that love (15:9).

In the same way the Spirit sent from the Father by the Son defers to the Son by testifying on his behalf (15:26). But the Spirit is also sent by the Father in the name of the Son (14:26). Both the Sent speaks on behalf of the Sender (5:24) and the Sender (the Father) testifies about the Sent (the Son) (5:37; 8:18). The whole triune community participates together in this "coming, going and sending", for it is not until the Son goes back to the Father that the Spirit will be sent by him and will come (16:7). In John the notion of sending and the notion of trinitarian hospitality are inseparable. It is the Son who is sent by the Father who *gives* the Spirit without measure (3:34) and it is the Father who sends who also *gives* the Son works to accomplish (5:36). This agency on behalf of the triune community has its foundation in its *unity* (17:21, *as You, Father, are in Me and I in You...that the world may believe that You sent Me*). The Sender and the Sent belong together and *know* each other (7:29, *I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me*; see also 8:29 and 17:25). The Father who sent the Son always *hears* him (11:42) and to look at the Sent One is *to see* the Sender (12:45). The Son is not simply the Sent one, but the One who is *loved* by the Father who sent him (17:23). All this demonstrates that John portrays the notion of agency as something also flowing out of a mutually hospitable relationship of the triune community.

Relationships of Father, Son and Spirit are characterized by mutual

communication (**hearing, seeing and speaking**). As we have seen in chapter one listening and hearing imply hospitality. John shows us that the divine Persons heed one another and therefore speak harmoniously. The Son speaks to the world the things that he hears from the Father, (8:26) and the Father teaches the Son the things, which he then speaks (8:28; 12:49, 50). Yet, we should not infer from this the human process of Jesus' limited learning, but rather see in it a description "of his utter love and servanthood and his total unity with the thought of the Father."¹⁰⁸ What we see here is the Father and the Son constantly conversing within the divine Trinity, interweaving their distinctive patterns of personhood within their essential hospitable unity. Gruenler notes that 7:18¹⁰⁹ is "the key that unlocks the 'hearing' passages" which denote Jesus' complete identification with the Father and the absolute truth-speaking of the Divine Family¹¹⁰ as well as his complete availability to the Father.

The same is true with the Spirit, who speaks only *whatever He hears* (16:13) from the Father and the Son. At the same time, Jesus' words in 11:41a "*Father, I thank You that You have heard Me*" show that the Father also listens to the Son and defers to him, giving him not only his attention but complying with his requests. Speaking what he hears is the Spirit's deference to the words of the Son, an idiom that connotes the voluntary disposability of the Spirit as servant of the Triune Community. To speak only what they hear signifies the absolute unity of the message of the Trinity; "their message is identical because they are essentially one; thus to hear is to be in essential

¹⁰⁸ Gruenler, 61.

¹⁰⁹ *He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true.*

¹¹⁰ Gruenler, 53.

agreement.”¹¹¹

On the other hand, this intimate relationship and essential agreement is also described in terms of seeing: *not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father* (6:46). In their mutual relationship of hospitable deference to one another, the Persons of the Divine Community see the things that are of their common nature, thus, the Son says, “*things which I have seen with My Father*” (8:38a). And their relationship is so intimate and harmonious that their vision of one another is “unobscured and constant.”¹¹² Seeing the Son is, therefore, seeing the Father, (*whoever has seen me has seen the Father*, 14:9b, NRSV) for even his message reflects his vision of the Father. Gruenler notes that hospitality according to John is distinctively characteristic of the persons of the Trinity in their relationship to each other within the essential unity of them as one God.¹¹³

It cannot escape our eye that the Divine Community is also characterized by **giving**. *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand* (3:35; also 6:37 and 13:3) and “all things” that the Father gives the Son are the things that usually are of divine prerogative.¹¹⁴ The Father gives judgment to the Son (*He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man*, 5:27; also 3:18; 5:22). Yet, Jesus is not alone in this judgment, but together with the Father (*My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me*, 8:16). The Father defers to the Son in that

¹¹¹ Gruenler, 117.

¹¹² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*. New London Commentaries (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), 331.

¹¹³ Gruenler, 1.

¹¹⁴ Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), 38.

he gives him all authority to judge. The Son, on the one hand, claims equal honor with the Father and also defers to the Father by saying that he was sent by him.

Divine judgment, however, is not simply designed to point out what others have done wrong, but to bring them to eternal life. The Son's authority comes from his being the perfect image of the Father revealing the healing love of the Trinity for all God's children.¹¹⁵ The Father generously and equally shares with the Son life itself (*just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself, 5:26*) as well as divine authority to give life (3:13-15; 6:27, 53).

The Father gives the Son *authority over all flesh...that He may give eternal life* (17:2) and the lives of those being saved (*all that the Father gives Me will come to Me, 6:37; see also 10:29*), thus sharing with him the task of caring for the sheep. In the same sentence (10:29) the Son is deferring back to the Father by saying that he *is greater than all*. All things are hospitably shared in the Divine Community (*all things that the Father has are Mine, 16:15*) not only between the Father and the Son, but also with the Spirit (*therefore I said that He [the Spirit] takes of Mine and will disclose it to you, 16:15b; also 17:10*).

True community, however, does not only consist of giving the gifts and sharing the good things and privileges but also of self-giving. The Son in the context of mutual indwelling and oneness gives his life (10:17,18) and is ready to accept the path of suffering from the Father's hand (*the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it? 18:11*). This is one of the ultimate demonstrations of the ways of the Divine Community where the Persons are utterly generous toward one another.

¹¹⁵ Maloney, 138.

It is notable that in John hospitality and generosity characterize not only the Son and the Spirit, as we would expect, but also the Father who ministers to the Son (*Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man*, 1:51). “If you will”, says Kysar, “the messengers of God are constantly coming and going in the relationship between the Son and the Father”¹¹⁶ referring to the greater heavenly reality and divine authority that is placed on the Son.¹¹⁷

The Father demonstrates hospitality to the Son without diminishing his formal authority as Father, revealing to us the ironic biblical truth about personhood (beginning with the Triune Community), that one is truly a Self “in manifesting a love that rejoices in serving and pleasing the other.”¹¹⁸ The Father acts on behalf of the Son *for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal* (6:27), attesting that the Son is one with him and that the Father is at work in him.¹¹⁹ The Father places the authority of the divine realm on the Son – to bestow the gift of eternal life on behalf of the Divine Community.¹²⁰

The Father graciously gives the Son to have life in himself: “*I live because of the Father*” (6:57) and even in the midst of suffering and death remains with the Son (*He has*

¹¹⁶ Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel*, 38.

¹¹⁷ Admittedly, most of the scholars (e.g. Kysar and Morris) see this passage referring to the Genesis passage about Jacob and the ladder, concluding that what is implied here is that Jesus is the “point of contact between heaven and earth” and “the locus of the ‘traffic’ that brings heaven’s blessings to mankind” (Beasley-Murray, 28). But it has also been suggested that the promise of “the sky opened” might recall Jesus’ temptation (Beasley-Murray refers to Michaelis) and even the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at baptism (Brown) that was totally omitted from John’s account. Bultmann, however, suggests that for John this ascending and descending is a picture of the constant communion between Jesus and the Father (Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John: a Commentary*, translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971, 105-6). Brown’s and Bultmann’s suggestions seem especially feasible in light of what we have already seen regarding intratrinitarian hospitality.

¹¹⁸ Gruenler, xi.

¹¹⁹ Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Gospel of John* (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1988), 223.

¹²⁰ Gruenler, 43.

not left Me alone, 8:29). There is mutual and complete unity among the Persons of the Trinity and such complete oneness entails “complete self-giving”; the Son gives himself to the Father from whom he receives his being and to humanity to whom he mediates the Father.¹²¹

Mutual hospitality of the Divine Community is also expressed in a concern for the **honor** of another. Neither of the Persons is primarily concerned with their own honor and glory. On the contrary, the Son *is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him* and, therefore, *there is no unrighteousness in Him* (7:18). The same idea is repeated in 8:49, 50 and 12:28. Jesus places his personal honor and claim of authority alongside his submission to the will of the Father,¹²² “*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work*” (4:34; also 5:30; 6:38).

At the same time the Father acts on behalf of the Son and glorifies him (8:54). In 13:31-32 the reciprocal hospitality of the Divine Persons is seen in their mutual glorification (*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately*). Jesus focuses his attention on the Father, the Father refocuses attention on the Son and vindicates him of which Gruenler says, “there is a divine altruism that defines the life of the divine Community.”¹²³ In the same manner the Spirit participates in Divine Community for as Jesus says, “*He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you*” (16:14). Here for a moment the Father is in the background, but once

¹²¹ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 178.

¹²² Gruenler, 35.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 63 (See also 14:13; 17:1, 4, 5, 10).

Jesus states that what is the Father's is also his, the glory that the Spirit brings by implication is the glory of the Father. This mutual glorification and honoring is extremely important to note, because honor is public reputation, one's status or standing. Malina notes that, "given the fundamental importance of honor in ancient Mediterranean life, Jesus asks for that which is of the highest value."¹²⁴ At the same time in 5:23 the Father has acted so that "all" will honor the Son. In the Mediterranean culture honor is a relative matter in which one claims to excel over others, to be superior. It is, thus, an important truth that the Father and the Son glorify each other, rather than themselves. Their relationship is that of mutual subordination and service of hospitality to one another.¹²⁵

In the same way as self-honoring is inappropriate, self-testimony is as well (*If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true*, 5:31). But in the Divine Community of hospitality we see the Persons **testifying** about each other in mutual service (*there is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true*, 5:32; also 5:37; 8:18). Jesus bears witness to the Father and submits to him, while the Father bears witness to the Son and defers to him. In the same way the Spirit will testify about the Son (15:26). The "I am" claims of Jesus in chapters 8-12, besides emphasizing the authority the Son has in himself, also indicate the fact the Father and the Spirit are present with him and defer authority to him making him the speaker on behalf of divine Trinity. Both his witness and judgment are those of the Divine Community, not his alone.

¹²⁴ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 244.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

John 8:29 seems to contain the key to the essential motivation of the persons of the Triune Community and their interpersonal communion: to do what is pleasing to one another (*for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him*), to be completely available, to give the gift of self, to show fidelity, to belong to another.¹²⁶ For in the true relationship of hospitality one makes a sacrifice, freely chosen, under no obligation through an expressed command or even a wish on the part of the loved one.¹²⁷ All three persons of the Trinity do not only share equality but also defer in their honor, placing themselves at each other's disposal for mutual glorification.¹²⁸

This is so when the Son is praying, "*Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name*" (12:27-28). As hard as making oneself disposable to the Father and to the world will be, he is willing to continue on this path for the sake of the Father's glory. And just as at Jesus' baptism, the Father approves and glorifies the Son: *a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again"* (see also 17:5). Gruenler comments that, "the unifying aim of the persons of the divine Society is always to be pleasing to one another, and the prayer of Jesus evokes a pleasing response from the Father to whom it is addressed."¹²⁹

As we have shown, in the Triune relationship of *perichoresis* there is a complete intertwining of love and communion and the relationship is that of "reciprocal

¹²⁶ Gruenler, 61.

¹²⁷ Maloney, 155.

¹²⁸ Gruenler, 23-24.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

participation”¹³⁰ and mutual hospitality characterized by interdependence. Yet, this Triune interdependence and hospitality are expressed not only in their immediate relationships and communion but also in their **common work** (5:19-24). John 5:17 and 5:19¹³¹ demonstrates that the divine relationship of disposability will not allow them to do anything without being in one accord with one another. The Father and the Son bound by love are moved to share mutually even their working, *for the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel* (5:20). We see then, that this total identity and reciprocity of “work” also point to their perfect relationship of mutual hospitality and solidarity. In light of what John says about the common work of the triune community Gregory of Nyssa concluded that, “every divine action in creation and human life is the concerted work of all three divine persons.”¹³²

Bringing all of our observations together we can say that for John “the Blessed Trinity is [thus] a mystery of inclusion”,¹³³ a community of Persons, different from one another, but “open in radical mutuality” and being in “direct and immediate relationships.”¹³⁴ Such communion is the result of mutual surrender and reciprocal hospitality in which each is accepted and each is open to the other, giving the best of oneself. The Son is ever in the Father knowing him, lovingly acknowledging him and

¹³⁰ Erickson, 304.

¹³¹ *My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working...the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.*

¹³² Gregory of Nyssa is referred to in Philip Walker Butin, *The Trinity* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2001), 108.

¹³³ Boff, 15.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

expressing his faithful servanthood on the Father's behalf. While the Father is given pride of place by the Son, he also defers to the Son by honoring and glorifying him as appointed spokesman on behalf of the Divine Family, and by faithfully listening and responding to the Son's requests. Father and Son similarly honor the Holy Spirit as appointed spokesman and interpreter in the present age, while the Holy Spirit reciprocally honors and serves the Father and the Son.

Volf notes that "the life of God is a life of self-giving and other-receiving love"¹³⁵ in which each divine person seeks the "glory" of the other and makes space for the others.¹³⁶ Far from being the highly sophisticated and unpractical doctrine of popular caricature, as we look attentively at the Gospel of John, we see how crucial and intensely practical a Trinitarian understanding actually is. We begin to see that "God as Trinity means that whatever is Sacred is relational, never self-absorbed; always moving beyond itself to meet the new, the other, the different, never set in its ways or stuck on itself as the only way."¹³⁷ Hospitality, shared life expressed in "dynamic love, an economy of giving and receiving,"¹³⁸ is basic to the nature of God.

¹³⁵ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 127.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹³⁷ Carter Heyward, "Called to Embody the Image of God" in *Living Pulpit*, 8 no 2 (*Ap-Je*, 1999), 21.

¹³⁸ Pinnock, 30.

Chapter 3 TRINITARIAN HOSPITALITY IN THE CREATED WORLD

In the previous chapter we have established a very important theological truth presented in the Gospel of John: the social nature of God who is the triune community of mutual hospitality. However, it is not a complete picture of the triune God and to stop here would be to miss the point of John's Gospel that God is actually "a fellowship of Persons who are *open to the joy and pain of the world.*"¹³⁹ This is not a new thought, of course, and many have seen it illustrated in the famous fifteenth century Russian icon by Andrei Rublev (*Troitsa* - "The Trinity"), which depicts an open circle of three persons. Elizabeth Johnson summarizes the appeal of the icon suggesting that this is an image of the Divine Community which is in no way self-contained or closed, rather, it is "open to the world, seeking to nourish it", "calling the world to join the feast"¹⁴⁰ and inviting it hospitably into its circle. As we will see, this is exactly the picture John paints in his Gospel: the picture of the Divine Community hospitably open to the world.

While other Gospels also desire to show that Jesus is not just a human being, but the Son of God, John's starting point is not nativity, but incarnation (*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth, 1:14*). That the Word "became" flesh is extremely significant and implies much more than the fact that Jesus "took on" humanity, was changed from divine into human or "appeared to be human." The unusual verb ἐσκήνωσεν, literally, "pitched one's tent" suggests that in Jesus, God came to take residence among his people in a more intimate (see Exodus 40:34-35) and permanent

¹³⁹ Pinnock, 41.

¹⁴⁰ Johnson quoted in Vosloo, 88-89.

way than ever before¹⁴¹ to share the destiny of the humankind wherever they are. The idea is nicely expressed in Eugene Peterson's modern paraphrase (*The Message*), "the Word moved into the neighborhood."

This idea of "moving in" has two sides to it. On the one hand, Jesus is a "divine being from outside the world who comes to share His heavenly status and nature with human beings,"¹⁴² so that *of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace* (1:16). Verse 18 (*No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him*) is a wonderful image not only of the unity and warm deference of the Father and the Son to one another, but also of their openness in making the Divine Community known to the world. On the other hand, God "moved in" the midst of people not only as the One in the position to give, but as a guest or stranger having become "vulnerable to the welcome of human beings."¹⁴³ This theme of hospitality between God and the world emerges in the very first chapter and is evident in the whole of John's Gospel: God is the welcoming God but also the God who comes to be welcomed.¹⁴⁴

We see the reciprocal love (essential in the triune community) becoming active and communicated in the Son to people as *the heavens open and the angels of God ascend and descend on the Son of Man* (1:51). This statement, on the one hand, reveals a hospitable ministry of the Father to the Son (as has been pointed out in chapter 2) but also

¹⁴¹ Köstenberger, *John*, 41.

¹⁴² Marshall, 494.

¹⁴³ Pohl, "Welcoming Strangers," 66.

¹⁴⁴ The former is the object of this chapter, the latter will be discussed in chapter four as a Johannine image of faith and believing.

(in view of 3:13) demonstrates that the Son himself has come to be “the link between heaven and earth,”¹⁴⁵ the embrace of the earthly into the heavenly community.

This outward Trinitarian hospitality is evident on several levels: in God’s reaching out to the sinful world with gracious inclusiveness (even of those who will later reject his hospitality), in God’s special care for those who by accepting his hospitality become his flock, and in the promise of God’s eschatological hospitality through the future ministry of the Spirit in the church. Rather than following the order of the Gospel narrative, this chapter will focus on these three expressions of divine hospitality in order to bring out its outward nature.

TRINITARIAN HOSPITALITY TO THE WORLD

The outward direction of the Divine Community (described in chapter 2) is aimed at the redemption of the lost and is described in John largely in terms of *giving*. The *giving* of the only begotten Son (3:16), so that the world may be saved through him (3:17) is the evidence of God’s love for the world. Through the Son the love of the triune God reaches and embraces the created.

John 3 shows that the whole Trinity is present in the work of redemption, “Father, Son and Spirit serve as one as they make themselves available for the lost”,¹⁴⁶ *for He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure* (3:34). The Trinity is revealed to us as the Father, seeking to show his love for lost

¹⁴⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 171.

¹⁴⁶ Gruenler, 32.

humanity, communicated to us through Word and Spirit. Pinnock notes John's desire to demonstrate that "God loves sinners in history because, prior to that, God loves the Son and the Spirit, and loves us in relation to them."¹⁴⁷ This love of God for sinners, then, flows from the love that circulates everlastingly within the Trinity (*just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you, 15:9*).

We noted that the Triune Community is characterized by mutual giving and sharing of life. Yet, John 5-6 make clear that the sharing of life is not reserved only for the trinity, whose working together is directed towards the world, so that the world can have life (5:20-21, *for the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing...so as the Father...gives life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes*). Like the Father and the Son, the Spirit also gives life (6:63, *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing*), emphasizing that it is as impossible for people to gain this life on their own as it is to come to God unless they are hospitably invited to do so (*unless it is granted by the Father, 6:65, NRSV*). But the invitation is given and all three persons of the Triune Family evince their unity in loving service to a fallen creation¹⁴⁸ by hospitable giving of its divine life. John makes clear: the three persons of the Trinity not only share in the mutual relationship of openness and generosity but give to human persons an opportunity to join in that relationship with God, who makes trinitarian life also their life (5:24).¹⁴⁹

In chapter 6 John continues to speak about life eternally constitutive in the Godhead (1:4) and generously given to people. But now he does so in the context of the

¹⁴⁷ Pinnock, 30.

¹⁴⁸ Gruenler, 51.

¹⁴⁹ LaCugna, 228.

feeding of multitudes and in terms of Jesus being the Bread of Life hospitably given for our nourishment (6:57, NRSV, *Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me*). Typically for John the account of the miraculous feeding is followed by a discourse, which interprets and applies it, bringing out a deeper meaning both of the event and of Jesus' true identity. This deeper meaning of the feeding is also seen in the abundance of food, which, having been offered in the context of wilderness, Passover, and Jesus-the-prophet, reflects the eschatological celebration of the feast of the Kingdom of God¹⁵⁰ prepared for and hospitably offered to the people.

The setting has the people reclining¹⁵¹ and Jesus acting as the Host (6:11) distributing the bread and the fish himself (rather than mandating his disciples to do so). Keener notes Jesus' role as that of "the good host" who offers food abundantly so that there is some of it left over at the end of the meal.¹⁵² However, this miraculous act of hospitality is an obvious sign of a greater hospitality of God to the world. Taking place up on the mountain which was "a well-attested place for communing with God"¹⁵³ this meal is not only a generous provision for the physical needs of the people, but Jesus' offering of himself as the bread of life by feeding on whom one can have eternal life (6:63). This 'gift' of the life-giving Bread, while given by the Son, is given on behalf of

¹⁵⁰ Beasley-Murray, 88.

¹⁵¹ Keener considers it as a sign of a special, rather than a usual daily meal during which people were simply seated (Keener, *John 1*, 668).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 668.

¹⁵³ Malina, "The Received View," 126.

the Divine Community¹⁵⁴ for it is done with the approval of the Father (6:27), who even in the past was the One giving their predecessors *bread out of heaven to eat* (6:31-33). Now, Jesus does not only offer heavenly bread to the people because he is the Bread that comes from heaven (6:35, 38, 41, 48, 50); this generous gift can only be received through the invitation of the Divine Community. Jesus says, “*no one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me*” (6:44, NRSV; see also 6:37, 65) and “*the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out*” (6:37).

The image of divine hospitality offered in the Bread of Life is complemented by the image of the gift of the Living water (7:37b-38a, NRSV, *Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and... drink*; see also 6:35b), which will be given in the Person of the Spirit (7:39, *this He spoke of the Spirit*). What we see in John 6 and 7 is Jesus speaking of eternal life and salvation in terms of divine hospitality, in terms of availability of bread for the hungry and water for the thirsty. Jesus speaks these words in the context of the feast of Tabernacles, the underlying theme of which was people’s dependence on God’s literal provision of water (Zech. 14:16-17)¹⁵⁵ as well as the hope of salvation (Isaiah 12:3).¹⁵⁶ Beasley-Murray notes that Jesus’ words were the declaration of the presence of this salvation in and through him and the “invitation to receive it from him.”¹⁵⁷ Once again John portrays the triune community, not only as relational within itself, but as

¹⁵⁴ Gruenler, 43.

¹⁵⁵ See also Isaiah 58:11.

¹⁵⁶ *Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation.*

¹⁵⁷ Beasley-Murray, 114.

supremely hospitable in offering salvation and “its ministry to a world that is thirsty for hospitality and communion.”¹⁵⁸

Jesus often meets people as an ordinary guest but knowing their real need (for salvation) becomes their heavenly host. In Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman he approaches her as a needy guest asking for water but then offers her the water that would become in her *a well of water springing up to eternal life* (4:14); he becomes the host.¹⁵⁹ The story exhibits many of the standard features of a hospitality scene: Jesus is portrayed as a stranger and a traveler expecting hospitality, a woman informing those who can officially extend hospitality to the traveler, the Samaritans receiving him as the guest. John “employs words that are typically associated with hospitality”: διδώμι/δωρεά (dominates 4:7-15), μένω (4:40), ἔρχομαι and ἐξέρχομαι (4:43) and “from a theological perspective” appears “to be drawing upon the custom and the imagery associated with hospitality in antiquity”.¹⁶⁰

This story is particularly noteworthy, however. While Jews usually sought hospitality from a kinsperson or fellow Israelites, Jesus goes far beyond that. He asks hospitality not only from a Samaritan but a Samaritan woman who obviously has strained relationships in the community as a result of her promiscuous life (see 4:6-7, 16-18). A divine stranger who has come into the world offers hospitality not only to those who could expect it (the Jews) but to the excluded Samaritans (and such sinners as the Samaritan woman) inviting them also to come home (4:35-38, 39-42).

¹⁵⁸ Gruenler, 54.

¹⁵⁹ Arterbury notes that ancient hospitality encounter often involved the giving of gifts or at least an act of reciprocity. So, Jesus’ mention of a gift that he can provide in the context of this woman’s hospitality is not unusual (*Entertaining Angels*, 115).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

The Cana narrative in John 2, on the one hand, seems to be so dominated by “theological themes and innuendo” that to some degree it is hard to reconstruct a convincing picture of what happened in this story and why.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, these theological themes also reflect the theme of hospitality, which we have already discerned in John’s Gospel and resemble what happened between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Here too Jesus arrives at a wedding as a guest, but becomes a host providing wine when it runs out putting a wedding at risk of being a total fiasco.¹⁶² Yet, by providing better wine at the time when a lower quality of wine is usually offered, Jesus does more than what a host is expected to do. So Jesus, “the guest who was not likely to contribute any money... gave the most valuable present of all: valuable for its quality, its quantity, its timeliness, and its non-reciprocating character.”¹⁶³ What happened in Cana John calls the “beginning of *signs*” (which he also refers to as “works”). In view of 4:34 (*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work*) the works of Jesus are not just miracle making; rather, it is everything he does as the representative of the triune community for the salvation of the world.

In John 9 Jesus meets a person whose life is a terrible hardship, who is deprived of much that is valuable and enjoyable in life and left with the only possible activity – begging. This man is most likely on the fringes of society, for his infirmity would have been viewed as direct consequence of sin – either his own or his parents’ (evident in a

¹⁶¹ Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1*, 101.

¹⁶² On a cultural scale, running out of wine was not only embarrassing. A family organizing the wedding feast was responsible for securing a sufficient supply of wine for the guests and could be subject to legal charges if it failed to do so (Leon Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John*, vol.1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986, 69-77).

¹⁶³ Köstenberger, *John*, 95.

question asked in 9:2). Jesus' answer, on the one hand, demonstrates the falsity of the question and, on the other, the fact that this dreadful situation would become an opportunity through which *the works of God might be displayed in him* (9:3). Since the works of God are the loving and saving activity of God in the world, the healing of this blind man who through the removal of this affliction receives both physical and spiritual blessings¹⁶⁴ demonstrates this activity. His joy, however, is marred by the religious authorities' rejection of him. They, being unable to respond to his testimony, find only one way to deal with him – they simply throw him out (ἐξέβαλον). But in contrast to them we see the heart of Jesus (9:35) who, having learned about the rejection of this man, searches him out and invites him to believe in the one who hospitably ministered to him.

In the later story, John 11:4 echoes 9:3 (*this sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it*) and brings these two seemingly unrelated stories closer together. We noted earlier that the triune community desires to make its life available to the world and draws it hospitably to themselves. In light of this the significance of Lazarus' raising from the dead¹⁶⁵ (as well as of the events and sayings related to it) can hardly be exaggerated. As grand as it is this raising is not

¹⁶⁴ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel 2*, 349.

¹⁶⁵ Talking about this event we should not understand the raising of Lazarus as the first resurrection but only as John's demonstration that Jesus is the source of all life and wholeness who even triumphs over death. We understand that Lazarus will die again (unlike Jesus himself and those who are raised in him). All that is being asserted here is that in contrast with Martha's abstract belief in life sometime after, in the future, Jesus calls her to recognize that she already stands in the presence of the Resurrection and the Life (see Beasley-Murray, 201). And it is in union with Him the believer has life and an assurance of its consummation on the last day. The Christian experience then can be called "life before death." Dodd (quoted in Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John*, 403) also finds in this story the promise of eternal life both as something future and something present. So, the assertion here is not that Lazarus' raising is somehow the consummation of the resurrection but that in Jesus the Life is already present and available to those who will be united with him through faith. And while a believer might die physically, he/she already has life in a higher, "in an ultimate sense" (Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John*, 403, see also Köstenberger, *John*, 336).

simply a miracle but ‘a sign’ that demonstrates the true identity of Jesus as the one from God. Jesus is not only the hospitable giver of life; he himself is *the resurrection and the life* (11:25; see also 1:4; 6:35). Jesus seeks to shift Martha’s vague faith in a future resurrection to personal trust in him, for in him life is available already here and now. All the more, this account shows that life is not simply a gift that is obtained from the Father through the Son, but the Son Himself; he himself is that which people need.¹⁶⁶

Both the healing (John 9) and the raising of Lazarus (John 11) are an opportunity for the glorification of Father and Son and are representations of the gracious availability of the Divine Community on behalf of the sick, the bereaved and the dead.¹⁶⁷ And in all of the above encounters and discourses (John 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11) we see how Divine Family “defers to the Son as he offers heavenly grace on their behalf”¹⁶⁸ representing triune love and hospitable ministry to the world.

TRINITARIAN HOSPITALITY TO THE FLOCK

Using now a different image, John 10 presents a picture of divine persons who are not only present and turned to one another in total openness and intimacy, but who are also turned to “the sheep” with care and intention of drawing them into their relationship (10:14-15). To express Jesus’ relationship to the world¹⁶⁹ John uses images of *the*

¹⁶⁶ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel 2*.

¹⁶⁷ Gruenler, 78.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁶⁹ Although I will speak in more detail about the emergence of the new community in the following chapter, I am mentioning it here for the purpose of demonstrating the Trinitarian hospitality as outward and not locked on itself. Thus, no clear distinction is made here between the ‘world’ and the ‘new community’

Shepherd and the Door as well as his regular notions of *knowledge, hearing and seeing*. The manner of entrance of the Shepherd implies what kind of a person he is: someone who has the right to be there with the sheep because he has a relationship with them.¹⁷⁰ It is an image of divine care for the sheep that are dependent and helpless on their own and are in need of care. The contrast between the Shepherd and those who come “as thieves and robbers” (as well as those who are “hired”) (10:1, 12-13 and especially 10:10¹⁷¹) seems to imply that while the former *gives* for the sake of the sheep, the latter ones *take* for their own sake. Jesus as the Shepherd is an image of an intimate concern for his sheep who are “his own” (10:3-4, 12).¹⁷²

This “figure of speech” (10:6) that Jesus uses speaking of the Shepherd and the sheep demonstrates extraordinary care and intends to bring out a spiritual truth about divine-human relationship. The relationship between the sheep and the Shepherd like that of the Father and the Son are characterized by “knowledge” (10:4-5, 6, 14-15, 27). Just like the Persons of the Trinity share mutual knowledge, “the reciprocal immanence between God and humans is also closely connected to the Johannine idea of knowing.”¹⁷³ Relationship of ‘the sheep’ with Jesus is spoken of in terms of intercommunion (10:14b, *I know My own and My own know Me*), which does not only *reflect* the intercommunion of

and in this section references to the ‘world’ are meant to identify the ‘whole of creation’ rather than the unbelieving counterpart of the ‘new community’.

¹⁷⁰ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 2*, 371.

¹⁷¹ ...*the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

¹⁷² Keener, *John 1*, 807

¹⁷³ Dodd is referred to in Kanagaraj, “‘Mysticism’ in the Gospel of John,” 273.

Father and Son, but *originates* in (10:15a, *even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father*) and depends on it.

Speaking of this knowledge, John also draws upon two other notions, which build up his hospitality language: *seeing* and *hearing*. Just like the trinitarian relationship of mutual knowledge is marked by the fact that the Persons hear one another (e.g. 8:38-39; 11:41-42; 16:13), the Shepherd draws his sheep into the same relationship. It is said that *the sheep follow him because they know his voice* (10:4), so “not only that the voice is heard, but that it is heard with understanding and acceptance.”¹⁷⁴ It is interesting that in John 9 the same truth (but in the negative/exclusive terms) sounds from the lips of the Jews, “*We know that God does not listen to sinners; but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will*” (9:31, NRSV). Jesus’ opponents, however, are full of misunderstanding and misperception; they are not able to see that the Divine Community hospitably draws all who desire to come and share in its relationship. And so, the healed man (see 9:12, 20-21, 24-25, 29-31) and not they becomes paradigmatic for “sheep” that “know” the Son, and share with him in a relationship of mutual recognition.¹⁷⁵

On the other hand, the knowledge of God, which the Son makes possible, is spoken of in terms of “seeing”¹⁷⁶ (14:7, *if you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him*). As we have already seen, the Son’s relationship to the Father is characterized both by his knowledge and vision of the Father (e.g. 6:46). But now this knowledge of God is made available and “mediated

¹⁷⁴ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 2*, 371.

¹⁷⁵ Keener, *John 1*, 805.

¹⁷⁶ Kanagaraj points out that this includes both the initial apprehension and a continuous appreciation and understanding (“‘Mysticism’ in the Gospel of John,” 273).

to human beings by a vision of Jesus himself”: “*whoever sees me sees him who sent me*” (12:45, NRSV; also 14:9, NRSV, *whoever has seen me has seen the Father*). Once again John demonstrates that the Divine Community is not closed in on itself in its mutual knowledge, but is open to the world, which can participate in it by knowing the Son. The presence of each divine person to us is similar to their presence to each other.

Jesus continues to make this point with yet another image – that of *the Door* (10:7-9; cf. 10:1). Nowhere else is Jesus spoken of in these terms. Verse 1 speaks of the door to the sheepfold, while in 10:7, 9 *Jesus is* the door to salvation. The image is that of leading the sheep in and out and providing “pasture” for them (10:9). We have seen previously that Jesus supplies the living water and the bread of life. Now we see that he is the only passage to the pastures that brings fullness of life. In a way it is an exclusive statement, for Jesus is not just one door among others but “the Door” (cf. 14:6).¹⁷⁷ Verse 8 presents a negative counterpart to the nature of the Good Shepherd and underlines that unlike the thief who is arrogant, selfish, destructive and working against the social unity of the flock for his own advantage, Jesus’ motivation is hospitable, charitable and transparent displaying the gracious availability of the Divine Community.¹⁷⁸

The discourse in John 10 shows that the sole goal of all that Jesus does is to *give* abundant life through ultimate hospitality, *so that they [the sheep] may have life* (10:10). This idea repeats time and again throughout John’s Gospel and equates eternal life with knowing the triune community (e.g. 17:3, *this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*). Jesus comes into this world in

¹⁷⁷ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 2, 373.

¹⁷⁸ Gruenler, 71.

order that he might make eternal life available for those who trust him. John 10:11-18 shows how great the price of divine hospitality to humanity is, for Jesus has to die in order “to open wide for [it] the way into life.”¹⁷⁹ The relationships of Divine Community, their mutual knowledge and love play out in the Son’s desire to lay down his life in the ultimate act of hospitality not only within the trinity but extending it to the world (10:15, *even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep*).

In the concluding remarks to his audience (10:18) Jesus again emphasizes his equality with God,¹⁸⁰ the voluntary nature of his hospitable placing of himself at the disposal of a fallen world,¹⁸¹ and his unity with the Father’s will.¹⁸² We see that the Father defers to the Son (10:29a, *My Father, who has given them to Me*), the Son defers to the Father (10:29b [*My Father*] *is greater than all*), and both are absolutely one not only in their interpersonal relationship but also “in their gracious disposability on behalf of the sheep who constitute the redeemed family.”¹⁸³ All this is done to open the Divine Community to the fallen world, even to those who are *not of this fold* (10:16), the Gentiles who will come to Jesus.

The Divine Community constantly continues to make room¹⁸⁴ for people to be a part of it but as has been noted earlier such participation is impossible without the divine

¹⁷⁹ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 2, 374-375.

¹⁸⁰ *I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*

¹⁸¹ *No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative.*

¹⁸² *This commandment I received from My Father.*

¹⁸³ Gruenler, 75.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Jenson uses the phrase: “God is roomy” (quoted in Vosloo, 88).

initiative (12:32, NRSV, *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself*; also 6:44). The idea of the necessity of divine initiative is common both in the Old and the New Testaments: people cannot know God without God giving them an enlightened heart, a new spirit (Ezk. 36:24-26; Jer. 31:31-34). John also expresses this common idea but does so in hospitality terms: people can come to God only by *receiving* his welcome in the person of his Son who is the Way and the Door into the household of God.

The Prayer of Jesus in John 17 further testifies to the intention of the Trinity to be open to the world.¹⁸⁵ Mutual glorification, oneness (17:1), and equality of Father and Son (17:2) describe how the hospitality of the Divine Community extends to the human part of it. Although this prayer is, first of all, given on behalf of a limited group of disciples, what is being asked of the Father is the intention of the Divine Community for the whole human world as 17:20 makes clear. The Father and the Son equally share the desire that *they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us* (17:21). Jesus speaks of the authority over all flesh (that is the entire human race) that was given to him by his Father (17:2), yet, he speaks of it when he is about to go to the cross, reminding us once again that his “authority [that] is concerned with giving of eternal life.”¹⁸⁶ It is also notable that this prayer is full of “giving” terminology¹⁸⁷ emphasizing heavily the giving between the Father and the Son, as well as of the Son to

¹⁸⁵ More will be said on John 17 in chapter 5 of this work when dealing with the nature of the new community.

¹⁸⁶ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 4, 569.

¹⁸⁷ “To give” is used 17 times in the prayer.

the people.¹⁸⁸ The theme of the gift of life that Jesus spoke of earlier is reintroduced here again, (17:2b, *that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life*) with an explanation of life in a common Johannine term of knowledge.¹⁸⁹

So, “the communion among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, constituting one God, is a mystery of inclusion... the three divine persons open to outside and invite human beings and the entire universe to share in their community and their life.”¹⁹⁰ The distinction is made between the Father “giving” people to the Son and the Son welcoming them and conferring life upon them. “If anybody comes to Jesus and seeks salvation, he or she is welcome because the Father and the Son are united in loving purpose”.¹⁹¹ The manner of Jesus’ speech¹⁹² indicates his conviction that the persons of the Divine Community do not only inwardly share one another’s love, hospitality, and interpersonal communion but also that “the divine Community extends its hospitality to an inhospitable and fragmented world.”¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Morris notes, “It certainly means a lot to John to note that God is a God who gives and gives and gives” (*Reflections on the Gospel of John 4*, 569).

¹⁸⁹ *This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent* (17:3).

¹⁹⁰ Boff, 63.

¹⁹¹ Marshall, 500.

¹⁹² *The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world* (17:22-24).

¹⁹³ Gruenler, 121.

ESCHATOLOGICAL TRINITARIAN HOSPITALITY

In John 14 the divine hospitality is heightened by Jesus' confident sense of "going home" and his promise to prepare a dwelling place for his disciples. It is significant that at the hour of his greatest need, Jesus comforts his disciples (distressed by predictions of his death) and places himself at their disposal, "attesting further the selfless hospitality of the divine Community."¹⁹⁴ The image here is that of the "Father's house" (14:2, 3, 23) that in John's context of divine hospitality most likely implies a place to stay, an eternal home (see Eccl. 12:5) into which we are invited to come, rather than Temple (as in 2:16).¹⁹⁵ References to the Spirit's presence among them (14:17), Jesus' dwelling among the people (1:14, 14:9) and both he and the Father coming to them (14:23) clearly stress that in these spatial terms Jesus points in the direction of living in the immediate presence or, if you will, in the embrace of the Divine Community. So, while the image is that of a place, the point is that of a relationship that marks the Divine Community and is to mark the community between God and humanity: that of mutual knowledge (14:7), deference (14:23), love (14:15) and abiding (14:17). It seems to be the reason why Jesus does not give us a detailed description or explanation of the Father's house, saying only that it "has many dwellings" implying the abundant space for all those who are prepared to follow him.¹⁹⁶ It is also true that the idea of familial fellowship "where hospitality and

¹⁹⁴ Gruenler, 95.

¹⁹⁵ See Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 3, 491; Beasley-Murray, 249.

¹⁹⁶ Köstenberger, *John*, 426.

interpersonal communion abound” is present here.¹⁹⁷ The image of the family continues as Jesus says in 14:18a “*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*”

It is possible that Jesus has in mind the first disciples, who asked him where he was staying and to whom he said to *come and see* (1:38-39).¹⁹⁸ Now he assures them of his future care, for he is ever servant and will continue to serve them even after his departure. He will go to prepare a house to welcome them there and he will do that by death, for only then his work will be complete (19:30) and he will take his disciples to their future abode.¹⁹⁹ In 14:15-21 we see that the close interpersonal relationship of Father, Son and Spirit includes the disciples, for God “does not will to be without us, and He does not will that we should be without Him...He does not will to be God for Himself nor as God to be alone with Himself. He wills as God to be for us and with us...”²⁰⁰

The image of the Vine and the branches in John 15 does not at first sight evoke a notion of hospitality. However, it is a comparison, which represents a concept of ‘abiding’ - an important constituent of John’s hospitality language. W. Temple notes that “the vine lives to give its lifeblood”, it gives abundant fruit and when the fruit matures and the vine “for a moment becomes glorious, the treasure of the grapes is torn down and the vine is cut back to the stem” until the next year it blooms again.²⁰¹ The image of Jesus as the vine in this sense is consistent with what we have already seen earlier, the whole

¹⁹⁷ Gruenler, 101.

¹⁹⁸ Köstenberger, *John*, 426.

¹⁹⁹ Marshall, 506.

²⁰⁰ Gary Deddo, *Karl Barth’s Theology of relations: Trinitarian, Christological and human towards an ethic of the family* (NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 118.

²⁰¹ Cited by Morris in *Reflections in the Gospel of John* 3, 515.

life of Jesus is a service of love to others, culminating in death²⁰² that would bring blessings to those for whom he dies. Morris notes that, “there is nothing of self-seeking anywhere, but rather a deep concern” for needy humanity.²⁰³

This call to abide, then, seems to give further insight into what was meant in John 14 and emphasizing that this life in union with the divine community is not something that lies in the future, but a “present experience of believers in God’s presence.”²⁰⁴ “*Abide in Me, and I in you*” (15:4a) seems to imply the “givenness” of this union, the fact that it “is already given by God as a gift” and we are simply encouraged to “hold on loyally and continually to that givenness.”²⁰⁵

This abiding stems from the love within the Divine Community (15:9, *Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love*). Now humanity is welcomed to take part in this love, through Jesus’ love, which is “no shallow emotion, easily aroused and easily dispersed” but “proceeds from what he is” and “is an expression of his innermost being.”²⁰⁶ Having extended this invitation to dwell in the “house of the Father” and to abide in the divine love, “slaves” have been transformed into “friends” (15:15). Those who were ‘the others’, ‘the enemies’ are embraced by “the divine persons who love [them] with the same love with which they love each other and therefore make space for [them] within their own eternal embrace.”²⁰⁷

²⁰² *No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends*, 15:13 (NRSV).

²⁰³ Morris, *Reflections in the Gospel of John* 3, 515.

²⁰⁴ Keener, *John* 2, 936.

²⁰⁵ Barrett quoted in Kanagaraj, 265.

²⁰⁶ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 3, 520.

²⁰⁷ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 129.

While the references to the Holy Spirit have been rather scarce in the first half of the Gospel of John, his work on behalf of the Trinity in the world is especially emphasized in 14:15-17, 26; 15:26; 16:5-16. Much has been written about the role and the meaning of the Paraclete as “advocate”, “counselor”, or “helper” in the light of not only biblical, but also of extra-biblical material.²⁰⁸ But, Ridderbos properly calls us to allow first of all “the Johannine context to determine the meaning of it” which points us in a direction of understanding its meaning primarily as “helping presence”, for “the Spirit comes to dwell in believers as if Jesus himself takes up residence in them.”²⁰⁹ Through the Spirit God continues to be present, continues to act on behalf of the people guiding, accompanying (14:16-17) and teaching them (15:25-26), testifying on behalf of Jesus (15:26-27) and glorifying him by continuing his work and pointing people to him (16:13-15).²¹⁰

John 16, on the one hand, emphasizes generosity and hospitality marking Jesus’ promise, for the Son completes the work of the Father and returns to him in order that the Spirit may come. The triune community is ultimately and equally given for the salvation, preservation, and empowering of the world (16:7, *if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you; also 14:16*). On the other hand, the Spirit will “convict” some of *sin, righteousness and judgment* (15:8) and “guide” others *into all the truth* (15:13), disclosing to them all the things pertaining to the Divine Community (15:15). In the context of divine hospitality pervading the whole of the Gospel of John, it

²⁰⁸ Detailed discussion of this topic is not necessary for the scope of this paper, so only a brief note will be made on the meaning of the Paraclete here.

²⁰⁹ Ridderbos quoted in Köstenberger, *John*, 436.

²¹⁰ Marshall, 507.

would be appropriate to say that “the world’s deepest misery and lostness [do] not consist in its moral imperfection but in its estrangement from God and its refusal to allow itself to be called out of that condition by the one whom God has sent for that purpose.”²¹¹

It is when Jesus departs from the world to the Father, that the Spirit will represent the Triune Society by being forever available to believers (14:16, *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever*). The identification of Jesus with the Spirit (*another Helper*) is so strong²¹² that “He can say that *he himself* will return” to the people in the person of the Spirit²¹³ (15:18, *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you; see also 14:28*). Just as the Son emptied himself by becoming flesh through the union with a human nature, so, too the Spirit “empties himself by indwelling human lives through the impartation of uncreated grace.”²¹⁴

The sending terminology in 14:26 (*the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will...*) also integrates the Spirit into “the network of sending relationships established in this Gospel”²¹⁵ within the Divine Community that embraces the created world in the passionate desire to share the triune, divine life with others.²¹⁶ God does not simply confront his creation as Creator, or as the Incarnate One but “in the Spirit God

²¹¹ Köstenberger, *John*, 472.

²¹² Kysar calls the Spirit “the alterego of Christ himself” and states that “The Paraclete is Christ among us” (Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel*, 96-7).

²¹³ Köstenberger, *John*, 434.

²¹⁴ Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25.

²¹⁵ Köstenberger, *John*, 442.

²¹⁶ Maloney, 64.

dwells in man himself”, so that the whole world becomes God’s home.²¹⁷ One can say that the Son and the Spirit work “in tandem”²¹⁸ in this created world or in other words “when the Trinity turns to the world, the Son and the Spirit become the two arms of God by which humanity was made and taken into God’s embrace.”²¹⁹

The foot-washing of John 13 draws together several aspects of John’s language of hospitality and greatly contributes to it. This hospitality nature of the event can be discerned in several aspects. John describes physical proximity of the beloved disciple and Jesus (*reclining on Jesus’ bosom*, 13:23) in the same terms as that of Jesus and the Father (1:18).²²⁰ Jesus’ actions towards Judas, dipping a morsel and giving it to him was also a mark of a special favor²²¹ and a sign of an incredible hospitality of Jesus to the one who will soon betray him (13:18, 26). The practice of foot-washing itself was a conventional hospitality to guests in the ancient world, but since it is not offered here upon the arrival, we know that something more is taking place.²²² The setting is that of a meal (13:2, 4) that, on the one hand, expresses intimate fellowship and nourishment (c.f. John 6) and on the other, carries “symbolic eschatological overtones of intimacy and fellowship with the Son after his glorification.”²²³ The time of the meal is right *before the*

²¹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Augsburg: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1993), 104.

²¹⁸ Köstenberger, *John*, 471.

²¹⁹ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 128 (This beautiful image was used by Irenaeus in his description of the Son and the Spirit as “the two hands of God” through which he worked both in creation and redemption).

²²⁰ Keener, *John 2*, 918.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 918.

²²² Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 223.

²²³ Arland J. Hultgren, “The Johannine Foot-washing (13:1-11) as symbol of Eschatological Hospitality,” *New Testament Studies* 28, no. 4 (October 1982): 542.

Feast of the Passover (13:1a) and what Jesus does in this account is described as ‘loving them to the end’ (13:1b). This brings to mind what he said earlier about the Good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep (e.g. 10:11, 14, 18; also 15:13) as well as John’s identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God (1:29) whose death will “accomplish[ed] all that Passover symbolized.”²²⁴

But despite the fact that Jesus’ death is approaching, John portrays him as the One in control of events, not simply as someone who will be cornered and killed, for it is *knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands* (13:3) that he washes the feet of his disciples. What Jesus does, he does in the full consciousness of his unity and equality with the Father from whom he had come and to whom he is returning (13:1, 3). He is also aware of his servant role²²⁵ and thus, in this act of hospitality he reflects “the ultimate Community, whose fellowship, oneness, and mutual disposability he represents.”²²⁶ It is not primarily a lesson of humility and servanthood that Jesus the Teacher presents to his disciples. In the light of his knowledge that he and the Father are one (10:30; 17:11; cf. 14:9) and that he is from God and with God, the Son offers “hospitality on behalf of the Father and shares His own destiny of going to the Father with those whom he washes.”²²⁷ He is the incarnation of the essential nature of the Divine Community, which is radically hospitable and self-giving.

²²⁴ Morris, *Reflections in the Gospel of John* 3, 466.

²²⁵ 13:4-5 describe what servants usually did: *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself, poured water into the basin, and began to wash the ... feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.*

²²⁶ Gruenler, 90.

²²⁷ Hultgren, 542.

Obviously, those present at the supper did not quite understand the full meaning of what was happening, but would understand “hereafter” (13:7), that is, after Jesus’ death, resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And that understanding will embrace an absolutely essential truth: in choosing a life of loving service on behalf of others Jesus portrays the triune God as the one who “is supremely relative, the one always turned toward others in serving love.”²²⁸ What they also have to understand is that without this hospitality on Jesus’ part, they could not participate in his life (13:8; c.f. 6:44; 12:32; 14:6). “There can be no homecoming except in terms of the Host, who requires that the invited guests be redeemed and washed before entering” through “...the generosity of the suffering Son, who represents the generosity of the divine Society.”²²⁹ It seems right, then, that Arland Hultgren considers this foot-washing “a symbolic act of eschatological hospitality” in which Jesus, as the faithful servant and son, prepares his disciples for entrance into his Father’s house (14:2).²³⁰

What Jesus has said on numerous occasions about laying down his life is now taking place in the account of the foot-washing anticipating the ultimate act of divine hospitality: the cross of Jesus. We have seen that “*for God so loved the world*” (3:16) demonstrated the way in which God loved the world – by *giving his Son*. And although it is Jesus who goes through condemnation, suffering and crucifixion, this sacrificial giving has to be understood in trinitarian terms.²³¹ Jesus speaks of it as something that is given

²²⁸ Maloney, 76.

²²⁹ Gruenler, 96-7.

²³⁰ Hultgren, 542.

²³¹ The Father gives up His Son for us (3:16), the Son gives himself up for us (10:11) and although there is no single explicit statement in John, his trinitarian foci elsewhere allow us to say that “the common

to him by his Father (18:11, *the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?*) We have seen what the Father entrusted the Son to do and in light of the whole Gospel of John the meaning of the cup is the ultimate hospitality of God through Jesus' giving his life on the cross.

In the way John relays these events can be discerned a strong sense of Jesus' control, 'hosting' the events, rather than his defeat. It was not a disaster that Jesus could not avert, for he knew exactly what was coming (18:4). Rather (10:18, *I lay it down on My own initiative*), it was a deliberately assumed "plan that has been worked out"²³² (19:30, *it is finished*). Jesus dies, but his death is more than a mere cessation of life. It is a generous giving of his life for the sake of the world, for to speak of the Cross is to speak of God's hospitality.²³³

Having demonstrated the culminating point of his presentation of divine hospitality and self-giving, John turns our attention to post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, once again emphasizing the hospitable nature of Jesus' encounters with his disciples. At first he comes in as a Guest, greeting them, saying "*Peace be with you*" (20:19,21,26). His coming and standing in the midst of them brings to memory some of the first words of John about the Word coming into the world and "dwelling among" the people (1:14). Having come in their midst and being ready to depart to the Father Jesus *breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit"* (20:22), fulfilling his promise of the coming of the Paraclete who will now be the divine presence among them.

sacrifice of the Father and the Son comes about through the Holy Spirit, who joins and unites the Son in his forsakenness with the Father" (Moltmann, 83).

²³² Morris, *Reflections in the Gospel of John 4*, 602.

²³³ Vosloo, 88.

It is significant that in the very last moments of Jesus in the world he once again acts as a generous representative of the Divine Community through the miraculous catch of fish and an invitation to *come and have breakfast* (21:12). This shared meal offered by Jesus as host (21:13, *Jesus ...took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise*) brings to mind Jesus' previous teaching concerning himself as life-giving food and as a representative of divine hospitality (6:1-4, 25-59; 12:24-26; 13:12-20) as well as the eschatological banquet that will be graciously provided by the Divine Community.²³⁴

John's Gospel does not allow us to speak in terms of God either as a self-contained community or as having two lives: immanent (Father, Son and Holy Spirit as they are within God's own inner life) and economic (God as Father, Son and Spirit at work outside the divine life in the world).²³⁵ Rather, John is trying to paint a picture of "one life of the Triune God, a life in which we graciously have been included as partners...partakers of divinity...transformed and perfected by the Spirit of God."²³⁶

While relations within the Trinity are characterized by love, giving, mutual attention (of hearing and speaking) and knowledge, abiding and sharing of life, "the Communion of the Blessed Trinity is not closed in on itself", rather it opens outwardly

²³⁴ Pohl, *Welcoming Strangers*, 82.

²³⁵ Arguing against seeing the life as strictly separated into God's life within the Trinity and God's life in relation to the world one can also fall into the other extreme and collapse the immanent and economic trinity into one (as the process theologians do, e.g. Hartshorne and Cobb). Volf warns against strict identity between the economic and the immanent trinity, lest we come to the conclusion that "the world is necessarily an integral part of God's life" (Vosloo, 82). Plantinga also speaks of distinguishing between the ontological and the economic trinity in terms of distinguishing "the patterns and relations of the inner life of God from the patterns and relations of God exhibited in the economy of redemption – centrally in the incarnation and the work of the Spirit" (Plantinga, 315).

²³⁶ LaCugna, 228.

“inviting all creatures, especially human creatures, to also enter into the play of communion between themselves and with the divine Persons.”²³⁷

²³⁷ Boff, 4.

Chapter 4
**RECEPTION AND REJECTION OF DIVINE HOSPITALITY:
THE BOUNDARIES²³⁸ OF THE NEW COMMUNITY**

We have seen in the previous chapter that salvation in John is mostly expressed in terms of *life* (or *eternal life*) understood as sharing in the life of God (1:4) or incorporation into the life of the Father (14:23; 17:21), the Son (14:20, 23; 17:21,23,26) and the Spirit (7:39; 14:17).²³⁹ This relationship is expressed in terms of hospitality: the Divine Community inviting the world to share in the divine life of hospitable mutuality. However, John demonstrates repeatedly that in order to belong to those who are drawn into this eternal fellowship with God one has to “receive” the welcome of God. This chapter intends to show that notions of salvation and faith in John’s Gospel are also expressed in the language of hospitality, and in fact, “receiving Christ in the terminology of this Gospel is essential to salvation (1:12).”²⁴⁰ Using this language throughout the Gospel John is constantly sorting out insiders and outsiders, those with Jesus and those set against him, those that believe and those that do not.

²³⁸ While the word ‘boundaries’ seems to be an antipode of hospitality, it is not necessarily so. The word is used here not in a sense of judgment or exclusion but in the sense of identity: what makes one a member of the new community and not the other. James Farwell actually speaks of “the hospitality of boundaries” and of the fact that boundaries can even mean “definition and even inclusion” (James Farewell, “Baptism, Eucharist, and the Hospitality of Jesus: on the practice of “Open Communion” in *Anglican Theological Review*, Spring 2004. <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3818/is_200404/ai_n9345554> Accessed in October, 2005). So, the idea here is not that some are included and others are not on the basis of some questionable criteria but that all are invited into this community, but only those who will accept the invitation will become its members. The image is that of the clearly marked community which, nevertheless, continues to be open and to hold its arms in an open gesture of invitation to all who desire to come.

²³⁹ Marshall, 520.

²⁴⁰ Keener, *John 1*, 399.

It is evident from John that there are two aspects of salvation: divine and human.²⁴¹ On the one hand, it is entirely due to God's initiative (as we have seen in 6:44; 12:32; 14:6), for it is the Divine Community that comes into the world, draws people to themselves and offers the gift of eternal life. On the other hand, as this divine hospitality is offered, John appeals to the people to come to Jesus, to 'accept' what is offered and to respond to the gift of eternal life by reciprocating God's hospitality. Throughout John's Gospel we note a constant double thrust of reception and rejection, which frames John's notion of belief and unbelief.

FAITH AS HOSPITABLE RECEPTION OF JESUS

We must note that 1:12 places the verbs "to receive" and "to believe" in parallel: "*as many as received him*", "*to those who believed in his name*", making clear and underlining throughout the Gospel that to receive the Word means to believe in him. Time and again John also uses the notions of unbelief and rejection in the same pericopae. In Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus unbelief goes hand in hand with not welcoming the testimony of the Divine Community (*you do not accept our testimony... you do not believe*, 3:11-12). In John 4 the Samaritans "believe" (4:39, 41, 42) in Jesus and show him hospitality by asking him to stay with them (4:40). Then Jesus goes on to Galilee and Galileans are also spoken of as having *received Him* (4:45) for they have seen the things Jesus did at the feast in Jerusalem. In John 5, on the other hand, unbelief is equated with inhospitality (*you do not believe Him whom He [the Father] sent*, 5:38; *I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me*, 5:43). In fact, they cannot

²⁴¹ Marshall, 521.

believe in him because instead of receiving him and his glory, they care more about *receiving* glory from one another (5:44). The same pair of terms we find in John 12 (*He who believes in Me*, 12:44; also 12:36, 39 and *he who rejects Me*, 12:48). In 7:39 believing in the Son (and in 14:10-11 belief in the Father and the Son) is linked with receiving the Spirit, thus, faith in the triune God is equated with reception of him. In John 13 the link is between faith in him (13:19) and receiving those whom he sends (13:20).²⁴² At the same time receiving Jesus' words that were given to him by the Father is equivalent to believing that Jesus was sent by the Father (17:8).

The Prologue also reminds us that for John faith means becoming a *child of God* (1:12) who "belongs with the family and is destined for a rich inheritance with other members of the family".²⁴³ Being God's children according to John is no longer related to being descendants of Abraham, for "apart from the acceptance of the Word, people are not God's children, even though they are created by the Word and even though they are Jews."²⁴⁴ When we talk about "receiving" we are also emphasizing the fact that becoming members of God's family is the gift of God, which he gives to those who respond to his Son, for "entrance into the heavenly family is not achieved by human effort; it is always the gift of God."²⁴⁵

The notion of rejection of the Word is further emphasized in other hospitality terms (*the darkness did not comprehend Him, the world was made through Him...the*

²⁴² We have to remember that in the ancient notion of agency, to receive the one who is sent is to receive the sender.

²⁴³ Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience: From Faithful Reading to Faithful Living* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 163.

²⁴⁴ Marshall, 492, n5.

²⁴⁵ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John I*, 12.

world did not know Him, 1:5,10). Καταλαμβάνω (1:5) and γινώσκω (1:10) are used here consecutively referring “to more than mere intellectual rejection and entailing a willful refusal to accept or believe.”²⁴⁶ Knowledge and faith are also used together in 6:69 (*we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God*), for to believe in Jesus and to know him for John is one and the same thing. In John 8 the conversation about who are the real “children of Abraham” and “who are the children of the devil” the nature of the saving faith is once again expressed in terms of knowledge of Jesus’ true identity and belief in him (*unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*, 8:24; *when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He*, 8:28; also 8:19, 55).²⁴⁷ Belief is closely connected with the knowledge that the Father sent Jesus and that Jesus and the Father are one in their work in the world (*though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father*, 10:38; also 14:7, 10-11).

The story of Jesus healing the blind man also reveals the understanding of faith as knowing Jesus and his true identity. Here, however, we see the faithlessness of those Jews who “did not believe *it* of him” (9:18) described in terms of the ignorance of Jesus’ true identity (*we know that this man is a sinner*, 9:24; *we do not know where He is from*, 9:29; *we know that God does not hear sinners*, 9:31).²⁴⁸ So, as Brown notes, “the basic sin in John’s Gospel is the failure to know and believe in Jesus.”²⁴⁹ But this knowledge

²⁴⁶ Köstenberger, *John*, 37

²⁴⁷ See also 8:30, 32: *As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him; and you will know the truth (Jesus is the Truth, 14:6).*

²⁴⁸ Their words imply that Jesus is a sinner, is not God-fearing and therefore God cannot hear him.

²⁴⁹ Brown quoted in Köstenberger, *John*, 37

for John “is not merely theoretical...nor does it take place in one single act of perception from which everything else would automatically follow.”²⁵⁰ Rather, “it is necessary time and again for Jesus to come to us...and it is necessary for us time and again to recognize and acknowledge him anew”,²⁵¹ retaining a “knowing faith” or a “believing knowledge.”²⁵²

John 3:18-20 speaks of unbelief as a refusal to “come to the Light” (*he who does not believe has been judged already... and does not come to the Light*). After the healing at Bethesda, Jesus says “*you do not believe Him whom He [the Father] sent*” (5:38) and “*you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life*” (5:40), intertwining belief once again with reception (*I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me*, 5:43). Believing in Jesus is coming to him, receiving the hospitality of the One who alone can quench hunger and thirst forever (6:36; also 7:37). So, “he who comes to me” (6:35) is an equivalent of “he who believes in me”. On many occasions John speaks about those who are receptive of Jesus and his message and whose disposition is that of belief in terms of “searching to find him” and “coming to him” (1:39, 46; 3:2, 21, 26; 4:30, 40, 45 etc.).

John also speaks of a believing relationship with Jesus in terms of loving as we see from his conversation with the Jews (*if God were your Father, you would love Me*, 8:42), implying that they do not love him, as well as do not believe in him (8:45). To

²⁵⁰ Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 25.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Bultmann’s term in “Πιστεύω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1967): VI, 227.

believe in Jesus as the One who comes from God and acts and speaks in his name, to receive in him the love of God (3:16) is to love him, for Jesus says, “*you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father*” (16:27). This response of love is an inextricable element of faith, for it is “interwoven with a great divine act for our salvation, and we should see in it more than a general trust in divine providence.”²⁵³

Keeping in mind that John speaks of faith in hospitality terms we once again turn to the Prologue and find that hospitality language is used to portray the response of the people to the Word who comes into the world as a guest “to find a home among humankind.”²⁵⁴ And this response is mixed (1:10-12): there are *His own* who *did not receive Him* as well as those who *received Him* and were given the *right to become children of God*. Malina notes that this beginning of the story of Jesus’ life and ministry needs to be understood in the light of hospitality infractions,²⁵⁵ which by destroying the host and guest relationship, do not only make them strangers, but make them enemies. And, “hence in the social context of the rules of hospitality, the Johannine *his own received him not* alerts the reader to the ongoing conflict and hostility that is to follow.”²⁵⁶ As the ministry of Jesus begins and continues all the way to his death and resurrection we continue to see responses of both hospitality (those that believe) and

²⁵³ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 559.

²⁵⁴ Ringe, 50.

²⁵⁵ On the side of the host an infringement of hospitality would include: insulting one’s guests or showing of hostility, neglecting to protect one’s guests and their honor, failing to attend to one’s guests, to grant them the precedence which is their due, to show concern for their needs and wishes and failure to offer their best is to denigrate the guest (Malina, “The Received view”, 185-6).

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 186-87.

hostility (those that do not believe) making the former members of the Divine Community and leaving the latter on the outside.

The more Jesus' life manifests *his glory*, revealing that he is not just another prophet or teacher of the law, the more John tells us that *His disciples believed in Him* (2:11). People's understanding with which Jesus was confronted was very limited and clouded by their 'traditional beliefs', so he begins to speak with them about the real meaning of belief which makes one a member of the kingdom of God. John presents Nicodemus as one of those who desire to know²⁵⁷ and it is to him that Jesus first speaks of faith as accepting the testimony of the Divine Community (3:11, *we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony*).²⁵⁸ It is in the context of this conversation that God's mission in the world is set in the light of divine hospitality: God giving his only Son, so that by receiving this gift and believing in him they would have eternal life (3:16-18). Jesus concludes his explanation of belief by speaking about the "coming" of the Light into the world and that the appropriate response to that coming should be "coming to the Light" and "loving the Light" (3:19-21; also 12:46-48). Yet, people respond to God's hospitality with hostility, to God's love (3:16) with 'hatred' (3:20) and "stubbornly refuse[d] his self-sacrificial offer of reconciliation."²⁵⁹ Although Nicodemus is still one among the Pharisees²⁶⁰ (sharing in much of their false convictions about what constitutes the right relationship with God),

²⁵⁷ Keener notes that the plural "you" in 3:11 suggests that Jesus "addresses the community of which Nicodemus at this point remains a part" (Keener, *John 1*, 558-9).

²⁵⁸ Again, the plural "we" seems to represent the joint voice of Father and Son whose witness is harmonious (e.g. 5:31-32, 36-37; 8:13-14, 17-18; 15:26).

²⁵⁹ Keener, *John 1*, 572.

²⁶⁰ His reference to the law as 'our' while Jesus says to them 'your' law is notable (Keener, *John 1*, 734).

John allows us to see that Jesus' words to him are stirring his heart up for a new understanding. He reappears in 7:50-52 in the encounter of chief priests, Pharisees and officers as the one who timidly disagrees with this religious elite and their hostile reaction to Jesus by reminding them that the Law requires to "hear" and "to get to know" the person before passing judgment on them (7:51). In this John presents us with the contrast between Nicodemus who is seeking to "hear" Jesus and "know" what he is all about and the religious elite that has failed to hear him (see 5:37; 8:43, 47) and knows neither him nor his doings (8:14, 19).²⁶¹ We meet Nicodemus once again after Jesus' death on the cross when together with Joseph of Arimathea he takes away the body for burial (19:38-42) using his last opportunity to act hospitably towards Jesus in whom he has come to believe. These encounters with Nicodemus reveal that even the elite, the religious core of the day, is beginning to divide in its response to Jesus and it is not only the despised "ignorant crowd" (7:49) that is accepting Jesus.

Unlike the unreceptive and even hostile Judea, Jesus' encounter with Samaritans (4:39-42) and Galileans (4:43-54) results in many of them believing in him (implying, of course, that some did not). Both groups²⁶² are the kind of people that the Judean religious elite accuse of being ignorantly attracted to Jesus in contrast to themselves who (presumptuously) 'know' their own privileged place in relationship to God (8:32, 39).

²⁶¹ It is significant that 'hear' and 'know' in John (as we have seen so far) are the terms of a hospitable relationship, which the religious elite here fails to exhibit in response to Jesus.

²⁶² Jewish attitude towards Samaritans is well known, but it is also evident from 7:52 that Galileans were viewed in those days as "specially unspiritual", a kind of a people from whom a prophet could never emerge (Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 2, 288). While it is possible that the issue was the contestation of the Jews of Jerusalem towards Galileans as the 'people of the land' (Sean Freyne, *Galilee: From Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 BCE to 135 CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism*. Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1998, 371), Freyne also notes the Judean view of Galilee as those who did not keep the law with the same scrupulousness and therefore were not "godly enough to produce a prophet" (Freyne, 121).

John highlights a contrast: Jesus leaves Judea, the place of hostility, to go to Galilee (4:3), which receives his ministry far more hospitably²⁶³ (4:40, 45) in that it believes in him (4:42, 53). Jesus, who is clearly “portrayed as a stranger and a traveler”²⁶⁴ requesting hospitality from a Samaritan woman, is then shown hospitality by the Samaritan city dwellers (as well as Galileans) as an important guest²⁶⁵ and for John’s Gospel this is believing.

GROWING HOSTILITY OF UNBELIEF

John 5 portrays Jesus back in Jerusalem healing on a Sabbath a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years (5:1-9) causing hostile reaction (5:16) of the Jews for whom such actions are “unlawful” (5:10).²⁶⁶ They fail to see that whatever Jesus does or whenever he speaks, he mediates the life-giving power that he shares with the Father. They also do not realize that it is not their descent from Abraham or adherence to the law but their response to Jesus that either includes into or excludes them from the community that truly belongs to God.²⁶⁷ John 5-8 contain numerous occasions when Jesus desires to show that those who claim to belong to the Father but do not receive the Son deceive

²⁶³ Keener, *John 1*, 589.

²⁶⁴ Arterbury, 113.

²⁶⁵ It is both expressed in their coming out to greet Him and their invitation to stay with them (4:30, 40) (Arterbury, 117).

²⁶⁶ The conflict that is already rising between Jesus and “the Jews” is quite significant. While Jesus certainly cares for the man, there is more that is going on here. Knowing that healing on the Sabbath will give rise to resentment on the part of the Pharisees, Jesus still chooses to heal the one who having been ill for 38 years could have probably waited another day. But Jesus does not think so, deciding rather that the extension of healing and love takes precedence over a strict Sabbath law (revealing thus the core of the conflict: a radical difference between Jesus’ and the Jews’ understanding of the right way to worship God).

²⁶⁷ Ringe, 53.

themselves (5:24, 26-27, 30-32, 36-38; 6:28-29, 30-33, 47-48, 50, 57; 7:16-18, 28-29, 33; 8:16, 18-19, 28-29, 49-50, 54). Opposition in John 5 is expressed in typical Johannine manner, the Jews are not able to *hear* Jesus (5:23-25), they *refuse to come to him* (5:40), do not *accept* him (5:43) which means that (contrary to their own conviction) they do not have real faith in God nor do they believe Moses (since he wrote about Jesus, 5:47). By their inhospitality to Jesus they negate the faith they claim they have in God, because to respond to Jesus is to respond to the Father.

Those who see the healing follow Jesus to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (6:1-2) and later are said to follow him because he once again performs a miracle (6:14). The discourse in John 6 demonstrates both the claims about Jesus and the need for people to accept them, for only the one “who accepts the words of Jesus will receive the life-giving Spirit.”²⁶⁸ Ironically, the response of these people to Jesus is not a hospitable welcome on their part but a desire *to come and take Him by force to make Him king* (6:15).²⁶⁹ For they do not understand that Jesus is not just “the eschatological bringer of salvation”, “the prophet” who they believed will be king and will satisfy their natural desires and longings,²⁷⁰ but an envoy of the Divine Community offering himself for the satisfaction of their eternal longing by making it possible for them to have part in divine life (6:51, 53) through eating his flesh and drinking his blood (6:53-56).²⁷¹ They are

²⁶⁸ Brown, *The Gospel According to John* 29, 300.

²⁶⁹ The wrong reaction of the crowd could have become also a temptation for Jesus to follow the way the crowds were offering: the popular, easy way of controlling the world through power and to turn away from the kind of service and hospitality that he came to bring.

²⁷⁰ Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John*, 213.

²⁷¹ To eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood is synonymous with the words *to welcome, accept, receive, believe into*, and the like (Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 134).

searching him for the wrong reasons (6:24) and when they hear his words about what real life is, they are scandalized (6:60, 66: *many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"...many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore*). People divide into two groups: those who do and those who do not respond to the light, but now even majority of those who formerly were Jesus' disciples withdraw their allegiance, leaving him only with the recognized twelve.²⁷²

The twelve, however, recognize the words of Jesus as the One who speaks *the words of eternal life*, believe in him and come to know him as *the Holy One of God* (6:68-69). In contrast with those that refuse to accept the difficult words of Jesus, the twelve respond properly to the Jesus claim in 6:63, "*the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life*". They begin to realize and accept Jesus' relation to the Father and his claims about being one with the Father, for Peter's confession of Jesus as *the Holy One of God* (6:69) resembles a more frequent OT title "the Holy One of Israel", assigning Jesus the highest possible place.²⁷³ Having placed themselves at Jesus' disposal they begin to understand about the Father, and responding to the Son they are responding to the Father (6:29).

At this point rejection of Jesus is becoming especially pronounced which is evident from the fact that he *is unwilling to walk through Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him* (7:1) and comes to the festivities in Jerusalem incognito (7:10).²⁷⁴

²⁷² W.H. Cadman, *The Open Heaven: the Revelation of God in the Johannine Sayings of Jesus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 97.

²⁷³ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 390.

²⁷⁴ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 146.

Following the statement of apostasy of many of Jesus' disciples in 6:66, John tells us that *even* Jesus' own brothers do not believe in him (7:5), although they seem to show excitement about the mighty works Jesus does. Jesus is aware of what his mission is (7:28, 33-34): to invite others to come home (which is the will of the whole Divine Community), yet, the tragedy for many of his hearers is that in rejecting the Son, they reject the Father and the gracious offer of a final homecoming. They are more and more divided in their response to him (7:43): some are inclined to accept him saying, *He is a good man* (7:12), *this certainly is the Prophet* (7:40), *this is the Christ* (7:41) and "performing such signs he must be the Christ" (7:31). Others rejected him saying, *He leads the people astray* (7:12), *Christ is not going to come from Galilee but from Bethlehem* (7:41-42) and "this man cannot be the Christ since we know where he comes from" (7:27).²⁷⁵ A sense of some people doubting 'in favor of Jesus', yet, not really accepting him is overlaid with even a stronger sense of hostility²⁷⁶ towards the One who alone can invite people to come to the Father and find in him eternal home.

Jesus continues to declare that he is speaking and acting in harmony with the Father, as well as to call his listeners to believe his claims (8:24), noting that his subsequent crucifixion and going back to the Father will be the ultimate revelation of the One who is the "I AM" (8:28). Then they will know for sure, yet, this knowledge will be comforting only for those that chose to believe him now but will prove to be belated and judging for those who have no room for his word (8:37). What happens in 8:31ff is especially interesting, for John tells us that Jesus begins to speak to those Jews who "had

²⁷⁵ This skepticism reveals to the readers the irony John puts in these words, for they know that Jesus after all did come from Bethlehem (Keener, *John 1*, 730).

²⁷⁶ *You have a demon* (7:20); *they were seeking to seize Him* (7:30, also 7:25, 44).

believed Him” which is very difficult to reconcile with the sharp argument that follows, Jesus’ statement that they want to kill him (8:37) and them actually picking up the rocks to stone him (8:59).

What kind of belief is that, one might ask. To answer that we must note, on the one hand, that John quite often says that “many believed” in Jesus (e.g. 2:23; 7:31; 10:42; 11:45; 12:11, 42). On the other hand, it is also true that in many of these cases (including 8:30-31) their faith would not persevere (8:31, 48, 59) and their failure “to abide” (8:31) suggests that they are not (or would not be) “sons” (8:35).²⁷⁷ That once again underlines John’s conviction that salvation does not consist of a superficial adherence to some of the truth that Jesus declares, but in reciprocating divine hospitality by “hearing” Jesus (8:43), trusting him (8:45), making room for his word (8:37) and continuing in his teaching (8:31). For “it is not only those who begin to follow Jesus, but those who persevere who remain His disciples (6:60-71)... their initial faith is not fully adequate, for it is merely ‘sign-faith’...”²⁷⁸ What is lacking in them is the sharing of eternal dwelling with the Divine Host which is the privilege of those who having received him by faith actually become his children (8:35; see also 1:12). These Jews of 8:31 are on the contrary ‘the children of the devil’ (8:44) because it is to him they belong and his desires that they want to carry out (unlike Jesus who does only what is pleasing to the Father, 8:49-50, 54). This accounts for the fact that their hospitality at the end of the encounter turns into hostility (8:52) only demonstrating that they never knew either the Father (8:55) or the Son (8:58). Contrasting parts in Jesus’ reply here draw strong boundaries that separate

²⁷⁷ Keener, *John 1*, 746.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 665.

Jesus' society (those who abide in his word²⁷⁹) from Judean society (those who seek to kill Jesus because his word has no place in them).²⁸⁰

*THE JUDGMENT OF THE HOSTILE WORLD AND THE CREATION
OF THE NEW COMMUNITY OF HOSPITALITY*

From that point on (John 8) the division between those who will constitute a new community belonging to God and those who by their unbelief will remain on the outside is becoming especially sharp. The Pharisees are not able to see in the healing of the blind man (John 9) the manifestation of God's works through Jesus (9:4), because they are fixed on their law (9:16) and see Jesus as an enemy, as a sinner (9:16). Hostile to Jesus but unable to find him, they spill out their hostility onto the man who has the courage to disagree with them.²⁸¹ Despite the fact of healing they continue to disbelieve and make a decision *that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue* (9:22, NRSV). Fulfilling their threats they do put a formerly blind man out²⁸² (in contrast with Jesus' hospitable reception of him, 9:35) and all the more widen the gap between a new community of Jesus (of which the blind man becomes a part) and the old community of those who do not believe. Reception and rejection of Jesus become the boundary of the new community of Jesus that he spoke of many times (e.g. 6:56-57), the

²⁷⁹ See also 6:56: *Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them* (NRSV). Eternal life is abiding in God.

²⁸⁰ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 159; Ringe, 53.

²⁸¹ *So they [Pharisees] said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet"* (9:17).

²⁸² In this "rejection of the man by the Pharisees we also see foreshadowed the rejection of Jesus and his disciples" (Marshall, 503).

community of union between Jesus and believers achieved by his death and their acceptance of it, the same union that exists between the Father and the Son (10:38; 14:10-11; 17:21).²⁸³

In his discourse about the sheep and the Shepherd Jesus emphasizes now who are the ones belonging to his sheep fold and who are not. He speaks again in terms of hospitality, which we discussed earlier: *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”* (10:27). As the Father in his communion with the Son listens to him, so the reflected new community respond to the Shepherd by answering to his call, by listening to his voice and following (implying a personal response of accepting a hospitable invitation of the Divine Community to “come home”). Enough has been demonstrated and said by Jesus for people to see his real identity and to respond hospitably to him: *“If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe”* (10:24b-25a). Of course, he is not referring to any specific statement of his but to the scope of his whole ministry (10:25b) “which should have constituted more than sufficient evidence for the Jews to believe.”²⁸⁴ He also might refer to his words about his oneness with the Father in 10:30-38 that only increased the tension (10:31) that has been building up “between his drawing the lost and the sick into a redeemed community and his opponents’ rejection on doctrinal grounds of his clarification of Mosaic monotheism in terms of a divine Community.”²⁸⁵ The rejection of Jesus brings the judgment of exclusion from the Divine Community.

The irony we see is that the more Jesus’ works reveal his divine identity and unity

²⁸³ Cadman, 88.

²⁸⁴ Köstenberger, *John*, 311.

²⁸⁵ Gruenler, 77-78.

with the Father, the more hostile becomes the reaction of those who do not believe his claims, and so the story of Mary anointing Jesus' feet in 12:1-8 is bracketed by two hostile actions (11:55-57 and 12:9-11).²⁸⁶ They are looking for him in hostility and they find him at the table with those who believe in him and welcome him; *[Martha] said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world"* (11:27). The more Jesus speaks, the more those who hear and watch him divide into two camps (11:45-46): those who believe in him including even many of the rulers (12:42) and on the other hand, those who for a time are among Jesus' closest community but do not remain such, revealing their true response to him. With great irony John mentions Judas' pretense of "hospitality" to the poor,²⁸⁷ which will soon be replaced by his hostile betrayal of Jesus. And in 12:10 (*the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also*) John gives us a further update on the hostility, which is now "aimed not only at Jesus but also at those to whom he has given life."²⁸⁸

More and more now Jesus speaks about his coming suffering: "*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die*" (12:32-33, NRSV). But the response to this divine act of disposability which brings eternal life to the lost is the questioning of the crowd, for "there is no place in their theology for a disposable Christ... their Messiah is not a

²⁸⁶ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 204.

²⁸⁷ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it (12:5-6).

²⁸⁸ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 207.

suffering Messiah.”²⁸⁹ Yet Jesus continues to summon his doubters to believe in him, which also means believing in the One who sent him, and seeing him means seeing the Father (12:36, 44-45). If they fail to do that, they will reject the invitation and lose the opportunity to become members of the redeemed community, will *remain* in the darkness (12:46) and more than that will be “setting themselves into opposition with the God they professed to serve.”²⁹⁰

Jesus’ reference to the words of Isaiah “*Lord, who has believed our report and to whom has the arm of the Lord has been revealed*” (12:38; see Is. 53:1) brings out the truth that rejection of God’s word and work in Jesus is not a new thing.²⁹¹ They see the works and hear the words, but having hardened rather than opened their hearts, they purposefully, actively, and consciously choose to reject what they hear and see. When in the person of Jesus the generous hospitality of the Divine Family is willfully rejected, Jesus is authorized to speak with judgmental authority towards those who “refuse the invitation to come home and willfully choose death instead of life by seeking self-actualization on their own rebellious and selfish terms.”²⁹² On the other hand, believers respond to Jesus’ invitation to come home and become the children of God sharing both the fellowship and the character of the family. No other Gospel makes this division between those “with us” and “those against us” (on the basis of response to the

²⁸⁹ Gruenler, 84.

²⁹⁰ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 3*, 459.

²⁹¹ Morris notes that even when the Jewish people recognized the prophets as those whom God had sent to them and revered their writings, when the prophets actually came to the people, their message had not been accepted. (Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 3*, 459) We see the same tendency here: many recognized Jesus as the one from God, but still would not receive Him nor His message.

²⁹² Gruenler, xix (“The world” is the word Jesus uses to refer to those who by rejecting Jesus place themselves on the opposing side of the new community, e.g. 14:17,19,22,27,30-31; 15:18-19; 16:8, 20; 17:14, 16, 25).

hospitality of God) as emphatically as does the Gospel of John.²⁹³

We have seen that while many believe in Jesus, not all of them become part of his new community and John 13-17²⁹⁴ especially points to the nature of faith which truly makes one a member of the new community of God. All are welcomed to become a part of the Divine Community but people's reception or rejection of Jesus sketches out the boundaries of this community. First, participation is essential for becoming a member of the new community. We have already been getting a sense that believing is not just about the words that Jesus says but about making a commitment on the basis of his word. It is not an intellectual acceptance of the message, but a total acceptance of the person of the Son and the Father, "coming to Jesus", "receiving him". As the account of the footwashing shows, to have part with Jesus one has to accept his hospitality. In response to Peter's objection that Jesus will never wash his feet (13:6-8a) Jesus responds, "*If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me*" (13:8b). The point here is obviously not that if Peter gets his feet washed on this occasion, he would belong to Jesus forever but that "there is no other way of being Christ's than in receiving the cleansing he died to bring."²⁹⁵ Jesus is saying to Peter and to the rest: you cannot secure your own salvation, you cannot have life, but I can bring you into this life by the gift of my life that will be given for you. "The believing community is constituted through participation in him...by making themselves available to the generosity of Jesus...one gives, the other receives, in

²⁹³ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 238.

²⁹⁴ Only a brief treatment will be given to John 13-17 here to demonstrate the nature of faith that constitutes a new community of God, for the following chapter of this work will be fully dedicated to the treatment of the nature of this new community as delineated in John 13-17.

²⁹⁵ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 3, 469.

mutual hospitality and disposability that make interpersonal communion and the new community possible.”²⁹⁶

Secondly, to become a member of the new community one has to believe in Jesus not through a single act,²⁹⁷ but by a continuing relationship. This relationship John expresses in the terms of abiding (15:4-10; also 6:56) and in the use of the preposition *in* (14:11, 20; 17:21, 23, 26), implying an “active holding on to Jesus and his teaching”²⁹⁸ and an “inward, enduring personal communion.”²⁹⁹ 15:1-11 emphasizes this enduring relationship with Jesus on the part of those who came to believe in him, while 15:18-16:4a demonstrates the opposite themes of hatred and exclusion.³⁰⁰ True faith is not an acquisition of convictions about Jesus but loving him (14:21) and only through such response to him one becomes a member of the new community as he or she places oneself obediently at the disposal of this community. On the contrary *whoever does not love me does not keep my words* (14:24, NRSV) and although such person can associate him/herself with the new community, they will not remain a part of it, because to love (as Jesus demonstrates) is to offer oneself hospitably to the other.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Gruenler, 90.

²⁹⁷ Which seems to have been the problem of those who at first accepted Him but then rejected Him.

²⁹⁸ Marshall, 521-522.

²⁹⁹ Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: the Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 54.

³⁰⁰ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 233.

³⁰¹ In 13:29-30 we see Judas who was among Jesus’ closest community, but having received the hospitality of Jesus, instead of placing himself at His disposal and giving of oneself he “stole” the money that was entrusted to him (12:5-6) and acted harshly towards Jesus whose love and hospitality he experienced so many times.

For John, believing in Jesus is equivalent to knowing him. This knowledge of Jesus (17:25-26) is the “stuff” of faith which stands at “the center of the new society; and so for the unbelieving world there is, by implication, no possibility of real and lasting community apart from the Community of God.”³⁰²

The paradox and the extent of Jesus’ rejection are expressed in his words earlier in 15:23-25;³⁰³ worldly hatred of Father and Son is without a cause, it is groundless and self-destructive. “But such oppositional language indicates the magnitude of the breach” created now between the new community of God and the surrounding society³⁰⁴ whose rejection “of Jesus culminated in his crucifixion.”³⁰⁵ Betrayed by the one who was among his closest friends (at least apparently) Jesus is arrested by a great cohort of those looking forward to dispose of him. It is notable, however, that John does not strictly speak “of an arrest, but of Jesus’ giving himself up” in that he comes out to the soldiers asking, “*Whom do you seek?*” (18:4,7),³⁰⁶ reminding the reader that no one takes his life from him, but he lays it down freely in ultimate hospitality (10:18) and with authority (18:5, 6, *I am He*³⁰⁷).

John once again emphasizes that it is Jesus’ own people that have been and are becoming even more hostile to him: it is his *own nation and the chief priests* that

³⁰² Gruenler, 130.

³⁰³ *Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father... ‘They hated me without a cause’* (NRSV).

³⁰⁴ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 238.

³⁰⁵ Pohl, *Welcoming Strangers*, 82.

³⁰⁶ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 4*, 605.

³⁰⁷ Although the context here for the saying does not put this expression on the same plane as other “I am” sayings in Jesus, the resemblance is striking and probably intentional.

delivered him to Pilate and (18:35) and it is “*the Jews*”³⁰⁸ who were obviously on the opposing side from his followers (18:36). In the same way the irony of the trial (18:12-14, 19:12-16) is in the fact that “the chief enemies of the redemptive hospitality of the Family of God embodied in Jesus the Son are the supposed guardians of Israel’s prophetic tradition concerning the new community of the messianic age.”³⁰⁹ Judas is standing with the soldiers demonstrating whose side he is decisively on, so “the lines are drawn and Judas now belongs with the enemies of Jesus.”³¹⁰

We might note at this point that Peter’s relationship with Jesus, although marred by his cowardly denial, still ‘remains’. There is something that Jesus knows about the heart of Peter that we might not know (21:17) that will carry Peter on to give his life for his Master (21:19) and Jesus invites him anew to continue in the relationship with him.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ It is important to note that John’s frequent negative use of the term “the Jews” has become a ground for misinterpretation and rise of anti-Semitic feelings even within the Christian church. But many have legitimately asked the question of whether John’s gospel is really intended to cause such reaction. I do not think it does, for despite the majority of negative references to the Jews, there are also some references that are positive or neutral. First of all, while referring to those who opposed Him as “Jews” Jesus still accepts the designation “Jew” for himself (e.g. 4:9; 18:35) and there are positive references to the believing Jews (e.g. 11:45; 12:9). But in the negative contexts, “Jews” often clearly mean the Jewish leaders who oppose Jesus and his followers. In the passion narrative John is spoken of as “writing as a Jew for other Jews” who presents the condemnation of Jesus from beginning to end as “the great betrayal of the nation by its own leadership” (Beasley-Murray, 363). Yet, it is not only about the Jewish leaders either, for even they become representatives of the evil attitudes of the world in general (Keener, *John 1*, 217, see also Beasley-Murray, lxxxix). Going further in that direction, Keener suggests that John uses the term “Jews” ironically as a response to the opponents’ claims that Jewish Christians are no longer Jews (they are in fact never referred to as Jews) thus, emphasizing further the growing gap between those who accept and those that reject Jesus and His claims. In light of all that, John’s use of “the Jews” cannot be taken as anti-Semitism but has to be viewed as a collective term representing all those who are hostile to Jesus whether they be of His own people (1:11) or of any other nation.

³⁰⁹ Gruenler, 134.

³¹⁰ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 4*, 606.

³¹¹ The present tense of “follow Me” gives a sense of “keep on following Me”, reflecting both the fact that in the past Peter’s following was rather erratic (Morris, *Reflections*, vol.4, 742) but indeed as Peter’s life and death will demonstrate he will (and already does) abide in Jesus. And in fact, Peter was just one of the ‘uncertain’ members of the new holy community, for Jesus made it clear in His words in 16:32 that all his

Unlike Judas, he is on Jesus' side and still among the children of God who are "at home, adopted, emancipated, awaiting inheritance"; friends of God who participate "with God in a practice of openness, vulnerability, and candor"; servants of God who are "under way in obedience and risk."³¹² He is the member of the same community as Thomas to whom Jesus declared (20:24-29) that access to life in the community of God is gained "not by evidence of demand... but by placing oneself at the disposal of Jesus in faithful belief and service, whether one sees clearly or not."³¹³

There is no doubt that for John the emergence of the new community of God is closely connected to "Jesus' dual identity as stranger-guest and host" which "is a core image of the Christian faith."³¹⁴ So we come to the end of John's gospel narrative, "the story of the interplay of the acceptance and rejection of Jesus" in which some follow him and "remain" with him constituting "the insiders of the Johannine community", while others reject him and become outsiders.³¹⁵ And the cross seen through the eyes of faith is not where the hostile and unbelieving world triumphs getting rid of Jesus but "where Jesus the King makes himself utterly disposable in divine hospitality and becomes the seed of the new society (12:24)."³¹⁶

disciples will be scattered each to their own home, leaving their Master alone. On the other hand, this community will be brought back together and will "remain".

³¹² Brueggemann, 163.

³¹³ Gruenler, 138.

³¹⁴ Pohl, *Welcoming Strangers*, 66.

³¹⁵ Ringe, 55.

³¹⁶ Gruenler, 135.

Chapter 5
NEW COMMUNITY AS THE IMAGE OF TRINITARIAN HOSPITALITY

As we have seen so far in John's Gospel, God, the hospitable community of Father, Son and Spirit, graciously invites the world to participate in this community. We have also seen that hospitable reception or hostile rejection of divine hospitality creates boundaries of a new community of faith.³¹⁷ This community is brought to life, first, through the self-giving ministry of Jesus who demonstrates the triune hospitality to the world, and second, through a hospitable reception of it by those who believed in him. In this chapter I would like to explore the unique nature and mission of this community, which John presents as imaging the nature and mission of the triune community. This has very important implications for the life of the Christian church today.

John never uses the word 'church' but it would be a mistake to conclude on such basis that there is no concept of the church in his Gospel. On the one hand, it is true that John lacks the strength of Matthew's concern for the apostolic authority (Mt 16:13-20), institutional structure of the church and 'leadership' in the church.³¹⁸ On the other hand, in place of these concerns John raises his own concerns about the church as the new community, the nature of which could be understood in light of the relationships binding believers to God and to one another within the community (e.g. 10:1-18; 15:1-10, 16, 17).

What has been discussed in this work so far has important bearings not only on our understanding of the nature of the trinitarian community as hospitable within and outside of itself, but also on our understanding of the church as such. Johannine

³¹⁷ The term "community of faith" that will be used here is intended to refer to the Christian community (new community of hospitality), which in my opinion is fitting for John's gospel description of the Christian church. This term is not intended to designate some pluralistic post-modern notion of vague 'faith communities' (that are not characterized by any particular belief).

³¹⁸ Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel*, 99.

trinitarian focus that we have seen throughout the Gospel is not replaced by a Christological focus³¹⁹ when it talks about the Christian community.³²⁰ We have seen that who God is in himself he is also in relation to the world, which must inevitably mean “that the fellowship of Christians should reflect the trinitarian unity of God”³²¹ and that there is a close connection between the intratrinitarian life and the ‘mission’ of the church.³²² The Johannine concern has been taken into account by the church Fathers who have emphasized the nature of the church as grounded in the Trinity saying, “the church is full of the holy Trinity” (Origen)³²³ and “where the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are, there also is the church, which is the body of the Three” (Tertullian).³²⁴

Volf notes that in recent years the thesis of Christian communion corresponding to trinitarian communion is regaining its prominence, but there is still a great need to examine carefully where such correspondences are to be found.³²⁵ The Gospel of John appears to be the starting place for such examination, for if it is a “unique...testimony to

³¹⁹ Such can easily be the impression, since in the great number of texts the references are to the relationship of Jesus to the community of believers. But we have to remember that even when Johannine Jesus talks about the unity of believers to himself (15:5,7) he always points beyond himself to the Father (14:9-11; cf. 15:8) and always acts on behalf of the whole divine community, creating a very unique trinitarian feel in the Fourth Gospel (especially clear from John 17).

³²⁰ Many scholars build their ecclesiological understanding on Christology, which John does not allow us to do. Volf notes this tendency as well (Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 196-7).

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

³²² Erickson, 306.

³²³ Origen quoted in Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 195.

³²⁴ Tertullian quoted in Boff, 43.

³²⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 191.

the life of the triune God” and what we say about Christian community in light of this Gospel also “has to be measured against the *greater reality* of the life of the Trinity.”³²⁶

As was demonstrated earlier, in the process of the earthly ministry of Jesus those who have accepted him and his claims have formed a new community of God based not on ancestral roots and belonging to the people of Israel (8:33), but on reciprocating the hospitable ministry of Jesus and accepting the divine welcome into divine family (1:12). Belonging to such community in John’s terms is life of which he speaks extensively in the first 12 chapters (over 30 times). Curiously ‘life’ is only mentioned a few times in chapters 13-20, the assumption being that those to whom Jesus speaks in these concluding discourses are the ones that have already “come to him”, “have life” and thus, are incorporated into this new community of life.³²⁷ What they need to hear and understand now is the essential nature (*being*) and mission (*doing*) of this new community, which John presents also in the light of hospitality of the triune God: love, mutual service, giving, witness, abiding and unity. We see that John’s Gospel makes “a profound connection between *who God is and what it means to be a member of the people of God*,”³²⁸ thus, expressing the nature and the mission of the new community as grounded in the hospitable nature and mission of the divine Trinity.

³²⁶ Stephen C. Barton, “Christian Community in the Light of the Gospel of John.” In *Christology, Controversy & Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*, eds. David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1999), 279.

³²⁷ George D. Vanderlip, *Christianity According to John* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 31-32.

³²⁸ Barton, 293.

THE NATURE OF THE NEW COMMUNITY

To speak of the church John uses terms and images that were often symbolic of God's people (Israel)³²⁹ and "consistently presupposes a gathered Christian Community"³³⁰ that came into being through the gracious invitation of the Triune God to enter into its fellowship of love and hospitality. John uses the designation "children of God" (1:12; 11:49-52) to describe those who form the new community and expresses the heart of his teaching concerning the church as a community of those who belong to the Father, because they are included into the family. The new community is also referred to as "his own" (13:1) expressing the notion of belonging and formerly referring to the people of Israel (see 1:11). The notion of belonging and gracious gathering by God of those who responded to his hospitality is found in the expression "one flock *with* one shepherd" (10:16b). In 10:4 John refers to the members of the new community as both the sheep and "his own" creating a picture of God's providential care for the new community which now includes not only the people of Israel, but also Gentiles.³³¹ So, we see in John the church that is the inclusive community of those who have been graciously incorporated into the family of God through the work of his Son; this community is the result of divine ministry of hospitality in the created world.

The nature of the new community and the basis of its mission are grounded in its life of communion with the triune God as the image of the branches and the Vine clearly shows. That is to say, what the church *is* in relation to the triune God defines what the church *does* (15:4-8), just as in the relationships between the Father and the Son: what

³²⁹ Marshall, 523.

³³⁰ Vanderlip, 72.

³³¹ Köstenberger, *John*, 307.

they are in the relationships with one another defines their actions on behalf of one another in the world. Jesus' words "*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser*" (15:1-2) are an indication of the Divine Community as generously disposed to promote the health and productivity of the believing community.³³² The primary thing for the new community then, is not to accomplish great things for God's sake, but to "abide" in the Son, for only then will it be given the ability to accomplish infinitely more than it could ever do on its own (15:5). The call to "abide" complemented by the promise that Jesus will also "abide" in them (15:5) reflects the mutual indwelling of the Divine Community into which believers have now been drawn (17:21). And as Father, Son and Spirit abide in one another, in the analogous way the new society abides in the Divine Society, participating in its life "always allowing oneself to be encompassed, of allowing oneself to receive."³³³ In this sense what is demanded in the imperative "*Abide in Me*" (15:2) is primarily not "a continued being *for*" but a "being *from*", not a holding onto a position within the new community, but "an allowing oneself to be held",³³⁴ continually responding to the hospitality of God and getting to know better (15:15; 16:13-15) the One who is its life-giving Vine.

John 15:15 shows that integration of believers into the new community changes their status in relation to God: from that of slaves to that of friends.³³⁵ This shift of relationship is complemented by an earlier contrast between children and slaves (8:33-35)

³³² Gruenler, 107.

³³³ Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John*, 535.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 535-6.

³³⁵ In the same way we can say that in creating the new community God by inviting people in changes their status from strangers into "His own" (13:1) and into "His children" (1:12).

and is very important for John's depiction of the new community. This change of relationship that Jesus grants the new community means that they "need no longer assume the role of subordinates"³³⁶ but rather of trusted intimates with whom Jesus shares everything that is shared among the Divine Community (*I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you, 15:15*). In a way 16:23-27³³⁷ also reflects how with the embrace of believers into the Divine Community of love and hospitality their relationship with the Father resembles Jesus' relationship with him. For as Jesus asks the Father on their behalf and the Father grants him what he asks for, the believers themselves are now in the family and can ask the Father and receive from him. Lossky nicely captures this participation in the Divine Community of the Holy Trinity as "possessing by grace all that the Holy Trinity possesses by nature."³³⁸

The proper response of the new community, then, is to reciprocate God's hospitality with obedience (*You are My friends if you do what I command you, 15:14*). By this reciprocal obedience believers "continue to make themselves more open recipients"³³⁹ of God's love and hospitality, "abiding" in ever closer communion with God. The thrust of this verse is not conditional, that is, God making believers his friends

³³⁶ Keener, *John 2*, 1014.

³³⁷ *In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you 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.*

³³⁸ Del Colle uses the idea of Lossky from "The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church" (Del Colle, 10).

³³⁹ Keener, *John 2*, 1015.

“only if they obey” but reciprocal,³⁴⁰ which characterizes the relationships of the triune community and is now to be reflected in the relationships of the new community with God. The assumption is that obedience arises out of love, just as Jesus’ love for the Father issues in obedience (14:31; see also 14:15,21,23-24).³⁴¹ There is, of course, asymmetry here as well. The obedience flows from the love of God that has been extended to the new community of believers created from those drawn to God and transformed into his people by his gracious self-giving and redeeming love. In turn, this circle of hospitality that was first extended by God to believers (15:9) is now to be extended by them to fellow members of the new community (15:12, *This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you*). These words Jesus speaks knowing that soon he will no longer be with them but they, nevertheless, continue to exist only in close relationship with the triune community, through the presence of the Holy Spirit in them, on the one hand, and through their love to one another, on the other (15:9, *Abide in my love*).

Until the upper room discourse the emphasis of Jesus’ words was on the disciples’ relation to himself and through him to the Father; now the emphasis is on their relationships to one another (*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another*, 13:34). According to 13:35 this mutual love of its members is the distinguishing mark of the new community, (*by this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*,

³⁴⁰ 14:31 (*I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me*) is one of the examples of intimacy in relationships between the Father and the Son that issues in Jesus’ obedient deference to the Father.

³⁴¹ Marshall, 506.

NRSV).³⁴² The “newness” of the commandment, of course, was not in his call “to love” (since loving God and loving one’s neighbor was essential even in the Old Testament), but in the command to love “as Jesus loved them.”³⁴³ As he anticipates the cross, Jesus calls the believing community to the same self-giving love, which says “as I have given myself, not simply for you (though that is true), but to you”³⁴⁴ you also are to give yourselves to one another. The appeal here is “not an exhortation to begin loving or to do one’s own meritorious part” but rather “to continue in the reciprocity of loving which has its beginning in the oneness of Father and Son.”³⁴⁵ The new community is to be the image of the Divine Community of which it is now a part, to “emulate God as a person, rather than adhere to abstract principles, for love has no reality of its own apart from its embodiment in the persons of the divine Community.”³⁴⁶ Therefore, the call is to stay with him who creates the relationship of love in the first place and out of which arises the necessity to love as he did. And just as Jesus “throughout his life remained in the Father’s love” and “kept his Father’s commandments”³⁴⁷ the new community is also to remain in his love by keeping his commandments (15:9).

The context of the command in 13:35 as well as its repetition in the *inclusio* of

³⁴² The overwhelming number of times Jesus uses ‘love’ in his address of the new community emphasizes the same point. Morris notes that in the Upper room discourse the noun *love* is used six and the verb twenty-four times vs. only one and seven times correspondently in the Gospel up to this point (Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 3, 482).

³⁴³ Brown, *The Gospel According to John* 29A, 614 (also Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* 3, 484).

³⁴⁴ Cadman, 141-2.

³⁴⁵ Mark L. Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel: Motif Analysis and Exegetical Probe into the Theology of John* (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr, 1976), 39.

³⁴⁶ Gruenler, 100.

³⁴⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 273.

15:12-17 further underline the meaning of love with which Jesus loved his own and which is now to be imaged among the members of the new community – it is the love that gives oneself in ultimate hospitality (13:1; 15:13).³⁴⁸ In the context of the invitation to “abide” in God, to remain in the relationship of friendship with him, love means disposability, willingness to share everything, even one’s own life with another (15:13). It is dying to one’s “own narcissism or self-love,”³⁴⁹ finding of one’s true self in hospitable service to others³⁵⁰ and reflecting “trinitarian holiness of divine self-emptying love” through “living in a community of love.”³⁵¹ That is why we do not have any other commandments listed in John, because “reciprocal love is indeed the dynamic base of the Johannine ethics” which are elevated “above a list of rules.”³⁵² With this single command members of the new community are at once hospitably drawn into divine fellowship and are spurred to act hospitably on behalf of its members and in the world (even though it adheres to a set of values, which are far removed from the divinely ordained values of hospitality).

In a sense even the arrest of Jesus gives us insight into the nature of God’s kingdom as well as the community Jesus brings into being by saying, “*My kingdom is not*

³⁴⁸ *Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end (13:1); Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (15:13).*

³⁴⁹ Maloney, 113.

³⁵⁰ The same servanthood principle is found in Jesus’ words in 12:24-26 (*Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also, NRSV*) and is “derived from the interpersonal fidelity and hospitality of each of the three persons of the Triune Family to one another” (Gruenler, 122).

³⁵¹ Maloney, 147.

³⁵² Van der Watt, 316.

of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews” (18:36) and, *“the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?”* (18:11). How is that so? Jesus says that the divine kingdom is *not of this world*, that is, “not of this world’s kind.”³⁵³ It is radically different. So far we have seen that John often uses “the world” to designate the unbelieving part of created world, those who choose hostility over against hospitality as their response to Jesus. The disciples who do not yet fully understand that the community Jesus creates and the nature of the Divine Community are of the same kind and continue to act in the their ‘natural’ habitual ways. Peter is trying to defend Jesus by means of force, using his sword (18:10), while, Jesus tells him to put the sword away, for it “represents the way of the world” while the cup is “the way of the Family of God, for the Father has given his Son for the salvation of the world to drink the cup.”³⁵⁴ The cup, the ultimate hospitality of God through Jesus’ giving his life on the cross, reflects the way of Jesus’ kingdom and therefore the way of the new community. Jesus himself has decisively accepted this cup and is ready to give himself for the world. He also continues to create the new community, which (embraced by Divine Community) is to live according to values very different from those of this world, reflecting God’s hospitality in the face of worldly violence and hostility.

A hospitable relationship of mutual giving and receiving, however, presupposes an already existing communion of persons, because being utterly isolated from others one

³⁵³ Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John*, 654.

³⁵⁴ Gruenler, 131.

can neither give nor receive anything.³⁵⁵ John asserts that truth when he says that the oneness of the triune community must be replicated within the new community of faith (17:11, 21-23). There is no claim to independent individuality, but an assertion of essential identification in loving Triune community and it is on this pattern Jesus prays that the new community of believers may be one.³⁵⁶ As Boff notes, this “united society that exists in the Trinity is the foundation of human unity, the latter is inserted in the former” (*Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are*, 17:11).³⁵⁷

Our understanding of the new community as imaging the triune community is also deepened when we consider “*the glory*” which Jesus has given to the new community (17:22). If the glory “commonly refers to the manifestation of God’s character or person in a revelatory context”,³⁵⁸ then the oneness of the new community is also a manifestation of the hospitable character of the triune community. In other words Jesus’ giving them the divine glory “is the establishment between Himself and them of a relationship corresponding to that existing between Himself and the Father.”³⁵⁹ This means that God’s people reflect the image of God in being “for one another as God the Father is for us through Christ in the power of the Spirit” (17:22-23).³⁶⁰

Although the oneness of the new community is restricted to those who are made

³⁵⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 212.

³⁵⁶ Gruenler, 122.

³⁵⁷ Boff in LaCugna, 276.

³⁵⁸ Carson, 569.

³⁵⁹ Cadman, 138.

³⁶⁰ Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 79.

part of the community by the gracious initiative of the triune God, this is the only identifying criterion. Jesus' words in 10:16 are important: "*I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also...and they will become one flock with one shepherd.*" This reminds us of how diverse this new community is: it includes Jews (8:31; cf. 3:1) and Gentiles (10:16), Samaritans (4:42) and Galileans (4:45), men (3:1) and women (4:7), those ignorant of the law (7:49) and the 'rulers' (12:42), the sick (9:1-2), the excluded (5:5-7) and the prominent (19:38) alike, all those who have accepted the generous invitation of the Divine Community to come home. It is in such context (irreconcilable by the cultural and religious norms of that day) that Jesus prays for their diversity to "be expressed in the unity that exists in the unity and diversity of the Holy Trinity."³⁶¹ The oneness of the Divine Community is to be imaged in the community of one flock under one shepherd.

Such unity cannot be reached by human effort, by an outward gathering of all Christians "under one banner" of an organization,³⁶² nor by adherence to any official formula because there is only one criterion: the love that binds together the Divine and the believing communities alike. Many reciprocity statements that are characteristic of John's Gospel and express oneness between Father and Son appear also in the context of the new community describing the relation among believers³⁶³ and their mission in the world, showing once again that oneness of the Christian community has its roots in the intratrinitarian oneness. The new community is one when "the symmetrical reciprocity of the relations of the trinitarian persons finds its correspondence in the image of the

³⁶¹ Kent Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005), 74.

³⁶² Morris, *Reflections On the Gospel of John 4*, 593.

³⁶³ Appold, 47.

church in which *all* members serve one another with their specific gifts of the Spirit in imitation of the Lord and through the power of the Father.”³⁶⁴

The first instance of such service of the members of the new community we already find at the foot of the cross when Jesus *said to His mother*, “*Woman, behold your son*” and then to the beloved disciple, “*Behold, your mother*” after which *the disciple took her into his own household* (19:26-27). In the grand scheme of Jesus’ ultimate hospitality on the cross he continues to demonstrate the pattern for believers in their relationships with members of the new family. John tells us that Jesus’ own brothers did not believe in him (7:5) and although it would be their responsibility to care for their mother after Jesus’ death, he chooses to entrust her to the care of one of “God’s children” (1:12). So, it is to the beloved disciple that Jesus refers Mary as his adopted mother and he out of obedience to his Lord’s request places himself at the disposal of Mary, imaging Jesus’ own hospitality.

It is also very significant that what has been said so far about the nature of the new community is not only limited to those who were present at the time of the discourse, but includes everyone who will come after, having believed through their word (17:20-21³⁶⁵). The prayer in John 17 implies then, that the new community at any age or place will maintain its unity by abiding in the triune community and remaining in the mutual relationship of hospitality. Having received, believers are to give to one another

³⁶⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 219.

³⁶⁵ “*I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*” John 17 seems to also give us a warrant for seeing Christian unity and fellowship in the triune community as something that extends across time both backwards and forwards, bringing to mind the *great cloud of witnesses surrounding us* (Heb. 12:1) as we continue to live out our calling as a new community of hospitality.

and to those who are yet to come into fellowship through their belief in Jesus.³⁶⁶

THE MISSION OF THE NEW COMMUNITY

What is quite significant in John's presentation of the new community is the difficulty of drawing a clear line between the nature and the mission of the community. In fact the discourse on unity among believers makes it clear that the unity itself is the beginning of its mission in the world (*that they may all be one...so that the world may believe that You sent Me, 17:21; and loved them, even as You have loved Me, 17:23*). When Tertullian says that the church is the body of the three divine Persons, he suggests that through the life of the new community of God, its mutual love and oneness "something is made known of the mystery of the Father, of the intelligence of the Son, and of the love of the Holy Spirit."³⁶⁷ Just as the ministry of Jesus in the world was aimed at communicating God's love and welcoming the world to come home, the unity of the new community testifies both to the intratrinitarian love and to God's love to the world. Thus, through its unity the believing community will offer to the world the same type of invitation Jesus offered: an invitation to recognize divine love seen clearly in the sacrificial giving of the Son as the paschal lamb who takes away the sin of the world³⁶⁸ and hospitality as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus.³⁶⁹ It is clear that the new community is not created solely for its own enjoyment of the love of God but is to

³⁶⁶ Gruenler, 127.

³⁶⁷ Boff, 44.

³⁶⁸ *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ...that the world might be saved through Him (3:16-17).*

³⁶⁹ *...so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me (14:31).*

become an image of the divine community and an extension of Jesus' mission, which is "the outworking of the love of God."³⁷⁰

It is out of love for the world and the desire to bring the world home that God sent his Son (3:16) and it is in the new community that this "truth of the gospel of God is embodied and maintained."³⁷¹ So, on the one hand, the mission of the new community is implicit in its reciprocal hospitality, love and unity born out of its intimate relationship with Divine Community. In those relationships the church "finds its origin, meaning, strength and ultimate purpose"; apart from them it "has neither life nor message, neither purpose nor mission, and is powerless for service."³⁷² On the other hand, the mission of the new community is given explicitly in the same terms Jesus expressed his own mission on behalf of the Divine Community, "*Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you*" (20:21; see also 17:18). This missionary directive is given by the risen Lord to the new community of disciples that itself embraces and is authenticated by the Divine Community (note the "...*I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*", 20:17, NRSV) who are then sent *as* Jesus was sent by the Father.

Understanding how and why the Son was sent into the world, then, should shed light on how and why the new community is sent into the world as well. Jesus was sent to do the will and the works of the Father (4:34; 5:30, 38), to reveal the one who sent him (5:36; cf. 7:29), to draw all people to the Father (6:44), to offer himself in hospitality as the Bread that gives life (6:57), to communicate the Father in what they hear from (8:26)

³⁷⁰ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 4*, 597.

³⁷¹ Stephen Pickard, "The Trinitarian Dynamics of Belief" in *Essentials of Christian Community*, eds. David F. Ford and Dennis L. Stamps (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 72.

³⁷² Vanderlip, 79.

and see in (12:45) him. All that serves only one purpose: that those who receive him and believe in him may have life in his name (20:31). Jesus, appearing to his disciples, greets them with the words of peace and shows them the evidence of his ultimate self-giving on their behalf, demonstrating that it is he who has done and given so much for their own homecoming (*I also send you*). Then he is sending them in the name of the Triune community to go and minister forgiveness of sins just as the Son was sent by the Father to forgive sins (20:19-23). Having been welcomed into the community of divine love, they are now also drawn into the unity and mission of Father, Son and Spirit (*as the Father has sent Me, I also send you, 20:21; Receive the Holy Spirit, 20:22*). It is notable that John (in contrast with Matthew) focuses not so much on Peter and the authority given to him, as on the whole new community and “the pronouncement of the forgiveness (in case of repentance) or the retention of sins (in the case of a person’s refusal to believe).”³⁷³ Up until now, the entrance into the new community was based on the reception or rejection of Jesus as the representative of the Divine Community. Now, being ready to return to the Father Jesus sends his disciples as a community to carry the collective witness about God and to hold “the key to membership in the messianic community”³⁷⁴ still on the basis of people’s reception or rejection of their testimony (e.g. 9:41). This mission will be carried out in the presence and with the help of the Holy Spirit³⁷⁵ who will also testify (15:26-27) and whose testimony will also be accepted by some and rejected by others (14:17; 16:8).

³⁷³ Köstenberger, *John*, 575.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 576.

³⁷⁵ The giving of the Spirit is also not spoken of in terms of individual gifts, but rather in terms of a gift of the divine community made to the new community of believers.

We see that departing from this world Jesus still desires that the Divine Community of love and the invitation to life would continue to be offered to the world. Jesus is sent by God out of divine love (3:16) and serves God through faithfulness to that love (15:9); in the same way “the mission of the community is likewise an expression of the divine love and is an agency of love.”³⁷⁶ This inseparability of the mission of the new community from God’s love seems to resolve the tension between Jesus’ seemingly exclusive command “to love one another” and the love of God for the world that rejects Him. The world, which responded to God’s hospitality with rejection of Jesus is not yet permanently excluded from the love and union of the new community,³⁷⁷ “it is still the object of God’s redemptive love (3:16), and it is to be given a further opportunity of coming to faith through those who are the direct concern of Jesus’ prayer (17:21, 23).”³⁷⁸ Continuing the mission of the Divine Community in the world, however, will evoke the same hostility towards the new community as was exhibited towards Jesus himself (15:18-16:15). And it is over against this hostility that the new community is encouraged to remain in close union with the Divine Community (15:1-17) retaining his love as the binding force against the world’s hatred. So, the emphasis on the love towards one another within the new community does not mean that believers are freed from the responsibility to love the world. Rather, the expression of this love would be different:

³⁷⁶ Robert Kysar, *Called to Care: Biblical Images for Social Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 65.

³⁷⁷ What is asserted here is not that ‘every one will eventually be drawn into the new community’ but that the opportunity to accept divine hospitality in the person of Jesus did not end with His crucifixion but is still offered through the new community of hospitality even today. This statement does not contradict the fact that there will be a time when such opportunity will no longer be available.

³⁷⁸ Cadman, 297-8.

the love within the new community is to be highly reciprocal (reflecting that of the Divine Community) while the love for the world is “focused on bringing the unbeliever into the community of God”,³⁷⁹ getting involved with it in order to invite the people to join God’s family (see 4:42; 13:35; 17:21, 23).

There is a degree of urgency with which Jesus invites the new community to join the divine work in the world saying, “*look on the fields, that they are white for harvest...he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal*” (4:36) and “*We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work*” (9:4). Although the plural “we” seems to primarily imply the Divine Community working together (14:10), it is also possible that Jesus includes in it an invitation to disciples (14:12) to “share in continuing Jesus’ mission from the Father.”³⁸⁰ This plural “we”, then, underlines the mission in the world as “a social ministry in two respects: the divine Community is at work, and Jesus’ followers are working with him as the nucleus of a new community.”³⁸¹ The “must” of 9:4 also emphasizes that “this is not simply what is advisable or expedient” but something of a “compelling necessity”³⁸² and “*the works of Him who sent Me*” reminds us that mission in the world is something that originates with God. Once again we see that Jesus places the disciple’ mission in direct continuity with his own, so that “God’s own triune mission to the world provides the source, pattern, and impetus for the church’s mission to the

³⁷⁹ Van der Watt, 315.

³⁸⁰ Keener, *John I*, 779.

³⁸¹ Gruenler, 67.

³⁸² Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 479.

world.”³⁸³

The extension of divine ministry through the new community is also seen in 14:12 (*the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father, NRSV*). These words are given in the context of the promise of the Spirit who will continue to do what Jesus had done and whose work will be carried out through the new community of believers in proclaiming and demonstrating the divine invitation to come home to the Father. *Greater works* refer neither to a greater success or miracles of the disciples than those of Jesus, nor to supplementing or surpassing his work in any quantitative way.³⁸⁴ Rather, the idea is that of *preserving* and *fulfilling* in the new community of the work that begins in the past, is manifested in the ministry of Jesus and is continued in the ministry of the Spirit. It is possible that Jesus might be pointing to the world-wide mission of the people of God and hence to a greater geographical spread of Jesus’ ministry through disciples³⁸⁵ but whether it is true or not, these “greater works” will convey to people the spiritual realities of Jesus’ own works³⁸⁶ that reflect God’s hospitality. This statement must be seen in light of Jesus’ reminder that the new community can do nothing (15:5) apart from him but with him will not only participate in divine ministry of hospitality but will bringing it to fruition.

Bearing fruit is another image used to describe the mission of the new community

³⁸³ Butin, 114.

³⁸⁴ Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John*, 610-611.

³⁸⁵ Some scholars accept (Keener notes Bernard, Luther) and some dismiss such a possibility (Bultmann, Beasley-Murray).

³⁸⁶ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 254.

(*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples*, 15:8; also 15:2,4-5, 16). Although Jesus does not define fruit-bearing in this discourse, the context can give us some indication of what Jesus might be speaking about. In the immediate context, 15:5 (*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing*, NRSV) is a summary of John's repeated thought that "new birth, new life, and religion genuinely pleasing to God all must come from above."³⁸⁷ Fruit-bearing then generally refers to "every demonstration of vitality of faith, to which, according to vv 9-17, reciprocal love above all belongs."³⁸⁸ However, we must also understand this fruit-bearing in continuity with Jesus' own ministry of self-giving and hospitality (*unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit*, 12:24). "*I ...appointed you that you would go and bear fruit*" of 15:16 also points to the sending of the disciples on a mission. In this light the "fruit" cannot only be limited to an attitude within the community but has to mean also an attitude towards the world (as 15:18-16:4a clearly indicate), carrying the "effective mission in bringing to Christ men and women in repentance and faith."³⁸⁹ So, we must say that bearing fruit in the context of the whole Gospel refers to the mission of the new community, which is expressed both in their reciprocal love to one another (15:9-17)³⁹⁰ as well as in their self-giving ministry of

³⁸⁷ Keener, *John 2*, 998.

³⁸⁸ Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John*, 532-533. Keener contends also that the immediate context of 15:1-5 suggests that fruit-bearing is 'moral fruit' (Keener, *John 2*, 997).

³⁸⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 273 (Beasley-Murray refers to Hoskyns who understands by the fruit "those who have believed in Jesus through the apostolic preaching").

³⁹⁰ Both this love for one another (*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*, 13:35, NRSV) and bearing fruit that glorifies the Father (15:8, *My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples*) reveals to the world that the new community intimately relates to and belongs to God.

welcoming others home to the Father as a continuation of the ministry of Jesus (4:36; 12:24).

The note of Jesus' ultimate hospitality is also emphasized as the mark of the new community in the account of foot washing in John 13. Jesus' actions, on the one hand, reflect hospitality customs of the day as well as serving as a pointer to the "eschatological hospitality" of God. On the other hand, having upset typical hospitality expectations his actions radically supersede the values of the ordinary society³⁹¹ (13:13-14) and reveal a completely new nature of the believing community imaging divine hospitality. Through this radical action Jesus exemplifies both "the characteristic motif of the divine Community and [that] of the beloved community he is bringing into being."³⁹² It is important to note that the footwashing goes well beyond ritual, or even beyond believer's imitating Jesus (e.g. by seeking to perform the most menial tasks for others). The power of the command of Jesus in 13:14-15³⁹³ "lies in the symbol of how we also, to the degree that we have been transformed by the self-emptying love of the triune God, as manifested by Christ and recognized by the outpouring of the Spirit, must live for others in a similar *kenotic* love."³⁹⁴

The question of Jesus in 13:12 of whether the disciples understand what he has done for them is also a call to see that humble servanthood, hospitality beyond conventional norms and total self-giving are the essential characteristic of divine love

³⁹¹ Malina, *Social-Science Commentary*, 221.

³⁹² Gruenler, 90.

³⁹³ ...you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

³⁹⁴ Maloney, 77.

(13:13),³⁹⁵ which has very important social implications for the new community. Hospitality of the Son to the new community must be transformed into their hospitality for one another (*If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet, 13:14-15*). In the light of the assertion of 13:16 (*a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him*), God the Divine Community who is “dynamically social both inwardly and outwardly in unselfish hospitality” is also the secret to true discipleship and true community in which each member is a servant who is sent to share.³⁹⁶

The progression of divine love stems from the generous and loving hospitality of Father to Son, Son to believer, believer to believer and through their ministry to the world. Quite significantly this chain of hospitality and love is expressed in Jesus' prayer in terms of 'sanctification' (*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth, 17:16b-19*). The new community can be sanctified because Jesus sanctified himself for their sakes (17:19; cf. 6:51; 10:11,15; 15:13). The Holy One of God (6:69) “proves His holiness by sacrificing himself for his own” and “his holiness like his sonship and his [glory]...is nothing other than the fulfillment of His being for the world, his being for his own.”³⁹⁷ Sanctification for the new community, then, is not an end in itself, not something connected with their

³⁹⁵ In 13:13 Jesus says, “*You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am*” Jesus asserts his right to be the center of their respect and authority, His standing in the very place of God himself. And since he is such, his humbling of himself and placing himself at their disposal is a vivid testimony to the hospitable nature of the triune God.

³⁹⁶ Gruenler, 92.

³⁹⁷ Bultmann, *The Gospel According to John*, 510-1.

goodness, nor something “inwardly focused, cultivating merely intracommunitarian love and unity”³⁹⁸ (while being physically removed from the world). Rather, it is closely connected with sending into the world (17:18) and has to be understood in terms of mission.³⁹⁹ Holiness for John, then, is not a physical separation from the world (17:15) but a separation from the world’s values⁴⁰⁰ while remaining in the world and resembling the Divine Community of love, which does not shun, but hospitably reaches out to, the lost and needy world.

Finally, this is underlined in the very last minutes Jesus spends with his disciples and his conversation with Peter. On the shore, Jesus the host once again demonstrates to Peter that divine hospitality does not easily let go of people. Peter’s restoration is the clear evidence of divine love that includes rather than excludes, but it is significantly more than that. What Peter is called to do in response to being assured of his inclusion into God’s family is to participate in the extension of the mission of Jesus, which is spoken here in terms of “shepherding.” In light of sending the new community as he himself was sent, Jesus points to the nature of their ministry which will be the image of his own: caring for those whom he will continue to draw into fellowship with him.⁴⁰¹ What we find in this concluding instruction of Jesus is a confirmation of what he has already said about the mission of the new community. After his departure his disciples as

³⁹⁸ Köstenberger, *John*, 496.

³⁹⁹ Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 4*, 589.

⁴⁰⁰ Keener, *John 2*, 1060-1.

⁴⁰¹ It is notable that the sheep that his followers are to feed are *His* sheep, not *their* sheep (*Shepherd My sheep*, cf. 21:15,16,17).

an extension of his own mission and out of their reciprocal love for him (21:15-17) will “act as a shepherd to the flock”⁴⁰² doing all that a shepherd should do.⁴⁰³

This ministry for the flock is to image the ministry of Jesus to the full, for as the Good Shepherd’s care for the flock was characterized by ultimate self-giving (10:11), so the hospitable ministry of the new community would have always to be carried out “in the shadow of the cross.”⁴⁰⁴ Divine hospitality requires that the new community be ready to obey the final word of invitation from the Son, “*Follow Me*” (21:19,22) as he leads homeward⁴⁰⁵ into eternal life in fellowship with the Triune Community (14:1-3, 23). For Peter Jesus’ invitation to follow him, in the light of 21:18-19 can only have one meaning: asserting one’s love for God and being hospitably included in the circle of divine love he is also included in God’s hospitable mission of bringing others home and this mission requires an attitude of ultimate self-giving. Such is the ministry of the Divine Community in the world; such will be the ministry of the newly created community as well.

⁴⁰² Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John 4*, 740.

⁴⁰³ Köstenberger notes that the different words used to define the action towards the flock – “feed” and “shepherd” hardly intended to underline any nuances of the care, but rather “jointly span the fullness of the task given” here to the new community as represented by Peter (Köstenberger, *John*, 597).

⁴⁰⁴ Köstenberger, *John*, 599.

⁴⁰⁵ Gruenler calls the Fourth Gospel “the Gospel of homecoming” (20:31) (Gruenler, 140).

CONCLUSIONS

John tells the story of God using hospitality language and creates a picture of God who desires to welcome people to dwell with him forever. Having looked closely at John's Gospel we can say that while the word "hospitality" is not found there, this otherwise biblical term is "a useful piece of shorthand"⁴⁰⁶ for a Johannine concept that is so important for the church. John describes God as receiving, drawing, providing food and drink (not only physical but also spiritual) and generously giving (not only things but even himself). John describes relationship as dwelling together (abiding), as mutual conversation and listening, love and intimate knowledge. For him God by nature is social, is the triune community of hospitality that exists in a reciprocal relationship of love, service and conversation, ministering to and acting on behalf of other Persons. The Triune Community is also one in their purpose to welcome humanity into their fellowship through the Word that became flesh and dwelt among them, revealing God's ultimate hospitality for humanity and desire to be in communion with it.

This Johannine view of God helps us to overcome our "frustration over the perceived irrelevance of the doctrine of the Trinity for practical Christian living"⁴⁰⁷ for having been drawn into the hospitable communion of God we also have been made a new community whose purpose is "to transform life where we are, so that the world may become a home and other strangers may also come to be at-home."⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Mission of Jesus and 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 Publishing Company, 1998), 22.

⁴⁰⁷ Erickson, 306.

⁴⁰⁸ Brueggemann, 299.

John's concept of the church challenges us to ask ourselves some honest questions about ourselves as a church. Where do we go, having discovered in a new way the emphasis John places on the notion of hospitality? What changes, once we have been exposed anew to the social nature of God the Trinity, utterly hospitable within and turned toward the world with an intention of bringing it into communion with himself, are required of us, the people of God? How do we continue to be the church, which would be the image of the hospitable trinitarian community in the world? Butin states that looking at the church today, we often see what is "not even a pale reflection of the relational, triune God's intention," something "little more than buildings where organizational meetings are held and public speeches with a religious twist are made."⁴⁰⁹ How true is such an assessment in relation to our church, which believes itself to be called to embody God's holiness, to be God's holy people? If this assessment is even partially true, does this reading of John focusing upon hospitality offer any way forward? Can it help us reflect the unity of the Trinity for which Jesus prays to the Father? How can the church, present in multiple cultures with understandings of hospitality as numerous as cultures themselves, grasp the meaning of and, more importantly, be the new community of hospitality? John challenges us to reflect on these questions and to seek answers for what our churches are like and what they are to be. But where do we begin?

As was said in Chapter 1, first, we must broaden our understanding of hospitality beyond any cultural notions of it and to find its deepest meaning in the nature of the triune community. If we are the people of God, our understanding of community needs to take its shape from the triune God, not from any of the debased models of community

⁴⁰⁹ Butin, 93

that we can find in our cultural contexts. We are then to see hospitality not as a set of things to do in receiving another but as a “way of living our lives and of sharing ourselves.”⁴¹⁰ John helps us to see beyond the narrow notion of hospitality as simply providing for the physical needs of friends or even strangers that might come our way. In the context of our ministry we are to see that hospitality is not *only* about distributing food, sharing money or shelter (although it is an important part of it), but about recognizing the stranger as a “person worth loving and caring for”; it is about “inviting people into our lives” and going beyond physical needs to such notions as love and friendship, dignity and respect.⁴¹¹

We are called to recognize that relationality is at the center of God’s and our being. Although those concerned with social action and justice also aim at bringing people to restored relationships, dignity and respect, hospitality calls for a more personal character of solidarity and liberation and a more personally substantive involvement than just service or political action. Hospitality as sharing a life of reciprocity “brings to the other what no law or revolution can do: understanding and acceptance.”⁴¹² But even that is not the end in itself for truly divine hospitality aims not only to embrace people and bring them into the believing family but to bring them into communion with the triune God. The encounter of people with the triune hospitality of God has transformative power which changes their lives as John demonstrated in many of his stories (e.g. 4:7ff,

⁴¹⁰ Christine Dorothy Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 172.

⁴¹¹ Gregory Jones, “Eucharistic hospitality: welcoming the stranger into the household of God.” *The Reformed Journal* 39 (March, 1989): 16.

⁴¹² Pohl, *Making Room*, 84

8:2ff). However it will play out in each one of our contexts, we are to maintain a balance of a hospitable response to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people, for “Gospel hospitality will not allow people to starve physically or spiritually.”⁴¹³

Another great challenge for the church is its desire to preserve its identity and the attendant fear of anything different. Hospitality involves creating a relationship of friendship, which “challenges the notion of an *enclosed identity* in which the aim is to protect my/our identity by insulating me or us from what is different and other.”⁴¹⁴ Being hospitable means bringing the diverse into unity without erasing their diversity, unity that is expressed, not “in bureaucratic leveling,”⁴¹⁵ but in a blending of the variety of members of the new community with one another in mutual giving and service. Just as the unity in the Trinity is based on community of diverse persons who exist in complete self-giving to the other persons, the Christian community of hospitality is to be open and ready to receive others in their otherness and to include them in the relationship of mutual giving. This is not easy but “hospitality is the insistence that life must be kept open to those unlike us, not only for their sake but for ours as well”⁴¹⁶ if we truly are the new community of God. This is a challenge for a modern church, which is often much like the world around it in its individualistic tendencies, its desire to live an unbothered, private life. John’s hospitality challenge is double-sided: it is “the mandate *to care*” as

⁴¹³ Mary W. Anderson, “Hospitality Theology.” *Christian Century* 115.19 (July 1998): 643.

⁴¹⁴ Vosloo, 69

⁴¹⁵ Boff, 43

⁴¹⁶ Brueggemann, 170.

well as a call to recognize our “foundational need *to receive* what someone else gives unconditionally.”⁴¹⁷

Being part of the holiness tradition we know the danger of turning the life of seeking God’s holiness into the life of protecting one’s established, comfortable identity. It is easy to turn holiness into an individual’s attainment of some moral standards, while John’s Gospel is all about the fact that holiness of the new community is precisely in their living in a community of hospitality, which “reflects the trinitarian holiness of divine self-emptying love for them.”⁴¹⁸ We are then to look for creative ways to live out our lives as a community of hospitality, so that our ethic can both celebrate and embrace others without forfeiting our identity.⁴¹⁹ Wesley’s assertion that he knows no holiness but social holiness is exactly what we find in John’s Gospel for “God as Trinity means that whatever is Sacred is relational, never self-absorbed; always moving beyond itself to meet the new, the other.”⁴²⁰ To be holiness people is not just to create a community, which glorifies God and celebrates his holy laws in its words and actions. It is a community that also glorifies God in its dispositions and in the structure of action to be “that [which] corresponds to God’s decision to be with us and for us in Christ” because “we are to be for one another as God the Father is for us through Christ in the power of the Spirit.”⁴²¹

⁴¹⁷ Brueggemann, 170.

⁴¹⁸ Maloney, 147.

⁴¹⁹ Vosloo, 78.

⁴²⁰ Heyward, 21.

⁴²¹ Tanner, 79.

Hospitality must be seen not as one of the commands given to the children of God in the Bible but as an invitation to participate in what is already in place in the Divine Community. Christine Pohl rightly notes that “a life of hospitality begins in worship, with a recognition of God’s grace and generosity” and that “hospitality is not first a duty and responsibility” but primarily “a response of love and gratitude for God’s love and welcome to us.”⁴²² The starting point for the church is not to attempt to ‘imitate’ the community of the triune life, but to ‘participate’ in the life of the triune God, which will then become the source of our holy life. It is “through the sacrificial giving in Christ, a gift of hospitality *par excellence*”, that people “are invited and enabled to participate in the Triune feast of love” and enabled “to embody what can be called perichoretic hospitality.”⁴²³ It is because we have been adopted into the circle of the Divine Family that we are invited to be servants of others in continuing acts of hospitality, “in a “going out” of ourselves and moving always in loving presence toward others.”⁴²⁴

It is often heard today that offering hospitality in the modern world is a dangerous business. It is said to have been much easier for our grandparents or even great-grandparents because the world was different then and it was set for such practice. There is some truth to this perspective. The extension of the world, great distances and the size of communities (cities for example) can present us with challenges that might not have been there at the time of our ancestors, not to mention at the time of John’s writing, and make hospitality a difficult task, the completion of which requires grace and wisdom. We need to begin with transforming our church’s mentality, challenging our people to

⁴²² Pohl, *Making Room*, 172.

⁴²³ Vosloo, 89.

⁴²⁴ Maloney, 64.

realize that they are a community that has been welcomed into the family of God and is to be a caring community of hospitality which celebrates life and allows space for sharing disappointments as well as joys. It is difficult because most of us today are very busy and overwhelmed by great need and pain around us, so we need to rethink and reshape our priorities, to allow space for uncertainty, contingency and human tragedy and also to move from “our abstract commitments to loving the neighbor, stranger, and enemy” to “practical and personal expressions of respect and care for actual neighbors, strangers, and enemies.”⁴²⁵ Our vague fears of strangers (often based on generalizations or negative experience) will not be overcome by our theoretical fuzzy claims of welcoming the other, but can be overcome by intentional and “hard work of actually welcoming a human being into a real place.”⁴²⁶

I cannot list practical suggestions of how each Christian community is to be the new community of hospitality because this gospel concept will find variety of expressions in different places, cultures and eras. John does not make a list of hospitable actions we are to copy but invites us to discover that God is the triune community, “an open, inviting fellowship” who “wants the church to be the same, responsive in the same sort of way” and who wants “to hear from us an echo of dynamic relations within his own life, anticipating the coming of the kingdom.”⁴²⁷ In a hostile, fearful of anything different,

⁴²⁵ Pohl, *Making Room*, 75.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Pinnock, 117.

xenophobic and defensive world, how effective would be God's new community of hospitality if it truly became "an oasis in the inhospitable desert" of society?⁴²⁸

⁴²⁸ Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 130.

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