The concept of community in the Johannine gospel

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)

in the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria

April 2023

Declaration
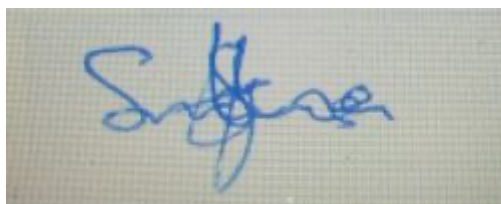
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Dedication

Dedication This dissertation is dedicated to two beautiful souls **Prof. Dr. Nicoletta Gatti,** who has been my mother and academic adviser throughout the journey of my theological studies, and my supportive wife whose relentless support has brought me thus far, **Mrs Priscilla A. A. Gharbin**.

Acknowledgements

The arduous task of an academic inquiry requires divine enablement and human assistance. Therefore, I am very grateful to the Almighty God – the Alpha and Omega – for giving me the strength from the commencement to the completion of this work. I am also eternally grateful to God for the supervisor He gave me – Prof. Dr Ernest van Eck. I do not know what I could have done without a dedicated scholar who executes his assignment with fatherly concern. Thank you for your rapid responses to my work and inquiries, inestimable comments, corrections, and contributions. Thank you for deciding to follow my work! I am also very thankful to my co-supervisor, Dr Han Janse van Rensburg, for her valuable comments and contributions to my work: supplying relevant information on the first-century Mediterranean culture. Prof. Dr Nicoletta Gatti deserves special mention for her support (academic and financial) throughout my journey. I should also thank the fathers who have supported me throughout my theological studies – Prof. Dr George Ossom-Batsa, Dr Kwasi Addo Sampong, Prof. Dr Simon K. Degbe, and the late Dr Joseph Quayesi-Amakye. I am also indebted to Dr Seth Kissi for clarifying my conundrums on the 'UP system.' Finally, I thank my beautiful wife for all her sacrifices because of my academic pursuit. May God bless you for being very supportive.

List of abbreviations

Cf   Confer

Dt   Deuteronomy

Ex   Exodus

Gn   Genesis

Ps   Psalms

Is   Isaiah

Jn   John

Lk   Luke

Lv   Leviticus

Mk   Mark

Mt   Matthew

Neh   Nehemiah

Nm   Numbers

n.d   no date

Sir   Sirach

Summary

Scholars characterise the Akan community concept preponderantly as communalistic. Consequently, they discuss Akan maxims that demonstrate their strong emphasis on collectivism. However, some proverbs reveal a tension between communalism and individualism and expose the struggle to incarnate their cultural values. John presents a similar situation where the Bethesda community, for instance, failed to incarnate their cultural values. Thus, this study explored the community concept in John for the proposed remedy and the implications for Akan believers.

This study employed Loba-Mkole's intercultural reading for the dialogue between the two cultures. Therefore, it applied Ossom-Batsa's communicative approach (a three-step frame of interpretation) as the theoretical framework. Thus, the study adopted narrative criticism by Daniel Marguerat and Bourquin to examine the community concept in John in Chapters 2 and 3 to discover the call of action (step 1). Further, it analysed Akan maxims as the substratum of the Akan community ideations (step 2). It then engaged both concepts using intercultural reading (step 3).

From the intercultural exegesis, the study establishes that the remedy for sociocultural maladies is a believing community that fulfils its mission of replicating the community of God. It entails abiding in the Vine and bearing fruits: mission as *going* and *living*.

The study recommends further research on the Akan culture, focusing on the materialistic elements. It also proposes that Akan Christians consider the concept of the church as a 'community of God' in John. Finally, it advocates that love should be the undergirding principle of communalism, not mutual benefits.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The ascendency of African Biblical Hermeneutics over foreign concepts of Bible interpretation in Africa became visible in the 1960s (Bediako 1999:1; Ossom-Batsa 2007:91-92; Maxey 2009:50). In his panoramic view of the various approaches in African Biblical Hermeneutics, Ossom-Batsa (2007:91-92) affirms that Biblical Hermeneutics followed the Western cultural point of view until this period, where some African theologians launched models of interpretation, with the inculturation of the Bible as the motive.[1] The political milieu around this time made such endeavours conducive due to the wind of colonial liberation that was blowing across the African continent, with its concomitant disconnection from imperialism. The fact that the theological schools used the Western paradigms of interpretation before this new era was enough for some African scholars to question the legitimacy and perpetuation of such methods after independence. Some found the discipline suspicious because of its origin: the colonial powers (Gatti 2017:46-47). It is pertinent to note that it was not a rejection of hermeneutics but a call to integrate Western methods with a hermeneutical approach that considers the African context (inculturation).

Further, the focus of introducing inculturation was not just to contribute to knowledge in the discipline of hermeneutics, but most importantly, to solve an identity problem. The question of the African Christian identity was one of the concerns of African theologians that necessitated the idea of contextualising or enculturating the message of the Bible in this setting (Maxey 2009:25-28). Bediako (1999:1), for instance, stresses that 'the question of identity is a key to understanding the concerns of Christian theology in modern Africa and the second century AD.' Christians in Africa encountered (what their counterparts in the second century faced) a struggle for identity with dominant cultures (Bediako 1995:256; see Maluleke 2001:29; Maxey 2009:54-55). And therefore, the urgency of discovering

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[1] For further reading, see Mbiti (1994:27-39), Bediako (1983:115-175), Dickson (1984:10-30), Ukpong (1994:40-61), Pobee (1992:1-30), and Oduyoye (1994:166-161). Shorter (2006:11) defines inculturation as 'the creative and dynamic relationship between faith and culture or cultures.'

their identity as African Christians became apparent. This discovery would only be possible with biblical scholarship that attaches significance to the interpreter's context, knowing that the African Christian's identity is inseparable from its context or culture.[2] As Adamo (2001:43) elucidates, culture is the milieu by which there may be an encounter between God and humankind. For this reason, a line of continuity and discontinuity with a Western scholarship was necessary to 'Africanize' their faith by replacing the Western cultural incidents with African cultural elements (Martey 2009:55) to aid the identity reformation process.

It necessitated the promotion of inculturation as a tool to afford Africans the opportunity to discover and maintain their identity as African Christians (Bediako 1995:256). Inculturation is the ongoing dialogue between faith and culture or cultures (Shorter 2006:11). More fully, it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture or cultures. Ukpong (1995:6) concurs that inculturation 'involves interactive engagement between the biblical text and a particular contemporary sociocultural issue where the gospel message serves as a critique of the culture or the cultural perspective enlarges and enriches the understanding of the text' (see also West 2018:249).[3] Consequently, one needs a text and a present context since the 'focus of [African] interpretation is on the theological meaning of the text within a contemporary context' (Ukpong 1995:6). Therefore, the African who reads the Bible will be interested in its significance to the African context.[4]

Reading the Gospel of John from an African perspective allows readers to consider dimensions not fully explored by western-oriented exegesis. One of these, for example, is the idea of community, a key concept in both contexts (see Aye-Addo 2013:173).[5] The indigenous African concept of humanism emphasises communalism

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[2] For some examples of how scholars have incarnated the New Testament, see eds. Getui, Maluleke and Ukpong (2001:120-144).

[3] Loba-Mkole (2008:1349-1350) postulates that Ukpong coined the term 'inculturation Biblical hermeneutics' as a designation for an interpretation derived from the methodology of inculturation. At the latter part of his career, Ukpong substituted the expression with 'inter-contextual hermeneutics.' The Nigerian scholar suggests that the change of name was contingent upon the fact that he considers the latter more apt than the former (see Ukpong 2012:190).

[4] See Ukpong (2000:11-28). In this work, the Nigerian scholar discusses how Africans read the Bible for its significance in their lives.

[5] For examples of discussions on the African concept of community, see Mbiti (1989) and Gyekye (1996). Different aspects of the communal life of the community of God in John have been discussed

above individualism, to the extent that the individual cannot exist alone, except corporately (Mbiti 1989:106; Gyekye 1995:155). Mbiti (1989:106) affirms that from the moment a person comes out of the womb until he or she enters the tomb, it is the community that defines his or her identity. Whether in life or death, the African belongs to the community. Thus, Africans perform rites for children after birth as a means of incorporating them into society. The dead are also 'ritually incorporated into the wider family of both the dead and the living' (Mbiti 1989:106). Indeed, the insistence on burying their dead on their soils in most African settings emanates from this idea of communal identity (Smith 2004:569). As Kaunda (1973:17) confirms, one's African-ness has its roots in the soil of the African continent.[6]

Mbiti (1989:106), like most African scholars, stresses that the cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man is their appreciation of collectivism; whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group or vice versa. So, one can only say: 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti 1989:72). This dictum expresses the 'logic' of the standard for the indigenous African's authentication and validation of reality, that is, communalism (Dogbe 1980:790). Thus, members are obliged to demonstrate their cultural (communal) values. They include sharing not only the joys of life's experiences but often their sorrows and perplexities. These are evident in caring for others, solidarity, reciprocal obligation, and social harmony (Mbiti 1989:72; Gyekye1995:154-158).

Similarly, the Akan society places a great deal on communal values. Growing up as an Akan child within an Akan community, I witnessed the demonstration of communality, domestically and communally, during occasions, such as burials, naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, and festivals (see Dogbe 1980:792-795). Indeed, in their philosophy, society is considered as natural to man, not just a necessary condition for his existence (Gyekye 1995:155, 1996:36). Some of these concepts are extrapolated from Akan aphorisms and proverbial lore. For instance, the maxim, *Onipa firi osoro besi a, obesi onipa kurom* (When a person descends from heaven, he or she descends into a human society), affirms the above point

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by various scholars. Van der Watt (2000) and Kunene (2012), for instance, discuss the family metaphor and communal holiness in John, respectively.

[6] Johnson (2020:82-106), for example, discusses funerals, post burial sacrifices, and rupturing place and identity in parts of Africa.

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(Appiah, Appiah & Agyeman-Duah 2007:201; Gyekye 1995:155, 1996:36). Gyekye (1995:155) maintains that embedded in the idea of descending from *soro* (Heaven) into *onipa kurom* (human society) is the belief that man is created by *Onyame* (The Supreme Being).

The criticality of the origin of man in Akan humanism is evident in its inextricable connection to the concept of society. If the human being is believed to originate from God, it follows that one is defined by one's heavenly origin, but not by the earthly parentage. Thus, the origin of the concept of community and need for communality, stem from the idea that since human beings are all children of God, the individual belongs to God and humanity, not his or her parents alone. This explains the Akan proverb, 'All human beings are children of God; no one is a child of the earth' (Gyekye 1995:19, 1996:23-24).

Further, these beliefs form the substratum of human relationships. The way people treat each other is based on this foundation. Gyekye (1996:24) notes:

> The insistent claim made in this maxim is based on the belief that there must be something intrinsically valuable in God: the human being, considered a child of God, presumably by reason of having been created by God and having in his or her nature some aspect of God, ought also to be held as of intrinsic value, worthy of dignity and respect.

With this understanding, the society recognizes the need to reflect its beliefs in communal living. These are embodied in Akan proverbs such as 'A human being needs help,' 'It is a human that is needed,' 'A man must depend for his well-being on his fellow man,' and many others. Explaining this concept, Gyekye's (1996) elucidation on one of the maxims (A human being needs help) is worthy of consideration. 'The real meaning of the maxim then' he asserts, 'is that a human being deserves, and therefore ought, to be helped' (Gyekye 1996:24). In summary, help for the human being in the Akan setting, is an entitlement.

Nevertheless, in addition to this entitlement, the individual has responsibilities. Communality necessitates contributions from the individual members of the group. Therefore, there cannot be the 'communal', devoid of the individual. Primarily, society is based more on obligation than on individual rights; people assume their rights in the exercise of their obligations, which makes society a chain of

interrelationships (Opoku 1978:11; Gyekye 1995:156-162). This warrants the expectation of individual contributions towards the realisation of the collective goal. The following are some of the proverbs outlined by Opoku (1997:17), Gyekye (1996:188-189) and Ackah (1988:53) to that effect: 'The left arm washes the right arm, and the right arm washes the left arm,' 'The tortoise says, the hand goes, and a hand comes,' and 'The reason two deer walk together is that one must take the moth from the other's eyes.'[7]

However, the general portrait of a 'working social/communal system' which is extrapolated from these proverbs have deficiencies which are often not emphasised.[8] To begin with, there is a difference between the theory and praxis of communalism in Akan thoughts and societies.[9] Indeed, Gyekye (2013:212) admits that even though society satisfactorily fulfils its duty of imparting various forms of moral knowledge to its members, not everyone translates them into actions. Furthermore, culture is dynamic; and therefore, with time, changes in the beliefs and practices of the people are possible and predictable. Thus, this position seems to point to an anachronistic representation of the Akan culture. Additionally, studies (Howard 1986:28; Gyekye 1996:50-51; Abraham 2010:14) indicate that urbanisation and the socio-economic related issues associated to it breed individualism,[10] making it impossible to apply these values to all Akan urban areas. Finally, because Akan (and African) scholars portray the Akan concept of community as generally communal, proverbs that suggest the strong presence of individualism are not given the same attention as the former.

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[7] However, the legitimate question which one needs to ask is: If the left arm does not wash the right arm, will the right arm wash the left arm? In response to this, taking personal responsibility of one's life is encouraged. Whilst personal responsibility is commendable, the approach seems to contradict the Akan sense of humanism and communalism: it makes the individual the focus of everything.

[8] Kissi (2017:21) interprets the Akan adage (No one points to his or her father's village with his or her left hand) as the consciousness of the Akans to speak well of their ethnic group. In this setting, the use of the left hand in public is a sign of impoliteness and disrespectfulness (Opoku 1997:20; cf. Kissi 2017:21). Thus, its place in the adage means speaking ill of this group would be tantamount to disrespecting the Akans. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why most Akan scholars do not stress on the negatives with the same level of intensity like the positives.

[9] Great voices like Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu are not oblivious to this; unfortunately, however, they give extraordinarily little attention to these proverbs in their analysis of the balance between communality and individuality.

[10] Gyekye (1996:50-51), in the conclusion of his discussion of communal and individual values, anticipates that urbanisation and cultural changes are most likely to cause the society to tilt more in favor of individualism

Paradoxically, present in this milieu are other proverbs which seem to affirm that some of the portraits of the concept of community presented on the Akan setting by the academic community rest on questionable assumptions. For instance, a proverb like 'Life is as you make it,' can breed both self-reliance and selfishness,[11] If the outcome of a person's life is solely dependent on him/herself, those who struggle to succeed would want others to follow that trajectory. Again, others would use every means possible to 'make it,' even if they must step on people to get there. Hence, the Akans say, 'If fish eats fish, then it grows fat,' that is, we climb by pushing down others (Appiah *et al.* 2007:104). These are signs of a precarious relationship between communalism and individualism in this model of society.

Recognising this conundrum, Akans who embrace Christianity, and thus consider communalism as a traditional, theological and missiological value, must find in their faith (i.e., in the Bible) a way of revitalising in their tradition the sense of communalism, challenged by urbanisation and globalisation. In the New Testament, the church is presented as a group with the calling to be the community of God (or God's people) in anticipation of the kingdom (Grenz 2000:22-24, see also Harrison & Dvorak 2012:1-225 for more discussions on the subject). And hence, members must live in unity, love, peace, and harmony, in the awareness that the church as a community, is the foretaste of the eschatological hope for the whole human community (Aye-Addo 2013:173).[12] Consequently, as members of the universal church, Akan Christians have the responsibility to pursue this mission.

Reading the early accounts of the life and mission of Jesus and his community, John appears to offer a unique contribution to the identity and mission of the community of the disciples. The author of John wrote to a community in crisis (Quast 1991:7; Brown 1979:97-106; Van der Watt 2007:20-21; Dunn 1985:41-42; Martyn 2003:18-19; Kruse 2003:36) and taught them to be one by imitating the oneness in the divine community (Jn 15:9-17; Jn 17:21). This teaching could be interpreted to mean either the absence of unison and communalism in the community or the expression of a

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[11] It is significant to note that Gyekye (1996:48) interprets these proverbs in support of the idea of creating awareness to be self-reliant without considering the problem of a potential breeding of individualism in a context which boasts of communalism. He admits, however, that the maxim (The clan is [merely] a multitude) means that within a clan there are no specific and reliable persons always to turn to for the fulfilment of one's needs (Gyekye 1996:48).

[12] The author stresses that in Christian understanding, the church as a whole community is the inheritor of the mission and ministry of the church.

form of collectivism which was not in conformity with God's ideal society. Therefore, the author sought to remedy these societal maladies by including such teachings from the Johannine Jesus. For this reason, John and its prescriptions for these communal problems can guide the Akan community of believers to re-read their tradition and reappropriate it through the lens of their newfound faith.

A critical exegetical analysis of John points to the centrality of the theme of community to the evangelist. John is not only a gospel written to a society, but also, about the concept of community. It is important to note that the author writes a narrative, a story that has a perlocutionary effect: to guide his readers to understand the concept of 'community' to build a 'missionary' community. This is evident from the introduction of the theme in the prologue, and its explication in the gospel.[13]

John opens the prologue portraying a 'divine community,' constituted by the Logos and God (Jn 1:1-2). The ontological equality, coexistence, communion, intimacy, communication, and cooperation exhibited in the creation (Jn 1:3-5) are essential components which warrant the term 'divine community.'

Again, implicit in the view of the divine society is the connotation that the concept of community goes back to eternity. John dates the relationship between God and the Logos to the beginning (Jn 1:1). Ἐν ἀρχῇ refers to a time before creation (Moloney 1993:35). It means that the author of the John is not referring to 'a definite localized point of time, but rather to the indefinite eternity' (Tenney 1997:64).

Moreover, the concept of the eternal community became incarnated in a specific society. In John, the divine community is the reason for the existence of a human community (cf. Grenz 2000:112; Kanagaraj 2013:2). The eternal relationship that exists between God and the Logos demonstrates the possibility and beauty of unity in 'diversity' (Jn 1:1). Replicating the coexistence of two of the eternal distinctions promotes unity in diversity in the human community. Therefore, Jesus, a member of the divine community descends into the world (Jn 1:11, Jn 1:14) to give us a model of a society.

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[13] The idea that the narrative only reflects the themes in the prologue is accepted by many Johannine scholars (see Köstenberger 2013:44, 1998:87; Beasley-Murray 1987:5; Moloney 1993:24; Robinson 1963:122; Morris 1995:63; and Carson 1991:111).

The incarnation was a medium through which God's concept of society became concrete in a human community. The process of incarnating the eternal community is not limited to the Logos becoming human but includes sharing his experience of the Father and the gift of the Spirit (cf. Jn 1:14; Jn 129-34; Jn 5:17-47; Jn 15:26). The concretisation process began with the calling of the disciples. Two disciples of John the Baptist who decided to become Jesus' disciples questioned Jesus about where He lives (Jn 1:38). Their question did not only necessitate an answer (Jn 1:38), but also, commenced the process of gathering members for this new community (cf. Talbert 2005:83). The joy of having found a new community, led Andrew to bring Simon Peter, his brother (Jn 1:42). Jesus also invited Philip to become part of the community (Jn 1:43). Philip found Nathaniel and asked him to come and see Jesus (Jn 1:45-46). And they became a new family that attended functions together (Jn 2:2; cf. Talbert 2005:83-90).

With this new community thriving, the author begins to explain issues relating to the society, using encounters of individuals. Apart from the disciples who encountered Jesus, there are two encounters with individuals that give the reader some ideas about this community: Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Going to see Jesus at night, Nicodemus reminds the reader of the conflict between τὸ φῶς (the light) and ἡ σκοτία (the darkness) anticipated in the prologue (Moloney 1993:108). It makes Nicodemus' journey a movement from darkness towards the light (Moloney 1993:108), thereby, indicating that the people of this society are those who have moved from darkness into the light. Their conversation also shows that membership of the community is not dependent on biological birth but a spiritual birth (born ἄνωθεν or from above):[14] birth through the Spirit determines the Christian identity (Jn 3:3; Burge 1987:171).

Additionally, the encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well further heightens the centrality of community in John. Jesus' words to the woman show that the new community defies race and racial boundaries (It belongs to neither Jews nor Samaritans) and includes anyone who 'drinks' the water supplied by the Son (Jn 4:9-14). In Christ, 'the well of salvation,' people who 'have no dealings with each other

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[14] As customary of John, this is a furtherance of the thought on those who embrace Christ in the prologue. They are born not of blood nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but God (Jn 1:12-13).

(John 4:9)' or are divided by ethnic and ideological differences (Köstenberger 2004:149), are united to worship the Father in truth and spirit (Jn 4:23-24).

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Given the centrality of the concept of community in both realities and the challenges Akans who embrace Christianity face with the precarious relationship between communalism and individualism in their context, how can the Akan Christian reader develop an interpretation that is respectful of the biblical text and meaningful to the culture? This study proposes an intercultural reading of the idea of community in the Johannine gospel through the narrative analyses of selected texts. Thus, the research examines how Akan Christians read and engage the theme of community in the Johannine gospel through an intercultural reading.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main questions of the study are:

1. How can Akan Christians read and engage the theme of community in the Johannine gospel through an intercultural reading?
2. How is the theme of community developed in John?
3.   What is the contribution of the Logos to the exegesis of the 'divine community'?

The following are the sub-questions:

1. How can the prologue become a hermeneutical key to explore the concept of community in John?
2. How can John guide Akan Christians to revitalise their tradition of communalism, challenged by urbanisation and globalisation?
3. What relationship exists between John's culture and that of the Akans?

1.4   OBJECTIVES

The focus is to explore the narrative development of the concept of community in John through narrative analyses of relevant narratives and examine its significance for the Akan community in an intercultural reading, using the communicative approach as the theoretical framework.

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1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

1.5.1 Introduction

Generally, there are two broad categories associated with how scholars employ the term community: territorial and relational. Whereas the former encompasses the context of location, physical territory, and geographical continuity, the latter points to the quality of relationships (Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi; Cohen 1985:12; Klink 2007:52). The study concentrates on the narrative development of the theme through the analyses of relevant narratives and reflects on its missionary relevance for the Akan Christian. Following the definition means that the quality of relationship in both realities is the focus. In this regard, the research discusses the literature that explores the community in John and the general interpretations of relevant narratives on the topic.

1.5.2 Johannine concept of community: Works and research gap

1.5.2.1 Introduction

Even though Wenham, Loader, and most Johannine scholars opine that John's gospel stresses community (Wenham 2006:8; Loader 2017:142; Koester 2003:247), the existing literature does not give attention to the narrative development of the theme. What exists are works that examine some aspects of the community in John: problems in the community and the stress on communality. Two possible reasons account for this: the nature of the narratives that point to the centrality of community in John and the interests of Johannine scholars in general. John is replete with 'materials' which reflect the collective interests, concerns, and experiences of a group of people (Martyn 2003:145; see also Aune 1972:73–84). However, scholars discuss the quality of relationships among members of the believing community and the world through the prism of individual interests.

1.5.2.1 Various approaches

Given the nature of the materials on the community theme in John, scholars employ various approaches in studying the subject. In this regard, Brown (1979) and Martyn (2003) deserve special mention for their contributions to Johannine scholarship and community. Both scholars attempt to excavate the history of John using the same approach: reading John on several levels so that it tells the story of Jesus and the believing community. However, Brown (1979:17), Kobel (2011:27), and Culpepper

(1998:43) agree that a thorough application of the method is Martyn's (2003) contribution.

Furthermore, in reconstructing this history, Brown (1979), Martyn (2003), and others identify problems that militate against communalism: internal and external conflicts ('relationship problems'). Scholars have postulated three main views on the conflicting factions: Christians, Jews, and Jews-Christians. Scholars who agree with the first view include Dodd (1968:41-57) and Jonge (2001:121-140). Dodd's view stems from the commonalities he draws from his comparative and semantic analyses of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in Galatians and John (Dodd 1968:41-57). Jonge (2001:121), on the other hand, builds his argument on what he considers as an authorial intention of John: a polemic targeted against Christians who refused to accept the Christological understanding of the Johannine group (non-Johannine Christians). Dunn (1991:293-322) and De Boer (2001:149), conversely, advocate for a reading of the conflict on 'racial' grounds. Thus, De Boer (2001:149) emphasises that the conflict is between 'two groups of Jewish people (Johannine Jewish Christians and 'the Jews').' Finally, the position of most scholars (Martyn 2003:18-19; Culpepper 2001:63; Reinhartz 2001:225) is that the conflict is between Jews ('the Jews') and Christians.

Who were 'the Jews'? And why did they oppose the believing community? Anderson (n.d) deserves special mention for his categorisation of the various approaches targeted at the identification of this group of people. Anderson (n.d; 2017:265-311)[15] outlines seven different approaches which have characterised the reading of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in John as follows:

> a. Seeing John as theologically anti-Jewish, b. Reading 'the Jews' as a reference to 'the Judeans' within Palestine or the Levant in general, c. Taking the term to mean 'particular Jewish authorities' who wanted to do away with Jesus, d. considering the presentation of religious authorities in John as narrative characters who represent the ambivalent relationships with local Jewish authorities by Johannine Christians in a diaspora setting, as they sought to convince family and friends that Jesus was indeed the Jewish Messiah,

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[15] This paper is an expanded form of a work published in *John and Judaism: A Contested Relationship in Context* (Anderson 2017:265-311).

sometimes to no avail, and e. Viewing John's presentation of the Jews as archetypes of the unbelieving world: the world, f. A sixth approach is to see John as pro-Jewish, and finally g. A proposal for an integrated approach that requires more than one of the above.

However, out of the seven approaches which have characterised the reading of the term, the majority view is that John employs it generally for the Jewish religious leaders (see Brown 1979:41; Martyn 2003:41; Köstenberger 2013:26; Dunn 1985:41; Morris 1995:357; Moloney 1998b:97; Wahlde 1982:33-60). However, others include their followers (De Boer 2001:148; Wheaton 2015:41).

Moreover, the precipitating factors that heralded the conflict between this group and Christians are Jesus' claim of deity and the Christians' belief in his messiahship (Dunn 2001:47; Brown 1979:43-46; Martyn 2003:46-47; Ridderbos 1997:10; Culpepper 2001:62).

Additionally, there are community dissensions that have received scholarly attention.[16] Based on the correlation between the epistles and the gospel,[17] the general interpretation extrapolated from juxtaposing the narratives on communalism in John to the ones on dissension in the letters,[18] is that the community had problems with schisms over divergent Christological positions (De Boer 1996:63; Brown 2016:133; Skinner 2012:305; Harris 2003:21).

Ironically, there were expectations in the gospel that indicates that the Johannine community was to demonstrate a sense of communalism. In consequence, scholars have devised various methods to explore how the Gospel of John expresses God's ideal community to a group plagued by external and internal conflicts. One of these is, for instance, the attempt to establish the concept of ethnicity in John and its implications for the believing community or the church as a community of God (Penwell 2019; Estrada 2019; Lim 2021). Generally, these works focus on ethnic

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[16] In determining the nature of internal issues, the scholarly discussions take into consideration the Johannine corpus (apart from the apocalypse of John); for in the epistles is the appearance of the problem (see Brown 1979:56; Brown 2016:133); The works of Harrington (2001:123-124) and Quast (1991:5, 116) are in support of the above.
[17] Both are parts of the Johannine corpus.
[18] Some of the narratives in John that stress communality are John 15:1-17 and John 17. In the Johannine letters, 1 John 2:18-22, 1 John 4:2-3, and 2 John 7 have the same focus.

labelling or characterisation in John to extrapolate a position on how the Johannine community handled ethnicity.

Despite the similarity of goals, the above scholars follow different trajectories. Arguing from a Johannine pneumatological standpoint, Estrada (2019:4) underscores the significance of the Holy Spirit in the formation of communal identity by examining how the community's theology of the Holy Spirit helped them to respond to the ethnic challenges of their times and exist as a community of God, constituted by members from different ethnic backgrounds. Estrada's (2019:4) work is based on the Spirit's role or involvement in the conversion of members of the new (believing) community through the new birth into one body (cf. Burge 1987:171). Conversely, Penwell (2019:1) focuses on the ethnic characterisation of Jesus in John ('Jesus the Jew' and 'Jesus the Samaritan') to argue that the author used ethnic labelling to assert a trans-ethnic identity for Jesus' followers and augment the traditional Judean ethnic identity into one community: 'children of God, who were born, not of blood or the will of the flesh or man, but God (Jn 1:12b-13)'. Lim (2021:140-150), on the other hand, diverges from Penwell's (2019) approach and concentrates on the ethnic characterisation of the mother of Jesus and John the beloved. His study establishes that the function of the ethnic portrayal of the mother of Jesus (Galilean Jew) and John the beloved (Judean Jew), vis-à-vis Jesus' command to adopt each as family members, is to show that in Christ, people from heterogeneous ethnic backgrounds become one family: children of God (Lim 2021:150).

In addition, others adopt a different approach, focusing on the thematic systematisation of community narratives for their communal connotations in John. But a few deserve special mention for the comprehensive nature of their works. Concentrating on how John applies the word one, Bauckham (2015:1-34) explores the concept of 'individualism' and the oneness of the divine and the human community in the narrative. Attempting to explain the role of communal meals in building unity among members of a group, community formation, and group identity, Kobel (2011:2-4) demonstrates how community experiences are tied to meal scenes in John, using a socio-rhetorical approach. Additionally, based on these 'communal passages,' Kanagaraj (1998:264-270) and Kunene (2012:208-216) discuss how John employs the idea of mutual indwelling to stress unity and community. Gleaning

from these passages, Kunene (2012:208-216) accentuates communal holiness as the import of the narratives.

Furthermore, others explore kinship in John to understand the character of relationships, employing various methods. Using a social-science approach, Campbell (2007) discusses kinship in John, focusing on the relationship between Jesus, his biological and fictive families, and their impacts on the character of relationships in John.

Additionally, others consider narratives that address John's metaphorical application of family language in uncovering the Father-Son relationship and the implications for the disciples. Thompson (2001), Moloney (1993, 1996, 1998a), and Van der Watt (2000) are examples of scholars who have discussed the 'family relationship' in John.[19] Even though Stovell (2012:22) has raised objections about some aspects of Van der Watt's (2000) work, it offers a comprehensive study on the subject.[20] Van der Watt critically examines the family metaphor in John and its implications for the Johannine community as a family of God (Van der Watt 2000:161-209, 260-377).[21] Thus, following the family language (e.g., Father, son, brothers, house, birth, and life), he explores the Father-Son relationship and establishes its effects on the character of the relationship required of the disciples (Van der Watt 2000:161, 397).

From the above, John 15 and 17 are the predominantly discussed narratives concerning the church as a community of God. And, generally, these chapters are interpreted as stressing communal values such as love for members of the believing community (for instance, Van der Watt 2000:260-377; Moloney 1998b:420-426; Ridderbos 1997:514-520, 560-563).

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[19] Scholars do not gloss over the 'family relationship' between the Father and the Son. Indeed, even scholars who have not done comprehensive work on the subject mention it in passing. And others, such as Thompson (2001), Van der Watt (2000), and Moloney ((1993, 1996, 1998a) have done comprehensive works on the subject. Thompson (2001) situates it within the Jewish concept of fatherhood and sonship to interpret the Johannine situation and its ramifications for the disciples. Moloney (1993, 1996, 1998a) employs literary analysis in his three volumes. Thus, he discusses the Father-Son relationship and its implications for communal relationships where relevant narratives are involved. Conversely, Van der Watt (2000) is by far the most comprehensive work on the subject.

[20] Stovell (2012:22) criticises his view of the family metaphor as the most prominent for being unhelpful and unnecessary.

[21] Though John is replete with metaphors, his view of the family metaphor as the most prominent is the substratum for his concentration on the subject.

1.5.3 Identifying the research gap

Despite the scholarly attempts to establish the character and quality of relationships in John, there are still gaps that the various approaches devised to explore communalism in John have not filled. To begin with, no author has read the Johannine prologue through the lens of community. Therefore, no work in the existing literature considers the prologue as a hermeneutical key to unearth the concept of community in John (as established in the background of this study). The significance of community in John requires tracing the theme from the prologue to the Book of glory. It helps to discover its perlocutionary effect on the narrative, the role of the Lagos in community building, and the responsibilities of the believing community in that role. The discussions on the prologue generally focus on its origin, themes, structure, and place in the gospel (see Robinson 1963:122; Morris 1995:63-100; Köstenberger 1998:87, 2013:44; Kanagaraj 2013:12-20). Thus, this work seeks to contribute to the debate by analysing the prologue's development of the theme. Given the significance of the prologue, the analysis allows the reader to explore the foundation of the community theme.

In addition, the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda is not interpreted as a narrative that unveils the relationship between communalism and 'individualism' in the Johannine community. The exegeses on John 5 and the general interpretations accentuate the identity of Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath and the Sabbath theme (Moloney 1996:4-27; Bystrom 2003:98-106; Witherington 1995: 136-141).[22] Thus, a different approach is necessary: a reading that considers the neglected communicative force of the narrative on the community theme.

An analysis of John 5 through the lens of community reveals that the healing at Bethesda is a hermeneutical key for an informed understanding of the precarious relationship between individualism and collectivism in Bethesda (a microcosm of the Johannine community). The story makes it imperative to investigate whether some of the cultural values attributed to this community existed in praxis or only in theory. For instance, the first-century Mediterranean culture in which John wrote (Keener

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[22] For a study of the silence of scholars on the significance of John 5 for the theme of community in John, see (Gharbin 2016). In this study, Gharbin demonstrates that John has put in place linguistic features that serve as a journey for the reader to discover how the Johannine Jesus addresses loneliness in a believing community.

2003:xxvi) stresses cooperativeness as a cultural value (Pilch 1993:33). Cooperativeness, according to Pilch (1993:33), is best interpreted as 'help.' It is, consequently, astonishing that the sick man could not get help (John 5:7) at the pool of Bethesda. The attitude of the Bethesda community makes it legitimate to interrogate whether their society was purely communalistic, individualistic, or amphibious. Indeed Rohrbaugh (2002:35-36; see also Malina 2007:106) affirms that two types of seemingly individualistic behaviour existed in the Mediterranean culture, even though they were collectivists. Could it be that the 'Bethesda community' exhibited traces of individualism? To what degree did it impact the community? Why did the 'inhabitants' exhibit attributes that are antithetical to the tenets of collectivism? In attempting to provide perspicuous answers to this conundrum, the narrative is subjected to narrative analysis to aid the reader to appreciate the context of Jesus' message on communality in the farewell discourse of the Book of Glory.

Moreover, since the prologue guides the reader to establish the substratum of the theme, and John 5 aids to anticipate and appreciate the discourse on communality in the Book of Glory, the narrative analyses can serve as a lens to ascertain the narrative development of the community theme. It also fills an academic gap that existing studies have not attempted to fill.

Finally, as indicated above, two narratives which address the issue of community in the farewell discourse of the Book of Glory are John 15 and 17. Though John 17 is not neglected, for various reasons, John 15 has been selected for the analysis. Whereas John 17 is a prayer for unity, John 15 reiterates the source of Christian communalism, reveals how the disciples can replicate the 'divine community' and establishes the mission of the believing community (see Köstenberger 1998:15; Ridderbos 1997:514-520, 560-565; Beasley-Murray 1987:276-306; 1055-1056). Furthermore, both chapters are not presenting divergent concepts. Rather, they converge at some point; the central theme of love, for instance, is reiterated in both narratives (Jn 15:9-17; Jn 17:23-26). However, in John 15, love is a commandment (Jn 15:12-17) that must be demonstrated. Further, the stress on loving one another is more recurrent in John 15 (implicitly in Jn 15:9-10 and explicitly in Jn 15:12, 17) than John 17:26). Indeed, unlike in John 15 where there is a 'balanced discussion' on the love between the Father and the Son, and between the members of the human community, the theme of love in John 17 focuses more on the love between

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the Father and the Son (Jn 17:23-26). Lastly, the selected narrative allows the interpreter to prescribe remedies for the societal maladies in the Akan community because of the scope of issues it examines. Therefore, through narrative analysis of John 15:1-16:1-3, the community theme is analysed to explore Jesus' paradigm of community and collectivism presented to the disciples for emulation.

1.6   METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the methodology employed in the study. It is divided in two parts, constituted by the theoretical framework and its application in the intercultural reading of the text in the Akan situation.

1.6.1   Theoretical framework

The communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa (2014), is used as the theoretical framework for this research. The Ghanaian scholar proposes a tripartite level as a frame of interpretation: adherence to the biblical text, attention to the call of action proposed in the text, and the interpreter's context (Ossom-Batsa 2014:128). Adhering to the text, he surmises, is to pay attention to the linguistic and non-linguistic elements, to get an informed understanding of the communicative force of the text which has been deliberately constructed by the author to aid his audience on their journey of reading. The call to action in the text, on the other hand, is the communicative function of the text. Primarily, it is the understanding which emanates from respecting the text and the journey of the implied reader, that become a call to action for real readers (Ossom-Batsa 2014:129). Furthermore, the interpreter's context is the frame within which the dialogue between God and humanity transpires (Ossom-Batsa 2014:129-130). The context is pertinent because the realization of the call to action in the text is conditioned by the context of the real readers.[23] It must be noted, however, that the community of readers must guard against 'enslaving' the text or rendering it docile to its context. Rather, the text should always have the central position.

Finally, even though the contextual theologian annotates that the tripartite levels are not sequential steps (but rather a frame of interpretation), some procedures must

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[23] The real reader is the contemporary reader of the text (See Brown 2007:129-130). Brown (2002:32) further mentions another group of readers: the implied reader. This, she opines, are the textually constructed 'reader presupposed by the narrative' or texts.

necessarily precede others. For instance, to arrive at the call to action in the text, the text is analysed. It simply means that before the enculturation of the narrative, the reader should respect the text, discover the call to action and then, enculturate it in his context. Thus, the communicative approach is applied using the tripartite levels as a frame of interpretation.

1.6.2 Applying the theoretical framework

Following the communicative approach, the study employs narrative criticism (Marguerat & Bourquin 1999) in the *first step* (adhering to the biblical text): narrative analyses of the prologue, John 5 and 15:1-16:3. The study employs this method because it analyses how the author conveys a theological message through narratives (cf. Powell 1990:18; Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:8; Osborne 2006:202). Elements, such as the settings, plots, characters, narrative time, narrative world, implicit commentaries, the implied narrator, and reader are analysed to discover the journey of the readers and the perlocutionary effect of the text (Osborne 2006:201-212; Powell 1990:18). Narrative criticism is a method of reading the text which explores and analyses how narrativity is made concrete in a particular text (Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:3). In this regard, Osborne (2006:203) suggests that two things demand the reader's attention: 'poetics, which studies the artistic dimension of the text; and meaning, which recreates the message that the author is communicating.' The poetics and meaning are studied to ascertain the construction of the narrative and recreate its communicative intentions.

The *second step* is the exegesis of reality. To explicate the community theme in the Akan context, proverbial expressions and cultural values that reflect their presuppositions are selected through purposive sampling and analysed.[24] The Akan context is the preferred choice for inculturation because of the centrality of the theme in Akan thoughts (a commonality it shares with the Johannine gospel) and the need for a contemporary sociocultural context in the intercultural reading of biblical narratives.

Thirdly, the call to action in the text (step one) and the Akan pre-understanding of a community (step two) discovered through both the exegesis of text and reality are

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[24] According to Dudovskiy (n.d.), this sampling style allows the researcher to use personal judgement in selecting data that help answer research questions or achieve research objectives.

engaged, using Loba-Mkole's (2008:1347-1362) intercultural biblical hermeneutics, to facilitate an engagement between the biblical text and reality (step three).[25] This scholar annotates that an intercultural reading of the biblical text entails a 'constructive dialogue between an original biblical culture and a receptive audience' (Loba-Mkole 2008:1347-1359). Clarifying what this dialogue entails, Ukpong (1995:6) adds that intercultural reading is an "interactive engagement between the biblical text and a particular contemporary sociocultural issue where the gospel message serves as a critique of the culture, or the cultural perspective enriches the understanding of the text." Consequently, the Johannine and Akan concepts serve as the original biblical and receptive cultures (for the constructive dialogue). The purpose is to allow the gospel message to critique the culture or the cultural perspective to enlarge and enrich the understanding of the text (Ukpong 1995:6).

1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINE

There are six chapters in this study. The first chapter discusses the introductory issues, constituted by the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, and the organization of chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the narrative analyses of selected texts, constituted by the Johannine prologue, John 5, and 15:1-16:1-3). Chapter 3 traces how John develops the community theme. The fourth chapter is the *exegesis* of the Akan reality. The discussions, thus, focus on the Akan concept of community. Furthermore, based on the outcome of the analyses of the narratives (Chapters 2-3) and Akan reality (Chapter 4), the fifth chapter engages both through an intercultural reading. Chapter 6 ends the study with summary and conclusion.

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[25] Recounting the historicity of this hermeneutical approach, Loba-Mkole (2008:1347-1362) traces it to Ukpong, from whose work the various strands emanate.

Chapter 2

Analyses of three community-centred narratives

This Chapter presents the first step of the tripartite levels (frame) of interpretation proposed by Ossom-Batsa (2014:128) – adherence to the biblical text. Ossom-Batsa (2014:128) explicates that adhering to the text means paying attention to the verbal and non-verbal elements to ascertain the communicative force of the text. Narrative analyses of these narratives (the prologue, Jn 5 and Jn 15:1-16:1-3) through the prism of the community theme demonstrate that it is one of their communicative intentions. Thus, considering the hermeneutical impact of the prologue on any academic autopsy on the themes in John (see Köstenberger 2013:44, 1998:87; Beasley-Murray 1987:5; Moloney 1993:24; Morris 1995:63; Carson 1991:111), what follows commences with the narrative analysis of the prologue. The analysis aims to establish the legitimacy of the community theme and its perlocutionary effect on the narrative. It further explores the theme in John 5 to unearth the incarnate Word's expositions of the divine community at Bethesda (a microcosm of the Johannine community) as a remedy for the problem of community: the quality of relationships.[26] Lastly, it analyses John 15:1-16:1-3 for the participation of the new covenant community in the mission of the divine community.

Consequently, narrative criticism by Marguerat and Bourquin (1999:3) is applied because it concentrates on the method employed by the author to express his theological message through narratives. To use this proposed approach, the interpreter must focus on two things: the construction of the text (poetics) and the recreation of the author's message (meaning) (Osborne 2006:203; cf. Powell 1990:18). However, identifying the structure is key to ascertaining the construction of narratives (cf. Fuhr & Köstenberger 2016:158; Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:5). Additionally, structuring requires a delimitation of the narrative. Whereas the delimitation helps to establish the boundaries and context, structuring narratives aim to discern the units and grasp the message being communicated (Fuhr & Köstenberger 2016:158; Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:5). Consequently, after

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[26] For the meaning of community, see Gusfield (1975:xv-xvi), Cohen (1985:12), and Klink (2007:52).

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structuring them, the poetics and meaning are then established through narrative analyses (cf. Osborne 2006:203; Powell 1990:18). Thus, the narratives are delimited, structured, and analysed to explore the community theme.

2.1 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PROLOGUE (JN 1:1-18)

The general view among scholars is that the prologue is a repository of the themes in John (see Köstenberger 2013:44, 1998:87; Moloney 1993:24; Robinson 1963:122; Morris 1995:63; Carson 1991:111). Consequently, it is indispensable in any academic explorations on the themes because they are traceable to it. Similarly, to progress with the community discourse in John, the analysis must demonstrate sufficient proof in the prologue to warrant it. Consequently, to ascertain the presence of the community theme in the prologue and establish its legitimacy, the analysis focuses on the narrative function of the prologue in unearthing the substratum and development of John's theology of community.

2.1.1 The delimitation of the prologue

In modern Johannine scholarship, it is ubiquitously acknowledged that the prologue refers to John 1:1-18 (Moloney,1993:23-25; Servotte 1994:4-8; Morris 1995:63; Culpepper 1998:110-111; Voorwinde 2002:28). Conversely, others rely predominantly on the literary genre of the prologue and its concomitant features to explain the above position (Moloney 1993:23; Culpepper 1998:110-111; Ridderbos 1997:22). Moloney (1993:23), Culpepper (1998:110-111), and Ridderbos (1997:22) delimit John 1-18 as a literary unit based on its poetic nature while considering John 1:19-51 (or Jn 1:19-20:31) as a narrative (cf. Behr 2019:254). Additionally, thematically, John 1:1 and John 1:19 start with different themes. While the former deals with meta-reality, the latter, in Dennison's (1993:3) words, 'brings us back down to earth after ranging over the prospects of the Logos (Word).' It is also instructive to note that this 'movement of the Logos' or 'thematic distinction' further strengthens the argument on the delimitation of the pericope: it provides an envelope structure – 'the use of θεός (God)' and the intimate relationship between the Logos and God expressed at the beginning (Jn 1:1), forms an *inclusio* (or inclusion)[27] with

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[27] Scholars, such as Keener (2003:276, 302) and Osborne (2006:54) refer to this literary technique as *inclusio*. Schubert (2008:51) and others, conversely, refer to it as an inclusion. Therefore, they are either used the way the author has expressed it or interchangeably in this work.

its repetition in John 1:18 (Dennison's 1993:3; Keener 2003:338,425-426; Voorwinde 2011:157).

However, the general position of scholars on the delimitation of the prologue does not reflect in its structuring – divergent positions exist. Thus, the next session examines the scholarly views to propose a structure for the narrative analysis of the prologue.

2.1.2 The structure of the prologue

Modern scholars have identified two typical patterns characterising the structuring of the prologue – synthetic parallelism and concentric chiasm (cf. Moloney 1993:25; Köstenberger 2004:20-21; Coloe 1997:41). Scholars who use the literary model of synthetic parallelism see the prologue as a series of parallel themes (cf. Coloe 1997:42). The argument is that a theme of a previous part is repeated and developed with others in its following parallel (Lacan 1957:97; see Ridderbos 1966; La Potterie 1984:1986).

In this regard, some scholars understand the prologue as three chains of uninterrupted 'waves' (Lacan 1957:96-97; La Potterie 1984:357-359; Moloney 1993: 25–27). Lacan (1957:97) argues that – just like the waves – John makes a point and returns to it in the following passage to elaborate on it. Below is Lacan's (1957:97) structure:

1.	A (1-2)	B (3)	C (4-5)
2.	A' (6-8)	B' (9-11)	C' (12-14)
3.	A' (15)	B' (16-17)	C' (18)

Building on Lacan's (1957:97) argument, La Potterie (1984:357-359) sees this threefold division (or 'waves') in the prologue:

1. the Word in God becomes the Light of the World (Jn 1:1-5)

2. the incarnation of the Word (Jn 1:6-14)

3. the Revealer: The only Son turned toward the Father (Jn 1:15-18).[28]

Finally, though Moloney (1993:27) follows the 'three-wave structure', he presents a modified version as follows:

1. the Word is announced and described (Jn 1:1-2, Jn 1:6-8, Jn 1:5)

2. the revelation brought by incarnate Word (Jn 1:3-4, Jn 1:9)

3. he human response to the gift of the Word (Jn 1:5b, Jn 1:10-13, Jn 1:16)

4. the description of the object of faith as the Father's only Son (Jn 1:14, Jn 1:17-18).

However, most scholars advocate for a chiastic structure – the most popular of all proposed structures concerning the prologue (Voorwinde 2002:23). It is traceable to Lund (1931:42-46; Culpepper 1980:2-3), the person who identified a concentric structure behind the prologue. After Lund, more elaborate structures were proposed, following that trajectory (cf. Boismard 1957:76-81; Lamarche 1964:529-532; Feuillet 1968; Pryor 1988:47, 1992:9; for a summary of works on this, see Culpepper 1980:2-6).[29] With each succeeding proposal, nonetheless, the structure became progressively convoluted (Voorwinde 2002:23; Köstenberger 2004:20). And this has generated disagreements on the precise details of the chiasm and its centre point (Pryor 1988:47). For example, the following is Boismard's (1957:76-77) chiastic structure of the prologue:

(a) The Word with God 1-2   18 The Son in the Father (a')

   (b) His role of creation 3   17 Role of recreation (b')

     (c) Gift to men 4-5   16 Gift to men (c')

      (d) Witness of John 6-8   15 Witness of John (d')

       (e) The coming 9-11   14 The incarnation (e')

        the world

         12-13

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[28] For detailed elucidations on the divisions, see La Potterie (1984:359-367).
[29] Whereas Moloney (1993:25) thinks that most scholars follow an original suggestion from Boismard (1957), Culpepper (1980) argues in favour of Lund (1931).

(f) By the Incarnate Word we become God's children

Conversely, Culpepper (1980:16) provides the following structure:

A vv.1-2   Word with God   A' v.18

  B v.3 Creation through Word   Grace and truth B' v. 17

   C vv.4-5 Received life   Received Grace C' v.16

  Dvv.6-8   Baptist   D'v.15

    E. vv. 9-10 Incarnation and response E' v.14

     Fv.11   F' v.13

His own-Israel   his own-believers

    G v.12a   G' v.12c

   accept the Word   believe the Word

H v.12b

to become children of God

Even though the prologue has stimulated copious creative structures, the various structural proposals – as demonstrated above – make no room for the community theme. Therefore, it is expedient to propose one that serves the aim of this research. As Fuhr and Köstenberger (2016:158) succinctly observes, the goal of a literary structure in analysing biblical texts is to discern the units and grasp the message communicated through the chosen literary form (Fuhr & Köstenberger 2016:158). Their explanation suggests that there is a relationship between the structure and meaning of the literary form. Therefore, in the absence of structures that reflect the theme, one is proposed as follows:

1. The divine community (Jn 1:1-2)

2. Creation: The divine community's collaborative work (Jn 1:3-5)

3. John testifies about the Light in the community (Jn 1:6-9, Jn 1:15)

4. The human community's response to the Light (Jn 1:10-13)

5. The incarnation and the human Community (Jn 1:14-18)

2.1.3 The analysis of the prologue

The narrative analysis of the prologue is the focus of this Section. As indicated above, even though the prologue has aroused a gamut of academic interests and discourses, the community theme has not been given the attention it deserves. Since the academic community has not concentrated on the community theme, the various structures employed as the substratum of their analyses do not focus on it. Therefore, the narrative analysis of the prologue follows the researcher's proposed structure because it focuses on the theme of community.

2.1.3.1 The divine community (Jn 1:1-2)

Beginning the prologue with Ἐν ἀρχῇ (In the beginning), John calls the reader's attention to Genesis 1:1[30] (Vincent 2009:24; Moloney 1993:27-29; Hamilton 1990:144; Morris 1995:72; Köstenberger 2004:25; Ngewa 2003:11; Harris 2015:18; McHugh 2009:6; Keener 2003:365; Beutler 2006:37; Evans 1993:77-79; Gordley 2018:157; Thomaskutty 2022:36; cf. Gharbin & Van Eck 2022:2).[31] By echoing the first words of the Old Testament, John's focus is on what precedes time or eternity before creation (Ngewa 2003:11; Tenney 1997:64; Moloney 1993:28; Harris 2015:18; Vincent 2009:24; Barrett 1978:152; Westcott 1980:4-5). So, the purpose is to establish what predates the creation, one of which is ὁ λόγος (Jn 1:1; Beasley-Murray 1987:10; Köstenberger 2004:25; Borchert 1996:102). It is evident in the use of the imperfect tense (ἦν, the imperfect tense of the verb εἰμι); it shows the continuing existence of a state or situation in the past (Ngewa 2003:11; Vincent 2009:24; Westcott 1980:5; see also Mounce 1993:181; Köstenberger 2004:115). Thus, it points to the absolute existence of the Logos before creation (Keener 2003:267; Borchert 1996:104; McHugh 2009:6; Moloney 1993:31). Therefore, by attributing to the Logos a state of continuous existence before creation (Vincent 2009:24; Beasley-Murray 1987:10), John is affirming the eternality of the Logos (Vincent 2009:24; Morris 1995:70; Ngewa 2003:12).

Another communicative intent or illocutionary force of Ἐν ἀρχῇ is to demonstrate that the Logos coexisted with God eternally (Barrett 1978:156; Ngewa 2003:12; cf.

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[30] Comparing the MT (בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ) and the LXX (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν)), one discovers that the LXX translates beginning as ἐν ἀρχῇ. Probably, John uses the Septuagint's translation of beginning to bring the reader back to Genesis 1:1.

[31] Indeed, based on the commonalities between both, Borgen (1970:288-295, 1972:115-130) takes the argument further to suggest that the prologue is a Targumic exposition of Genesis 1:1-5.

Borchert 1996:104).[32] The argument of the eternal coexistence of the Logos and God can be made when it is established that there are two distinct persons in John 1:1. Without that, we can only speak of the eternal existence of the Logos (Ngewa 2003:11; Vincent 2009:24; Keener 2003:369; Tenney 199764; see also Köstenberger 2004:115) and not the coexistence of the Logos with a distinct personality. Thus, John establishes this distinction by the preposition πρὸς (καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν), which denotes that the Logos did not eternally exist alone, but with God (Harris 2015:18; Kanagaraj 2013:1-2; Tenney 1997:64; Moloney 1993:28; McHugh 2009:9), the Father (Harris 2015:18; Ngewa 2003:12; Kanagaraj 2013:2). Therefore, the Logos is distinguished from the Father (Harris 2015:18-19; Ridderbos 1997:24; Vincent 2009:34-35; Mounce 1993:27; Borchert 1996:106; Harris 2008:64; Kanagaraj 2013:1-2; Voorwinde 2002:32).

Even though John does not give us details on the character of the relationship (Ridderbos 1997:25), the preposition (πρὸς) furnishes the reader with some information on this eternal relationship (see Vincent 2009:33-34; Harris 2015:18; Ngewa 2003:12; Harris 2005:18). In this context, to be '*with* God' is not merely communicating the coexistence of two separate individuals (Vincent 2009:34; Westcott 1980:6; Behr 2019:259). Rather, it denotes two distinct persons in communion, association, intimacy, fellowship, or union (Vincent 2009:34; Harris 2015:18; Kanagaraj 2013:1; Keener 2003:369; Morris 1995:70; Borchert 1996:103; Tenney 1997:64; Voorwinde 2002:32; Wuest 1983:209; Westcott 1980:6; Newman & Nida 1980:8).

Finally, the third statement concerning the Word reveals that the Logos shares the same nature with God (Mounce 1993:27; Vincent 2009:34-35; Harris 2015:19; Borchert 1996:103-104; Harris 2008:70; Tenney 1997:65; Harris 2008:65-67; Barrett 1978:156; Westcott 1980:6). This is evident in the use of the anarthrous (θεὸς) and the emphatic position of θεὸς (see Mounce 1993:27; Vincent 2009:34-35; Harris 2015:19; Ngewa 2003:12). The absence of the article in John 1:1c (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος) suggests that θεὸς is in a predicative position; therefore, John's focus is on the Word's nature or quality (Mounce 1993:27; Vincent 2009:34-35; Harris 2015:19;

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[32] In other passages in scripture, the Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity is part of the community of essence (Gn 1:2; Mt 3:16-17). For an extensive work on the God of the Gospel of John, see Thompson (2001).

Harris 2008:68; Ngewa 2003:12; Westcott 1980:6). By this construction, John ascribes to the Logos all the attributes of the divine essence (Vincent 2009:35; Harris 2015:19; Borchert 1996:103-104; Ngewa 2003:12; Mounce 1993:27; Kanagaraj 2013:2; cf. Tenney 1997:65). Furthermore, the emphatic position of θεὸς is John's way of stressing and strengthening the argument that the Logos enjoys unity of essence with God (Vincent 2009:34-35; Harris 2015:19; Mounce 1993:27).

For these reasons, this relationship could be described as a 'divine community.' Generally, there are two broad categories identified with the idea of community: territorial and relational (Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi; Cohen 1985:12).[33] By demonstrating that the Logos and the Father are one in essence (Mounce 1993:27; Vincent 2009:34-35; Harris 2015:19; Ngewa 2003:12; Borchert 1996:104; Tenney 1997:64), and have coexisted eternally (Vincent 33-34; Harris 2015:18; Kanagaraj 2013:1-2; Tenney 1997:64-65) in union and communion (Vincent 2009:34; Harris 2015:18; Keener 2003:369; Morris 1995:70; Borchert 1996:103-104; Kanagaraj 2013:2; Tenney 1997:64-65), John is expressing the quality of relationship that exists between God and the Logos (the relational dimension of community). John is, therefore, postulating a divine community (cf. Borchert 1996:106; Harris 2008:68; Gharbin & Van Eck 2022:6). Borchert (1996:106) perspicaciously and aptly observes: community and unity are two compatible sides of the eternal God (cf. Harris 2008:68; Grenz 2000:112). The reference to this relationship (and creation) indicates that in John, community is always a starting point (Kunene 2012:188; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2).

It is pertinent to note that John establishes this foundation (the unity and community of the divine essence) before discussing the creation. The idea is that creation is the product of the outflow of the eternal relationship (Grenz 2000:112). Grenz (2000:112) succinctly puts it as follows: 'Just as the triune God is the eternal fellowship of the trinitarian members, so also God's purpose for creation is that the world participates in 'community'' (Grenz 1998:49; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2; Bauckham 2015:48). Similarly, Moltmann (2008:375) affirms that the perichoretic unity of the divine trinity is an open, inviting and integrating unity that the whole world can find room within it.

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[33] Whereas the former encompasses the context of location, physical territory, and geographical continuity, the latter points to the quality of relationships (Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi; Cohen 1985:12; Klink 2007:52).

So, in John, there is a human community because God, the eternal community, has created the world and invites us to participate in the community of God. As a result, having established the concept of the divine community, he discusses the community motif embedded in creation (Kanagaraj 2013:2) and how it reflects the work of divine collaboration.

2.1.3.2 Creation: The divine community's collaborative work (Jn 1:3-5)

The narrative flow demonstrates further the partnership exhibited by the divine community during the creation of the world. To emphasise this collaboration, John states it positively (πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο) and negatively (καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν ὃ γέγονεν),[34] the contribution of the Logos in the work of creation (Jn 1:3; Ngewa 2003:13; Carson 1991:118; Köstenberger 2004:29; Ridderbos 1997:36; Borchert 1996:107; Tenney 1997:66). Recognising that the Father is the source of all that is (Morris 1995:71; Harris 2015:22; Grenz 2000:102), the Logos is identified as God's agent[35] in creation by the expression δι' αὐτοῦ or 'through him' (Vincent 2009:37; Ngewa 2003:13; Grenz 2000:104; Tenney 1997:66).[36]

Furthermore, John demonstrates the relationship between the Logos and creation, revealing that the Logos is the life-giver and light-giver of God's creation (Jn 1:4). The first section (Jn 1:4a) ascribes life-giving prerogative to the Logos (Harris 2015:23; Köstenberger 2004:30; Vincent 2009:37-38; Carson 1991:119; Morris 1995:73; Barrett 1978:158). Thus, whatever was created exists because of the self-existing life of the Word that was dispensed at creation (Carson 1991:119; Harris 2015:23; Morris 1995:73). The second part shows that this Life (the Logos) is also the Light that enlightens the world (Harris 2015:23; cf. Brant 2011:32; Barrett 1978:158; Beasley-Murray 1987:11). It is critical to note that the continuance of this role of the Logos is implied in the linear sense of the present tense (φαίνει) which

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[34] There are unresolved arguments whether the word γέγονεν should end the sentence (Jn 1:3) or begin the next sentence (Metzger 1971:195-196; Borchert 1996:107; Keener 2003:381-382). Metzger (1971:195-195) argues that it is more constant with the Johannine repetitive style and doctrine to punctuate with a full stop after ὃ γέγονεν (cf. Brown 1966:6).

[35] The term (agent) should be interpreted considering what John has said already about the Logos (Jn 1:1-3). The Logos is God and not a mere ambassador (Harris 2015:113: Beasley-Murray 1987:76; Köstenberger 2004:184; Carson 1991:224-225; Barrett 1978:260).

[36] This Johannine disclosure about the Logos' involvement in the creation of 'all things' unveils the community motif embedded in creation (Kanagaraj 2013:2; cf. Kunene 2012:188). According to Kanagaraj (2013:2), the community-oriented nature of creation flows from the fact that God created 'all things' as families according to their kinds (cf. Gn 1-2).

indicates continuous shining of the Light (Harris 2015:24; Vincent 2009:40; Waetjen 2001:272). And the darkness could not overpower it (Waetjen 2001:272; Brant 2011:30; Ridderbos 1997:39; Tenney 1997:67; McHugh 2009:19-20; Thompson 2001:134).[37] The transition from the present tense (φαίνει) to aorist (κατέλαβεν) has stunned many. Considering what a punctiliar aorist represents, some have proposed that John had in mind an event in the past (Moloney 1993:33; Waetjen 2001:272). However, some disagree for two reasons: first, John mentions no event; and second, the conjunction that connects the two statements has a constative sense – it states as a single fact a continuous struggle between the Light and darkness and the former's unceasing victory over the latter (Waetjen 2001:272).

Finally, Barrett (1978:158) takes the argument of the role of the Logos further by arguing that though Jesus (the Logos) was both life and light in himself, he was also the agent by whom God bestowed life and light upon the world (Barrett 1978:158; cf. Jn 5:21, Jn 5:26; Carson 1991:118; Kanagaraj 2013:2).[38] It means that the Logos exercises these divine prerogatives because the Father bestowed them upon him (Barrett 1978:158; cf. Jn 5:21; Harris 2015:114; Ngewa 2003:93; Thompson 2001: 77-78; Barrett 1978:260; Morris 1995:279; Harris 2015:114; Wuest 1983:222). Consequently, creation and its continuance are products of divine collaboration between the Father (source) and the Logos, the agent of creation (Morris 1995:71; Harris 2015:22; Vincent 2009:37; Ngewa 2003:13; Grenz 2000:104).[39]

2.1.3.3 John's testimony in the community (Jn 1:6-9, Jn 1:15)

John introduces the Baptist into the narrative. Unlike the Logos whose eternality is established by the imperfect tense (Ngewa 2003:11; Vincent 2009:24; Harris 2015:18; Keener 2003:267; Borchert 1996:104; Westcott 1980:5; Brown 1966:4), John changes the tense to aorist and describes the witness as ἄνθρωπος – to

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[37] Scholars are divided on how to apply the double meanings of κατέλαβεν in this context (keener 2003:387; cf. Brown 1966:8). Some think that applying both meanings (apprehend and comprehend) are legitimate (Harris 2015:23; Barret 1978:158; Brant 2011:30). Whereas few scholars translate the word as comprehend (Ridderbos 1997:40; Beasley-Murray 1987:11), the majority choose 'apprehend' as the appropriate interpretation (Köstenberger 2004:31; Waetjen 2001:272; Brant 2011:30; Ridderbos 1997:39; Tenney 1997:67; Thompson 2001:134; Tenney 1997:67).

[38] Even though John uses the term life predominantly in a soteriological sense, what the prologue has is the cosmological aspect (Barrett 1978:158).

[39] Though John does not include the Spirit, the third eternal distinction, creation is primarily a Trinitarian act (Grenz 2000:101). In the Genesis account, the Spirit is part of the divine collaboration that resulted in the creation of the world (Gn 1:1-2). For further studies on the roles of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in creation, see Grenz (2000:101-106).

denote the humanity of John and the historicity of his assignment (Köstenberger 2004:32; cf. Morris 1995:79; Westcott 1980:11; Brown 1966:27). Indeed, John (the witness) testifies to the pre-existence and pre-eminence of the Logos (Jn 1:15; Harris 2015:36; Tenney 1997:74; Köstenberger 2004:45; Ngewa 2003:15).

Moreover, even though he is distinguished from the Light (Vincent 2009:41; Barrett 1978:150), his significance is revealed by the references to μαρτυρία and the sophisticated literary introduction that indicates that he is a man *sent from God* and known by name (Jn 1:6-7; Jn 1:15; Morris 2015:79; Vincent 2009:42; Barrett 1978:150; cf. Ridderbos 1991:42). Being a witness serves to mark his unique place in salvation history as the one who pointed to the coming of the Light (Ridderbos 1991:42). Through the privilege of the divine assignment, he participates in God's mission for creation – the social life of the divine community (Grenz 2000:112). Therefore, like every other Johannine witness, he must be someone who has experienced the divine community to be a true witness (Brant 2011:31; Keener 2003:392; cf. Jn 1:6; Jn 15:26-27).[40] 'To witness,' according to Brant (2011:31), 'preserves the emphasis on one who identifies Jesus for others by virtue of what the witness has seen and heard' (cf. Keener 2003:392; Jn 15:26-27). Thus, he is introduced as a man sent from God (Jn 1:6; cf. Carson 1991:120).

Concerning the fruit of the witness of John – the man sent from God – Carson (1991:121) and Barrett (1978:159) suggest that it does not reflect the purpose of his witness (that all men might believe through him). They base their argument on the community's response to the ministry of John (cf. Barrett 1978:256; Carson 1991:121). Though the gospel gives no evidence for a counter position that all believed through him, determining the result of John's witness numerically is problematic because it can easily culminate in missing its qualitative impact. For example, Carson (1991:121) admits by mentioning in passing and citing John 1:35-37 as an instance when John's witness yielded fruitful results (Jn 1:35-37). However, when placed in its proper context, the example cited by Carson (1991:121) reveals

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[40] Morris (1995:80) lists seven who bear witness to Jesus in John – each of the three Persons of the Trinity, Scripture, the Baptist, and a variety of human witness (cf. Köstenberger 2004:32-33; Barrett 1978:159; Brant 2011:31). Apart from Scripture and Jesus, all these witnesses have experienced the Logos in one way or another. Jesus' statements attest to this (Jn 15:26-27). He tells his disciples to testify about him because they have been with (experienced) him from the beginning (Jn 15:27). He instructed them to testify after telling them that he will send the Holy Spirit (who has coexisted with him eternally) to witness about him (Jn 15:26).

the qualitative impact of the ministry and mission of John. First, it presents John as the first to testify about Jesus (the Light) to the Jewish leaders (Jn 1:19-28). Further, he is the first to publicly endorse and introduce Jesus to the community and witness to the community about him (Jn 1:29-34). Additionally, the gathering of the members of the community of God starts by the instrumentality of this witness. Two of his disciples became the first members of the community of God through his testimony (Jn 1:35-39). Thus, the negative response must not be the standard for measuring the fruitfulness of his witness.

Against this background, John demonstrates how the human community responded to the Light, the object of John the Baptist's testimony. The prologue describes two responses that characterised the people's attitude towards the Light: the positive (Jn 1:12-13) and the negative (Jn 1:10-11).

2.1.3.4   The human community's response to the Light (Jn 1:10-13)

The Light came into the created world inhabited by humankind (Harris 2015:30; Beasley-Murray 1987:12; Morris 1995:85; Köstenberger 2004:36; Barrett 1978:161);[41] but the world alienated from or hostile to God (Ridderbos 1997:44; Köstenberger 2004:36; Harris 2015:30; Carson 1991:123-124; Keener 2003:395; cf. Beasley-Murray 1987:12), did not recognise the identity of the Light (Harris 2015:30; Köstenberger 2004:36; Ridderbos 1997:44; Barrett 1978:162) or comprehend the Logos (Tenney 1997:68). John's comment also denotes the rejection of the right relationship with the Logos (Morris 1995:85; Ridderbos 1997:44) or response to the Logos (Barrett 1978:162).

Similarly, the Logos encounters rejection even within his own people – a *relational* term referring to Israel (Carson 1991:122; Vincent 2009:47; Morris 1995:85; Köstenberger 2004:37; Tenney 1997:69; Keener 2003:398). John is intimating that some from 'his home' – the covenant community (Carson 1991:125; Köstenberger 2004:402) which should have known and accepted him or had a proper relationship with the Logos – rather did not give him the reception he deserves (Carson

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[41] There are scholarly deliberations concerning how John employs the term (see Köstenberger 2004:36; Barrett 1978:62; Morris 1995:85; Carson 1991:123). Morris (1995:85), for instance, opines that the first two examples of κόσμος are about everyone, while the third refers to those who met Jesus. Carson (1991: 123) shows that κόσμος is never used positively in John. And Barrett (1978: 162) envisions only one sense of the word (Jn 1:10).

1991:122; Morris 1995:85-86; Köstenberger 2004:37; Harris 2015:30). 'God's chosen people who celebrated Torah rejected Torah in the flesh' (Keener 2003:399). It suggests that his is unwelcomed in his own home (Vincent 2009:47; Morris 1995:85; Harris 2015:30; Ridderbos 1997:45; McHugh 2009:41), that is, the covenant community (Carson 1991:125; Köstenberger 2004:402).

The comments about the response of these groups – the world and Israel – indicate the refusal of the human community to align itself to the purpose of the divine community for it, that is, participating 'in the life of the social Trinity' (Grenz 2000:112, 1998:49; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2; Bauckham 2015:48).

Conversely, despite the general rejection, there were remnants who 'went against the current, who broke with the general pattern by which the world thinks, lives, and acts' (Ridderbos 1997:45) and gave the Logos the expected reception (Tenney 1997:69; cf. Morris 1995:85; Köstenberger 2004:37; Harris 2015:30). These are people who duly and truly recognised the Logos (contradistinctive to those who did not recognise him, Keener 2003:399) and accepted him for what he was and manifested (Ridderbos 1997:45; Carson 1991:125-126; Köstenberger 2004:38; Brant 2011:33; Barrett 1978:162-163). Hence, 'accepting' or 'receiving' the Word is equated with 'believing in his name' (Köstenberger 2004:38; Harris 2015:31; Ridderbos 1997:45), given that 'the name' is a periphrasis or circumlocution for God (Brant 2011:33).

Further, whereas rejecting the Logos is tantamount to a rejection of the social life of the divine community (Grenz 2000:112, 1998:49; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2), accepting or believing in his name is an acceptance of this life (cf. Harris 2015:31; Ridderbos 1997:45-46; Morris 1995:87; Van der Watt 2000:166). Therefore, those who receive him are given the privilege (Carson 1991:126; Ridderbos 1997:45-46; Brant 2011:33) or authorisation (Morris 1995:87; Harris 2015:31; Köstenberger 2004:39; Keener 2003:403; Barrett 1978:163; Beasley-Murray 1987:13) to become τέκνα θεοῦ, but not υἱοὶ θεοῦ (Harris 2015:31; Morris 1995:87; Ridderbos 1997:45; Köstenberger 2004:39; Vincent 2009:49; Beasley-Murray 1987:13; McHugh 2009:45; cf. Brown 1966: 11). John makes this distinction when discussing the relationships between the Son and the Father and believers and the Father by using υἱὸς only for the Son (Harris 2015:31; Morris 1995:87; Ridderbos 1997:45; Köstenberger 2004:39; Vincent

2009:49; Brown 1966: 11). As Harris (2015:31) rightly notes, God has one Son by nature and many adopted sons. This authorisation ushers them into a new status (Morris 1995:87) or identity (Van der Watt 2000:182) – a relationship centred on community of *nature* (Vincent 2009:49; Morris 1995:87; cf. Keener 2003:403). This means they participate in the divine nature (see Vincent 2009:49; Morris 1995:87; cf. Keener 2003:403). And their participation in it secures them a place as members of the community of God, thereby enjoying an intimate familial relationship with God (Van der Watt 2000:182; Westcott 1980:16; cf. Keener 2003:403; Tenney 1997:69).[42] Nonetheless, this is not limited to the Johannine community but extends to the believing communities after the incarnation (cf. Ngewa 2003:17). Ngewa (2003:17), thus, stresses that 'those who believe' 'is an inclusive class of persons living in the past, present and future' – 'believing in this sense recurs at different times for different people throughout the ages' (Ngewa 2003:17).

John further explicates the substratum of this new identity by defining what it is and what it is not. Three different expressions which focus on human procreation (οἳ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς [who were born not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man])[43] are used to demonstrate that they did not become God's children through this medium (Van der Watt 2000:183; Ridderbos 1997:47; Köstenberger 2004:39; Harris 2015:32-33; Brant 2011:33-34; Vincent 2009:50; Keener 2003:404-405; Ngewa 2003:16; Tenney 1997:69; McHugh 2009:47). And they are contrasted with divine procreation (ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν) to authenticate their new identity as God's children (cf. Van der Watt 2000:183; Ridderbos 1997:47; Köstenberger 2004:39; Harris 2015:32-33; Brant 2011:33-34; Tenney 1997:69). As Harris (2015:32-33; cf. Van der Watt 2000:185) affirms, 'the four uses of ἐκ may point to the agency (by) or source (from) or cause (a result) or any combination of these.' Consequently, the expression (ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν) points to God as the source or cause of the procreation (Harris

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[42] According to Van der Watt (2000:188), 'becoming a child of God' is the metaphor with which the family imagery is activated, and the awareness of the possibility of a divine family is created. Thus, the reader must anticipate and read the various suggestions of a family in John through this lens (Van der Watt 2000:188).

[43] The three expressions are human ancestry (Harris 2015:33; Köstenberger 2004:39; Carson 1991:126; Keener 2003:404; Beasley-Murray 1987:13), human choice (Harris 2015:33; Köstenberger 2004:39; Carson 1991:126; Beasley-Murray 1987:13; cf. Ridderbos 1997:47), and human initiative (Harris 2015:33; Köstenberger 2004:39; cf. Ridderbos 1997:47).

2015:32-33; Westcott 1980:17; see Van der Watt 2000:184; Ridderbos 1997: 47; Köstenberger 2004:39; Harris 2015:32-33; Brant 2011:33-34; Tenney 1997:70).

Against this background, John demonstrates in the section that follows that the Word also assumed a 'community of nature with humankind' through the incarnation (cf. Vincent 2009:51).

2.1.3.5   The incarnation and the human community (Jn 1:14-18)

The statement (Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο) demonstrates two forms of incarnation in the prologue. The first is the incarnation of existing concepts in a specific cultural context. The notion that John used oral and written traditions has received scholarly validation (Dodd 1963:180; Barrett 1978:45-47; Borgen 2014:148). The Logos concept is one of such traditions present in John's religiously pluralistic milieu (cf. Keener 2003:339-347; Morris 1995:102-108; Ridderbos 1997:27-36). Scholars have therefore proposed possible backgrounds of John's Logos which include Hellenistic philosophy (Stoicism and Philo), Jewish wisdom literature (personification of wisdom), and the word of God in the Old Testament (Köstenberger 2004:26-27; Morris 1995:102-108; Gordley 2018:157-162).[44] However, scholars argue that traditions are usually applied uniquely by John (Dodd 1963:180). Similarly, scholarly analyses and juxtapositions of John's Logos concept to its parallels indicate its idiosyncratic application (Morris 1995:108; Keener 2003:339; Waetjen 2001:226-271). Indeed, the applications of traditions are associated with the establishment of new meanings (Labahn 2007:61). Likewise, John employs it to enculturate or incarnate his Logos Christology within a cultural context (Keener 2003:339).

Moreover, the statement denotes that the Logos entered into a new mode of existence in time without ceasing to be what he was in eternity (Vincent 2009:50-51; Harris 2015:35; Brown 1966:32; Westcott 1980:19; McHugh 2009:53; cf. Wuest 1983:209) – the Logos became genuinely human (Harris 2015:35; Harris 2008:59; Ridderbos 1997:49; Vincent 2009:51; Köstenberger 2004:40; McHugh 2009:53; Morris 1995:91; Carson 1991:127; Keener 2003:408), thereby assuming 'a community of nature with humankind' (Vincent 2009:51). However, it is critical to note that as the Word entered a new *mode* of being, all essential properties were retained (Harris 2015:35; Vincent 2009:51; Morris 1995:91). Consequently, the

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[44] See Keener (2003:339-347) for a comprehensive discussion on the subject.

incarnate Word is a being who is fully divine and fully human – a theanthropic person (Harris 2015:35; Vincent 2009:51; Morris 1995:91; Westcott 1980:19-20; cf. Carson 1991:127). Besides this, John never refers to him as the Word because he has become both audible and visible (Bauckham 2015:45).

Moreover, to explicate the relationship that existed between the incarnate Word and the historical context of the incarnation, John chooses a word (ἐσκήνωσεν, dwelt or 'pitched his tent') that immediately reminds the reader of the Old Testament wilderness wanderings, where God tabernacled among the children of Israel (Vincent 2009:51-53; Köstenberger 2004:41; Carson 1991:127; Ridderbos 1997:50-51; McHugh 2009:57; Moloney 1993:42). Thus, Barrett (1978:165) avows that ἐσκήνωσεν is chosen because of the word which follows it: δόξα. According to him, it recalls in sound and meaning the Hebrew word used to denote the dwelling of God with Israel (Barrett 1978:165; cf. Morris 1995:91; Ridderbos 1997:50-51). The argument is based on the 'divine dwelling' in the Old Testament wilderness wanderings with its concomitant glory and the apparent replication of these motifs by John (Barrett 1978:165; Morris 1995:91; cf. Köstenberger 2004:42). As God dwelt within the community of faith in the wilderness, the bright cloud which settled upon the tabernacle was considered the tangible expression of God's abiding presence – his glory (Barrett 1978:165). Thus, John evokes both motifs ('dwell' and 'glory') to indicate that through the incarnation, God's glory takes up residence amid his people once again (Köstenberger 2004:42; cf. Harris 2015:35; Vincent 2009:52-53; Ridderbos 1997:51; Keener 2003:411; Morris 1995:91-92).

Further, it is pertinent to state that the reference to δόξαν αὐτοῦ is the only moment in which the 'we' of the human community enters the narrative, supporting the μαρτυρία of John with her μαρτυρία (cf. Ridderbos 1997:51). As the first witness (John) testified about the Son's pre-eminence (Jn 1:15; Jn 1:27), the community testifies about his pre-eminence, noting that his glory corresponds in nature to the glory of the uniquely begotten (Keener 2003:416; Ridderbos 1997:53; Morris 1995:93; Wuest 1983:209)[45] or only begotten of the Father (Harris 2015:35; Harris 2008:85-87; Vincent 2009:53; Morris 1995:93; Brant 2011:35; cf. McHugh 2009:58). Nonetheless, what is expressed during the incarnation is glory 'revealed under

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[45] For an elaborate discussion on the subject, see Harris (2004:84-88).

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human limitations both in Himself and in those who beheld Him' (Vincent 2009:52; cf. Moloney 1993:43; Westcott 1980:22) – the apostles (Köstenberger 2004:42; Keener 2003:411; Tenney 1997:71) and/or eyewitnesses (Vincent 2009; Ridderbos 1997:52; Carson 1991:128; Harris 2015:35; Westcott 1980:22). And it was manifested through his works or signs (Carson 1991: 128; Morris 1995:93; Köstenberger 2004:42; Barrett 1978:166; Beasley-Murray 1987:14; Harris 2015:35), death and resurrection (Morris 1995:93; Carson 1991:128).

Additionally, John declares that the Son is 'full of grace and truth' (Jn 1:14d). The term is a combination that indicates an evocation of the Old Testament concept of God (Vincent 2009:54; Westcott 1980:24; Ridderbos 1997:54; Köstenberger 2004:44) – a designation by which Yahweh makes himself known in his glory (Ridderbos 1997:56). It also symbolises the faithfulness of God to God's people (Barrett 1978:167; Köstenberger 2004:44). Consequently, the elementary ramification is that the faithfulness of God finds ultimate expression in the community through the incarnation (Köstenberger 2004:45). The incarnate Word becomes God's revelation to the community (Barrett 1978:167; Westcott 1980:24; Vincent 2009:54; cf. Köstenberger 2004:46-47). And the believing community receives continuous grace out of his (the incarnate Word) fullness (Vincent 2009:57; Ridderbos 1997:56; Köstenberger 2004:46-47; cf. McHugh 2009:66).

John further explicates the significance of the incarnation to the human community (Jn 1:17; Ridderbos 1997:57; Köstenberger 2004:48; Vincent 2009:55; Barrett 1978:169). By way of contrast, he reveals that whereas Moses served as an intermediary for the reception of the law, Jesus Christ brought grace and truth – his intrinsic possession (Harris 2015:37; Ridderbos 1997:58; cf. Morris 1995:99).

The prologue concludes with an important task accomplished by the Son in the human community. John emphatically states that no man has seen God (Morris 1995:100; Köstenberger 2004:48; Harris 2015:38; Harris 2008:93-94) – not even Moses (Ridderbos 1997:58-59; Köstenberger 2004:48). Nevertheless, the theanthropic Jesus – though truly man (Harris 2015:35; Vincent 2009:51; Morris 1995:91) – is exempted. Being God uniquely begotten or μονογενὴς θεὸς (Harris 2015:38; Carson 1991:139; Morris 1995:100; Voorwinde 2002:31; Metzger

1971:198),[46] he enjoys unparalleled and timeless intimacy with the Father (Köstenberger 2004:49; Voorwinde 2002:32; Vincent 2009:60).

Most importantly, this eternal relationship makes the Son the only legitimate and authoritative expositor of the Father and the community he represents (Voorwinde 2002:32). Consequently, John presents him as the exegete of the Father and (by extension) the divine community (Vincent 2009:61; Brant 2011:37; Harris 2015:39; Morris 1995: 101; Köstenberger 2004:50; Beasley-Murray 1987:16; Wuest 1983:210). And the incarnation was the vehicle through which the Son exegeted (revealed or explained) God to the human community (Vincent 2009:61; Wuest 1983:210). Harris (2015:39) rightly affirms that ἐξηγήσατο encompasses in a single glance the whole span of Christ's earthly life, including his death and resurrection. Thus, by concluding the prologue with the summary of Christ's earthly life, John is indicating that what follows (the entire gospel) 'should be read as an account of Jesus 'telling the whole story' of God the Father' (Köstenberger 2004:50; cf. Moloney 1993:24). In other words, the narrative (the rest of the gospel) 'shows' what the prologue 'tells' (Moloney 1993:24).

2.1.3.6   The perlocutionary effect of the prologue on the theme

John lays the foundation for the community theme in the prologue. The prologue helps to establish that community is a divine intention and not a human invention. It opens with some interrelated concepts to this effect. First, it presents God as a community (cf. Borchert 1996:106; Harris 2008:68). Additionally, it considers the concept of community as a starting point (Kunene 2012:188; Kanagaraj 2013:2). The reason is that John begins with the concept of an eternal community, constituted by God and the Logos.

Against this backdrop, John presents the creation as the product of collaboration and an extension of the divine relationship. Since creation outflows from this relationship, humanity exists to participate in it: the community of God (Grenz 2000:112; cf.

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[46] Harris (2015:38; 2008:74-83) lists four variant readings as follows: ὁ μονογενὴς, ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς, ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς, μονογενὴς θεὸς. It is generally accepted, however, that μονογενὴς θεὸς has better attestation than the others (Harris 2015:38; Harris 2008:74-83; Carson 1991:139; Morris 1995:100; Vincent 2009:59; Voorwinde 2002:31; Barrett 1978:169; Metzger 1971:198; cf. Wuest 1983:210). Some also avow that there are compelling reasons for taking μονογενὴς as equivalent to (ὁ) μονογενὴς υἱὸς and translating the phrase as 'the only Son, who is God' (Carson 1991:139; Harris 2015:38; 2008:88-92). However, Vincent (2009:59) argues that the sense of the passage is not affected whether we read the only begotten Son or God only begotten (cf. McHugh 2009:69).

Kanagaraj 2013:2). However, this divine purpose cannot be fulfilled independent of God; a world that does not know God is not conscious of the will of God (cf. Jn 1:10). Consequently, a genuine relationship with God is a prerequisite for the revelation and manifestation of the divine intentions for humanity. Wherefore, God sends John the Baptist, the witness who has experienced this relationship, to testify about the revelation of God to humanity – the Light (or the Logos) (Brant 2011:31; Keener 2003:392; cf. Jn 1:6; Jn 15:26-27).

Through the incarnation, the Logos assumes a community of nature with humankind and exegetes his community to the world (Vincent 2009:61; Brant 2011:37; Harris 2015:39; Morris 1995: 101; Köstenberger 2004:50; Beasley-Murray 1987:16; Wuest 1983:210), thereby granting the members of the believing community the authorisation to become the community of God (Vincent 2009:49; Morris 1995:87; Van der Watt 2000:182; Westcott 1980:16; Keener 2003:403). The incarnation is also a conduit for the exegesis of God and the eternal community (Vincent 2009:61; Brant 2011:37; Harris 2015:39; Morris 1995:101; Köstenberger 2004:50). The entire gospel provides the framework for the exegesis (Köstenberger 2004:50).

It is important to stress that the idea of telling the whole story encompasses (but it is not limited to) ontological equivalence with the Father (Jn 5:17-19; Ridderbos 1997:191; Köstenberger 2004:185; Moloney 1998:174; Harris 2015:110; Brant 2011:105), the unparalleled and timeless relationship they enjoy and the functional unity which proceeds from that union (Jn 5:17-30; Vincent 2009:135) – an extension of the community theme in the prologue (cf. Gharbin & Van Eck 2022:6-7). Thus, it is safe to conclude that the exegesis of the Father by the Son includes his revelations on the community. Therefore, what follows is a narrative analysis of John 5 for a paradigm of the incarnate Word's exegesis and expression of the community.

2.2   NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF JOHN 5

John 5 shares some commonalities with the prologue. Like the prologue, it allows the reader to appreciate the revelation of the community of God in the human community. It also reveals the human society's failure to manifest its divine intentions. Beyond these, the attitude of the characters at Bethesda raises questions about some of the tenets and praxis of collectivism, the general scholarly description of first-century Mediterranean culture (Malina 1993a:67, 2007:106, 2010:19). Thus,

the narrative is analysed through the prism of community to uncover the societal maladies at Bethesda and the divine God's remedy to the problems.

2.2.1 The delimitation of John 5

The consensus among scholars is that the narrative (Jn 5) begins from the first verse of the fifth chapter (Köstenberger 2004:174; Moloney 1996:2; Talbert 2005:127; Asiedu-Peprah 2001:52). On the other hand, two scholarly opinions exist concerning the end of the literary unit. Borgen (2014:138) and like-minded scholars avow that John 5:1-18 form an independent unit. On the contrary, many scholars confirm the literary unity of John 5:1-47 (Köstenberger 2004:174; Moloney 1996:2; Talbert 2005:127; Schubert 2008:51; Asiedu-Peprah 2001:52; Brant 2011:97).

On the reasons for the divergent positions, Borgen's (2014:138) contends that John 5:1-18 is a documented oral unit and not just something extrapolated from oral tradition. His argument emanates from using a diachronic approach – a historical-critical method – to analyse the historical development or application of the material. Indeed, John used existing traditions (Dodd 1963:180). But, has Borgen not stretched the argument beyond its elasticity? For instance, Dodd (1963:179) contends that traditions are employed uniquely by John. Labahn (2007:61) confirms that using traditions involves forming unfamiliar meanings. Consequently, Borgen's (2014:138) position is incomplete because it ignores the innovative utilisation of the material in John 5. In Chapter 5, the healing (Jn 1:1-18) is not the centre stage but a catalyst for the discussions that follow (Schubert 2008:51).

Indeed, the majority view (literary unity of Jn 5:1-47) does not dispute the possibility that John 5:1-18 is a unit. It studies the text using a synchronic approach and concentrates on the Johannine application of the material in its final form (Köstenberger 2004:174; Moloney 1996:27; Witherington 1995:134; Schubert 2008:51). Further, to advance their position, they focus on the thematic unity of John 5:1-47. Their studies (Köstenberger 2004:174; Moloney 1996:27; Witherington 1995:134; Schubert 2008:51; Asiedu-Peprah 2001:52) indicate that the Sabbath theme is the unifying element in the chapter. John demonstrates this by stating that the healing occurred on a Sabbath day and making the subsequent events in the narrative traceable to it (Köstenberger 2004:181-183; Witherington 1995:134).

Moreover, some scholars affirm that John 5 shares commonalities with other healing stories (Witherington 1995:134; Talbert 2005:127). Talbert (2005:127) sees the narrative as a reflection of the traditional tripartite model in which the author states a problem, the healing, and the response that accompanies it. Witherington (1995:134), on the other hand, expands the model to include a statement of the illness, meeting between the sick and Jesus, the action performed to authentic the healing, and the reactions of observers to the event (Witherington 1995:134). The implication is that the narrative does not end at John 5:8 because it does not possess all the stipulated features.

In addition to the aforesaid, scholars use the phrase, μετὰ ταῦτα, to delimit the narrative (Moloney 1998:165; Culpepper 1993:196; Talbert 2005:127; Schubert 2008:51). These authors, for example, insist that the phrase 'after this' (in John 5:1 and John 6:1) affirms that John 5 is a literary unit. They consider the device as a 'beginning marker', and in consequence, conclude that the text ends at John 5:47 since it recurs in John 6:1 (marking the beginning of another narrative).

Unarguably, there is sufficient evidence in support of the literary unity of John 5. First, the position of μετὰ ταῦτα (Jn 5:1 and Jn 6:1) creates an *inclusio* (or inclusion) (Schubert 2008:51; Coxon 2014:99 Witherington 2005:133). Moloney (1998:165) and Culpepper (1993:196) confirm that the device is employed predominantly to indicate the commencement of new narratives to the reader. Thus, because μετὰ ταῦτα is used in John 6:1 to commence another narrative, John 5:1-47 belongs to the previous section. Nonetheless, there are exceptions (for instance, John 13:7; John 19:28). In such instances, μετὰ ταῦτα does not indicative a new section; it only means 'later' (cf. John 13:7; John 19:28). Similarly, John 5:14 does not begin a new narrative; rather, it just indicates what transpired 'later' (Carson 1991:245; Ridderbos 1997:190) or 'later the same day' (Köstenberger 2004:174).

On the other hand, more evidence points to the conclusion that in John 6:1, the expression heralds the beginning of a new narrative (cf. Osborne 2006:217). First, there is a change in geographical location from Jerusalem (Jn 5:1) to 'over the sea of Galilee' (Jn 6:1). Additionally, the theme is changed; the Sabbath and its related events and discourse disappear in the fifth chapter, and a new one commences in

the next chapter. Thus, it is safe to agree with Moloney (1998:165) that the unity of John 5 is certain because of the unity of place, time, characters, and theme.

Finally, seeing the narrative as a thematic unit also influences the structuring of the pericope.

2.2.2 The structure of John 5

Since scholars who accept the literary unity of John 5 predominantly use the Sabbath theme as the premise of their arguments, their proposed structures (though distinct) stress on the theme and Jesus' identity as the Son and Lord of the Sabbath (see Moloney 1996:2-27; Bystrom 2003:98-106; Witherington 1995: 136-141; Köstenberger 2004:175; Harris 2015:104-117). Moloney (1996:2-19; cf. Gharbin 2016:29-30), for example, structures the narrative as follows:

1. Jesus' healing work on a Sabbath (Jn 5:1-18)

   a. Introduction (Jn 5:1-4)

   b. The Sabbath event (Jn 5:5-18)

2. Life and judgment (Jn 5:19-30)

   a. Theological introduction (Jn 5:19-20)

   b. The Son exercises authority to give life (Jn 5:21)

   c. The basis of the Son's authority to judge is explained (Jn 5:22)

   d. Theological reflection (Jn 5:23)

   e. The Son as the life-giver (Jn 5:24-25)

   f. The basis of the Son's authority as life-giver is explained (Jn 5:26)

   g. The Son's authority to judge (Jn 5:27)

   h. The Son as judge and life-giver (Jn 5:28-29)

   i. Theological conclusion (Jn 5:30)

3. Witness and accusations (Jn 5:31-47)

   a. The problem of an acceptable witness to Jesus (Jn 5:31-32)

b. A series of witnesses presented to 'the Jews' (Jn 5:33-40)

    1. John the Baptist (Jn 5:33-35)

    2. The works of Jesus (Jn 5:36)

    3. The word of the unseen Father (Jn 5:37-40)

c. Two contrasting understanding of *doxa*: (Jn 5:41-44)

d. The Jews are accused by the writings of Moses: (Jn 5:45-47).

Köstenberger (2004:175; cf. Gharbin 2016:29) proposes a concise structure as follows:

1. The setting (Jn 5:1-3)

2. The healing (Jn 5:5-9a)

3. The aftermath (Jn 5:9b-15)

4. The Sabbath controversy (Jn 5:16-47)

    a. Jesus' response to the charges of Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy (Jn 5:16-30)

    b. Testimony regarding Jesus (Jn 5:1-47).

Harris (2015:104-117) also structures the narrative distinctively:

1. Jesus heals the man at the pool of Bethesda (Jn 5:1-15)

2. Jesus replies to his opponents (Jn 5:16-47)

    a. Jesus and the Sabbath (Jn 5:16-18)

    b. Jesus grants life and exercises judgment (Jn 5:19-30)

    c. Witnesses to Jesus (Jn 5:31-47).

Further, because no one has studied the narrative through the lens of community, no structure focuses on that. Thus, this work proposes one which takes into consideration the communicative force of the theme of community:

1. The Bethesda community (Jn 5:1-3)

2. The divine remedy for Bethesda community (Jn 5:5-9a)

3. The religious community concentrates on the Sabbath (Jn 5:9b-13)

4. The religious community identifies the 'Sabbath breaker' (Jn 5:14-16)

5. Jesus exegetes the divine community (Jn 5:17-47)

2.2.3 The analysis of John 5
2.2.3.1 The Bethesda community (Jn 5:1-3a)

The narrator introduces the narrative (John 5:1) using μετὰ ταῦτα. By this Johannine linguistic device, the real reader is signalled to anticipate a new section (Moloney 1996:4, 1998b:165; Culpepper 1993:196; Talbert 2005:127; Schubert 2008:40-41; Witherington 1995:133; Brant 2011:100). Whereas Keener (2003:635) considers the phrase as a chronological marker, Schubert (2008:40-41) opines that John uses these words primarily to indicate a change of subject or geographical location. In this case, however, the phrase occasions both topographical and thematic changes.[47] The narrative indicates that there is a geographical change from Galilee (Jn 4:54) to Jerusalem (Jn 5:1). Additionally, a thematic change is announced through the healing of the paralytic on a Sabbath day (Jn 5:9).

John proceeds to explain the reason for the topographical and thematic changes. 'A feast of the Jews' is mentioned as the justification for Jesus' voyage from Galilee to Jerusalem (Jn 5:1). The narrator's 'unconventional labelling' of the feast has precipitated speculations and a gamut of suggestions from Johannine scholars.[48] The reason is that John is known for connecting feasts to his narrative (Carson 1991:240; Yee 2007:30; Keener 2003:634) because of their significance in the piety of the believing community (Yee 2007:27).[49] Consequently, the conjectures aim at uncovering the communicative force of the 'feast of the Jews' in this narrative.

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[47] The same thing is repeated in John 6 and John 7 where the phrase occasioned both a change in theme and location. In John 6, Jesus departs from his location in Jerusalem and goes over the sea of Galilee (Jn 6:1). Additionally, the predominant theme in John 5 (Sabbath) is replaced by the feeding of the multitude. Similarly, in John 7, Jesus is seen in Galilee debating with his brothers on the right time to go to Judaea (Jn 7:3).

[48] Some of feasts associated with 'a feast of the Jews' includes the Passover (Morris 1995:265; Barnes n.d.; Poole n.d.), Pentecost (Bengel n.d.; Calvin n.d.), Purim (Meyer n.d.; Ellicott n.d.), and Tabernacles (Boismard 1999:208-218).

[49] John attaches John 2:13, John 6:4, and John 11:35 to the Passover, John 7:2 to the Feast of Tabernacles, and John 10:22 to the Feast of Dedications.

Nonetheless, it appears that John's silence, in this case, could be attributed to the fact that he mentioned ἑορτὴ just to indicate the purpose of the directional change (Moloney 1996:2-3: Carson 1991:241). Again, the mention of a Jewish religious feast places the event within a religious context (Yee 2007:16). It also introduces the *theme* of feasts and demonstrates how feasts inform John's Christology (Moloney 1996:2; Daise 2007:68).

Having established Jesus' mission in Jerusalem, bewilderingly, John describes a location in Jerusalem without demonstrating its connection to the religious feast in question: a place near the 'Sheep Gate' (Köstenberger 2004:179; Carson 1991:241; Bruce 1993:122; Estes 2013:116; Keener 2003:636).[50] And unlike the feast which occasioned the visit, the location is named. Scholars are, however, divided on the right reading of the name of the pool. Thus, some suggested names are Bethesda, Bethzatha, or Bethsaida (Metzger 1971:208; Moloney 1998:171; Siebald 1992:84).[51] Based on the corresponding Hebrew name in the Qumran Copper scroll, 'Bethesda' is widely accepted among them (Bruce 1983:122; Moloney 1998:171; Carson 1991:241; Metzger 1971:208; Keener 2003:636; Talbert 2005:127). Additionally, the meaning of the name – House of (Divine) mercy – could be one of the reasons for its wide acceptance (Metzger 1971:208; Wahlde 2006:561). It derives its significance from the deliverances at the pool, which is considered products of God's mercy (Köstenberger 2004:178; Wahlde 2006:561).

Again, since the setting of a narrative has a figurative tenor (Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:79), the idea of situating the event in a religious context is reiterated and further heightened by this labelling and representation (cf. Jn 5:1; Yee 2007:16; Asiedu-Peprah 2001:52). Thus, to legitimise its name as a place where God shows mercy, a community constituted by the sick (invalids, blind, lame, and paralysed) and searching for divine mercy or healing is indicated as occupants of the colonnades at Bethesda.[52]

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[50] These scholars agree that instead of sheep market, it should read 'Sheep Gate.' What they have in mind is the Sheep Gate Nehemiah mentions (Neh 3:1, 32).

[51] Bethzatha is accepted by some scholars because the name resembles a northern suburb in Jerusalem (Siebald 1992:84). Conversely, others accept Bethsaida because it is confused with a town in John 1:44 (Bruce 1983:122; see Metzger 1971:208).

[52] John 5:3b-4 attempts to demonstrate the mode of healing. Textual critics agree that the poor external attestations and the presence of non-Johannine words in the verse render it inauthentic (Metzger 1971:209; Harris 2015:105; Köstenberger 2004:195). Thus, they are considered as scribal

2.2.3.2 The divine remedy for Bethesda community: (Jn 5:5-9a)

Having established the different groups that constitute the community and the purpose of congregating there, the attention of the reader is drawn to a particular case after a general, pictorial, and panoramic presentation of the conditions at Bethesda. This character who is a member of the Bethesda community is merely identified as τις ἄνθρωπος (a certain man). In a status-conscious social system such as the first-century world (Malina 1993a:107), introducing a character with such description must be regarded with suspicion. Also, it is noteworthy that this identification marker is characteristic of John (Jn 1:6, Jn 3:1, Jn 5:5, Jn 9:1, and Jn 11:1). Out of the five instances, the narrative describes three of them by their names and 'social standing' (John the Baptist [Jn 1:6], Nicodemus [Jn 3:1], and Lazarus in Jn 11:1). Nicodemus was a Pharisee – a teacher of Israel (Jn 3:1-10). That denotes a man of high social standing (Skinner 2015:128). Further, Lazarus was Jesus' friend, an anticipation of the latter elevation of the status of the disciples (Esler & Piper 2006:91). John the Baptist was also God's authorized personal representative (Harris 2015:26) – a man with high social standing (Webb 1991:349-377).[53] On the other hand, the name and status of this man (and the congenitally blind man in Jn 9) are unknown. The absence of such identification reflects his social condition – an impoverished (Köstenberger 2004:180; Keener 2003:640; Harris 2015:106)[54] man who had no status in his society (Porter 2015:54; Keener 2003:640).

Apart from the social malady, his condition is known. He is suffering from long-term debilitation (lameness [Jn 5:5; cf. Jn 5:8-9], a disvalued state [Pilch 2000:13]). Many people in antiquity do not even live for 38 years (Köstenberger 2004:179). Thus, the '38 years' is purposefully stated to highlight both the severity and hopelessness of his condition (Ridderbos 1997:185; Tenney 1997:104; Köstenberger 2004:179).

Against this background, John introduces Jesus' response to the problem through various actions. Consequently, the verbs ὁράω (to see), γινώσκω (to know), and

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insertions, serving as marginal glosses to capture the popular belief of the people about the reason behind the stirring of the water and its consequence (Carson 1991:242; Bruce 1983:122; Moloney 1998b:171; Bultmann 1971:240-241; Barrett 1978:251). Therefore, most scholars suggest that it must be omitted due to its absence in the best and earliest manuscripts (see Metzger 1971:209; Harris 2015:105), such as P66, P75, Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and others (Talbert 2005:128; Jones 1997:124).

[53] Webb (1991:349-377) has done an extensive sociohistorical study on John the Baptist, considering his significance in the narrative.

[54] According to these scholars (Köstenberger 2004:180; Keener 2003:640; Harris 2015:106), the man's mat reveals his economic status, that is, poor.

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λέγω (to say) are worth mentioning because of how John employs them interconnectedly to unveil the actions of Jesus targeted at alleviating the problem (Jn 5:6). The process of healing commences with Jesus seeing the man (Jn 5:6). However, the expression (τοῦτον ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς κατακείμενον) does not merely indicate that Jesus caught a glimpse of him (see Brown 1996:207; Ridderbos 1997:185). In some instances, John (and the gospel traditions) indicates Jesus seeing a sick person before the healing as an introduction to action (Brown 1996:207; Ridderbos 1997:185; cf. Jn 9:1).[55] This approach poses no problems for his audience because it is grounded in a thorough knowledge of their background.The Mediterranean culture establishes a link between what one sees and the positive actions it triggers when one observes through the eyes of pity (Malina 1993b:139). The quality of pity is said to inhere in a person's eyes or heart and is revealed by what a person does on behalf of others in need (Malina 1993b:139). It indicates that positive actions are provoked when people in need are viewed through the lens of pity (see Malina 1993b:139).

The significance of this concept lies in its inextricable connection honour, a pivotal value in the Mediterranean society (cf. Malina 1993a:28; Van Eck 2011:4; Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:369). According to Malina (1993b:139), pity is a means of achieving honour; it provokes honourable acts towards those in need. The individual who acts out of pity is also said to be compassionate (Malina 1993b:139). Finally, pity is also a theological value – a quality of God (Malina 1993b:139). Thus, John is evoking one of their culturally held values to explain Jesus' response. Therefore, the relationship established between 'seeing' and 'acting' suggests that Jesus personifies the various representations of the quality of pity in that community. Through the eyes of compassion, he becomes the merciful one who demonstrates pity in a house of mercy devoid of mercy, 'seeing' the man in the depth of his misery (Ridderbos 1997:185; see Malina 1993b:139).

Further, the import of John's Christological perspective on the lame becomes more conspicuous when juxtaposed to the first-century Mediterranean view on lameness. Despite the value of pity in the culture, in praxis, people who needed it most (such as

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[55] Luke 7:13 records a similar case where Jesus was moved with compassion to raise the son of the widow of Nain after seeing her. Thus, the idea of tracing Jesus' compassionate actions to 'seeing' the individual first is characteristic of the gospel traditions and not just a Johannine style.

the lame) did not always receive it. On the contrary, some viewed them with contempt (Keener 2003:640) because being lame was considered a disvalued state (Pilch 2000:13). And in a society where a person's honour is his publicly acknowledged worth, this is tantamount to shame (Plevnik 1993:96; Rohrbaugh 2010:109; cf. Lv 21:18). Thus, Jesus' response to the situation challenges the culture to reevaluate its views on this marginalized group.

Moreover, even though John invokes a theological and cultural value, he builds upon that knowledge. The verbs ὀράω and γινώσκω are connected to demonstrate that though 'seeing' is an introduction to action in John (Brown 1996:207; Ridderbos 1997:185), in this case, the awareness of the problem prompted his actions (Morris 1995:268; Ridderbos 1997:185).[56] The knowledge of the condition influenced Jesus' view of the man's reality (Ridderbos 1997:185).

Having established these premises, John describes other actions taken by Jesus. First, Jesus initiates a conversation with the man to elicit his response (Estes 2013:117; Köstenberger 2004:180). It is noteworthy that characteristic of the gospel traditions, the sick usually comes to Jesus to ask for healing (Witherington 1995:134; Keener 2003:640). In this narrative, the converse is the case (Carson 1991:243; Witherington 1995:134; Keener 2003:640). Jesus seeks the man's attention by asking him a polar question (Estes 2013:117). In his examination of the interrogative force of Jesus' questions in John, Estes (2013:117) establishes that though polar questions require either a positive or negative response ('yes or no'), the use of ὑγιὴς coupled with the compassion that occasioned the question makes a positive response the only expected answer. The man answers differently; he explains the futility of his attempts at procuring his healing and the cause of the long-term debilitation instead (Jn 5:7).[57] Indeed, his persistent presence at the pool and the

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[56] Since John does not indicate how Jesus received information about the man's predicament, scholars have sought to explain the source of his information by showing that it was through supernatural knowledge (Moloney 1996:5; Brown 1966:207; Morris 1995:268; Witherington 1995:137; see Köstenberger 2004:180). Köstenberger (2004:180) and Carson (1991:243), on the other hand, assert that Jesus asked for the information even though they admit that the word is used for both supernatural knowledge and knowledge gained through inquiry.

[57] The notion that miraculous healings transpired after the angelic stirring of the pool (a follow up of Jn 5:3b-4) is considered as inauthentic due to the absence of sufficient external evidence (Metzger 1971:209; Köstenberger 2004:195). Since they are considered as scribal insertions, (Carson 1991:242; Bruce 1983:122; Moloney 1998b:171), the explanation in John 5:7 forms part of the marginal glosses (Brown 1966:207).

several unproductive attempts to step into it, demonstrate his willingness for healing (Bruce 1983:124, Carson 1991:243, Tenney 1997:105). It also makes conspicuous the absence of human help as the cause of his unrealised goal (Moloney 1996:5; Tenney 1997:105).

His answer (ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἔχω) is astounding. It establishes the cause of his exacerbated condition and the 'colossal cultural failure' which helped to perpetuate it (Pilch 2000:13; see also Pilch 1993:33). By that statement, John is indicating that the impoverished (Köstenberger 204:180; Keener 2003:640) and hopeless lame man (Ridderbos 1997:185; Tenney 1997:104; Brown 1966:207; see also Köstenberger 2004:179) who has no social position (Porter 2015:54; Köstenberger 204:180; Keener 2003:640), cannot also find help even in the house of mercy (Moloney 1996:5; Tenney 1997:105).

There are valid reasons why his answer is astonishing. First, John develops the narrative within a religious-cultural context (Asiedu-Peprah 2001:52; Yee 2007:16). Jesus comes to Jerusalem to celebrate a religious feast. Asiedu-Peprah (2001:52) argues that 'the mention of a feast is intended to place the whole of chapter 5 within a specific religious-cultural setting' (cf. Yee 2007:16). In Jerusalem, Jesus enters society with a religious identity (Bethesda) – a place where members live in expectation of God's omnibenevolence (cf. Köstenberger 2004:178; Wahlde 2006:561). So, it is reasonable to expect that people who live in anticipation of days of personal experiences of the mercies of God will replicate this attribute or one worthy of their identity. Indeed, to the ancient Mediterranean world, religion means 'the attitude one must have and the behaviour one is expected to follow relative to those who control one's existence' (Malina 1993a:31). It implies that God, the controller of life, expects humans to demonstrate an expected attitude. Malina (1993a:31) argues that Bible translations sometimes refer to this behaviour as justice (cf. Downs 2013:163).[58] As a virtue, justice refers to how community members relate to one another and reminds members to treat each other as they wish that God might treat them (Keenan 2002:121). Again, it manifests special care for the poor and marginalised in the society (Keenan 2002:121-122, 126; Harrington 2002:126).

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[58] Jesus refers to justice and mercy as the weightier matters of the law (Mt 23:23).

Regrettably, there was no justice at Bethesda. Instead, what was present were acts of injustice perpetrated against the disenfranchised and most vulnerable members of that community (Witherington 1995:137). The word βάλη (John 5:7) indicates that a certain degree of agility is a prerequisite for healing in the water before the cessation of its agitations (Vincent 2009:132). And since the lame man and other weak members of that community were incapacitated and immobilised by their sicknesses – they who needed healing most – were hindered by those whose sicknesses did not immobilise them (Witherington 1995:137). Thus, healings obtained at Bethesda are not products of communal or collective efforts but are contingent on the individual's competitive spirit, level of fitness, swiftness, and probably connections (Jn 5:7; see Witherington 1995:137).

The strong presence of individualism at Bethesda is antithetical to the first-century Mediterranean culture. Scholars agree that the Mediterranean selves were communalistic (Malina 1993a:67, 2007:106, 2010:19). The practice of collectivism in their cultural context is rooted in their appreciation of group orientation as a primary value (Neyrey 1993:91). It indicates that individuals should always 'seek the good of the neighbour' and not pursue individualistic goals (Neyrey 1993:89). Therefore, unless for the benefit of the group, competition is considered disruptive of social harmony (Malina 2010:22). Individualistic goals coupled with competition does not encourage cooperativeness: the urge to help one another and especially those in need (Pilch 1993:33). Further, since cooperativeness is governed by family-centeredness (Pilch 1993:33), expressing this cultural value, in turn, breeds family-centeredness, making it possible for the community to enjoy 'justice' (see Malina 1993b:136). Thus, the privation of help to those who needed it most betrays the tenets of collectivism (see Pilch 1993:33) and makes individualism the root of the enormous religious-cultural disappointment displayed at Bethesda.

Moreover, there are sufficient proofs in their cultural values to warrant the needed support. For instance, justice – loyalty – was also appreciated in the family institution (Malina 1993b:136), the dominant institution in the first-century Mediterranean world (Van Eck 2014:61). Within a kinship group, justice also means enduring loyalty to one's kin (Malina 1993:136). Malina (1993:136) argues that this enduring loyalty is demonstrated to the individual regardless of the conduct. Thus, family members were to support each other (Malina 1993b:136). In this narrative, John is silent on the

family of the man. Consequently, he leaves a gap for other 'family members' to occupy – friends (cf. Grant 2011:103).

In the absence of kinsmen, friends could have helped him (see Grant 2011:103).[59] In the first-century Mediterranean world, one's survival depends upon making friends (Pilch 2000:13). An important reason was that friends were 'persons who treated each other as if they were family' (Van Eck 2011:5). Implicit in this definition is the idea that friendship required commitment (Van Eck 2011:5) – one which made it a moral obligation to help a friend in need (Moxnes 1988:62). Therefore, being friendless means the deprivation of friendship and 'family', with all its associated benefits – accessing help from deeply committed members in times of need (see Pilch 2000:13; Moxnes 1988:62).

The above reasons show that viewing the man's answer (I have no one) through the lens of first-century Mediterranean cultural values leads to an agreement with Pilch (2000:13) that the narrative points to the restoration of the paralytic's disvalued states and the 'colossal cultural failure' which helped to perpetuate it.[60] First, the healing, confirmed by lifting the mat (Köstenberger 2004:180; Beutler 2013:148; Beasley-Murray 1987:74), shows the restoration of his disvalued state (Pilch 2000:13; cf. Keener 2003:640; Lv 21:18). The actions of Jesus also remind the community to demonstrate its religious-cultural values to the marginalized among them.

2.2.3.3   The religious community concentrate on the Sabbath (Jn 5:9b-13)

John introduces two new themes in the narrative: the Sabbath[61] and 'the Jews.' The Sabbath is crucial because it gives the new scene a religious-cultural context (Asiedu-Peprah 2001:52; see Keener 2003:641-642). The religious dimension of the Sabbath is that it must be observed and sanctified unto the Lord (cf. Dt 5:12). The cultural significance is the provision of liberation from work and any form of servitude

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[59] The Synoptic Gospels record a case where the narrative changed because a group of people carried a sick friend to Jesus (Mt 9:1; Mk 2:1-12; Lk 5:17-26).

[60] Pilch (2000:13) admits that the man's response is tantamount to a colossal cultural failure. However, he argues that in this healing story, Jesus improves the man's disvalued states by restoring him to wholeness and becoming his first friend (Pilch 2000:13). This seems to narrow the 'colossal cultural failure' to friendship. Friendship is not the only Mediterranean value that is not evident at Bethesda. Therefore, I argue that the encounter between Jesus and the paralytic exposes the missing link between the theory and praxis of collectivism and its interrelated Mediterranean values.

[61] In this narrative, John deviates from the Synoptics who usually place the Sabbath theme before the healing (O'Day & Hylen 2006:64).

within one's society, irrespective of one's social classification (Nelson 2004:83; Hasel 1982:32). Thus, one of the divine intentions for observing the Sabbath is to break down the wall of discrimination in a stratified society that grouped individuals into classes by one's gender or achievements and re-enact in the community humankind's original status (Nelson 2004:83; Hasel 1982:32).

Moreover, the community's responsibility towards the disenfranchised and marginalised are attached to the observance of the Sabbath (cf. Dt 5:12-15). The Old Testament gives two motivations for the command to observe the Sabbath: creation and the liberation from slavery in Egypt (cf. Dt 5:12-15; Ex 20:8-11; Ex 23:12). The freedom from Egypt serves as the basis for a social motivation – to prompt the people to allow those in bondage to participate in the communal rest provided by the Sabbath (Dt 5:14-15). So, indicating that the healing occurred on a Sabbath day, considering the abovementioned cultural import, the man's liberation from sickness is a way of reminding the community of its emancipatory role (cf. Dt 5:14-15).

Further, since the narrative has progressed from one 'religious-cultural scene' (Bethesda) to another – where Jewish religious authorities (Harris 2015:106; Köstenberger 2013:79; Stibbe 1994:78; Morris 1995:357; Moloney 1998:97) have been introduced – the Sabbath establishes the religious context of the narrative and sets the stage for the drama that follows (Martyn 2003:74; Carson 1991:244).

Therefore, the reader is prepared to anticipate a corresponding response. However, the attitude of the authorities shows the intensity of the societal maladies. The leaders demonstrate through their response that they are interested in the violation of the religious law and not the liberation of the man (Harris 2015:106; Moloney 1998b:168-169; Köstenberger 2013:79; Witherington 1995:138).[62] John's words (ἔλεγον οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τῷ τεθεραπευμένῳ) indicate that they acted purposely because of what had transpired on a Sabbath day. Unlike the introduction of Jesus that occasioned compassion and culminated in the healing, the religious leaders, from whom much is expected, paid no attention to the cure of an impoverished man (Köstenberger 2004:180; Keener 2003:640; Harris 2015:106) who had endured 38

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[62] Since the Sabbath was included in the three religious rituals that characterised the life of first-century Judaism, issues concerning it were of great interest (O'Day & Hylen 2006:64). Breaking it was practically the same as touching their communal identity (O'Day & Hylen 2006:64).

years of living in a disvalued state (Pilch 2000:13; see Köstenberger 2013:79). Their behaviour has been described as extraordinary (Beasley-Murray 1987:74), unimaginable and short-sighted for forgetting the true intent of the Law (Köstenberger 2013:79). They had jettisoned the weightier matters of the law (one of which is mercy) but promoted strict adherence to the law (cf. Mt 23:23; Köstenberger 2013:96). The narrative flow brings the reader to another discovery – the absence of mercy from the religious community. And this helps to appreciate the problems of the Bethesda community.

The man's response to the leaders for the violation of the law was that he was acting at the command of an authoritative (Harris 2015:106) but unfamiliar man (Bultmann 1971:243; Brant 2011:104). John's comment that the cured man was oblivious to Jesus' identity could be his way of further stressing that the healing was purely an act of mercy (what is lacking in the community) and not based on any prior relationship (cf. Jn 5:13).

2.2.3.4   The religious community identifies the 'Sabbath breaker' (Jn 5:14-16)

A new scene (not a new section) is introduced in John 5:14 using μετὰ ταῦτα (Moloney 1996:6; see Ridderbos 1997:181; Bultmann 1971:243). The phrase means 'later' (Carson 1991:245; Ridderbos 1997:190) or 'later the same day' (Köstenberger 2004:174) or an uncertain time (Morris 1995:272). Thus, the event – the encounter between Jesus and the healed man – is separated from the surrounding narrative (Moloney 1996:6). John creates a critical narrative event – a space in the plot – to see how the man responds to his new life. And the first place he enters is the temple (Jn 5:14). Interestingly, Jesus finds him in the temple and cautions him not to continue sinning (Beasley-Murray 1987:74; Morris 1995:272). The nature of Jesus' instruction stems from the repercussions of living in sin: something more terrible would happen to him (Köstenberger 2004:181; Harris 2015:107). This possibly refers to either another physical illness (Moloney 1998b:169; Morris 1995:272) or eternal damnation (Morris 1995:272; Ridderbos 1997:189).

Nevertheless, unlike the man healed from congenital blindness who defends Jesus in the presence of the Jewish leaders (Jn 9:15-17; Jn 9:24-34), he decides to go (ἀπέρχομαι) and report (ἀναγγέλλω) Jesus to the authorities (Harris 2015:107; Ridderbos 1997:189). And on account of this report (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο) (Brant 2011:104-

105; Ridderbos 1997:189) or healing on the Sabbath day (Talbert 2005:129; Harris 2015:109; Moloney 1996:8; Brant 2011:105), the religious leaders persecuted and sought to kill Jesus.[63]

2.2.3.5 Jesus exegetes the divine community (Jn 5:17-47)

Since the leaders could not discern Jesus' authority and the social maladies which the healing exposes and remedies, he 'exegetes' the 'divine community' as the ideal response to this colossal cultural failure. He makes statements with an illocutionary force to achieve a perlocutionary effect on the authorities.

The verb (ἀπεκρίνατο) has a legal undertone and indicates that what follows (John 5:17) is Jesus' reply to the leaders (Abbott 1905; Bruner 2012:321; Carson 1991:247).[64] For this reason, it indicates Jesus' response to the charges levelled against him (John 5:17). Using the family metaphor (ὁ πατήρ μου), Jesus appeals to his unique relationship with God (Harris 2015:110; Köstenberger 2013:97; Keener 2003:646; see Bruce 1993:128) as the substratum of his work (ὁ πατήρ μου ἕως ἄρτι ἐργάζεται κἀγὼ ἐργάζομαι). The expression ὁ πατήρ μου aims to assert that he enjoys ontological equality with the father (Ridderbos 1997:191; Köstenberger 2004:185; Moloney 1998b:174; Harris 2015:110; Beasley-Murray 1987:74-75; Brant 2011:105; Bultmann 1971:244). Again, the conjunction καὶ (which in this context means 'and so') and the emphatic ἐγὼ (both from the crasis κἀγὼ) suggest that by working on the Sabbath, Jesus is only replicating his father (Harris 2015:109; Bruce 1993:127). It is an adoption of a Jewish rabbinic opinion that some divine activities continue even on the Sabbath (Carson 1991:247; Keener 2003:646; Harris 2015:110; Talbert 2005:129). Therefore, his participation in the self-evident axiom of the constancy of divine activity is employed as an oblique claim to deity – doing what his Father does makes the Son as divine as the Father (Carson 1991:251; Barret 1978:256).[65] The interlocutors perfectly understood the perlocutionary effect of his

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[63] Though the imperfect tense indicates a repeated action (Mounce 1993:181; Köstenberger 2004:115), scholars disagree on the nature of the persecution. For instance, whereas Moloney (1996:8) and Carson (1991:247) agree that the imperfect tense suggests that the persecution was a repeated action, Harris (2015:109) thinks that the imperfect tense here is less likely to be customary.
[64] The word appears only in John 5:19 apart from John 5:17 (Bruner 2012:321; Carson 1991:247).
[65] The word. κἀγὼ places Jesus on the same level as God (Jn 5:17; Barret 1978:256).

illocutionary act, and hence, charged him with blasphemy (Ridderbos 1997:191; Köstenberger 2004:185; Moloney 1998:174; Brant 2011:105).[66]

Consequently, prefixing his argument with ἀμὴν ἀμὴν to establish the emphatic and supremely authoritative nature of his answer (Ridderbos 1997:192; Brodie: 1993:280),[67] Jesus begins to correct these misconceptions (from Jn 5:19) by 'exegeting' the 'divine community', focusing on collectivism, love, partnership, equality, and functional unity (Thompson 2001:77-78; Ngewa 2003:88-89).[68]

'The Jews' understood equality with God as independence from God,[69] whereas Jesus viewed it as the very opposite (Bultmann 1971:245; see Moloney 1998:174, 1996:9; Morris 1995:274-75; Harris 2015:112; Bruce 1993:128). Though they are one in being, the Son submits to the Father functionally (Morris 1995:277; Carson 1991:250; Ridderbos 1997:192; Talbert 2005:131; Ngewa 2003:93).[70] And accordingly, his works (both present and future works)[71] proceed from what the Father does and continuously shows him out of a perfect, continuing, and habitual love[72] (Bruce 1993:128: Morris 1995:278; Talbert 2005:131: Wuest 1983:221; Westcott 1980;190, see Carson 1991:251; Moloney 1996:13). And whatever the Son sees the Father doing, he does likewise (John 5:19). The adverb ὁμοίως (likewise), 'indicates identity of *action* (functional unity) based upon identity of nature (ontological equality)' (Vincent 2009:135). The ontological equality which exists

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[66] Bultmann (1971:245) argues that even though 'the Jews' understood what Jesus meant, their understanding of equality with God was different; whereas they saw equality with God as independence from God, Jesus meant the very opposite (see Moloney 1998b: 174, 1996:9; Morris 1995:274-75).

[67] In the New Testament, the double amen appears exclusively in John and from the mouth of Jesus (Ridderbos 1997:92; Kysar 1993:3; Brodie 1993:280; Abbott 1905:186).

[68] Describing the father-son relationship, Ngewa (2003:88-89) lists partnership, love, transparency, equality of power and honor, and delegate authority as parts of the attributes, evident in Jesus' response.

[69] To be 'equal to God' is a close equivalent of a later rabbinic phrase meaning to make oneself independent from God (Odeberg 1929:203; see Keener 2003:647).

[70] Jesus is using his experiences with his adoptive father (Harris 2015:112; Carson 1991:251; Köstenberger 2004:182) to argue that functional subordination is not at variance with ontological equality in a father-son relationship.

[71] Given the fact that he used both a present tense verb (δείκνυσιν) and its future tense (δείξει), the change of tense logically implies the continuance of the divine works. First and foremost, the Son submits to his Father and does what he sees (Morris 1995: 277; Carson 1991: 250; see Köstenberger 2004:182; Bruce 1993:128). And therefore, future 'showing' warrants future actions.

[72] Even though this is the only time the word φιλέω is used to describe the love of the Father for the Son (Morris 1995:278), Bruce (1993:128) and Carson (1991:251) argue that it is immaterial because the Father's love is affirmed already in this gospel (Jn 3:35) and expressed as ἀγαπαω (see Westcott 1980;190).

between the two precipitates functional unity, thereby producing exact or perfect parallelism between the Father and the Son (Carson 1991:252; Vincent 2009:135). Wherefore, the functions of the Son are the functions of the Father – their works one (Kysar 1993:43; Thompson 2001:77-78; Barrett 1978:260; Ngewa 2003:88). As a result, the Son's replication of the Father is a conduit for explicating the communal attributes that exist within the community of divine essence (see Thompson 2011:77-78) and for 'exegeting' the father's will and works to the religious community[73] (Carson 1991:251-252; Ridderbos 1997:193).

Talking about works, John makes it conspicuous that Jesus is referring to judgment and life-giving prerogatives (Jn 5:20-30; Morris 1995:278; Moloney 1998b:178, 182; Köstenberger 2004:183; Harris 2015:113; Beutler 2013:154).[74] Jewish theology ascribes these rights exclusively to God (Barrett 1978:260; Morris 1995:279; Thompson 2001:77; Ngewa 2003:93). But Jesus reveals something new, that is, the Son also has the divine prerogative of giving life (Jn 5:21; Jn 5:26; Harris 2015:114; Thompson 2001:77; Morris 1995:279), presently and eschatologically (Beasley-Murray 1987:77; Barrett 1978:260; Brant 2011:104). Nonetheless, the Son's exercise of the exclusively divine functions is grounded on the Father's eternal investiture of life in him (Harris 2015:114; Ngewa 2003:93; see Thompson 2001:77-78; Morris 1995:279). And the eternal investiture gives the Son the complete freedom to dispense life to whom he pleases (Morris 1995:279; Barrett 1978:260; Westcott 1980:191). Thus, the healing of the paralytic at Bethesda is not a violation of law, but an exercise of the life-giving prerogative vested in the Son (Barrett 1978:260; Westcott 1980:191; Brant 2011:104, 106).[75] Furthermore, since the Son establishes that the ontological equality which he enjoys with the father is the substratum of their functional unity, he works in partnership with the Father (Kysar 1993:43; Thompson 2001:77-78; Ngewa 2003:88). So, to question his authority and right to give life is to be guilty of questioning the authority of God. Therefore, having established this, he

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[73] Jesus was 'exegeting' the Father to the religious community which claimed to know and represent God (John 9:28-34) and yet, could neither discern his voice (Jn 5:37) nor his deeds (Jn 5:16; Jn 9:16-28).
[74] Carson (1991:253) argues that 'raises the dead' and 'gives life' are the same.
[75] The healing is considered by many as a resurrection or the exercise of the life-giving prerogative (Barrett 1978:260; Westcott 1980:191; Brant 2011:104, 106). Brant (2011:104), for instance, argues that the verb ἐγείρω and the language of healing used in John only in this case (Jn 5:6, 9, 11, 14, 15; Jn 7:23), may render this healing a sort of resurrection. In ancient conception, a limb that was not usable was dead, and so its restoration would be a restoration of life itself. According to him, this position is supported by the reference to resurrection (Brant 2011:106).

discusses judgement – another divine prerogative – with these 'judges' (Jn 5:22; cf. Jn 5:27; Barrett 1978:260; Morris 1995:279; Thompson2001:77). According to the Son, this has also been conferred on him (Vincent 2009:137; Barrett 1978:260; Köstenberger 2004:184; Carson 1991:254). Just like the life-giving prerogative, the judgment (Jn 5:22; Jn 5:27-30) belongs to both the present and the future, making him the 'present' and eschatological judge (Barrett 1978:260).

John indicates that the Father vested these in him for two reasons (Jn 5:23; Jn 5:27). One of them is that Jesus is the Son of Man (Jn 5:27). However, primarily, the Father bestowed these divine privileges on him because he wants the Son to be one in honour with him (Jn 5:23): honouring the Father (who sent the Son) and honouring the Son stand or fall together (Harris 2015:113; Keener 2003:652; Ngewa 2003:90; Carson 1991:254; Barrett 1978:260).[76] His response again returns the charge against the leaders who are rather dishonouring God by dishonouring him and judging the one appointed by God as their judge (Keener 2003:652; Ngewa 2003:90; Köstenberger 2004:184). Men are bound to respect their judge (Barrett 1987:260). But these leaders were judging their judge (Ngewa 2003:90).

Thus, Jesus mentions his witnesses to cement and conclude his argument (Ridderbos 1997:202). In biblical Jewish judicial proceedings, witnesses are crucial because a solo witness is untrue (Bruner 2012:336; Ridderbos 1997:202; Carson 1991: 259; Morris 1995: 287; Ngewa 2003:94; see Barrett 1978: 264). Jesus' statement (Jn 5:31) is therefore not suggesting that his claims thus far are false: the emphasis is (in line with Jewish judicial proceedings) on the veracity of uncorroborated claims by a solo witness (Vincent 2009:138; Brunner 2012:336; Harris 2015:117; Morris 1995:287; Carson 1991:259; Ngewa 2003:94). The requirement is to provide two or three witnesses (Ngewa 2003:94; Morris 1995:287). As a result, Jesus presents 'another' whose testimony is true (Jn 5:32) and greater (Jn 5:36-37): the Father (Carson 1991:260; Moloney 1996:20; Ngewa 2003:95).

How did the Father bear witness of the Son? The predominant view is the authorisation he received from the Father to perform these tasks (Ridderbos

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[76] But this is not to be understood as the universally recognized principle that 'a person's agent is as the person himself,' or the Jewish concept of the sender and the sent; he is God and not a mere ambassador (Harris 2015:113: Beasley-Murray 1987:76; Köstenberger 2004:184; Carson 1991:224-225; Barrett 1978:260).

1997:203; Bruce 1993:135-136; Carson 1991:261). However, while some scholars opine that the statement refers to the Old Testament Scriptures (Bultmann 1971:266; Vincent 2009:139-140; Beasley-Murray 1987:78; Köstenberger 2004:192), others mention the voice at Jesus' baptism (an unstated event in John) as the testimony in view (Beasley-Murray 1987:79; Harris 2015:118).

Moreover, the perfect tense used to explicate the father's testimony stresses its perpetual significance (Bruner 2012:340; Köstenberger 2004:192). Therefore, his testimony is conclusive for the son (Ridderbos 1997:202; Beasley-Murray 1987:78). Nonetheless, for the sake and salvation of his interlocutors, he presents a human witness (John the Baptist) who had a unique place in the community because of his mission (Ridderbos 1997:42; Bruce 1993:135; Ngewa 2003:95).

The purpose of John the Baptist is to bear witness concerning the Light that all might believe through his intermediate agency (Jn 1:7; Wuest 1983:209). Indeed, it was on record that he had borne witness of the Son to the delegation sent by the leaders (Jn 1:19-28). So, his testimony is 'presented as an established datum,' taking into consideration the effect of the perfect tense (Barrett 1978:264). Yet, it does not achieve its intended aim of leading to faith in the son (Jn 1:7) because 'the Jews' preferred 'the brief religious excitement of John's ministry to faith in whom God sent and to whom John bore witness, and the eternal life which he offered' (Barrett 1978:265; cf. Jn 5:33-35). Wherefore, Jesus brings it up and appeals to more witnesses.

The idea that the works of the Son validate his claims is evident in the narrative. The term (works) refers to all that the Father has given to or assigned him to accomplish (Ridderbos 1997:203; Ngewa 2003:95; Bruce 1993:135; Beutler 2006:160; Barrett 1978:266; Westcott 1980:199; Bultmann 1971:266). The Son stresses that even though the Father has entrusted these to him, he relies on him continuously to see what the Father does and replicates them (Jn 5:19; Bruce 1993:128: Morris 1995:278; Talbert 2005:131: Wuest 1983:221; Westcott 1980:190). As a result, their works are the same (Kysar 1993:43; Thompson 2001:77-78; Barrett 1978:260; Ngewa 2003:88; Vincent 2009:135). And since the Father who assigned him to work is working with him as his partner and testifies about him, the works testify of him as one sent by the Father (Jn 5:36).

Finally, Jesus presents the Scriptures as his witness (Jn 5:39-40). Most scholars affirm that 'the Jews' were people who studied the Scriptures diligently (Carson 1991:263; Köstenberger 2004:192; Morris 1995:292; Bruce 1993:136; Ridderbos 1997:204; Ngewa 2003:96; Barrett 1978:267). The problem is that their exploration of the Scriptures was misguided because they judged it to be inherently life-sustaining (Köstenberger 2004:193; Carson 1991:263; Barrett 1978:267; Ridderbos 1997:204; Bruce 1993:136; Westcott 1980:201). Additionally, most people in the rabbinic schools studied merely for self-advancement (Köstenberger 2004:194). So, the possibility of examining and expounding the Scriptures for public admiration is inevitable (Köstenberger 2004:194; cf. Jn 5:41-44; Ngewa 2003:97). Hence, they failed to see the testimony it bears about the one in whom eternal life is vested (Bruce 1993:136; Moloney 1996:23-24; Ngewa 2003:96). For that reason, Moses will be their accuser[77] since their study could not guide them to ascertain the import of his message (Köstenberger 2004:195; Ridderbos 1997:207; Harris 2015:120; Vincent 2009:141-143) despite the inextricable bond that exists between Moses' writings and Jesus' words (Carson 1991:266). Thus, they cannot believe the words of Jesus since they have neglected Moses' testimony (Jn 5:47; Morris 1995:295).

2.2.3.6 The perlocutionary effect on the community theme

Studying the narrative through the eyes of the community theme, the reader discovers that John set out to illustrate the exegesis of the community of God as a paradigm for replication. Therefore, he selects the marginalised (the paralytic) and the magnified (religious authorities) to demonstrate how the community fails to fulfil the divine intentions for establishing it. These groups have some commonalities worth noting. To begin with, they place the narrative in a religious-cultural context. The lame is at Bethesda (house of mercy). 'The Jews' are also custodians of the Law. In addition, despite the above, the two communities fail to fulfil the divine intention for establishing the community.

The exegesis of the eternal community exposes the problems in the community. It brings to light the enormous religious-cultural failure at Bethesda (Pilch 2000:13). Additionally, it discloses the exacerbated nature of the problem: the custodians of the Law are neither willing to accept the incarnate Logos nor have the word of God

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[77] It is contrary to their belief that Moses is their intercessor or defender (Beasley-Murray 1987:79).

abiding in them (Jn 4:38-40). Thus, a suitable replacement is necessary – a new community that endeavours to replicate the eternal community (Grenz 2000:112; Kunene 2012:103). To investigate how the narrative fills the lacuna created by the failure, John 15:1-16:3 is analysed to ascertain how Jesus demonstrates to his friends (the disciples) and 'family members' (Jn 1:12-13) how to imitate the community. It also allows us to see the elaboration of the theme in the prologue: the community of God. Finally, it reveals how the new community fills the gap.

2.3   NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF JOHN 15-16:3

Belonging to the farewell discourse, the narrative contains instructions on how the new community must reflect its new identity by incarnating God's purpose for communal life. Therefore, the goal is to discover how the new community continued God's mission and incarnated God's concept of community.

2.3.1   The delimitation of John 15-16:3

There is a general concurrence that John 15:1 marks the beginning of the narrative (Keener 2008:988; Köstenberger 2004:448; Harris 2015:266; Carson 1991:510; Ridderbos 1997:514). However, there are various positions concerning where it ends. Whereas some scholars propose succinct narratives, others promulgate lengthy narratives as the delimitation, depending on their emphases.

Scholars who focus only on the 'vine metaphor,'[78] provide the shortest demarcations (cf. Van der Watt 2000:30-48; Segovia 1982:118; Carson 1991:510-524; Van der Watt 2000:30-48). Van der Watt's (2000:30-48) concentration on the vine metaphor, for instance, allows him to delimit John 15:1-8 as a narrative. The basis of his argument is that the use of semantically related words within this textual locality makes it an independent unit (Van der Watt 2000:31; cf. Van der Watt (2007:12).

However, those who think of this as an extended metaphor agree on the delimitation but present divergent arguments that concentrate on the metaphor and its application (Carson 1991:510–524; Whitacre 1999:371–380; cf. Kunene 2012:75).[79] Consequently, in their opinion, the vine metaphor (Jn 151-8) and its application (Jn

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[78] Even though Van der Watt (2000:27-28) accepts John 151-8 as a metaphor, others have challenged its metaphorical nature and defined it differently (for a list of them, see Van der Watt 2000:29).

[79] Though Carson (1991:510-520) opines that the extended metaphor occurs in John 15:1–8, he considers John 15:9-16 (unlike the rest who extend it to Jn 15:17) as the 'unpacking' of the metaphor.

15:9-17) are one inextricable narrative (Carson 1991:510–524; Whitacre 1999:371–380; Kunene 2012:75; cf. Smith 1999:279; Köstenberger 2004:448–509). It is pertinent to note that Segovia (1982:118) also affirms the literary unity of the narrative; nonetheless, he argues that John 15:1-17 is an originally dependent discourse. He discusses further that from John 15:18, an entirely new focus predominates the narrative: the world and its attitude towards Jesus and his disciples (Segovia 1983:217). For that reason, he claims that the argument from content supports his position that John 15:1-17 forms a unit on its own (Segovia 1983:217).[80]

Nonetheless, most scholars support the delimitation of the narrative: John 15:1-16:4a (Brodie 1993:475; Lindars 1981:54-55; Harris 2015:27).[81] For these scholars, John 15:18-6:4a puts John 15:1-17 in a proper context by establishing that the significance of the teachings (on 'abiding' and 'mutual love') in the vine imagery (Jn 15:1-17) are meaningful in their connection to the world's hatred towards Jesus and his disciples (Schnackenburg 1982:91; Lindars 1981:54-55; cf. Brant 2011:219).[82] Additionally, Schnackenburg (1982:92) sees the frequently-repeated phrase ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν (which occurs in various places in the narrative Jn 15:11; Jn 16:1, 4, 6, 25, 33) as a demarcation marker that points to John 16:4a as the conclusion of the narrative. He contends that the repetition of the phrase in John 16:4a terminates the section (Schnackenburg 1982:92).

Others such as Moloney (1987:36,1998:55) and Brown (1988:78-79) opine that the narrative ends at John 16:3. Moloney (1987:36,1998:55), for instance, puts forth various arguments to substantiate this position. First, he asserts that John 15:21 and John 16:3 form an inclusion (Moloney 1987:35).[83] Further, Moloney (1987:35, cf. 1998:56) suggests a link between the Greek identical expressions used towards the end of the allegory on the vine and at the end of the section on hatred (Jn 15:11 and

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[80] There are various forms of demarcations for the 'extended metaphor' (cf. Brodie 1993:475; Keener 2003: 988-1016; Lindars 1981:54-55; Schnackenburg 1982:91; Moloney 1987:36, 1998a:55). For instance, whereas Keener (2003:988-1016) proposes John 15:1-16:4 as an independent narrative, Brodie (1993:475) limits it to John 15:1-16:4a. Conversely, Moloney (1987:36,1998a:55) puts forward various arguments in support of John 15:1-16:3.

[81] Even though Moloney (1987:36; 1998:55) argues that the narrative ends at John 16:3, he admits that most scholars support the literary unity of John 15:1-16:1-4a.

[82] Brant (2011:211) focuses on the entire farewell discourse as a unit and yet, sees the message of consolation (Jn 14:27-28 and Jn 16:4b) as a linguistic feature that makes John 15:1-16:4a a sub-unit.

[83] The verses that form the inclusion read as follows: But all this they will do to you on my account because they do not know him who sent me (Jn 15:21), and they will do this because they have not known the Father nor me (Jn 16:3).

Jn 16:1 [ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν]). He clarifies that even though the same expression appears in John 16:4a, the strong adversative ἀλλὰ distinguishes John 16:4a from John 16:3 and enables us to look towards the conclusion of John 16 (Jn 16:33) for the link with John 16:4a. Finally, there is a shift in content between John 16:3 and John 16:4 – whereas John 15:1-16:3 develops themes of abiding, love, and hatred, the rest of the narrative focuses on different themes (Moloney 1987:36). Against this background, he advocates for the unity of John 15-16:3 (Moloney 1987:36,1998:55).

Finally, others consider John 15:1-16:33 as a unit (Carson 1991:510; Talbert 2005:219; Beasley-Murray 1987:269). This demarcation stems from the view that the entire narrative, constituted by a monologue, forms the second part of the farewell discourse in John (Carson 1991:510; Talbert 2005:219; Beasley-Murray 1987:269). Consequently, John 16:4b-33 is considered an extension of the narrative from John 5:1-6:4a (Carson 1991:510; Talbert 2005:219).

Given the elucidations by Moloney (1987:36, 1998:55-56), the delimitation of the narrative follows his position – it finds his argument more convincing, cogent, and pellucid. It is nevertheless noteworthy that the two views converge and diverge at the same time. For instance, both avow that the last section contains a new discourse (Moloney 1987:35-36, cf. 1998:56 Schnackenburg 1982:92).[84] However, the disagreement is a conclusion drawn from the implication of the phrase on the demarcation of the narrative (see Moloney 1987:35-36, cf. 1998a:56; Schnackenburg 1982:92). The argument of the repetitive phrase as a clue for the demarcation of the narrative seems to favour Moloney for various reasons (Moloney 1987:36, cf. 1998:55-56). For instance, though Segovia (1983:217) proposes that John15:1-17 and John 15:18-16:4a are originally dependent discourses and units, he affirms that the phrase which appears in John 16:4a is a concluding formula which points to John 16:33 as the end of the narrative (cf. Moloney 1987:36, 1998a:55-56). Thus, one will be required to consider the repetitious phrase in John 16:33 as the conclusion of the section that begins from John 16:4a, if one does not conclude with John 16:3 (Moloney 1987:36; cf. Segovia 1983:217). It explains why even scholars who view the second farewell discourse as a unit (Jn 15-16) still see John 16:4b-33

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[84] Whereas Moloney (1987:35-36) refers to John 16:4-33, Schnackenburg (1982:92) refers to John 16:5-33 as the last section.

as the concluding part of the narrative, even though they consider John 16:4a as the end of the subdivision (see Carson 1991:510; Talbert 2005:219; Beasley-Murray 1987:269). Thus, as stated above, the work follows Moloney's delineation of the narrative because it is more cogent, clear, and convincing.

2.3.2 The structure of John 15-16:3

The proposed structures follow the different concepts about delimitation. However, in the following examples, attention is given to the structures that extend beyond the metaphor (Segovia 1982:119-120; Brodie 1993:475; Keener 2003:988-1016; Lindars 1981:54-55; Brown 1988:78-79; Moloney 1998a:59-70).

Among them, scholars who see John 15:1-17 as an 'extended metaphor' present different structures centring on the metaphor and John unpacks it in the narrative. For instance, Segovia (1982:119-120) divides the narrative into two main sections (Jn 15:1-8 and Jn 15:9-17)[85] and proposes a structure constituted by the following subunits: 1. the introduction of the figure of the vine and branches (Jn 15:1-2); 2. a statement concerning the basic origins of all the branches (Jn 15:3); 3. an exhortation to the branches to abide in the vine (Jn 15:4-7); 4. the results of such an abiding (Jn 15:8); 5. the introduction of the different relationships of love and their hierarchy (Jn 15:9-10); vi. statement concerning the joy of the believers (Jn 15:11); vii. the exposition of the love command (Jn 15:12-17).

Nonetheless, the majority who affirm the unity of John 15:1-16:4a also propose idiosyncratic structures (Brodie 1993:475; Keener 2003:988-1016; Lindars 1981:54-55). Brodie (1993:475) for instance, divides the narrative into two distinct units – positive (God's purifying of Jesus, the true vine, Jn 15:1-17) and negative (the world's hatred, Jn 15:18-16:4a). Keener (2003:988-1016) gives three divisions as follows – the vine and its fruitful branches (Jn 15:1–7), the love commandment (Jn 15:8–17), and the World's Hatred (Jn 15:18–16:4). Schnackenburg (1982:94-122) provides a detailed structure constituted by these five divisions: i. the figurative discourse of the vine and the branches and the closing words (Jn 15:1-11); ii. the commandment to love one another (Jn 15:12-17); iii. the hatred and hostility of the

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[85] Defining the type of literature in John 15:1-17, Brown (1972:668-669) uses phrases, such as 'allegorical parable' and 'imagery.' Brodie (1993:475) also calls it a parable. Conversely, Barrett (1978:470) refers to it as a 'symbolic speech.'

world (Jn 15:18-25); iv. the witness borne by the Paraclete and the disciples to Jesus (Jn 15:26-27); and v. Jewish hostilities (Jn 16:1-4a).

Brown (1988:78-79) and Moloney (1998a:59-70) agree on the unity of John 15:1-16:3. However, the latter presents a more detailed structure than the former. Brown (1988:78-79) proposes a structure which two divisions: (a) the vine and the branches (Jn 15:1-17); and (b) the world's hatred (Jn 15:18-16:3). Conversely, Moloney (1998a:59-70) shapes the narrative comprehensively as follows:

1. To abide in Jesus (Jn 15:1-11)

    a. Abiding in Jesus (Jn 15:1-5a)

    b. The results of abiding and not abiding in Jesus (Jn 15:5b-8)

    c. Abiding in the love of Jesus (Jn 15:9-11)

2. The commandment to love (Jn 15:12-17)

    a. The commandment to love as Jesus loved (Jn 15:12-14)

    b. Jesus' love has established a new relationship (Jn 15:15-16)

    c. The commandment to love (Jn 15:17)

3. To be hated by the world (Jn 15:18-16:3)

    a. An explanation for the hatred of the world (Jn 15:18-21)

    b. The results of the world's hatred (Jn 15:22-25)

    c. A further explanation for the hatred of the world (Jn 15:26-16:3)

From these proposed structures, it has become increasingly clear that though a group of scholars may agree on the boundary of the narrative, almost everyone presents something idiosyncratic (cf. Brodie 1993:475). Because the units discerned from a text has ramifications on the message deduced as its communicative purpose, divergent structuring produces different messages (cf. Fuhr & Köstenberger 2016:158). Therefore, most of the proposed structures do not purely concentrate on the exegesis of the community theme. Consequently, a new one – an adapted form

of Moloney's (1998a:59-70) structure – is proposed for the narrative analysis as follows:

1. The vine as a symbol for the believing community (Jn 15:1-11)

   a. Abiding in Jesus (Jn 15:1-5)

   b. The effects of abiding and not abiding in Jesus (Jn 15:6-8)

   c. Abiding in the love of Jesus (Jn 15:9-11)

2. The commandment for the believing community (Jn 15:12-17)

   a. The commandment to love as Jesus loved (Jn 15:12-14)

   b. Jesus' love has established a new relationship (Jn 15:15-16)

   c. The commandment to love (Jn 15:17)

3. The world's hatred for the believing community (Jn 15:18-16:3)

   a. An explanation for the hatred of the world (Jn 15:18-21)

   b. The results of the world's hatred (Jn 15:22-25)

   c. Witnessing in times of hatred (Jn 15:26-27)

   d. Further explanation for the hatred of the world (Jn 16:1-3)

2.3.3 The analysis of John 15-16:3

This section follows the above modified version of Moloney's proposed structure.

2.3.3.1   The vine as a symbol for the believing community (Jn 15:1-11)

2.3.3.1.1   Abiding in Jesus (Jn 15:1-5)

Jesus makes the last of his ἐγώ εἰμι statements in John unconventionally – 'it is the only one to which an additional predicate is conjoined ('and my Father is the Vinedresser')' (Beasley-Murray 1987:271; cf. Carson 1991:513; Talbert 2005:220). Despite the idiosyncratic nature of this statement, the vine imagery connected to it – the symbol of the community (Keener 2003:993) – is not peculiar to this narrative.[86]

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[86] There are examples in the Gospels (Mt 21:23-41; Mk 12:1-9; Lk 20:9-16; cf. Barret 1978:471; Keener 2005:988), the Old Testament (Ps 80:8-19; Is 5:1-7; cf. Harris 2015:266; Köstenberger 2004:449-450; Ridderbos 1997:515; Beasley-Murray 1987:272; Keener 2003:988; Talbert 2005:220;

The difference is, nonetheless, that he refers to himself as the true Vine (ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή). What Jesus evokes by this affirmation is the Old Testament vine imagery (cf. Harris 2015:266; Köstenberger 2004:449-450; Ridderbos 1997:515; Keener 2003:988; Talbert 2005:220; Carson 1991:513; Morris 1995:593). The Old Testament is replete with narratives that depict the believing community – Israel – like a vine or vineyard (Harris 2015:266; Mooney 1998a:59; Köstenberger 2004:449-450; Ridderbos 1997:515; Keener 2003:988; Talbert 2005:220; Barrett 1978:472).

So, why does Jesus evoke the imagery in this narrative? One of the goals of this metaphorical representation in John 15 is that it serves as a reminder of Israel's failure to produce good fruits (a reflection of the religious-cultural context of the time also – as demonstrated in the prologue and John 5; see Köstenberger 2004:449-450; Harris 2015:266; Carson 1991:513; Morris 1995:593; Ridderbos 1997:515). The prologue from which Israel's failure developed presents the Son as one rejected by many in Israel – the only nation distinguished from the world and identified as his own (Jn 1:10-11). John 5 also reveals a community where even the marginalised groups are unfruitful in incarnating their religious and cultural values in such a religious-cultural context – where the testimony of John, the Scriptures, and works of Jesus do not produce the intended fruits in many religious leaders because of their attitude (John 5:33-39). Consequently, a reminder of the failures of the Old Testament believing community and that of John makes possible the anticipation of something that reflects God's intentions for choosing Israel as God's vineyard (cf. Isa 5:1-4; Beasley-Murray 1987:272; Schnackenburg 1982:106).

Against this background, John presents Jesus – the true Vine – as the one to whom Israel pointed (Carson 1991:513; Köstenberger 2004:15, 448; Burge 2010:54; Barrett 1978:471). As the true Vine, Jesus 'replaces' Israel as the one through whom the blessings of God flow (Köstenberger 2004:15, 448; Carson 1991:514; Burge 2010:54; Van der Watt 2000:52; cf. Wheaton 2015:32), thereby demystifying the idea of tying the community of faith to a territory (Whitacre 1999:372; Burge 2010:54). He becomes the perfect representation of the definition of community by epitomising the territorial dimension through the demystification of the idea of the 'holy land'

Barrett 1978:471), as well as in the ancient world (cf. Köstenberger 2004:448-450; Carson 1991:513; Van der Watt 2000:26-29; Whitacre 1999:371; Brown 1966:669-672).

(Whitacre 1999:372; Burge 2010:54; Köstenberger 2004:449), and the relational dimension through the character of relationships expressed using the vine metaphor (Brant 2011:217; cf. Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi; Cohen 1985:12). Thus, the vine image denotes the new community of God constituted by both gentiles and believing Jews (Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993).

Jesus introduces the Father into the discourse as the vinedresser (of the community) and describes his role in two ways – negatively and positively (cf. Harris 2015:266-267; Köstenberger 2004:448-449; Carson 1991:514). The Father removes unproductive branches,[87] but prunes the ones that bear fruits[88] to fulfil the purpose of the vineyard – fruit-bearing (Harris 2015:266; Talbert 2005:220; cf. Carson 1991:514).[89] The fruit-bearing branches produce fruits because the message of Jesus prunes them (Moloney 1998a:60; Harris 2015:267; Keener 2003:997).

From John 15:4, the idea of being in union (or being in the Vine) with the Vine, with its accompanying results, is elaborated further.[90] The fruitfulness of the disciples depends on remaining in the relationship of 'mutual indwelling,' where they abide in the Vine and vice versa (Köstenberger 2004:451-453; Brodie 1993:480; Harris 2015:267; Schnackenburg 1982:99). Abiding in the Vine includes but is not limited to 'continuing to believe' (Harris 2015:267; Beasley-Murray 1987:272). It connotes a vibrant and intimate spiritual fellowship (Harris 2015:267) – continuing to live in union with Jesus (Beasley-Murray 1987:272). Köstenberger (2004:453) adds that primarily, it is to remain in the love of Jesus by obeying his commandments (Köstenberger 2004:453). However, this should not be considered a moralistic command

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[87] Because Jesus indicates that the unproductive branches were in him before their removal, there have been many speculations about the identity of this group (cf. Carson 1991:514; Barrett 1978:473; Schnackenburg 1982:98). Though John does not mention Judas, Carson (1991:515; cf. Köstenberger 2004:452) opines that the reader needs to go no further than Judas Iscariot. Many others, however, contend that John is referring to apostate Christians (Brodie 1993:481; Schnackenburg 1982:98; Barrett 1978:473; Keener 2003:1001).

[88] Scholars adduce several factors to explain the meaning of fruitfulness in this context. Some approach it from John's primary usage: the 'missionary' activity of leading others to Christ (Köstenberger 2004:453; Schnackenburg 1982:100; cf. Keener 2003:997; Talbert 2005:220). Others opine that it means expressing the life of a Christian disciple (Barrett 1978:474; Beasley-Murray 1987: 273; Brodie 1993:480). However, it would seem to include love (Moloney 1998b: 420–21), Christian character (Morris 1995: 595), and outreach (Schnackenburg 1982:100).

[89] It agrees with the notion that fruitfulness is an attestation that the farmer has executed his duties well (Sir 27:6; Keener 2003:994).

[90] The first sentence of John 15:4 may be interpreted in one of three ways: conditional, comparison, or mutual imperative (Barrett 1978:474; Carson 1991:516). Barrett (1978:474) contends that the next verse (Jn 15:5) warrants mutual indwelling as the interpretation.

(Schnackenburg 1982:99). The focus is on nurturing one's spiritual communion with Christ, which is the ground for fruitfulness (Köstenberger 2004:454; Schnackenburg 1982:99; cf. Carson 1991:516-517). The application of the metaphor is a reverberation of Jesus' relationship with his Father, intended to produce a perlocutionary effect – fruitfulness flows naturally from 'mutual abiding' just as Jesus' works outflow from his union and communion with the Father (Jn 15:5; Beasley-Murray 1987:273; Keener 2003:998; cf. Jn 5:19-23; Moloney 1998a:61).

2.3.3.1.2 The effects of abiding and not abiding in Jesus (Jn 15:6-8)

Jesus contrasts the effects of abiding and not abiding in him. The people who do not dwell in him are like unproductive branches: they are thrown away, dried up, gathered, and burned.[91] Though not explicitly mentioned, the passive voice employed in describing the condition of the unfruitful branches (Jn 15:6b) points to the Father as the one who destroys (Moloney 1998:62; Schnackenburg 1982:101; Van der Watt 2000:46). Conversely, those who abide in Jesus by allowing his teachings to govern their lives and practices receive the assurance of answered prayers (Harris 2015:268; Köstenberger 2004:455; Carson 1991:518; cf. Van der Watt 2000:42). Since God's word governs their lives, the assurance of answered prayers stems from the understanding that they pray according to God's will (Carson 1991:518; Barrett 1978:475; Beasley-Murray 1987:273; cf. Köstenberger 2004:455).

Furthermore, by living and praying within the parameters of the will of God, they bring glory to God (the Vinedresser) for fulfilling God's purpose for the vine (Harris 2015:266; Talbert 2005:220; Van der Watt 2000:44; cf. Köstenberger 2004:448-445), that is, being fruitful (Harris 2015:268; Köstenberger 2004:45; Ridderbos 1997:518; Keener 2003:1003; Barrett 1978:473). And by this, they show that they are genuine disciples of Jesus (Köstenberger 2004:455; Harris 2015:268; Ridderbos 1997:518;

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[91] Most scholars understand this as judgement (Carson 1991:517; Ridderbos 1997:518; Köstenberger 2004:455; Barrett 1978:475; Brant 2011:218; Schnackenburg 1982:101; Brodie 1993:481; Keener 2003:1002; Van der Watt 2000:41). Contra Beasley-Murray (1987:273) and Ridderbos (1997:517-518) find the expression as depicting the uselessness of the branches rather than judgment. Additionally, Harris (2015:268; cf. Carson 1991:519-520) has identified how scholars classify the two aorists (ἐβλήθη and ἐξηράνθη) as follows:1. Proleptic: '(he) will be thrown (aside like a branch) and will wither;' or 2. Gnomic: 'is thrown . . . and withers;' or 3. Dramatic, an aorist expressing an immediate and certain sequence: 'is/has been straightaway thrown out and withers/has withered.'

Beasley-Murray 1987:273; Schnackenburg 1982:103),[92]because their mission culminates in bringing glory to the Father just as Jesus (cf. Moloney 1998:62).

2.3.3.1.3 Abiding in the love of Jesus (Jn 15:9-11)

John establishes a connection between the eternal relationship and the implications for its appropriation by the community of God. The word καθὼς implies that the disciples enjoy the same manner of love that the Father lavishes on the Son (Harris 2015:269). The Son patterns his love for them after what he sees the Father display towards him (Carson 1991:520; Köstenberger 2004:456; Barrett 1978:475). It is naturally incessant (cf. Barrett 1978:475; Moloney 1998a:64). And in response, the Son keeps the commands of the Father out of love (Köstenberger 2004:456; cf. Harris 2015:269; Keener 2003:1003). Similarly, they are required to remain in Jesus' love by obeying his commands, not by compulsion, but as the expression of love (Ridderbos 1997:519; Carson 1991:520; cf. Moloney 1998a:64). As Barrett (1978:476) appositely and succinctly notes: 'the parallel shows that love and obedience are mutually dependent. Love arises out of obedience, obedience out of love.' Further, the obedience is, as Jesus reveals, something that inures to their benefits – just as Jesus' obedience to the Father is the ground of his joy, those who obey him also partake of this joy (Carson 1991:506; Ridderbos 1997:519).

2.3.3.2 The commandment for the believing community (Jn 15:12-17)

2.3.3.2.1 The commandment to love as Jesus loved (Jn 15:12-14)

The command to abide in his love is clarified as mutual love (Köstenberger 2004:457; Carson 1991:521; Ridderbos 1997:520; Beasley-Murray 1987:274; Barrett 1978:476). Therefore, a chain of love is created where the divine and human community of faith are united (Carson 1991:521-522; Moloney 1998b:424; Barrett 1978: 476; cf. Köstenberger 2004:457). Flowing from and patterned after the divine community, they must replicate it by demonstrating what Jesus exemplified – sacrificial love (see Schnackenburg 1982:103; Brodie 1993:483; Keener 2003:1004; Moloney 1998a:64). Just as he sacrificed his life for his 'friends' (in anticipation of the relationship expressed in the following verse), they are to obey this command – expressing reciprocal sacrificial love (Barrett 1978:476; Carson 1991:521-522; cf.

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[92] The new community demonstrates what the religious authorities lack – bringing honour to God (cf. Jn 5:44-47).

Beasley-Murray 1987:274). Their obedience to the command identifies them (not make) as his friends (Harris 2015:269; Carson 1991:522).

2.3.3.2.2 Jesus' love has established a new relationship (Jn 15:15-16)

The introduction of the theme of friendship establishes a new relationship (Beasley-Murray 1987:274; cf. Moloney 1998a:65; Brant 2011:218-219; Keener 2003:1015). Throughout the gospel, the followers of Jesus are considered his disciples. The change of identity to friends, thus, reflects a more elevated status (Köstenberger 2004:459; Schnackenburg 1982:110; cf. Esler & Piper 2006:91). They are called friends and not servants because of his love for them (Beasley-Murray 1987:274; Barrett 1978:477; Brodie 1993:483) and the privilege of the intimate knowledge he shares with them (Harris 2015:270; Barrett 1978:477; Carson 1991: 522-523; cf. Köstenberger 2004:459; Ridderbos 1997:521). Nevertheless, these are not two divergent reasons; his love is the substratum of the intimate knowledge he shares with his friends (cf. Beasley-Murray 1987:274; Brodie 1993:483). And because it flows from Jesus to his friends (disciples) – not the other way round – the 'friendship' is not strictly reciprocal (Carson 1991:522; Harris 2015:270. Thus, the disciples never referred to Jesus as their friend (Carson 1991:522; Harris 2015:270).

Apart from the unrequited nature of the friendship, and contrary to their cultural practice of selecting one's teacher (Harris 2015:270; Köstenberger 2004:460), Jesus reminds his 'friends' that their selection is solely dependent on him (as the emphatic ἐγὼ affirms; Barrett 1978:478; Schnackenburg 1982:111; cf. Ridderbos 1997:521; Vincent 2009:252). In this way, they become aware of the obligations associated with their elevated status (Schnackenburg 1982:111). Their responsibility is that they have been selected and set apart for a particular ministry – to go and bear fruit that will last (Köstenberger 2004:460; Carson 1991:523; cf. Vincent 2009:252). It has been interpreted predominantly as the missionary activity of soul-winning (Carson 1991:523; Brodie 1993:484; Vincent 2009:252; contra Ridderbos 1997:522; Schnackenburg 1982:112 who argue that it includes fruitfulness of Christian life). There are good reasons to conclude the statement aims at the mission as *going* and mission as *living*. The first witness sent from God mirrored both dimensions in his ministry (Jn 1:28-37). Similarly, Jesus participated in the two types of missions. Apart from winning souls, the testimony of the congenitally blind man whom he healed points to the character of life he lived (Jn 1:10-13; Jn 5:31). Moreover, looking at the

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command that precedes this obligation, it is better to agree with Ridderbos (1997:522) that the meaning includes both soul-winning and fruitfulness of Christian life. Finally, as they bear fruit, they have an assurance of answered prayers (cf. Harris 2015:270; Vincent 2009:253; Moloney 1998a:66).

2.3.3.2.3 The commandment to love (Jn 15:17)

The command in John 15:12 is repeated as a literary closure (Moloney 1998a:66; Ridderbos 1997:522; Keener 2003:1004; Schnackenburg 1982:113; cf. Köstenberger 2004:460). By closing the unit in this manner, John returns to the command in John 15:12 to reinforce the point that the love lavished on the faith community by Jesus must be the paradigm of the reciprocal love expected of them (Moloney 1998a:66-67; Ridderbos 1997:522; Schnackenburg 1982:113; Keener 2003:1004).

Against this background, the narrative turns to look at the community's relationship with the outside world after concentrating on its relationship with God and its members (cf. Harris 2015:271; Schnackenburg 1982:113; Keener 2003:1017).

2.3.3.3 The world's hatred for the believing community (Jn 15:18-16:3)

2.3.3.3.1 An explanation for the hatred of the world (Jn 15:18-21)

Jesus explains for the hatred of the world to eliminate surprise (Barrett 1978:480; Carson 1991:524-525; Talbert 2005:224; Köstenberger 2004:463) and prepare them to cope (Harris 2015:272). Additionally, the purpose is to encourage the community to remain steadfast in its mission to the world as witnesses (Schnackenburg 1982:114). Thus, he prepares them to embrace the fact of being bound to be opposed by the world (Ridderbos 1997:523) – people opposed to God and the new messianic community (Harris 2015:272). Indeed, the conditional clause denotes the statement of a fact already being experienced (Schnackenburg 1982:114; cf. Vincent 2009:253). Though it is their present reality, the oppositions are also futuristic (Harris 2015:272). And they stem from the messianic community's union with Jesus (Köstenberger 2004:464; Ridderbos 1997:523; Harris 2015:272).

This union conditions a lifestyle that opposes the world's values (cf. Ridderbos 1997:523; Köstenberger 2004:464; Carson 1991:525; Brodie 1993:485). Since they have been called out of the world to unite with Jesus as his possession and friends,

the members of the messianic community do not allow the world to condition their conducts (Ridderbos 1997:523; Schnackenburg 1982:115; Carson 1991:525; Keener 2003:1019; Moloney 1998a:68; cf. Barrett 1978:480). As a result, the world hates them (Carson 1991:525; Keener 2003:1019; Ridderbos 1997:523). In many Mediterranean cities, being a friend of one's enemy automatically makes you one's enemy (Keener 2003:1019). Thus, being friends with Jesus means inheriting his enemies and the hatred they have for him. In this regard, they are reminded that a servant is not greater than his lord (John 15:20; Ridderbos 1997:523; Carson 1991:525-526; Keener 2003:1020; Brodie 1993:488; cf. Moloney 1998a:68).[93]

John shows another reason for the opposition from the world: the rejection of Jesus, the one who chose and sent them (Moloney 1998a:68; Köstenberger 2004:465). They rejected Jesus because they did not know the Sender (cf. Jn 15:21). The statement elaborates on the theme of the world *told* in the prologue (Jn 1:10-12), where the idea of the world not knowing Jesus originates from (cf. Jn 1:10). The prologue further clarifies what rejecting and accepting the Word means. Accepting Jesus is equated with believing in his name (cf. Jn 1:12; Köstenberger 2004:38; Ridderbos 1997:45). Consequently, those who received him or believed in his name are the believing community. Thus, it is legitimate to label the world (those who rejected Jesus) as the unbelieving community (cf. Jn 1:12; 5:46-47;15:21).

Moreover, because the world – the unbelieving community – knows not the Sender, the disciples should expect to be opposed on account of Jesus' name (cf. Ridderbos 1997:523; Köstenberger 2004:465; Barrett 1978:481; Vincent 2009:254; Harris 2015:273; Beasley-Murray 1987:276).

2.3.3.3.2 The results of the world's hatred (Jn 15:22-25)

John discusses the effects of the world's rejection on the unbelieving community by evoking the theme of Light in the prologue to convey a theological truth (cf. Jn 1:4-5; Jn 1:7-9). Building on the theme, he indicates that since Jesus (the Logos) came as the Light (Jn 1:7-10) – divine revelation – rejecting him is tantamount to rejecting God's revelation (Barrett 1978:481; Harris 2015:273; cf. Köstenberger 2004:465). It is also an expression of rejection and hatred for the Father who sent him (cf. Jn

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[93] Ridderbos (1997:524), Barrett (1978:480) and Brodie (1993:488) note that this does not contradict what is stated already (Jn 15:15) and its latter application (Jn 15:20).

15:23; Talbert 2005:224; Köstenberger 2004:466-467; Moloney 1998a:69). The rejection was prompted by unbelief (Harris 2015:273; Schnackenburg 1982:116; Talbert 2005:224; Carson 1991: 526; Barrett 1978:481). Therefore, it is unexcused because it makes them culpable for rejecting God's revelation (Harris 2015:273; Schnackenburg 1982:116; Talbert 2005:224; Carson 1991:526; Barrett 1978:481).

Jesus strengthens his argument on the inexcusability of their sin and the culpability of the unbelieving community by appealing to his works (Ridderbos 1997:525; cf. John 5:36; Köstenberger 2004:466; Beasley-Murray 1987:276; Harris 2015:273). Ridderbos (1997:525) affirms that the two 'both ... and' constructions have a cumulative effect of bringing to expression in a single loaded sentence the guilt of seeing the works and nevertheless hating him and his Father. Jesus gave the world visible proofs through the works he performed (Jn 15:24; Ridderbos 1997:525; Carson 1991:527; Moloney 1998a:69-70; Brodie 1993:488-489; Keener 2003:1021). The works and words of Jesus provide proofs in an indissoluble relationship as evidence of his divine origin (Harris 2015:273; Schnackenburg 1982:116; Brodie 1993:488; Keener 2003:1021; cf. Beasley-Murray 1987:276). But in response, they rather hated Jesus and his Father (Harris 2015:273; Beasley-Murray 1987:276).

The shift from the all-embracing term (the world to they) helps to identify 'the Jews' who fail to live up to their Scriptures as the focus (cf. Moloney 1998a:72). This failure contributes to their inability to grasp what the Son reveals in words and works (cf. John 545-47). Thus, their hatred is unfounded (Schnackenburg 1982:117; Ridderbos 1997:256; Keener 2003:1021); it fulfils what is in their law (Ridderbos 1997:525; Brodie 1993:488; Talbert 2005:224). The law, consequently, convicts them (Moloney 1998a:70; Carson 1991:527; Barrett 1978:482) and heightens their inexcusable culpability (cf. Harris 2015:273; Barrett 1978:482; Carson 1991:527).

2.3.3.3.3 Witnessing in times of hatred (Jn 15:26-16:3)

Even though some scholars view the third Paraclete saying (Jn 15:26-27) as a later insertion that breaks the flow, most scholars disagree (see Carson 1991:527; Keener 2003:1022; Moloney 1998a:70-71; Ridderbos 1997:526-527). The general position is that it bears a strong mark of unity because of the Paraclete's work after Jesus' departure – bearing witness to vindicate Jesus (Barrett 1978:482; Carson 1991:528; Ridderbos 1997:526; Keener 2003:1022). As the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete's

witness – as Ridderbos (1997:526-527; cf. Keener 2003:1022; Talbert 2005:224-225) succinctly notes – is the assistance that the Spirit will give the disciples in the controversy between the church and the world about the truth concerning Jesus' self-revelation in word and deed as the sent one. Furthermore, in the face of opposition, the Companion is actively involved in their mission (Brodie 1993:490), taking away their fears and granting them peace (Moloney 1998a:71; cf. Ridderbos 1997:526-527). It produces a single process where the disciples witness about Jesus to the opposing world through the strengthening of the Paraclete (Moloney 1998a:71; Ridderbos 1997:527; Brodie 1993:490; Keener 2003:1022; cf. Talbert 2005:224). Consequently, it is a coherent development of the ideas that precede it (Schnackenburg 1982:117, 119; cf. Brodie 1993:489).

2.3.3.3.4 Further explanation for the hatred of the world (Jn 16:1-3)

Jesus gives further elucidations on what he has already revealed to his 'friends.' The purpose is to keep them from apostasy in the face of imminent persecutions (Carson 1991: 530; Ridderbos 1997:528; Beasley-Murray 1987:277; Harris 2015:74; Schnackenburg 1982:121). He states clearly that future persecution is both a certainty (Morris 1995: 615) and an escalation of what they had seen (Ridderbos 1997:529). The rejection of Jesus will necessitate their ejection from the synagogues and execution (Moloney 1998a:72-73; Talbert 2005:225; Brodie 1993:490).[94] However, the irony is that the perpetrators will attach pious motives to these acts and consider them expressions of service to God (Köstenberger 2004:469; Carson 1991: 531; Barrett 1978: 485; Talbert 2005:226). But, repeating the thought of John 15:21 (Ridderbos 1997: 529), Jesus reveals that the root of their conduct is the nonrecognition of God (Moloney 1998a:73; cf. Talbert 2005:226).

2.3.3.3.5 The perlocutionary effect on the community theme

John employs the metaphor of the Vine as a symbol of the believing community. In its application, he evokes the metaphor for various reasons. Firstly, it reminds the reader of the unfruitfulness of the old community and the need to anticipate the new fruitful community (cf. Is 5:1-4; Beasley-Murray 1987:272; Schnackenburg 1982:106). As a symbol, it redefines the old concept of community, making the new

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[94] Bultmann (1971:556; cf. Köstenberger 2004:469) think it is Jewish rather than Roman persecution. Contra Moloney (1998a:72-73) contends that the expulsion is by 'the Jews,' but the martyrdom is at the hands of Romans.

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one an inclusive community, constituted by both Jews and gentiles (Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993). Therefore, it serves as an elaboration on the theme of the family of God in the prologue (cf. Jn 1:12-13; Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993).

Explaining the cause of the fruitfulness of this community (what distinguishes it from the unfruitful community), John traces it to the union between the Vine and the branches. Unlike most religious leaders whose lives show their unwillingness to receive the Word and thus the absence of the indwelling Word (Jn 5:38-40), the new community abides in the Vine and vice versa (Köstenberger 2004:451-453; Brodie 1993:480; Harris 2015:267). Consequently, the Father and the message of Jesus prune them to be fruitful (Moloney 1998a:60; Harris 2015:267; Keener 2003:997).

Apart from nurturing their spiritual communion with Christ, the ground for fruitfulness relationship with the Vine, the pruning defines and enhances interpersonal relationships among the members (Köstenberger 2004:454; Schnackenburg 1982:99; cf. Carson 1991:516-517). Therefore, they must demonstrate mutually the incessant and sacrificial love experienced in God (Brodie 1993:483; Keener 2003:1004; Ridderbos 1997:520; Moloney 1998a:64). By these, the community personifies genuine discipleship because their life and mission culminate in bringing glory to the Father, just as Jesus (Köstenberger 2004:455; Harris 2015:268; Ridderbos 1997:518; Beasley-Murray 1987:273; Moloney 1998:62).

Therefore, the community is bound to be opposed (Morris 1995:615). However, Jesus promises that the Paraclete, sent by the Father, will allay their fears, and strengthen them (Moloney 1998a:71; Ridderbos 1997:527; Brodie 1993:490; Keener 2003:1022; cf. Talbert 2005:224). Through this divine provision, the Paraclete helps the community to participate in and perpetuate the mission of the Logos (cf. Moloney 1998a:71; Ridderbos 1997:527; Brodie 1993:490; Keener 2003:1022).

2.4   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The selected narratives discussed above allow the reader to trace the narrative flow of the community theme in John from the prologue to the Book of Glory. The prologue helps to establish that the concept of community in John is a divine intention and not a human invention. John opens with some interrelated concepts to this effect: 1) he presents God as a community (cf. Borchert 1996:106; Harris

2008:68); and 2) community as a starting point (Kunene 2012:188; Kanagaraj 2013:2). The relationship between these propositions is that community is a starting point because John begins with the concept of an eternal community, constituted by God and the Logos. Upon this foundation, John presents the creation as collaborative work and an extension of the divine relationship. Humanity, therefore, exists to participate in the community of God (Grenz 2000:112; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2).

However, this divine purpose cannot be fulfilled independent of God; a world that does not know God is oblivious to the purpose of God (cf. Jn 1:10). Consequently, a genuine relationship with God is necessary for the revelation and manifestation of the divine intentions for humanity. Therefore, God sends John the Baptist, the witness who has experienced this relationship, to testify about the revelation of God to humanity – the Light (or the Logos) (Brant 2011:31; Keener 2003:392; cf. Jn 1:6; Jn 15:26-27).

Mediated through the incarnation, the Logos assumes a community of nature with humankind and exegetes his community to the world (Vincent 2009:61; Brant 2011:37; Harris 2015:39; Morris 1995: 101; Köstenberger 2004:50; Beasley-Murray 1987:16; Wuest 1983:210), thereby granting the members of the believing community the authorisation to become the community of God (Vincent 2009:49; Morris 1995:87; Van der Watt 2000:182; Westcott 1980:16; Keener 2003:403).

To give the community a paradigm for replication, Jesus' exegesis of his eternal community exposes the problems in the community. First, it brings to light the enormous cultural and religious failure at Bethesda (Pilch 2000:13). Additionally, it discloses the exacerbated nature of the problem: the custodians of the Law are neither willing to accept the incarnate Logos nor have the word of God abiding in them (Jn 4:38-40). Thus, a suitable replacement is necessary – a new community that replicates the eternal community (Grenz 2000:112; Kunene 2012:103).

John 15-16:3 begins with expositions on the theme of abiding to demonstrate how the new community fits into the purpose of God (what the former failed to fulfil). Employing the vine metaphor, John elaborates on the concept of the constitution of a new believing community in the prologue (cf. Jn 1:12-13). It is an inclusive community where both Jews and gentiles are united in Christ, the Vine

(Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993). The community (unlike the Jewish leaders) abides in the Vine and vice versa (Köstenberger 2004:451-453; Brodie 1993:480; Harris 2015:267). Consequently, the message of Jesus prunes them to be fruitful (Moloney 1998a:60; Harris 2015:267; Keener 2003:997). And their fruitfulness glorifies God (Harris 2015:266; Talbert 2005:220; Van der Watt 2000:44). Furthermore, their relationship with the Vine prescribes a pattern of life that must be visible in the community. They must demonstrate mutually the incessant and sacrificial love experienced in God (Brodie 1993:483; Keener 2003:1004; Ridderbos 1997:520; Moloney 1998a:64).

Finally, just like Jesus, people who fulfil the divine purpose for the community are bound to be opposed (Morris 1995:615). Thus, Jesus promises that the Paraclete, sent by the Father, will allay their fears (Moloney 1998a:71). He will also strengthen them (Moloney 1998a:71; Ridderbos 1997:527; Brodie 1993:490; Keener 2003:1022). Through this divine provision, the Paraclete will be actively involved in their mission to testify about Jesus (Moloney 1998a:71; Brodie 1993:490).

Even though these narratives provide a panoramic view of the community theme, John is replete with materials that reflect the interests and experiences of a group of people (Martyn 2003:145; see Aune 1972:73–84). Some of these are outside the parameters of the above-discussed narratives. Therefore, a narrative development of the theme is discussed in the next section to make the portrait even more perspicuous.

Chapter 3

Narrative development of the community theme

This Chapter continues the first part of the methodology – employing narrative analysis to adhere to the text (cf. Ossom-Batsa 2014:128; Marguerat & Bourquin 1999:3). Chapter 2 establishes the legitimacy of the community theme in the prologue and its perlocutionary effect on the narrative, demonstrates the community's struggle with incarnating its religious-cultural values (Jn 5), and explicates how Jesus teaches the believing community to incarnate the divine concept of community in response to these challenges (Jn 15-16:3). Elaborating on the pattern employed in that analysis, Chapter 3 attempts to trace the narrative development of the theme, concentrating on narratives that develop the foundation and formation of the ideal (divine) community, expose the sociocultural maladies, and reveal the proposed remedy – the model Jesus established in response to the lacuna created by the community's immense religious-cultural failure.

3.1 THE FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY

3.1.1 The divine community (Jn 1:1-5)

The impact of the prologue on John makes it a hermeneutical key for every academic autopsy on its themes: it *tells* what the narrative *shows* (cf. Moloney 1993:24; Carson 1991:111; Fay 2022:4). Therefore, the narrative develops the enigmatic constructs mentioned in the prologue (cf. Moloney 1993:24; Köstenberger 2013:44). One of these is the concept of community. In John, the community is a starting point (Kunene 2012:188; Kanagaraj 2013:2). It opens with the community of God as the source and ideal paradigm of a community (Grenz 2000:112; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2). John establishes the divinity of the community members and the eternality of the quality relationship demonstrated by the eternal distinctions (cf. Jn 1:1). Attempting to reveal the eternality and divine nature of the community, he ascribes divine attributes to the community by setting the discussion within the context of eternity. First, John evokes Genesis 1 to argue in favour of the eternalness of the Logos and God (the Father). Further, in describing the existence of the Logos, John employs the imperfect tense (ἦν) that expresses the continuous state of existence to strengthen the argument of the pre-existence of the Logos

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before creation (Ngewa 2003:11; Vincent 2009:24; Keener 2003:267; Borchert 1996:104). And he guides the reader with a third statement that culminates naturally and logically in the conclusion that the eternal Logos enjoys ontological equality with God, thereby cementing the deity of the Logos (Jn 1:1c; Mounce 1993:27; Vincent 2009:34-35; Harris 2015:19; Borchert 1996:103-104; Tenney 1997:65).

However, since the attribution of traits of deity to the Logos alone does not satisfactorily warrant the designation of the Logos' relationship with God as a community, John legitimises the description. First, what John depicts in the prologue bears the mark of a community (cf. Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi; Cohen 1985:12; Klink 2007:52). It manifests the relational dimension of the community concept exhibited by the Logos and God in these expressions: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν (Jn 1:1b) and οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν (Jn 1:2). These statements connect the relationship to ἐν ἀρχῇ (which depicts eternity in this context), thereby establishing its eternality (Ngewa 2003:11; Tenney 1997:64; Moloney 1993:28). Furthermore, the Greek preposition (πρὸς) which John employs to describe the relationship that the Word enjoys with God reveals its qualitative nature as an intimate union or communion between two distinct persons (Vincent 2009:34; Morris 1995:70; Borchert 1996:103; Tenney 1997:64). Therefore, the paradigm epitomised in this relationship is that the coexistence of distinct persons and the quality of relationship demonstrated between them define a community (cf. Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi).

Most importantly, the expression of community is rooted in God's nature (Borchert 1996:106). As Borchert (1996:106) concisely observes: community and unity are two compatible sides of the eternal God (cf. Grenz 2000:112). Thus, the conspicuous mark of community exemplified in the prologue is traceable to God's nature. God and the Logos enjoy communal coexistence eternally because the community is compatible with their nature (cf. Borchert 1996:106). In cognisance of the ontological equality and the character of eternal relationship that the Logos enjoys with God, one is not wrong to surmise that John postulates the concept of a community of God in John 1:1-2 (Kunene 2012:188; Borchert 1996:106; Kanagaraj 2013:2).

Nonetheless, the idea that God and the Logos constitute a community is not limited to their intimate relationship but includes a community of action. Consequently, John depicts the creation – another community-oriented subject (Kanagaraj 2013:2) – as

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the outcome of the collaborative work of the Logos and God (Jn 1:3-4; Morris 1995:71; Harris 2015:22; Vincent 2009:37; Ngewa 2003:13). In this regard, the Father who is the source of all that exists (Morris 1995:71; Harris 2015:22; Grenz 2000:102), cocreates all things through the Logos as its life-giver and light-giver (Jn 1:4; cf. Harris 2015:23; Köstenberger 2004:30; Carson 1991:119; Morris 1995:73).[95] Consequently, creation outflows from a community of action, a collaboration between the Father and the Logos (Morris 1995:71; Harris 2015:22; Grenz 2000:104).

The notion that creation outflows from the eternal relationship require it to participate in the community (Grenz 2000:112; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2; Bauckham 2015:48). Moltmann (2008:375) affirms that the community of God is an open, inviting and integrating unity that the whole world can find room within it. Nevertheless, humankind cannot participate in this relationship independent of divine assistance and invitation. For this purpose, God sends John the Baptist to partake of this mission (cf. Jn 1:6-8).

3.1.2 The preparations for the new community (Jn 1:6-9, Jn 1:15)

The introduction of John the Baptist is the bridge between the community of God, the incarnation, and the historical replication of the ideal society. As a witness, he is the first human to participate in the divine activity of *sending* in John (Jn 1:6). Thus, in introducing him, John changes the tense from imperfect (that stresses the eternality of the Logos) to aorist (Ngewa 2003:11; Keener 2003:267; Borchert 1996:104) and describes him as ἄνθρωπος – to denote the humanity of John and the historicity of his assignment (Köstenberger 2004:32; cf. Morris 1995:79).

John distinguishes the Baptist from the ramifications of the generic term, identifying him as a witness (Jn 1:6-8). This characterisation helps the reader recognise that the Baptist *knows* God (unlike the world, Jn 1:10). It is characteristic of John to portray genuine witnesses as people who testify after experiencing God (Brant 2011:31; Keener 2003:392; cf. Jn 1:6; Jn 3:32; Jn 15:26-27).[96] Thus, John introduces him as a

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[95] Kanagaraj (2013:2) argues that God created 'all things' as families according to their kinds (Gn 1:21, 24-25) and, therefore, John is disclosing the community motif embedded in creation.

[96] Morris (1995:80) lists seven who bear witness to Jesus in John – each of the three Persons of the Trinity, Scripture, the Baptist, and a variety of human witness (cf. Köstenberger 2004:32-33; Barrett 1978:159; Brant 2011:31). Apart from Scripture and Jesus, all these witnesses have experienced the Logos in one way or another. Jesus' statements attest to this (Jn 15:26-27). He tells his disciples to testify about him because they have been with (experienced) him from the beginning (Jn 15:27). He

man sent from God (Jn 1:6; cf. Carson 1991:120). Most importantly, this labelling serves to mark his unique place in salvation history as the one who pointed to the coming of the Light (Ridderbos 1991:42). Through the privilege of the divine assignment, he participates in God's mission for creation – the social life of the community of God (Grenz 2000:112).

As significant as his role is, it warrants the expectation of the emergence of the Light, a higher-ranking person whose pre-existence and pre-eminence are indisputable (Jn 1:15; Harris 2015:36; Tenney 1997:74; Ridderbos 1991:55; Köstenberger 2004:45; Ngewa 2003:15). Moreover, the appearance of the Light is the prerequisite for the exegesis of God (cf. Jn 1:14). The assignment of John the Baptist (to bear witness of the Light) and the pre-eminence of the Light preclude him from exegeting the community of God (cf. Jn 1:6-9; Jn 1:14-15). Therefore, John introduces the incarnation to establish the framework within which the exegesis occurs.

3.1.3 The incarnation of the divine community (Jn 1:10-18)

The incarnation explicates the community of God as the divine purpose of community and provides a perfect paradigm for replication. In John, creation emanates from the eternal relationship and, therefore, purposed to replicate it by partaking in 'community' (Grenz 2000:112; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2). Consequently, it requires a paradigm because the human community did not have the ideal portrait before the incarnation. The prologue reveals the reasons that account for this. First, it states that apart from the theanthropic Jesus (Harris 2015:35; Vincent 2009:51; Morris 1995:91; Westcott 1980:19-20), no man has seen God (Jn 1:18a; Morris 1995:100; Köstenberger 2004:48; Harris 2015:38) – not even Moses (Ridderbos 1997:58-59; Köstenberger 2004:48). Moreover, it establishes that being God uniquely begotten (Carson 1991:139; Morris 1995:100; Voorwinde 2002:31), the Son enjoys an unprecedented and perpetual intimacy with the Father (Köstenberger 2004:49; Voorwinde 2002:32; Vincent 2009:60). John attributes this peculiar relationship only to the Logos – the Son (Jn 1:1-2; Jn 1:18). These attributions of quintessential properties of deity to the Son culminate in his authorisation as the only

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instructed them to testify after telling them that he would send the Holy Spirit (who has coexisted with him eternally) to witness about him (Jn 15:26).

authoritative expositor of the Father and the community he represents (Jn 1:18; Voorwinde 2002:32; Vincent 2009:61; Brant 2011:37; Morris 1995:101).

Furthermore, the exegesis of God within the context of the human community materialised through the instrumentality of the incarnation (Vincent 2009:61; Wuest 1983:210). By 'assuming a community of nature with humankind,' Jesus allows the human community to respond to the will of God concerning its existence (cf. Vincent 2009:51). Thus, the prologue unearths two different reactions that characterised the reception of the exegesis of God during the incarnation: the negative (Jn 1:10-11) and positive (Jn 1:12-13). The negative response is evident in the rejection of the divine relationship or appropriate response to Jesus by the *kosmos* and some members of his own home – Israel (cf. Carson 1991:122; Morris 1995:85-86; Köstenberger 2004:37; Ridderbos 1997:44). The inappropriate response of the world and some within the old covenant community to the incarnation indicate the human community's proclivity to misalign itself to the purpose of God – that is, participating in the social values that characterise the community of God (Grenz 2000:112; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2). Conversely, the positive or appropriate response manifests in the reception given the incarnate Word by remnants within the above groups (Ridderbos 1997:45; Tenney 1997:69; cf. Morris 1995:85). Given that *the name* is a circumlocution for God (Brant 2011:33), John equates accepting or receiving the Word with believing in his name to indicate the means through which they received the incarnate Word (Köstenberger 2004:38; Harris 2015:31; Ridderbos 1997:45). Unlike those who refused to be partakers of God's purpose for creating the human community through their inappropriate response to God's revelation, the remnants, by responding positively, participate in the social life of the community of God (cf. Morris 1995:87; Grenz 2000:112; Kanagaraj 2013:2). They constitute the community that mirrors the community of God on earth.

However, their appropriate response towards this divine invitation is not the only criterion that allows them to participate in the social life of God's community and the mission of the Logos. Receiving the Son of God helps individuals obtain what guarantees their incorporation into this community (Morris 1995:87; Köstenberger 2004:39; Ridderbos 1997:45; McHugh 2009:45). The term (τέκνα θεοῦ) implies a change of status (Morris 1995:87) or identity (Van der Watt 2000:182) that warrants participation in the divine nature (see Vincent 2009:49; Morris 1995:87). Partaking in

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the divine nature also symbolises their incorporation into the family of God, thereby enjoying an intimate familial relationship with God and sharing in the community life of God (Van der Watt 2000:166, 182; cf. Keener 2003:403).

Participating in the familial relationship of the community of God, the believers (the 'we' in Jn 1:14), transformed into a community of witnesses, support the μαρτυρία of John with theirs – the glory of the pre-eminent Son (Keener 2003:416; Ridderbos 1997:53; Morris 1995:93). It is glory 'revealed under human limitations both in Himself and in those who beheld Him' (Vincent 2009:52) and manifested through his works or signs (Carson 1991:128; Morris 1995:93; Harris 2015:35), death and resurrection (Morris 1995:93; Carson 1991:128).[97] Thus, the testimony is genuine because it is evidence-based (cf. Brant 2011:31; Keener 2003:392).

Moreover, the privilege of partaking in the life of God's community and assuming the role of a community of witnesses extends beyond John's community (the 'we'). It includes all believing communities after John (cf. Ngewa 2003:17). The Johannine criteria for the characterisation of the group as the family of God support the above conclusion. Employing three different expressions, John demonstrates that natural procreation is not the criterion for membership in the family of God (Jn 1:13; Van der Watt 2000:183; Brant 2011:33-34; Tenney 1997:69; McHugh 2009:47). The qualification is by divine procreation in which God changes the identity of individuals to warrant their incorporation into the new community (Jn 1:13; cf. Van der Watt 2000:183; Köstenberger 2004:39; Brant 2011:33-34). And this is not limited to the members of the community of John (cf. Ngewa 2003:17).

Finally, John interprets the work of the incarnate Word towards the establishment of the new covenant community as exegeting the Father (cf. Jn 1:14). The incarnation is the vehicle through which Jesus explains God within the context of the human community (Vincent 2009:61; Harris 2015:39). Harris (2015:39) rightly concurs that the term ἐξηγήσατο comprises the whole span of the earthly life of Christ. Therefore, the entire gospel, the compendium of inestimable information about Christ's life in the flesh, must be read as *telling* what the prologue *shows* on the incarnation of the ideal concept of community (cf. Köstenberger 2004:50; Moloney 1993:24). As a

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[97] See Pang (2022:54-99) for an extensive discussion on the glory theme.

result, what follows traces how John develops the contextualisation of the community concept, commencing and concentrating on relevant narratives in the Book of Signs.

3.2   THE CONCEPTION AND MISSION OF THE COMMUNITY

3.2.1   Preparing for the conception of the community (Jn 1:19-34)

The prologue reports that the ministry of John the Baptist is a precursor to the establishment of the new covenant community (cf. Jn 1:6-8; Jn 1:15; Talbert 2005:83-87; Ridderbos 1991:61). Consequently, to unpack the theme, the narrative begins with the ministry of John the Baptist to determine the reverberations of the 'voice crying in the wilderness' on the formation of the new community of God (cf. Moloney 1993:24; Köstenberger 2013:44; Robinson 1963:122).

Given that the prologue defines his mission as one sent from God to testify to the Light so that all might believe through him, the narrative presents his *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* as a witness (cf. Jn 1:6-8). John orders the character of the ministry of the Baptist and its concomitant impact according to days (Jn 1:29; Jn 1:35). This systematisation places the service of John within a historical timeframe and context (Borchert 1996:104; McHugh 2009:6; Moloney 1993:31). Perhaps, John is also seeking to announce the commencement of something new – the dawning of a new day (Jn 1:29; Jn 1:35).[98] Ridderbos (1997:78) asserts that it allows the narrative to acquire a clear salvation-historical meaning, marking an epoch in the history of the human community.

In unpacking the events that culminate in the new era, the narrative gives prominence to John's testimony to the delegation of interrogators sent by the Jewish ecclesiastical leaders due to its impact (Jn 1:19-28). It is an established dictum that John the Baptist is the precursor to the formation of the community of God (Jn 1:7). Thus, the narrative must begin with John's testimony, given that it focuses on the commencement of the believing community (cf. Talbert 2005:83). Moreover, the religious character of the community, coupled with its significance to the mission of the incarnate Word, makes the encounter a great opportunity: it allows him to testify to the religious leaders and Israel about the emergence of a new order. Additionally,

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[98] Given that the narrative marks the beginning of the gospel and groups what transpired under days, Köstenberger (2004:53) asserts that John is probably developing a 'new creation' motif just like Genesis 1.

the content of the testimony impacts the witnesses and the theme of community, given that it transpired publicly (Jn 1:28; cf. Keener 2003:439). How does John employ the testimony to sustain the narrative development of the community theme?

John sustains it through the questions posed to the Baptist and his corresponding response (Jn 1:19). The question accomplishes two goals: 1) it allows John to clarify the misconceptions of the religious leaders about his identity by defining who he is not (neither Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet) and who he is (the precursor – one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord); and 2) provides an opportunity for a subliminal introduction of a discussion on the Messiah into the narrative by the emphatic negative response (ἐγώ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ Χριστός) (Jn 1:19-23; cf. Moloney 1993:61; Talbert 2005:83-84; Ridderbos 1991:64; Morris 1995:117). His explicit refusal of messiahship takes the focus away from him and draws attention to the ἐγώ εἰμὶ – Jesus (the Messiah) (Moloney 1993:61; Keener 2003:434).[99] To advance his argument, he also equates Christ to the Hebrew Messiah by introducing the term Χριστός and identifying as the expected messianic precursor whom Isaiah prophesied to create anticipation for the emergence of the Messiah in the community and narrative (cf. Jn 1:23; Carson 1991:143; see Is 40:3).[100]

Furthermore, the delegation asks a question that helps to advance the argument of John's messianic expectations: 'Why are you baptising?' (cf. Moloney 1993:61).[101] John the Baptist employs the answer to advance his messianic beliefs, positing that the one who is coming after him is standing among them, but unknown to them (Jn 1:26; cf. Jn 1:10). His response tells that John held him in high regard (Köstenberger 2004:64; Keener 2003:448; cf. Ridderbos 1991:67). Essentially, the statement exalts Jesus, the Coming One, in divine terms (Keener 2003:448). The reader immediately recognises the reiteration of the testimony of John encapsulated in the prologue: the pre-eminence of the incarnate Word, the Messiah (cf. Jn 1:15; Harris 2015:36; Tenney 1997:74; Köstenberger 2004:45; Ngewa 2003:15). The narrative closes the

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[99] Morris (1995:117) classifies this emphatic pronoun as an expression constantly employed by the Baptist whenever he contrasts himself with Jesus and takes the subordinate position.

[100] Whereas all the Gospels apply Isaiah to the text, only John places the citation on the lips of the Baptist (Keener 2003:438; cf. Carson 1991:143).

[101] To explain the possible background of the question, Keener (2003:440-448) has copiously discussed the significance of baptism in John. Moloney (1993:61; cf. Morris 1995:117) affirms that 'whatever one makes of this question from the Jerusalem authorities, the reader is following a discussion between Judaism and the Baptist which presupposes the context messianic expectation.'

testimony for the day with the commentary that the event transpired publicly in Bethany (Jn 1:28). The geographical reference marks a structural break in the narrative and prepares the reader for the climax of the testimony (Ridderbos 1991:68).

Given that the Baptist's testimony has not culminated in the establishment of the community of God, John presents the second part of the witness (cf. Ridderbos 1991:69). It iterates and elaborates on what he said in the previous 'day.' The reader recognises the reiteration of a familiar affirmation by simply observing what the Baptist says (cf. Ridderbos 1997:75). He reminds his audience of his previous testimony about someone who is coming after him – a reiteration of his testimonies in the prologue and to the delegation (Jn 1:30; Jn 1:15; Jn 1:27; Ridderbos 1997:75; Carson 1991:151). By this, the narrative harks back to his testimony concerning his role as the precursor and elaborates on it. John clarifies that the purpose of baptising with water is to reveal the Coming One to Israel (Jn 1:31; Jn 1:33; cf. Carson 1991:151; Talbert 2005:85). However, without the assistance of God, his ministry would be fruitless in becoming the conduit to introduce Jesus. Consequent, he receives divine indicators that help him identify Jesus. John testifies that it came in the form of a revelation (Ridderbos 1997:76; Köstenberger 2004:70).[102] And God confirmed that the features mark Jesus as the Coming One (Carson 1991:151; Jn 1:33; cf. Jn 1:6).

The testimony about the content of the revelational event suggests that the goal of establishing the new community and its implementation remain the products of the collaborative works of the social Trinity: all members of the Godhead play essential participatory roles towards its realisation. Thus, as the narrative unfolds, the reader must expect a community of action from the Godhead, culminating in creating the new believing community. These actions begin with the Father sending and guiding the precursor (through the Spirit's act of descending and remaining and the declaration from the Father) to identify the Coming One, testify about him and introduce him to the community (Jn 1:19-34).[103]

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[102] Contra Morris (1995:133) and Carson (1991:152) opine that the Spirit descended in bodily form. Probably, they are appealing to the event in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22).
[103] Talbert (2005:85) cites passages from deuterocanonical books to support the claim that some in Jewish circles believed that the identity of the Messiah remains hidden to people until another reveals

Additionally, the act of remaining upon him aims to help the community to differentiate him from anyone who received divine enablement for a task and review its messianic expectations (cf. Harris 2015:46; Keener 2003:460). The Spirit descended on people to empower them temporarily to accomplish a task (cf. Ridderbos 1997:76, Harris 2015:46; Keener 2003:460). However, the Spirit descends upon him and remains (cf. Harris 2015:46; Keener 2003:460; Köstenberger 2004:70). The implication is that the Spirit permanently abides and equips him (Ridderbos 1997:76, Harris 2015:46; Keener 2003:460; Carson 1991:152).[104] Therefore, throughout his ministry, the Spirit remained upon him so that the accomplishment of his mission is not without the participation of the Spirit (cf. Morris 1995:133; Köstenberger 2004:70; Keener 2003:461; Barrett 1978:178).[105]

In addition, it marks him as the expected Messiah. The Old Testament prophets anticipated the Spirit to permanently rest upon the Messiah fully (Köstenberger 2004:70; Moloney 1993:66). They prophesied a messianic period where God would pour his Spirit upon all (Carson 1991:152; Köstenberger 2004:71). Jesus fulfils both expectations as the person upon whom the Spirit rests permanently without measure and one who baptises with or 'dispenses' the Spirit (Ridderbos 1997:76; Keener 2003:460; Carson 1991:152; Jn 1:33; cf. Jn 3:34). By connecting Jesus to the messianic event and functions, John is announcing the dawning of the messianic age and the emergence of the Messiah (Carson 1991:152). In this context, John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Son of God[106] and identifies him as the Lamb of

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it. Consequently, the various roles that culminate in identifying the Messiah are critical to creating the believing community because both are inextricably linked.

[104] Elsewhere in the narrative, John employs the term for mutual abiding elsewhere (Keener 2003:460).

[105] The participation of the Spirit in creating the new community is evident from the commencement of the ministry of Jesus, throughout his entire earthly ministry, and the ministry of the disciples (Jn 15:26-16:3).

[106] Other authorities read 'the Chosen One of God,' arguing that it has significant textual support (Carson 1991:152-153; Morris 1995:134-135; cf. Barret 1978:178). According to them, it is quite intelligible to think of altering an original 'Chosen One of God' into 'Son of God' than the reverse (Morris 1995:134-135; Carson 1991:152-153; Barret 1978:178). However, there is sufficient and diverse evidence for the above reading (Metzger 1971:200; Harris 2015:46; Keener 2003:464; cf. Ridderbos 1997:77; Moloney 1993:66). As Metzger (1971:200) explains, most of the committee member preferred the reading (Son of God) based on age and diversity of witnesses and the fact that it agrees with the theological terminology of John (cf. Keener 2003:464). Moreover, the messianic nature of the alternative (The Chosen One of God) is disputed (Köstenberger 2004:71). Consequently, this work follows the first reading, considering the messianic context of the discourse between John and the delegation that resulted in his answers and the theological significance of the term 'Son of God' in John and on the community theme.

God[107] who takes away the world's sin. Two alternating explanations have characterised the reading of the phrase the Lamb of God: the genitive of source (the origin of the Lamb) and genitive of possession (the Lamb belongs to God) (Köstenberger 2004:66; cf. Harris 2015:45; Moloney 1993:65). These positions are complementary and not contradictory – Jesus is the Lamb from God and provided by God to take away the world's sin (Harris 2015:45; Köstenberger 2004:66; Carson 1991:151).[108] The completeness or breath of the atonement is implied (Morris 1995:130).

Concerning the narratological significance of the Son of God title, the prologue defines it (cf. Jn 1:18; Jn 1:34). In the context of the theme, the prologue ties it to the incarnation and formation of the community (cf. Jn 1:18). The basis of this connection is that being the Son of God makes him the exclusively authoritative exegete of the community of God (Harris 2015:35; Vincent 2009:51; Morris 1995:91; Westcott 1980:19-20). Therefore, by applying the term, John reminds the reader to anticipate the narratological manifestation of one of the prospects of the incarnation – the exegesis of the community of God (Vincent 2009:61; Brant 2011:37; Morris 1995:101). The introduction of the exegete – the incarnate Word – necessitates the expectation of the *exegetical process*: the narrative development of the creation of the community of God. Therefore, the narrative discusses the effect of the climax of John's testimony on the commencement of the new believing community.

3.2.2 Incarnating the community of God (Jn 1:35-42)

John develops the previous testimonies, presenting what transpired on the 'next day' (Jn 1:35). Though dividing the witness by days allows it to acquire a clear salvation-historical meaning, the events recorded on this day are especially significant because they bring finality to the salvation-historical significance of the testimony to the narrative – the creation of the community of God (cf. Ridderbos 1997:78). The day marks a critical epoch because John identifies Jesus, the one who is to engage

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[107] Ridderbos (1991:69) considers the first part (the Lamb of God) the most characteristic of the witness of John.
[108] The narrative regards sin as one entity or generic singular (Harris 2015:45; cf. Morris 1995:130). Many scholars have attempted to explain the background of John's statement. For an extensive discussion on the various views, see Ridderbos (1997:69-75) and Keener (2003:452-456).

in the activity of creating a new community (cf. Morris 1995:114; Köstenberger 2004:53).[109]

Despite its criticality, the events cannot be separated from the previous narrative because they place it in the proper context (cf. Talbert 2005:85; Ridderbos 1997:78-79). 'The Lamb of God' is a link phrase that connects both (Talbert 2005:85; Moloney 1993:67). Employing the title – ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (The Lamb of God) – John harks back to his earlier testimony (Jn 1:29; Talbert 2005:85; Köstenberger 2004:72). Having received previous instructions, the two were not oblivious to the appropriate response expected of them (Morris 1995:137; Carson 1991:154). Hence, the reminder necessitated the movement *away* from John *toward* Jesus (Moloney 1993:67; Morris 1995:137; Carson 1991:154; Jn 1:37). Consequently, the resolution to follow Jesus resulted from past and present testimonies of John (Morris 1995:137; Moloney 1993:67; Ridderbos 1997:79). John fulfils his mission by bearing witness of the Light and becoming the conduit through which people believe in him (Jn 1:6-7).

Many describe this act as a precursor to discipleship (Keener 2003:467-468; Carson 1991:154).[110] This is because the narrative has not yet indicated that they are following the teachings of Jesus. Therefore, John develops the culmination of the encounter, employing a probing question from Jesus to elicit a response from the potential disciples and clarify their motive (cf. Keener 2003:468). Their answer focuses on identifying where Jesus dwells (Jn 1:38). Considering the discussions on the messianic expectations that precede this encounter, some scholars have raised questions about the title (Rabbi) and the answer entirely (cf. Jn 1:19-34). For instance, Moloney (1993:67) avers that the response does not meet the earlier messianic expectations because the disciples approached Jesus solely as a teacher (cf. Keener 2003:469).

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[109] The one-week events presumably parallel the creation narrative in the first week in Genesis (Morris 1995:114; Köstenberger 2004:53). Whereas in Genesis, God created *ex nihilo*, John borrows the concept of creation as a framework to suggest that Jesus engages in a different type of creative activity during this week (Morris 1995:114).

[110] It resonates with the verb, which means to follow as a disciple (Carson 1991:154). The language of following is also the conventional Jewish locution for discipleship (Keener 2003:468). Though generally, disciples follow their teacher literally, the progressive utilisation of the term in John suggests following the teachings of Jesus (Köstenberger 2004:73). Thus, the actions of the two disciples indicate a decision to follow Jesus and his instructions.

Contrary to this view, there are sufficient reasons to believe otherwise. The narrative makes the testimony of John, including his identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God, the basis of their decision (Talbert 2005:85; Morris 1995:137; Carson 1991:154). It employs the title to link the earlier testimony with the latter (Talbert 2005:85; Mooney 1993:67). Additionally, it makes the pronouncement of the title the ultimate pointer that necessitated the step toward discipleship (Jn 1:37; cf. Barret 1978:180). Therefore, the motivation to follow emanates from encountering the Lamb (and Son) of God. They referred to him as Rabbi simply because it was appropriate in a status-conscious culture (cf. Keener 2003:468). The narrative indicates that he was more than a Rabbi to them (cf. Jn 1:41; Jn 6:25; Jn 9:2).[111]

Brodie (1993:160) sees in their response (ποῦ μένεις;) a quest for God. His claim is legitimate because it considers the symbolic significance of the verb (μένω) in Johannine theology (see Carson 1991:155; Köstenberger 2004:74-75; Barret 1978:180). As Brodie (1993:160) succinctly states, 'the richness of the word has passed from the Spirit (Jn 1:32-33) to Jesus (Jn 1:38-39), to the disciples (Jn 1:39).' The events Brodie mentions indicate that John employs the verb to hark back to the past and forecast the future. First, the word is applied in the narrative to establish the abiding relationship between the Spirit and Jesus (Ridderbos 1997:76; Keener 2003:460; Carson 1991:152). John employs it later to describe the character of the relationship – mutual indwelling and intimacy – that exists between the divine and human communities (Jn 15:1-17; cf. Brodie 1993:160; Keener 2003:472; Barret 1978:181). This symbolic meaning of the verb, characteristic of Johannine theology, is presumably intended (Carson 1991:155; Barret 1978:180-181). Thus, the disciples' answer indicates a quest for an abiding relationship with God or the community of God (cf. Brodie 1993:160). The reader recognises this in the invitation of Jesus and how they honoured it. Accepting the invitation and dwelling with Jesus

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[111] Since Moloney (1993:68) avows that the disciples approached Jesus solely as a teacher and failed to identify him by what the Baptist indicated, he treats their confession as development (Jn 1:41; Moloney 1993:68). If the disciples were addressing Jesus on both occasions, this claim would be legitimate. However, the narrative indicates otherwise. Thus, that scenario may represent a confirmation of the testimony of John and not progress or sudden discovery (cf. Keener 2003:475; Ridderbos 1997:85; Beasley-Murray 1987:26). This explanation is possible because their question triggered an invitation to go and ascertain what they wanted to know about him (Ridderbos 1997:82). They were introduced to the Messiah and not a Rabbi. And beyond what John instructed, the narrative gives no information about what Jesus shared with them to warrant that sort of development. As a result, the confession did not result from discovery; Andrew was only interpreting John's testimony through the eyes of his personal experience (Ridderbos 1997:85; Keener 2003:475).

that day transforms them into the first humans to dwell or participate in the community of God (Jn 1:39; Brodie 1993:160-161). It is, therefore, not wrong to conclude that the narrative indicates the beginning of the fulfilment of God's purpose for the human community (cf. Brodie1993:160; Bultmann 1971:100). The reader identifies the commencement of the gathering of those who constitute the community of God in the prologue (Jn 1:14; Ridderbos 1997:79-80).

The gospel is focused first on the individual and progresses to the community, suggesting that believing leads to becoming part of the community (Brodie1993:37). In addition, the foundational principle of Christian expansion is a repeated process of witnessing whereby new disciples testify about Jesus to others (Carson 1991:159; cf. Talbert 2005:86). Thus, this encounter prepares the reader for a narrative development of the gathering of the community. Consequently, a chain of events is narrated to this effect, beginning with Andrew. As a community member,[112] Andrew participates in its mission by becoming a witness who replicates the invitation which he received from Jesus by first[113] bringing his brother Simon to the Messiah[114] to become a member (Jn 1:40-41; cf. Ridderbos 1997:79).[115] The implication is that an encounter with Jesus transforms individuals into members of the community of God, a community of witnesses (cf. Keener 2003:475). It additionally demonstrates the paradigmatic nature of the Baptist's literary role as a witness, making witnessing the responsibility of every member of the community of God (Keener 2003:475).

Therefore, the narrative presents Philip as a witness who participates in the mission of the community after Jesus finds him (Jn 1:43-51; cf. Keener 2003:480). However, Philip's case is unique in the sense that Jesus took the initiative to summon him to discipleship (Talbert 2005:86; Morris 1995:142). Thus, in John, Philip is the only true example of a *call* (Köstenberger 2004:78). Nevertheless, it parallels the first account

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[112] It is critical to note that though he took a step towards discipleship based on John's testimony, the personal encounter with Jesus transformed him into a true disciple (Keener 2003:475).

[113] There are three textual variants. However, the above reading – that the first thing Andrew did was finding his brother – has received support because it is well attested (Carson 1991:157; Ridderbos 1997:84; Brodie 1993:161; Metzger 1971:200). For more information on the three textual variants, see Harris (2015:50), Carson (1991:157), Metzger (1971:200) and Barret (1978:181-182).

[114] John is the only New Testament writer who employs the term Messiah (Ridderbos 1997:85; Köstenberger 2013:76; Barret 1978:182). Andrew's proclamation stems from his interpretation of John's testimony through the prism of his encounter (Keener 2003:475).

[115] Though the narrative does not name the other disciple, most Johannine scholars affirm that the unidentified person is John, the Evangelist (Ridderbos 1997:83; Köstenberger 2004:76; Harris 2015:50; Witherington 1995:70; Beasley-Murray 1987:26).

(Andrew and Simon) in several ways. For instance, the narrative repeats the identification (we have found, Jn 1:41; Jn 1:45) and invitational phrases (come and see, Jn 1:39; Jn 1:46). Though articulated distinctly, their testimony demonstrates an understanding of Jewish messianic expectations and the messiahship of Jesus (Ridderbos 1997:88).[116] Most importantly, they performed their responsibilities as fruitful witnesses, adding to the community (Jn 1:45-46; Jn 1:41-42; cf. Ridderbos 1997:87).[117] Finally, the repeated phrase (we have found) harks back to the community of God in the prologue (we) that beheld his glory (Jn 1:14). Therefore, by employing the plural (we), Philip identifies with this community in the prologue that is now fledgling in the narrative (cf. Morris 1995:143; Köstenberger 2004:74).

Having identified the genesis of the community, John begins to define its role in its context. Employing some of the signs, he develops narratives linked to community identity, casting them in a religious-cultural context to guide the reader to discover how the disciples grew in a community plagued by sociocultural maladies (cf. Köstenberger 2004:102). Finally, he presents the community of God as the remedy to these societal maladies. The first symbol of community identity which John employs for this purpose is the Jewish ceremonial ritual (cf. Jn 2:1-11; cf. Köstenberger 2004:102).

3.2.3 Defining the community's sociocultural role (Jn 2:1-11)

To explicate the character and mission of the new community, John begins with a narrative containing elements that symbolize Jewish community identity (cf. Jn 2:1-11). It evokes a plethora of Jewish religious-cultural symbolisms, employing marriage, wine, and jars for purification rites (cf. Moloney 1993:79). By situating the narrative plot within the context of a Jewish wedding, John gives the event a religious-cultural context (Jn 2:1).[118]

To unpack the religious and cultural significance of the narrative, John identifies a problem with religious-cultural impact: a scarcity of wine. Wedding celebrations

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[116] Whereas Andrew employs the title Messiah, Philip speaks of the same person by referring to the testimony of Moses concerning him in the Law (Jn 1:45; Ridderbos 1997:88; cf. Jn 5:39, Jn 5:45-47).
[117] John anticipates the future expectations of fruit-bearing required of the believing community (cf. Jn 15:1-5).
[118] Marriage is a traditional symbol that evokes Jewish messianic expectations (Moloney 1993:80). The wedding ceremonies which usher the bride and groom into their marital lives also attract extended families and the entire community (Köstenberger 2004:91; Keener 2003:499). The wedding, therefore, places the *sign* within the sphere of religious, family, and community life.

transpire within seven days (Köstenberger 2004:91; Harris 2015:57; Carson 1991:169). Hence, experiencing a shortage of wine was not improbable. The only problem is that lacking wine on a wedding day in a *shame* culture is tantamount to embarrassment (Carson 1991:169; Keener 2003:502; Köstenberger 2004:93). First-Century Mediterranean culture views marriage as a fusion of the honour of two extended families (Campbell 2007:127). Wine is also indispensable to any well-organised public celebration because it symbolises joy and celebration in Jewish thoughts (Keener 2003:502; Köstenberger 2004:93). Its absence on a day of communal celebration consequently raises questions about the organisation of the wedding and casts aspersions on the bride and groom, a social *faux pas* that could make the wedding the talk of the guests for many years (Keener 2003:502). The Jews also associate wine with the messianic banquet and age as a period of the superabundance of wine in their theological reflections (Köstenberger 2004:93; Keener 2003:494). Thus, the narrative introduces Jesus into a religious-cultural situation: The wedding and wine, traditional symbols of the messianic time and the messianic fullness and the absence of wine, purporting a sociocultural crisis (cf. Moloney 1993:80). John prepares the reader for Jesus' remedy to this social malady with religious implications.

In this context, the mother of Jesus reports the problem to Jesus (Jn 2:3). Given the sociocultural implications of the crisis, she may have acted to save the family from dishonour (Köstenberger 2004:93; Carson 1991:169; Keener 2003:502).[119] It is also possible that she was only expressing her confidence in the resourcefulness of Jesus (Carson 1991:169-70; Morris 1995:158; cf. Köstenberger 2004:94) or acting on the presumption that her request will be granted (Keener 2003:503).

Jesus responds with a question in the form of rebuke, indicating that even biological family ties are subservient to his divine mission (Carson 1991:171; cf. Moloney

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[119] Contra Morris (1995:158) opines that Mary reported the incident to Jesus because she expected a public demonstration of his messiahship. His conclusions rest on questionable assumptions because he relies on the infant narratives, an event John never mentions. The first appearance of Mary in the Gospel of John is this narrative. John excludes her from the conversation between Jesus and the burgeoning community, where Jesus gives a hint about these signs (Jn 1:51). Furthermore, since John indicates that this is the first sign of Jesus, it may be arduous to justify the above position (Jn 1:2; Campbell 2007:121-122). Consequently, it is doubtful if that was her motivation (see Carson 1991:169-70; Morris 1995:158; Keener 2003:503; Köstenberger 2004:94; Campbell 2007:121-122; Barrett 1978:191).

1993:81; Morris 1995:159-160).[120] However, this is not the absence of filial affection for his mother but an indication that his position as the Son of God (and Mary) and mission requires obedience from the Father who sent him (Köstenberger 2004:94; cf. Morris 1995:159). Consequently, his actions will be dependent upon something other than the wishes of Mary (Moloney 1993:82; Köstenberger 2004:95; Harris 2015:58). Since Mary stands outside a mysterious and unknown 'hour,' the timing must be determined by a person who is part of the unknowable union between the Father and the Son (Moloney 1993:81).

By the response of Jesus, the narrative introduces a prominent theme in John: the hour. John employs the term to allude to the glorification of Jesus (cf. Carson 1991:171; Ridderbos 1997:105; Barrett 1978:191; Morris 1995:160).[121] So, how does it address the concerns of his mother? Carson (1991:172) avers that Jesus typically identifies more symbolisms in the utterances than the speaker envisions (Carson 1991:172). Hence, whereas Mary was looking at saving the wedding from embarrassment, Jesus was looking at the messianic age: a period when he supplies 'wine' for the banquet (Carson 1991:172-173). Consequently, the reader recognises that the response of Jesus – though it may address mundane issues – has messianic ramifications and will, therefore, be done within the parameters of divine direction and timing (Harris 2015:58; cf. Ridderbos 1997:106).

Having evoked Jewish messianic expectations, John identifies symbols of Jewish religious rites: six water jars for purification (Jn 2:6). He provides information that is vital to set the narrative within the context of Jewish messianic expectations. He states the capacity of the jars possibly to intimate the abundance of the messianic provision that is about to happen (Ridderbos 1997:107; Morris 1995:162; Köstenberger 2004:97; Carson 1991:174). Also, the goal of stating the purpose of these jars is to indicate the impending replacement of the old order of Jewish religious practices with something better (Carson 1991:173). Additionally, some

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[120] The reply from Jesus has divided scholars (cf. Jn 2:4). The debate focuses on the vocative he employs to address Mary and the question he posed. Most Johannine scholars argue that though the vocative may not be an endearing term, Jesus is acting courteously by referring to Mary simply as a woman (Carson 1991:171; Morris 1995:158; Köstenberger 2004:94; Ridderbos 1997:105; Barrett 1978:191; Beasley-Murray 1987:34; cf. Brodie 1993:174). It also appears that by the vocative expression, Jesus is politely establishing a distance between himself and his mother (Köstenberger 2004:94; Carson 1991:171; Ridderbos 1997:105).
[121] It includes his suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation (Carson 1991:171; Ridderbos 1997:105; Barrett 1978:191; cf. Morris 1995:160).

scholars interpret the number six as symbolising incompleteness and, therefore, suggests that it signifies the imperfectness of Jewish religious practices (Köstenberger 2004:96; Barrett 1978:191; cf. Carson 1991:174; Morris 1995:160). The qualities attributed to the jars, their inseparable connection to Judaism, and the religious-cultural crisis linked to the absence of wine at the wedding, create gaps that prepare the reader for a different and better.

Jesus' response to the request fills the cultural and religious lacunas. At the cultural level, the provision of wine averts a potential social crisis (Carson 1991:169; Keener 2003:502; Köstenberger 2004:93). Religiously, both the process and provision point to the inauguration of a messianic community. For instance, filling the jars to the brim highlights the messianic age, displaying that what will transpire is a lavish provision of wine, a portrait akin to the messianic time (Harris 2015:59; Carson 1991:174). Additionally, the superiority of the wine validates its connection to the new, messianic age Jesus is introducing (Carson 1991:174). It is congruent with John's comment about the *miracle*: Jesus did the first of his signs in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory (Jn 1:10). Jesus has kept the manifestation until now. The hour (the time of this lavish provision of wine) marks the epoch when the presence of Jesus as the glory manifests (cf. Moloney 1993:88). John labels it as a sign because it is both what Jesus is doing and what it says about him (Moloney 1993:88; Carson 1991:175; cf. Köstenberger 2004:99). The Jewish symbolisms evoked throughout the narrative only points to the Messiah and a messianic age (cf. Moloney 1993:80; Harris 2015:59; Carson 1991:174; Köstenberger 2004:99). Incidentally, the Jews consider the messianic age as a time of the manifestation of the glory of God (Köstenberger 2004:99). Thus, by manifesting his glory through this sign, Jesus is inaugurating a new (messianic) era or order (Harris 2015:60; Carson 1991:175).

The remedy to the scarcity of wine has spiritual and cultural ramifications for the growing community (cf. Jn 2:11). The manifestation of glory occasions spiritual growth in the disciples,[122] suggesting that they either put their faith in Jesus (Harris

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[122] Moloney (1993:88) and like-minded scholars interpret the statement as the beginning of true faith. According to Moloney (1993:88), the implied reader traces the disciples' journey through failure into acceptance of the glory of God in this sign (Moloney 1993:88). However, the context of the symbolisms evoked in the narrative and the previous encounters between Jesus and the disciples indicate something contrary. The plethora of images (as discussed earlier) point to the messiahship of Jesus. Aside from John the Baptist, all messianic titles attributed to Jesus came from the disciples (cf. Jn 1:35-51). Apart from Nathanael, whose testimony resulted from a personal experience, the

2015:61; Carson 1991:175)[123] or learned to understand him more and more after seeing his glory (Ridderbos 1997:113). Stating that the disciples witnessed the messianic glory harks back to some ideas in the prologue. The prologue indicates that remnants of the covenant community became part of the messianic community who beheld the glory of the Son during the incarnation (cf. Jn 1:12-14; Ridderbos 1997:45). John is intimating that despite the general failure of the Jewish community to grasp the significance of the sign, there are remnants who recognise it. Their presence at the time of the manifestation of the glory makes them part of the community in the prologue (cf. Jn 1:14). Thus, John is not suggesting the inception of true faith as Moloney (1993:88) annotates. As Ridderbos (1997:113) affirms, the narrative presents their faith earlier in their encounter with Jesus (cf. Jn 1:50-51). John is thus, indicating that witnessing the glory caused spiritual growth or the disciples to learn to understand Jesus more (cf. Harris 2015:61; Carson 1991:175; Ridderbos 1997:113).

Given the narrative context, one cannot limit it exclusively to understanding his identity; it includes recognising the significance of this act for the group's community identity. Tying the inauguration of the messianic community to wine, something that symbolises the messianic era and whose absence is tantamount to shame (a sociocultural problem), Jesus is establishing a relationship between the community and its response to its sociocultural challenges. He is redefining community identity and the character of a covenant community. By this sign, he characterises the messianic community as a group whose social presence must curtail sociocultural challenges. The implication is that its absence also creates a necessitating environment for societal maladies, akin to the lack of wine at the wedding ceremony.

Finally, employing it as the first sign, John publicises the anticipation of religious-cultural problems and the divine response through the messianic community.

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messianic testimonies of Andrew and Philip were products of encounters, given after abiding with Jesus, a sign of being part of the community of God (cf. Jn 1:37-51; Brodie 1993:160-161). Furthermore, the act of witnessing means the encounter transformed them into a community of witnesses (cf. Keener 2003:475). Therefore, John may be portraying something other than the beginning of true faith. As Harris (2015:61) rightly avows, the expression is more probably constative (put their faith) though it could be ingressive (began to believe).

[123] Harris (2015:61) opines that the expression is more probably constative (put their faith) though it could be ingressive (began to believe).

Consequently, he introduces the cleansing of the Jerusalem temple, another symbol of Jewish religious and community identity (cf. Köstenberger 2004:102).

3.2.4   Redefining community identity (Jn 2:13-22)

The first sign results in deepening the messianic community's faith in Jesus or enabling them to learn to understand him more (cf. Jn 2:11; Harris 2015:61; Carson 1991:175; Ridderbos 1997:113). It also necessitates recognising Jesus' response to the problem as characterising the messianic community as the remedy to society's religious-cultural quandaries. In what follows, John tracks the religious-cultural plights and how the messianic community fills the lacuna created by these challenges.

John marks the beginning of the narrative by placing it within a religious context; he mentions the nearness of Passover as the justification for Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (Jn 2:13). While in Jerusalem, Jesus goes to the court of the Gentiles (cf. Moloney 1993:96; Carson 1991:178; Brodie 1993:179).[124] He identifies a religious-cultural problem: the abuse of the court of the Gentiles (Jn 2:14). Discovering the happenings at the court, he drove out the moneychangers and merchants, together with the sacrificial animals (Harris 2015:63).[125] Jesus speaks for the first time in the narrative.[126] He commands the pigeon sellers: Take these things out of here![127] John explains the reason for his actions with another imperative: Stop making my Father's house a marketplace! (Jn 2:16). The presence of the present imperative forbids the continuation of an act (Harris 2015:63; Köstenberger 2004:107; cf. Morris 1995:171). Thus, some scholars maintain that John employs the prohibition to teach that the emergence of the Lamb of God necessitates the abrogation or discontinuation of Jewish religious sacrifices (Barrett 1978:198). Though this is possible, it appears that Jesus is not objecting to animal sacrifices or taxes, but to their impacts on Gentile worship (Köstenberger 2004:106; Keener 2003:524; Harris 2015:64). Conducting

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[124] The events that follow could have happened only at the outward court of the temple: merchants selling sacrificial animals and moneychangers seated at their tables (Moloney 1993:96; Köstenberger 2004:103; Carson 1991:178). The availability of sacrificial animals and currency exchange facilities for the half-shekel temple tax payment was convenient for temple visitors (Harris 2015:63; cf. Köstenberger 2004:105; Carson 1991:178; Ridderbos 1997:116).
[125] Some scholars assert that the act implies that the emergence of the Lamb of God renders these practices redundant (Barrett 1978:198).
[126] John records this speech with the Greek imperatives (Jn 2:16).
[127] Though Jesus addresses the pigeon sellers directly, it extends to all merchants because it is within the context of the temple cleansing (Harris 2015:63).

these activities at the outer court disrupts Gentile worship (Köstenberger 2004:106; Keener 2003:524). Designating a court for Gentiles to worship in a symbol of Jewish community identity, despite its location, shows that the divine purpose for the community of God is an interracial community serving one God (cf. Köstenberger 2004:102). Thus, obstructing Gentile worship defeats its divine purpose (cf. Jn 2:16).

Considering the zealous response from Jesus, his disciples remembered the righteous sufferer in the Psalms (Ps 69:9). John does not clarify if it transpired on the spur of the moment or after the resurrection (Carson 1991:180). However, the memory of the righteous sufferer achieves two things in the narrative. It gives the disciples a teachable moment to understand Jesus more and deepen their faith, aside from the impact of the first sign (cf. Ridderbos 1997:113). The event develops their previous knowledge about Jesus thereby, contributing to their spiritual growth.

Additionally, the narrative changes the tense of the quotation from the LXX to the future tense: 'Zeal for your house will consume me' (Carson 1991:180; Harris 2015:64). The purpose of the change of tense is to proclaim the prophetic or proleptic ramifications of the cleansing of the temple on the narrative (Carson 1991:180; Köstenberger 2004:107; Ridderbos 1997:111).[128] His zeal for unadulterated worship and relationship with God, demonstrated in the cleansing of the temple, will consume him – culminate his death (Carson 1991:180; Brant 2011:71; Köstenberger 2004:107). However, it is doubtful that the disciples associate their memory of the righteous sufferer to his death; the connection comes only after the resurrection (Carson 1991:180; cf. Jn 2:22). At best, their focus at that moment was on the exhibition of zeal (Carson 1991:180).

John introduces new characters: the Jewish religious leaders (Jn 2:18). Ironically, the disciples readily found in the Old Testament Scriptures a justification for Jesus' actions and accepted it, but those who search them rigorously ask for a sign (Carson 1991:180; Köstenberger 2004:108; Ridderbos 1997:117; cf. Jn 5:39). The religious leaders are spiritually blind to discern through the prism of the Old Testament the significance of the act (Carson 1991:181). Therefore, in line with their expectations

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[128] Contra Harris (Harris 2015:64) acknowledges that the future tense could be prophetic (My jealous ardour for temple purity will lead to my death), it is more probably gnomic (My intense eagerness for the sanctity of the temple and purity of worship always eats me up).

that the Messiah will perform signs, they ask for one (Morris 2015:173-174; cf. Köstenberger 2004:108). Jesus provides a messianic proof as legitimation – the destruction and reconstruction of the temple (of his body; Jn 2:19; cf. Köstenberger 2004:102). Nevertheless, he purposely expresses it ambiguously or cryptically, making it difficult for the leaders to grasp the importance of the answer.[129] However, the purpose is to generate discussions on Jewish messianic expectations and demonstrate how he fulfils them. The concept of rebuilding God's temple is a favourite early motif (Van der Watt 2000:105). Present in both the Old Testament and Second Temple literature is the expectation to establish a new temple for the messianic age (Köstenberger 2004:102; cf. Keener 2003:530). Despite the scriptural evidence, the interlocutors of Jesus focus on their temple, a sign that they have still not grasped the communicative force of his enigmatic statement (cf. Jn 2:20). Even the disciples who discerned the connection between the zeal of Jesus and the righteous sufferer (Ps 69:9) did not understand the cryptic message either (Jn 2:22; cf. Carson 1991:182; Ridderbos 1997:121). Thus, John clarifies that Jesus was referring to his body as the temple (cf. Jn 2:21).

The explanation guides the reader to understand the significance of the enigmatic sayings of Jesus for the messianic community. John is redefining the community of God and sacred spaces through the lens of the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Jn 2:22). The temple symbolises a national and religious identity (Köstenberger 2004:105). It is the locality of the divine presence where the community serves God (Van der Watt 2000:106). The shift from the cleansing of the temple to his body announces a new season where the religious and (inter) national identity of the community of God will be this new temple – Jesus (see Köstenberger 2004:108; cf. Harris 2015:67). The intimate familial relationship between Jesus and the Father makes him the living abode of God on earth, and therefore the fulfilment of all the Jewish temple meant (Carson 1991:182; Van der Watt 2000:106; cf. Moloney 1993:101). Faith in Jesus the Messiah, consequently, replaces Jewish temple worship (Köstenberger 2004:108; cf. Harris 2015:67; Van der Watt 2000:106; Brodie 1993:179 Keener 2003:527). Thus, Barrett (1978:201; cf. Carson 1991:182) rightly avers that 'the human body of Jesus was where a unique manifestation of God took place and consequently became the only true temple and centre of true worship.' In

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[129] Harris (2015:66) notes that τοῦτον could refer either to the actual temple or the body of Jesus.

his body, the original intention of the religious and national identity of the temple find expression. The universal dimension of God's purpose for community life and identity, displaced by the narrowly based worship in the temple, manifests in Jesus (Köstenberger 2004:105; Brodie 1993:179; Barrett 1978:195). The death and resurrection of Jesus tear down the temple wall that divides worshipers into Jews and Gentiles and build or assemble them as the new community of God (Barrett 1978:195; Brodie 1993:179; Köstenberger 2004:105).

Additionally, it culminates in strengthening the disciples' (the existing messianic community) faith in the Scripture and the word that Jesus spoke. The general view is that Scripture refers to the Old Testament passages that focus on the righteous sufferer (Harris 2015:67; Morris 1995:179-180; Carson 1991:183; cf. Ps 16:10; Ps 69:9; Is 53:12). And probably, the word that Jesus spoke is the message about the destruction and the resurrection of his body (Jn 2:19; Köstenberger 2004:110). Since Jesus fulfils the Old Testament Scripture on the righteous sufferer and his prediction about his death and resurrection, it could be argued that the expression (faith in Scripture and the word) ultimately points to faith in Jesus.

Unlike the disciples who keep progressing in their faith in Jesus, the Jewish community, in general, responds differently. Many believed in his name because of the signs he performed. Their penchant for seeking signs is akin to the religious leaders (cf. Jn 2:18). Thus, the reader is cautioned not to infer a demonstration of genuine faith from their attitude (Köstenberger 2004:116; cf. Carson 1991:184; Köstenberger 2004:115; Keener 2003:531; Morris 1995:181). Their posture makes that type of faith spurious (Carson 1991:184; Köstenberger 2004:115; Keener 2003:531; Morris 1995:181; contra Ridderbos 1997:122).[130] It is evident in the comments about the response of Jesus: on his part would not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone (Jn 2:24). Jesus reacted based on the foreknowledge of their character (Keener

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[130] Ridderbos (1997:122) contests that the people displayed genuine faith. Based on how the prologue applies the expression (believed in his name), he concludes that John does not indicate any pretence in their attitude (Ridderbos 1997:122). Even though the prologue employs the expression as genuine faith, it is problematic to accept that it applies to this context (cf. Jn 1:12). The reason is that Jesus connects the faith of Nathanael to what he saw, but he promised him extraordinary things than he had seen (Jn 1:50-51). The future promise makes Nathanael part of Jesus' journey. However, no such commitment exists in this case. Consequently, it seems more accurate to assert that it was dubious faith (Carson 1991:184; Köstenberger 2004:115).

2003:531). The narrative does not also furnish us with evidence that they followed Jesus after the encounter. Consequently, even if they desired to become part of the community, they approached it wrongly, therefore, needed divine guidance.

Against the background of the spurious faith of many Jews, the subsequent narratives address the divinely ordained entry requirements and the community identity of the messianic community, employing two personal encounters with Jesus: Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21) and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-39).

3.2.5 Entering the community of God (Jn 3:1-21)

The introduction of Nicodemus is critical because he enters immediately after casting the Jewish religious authorities and community in a bad light. Nevertheless, John's failure to particularise the aim of his visit has occasioned varying interpretations because it transpires at night. Some argue that he opted for the night visit to have a conducive atmosphere for discussions akin to rabbinic practices (cf. Carson 1991:186; Morris 1995:187). Considering his position as a Pharisee, others propose that he feared being identified by the public (Keener 2003:536; cf. Ridderbos 1997:124; Morris 1995:187). However, predominantly, scholars interpret this symbolically (Morris 1995:187; Moloney 1993:108; Carson 1991:186; Brant 2011:74; cf. Harris 2015:72). Considering the narratological application of the word (night) in John, many opine that Nicodemus' action symbolises a movement from darkness towards the Light (Moloney 1993:108; Morris 1995:187; Keener 2003:536; Brant 2011:74).[131]

Such a transition is possible if he acted on his volition. Some have inferred that the first-person plural verb οἴδαμεν suggests that Nicodemus is speaking for like-minded religious leaders (cf. Carson 1991:187). It is pertinent to note that John does not state it explicitly. Unlike the delegation sent to interrogate John the Baptist, the narrative does not indicate that the leaders sent Nicodemus (cf. Jn 1:19). Additionally, it gives no indication of Nicodemus eliciting the response for any sender, unlike the above (cf. Jn 1:22). It does appear that it was for personal gain. However, considering how John develops the idea of Jesus fulfilling and replacing what Judaism represents, the message of Jesus has far-reaching implications.

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[131] Contra Köstenberger (2004:108) argues that the timing depicts the flatness of this character in John.

Nicodemus initiates the conversation by addressing Jesus as Rabbi (Jn 3:2). Carson (1991:186) suggests that the application of the term by Nicodemus is worth more than the utterance of 'the two untaught disciples of John the Baptist' (cf. Jn 1:38). Nevertheless, placing both within their narrative contexts does not favour this interpretation. The disciples followed because John introduced Jesus to them after a series of messianic testimonies. Their question and the corresponding response of Jesus also affirm that they went to abide with the community of God (cf. Jn 1:38-40; Brodie 1993:160-161). Carson (1991:199; cf. Köstenberger 2004:122) admits that Nicodemus' question implies that he went to verify the identity of Jesus. He acknowledges in the latter part of his analysis of the questions that Nicodemus had not even begun to appreciate who Jesus is (Carson 1991:199). Therefore, his reference to Jesus as Rabbi is not weightier than the disciples who were convinced through the testimonies from the divinely ordained precursor and followed.

Addressing the narratological impact of the title, Morris (1995:187), conversely, opines that Nicodemus sees Jesus simply as a teacher. His explanation rests on questionable assumptions; it suggests that Nicodemus regards signs as prevalent among Rabbis. But this is foreign to the narrative. If this is true, Nicodemus should equally perform Jesus' miracles, given his position as a Rabbi (cf. Jn 3:10). Additionally, he would not have visited Jesus at night over the demonstration of signs (cf. Jn 3:2). Contrarily, his comment proves that he regards him more than a teacher (cf. Carson 1991:186; Moloney 1993:109). For instance, unlike the religious leaders who failed to recognise the significance of the signs, Nicodemus at least accentuates that they point to his divine calling (from God) and backing (Carson 1991:186; cf. Barrett 1978:205; Köstenberger 2004:121). Judaism holds that miracles attest to God's presence (Köstenberger 2004:121). Consequently, recognising that the signs point to God's presence distinguishes him from the other religious authorities as a leader who considers Jesus more than a teacher.

However, this is not enough for a transition from darkness to Light. His credentials are also inadequate to enable him to understand the nature of Jesus' identity without the influence of spiritual birth (Keener 2003:537). Thus, focusing on his thoughts, Jesus rejects the approach by which Nicodemus seeks to know him, introducing him to the divine entry requirement (cf. Köstenberger 2004:121-122). Employing the double amen, he establishes the emphatic and authoritative nature of spiritual rebirth

as the only means to see the kingdom or community of God (cf. Ridderbos 1997:192; Brodie 1993:280). The word ἄνωθεν has a dual meaning – again and from above (Brant 2011:31; Carson 1991:189; Morris 1995:188; Keener 2003:538; Moloney 1993:110).[132] Nicodemus understands the statement primarily as denoting rebirth (Jn 3:4). The perlocutionary effect indicates that he missed the illocutionary force: from above (Keener 2003:538; Moloney 1993:110). As a result, Jesus restates the earlier sentence with two substitutions. He replaces ἄνωθεν with '*water and the Spirit*' and the word '*see*' with '*enter*' (Jn 3:5; cf. Carson 1991:191; Moloney 1993:110). The Greek construction suggests that John employs *water and Spirit* as a conceptual unity (Carson 1991:194; Harris 2015:73; Keener 2003:550; Talbert 2005:103; contra Moloney 1993:111).[133] Jesus is intimating a new birth produced by the Spirit, a transition from natural to spiritual birth, harking back to the entry requirement of the community of God in the prologue (Harris 2015:72; Moloney 1993:111; Jn 3:6; cf. Jn 1:12-13). Thus, John parallels the expression *from above* to the spiritual birth to clarify its source and extend its application and necessity for entering the kingdom of God (Jn 3:7; Morris 1995:194; Köstenberger 2004:124 Harris 2015:73).[134] Since Nicodemus is a member of the Jewish religious authorities and community, the plural (you) denotes the inclusion of these groups (Morris 1995:194; Köstenberger 2004:124; cf. Barrett 1978:211). It also includes humanity, given that this experience is a prerequisite for humankind (Harris 2015:73).

John demonstrates the effect of this spiritual reality analogically (Jn 3:7; cf. Carson 1991, 194; Köstenberger 2004:124). To illustrate how the Spirit operates in the process of spiritual rebirth, Jesus compares it to the movement of the wind (cf. Jn 3:7). Akin to its Hebrew counterpart, the Greek expression denotes wind (or breath) and Spirit (Carson 1991:197; Ridderbos 1997:128; Moloney 1993:114). Jesus employs the word in his analogy to compare the mysterious and sovereign will of the Spirit in effecting rebirth to the wind (Ridderbos 1997:129; Harris 2015:73; Carson 1991:197). The indication is that the spiritually reborn, the regenerated community,

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[132] Scholars appeal to the interpretation of Nicodemus, John's testimony of the Spirit descending on Jesus and the origin of Jesus as the basis for the dual meaning (cf. Jn 1:31-36; Jn 3:31; Ridderbos 1997:125).

[133] For the summary of various interpretations on the verse, see Carson (1991:191-195) and Morris (1995:191-193).

[134] The word (ἔδει) appears nine times in John and twice in this narrative (Jn 3:7; Jn 3:14; Jn 3:30; Jn 4:20; Jn 4:24; Jn 9:4; Jn 10:16; Jn 12:32; and Jn 20:9). In all instances, they give the impression that performing the act in the narrative is a necessity.

experiences the divine activity even though it is invisible (Jn 3:8; Carson 1991:197; Harris 2015:74; Ridderbos 1997:129).

Unlike the wind, the effect or experience of spiritual rebirth is not temporary but the beginning of a new life. The state of being reborn from above is a means to an end and not the end. The expression (see or enter the kingdom of God) implies that this birth ushers anyone who experiences it into a different state, given that Jesus makes it the prerequisite for seeing or entering the kingdom of God (cf. Jn 3:5).[135] The word '*see*,' means to experience, encounter, or participate (Harris 2015:72; Carson 1991:188; cf. Keener 2003:537). Therefore, the rebirth allows individuals who have been reborn to participate in the experience of being members of the community or family of God (Moloney 1993:113; Harris 2015:77; cf. Jn 1:12-13).

Though a recognised and established teacher, Nicodemus cannot discern the communicative force of Jesus' message (cf. Ridderbos 1997:132; Morris 1995:195; Barrett 1978:211; Köstenberger 2004:122). In the narrative, he moves from misunderstanding Jesus (Jn 3:4) to being surprised at his sayings (Jn 3:7) and expressing a growing exasperation and lack of understanding (Köstenberger 2004:125). His inability to grasp these realities occasions further elucidations from Jesus, focusing on the foundation for spiritual rebirth (cf. Jn 3:11-21).

Jesus repeats the double amen to re-establish the authoritative and emphatic character of the testimony (Köstenberger 2004:125; Ridderbos 1997:133 cf. Ridderbos 1997:192; Brodie 1993:280). However, on this occasion, He speaks in the first-person plural (οἴδαμεν). Consequently, whereas some hold that Jesus was referring to himself and his disciples or John the Baptist (see Carson 1991:198; Ridderbos 1997:133), others include his future disciples (Harris 2015:74). However, Carson (1991:199) sees a sardonic expression. Since Jesus replicates Nicodemus (we know), it is reasonable to think of the plural as including the disciples, given that Nicodemus applies it in a collective sense.

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[135] Metzger (Metzger 1971:203) indicates that though a wide range of patristic authors and a few manuscripts substitute τοῦ θεοῦ with τῶν οὐρανῶν, the committee was impressed with the age and diversity of witnesses in favour of τοῦ θεοῦ and the possibility that copyists introduced τῶν οὐρανῶν in imitation of the recurrent expression in Mathew.

Replicating the opening statement of Nicodemus, Jesus addresses the root of his problem (cf. Carson 1991:199; Köstenberger 2004:125-126). It is not the inability to intellectually comprehend the testimony of Jesus but his willingness to accept it (Carson 1991:199; Köstenberger 2004:125-126; cf. Jn 3:2). He addresses Nicodemus employing the plural you, suggesting that the unwillingness to accept the testimony is ubiquitous and not an idiosyncratic problem (Jn 3:11; Moloney 1993:115; cf. Jn 3:7; Beasley-Murray 1987:49). It justifies why he speaks to Nicodemus in the plural in his message on the necessity of spiritual rebirth (cf. Jn 3:7). The source of the testimony legitimises the comments Jesus made about their unwillingness to accept the testimony: it proceeds from witnesses who testify to what they have seen and speak of what they know (Jn 3:11; Moloney 1993:116-117; cf. Jn 3:31-32). Jesus refers to the witnesses in the first-person plural: himself and his disciples (Morris 1995:196; Ridderbos 1997:134; Kysar 2005:188; Harris 2015:74; contra Carson 1991:198–99; Keener 2003:558).[136] Alternatively, other scholars include the church as part of the community of witnesses (Beasley-Murray 1987:49; Harris 2015:74). He gives a portrait of the Jewish community's unwillingness to accept the testimony of the community of God.

Employing the above as the grounds, Jesus develops the foundation for spiritual rebirth. Before advancing his argument, he prepares the mind of Nicodemus for 'heavenly things' (Jn 3:12). The announcement is necessary because Jesus is moving from elementary to higher discourse (Carson 1991:199; Harris 2015:74). Given that John records no interaction between Jesus and Nicodemus before this narrative, earthly things and heavenly things refer to the previous and present discussions (Carson 1991:199; Harris 2015:74; Morris 1995:197).

The promulgation of these higher spiritual realities requires a qualified expositor. Thus, Jesus positions himself as the authority on this enigmatic discourse by explicating the basis of his authorisation as the authoritative expositor of the message (cf. Harris 2015:75; Morris 1995:197; Carson 1991:199; Jn 3:31-32). The

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[136] Carson (1991:198–99) excludes the disciples because he argues that it is too early. The first members of the community of God started witnessing immediately after dwelling with Jesus (Jn 1:39-42). The encounter transformed into a community of witnesses, thereby demonstrating the paradigmatic nature of the literary role of John as a witness and making witnessing the responsibility of the community of God (Keener 2003:475). Therefore, it is not early to consider them witnesses. Alternatively, Keener (2003:558) also argues in favour of Jesus and the Father.

phrase, 'no one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven,' harks back to the prologue (cf. Jn 1:18; Köstenberger 2004:127).[137] He appeals to his origin, relationship with the Father, participation in divine glory, incarnation, and mission as legitimation for being the qualifies expositor of heavenly things (Jn 1:1-2; Jn 1:18; Köstenberger 2004:127; Carson 1991:201).

Jesus commences his expositions on heavenly things, evoking the story of Moses and the bronze serpent to illustrate his point (cf. Nm 21:8-9; Jn 3:14-15). Thus, the reader must read the import of his message through the prism of the story. In the Old Testament, God intended the event as a way of salvation: looking at the bronze serpent results in restoring physical lives (Köstenberger 2004:128; Carson 1991:202; cf. Harris 2015:75). Similarly, God has ordained that looking unto Jesus through faith leads to eternal life (Köstenberger 2004:128; Carson 1991:202; Keener 2003:563; Harris 2015:75; Moloney 1993:117). However, in this instance, the source of salvation is the object of faith, not the individual (Köstenberger 2004:128). Moreover, unlike Moses, who lifted the bronze serpent as the means, Jesus will accomplish it through his crucifixion (Carson 1991:201; Köstenberger 2004:128; Harris 2015:75; Ridderbos 1997:136-137; Morris 1995:199).[138] But the benefit of his salvation, the life of the age to come (eternal life), is neither restricted to Nicodemus nor his community, but everyone, striking a universal note (Jn 3:15; Carson 1991:202; Harris 2015:75; Köstenberger 2004:128; Morris 1995:201).[139]

Jesus explains the purpose of the divine provision of eternal life: the character of the love of the Father (Jn 3:16; Brant 2011:77; Köstenberger 2004:128; Carson 1991:204). The intensity of love necessitated the provision of the greatest gift, the unique and beloved Son, for the redemption of humankind (cf. Köstenberger 2004:128-129; Carson 1991:204).[140] Once again, Jesus extends the communicative force of the message beyond Nicodemus and the theology of the Jews. Jews are not oblivious to the love of God; however, the difference is that Jesus extends God's

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[137] The shorter reading (without the words, who is in heaven) has quality external attestations (Metzger 1971:203-204; Harris 2015:75; Carson 1991:203).
[138] The term (lifted) has a double meaning in John, namely crucifixion and exaltation (Carson 1991:201; Köstenberger 2004:128; Harris 2015:75; Keener 2003:565; Moloney 1993:117)
[139] Throughout the conversation, Jesus extends his message beyond Nicodemus, employing the second person plural (Jn 3:7; Jn 3:12). Though he changes the word here, the import is the same.
[140] The verb (gave) encapsulates both incarnation and crucifixion (Beasley-Murray 1987:51; Harris 2015:78; Brodie 1993:106). Contra Ridderbos (1997:138) and Keener (2003:566) restrict it to the crucifixion.

love beyond the Jewish race (Carson 1991:205). Nevertheless, the appropriation of the divine provision is contingent on the human response, positive or otherwise (Jn 3:17-18). Thus, John distinguishes between believers and unbelievers and the repercussions of their response as two sides of the same coin, where salvation for believers implies a judgment on unbelievers (Morris 1995:205; Köstenberger 2004:129). Whereas God does not condemn the believer, the unbeliever stands condemned (Harris 2015:79; Carson 1991:207; cf. Jn 3:36). The ground for condemnation is their response to the incarnation (Jn 3:19-21; cf. Jn 3:36).

In summary, the narrative develops the idea initiated in the preceding chapter. In the previous chapter, the abuse of the Gentiles court, an emblem of the universal dimension of the community of God, serves as a teachable moment to introduce the new symbol of community identity. In Jesus, God's purpose for the human community – the interracial community of worshipers – materialises. Since the Jewish authorities fail to recognise the ramifications of the new thing Jesus inaugurates and many demonstrate spurious faith, Jesus develops the theme in his interactions with Nicodemus, revealing the entry requirements for participating in the messianic community. Nicodemus' lack of response to the invitation creates a pause in the narrative plot and anticipation for the reception of the new universal community identity. John fills the narrative gap with two narratives in chapter 4.

3.2.6 Universalising the community of God (Jn 4)

In this narrative, John guides the informed reader to discover the universalisation of the community of God. He organises this narrative around the universalisation of sacred space, witnesses, and the community of God.

To demonstrate the universalisation of holy space, John maintains the Gentile context of the earlier narrative, though the location is new. He announces Jesus' decision to move from Judea to Galilee to avoid the polarisation of his ministry and that of the Baptist (Jn 4:1-3; cf. Carson 1991:215; Harris 2015:88). And he reveals that Jesus must go through Samaria. Given the location from Judea to Galilee, the shortness of the distance is a reason to consider this path (Jn 4:4; Carson 1991:215; Köstenberger 2004:146).[141] Most importantly, however, Jesus chose that route

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[141] contra Harris (2015:89), Ridderbos (1997:153) and Moloney (1993:137) argue that it is not geographically necessary because travellers could go north by crossing the River Jordan to the east

because of the necessity of accomplishing a divine mission (cf. Ridderbos 1997:153; Harris 2015:89; Carson 1991:216).[142] This divine mission leads Jesus to Sychar, a non-Jewish region (Moloney 1993:132). Even though the Samaritans viewed themselves as Jews, the Jews considered them mixed-race or Gentiles (Carson 1991:216; Witherington 1995:117; Keener 2003:599-600). A Samaritan woman enters the narrative as a representative of the race inhabiting that territory (Morris 1995:227; cf. Köstenberger 2004:148). Additionally, going to the well alone portrays her as ostracised and marginalised by the community she embodies (Keener 2003:606; Witherington 1995:120).

Reading the encounter through the prism of the above characteristics and the fact that it follows a narrative where Jesus deals with a Pharisee, the reader discovers that the mission transcends racial, religious, and social boundaries. John justifies the above with a conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman (see Keener 2003:591-98; Carson 1991:218; Brant 2011:84).[143] The woman's response affirms her knowledge of the existing barriers (cf. Jn 4:9).[144] Instead of engaging her along that tangent, he follows a different trajectory because these walls of segregation are irrelevant to the new reality which Jesus is initiating, introducing her to the living water (cf. Ridderbos 1997:154–55; Köstenberger 2004:150). Metaphorically, Jesus is speaking of something better, the water of life (Keener 2003:604).

At this point, the reasons for breaking the racial, social, and gender barriers are unfolding gradually; He is there to universalise the community by offering satisfaction to the deepest thirst of Samaritans (cf. Ridderbos 1997:157–58; Köstenberger

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and then crossing it again north of Samaria. Though this is undisputable, it was a longer route (Köstenberger 2004:146; Carson 1991:215-216; Keener 2003:589; Moloney 1993:137). Therefore, going through Samaria seemed more appropriate (cf. Carson 1991:215; Köstenberger 2004:146).

[142] John employs the Greek word (δει) ten times in the entire Gospel and trice in this narrative (Jn 3:7; Jn 3:14; Jn 3:30; Jn 4:4; Jn 4:20; Jn 4:24; Jn 9:4; Jn 10:16; Jn 12:32; and Jn 20:9). Predominantly, it expresses the performance of an act that is a divine imperative (Jn 3:7; Jn 3:14; Jn 3:30; Jn 4:4; Jn 4:20; Jn 4:24; Jn 9:4; Jn 10:16; Jn 12:32; and Jn 20:9). Similarly, in this narrative, it denotes a divine necessity (Köstenberger 2004:146; Carson 1991:216; Moloney 1993:137; Keener 2003:590).

[143] For a thorough discussion on social, gender, moral and ethnic barriers, see Keener (2003:591-98).

[144] Several witnesses omit the explanatory comment (Metzger 1971:206; cf. Barrett 1978:232). Metzger (1971:206; cf. Barrett 1978:232) writes: The omission, if not accidental, may reflect the scribal opinion that the statement is not exact and therefore should be deleted. Majority of scholars who include it opine that the comment refers to sharing drinking vessels because the alternative reading is difficult to sustain since the disciples had gone to Samaritan village to buy food (Harris 2015:90; Morris 1995:229; Carson 1991:218; Borchert 1996:203; Barrett 1978:232). However, others think it goes beyond this (Ridderbos 1997:154). For instance, Ridderbos (1997:154) refers to the deep-rooted hostility that Jews felt for Samaritans as the interpretation of the comment.

2004:151-152). Thus, he declares the greatness of his gift by contrasting it to the well. Unlike the well, his is perpetually refreshing and produces eternal life (Jn 4:14; Harris 2015:91-92; Ridderbos 1997:156). It also transcends racial boundaries: he gives everyone and whoever (cf. Moloney 1993:140). Finally, through a request for water, the narrative demonstrates the Samaritan's inability to grasp the metaphorical import of what Jesus is offering (John 4:15; Carson 1991:220; Ridderbos 1997:158; Keener 2003:605).

Jesus suddenly shifts the conversation and commands her to go and call her husband (Jn 4:16).[145] She answers deceitfully, knowing the dual sense of the word translated as a husband (Köstenberger 2004:152–53; Harris 2015:92; Keener 2003:605). But Jesus demonstrates that he knows the woman's circumstance, culminating in acknowledgement from the woman that he is a prophet (Jn 4:18-19; Köstenberger 2004:153).[146] The informed reader recognises that the question is serving its purpose; the woman is gradually changing her view on the identity of the Jewish stranger (cf. Carson 1991:221; Ridderbos 1997:161; Keener 2003:609). However, besides this change, she redirects the conversation from discussing her relationships with different men to debating the locus of true worship (Jn 4:20-26). The question seeks to elicit Jesus' clarifications on a controversial topic. However, it introduces the symbol of community identity and allows Jesus to clarify the universalisation of the community of God.

Standing at the foot of Mount Gerizim, the woman raises a contentious subject: the locus of worship (Jn 4:20). The Samaritans associated the site with many events in the patriarchal period (Köstenberger 2004:153-154). They later constructed a temple on the mountain, which the Jews considered an illegitimate competitor to the Jerusalem temple and thus, razed it (Morris 1995:237; Witherington 1995:117). The expressions 'our ancestors' and you (plural) reflect the opposing views of the two communities on sacred space and worship (cf. Köstenberger 2004:154; Harris

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[145] It appears that the purpose is to let her come to terms with the identity of Jesus and the nature of the gift he is offering (cf. Carson 1991:221). The goal of demonstrating supernatural knowledge of her past and present lives is to produce an aha moment (Ridderbos 1997:159). Thus, Jesus is defining the course of the conversation (Keener 2003:605). For a summary of the various interpretations of the command, see Ridderbos (1997:158-159).

[146] The woman was not referring to the prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 (Harris 2015:92; Köstenberger 2004:153). Contra Keener (2003:609) suggests otherwise.

2015:92-93; Ridderbos 1997:161). It can be inferred from the second person plural verb (you say) that she wants to know what Jesus also has to say about this tension.

In response, Jesus offers new perspectives that bypass the two sacred spaces (Jn 4:21). Her statement indicates that she is oblivious to what Jesus has already communicated through the conversion of water for Jewish purification rites to wine (Jn 2:1-11) and the cleansing of the Jerusalem temple (Jn 2:13-25). Thus, he reiterates that he fulfils and replaces what the temple symbolises (cf. Jn 2:18-22; Köstenberger 2004:155). His ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection (the coming hour that is also here now) will occasion (or has occasioned) a new season where Jesus replaces the temple as the centre of worship for the community of God (Carson 1991:224; Köstenberger 2004:155; cf. Van der Watt 2000:106; Witherington 1995:120). In this new temple, racial barriers do not exist because the believing community will worship one Father, God (Morris 1995:238; Köstenberger 2004:155).[147] Additionally, the new era does not focus on geographical locations; it centres on genuine worship, where people give the Father what he seeks, worship in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23-24; cf. Morris 1995:239; Harris 2015:93).[148] Thus, Jesus concludes with an explanation for bypassing both religious spaces: God is Spirit (Köstenberger 2004:157; Carson 1991:226; Brant 2011:86).

Though the woman does not respond specifically to Jesus' statement, she comes closer to his thinking, introducing a discussion on messianic expectations (Jn 4:25; Ridderbos 1997:164). The theological reflections of the Samaritans make provision for an eschatological figure, a 'Restorer' (*Taheb*) expected to be a teacher and lawgiver like Moses, who will reveal all things (Keener 2003:619; Brant 2011:83; Harris 2015:94; Köstenberger 2004:157; Ridderbos 1997:164). In response, Jesus openly discloses his messiahship, affirming that he is the expected Messiah (Köstenberger 2004:157; Talbert 2005:122; Harris 2015:94).

Whist awaiting her response, the disciples return to the well in a state of bewilderment because Jesus is breaking cultural values (Jn 4:26; Keener

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[147] The racial proclivities (our fathers) give way to the universalised (the Father) (Morris 1995:238; Köstenberger 2004:155).
[148] Contra Talbert (2005:121) and Keener (2003:615) intimate that John is talking about worship in the Holy Spirit or worship empowered by the Holy Spirit, respectively.

2003:621).[149] The reader discovers that though Jews have a Gentiles court in their religious symbol of community identity, their relationship with their neighbours is antithetical to its tenets. And the disciples whose mission is to remedy religious-cultural maladies are also perpetuating them, viewing the situation through the same cultural lens (cf. Jn 2:1-11). Whilst contemplating the cultural implications of the conversation, the woman leaves her water jar and returns to the city (Jn 4:28-29). Is John tacitly intimating the reception of the living water (cf. Jn 4:15; Talbert 2005:122)? Though John is not explicit on that, her action warrants interrogation. The informed reader is aware that Jesus is here for a divine obligation. Yet, the disciples offer what is not Jesus' priority now (Jn 4:34; cf. Keener 2003:623; Witherington 1995:122-123). Thus, he admonishes them to realign their priorities and participate in the harvest (Jn 4:35-36; Ridderbos 1997:168; Witherington 1995:122). However, the Samaritan woman participates in the harvest as a witness (Brant 2011:31; Talbert 2005:124).[150]

Now the reader is beginning to understand that Jesus broke barriers to engaging the Samaritans because of this woman's role in the universalisation of the community of God (cf. Keener 2003:606; Carson 1991:217). John clarifies it explicitly, stating what her testimony occasioned. First, she participates in the universalisation of the community of God: many Samaritans believed through her testimony (Jn 4:39). Her testimony stimulated their faith to get to know the object of the testimony (Köstenberger 2004:164; Ridderbos 1997:171; Morris 1995:250).

The believing Samaritans also accompanied her to Jesus and asked him to abide with them (Jn 4:40). Given the theological significance of the verb (to remain), the reaction of Jesus and the confession that follows, one has no reason to cast doubt on their inclusion into the community of God. The Samaritans responded to

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[149] The Jews held that Rabbis should not talk to women publicly (Harris 2015:94; Köstenberger 2004:159; Morris 1995:242; Barrett 1978:240; cf. Carson 1991:227). By the conventions of the day, talking to a (Samaritan) woman alone at the well was also immoral (Ridderbos 1997:166; cf. Brant 2011:83; Witherington 1995:120).

[150] Her response to the message of Jesus is noteworthy because it transformed her into a member of the community of witnesses, a reflection of the action of the first disciples after encountering Jesus (cf. Jn 1:35-42; Keener 2003:475). Her invitation (come and see) also reflects what Jesus demonstrated (cf. Jn 1:39; Köstenberger 2004:159). Thus, if the disciples demonstrate the paradigmatic nature of the Baptist's literary role as a witness through witnessing, she embodies the universalisation of witnesses by testifying (cf. Jn 1:35-42; Keener 2003:475). Thus, the universalisation of sacred space in Christ culminates in the universalisation of witnesses.

testimony about Jesus and not the signs (Witherington 1995:119). The narrative also reflects the conversion of the first disciples who abode with Jesus and confessed his messiahship after (Jn 1:35-42). The invitation to abide with Jesus is indicative of their willingness for God or to be part of the community of God (cf. Brodie 1993:160). Jesus' response to their request validates the genuineness of their faith (cf. Jn 2:23-25; Talbert 2005:124). It further settles the conviction of the Samaritans and contributes to an inundation of Samaritan believers, a harvest of more souls and thereby universalising the community of God (Jn 4:41; cf. Köstenberger 2004:164; Keener 2003:626). Finally, the testimony of the people after abiding with Jesus attests to the universalisation of the community. They confessed him as a Saviour of the world (Jn 4:42; cf. Jn 3:16-17). Given that the confession proceeds from Samaritans, a mixed-race community, it reveals the universalisation of the believing community (Witherington 1995:125; Keener 2003:626). In Christ, the community of God is accessible to a 'mixed-race' and not only Jews (Witherington 1995:125).

Further, John develops the theme employing the second sign to explicate how Jesus is the Saviour of the world (Jn 2:46-54). To prepare the reader for the development of the theme, he indicates a geographical change from Sychar to Galilee, an abbreviation of a Hebrew phrase that means the region of the Gentiles (Talbert 2005:125; cf. Is 8:23). In this context, John announces the return of Jesus and his disciples to Cana, where he performed the first sign. A Gentile official in Capernaum whose son is ill receives a message about the return of Jesus to Cana and comes to beg for his healing (Talbert 2005:124-125; cf. Köstenberger 2004:169).[151] Responding to the man, Jesus rebukes him and extends it to the Galileans in general for insisting on signs before believing, employing the second person plural (Köstenberger 2004:170; Carson 1991:238). Nevertheless, the man persists in

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[151] Other scholars have expressed different opinions on the identity of the official. Since John does not state it explicitly, scholars only speculate. Beasley-Murray (1987:288) suggests that the official was probably a Jew. Others take no sides because the narrative does not state it explicitly (cf. Carson 1991:234; Brant 2011:90). Köstenberger (2004:169) intimates that though it is unspecified, the official was probably a Gentile. Barrett's (1978:245) acceptance of the Gentile identity of the official stems from the similarities existing between this narrative and the synoptic incidents. Talbert (2005:124-125) also draws such conclusions. Besides that, he develops this position by placing it within its narrative context. He argues that this narrative illustrates the confession of the Samaritans: The Saviour of the world (Talbert 2005:125). According to him, Galilee is the region of Gentiles, a culture that concentrates on non-Jews. The logic of his argument is that since the Samaritans declared Jesus as the Saviour of the world, and he is in a Gentile region, John is employing a Gentile character to illustrate the theme (cf. Talbert 2005:125).

asking Jesus to follow him to Capernaum to heal his Son (Jn 4:49). However, Jesus assures him of healing without travelling with him (Jn 4:50). And without any sign, the man believes the spoken word of Jesus, a proof of one who is demonstrating or progressing in his faith in Jesus (Harris 2015:102; Moloney 1993:186). However, his servants confirm the healing on his way to Capernaum (Jn 4:51). The information he receives establishes a connection between the word of Jesus and the recovery: it happened just after Jesus spoke (Jn 4:52-53). The voyage translates into a faith journey: the man and his household become part of the believing community because of the healing (Jn 4:53).

John concludes the narrative, stating that it is a sign (Jn 4:54). Why does John describe it as such? The healing confirms that Jesus is the Saviour of the world (Talbert 2005:125). He saved the official's son from death. Further, it culminates in the salvation of the Gentile official and his family from eternal death, a confirmation that Jesus is the world's Saviour (cf. Jn 4:54).

Finally, the analysis shows that John presents the universalisation of the community as a response to the relationship problems within the society. The Jews have a court that allows Gentiles – regardless of their place of origin – to participate in their communal worship but are hostile to the Samaritans, their neighbours. The hostilities defeat the significance of the Gentiles court. Additionally, the existence of the Gentiles court in the Jewish symbol of community identity *vis-à-vis* the conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans indicates the failure of the Jewish community to incarnate its religious tenets in concrete sociocultural issues.

However, this is not peculiar to their relationship with the Samaritans. The problem of relationships exists within the Jewish community. The healings at Bethesda also characterise the community as a group that fails to contextualise its religious and cultural values. Thus, John employs the narrative to address the relationship flaws at Bethesda – the microcosm of the community – and unveil the believing community's religious-cultural obligation in a society grappling with the inability to incarnate its communal values (cf. Pilch 2000:13).

3.3 IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM OF THE COMMUNITY (JN 5-12)

3.3.1 The implications of the healing at Bethesda (Jn 5)

John casts the narrative in a religious-cultural context, announcing that Jesus travelled to Jerusalem for a Jewish religious feast (cf. Jn 5:1; Yee 2007:16). He heightens it by identifying the setting as a house where God expresses mercy through healings, thus attracting a multitudinous community of sick and marginalised groups (cf. Köstenberger 2004:178; Wahlde 2006:561; Yee 2007:16). Given that they belong to one house with a common goal, the reader expects them to operate as members worthy of their communal identity. However, it is a house divided. Therefore, the narrative unveils the problems in this microcosmic community, focusing on a peculiar case.

John concentrates on a man with a multifarious condition that exposes the religious and cultural problems of the community. His identification denotes an impoverished man without status in his society (Köstenberger 2004:180; Porter 2015:54; Keener 2003:640). His sickness – a long-term debilitation – indicates the severity and hopelessness of his condition, preparing the reader for the community's response (cf. Ridderbos 1997:185; Tenney 1997:104). In this context, the narrative introduces Jesus, whose question makes the reason for the community's response perspicuous – the inability to incarnate its religious-cultural values.

The man's answer indicates that the cause of his prolonged sickness is the privation of help caused by individualism, manifesting in the competitive spirit that characterised the search for healing (cf. Jn 5:6-7; Witherington 1995:137). This characterisation is antithetical to the tenets of a collectivistic society (Neyrey 1993:89). A collectivistic culture promotes seeking the neighbour's good over pursuing individualistic goals (Neyrey 1993:89). Therefore, it does not countenance competition because it disrupts social harmony (Malina 2010:22). However, Bethesda became a house of competition (Witherington 1995:137). Their attitude also uncovers the absence of cultural values, such as cooperativeness, family-centredness and friendship (Pilch 1993:33, 2000:13; Moxnes 1988:62).

Apart from these reasons, the Bethesda community should have responded appropriately on religious grounds. It lives in expectation of the omnibenevolence of God and therefore must replicate it. The religious context warrants the demonstration

of justice, which reminds them to treat each other as they expect from God and manifests special care for the marginalised (Keenan 2002:121-122, 126; Harrington 2002:126). But this does not happen. The absence of these religious-cultural values indicates that the microcosmic community failed immensely: culturally and religiously (cf. Pilch 2000:13).

Consequently, apart from exposing these problems, the reason for Jesus's presence is to provide the solution to these societal maladies by evoking the community's religious-cultural values to illustrate how they must respond to these challenges. The first action he takes targets the community's view on lameness. Instead of contempt, he views the man through the eyes of pity (Jn 5:6; Ridderbos 1997:185). Addressing their view is critical because it conscientizes the community to evaluate human conditions through God's eyes, given that pity is a theological value, a quality of God (Malina 1993b:139). Furthermore, looking at the community through God's lens influences the human response to societal problems because of the inseparable link between perception and action. The Mediterranean culture establishes a connection between an individual's view and acts (Malina 1993b:139). They affirm that the quality of pity inheres in a person's eyes or heart and is revealed by what a person does on behalf of others in need (Malina 1993b:139). Looking through the eyes of pity provokes honourable and compassionate or merciful acts towards the needy (Malina 1993b:139). The narrative establishes this connection through Jesus' action towards eradicating the problem (cf. Ridderbos 1997:185; Malina 1993b:139). By this approach, he becomes the Merciful One missing in the house of mercy.

Moreover, Jesus demonstrates that looking at the community from God's perspective allows the members to actualise their religious-cultural values. For instance, through the Sabbath healing, the narrative portrays Jesus as the agent of liberation who incarnates the cultural significance of the Sabbath, emancipating a man from servitude irrespective of his social classification (cf. Nelson 2004:83; Hasel 1982:32). Thus, the attitude of Jesus and the healing challenge the community to reflect its religious-cultural values.

Furthermore, the narrative closes, revealing the exacerbated nature of the problem and the need for a new community: the unimaginable and short-sighted behaviour of the religious authorities (Köstenberger 2013:79; cf. Beasley-Murray 1987:74). They

jettisoned the weightier matters of the law, such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness but promoted strict adherence to the law (cf. Mt 23:23; Köstenberger 2013:96). Like Bethesda, the reader discovers the absence of religious-cultural values in the religious community. Even when Jesus employs the family metaphor to explicate the community of God, the religious authorities are unable to grasp it because they study the Scriptures for self-aggrandisement (Köstenberger 2004:194-195; cf. Ridderbos 1997:207; Harris 2015:120). Their response to the teachings of Jesus exposes their failures and inability to fill the lacunas in the Bethesda community. These challenges pervade the subsequent narratives and demonstrate the exacerbated nature of the problem.

3.3.2 The root of the lacunae: A journey of the reader (Jn 6-12)

These narratives elaborate on the root of their inability to reflect its religious-cultural values. It departs from the microcosmic community of Bethesda and focuses on the Jewish religious leaders and community. It is instructive to note that the recurrent expression (the Jews) is a Johannine characterisation of the Jewish religious leaders and the community (see Brown 1979:41; Martyn 2003:41; Köstenberger 2013:26; Dunn 1985:41; Morris 1995:357; Moloney 1998b:97; Wahlde 1982:33-60; De Boer 2001:148; Wheaton 2015:41). In utilising the word to explicate their delinquency to reflect their mandate, the narrative focuses on one group or both. Therefore, it records the response of the Jewish community, religious leaders, or both to the mission of Jesus.

In both instances, however, the leaders feature preponderantly and influence the actions of the populace. John portrays the response of the religious authorities generally as the greatest obstacle to the mission of incarnating the community of God. The unfruitfulness of their studies become even more conspicuous with the narrative development of the theme. The problem Jesus catalogues in John 5 – the leaders' inability to recognise him despite their rigorous scrutiny of the Old Testament Scriptures – recurs (cf. Jn 5:39-47). It manifests in various ways in the interactions between Jesus and the Jews. One of these is their view of the source of the authority of Jesus (Jn 7:15; cf. Jn 5:17-18).

The religious leaders grapple with the source of Jesus' authority (Jn 7:15; cf. Jn 5:17-18). Belonging to the rabbinic schools, the leaders assume that a teacher

derives his authority only through this medium (cf. Jn 7:15). Given that without any rabbinic training, Jesus employs the rabbinic hermeneutical approach in his authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures, they questioned the legitimacy of that authority (Jn 7:15; Carson 1991:311; Harris 2015:153-154). Their distorted view of the source of his power emanates from continuously evaluating Jesus through the prism of their misguided study instead of the Scriptures – the compendium of testimonies about him (cf. Jn 5:39-47).

Moreover, questioning the messenger's authority affects their reception of the message. John portrays the religious leaders as people who are unreceptive to the teachings of Jesus. They constantly grapple with grasping the communicative force of the message of Jesus (cf. Jn 2:18-21; Jn 5:17-18; Jn 6:41-52; Jn 8:34-36). Even when they ask questions, they mostly do not approach it as sincere enquirers but as those seeking to challenge his legitimacy and doubt his message (cf. Jn 2:18-21; Jn 5:17-18; Jn 6:41-52; Jn 8:12-19). In some instances, the leaders register their disbelief in his character and the content of his message (cf. Jn 7:45-52; Jn 9:28-29).

Given their unreceptive disposition to Jesus' message – the repository of relevant information about his status – they grapple with accepting his claims about his identity as well. Their question concerning the identity of Jesus and its corresponding response affirms the above: they sought answers on a subject he had discussed from the beginning (Jn 8:25). By harking back to the previous encounters, Jesus reminds the Jews of the promulgation of his identity, proving that the leaders are either struggling to grasp or refusing to accept his claims (cf. Jn 2:13-22; Jn 5:19-45; Jn 8:25).[152]

The community's misunderstanding of the message and identity of Jesus, with its concomitant nonacceptance of the messianic claims, pervade the subsequent narratives. It is evident in the reactions of the Jewish community to his teachings. These reactions are binary: the antagonistic attitude towards people who believe in the messianic proclamations and the object of messianic claims (cf. Jn 9:22; Jn 6:34-42, 60; Jn 8:34-42). The antagonism is apparent in the punishment meted out to

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[152] Contra Moloney (1996:99) sees an honest question and not a rejection of Jesus. However, even if it is assumed that the question bears a mark of honesty, their behaviour after this encounter betrays this explanation, just like the earlier ones (cf. Jn 9:22; Jn 10:19-20, 31-33).

individuals for believing in Jesus or confessing him as the Messiah: ex-communication (Jn 9:22). Further, the Jews opposed the testimony of Jesus in various ways. They met his message on his identity as the Bread of Life with mistrust, incomprehension, and grumbling (Jn 6:34-42, 60). They also challenged the testimony about his self-identification as the Light of the World (Jn 8:34-42). The narrative also makes the Jews' misunderstanding and rejection of his identity the principal grounds for the accusations of demon-possession levelled against Jesus (Jn 8:48-52; Jn 10:20). It also ties the two attempts at stoning Jesus to these factors (Jn 8:58-59; Jn 10:30-33; cf. Jn 8:58-59). These attempts reveal the deep-seated antagonism towards Jesus and a quest to annihilate him for his claims, culminating in their participatory role in the crucifixion of Jesus (Jn 18-19). The exegesis on the identity of Jesus is the preponderant stimulant for their fixation with exterminating him (cf. Jn 5:16, 18; Jn 7:1, 11, 30; Jn 10:39).

Beyond these challenges, John's characterisation of discipleship also exposes the root of the community's failure. The narrative reveals that many Jews believed in Jesus apart from his disciples – both the laity and leaders (Jn 2:23; Jn 7:31; Jn 8:30-31; Jn 10:42; Jn 11:45; Jn 12:11, 45). Nevertheless, the majority believed because of the miracles they witnessed Jesus perform (cf. Jn 2:23; Jn 7:31; Jn 11:45; Jn 12:11, 45). The leaders who believed through signs were also afraid to confess it due to the trepidation and fear of the Pharisees (Jn 12:45). Additionally, the faith of many who followed Jesus was spurious (Jn 8:30-31; Ridderbos 1997:306; Köstenberger 2004:261; Carson 1991:346-348).[153] Though they professed faith in him, they became indifferent to his word, liars, people who did not know his Father, doubted the identity of the Son, children of the devil, and guilty of participating in attempted murder (Jn 8:37-59; Carson 1991:346; cf. Köstenberger 2004:261). These people who were once with Jesus turned away from him and became hostile to him (Ridderbos 1997:306; Köstenberger 2004:261).

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[153] Given that the narrative asserts that many believed in Jesus but concludes with rebukes about behaviour uncharacteristic of believers, Harris (2015:174) and like-minded scholars categorise the people into believers (Jn 8:30-31) and Jewish opponents (Jn 8:33) to reconcile the anomaly (Carson 1991:346). Harris (2015:174), for example, opines that the concluding part deals with an interaction between Jesus and the Jewish opponents, not the believers. His explanation overlooks other instances of demonstration of spurious faith in John where disciples turned back due to the teachings of Jesus (Jn 2:23; Jn 6:60-66; cf. Carson 1991:346-347; Köstenberger 2004:261; Ridderbos 1997:306). See Carson (1991:346-348) for further explanations for this distinction and rebuttals on this view.

Their response to the teachings and mission of Jesus indicates that the community grapples with false discipleship: inability to abide in Christ or his teachings (cf. Jn 8:31; Carson 1991:348). Therefore, Jesus instructs them to continue in his word, given that remaining in the teachings of Jesus is a mark of true discipleship (Carson 1991:348; Ridderbos 1997:306). It is the panacea for unfruitfulness and the only way the community can incarnate the divine concept of community. Its absence implies that the community cannot be fruitful in fulfilling its mandate (cf. Jn 15:1-17). Against this background, Jesus teaches the genuine disciples in the farewell discourse the remedy for spurious discipleship and the participatory role of the believer in anthropomorphising the community of God. Therefore, the reader analyses the community theme in the farewell discourse to ascertain the proposed Johannine response to these societal issues.

3.4   THE COMMUNITY THAT REPLICATES GOD (JN 13–17)

Various reasons back the criticality of examining the farewell discourse for solutions to the sociocultural maladies. Discussions on the relational dimension of community saturate the farewell address. It describes the character of the relationship in the eternal community, presenting it as the paradigm. Additionally, it explicates the divine community's association with the disciples. Furthermore, it defines how members of the believing community must replicate this paradigm in their relationship with each other and the world. Finally, it explains how these relationships function to remedy the enormous religious and cultural failure exposed in this milieu. Therefore, the study analyses the discourse thematically for an informed understanding of the Johannine response to the community challenges in John.

3.4.1   The portrait of the divine community

A predominant theme in the farewell discourse is community – the nature of the relationship that the members of the eternal community enjoy. Whereas the prologue creates anticipation for elaborations on the subject, the farewell discourse brings the exegesis and development of the community theme to finality. In the farewell discourse, Jesus indicates the culmination of his mission as the uniquely authoritative expounder of the Father (and the perfect community), announcing that he has made his name known or unveiled his character to the disciples (Jn 17:25; cf. Jn 1:18; Harris 2015:293). The criticality of this revelation stems from its effect on the

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theme. Johannine narratives expounding traits that affirm the characterisation of the relationship between the eternal distinctions as a community concentrate preponderantly on Jesus' relationship with his Father (cf. Jn 13:3; Jn 14:7-11; Jn 15:9; Jn 16:15). In John, Jesus customarily speaks of himself through the prism of his relationship with his Father.[154] Analysing it, therefore, provides elucidations on this community. Understanding the character of the Father also helps the various communities to evaluate their character as members of a community.[155] How does Jesus characterise the Father? What is its impact on their relationship and the human community?

Jesus depicts the Father as relational (community) in his essence.[156] It is an idea developed from the prologue. The divine self-differentiation in the opening and end of the prologue portrays the Father as relational in his divine essence (Jn 1:1-2; John 1:18). Whereas the self-differentiation marker at the beginning describes an eternal communion with God (Jn 1:1-2), the end depicts him as the Son in the bosom of the Father (Jn 1:18). The commonality between both is the emphasis on quality relationship – the relational dimension of community. Developing this thought, the farewell discourse and the narrative present another dimension. Jesus substitutes the idea of the Logos being *with* God with a perichoretic relationship, employing the reciprocal immanence formula (Jn 10:38; Jn 14:10-11, 20; Jn 17:21; Ridderbos 1997:495; Harris 2015:258). In various instances, he describes his relationship with the Father as being in-one-another – mutual interpenetration (Jn 10:38; Jn 14:10-11, 20; Jn 17:21; cf. McGrath 2001:325). A perichoretic relationship denotes unity of being (Köstenberger 2004:431; cf. McGrath 2001:325). Akin to the prologue, the union between the ontological co-equals, the Father and Son, is intimate (cf. Bauckham 2007:251). It also affirms the community status, describing a *community of being* that allows the individuality of the eternal distinctions to be maintained while

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[154] The 'I am' sayings express his divine identity without explicitly linking it to the Father (Bauckham 2007:251).

[155] For instance, whereas the struggle for healing at Bethesda reveals the presence of individualism, Jesus identifies the absence of the love of God as a motivation for the response from the religious leaders (Jn 5:42). Thus, an informed view of this character – the foundation of community – positions the disciples to replicate the community of God. Therefore, discussions on love feature prevalently in what Jesus presents on the character of the Father. Elaborating on the relationship between Jesus and the Father and its role in their relationship in the farewell discourse, he describes the Father primarily as loving (Jn 15:9; Jn 15:10; Jn 17:23; Jn 17:24; Jn 17:26; cf. Jn 3:35; Jn 5:20; Jn 10:17).

[156] Borchert (1996:106) affirms that the expression of community is rooted in God's nature.

sharing in the life of each other (cf. McGrath 2001:325; Carson 1991:494; Bauckham 2007:251).

Furthermore, Jesus makes the relationship of mutual interpenetration the cause of a community of action. Regarding this, he identifies two areas – works and words (Jn 10:38; Jn 14:10). He attributes his operations to this *circumincession,* making them the outcome of a divine partnership (Jn 10:38; Jn 14:10; cf. Jn 5:17-20). The idea that their relationship produces functional unity originates from the prologue (cf. Jn 1:3-4). However, the distinctive feature is that the prologue associates it with the Logos being *with* God, not mutual indwelling. The concept of coinherence appears only in the narrative, identifying Jesus' works as the works of the Father (his Sender) or the product of the Father working through him (Jn 9:4; Jn 10:37). Even when John does not suggest interpenetration explicitly, it is implicit in the narrative. For instance, Jesus appeals to (and the Jewish leaders understood) his ontological equality with the Father as the ground for his work (Jn 5:17-20; cf. Ridderbos 1997:191; Köstenberger 2004:185; Moloney 1998b:174; Harris 2015:110). It implies a *circumincession* because the perichoretic relationship in the Godhead requires ontological equality or unity (cf. Köstenberger 2004:431; McGrath 2001:325). Jesus further attributes his words to the perichoretic union. Akin to his works, he reveals that his words emanate from his relationship with the Father; they do not originate from him but his Father (Jn 15:15; cf. Jn 14:10; Carson 1991:494). They are things he hears from the Father (Jn 15:15).

The community of being and actions demonstrated by the Father and Son define the kind of community represented in the farewell discourse. It is a collectivistic community and not an individualistic one; members are united in being and actions. The functional unity expressed in this community portrays it as one characterised by communal values, such as unity, cooperation, and love (Jn 14:10, 31; Jn 15:9; Jn 17:11, 21; Jn 9:4; Jn 10:37; cf. Jn 5:17-20).

Additionally, elucidating the reciprocal indwelling as the cause of the community of actions, John casts the relationship in a family context (cf. Jn 17:25; Köstenberger 2004:500). As the authorised expositor of God, another thing Jesus reveals about the character of God is that God *consists in* the communion between Father and Son (Bauckham 2015:28-29). Bauckham (2007:251) aptly and succinctly writes: The

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Father is Father only because Jesus is his Son, and Jesus is Son only because he is the Son of the divine Father. Each is essential to the identity of the other. Jesus appeals to the family bond to interpret the unity and collaboration in works and words within this community as products of familial relationship (Jn 14:10; Jn 17:11, 21; cf. Jn 9:4; Jn 10:37; Jn 5:17-20).

Another way John expresses the import of the perichoretic relationship is the divine partnership that sustains the incarnation of the concept of community. Therefore, what follows analyses the participatory roles of the members of the eternal community towards incarnating the community of God.

3.4.2 The participatory roles of the members of the divine community

Even though the materials on the participatory roles that the members of the eternal community play in its mission for the human community pervade John, the farewell discourse makes the individual functions perspicuous by defining them, thereby making it the narrative where the reader encounters more the participatory roles of the members of the eternal and human community in the incarnation of the divine concept.

3.4.2.1 The role of the Father

His role in the contextualisation of the community of God is critical because everything revolves around it. The narrative ties it to the incarnation of the Logos – a medium through which the divine concept of society became concrete in the human community. Jesus – the expositor of the community – makes the Father the beginning and end of the process of contextualising the divine concept, stating that he proceeds from and returns to the Father after his earthly mission (Jn 13:1, 3; Jn 14:12, 28; Jn 16:16, 28). Within this timeframe, the Father also participates in the mission of the Son. First, the Father sent the Son, putting all things under his power (Jn 13:3; Jn 14:24; Jn 15:21). In the incarnation, the Father is present with the Son and is the subject that the Son exegetes (Jn 17:25; Jn 16:32; cf. Jn 1:18). And he accomplishes it by a community of action – collaborating with the Father in works and words (Jn 14:10; cf. Jn 10:38; Jn 5:17-20).

Furthermore, John connects the Father's role to the work of the Spirit in the establishment of a society that replicates God (cf. Jn 15:26). As will be developed later, the Spirit has a significant role in this mission of concretising the community of

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God (cf. Jn 14:26; Jn 15:26-27; Jn 16:7-14). However, it is the Father who sends the Spirit to accomplish it (Jn 14:26). The Spirit proceeds from the Father and, consequently, the Father is primary in these relations (cf. Jn 15:26; Ridderbos 1997:526).

Finally, the disciples cannot replicate God independent of the Father's participation. The Father is the vinedresser of the Vine – the symbol of the community (Jn 15:1; Keener 2003:993; Köstenberger 2004:449). In this context, the narrative assigns two roles to the Father, describing them negatively and positively (cf. Harris 2015:266-267; Köstenberger 2004:448-449; Carson 1991:514). The negative aspect describes how he deals with unproductive branches. John states it explicitly and implicitly. In the first statement, the pronoun points to the Father as the one who removes them (Jn 15:2). However, John employs the passive voice in the detailed description of the fate of the unfruitful branches to point to the Father as the person who destroys them (Jn 15:6; Moloney 1998:62; Schnackenburg 1982:101; Van der Watt 2000:46).

Conversely, the Father prunes the fruitful branches to fulfil the purpose of the vineyard – fruit-bearing (Jn 15:1; Harris 2015:266; Talbert 2005:220; cf. Carson 1991:514). Scholars adduce several factors to explain the meaning of fruitfulness in this context. Some approach it from John's primary usage: the 'missionary' activity of leading others to Christ (Köstenberger 2004:453; Schnackenburg 1982:100; cf. Keener 2003:997; Talbert 2005:220). Others opine that it means expressing the life of a Christian disciple (Barrett 1978:474; Beasley-Murray 1987:273; Brodie 1993:480). However, it would seem to include love (Moloney 1998b:420–21), Christian character (Morris 1995:595), and outreach (Schnackenburg 1982:100). These interpretations suggest that the divine work expands the family and help to incarnate God's purpose for the human community. Whereas the missionary activities populate the community because they aim at leading others to Christ, demonstrating Christian character and love are natural constituent elements of the community of God (cf. Jn 15:9, 12; Köstenberger 2004:453; Schnackenburg 1982:100). The implication is that the community performs these activities – critical components of the mission to replicate the community of God – through the pruning of the Father.

3.4.2.2 The role of the Son

As the expositor of the community of God, the Son defines his role in the incarnation of the community, employing the I am statements (Jn 14:6; Jn 15:1-7). The first statement identifies Jesus as the bridge connecting the divine and human society, stressing that he is the way to the Father (Jn 14:6). Jesus accentuates his declaration, stating it positively and negatively (Jn 14:6; Talbert 2005:212). By this declaration, Jesus claims more than showing the way or being one of the ways in a religiously pluralistic setting: he positions himself as the only means of access to the Father, the community of God (cf. Ridderbos 1997:493; Köstenberger 2004:430; Morris 1995:640-641). On what grounds is Jesus the way?

Two views attempt to explain why Jesus is the Way. One explains the verse with the principle that the first noun governs the other two, thereby considering 'the Truth and the Life' simply as explanatory or clarification of the Way (Keener 2003:943; cf. Carson 1991:490-491; Moloney 1998a:35-36). Consequently, they translate the sentence in a manner that absorbs the force of the two nouns. For instance, I am the true and living Way or the true Way of life (Carson 1991:490-491; Ridderbos 1997:429). This approach weakens the supporting and illocutionary functions of the two nouns (see Morris 1995:569; Carson 1991:490; Harris 2015:256; Talbert 2003:212). It also fails to explain why in some narratives in John, three terms linked with conjunctions remain distinct (cf. Köstenberger 2004:429).

Conversely, though the majority affirms that *Way* gains emphasis over Truth and Life, they do not subsume the import of the last two nouns into the first like the minority view but recognise their supporting role in justifying why Jesus is the Way to the Father (cf. Morris 1995:569; Carson 1991:490; Harris 2015:256; Talbert 2005:212; Ridderbos 1997:493). How do these nouns support the claim that Jesus is the Way to the Father? On the role of the first noun (ἡ ἀλήθεια) in affirming the claim of being the Way, the principal thing to note is that Jesus is truth in his very essence (Köstenberger 2004:430). Additionally, as the incarnate Word, he anthropomorphises God's truth as the supreme revelation (Carson 1991:490-491; Harris 2015:256). It implies that knowing him as the ultimate revelation – God's truth – is tantamount to knowing the Father, corroborating the claim of Jesus (cf. Jn 14:7-11; Talbert 2005:212). Jesus also embodies God's Life and gives Life (cf. Jn 1:4; Jn

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5:26; Harris 2015:256; Morris 1995:569). To receive Life is to have access to the Father (cf. Talbert 2005:212). Thus, appealing to his essence as the Life substantiates his claim as the only door to the Father. Therefore, the exclusivity that Jesus enjoys as the only access to the Father and the community of God originates from being the Truth and the Life (Köstenberger 2004:430; Carson 1991:490-491; cf. Harris 2015:256).

Furthermore, the work of the Son extends beyond being the Way to the Father and the community of God. Jesus identifies himself as the true Vine, a characterisation that depicts the extent of his role (Jn 15:1). The vine imagery is a community symbol (cf. Keener 2003:993). Thus, one of the goals of this symbolic depiction is to remind the reader of the failure of Israel to reflect its intended purpose as a covenant community. This reminder makes possible the anticipation of something that reflects the divine intentions for choosing Israel as the vineyard of God (cf. Is 5:1-4; Beasley-Murray 1987:272; Schnackenburg 1982:106). Avowing to be the true Vine, Jesus 'replaces' Israel as the one through whom the blessings of God flow, thereby demystifying the idea of tying the community of faith to a territory (cf. Köstenberger 2004:15; Carson 1991:514; Burge 2010:54; Van der Watt 2000:52; Whitacre 1999:372). He becomes the ideal design of the community concept, epitomising the territorial dimension through the demystification of the idea of the holy land (Whitacre 1999:372; Burge 2010:54; Köstenberger 2004:449), and the relational aspect through the character of relationships expressed in the vine metaphor (Brant 2011:217; cf. Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi; Cohen 1985:12). Thus, the vine image denotes the universalised community of God constituted by both gentiles and believing Jews (Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993). The ramification is that aside from being the only means of access to the Father (community of God), Jesus is also the *community* in which the believers dwell – the true Vine. Put differently, having access to the Father leads to the Son; it culminates in union with Jesus.

The union with Christ, the true Vine, introduces another role of the Son in the incarnation of the divine concept of community: to initiate fruitfulness of the branches – the believing community (Jn 15:2; Jn 15:4-5). The farewell discourse explains fruitfulness as resulting from two interconnected theological concepts: mutual abiding and the pruning of the Father. Jesus employs the vine metaphor to juxtapose the

fruitfulness of the believing community to a vine and its branches (Jn 15:4-5). The juxtaposition aims to demonstrate the impossibility of pursuing fruitfulness outside the parameters of the community's relationship with Christ (Jn 15:4-5; cf. Köstenberger 2004:451-453; Brodie 1993:480; Keener 2003:998; Harris 2015:267). Thus, the narrative positions the Son as the cause or source of fruitfulness, his contribution to the mission of the believing community (cf. Keener 2003:998).

Furthermore, the second reason Jesus gives for fruitfulness justifies the above: divine pruning. Jesus attributes fruitfulness to the pruning activity of the vinedresser – the Father (Jn 15:1-2). Nevertheless, the narrative indicates that the Father does not initiate fruitfulness but develops his Son's work (cf. Jn 15:2). His responsibility is to prune fruitful branches to be exceedingly fructuous, thereby fulfilling the purpose of the vineyard (Jn 15:2; Harris 2015:266; Talbert 2005:220; cf. Carson 1991:514). Given that the Father only prunes branches that bear fruits because of their connection to the Vine, the outcome could also be attributed to the participatory role of the Son who initiates fruitfulness.

3.4.2.3   The role of the Spirit

Jesus identifies the Spirit as distinct from himself – another Paraclete (Jn 14:16; Ridderbos 1997:499-450). He explicates the Spirit's role in the community, revealing that the work of the Spirit concentrates on the mission of the Son and the disciples. In this regard, Jesus characterises the Spirit on three occasions as the Spirit of truth, reflecting the character and mission of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:17; Jn 15:26; Jn 16:13; cf. Carson 1997:500). As the Spirit of truth, he communicates the truth: bears witness to vindicate Jesus, the truth (Jn 15:26; Jn 14:6; cf. Carson 1991:528; Ridderbos 1997:526; Keener 2003:1022). Furthermore, he glorifies Jesus, revealing him to the disciples after his departure (Jn 16:14; cf. Harris 2015:278).

Additionally, the Spirit plays various roles in the believing community and its mission to replicate God. Just like the mission of the Son, Jesus ties the functions of the Spirit to two names that reflect his mission: the Paraclete (Jn 14:16, 26; Jn 15:26; Jn 16:7) and Spirit of truth (Jn 14:17; Jn 15:26; Jn 16:13). However, unlike discussions on the Spirit's work in the mission of the Son, where Jesus employs the term (Paraclete) as a distinguishing marker, he characterises the Spirit as the Paraclete to

present him as their Comforter and Helper (Jn 14:16-19; Jn 14:26; Jn 15:26; Jn 16:7).

There are various reasons why these designations appear only in the farewell discourse. The farewell discourse is replete with the Paraclete sayings because Jesus repeatedly announces his departure (cf. Jn 13:1-3; Jn 14:2-3, 19, 28; Jn 16:28; Jn 17:13). His absence necessitates the advent and crucial work of the Paraclete. The arrival is necessary because the Paraclete fills the vacuum created by Jesus' departure, preventing the believing community from being orphaned (cf. Jn 14:18). To be orphaned includes a state of fatherlessness but encompasses other forms of bereavements like friendlessness and helplessness (cf. Harris 2015:261; Carson 1991:501; Keener 2003:973). Secular Greek also applied the word to disciples bereft of a teacher or master (Carson 1991:501; Harris 2015:261). Arguing along this trajectory, Keener (2003:973) interprets the 'fatherless' image as a teacher-disciple relationship asserting that the culture sometimes compared teachers to fathers. It is pertinent to note that John does not treat the relationship between Jesus and the disciples through the prism of a father-son relationship. Jesus always points them to the Father (Jn 14:6, 9, 10; Jn 15:15). However, the prevalent and preponderant characterisation is the Lord-servant relationship followed by the Teacher-disciples relationship, with these depictions appearing 43 and 11 times consecutively. Jesus also describes the relationship as friendship (Jn 15:13-15). Thus, his departure deprives the disciples of their Lord, teacher, and friend, necessitating a suitable replacement to fill the brief hiatus.

The teaching role of the Paraclete is one of the topics Jesus elucidates to the disciples before departing. It is one of the reasons he identifies the Paraclete as the Spirit of truth (cf. Jn 15:26; Jn 16:13). In this capacity, the Paraclete teaches the disciples all things, bringing to their remembrance all that Jesus taught (Jn 14:26). Jesus restates this idea indicating that the Spirit will guide the believing community in all truth and show them things to come (cf. Jn 16:13). The former denotes two successive events in which the Spirit expounds the teachings of Jesus for the disciples to grasp the communicative intent (cf. Ridderbos 1997:511; Keener 2003:977; Carson 1991:505; Harris 2015:263). The latter reinforces what Jesus said earlier, revealing the mode through which the Spirit teaches the messianic community. In this regard, the Spirit will guide the community to explore and

understand the truth already unveiled without revealing new things (cf. Ridderbos 1997:536; Carson 1991:539; Harris 2015:278). The content of this exploration is Jesus, the truth (Harris 2015:278; Carson 1991:539).

Aside from these, the Spirit functions as a witness. The narrative furnishes us a reason to legitimise his work. As the Spirit of truth, his witness vindicates Jesus – the truth (Jn 14:6; Jn 15:26; Jn 16:13; cf. Carson 1991:528; Ridderbos 1997:526; Keener 2003:1022). This witness – as Ridderbos (1997:526-527; cf. Keener 2003:1022; Talbert 2005:224-225) succinctly notes – is the assistance the disciples receive from the Spirit in the controversy between the church and the world about the truth concerning Jesus' self-revelation in word and deed as the sent one.

The Comforter title also accurately describes the work of a person coming after the deprivation of a friend. The Spirit is another Comforter who succeeds Jesus, the friend to the disciples (Jn 15:13-15; Jn 14:16). The ramification of this statement from Jesus is that he is the first Comforter, thus, legitimising one of the interpretations of the word (orphan): a friendless state (cf. Harris 2015:261). It further presents the Spirit as the Comforter to a community in need of assistance. The narrative context defines the type of help that necessitates the presence of the Comforter. The thought of Jesus' departure occasioned fear in the believing community. Jesus, therefore, reminds them repetitively neither to let their hearts be troubled nor fear (Jn 14:1, 27; Jn 16:20-22). He also speaks about imminent opposition and persecutions, aggravating the already troubling and heart-throbbing condition (Jn 15:20-21; Jn 16:2-3). Amidst these conditions, the community has a mission to fulfil that requires divine assistance. Thus, the Companion fills the gap, being actively involved in their mission (Brodie 1993:490), taking away their fears and granting them peace (Moloney 1998a:71; cf. Ridderbos 1997:526-527). His help produces a single process where the disciples witness about Jesus to the opposing world through the strengthening of the Paraclete (Moloney 1998a:71; Ridderbos 1997:527; Brodie 1993:490; Keener 2003:1022).

Finally, the incarnation of the concept of community demonstrated in the community of God is a product of a divine-human partnership. Just as the members of the community of God perform various roles, corporately and idiosyncratically, the

believing community has a role to play. In the following session, the work discusses these responsibilities.

3.4.3 The participatory role of the believing community

As partners with God in incarnating the ideal community concept, the disciples are responsible for continuing God's mission of anthropomorphising the divine purpose through the explications Jesus provides. To manifest this, they must act in cooperation with God. Thus, Jesus reveals what their assignment prescribes and proscribes as members of the believing community. They focus on their relationship with God, themselves, their role as partners to God, and its associated problems of inevitable persecutions. The instructions are divine imperatives to obey.

Their role begins with maintaining their participation in the community of God. Given that they are part of the community at this stage, the farewell discourse addresses them as people who have already entered it. Consequently, the narrative accentuates the perpetuation of their union with Christ. In this regard, Jesus commands them to abide in the Vine (Jn 15:4). The import of this imperative includes but is not limited to 'continuing to believe' (Harris 2015:267; Beasley-Murray 1987:272). It also denotes remaining in their union with Jesus or maintaining a vibrant and intimate spiritual fellowship (cf. Harris 2015:267; Beasley-Murray 1987:272). Thus, the focus is nurturing their spiritual communion with Christ (Köstenberger 2004:454; Schnackenburg 1982:99; cf. Carson 1991:516-517).

Remaining in the Vine is the divine requirement for the believing community's response to Christ's indwelling; it establishes a relationship of reciprocal indwelling, necessary to implement the divine mission (cf. Jn 15:4; Köstenberger 2004:451; Ridderbos 1997:517; Harris 2015:267). Akin to the Vine-branches relationship, they can do nothing without Christ (Jn 15:4-5). The narrative context suggests that fruitfulness is in view (Harris 2015:267; cf. Ridderbos 1997:517). Their fruitfulness depends on remaining in the relationship of reciprocal indwelling – abiding in the Vine and vice versa (Köstenberger 2004:451-453; Brodie 1993:480; Harris 2015:267; Schnackenburg 1982:99). Fruitfulness in this context hinges on two areas of Christian mission: *going* and *living*. The former culminates in community expansion through Christian outreaches (Köstenberger 2004:453; Schnackenburg 1982:100; Keener 2003:997; Talbert 2005:220). The latter focuses on how the

disciples should relate to each other as people whose mission is to replicate God's concept of community. Some of the attributes they must characterise as a believing community are Christian character (Morris 1995:595), Christian discipline (Barrett 1978:474; Beasley-Murray 1987:273; Brodie 1993:480), moral fruit (Keener 2003:997), love (Moloney 1998b:420–21; Talbert 2005:220) and serving each other (Jn 13:14-15). Given that these attributes outflow from this relationship, it is impossible to fulfil their mission without it. Jesus restates this idea, applying the metaphor to his relationship with the Father to produce a perlocutionary effect – fruitfulness flows naturally from 'mutual abiding' just as Jesus' works outflow from his union and communion with the Father (Jn 15:5; Beasley-Murray 1987:273; Keener 2003:998; cf. Jn 5:19-23; Moloney 1998a:61).

The second imperative Jesus ties to fruitfulness – the goal of the disciples – is to abide in his love (cf. Jn 15:9-10; Carson 1991:510). Jesus juxtaposes his relationship with the Father to the disciples to clarify the import of the divine imperative (cf. Jn 15:9-10). In the eternal relationship, love and commands are inseparable because they are mutually dependent (Barrett 1978:476). The love of the Father flows from the obedience of the Son, the obedience of the Son from love (Jn 15:10; cf. Barrett 1978:476). Since the Father loves the obedient Son, he reciprocates it by keeping the commandments of the Father out of love (Köstenberger 2004:456; cf. Harris 2015:269; Keener 2003:1003). As Harris (2015:269) puts it, obedience is evidence of love and reinforces love. Jesus, in a similar fashion, requires the believing community to remain in his love by adhering to his commands. And reflecting the character of its paradigm, the obedience should outflow from love, not by compulsion (Ridderbos 1997:519; Carson 1991:520; Köstenberger 2004:453).

Like the first imperative (to remain in the Vine), the love command extends to the quality of relationships expected within the believing community (cf. Jn 13:34-35). Jesus requires the disciples to incarnate this theological value within the believing community (cf. Jn 13:34-35; Jn 15:12). Members must demonstrate reciprocal love, thereby creating a chain of love uniting the divine and the human community (Köstenberger 2004:457; Carson 1991:521; Ridderbos 1997:520). Being obedient to this command identifies them as disciples of Jesus (Harris 2015:269; Carson 1991:522).

Finally, the disciples have a role as a community of witnesses (Jn 15:27). Witnessing is an integral part of the incarnation of the divine concept of community – it sustains the mission. John the Baptist was a witness who ushered in the Messiah through his testimony (Jn 1:6-7). Jesus and the Father witness about the Son (Jn 8:18). To participate in this mission, the disciples must witness. Indeed, the earliest disciples began as a community of witnesses (Jn 1:40-41). Advancing the work also requires a community of witnesses, given that the foundational principle of Christian expansion is a repeated process of witnessing whereby disciples testify about Jesus to others (Carson 1991:159; cf. Talbert 2005:86). Consequently, Jesus commands them to testify as qualified witnesses – people who have been with him from the beginning (cf. Jn 15:27).

Performing their role as witnesses brings antagonism from the world (Jn 15:18-25; Jn 16:1-4). Jesus enumerates the causes of the opposition. Their union with Christ conditions a lifestyle that trigger hatred because it is antithetical to the world (cf. Ridderbos 1997:523; Köstenberger 2004:464; Carson 1991:525; Brodie 1993:485). However, the root of the problem is the nonrecognition of God (Jn 16:1; Moloney 1998a:73; Talbert 2005:226). The world's attitude towards God has a ripple effect on Jesus and his disciples. John establishes a relationship between the sender and the sent, such that honouring or dishonouring the sent is tantamount to honouring or dishonouring the sender and vice versa (Jn 18:20-23; Jn 5:22-23). Thus, a world that does not recognise the Father automatically rejects the Son and opposes his disciples because he sent them (Jn 15:18-20). Since the world rejects Jesus, the community of witnesses (the sent) will face ejection from the synagogues and execution (Moloney 1998a:72-73; Talbert 2005:225; Brodie 1993:490). However, the community performs its functions through the assistance of the Paraclete.

The above indicates the impossibility of anthropomorphising the concept of community without the involvement of all partners – God and the believing community. Since the community is God's idea, its explication belongs to God. Nevertheless, its incarnation requires a community of witnesses who receive guidance and empowerment from the Paraclete to testify about the Son, thereby uniting the divine and human community.

Finally, whereas the farewell discourse allows the reader to see the participatory roles of the divine and human community in the incarnation of God's purpose, the words of Jesus to the community at the foot cross and the corresponding reaction from the hearers practically demonstrate the theological construct in the farewell address. Therefore, the work discusses this event and its ramifications for the community theme.

3.5   JESUS' FINAL MOMENTS WITH THE COMMUNITY

After Jesus' farewell discourse with the disciples, there are two momentous events worth noting because of their criticality to the narrative development of the community theme, constituted by the disciples' encounter with the crucified and the resurrected Lord. The discussion, therefore, assesses the contributions of these events to the development of the theme.

3.5.1   The community at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25-30)

Having taught the disciples about living as the community of God, the events at the crucifixion scene gives a practical application of some community-centred teachings. In this narrative, the abiding theme finds expression through the actions of these disciples (cf. Jn 15:1-5). John mentions that not all twelve disciples are present (cf. Jn 19:25-27). The reason is that the disciples became petrified. Peter's attitude towards Jesus – denial during the trial – reveals the intensity of fear that had gripped the believing community, a situation predicted before the arrest (cf. Jn 14:1, 27; Jn 16:20-22; Jn 18:17, 27). Therefore, the indication is that these were the only ones to have followed him to this point, portraying them as the personification of true discipleship. In a narrative replete with spurious disciples who become hostile to Jesus upon teaching what they deem hard, following Jesus to the cross demonstrates genuine discipleship – continuing in Christ (see Jn 2:23; Jn 6:60-66; Jn 8:30-31; Ridderbos 1997:306; Köstenberger 2004:261; Carson 1991:346-348).

Moreover, John ties the abiding theme to life in the new relationships in Christ (cf. Jn 19:26-27). In unpacking the vine metaphor, Jesus reveals that abiding in him implies allowing his words to remain in the community members, that is, governing their lives and practices by his teachings (cf. Jn 19:27; Harris 2015:268; Köstenberger 2004:455; Carson 1991:518). The reaction of the beloved disciple exemplifies the relationship between the community's union with Christ and living by his word. At the

foot of the cross, Jesus commits his mother into the hands of the beloved disciple, introducing her simply as 'mother' (Jn 19:27; cf. Harris 2015:317). Employing the term, Jesus establishes a new familial relationship at the foot of the cross, defining how the community must live (cf. Moloney 1998a:146; Ridderbos 1997:613; Keener 2003:1145). The beloved disciple responds by taking her to his own house from that hour (Jn 19:27). His actions demonstrate his subservience to the word, allowing it to govern his life and practice. It also implies that he understood the communicative force of the word of Jesus – to care for her (Jn 19:27; Harris 2015:316; Ridderbos 1997:613; cf. Brodie 1993:547). The perlocutionary effect of the narrative is that it presents a paradigm requiring the believing community to demonstrate stronger bonds than biological, familial relationships (Keener 2003:1145). It also characterises the members of the community of God as people living in a family-oriented or collectivistic society in praxis, not just theoretically. Consequently, they demonstrate their union with Christ and the influence of his word on the community by caring for the members (cf. Jn 19:27; Brodie 1993:547). Such is the crux of the narrative – a portrait of profound care, even under nightmarish or adverse conditions (Brodie 1993:547).

Finally, another momentous event John mentions is Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to the disciples on the evening of the first day of the week, where he commissions and empowers the community to fulfil its mandate (Jn 20:19-23).

3.5.2 The commissioned and empowered community (Jn 20:19-23)

The crucifixion occasioned fear in the believing community (cf. Jn 20:19; Ridderbos 1995:641). Due to the leaders' role as the architects of Jesus' crucifixion, they became the believing community's object of trepidation (Keener 2003:1200). Therefore, the disciples congregated in a room and locked themselves up (Jn 20:19). Nevertheless, Jesus appeared and stood among them in those moments of fear, indicating that one of the characteristics of his resurrection body is his ability to dematerialize and materialize at will (Harris 2015:330; cf. Keener 2003:1200).[157] More importantly, the reunion and the joy it evokes in the petrified community marks the fulfilment of his promise to the disciples (Jn 20:20; cf. Jn 16:20-24; Jn 17:13;

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[157] The closed doors coupled with his mode of entrance underscores the miraculous nature of the act (Ridderbos 1995:641; Carson 1991:646; cf. Köstenberger 2004:572).

Köstenberger 2004:572; Ridderbos 1995:642; Harris 2015:330; Carson 1991:647; Talbert 2005:263; Keener 2003:1201).

Most importantly, what Jesus shows and says to his disciples is noteworthy, given his standing posture and what transpired. He stood in their middle – the appropriate place for revelations – before showing them his wounds (Jn 20:19; cf. Keener 2003:1201). These lacerations on the hands and sides of his resurrected body are evidence of his suffering and victory over death and the grave (Jn 20:20; Ridderbos 1995:641; cf. Köstenberger 2004:572). The purpose was to share his triumph with the community of witnesses and reveal the crux of their message (cf. Ridderbos 1995:641; Carson 1991:647). Additionally, it sets the commission – the disciples' participation in God's mission – in a proper context, given that it involves testifying about Jesus (cf. Jn 20:21).

Speaking to the disciples, he bequeaths peace to them twice (Jn 20:19, 21; cf. Jn 14:27; Jn 16:33). The first statement about peace accompanies his appearance (Jn 20:19). However, the narrative ties the latter to the commissioning of the disciples (Jn 20:21). Therefore, it seems appropriate to surmise that the first statement aims to dispel their fears, considering the frightened state of the community (cf. Jn 20:19; Köstenberger 2004:572; Morris 1995:745). However, the latter – what John ties to the disciples' commissioning – is a source of encouragement for a community bound for persecutions because of their mission (Keener 2003:1202).

The commissioning of the disciples is the narrative focus (Jn 20:21; Köstenberger 2004:574). The authorisation is critical because it allows the disciples to participate in the divine mission as a community of witnesses (Harris 2015:330; Keener 2003:1204; Köstenberger 2004:575). Jesus summarises the relationship between the two roles in the commissioning statement: As the Father has sent me, so I send you (cf. Jn 20:21). It is pertinent to guide against promulgating two types of sending because of the different expressions employed in the statement for Jesus and the disciples; John uses them interchangeably (cf. Harris 2015:330; Keener 2003:1203; Carson 1991:647; Ridderbos 1997:642). He expresses the same thought, thereby drawing the disciples into the unity and mission of the eternal community (Köstenberger 2004:573; Ridderbos 1997:642). The indication is that the believing community continues Jesus' mission (Keener 2003:1203; Harris 2015:330). The

collocation aims to strengthen the community, knowing that it guarantees participation in their mission (cf. Ridderbos 1997:642). Ridderbos (1997:642) aptly notes: Just as Jesus fulfilled his mission through the functional unity with the Father, he likewise remains in force in the mission of his disciples.

To demonstrate the participation of the eternal community in what he has commissioned them for, he breathed the Spirit on the community (Jn 20:22). The generally accepted view is that the narrative envisions the empowerment of the disciples (Ridderbos 1997:643; Keener 2003:1204; Talbert 2005:264: Harris 2015:331). It agrees with the narrative context: the petrified state of the disciples and the commissioning (cf. Jn 20:19-23). However, two forms of this view exist in Johannine scholarship – partial and complete empowerment. Primarily, the proponents of the first view arrive at this conclusion, trying to reconcile what transpired here with Pentecost by juxtaposing the disciples' behaviour after Jesus breathed on them to the account in Acts 2 (Carson 1991:653-654; Köstenberger 2004:574-575). Köstenberger (2004:574-575), for instance, asserts that their behaviour after the present incident would also be puzzling had they already received the Spirit. Arguing along that trajectory, Carson (1991:653-654) writes that the event is a kind of acted parable pointing forward to the full enduement still to come. Alternatively, most scholars affirm that what transpires here is the transmission of the working of the Spirit (Ridderbos 1997:643). Unlike the above scholars who interpret the event through the prism of Lukan pneumatology in Acts, they focus on Johannine theology. Therefore, they interpret the event predominantly as the time when Jesus empowers the believing community for the mission preceding the act (Ridderbos 1997:643; Keener 2003:1204-1205; Talbert 2005:264). Consequently, though both views interpret the narrative distinctly, the common denominator is the agreement – that the event empowers the community. Only a community commissioned and empowered by God fulfils a critical component of its mission.

3.6   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The narrative development of the concept of community allows us to see the Johannine strategy employed to demonstrate the foundation of community in John, the conception and mission of the believing community, the problem of community, and how the believing community can replicate God. In John, God is the foundation

of community. The narrative grounds this on the principle that God is the first community. From the prologue, the characterisation of God as the first community stems from God's nature and the relational dimension of community demonstrated by the eternal distinctions in their union and the collectivistic attributes that culminated in the creation of the world (cf. Jn 1:1-5).

As a product of this relationship, creation must participate in the community (Grenz 2000:112; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2; Bauckham 2015:48). Nevertheless, its participation is dependent on divine assistance and invitation. Thus, God sends John the Baptist, one who fits into the Johannine qualification for witnesses to testify to his community concerning the Light (cf. Brant 2011:31; Keener 2003:392). As the precursor and witness, John fulfilled his role. He ushered in the messianic era by identifying the Messiah to the community (Jn 1:29-34). Additionally, his ministry inaugurated the assemblage of the members of the community of God: Two of his disciples became the first members of the community of God through his testimony (Jn 1:35-39).

Furthermore, to demonstrate the role of the new community, John ties its narrative development to its religious and sociocultural mandate. Through narratives that evoke Jewish religious and cultural symbolism, John uncovers the religious-cultural maladies, presenting the new community as God's response to these challenges. For instance, John employs the sign of turning water to wine to demonstrate the community's role, characterising it as a group whose social presence must address sociocultural challenges (cf. Jn 2:1-11). Additionally, the narrative casts Jesus' response to the abuse of the Gentiles court in the Jewish symbol of community identity as the redefinition of community identity (Jn 2:13-22). Therefore, John proceeds to address the universalisation of the community of God, buttressing the earlier notion that in Christ, God's purpose for community identity manifests (cf. Jn 4).

It is also pertinent to note that the abuse of the Gentiles court coupled with the tension between the Jews and the Samaritans expose the Jews inability to incarnate their religious values. They have a court that allows Gentiles to participate in their communal worship, indicating that the divine purpose for the community of God is an interracial community serving one God (cf. Köstenberger 2004:102). Therefore, their disruption of Gentile worship reveals their struggle with becoming the conduit for

incarnating the community identity prescribed by God. Again, the same community that allowed a Gentiles' court in their temple had relationship challenges with their neighbours on religious grounds, defeating its theological essence.

Moreover, the problem of the community reflects the internal challenges of Jewish society. It is evident in the societal maladies that plagued the microcosmic community of Bethesda and the religious leaders' response to the remedy Jesus provides (Jn 5). The apparent colossal cultural failure creates lacunas, necessitating a paradigm for replication.

Consequently, the farewell discourse addresses how the human community can represent the community of God. The farewell address reveals that the incarnation of the community of God is a divine-human partnership where both partners play their participatory roles. Thus, Jesus teaches the community how it can play its role and demonstrate in his final moments on the cross the application of the truths proclaimed earlier. Finally, he commissions and empowers the community to fulfil its mission. As discussed earlier, the community's mission is binary in nature: *going* and *living*. It is, therefore, reasonable to surmise that the purpose of the commissioning and empowerment is to fulfil these.

In the fourth chapter, the study exegetes the Akan concept of community. This is a critical step because the study recognises that the contextualisation of the biblical text completes the hermeneutical cycle. Thus, exploring how the interpreter's context perceives the theme is a prerequisite. The focus of this chapter (the narrative development of the community theme) helped identify the call to action for the interpreter's context. Consequently, studying the Akan reality also will impel an informed understanding of its sociocultural context and the call to action, an integral substratum for intercultural exegesis.

Chapter 4
The Akan concept of community

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on the second step of the methodology – the exegesis of the Akan reality. The study indicates that reading the text interculturally requires a biblical culture and a contemporary cultural context (Loba-Mkole 2008:1347-1359). Chapters 2 and 3 examine the biblical culture – Johannine concept of community. This chapter evaluates the second partner of an intercultural exegesis – the interpreter's culture. Thus, the study performs an academic autopsy on the Akan community concept to understand their community ideations and interrogate the veracity of the views in the academic literature enunciating this subject. It is also a prerequisite for determining the call to action (communicative force). Finally, the study explores the Akan sociocultural milieu because of the commonalities between the Johannine and Akan contexts: the emphasis on the community theme. The correlation, the researcher believes, will allow the *modus vivendi* prescribed for the community of God in John to serve as a critique of the culture of the Akan Christian or see how the Akan culture enriches the understanding of the text (cf. Ukpong 1995:6; West 2018:249).

For an informed understanding of the Akan concept of community, it is critical to analyse their proverbs. Thus, the subsequent section examines the place of Akan proverbs to appreciate their impact on their philosophy of life. Further, understanding the value of Akan proverbial lore culminates in establishing their concept of a community.

4.2 PROVERBS IN AKAN EPISTEMOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

In deliberating on the African philosophy of life, their proverbs cannot be neglected or downgraded. The reason is that these aphorisms are mines or repositories from which their cultures could be excavated. Commenting on this subject, Mbiti (1997:ix) perspicaciously notes:

> Africa is rich in a variety of ways, including natural resources, manpower and culture. Within the framework of culture there is a wide range of heritage including

religion, music, dance, art, architecture, and oral literature. And in the realm of oral literature, we find the immensely rich world of stories, fables, recitations, songs, poetry, and proverbs.

Similarly, the Akan counterparts of the Kenyan clergyman agree with him on the significance of proverbial lore in unearthing the thoughts of a traditional African (cf. Opoku 1997:xviii; Boakye 2018:35). In the Akan conceptual scheme, proverbs are sources and enormous residue of knowledge garnered from the real-life experiences of the community (Boakye 2018:35). This ubiquitously held view on the impact of proverbs is the substratum of some of the works of Akan philosophers and scholars, such as Appiah *et al.* (2007), Gyekye (1995, 1996), Opoku (1997), Danquah (1968), Yankah (1989) and Bannerman (1927) who have examined Akan proverbs to bring an informed understanding of the Akan culture (see also Rattray 1916). They consider Akan proverbs as summations of knowledge of the surrounding world (Appiah *et al.* 2007:xii; Kyeremateng 2010:28; Gyekye 1995:14-15; Mbiti 1997:ix; see also Boakye 2018:35). Thus, a short proverb can be equivalent to pages of philosophical discussion (Appiah *et al.* 2007:xii).

Apart from proverbs being a source of knowledge, they also epitomise the wisdom of the community (Dzobo 2010:94; Kyeremateng 2010:28; Boakye 2018:35; Mbiti 1989:86). For the Akan, proper application of proverbs adorns or enriches the speech (Opoku 1997:xviii; Kyeremateng 2010:28; Boakye 2018:35). However, the goal is to contextualise the wisdom of the elders in the prevailing circumstance at the time, not to display the richness of the speech (cf. Kyeremateng 2010:28). It explains the Akan notion that the proper application of aphorisms is a mark of wisdom (Opoku 1997:xviii, 42; cf. Dzobo 2010:94-95; Kyeremateng 2010:28; Boakye 2018:35; Mbiti 1989:86). For Akans, wisdom is a prerequisite for accurate application and interpretation or understanding of proverbs (Opoku 1997:xviii, 42; Gyekye 1996:141-142; Yankah 1989:55). They express this in two adages: we speak to the wise in proverbs, not in plain language, and communicating to a fool in proverbs requires explanations (cf. Opoku 1997:42; Gyekye 1996:141-142). Thus, Dzobo (2010:94) aptly observes that proverbs are a remarkably effective mode of communication, and society classifies their correct and persuasive use in speech as a sign of sound education, maturity, cultural sophistication, and wisdom. Mbiti (1989:86) affirms that 'it is in proverbs that we find the remains of the oldest forms of African religious and

philosophical wisdom.' The ramification is that they provoke further reflection and deeper thinking about the meanings of the proverb and that aspect of life that the speaker seeks to promulgate or elucidate (Mbiti 1997:ix).

Furthermore, in the awareness that adages are repertoires of knowledge and wisdom, every aspect of their lives is captured in their proverbial sayings (Mbiti 1997:ix; Christaller 2000:5; Boakye 2018:35). Akan proverbs are sources and summations of knowledge, the philosophical reflections of the community and concepts about every aspect of their lives. Their contents commend refined, tested, and proven community values (cf. Boakye 2018:35). Dzobo (2010:96) rightly affirms that proverbs display the main value orientations of the traditional African community – from the ethical, spiritual, humanistic, economic, and intellectual to the material. Thus, scholars (Appiah *et al*. 2007:xii; Opoku 1997:xviii; Mbiti 1997:ix) perspicaciously note that it is impossible to appreciate the philosophy and beliefs of Akans without studying their proverbs. In cognisance of these benefits, it is pertinent for works of this nature to incorporate or even concentrate on Akan proverbial lore. Consequently, the subsequent section explores the Akan community concept, focusing preponderantly on their aphorisms.

4.3   COMMUNITY IN AKAN THOUGHT

4.3.1   The foundation of the Akan community concept

Akan philosophers accentuate the relational dimension as the determinant of community, not the territory (though it is an aspect) inhabited by a group of people (Gyekye 1996:35-36; cf. Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi; Cohen 1985:12; Klink 2007:52). To these thinkers, an aggregate of persons devoid of quality relationships does not constitute a community (cf. Gyekye 1996:35-36). A community, in their epistemology, is a group of individuals connected by interpersonal bonds – people who share common interests, values, and goals (Gyekye 1996:35-36).

Extrapolating the Akan philosophical ideations of humanity and community from their proverbs will culminate in describing their community concept as originating from God, thus, natural to the human being. The Akan view of humans as theomorphic beings created for communal life is the ground for this postulation (Gyekye 1995:19-20; cf. Opoku 1997:11; Appiah *et al*. 2007:201). In this regard, two proverbs are worth noting: all 'humans are children of God' and 'when a person descends from

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heaven, he lands into human society' (cf. Appiah *et al*. 2007:201; Gyekye 1995:155, 1996:36; Opoku 1997:11; Danquah 1968:193). Gyekye (1995:155) maintains that the belief that *Onyame* (the Supreme Being) created human beings emanates from the idea that they descend from heaven into the human community. For Akans, the relationship between God and humankind exceeds a Creator-creature relationship. Their aphorisms postulate that humans have an aspect of their Creator in their nature and, in consequence, are theomorphic beings (Gyekye 1995:20, 1996:24). Therefore, all humans are children of God; none is a child of the earth (Gyekye 1995:20, 1996:24; Appiah *et al*. 2007:205; Danquah 1968:193). This adage implies that all human beings are children of God by creation, not procreation. It denotes that the Akan perceives all human beings as a community or family of children of God (cf. Gyekye 1996:24; Danquah 1968:101). The Akan understanding of the brotherhood of humanity rests on this assumption. Their characterisation of the human community shows that the Akan concept of brotherhood extends beyond blood ties (Gyekye 1996:26, 28). To them, humanity has no boundaries. They express this idea in the adage, 'man's brother is a man' (Gyekye 1996:28). Thus, Akan anthropology is the bases for their concept of communitarian egalitarianism and the indispensability of the community to a human being.

Alternatively, the foundation of the Akan ideations of the community can be examined by their view of the constitution of the human being. Akan thinkers perceive the constitution of human beings as an explanation for their sociality. The Akans hold a dualistic conception of the person, constituted by the immaterial and material constituent elements (Gyekye 1995:99).[158] The spiritual elements consist of the *okra* (soul) and *sunsum* (spirit). The two constitute a spiritual unity (Gyekye 1995:99). Akan cosmology intimates that the *okra* (soul) – the innermost self and essence of a person – is a divine essence or spark of God in man (Gyekye 1995:85). The *okra* is also the life, transmitter, and embodiment of a person's destiny. The spirit (*sunsum)*, according to Danquah (1968:66; cf. Gyekye 1995:97), determines the character dispositions and personality of a person.[159]

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[158] Gyekye (1995:99) elucidates that failure to see the spiritual unity of the *okra* (soul) and *sunsum* (spirit) is the reason some think of a tripartite conception, constituted by the soul, spirit and body (*honam*).
[159] Gyekye (1995:90) defines personality as a set of characteristics as evidenced in the behaviour of an individual.

Whereas the okra is from God and constitutes a spiritual unity with the *sunsum*, the *honam* (body) is material (Gyekye 1995:94). In their view of the nature of the human being, Akans also distinguish the *mogya* (blood) and the *ntoro* (father's spirit) – both endowed by human beings (Gyekye 1995:94). They hold that whereas the *ntoro* comes from the father, the mother transmits the *mogya* to the child (Gyekye 1995:94). The two, in Akan anthropology, are responsible for the traits of parents that their children inherit (Gyekye 1995:94). The ramification of this philosophical construct is that the individual is not an 'independent being' because his existence is the product of a collaborative work of God and the human community (parents). Against this background, human life revolves around society. Thus, for the Akan, to be human is to relate with others – community (Opoku 1997:xviii; cf. Mbiti 1989:101).

Consequently, the Akans express this notion in the adage that when a person descends from heaven, he lands in human society. It suggests that human beings are naturally communal or social (Gyekye 1996:36; cf. Appiah *et al*. 2007:201). Akan thinkers ground the interpretation of this maxim on the principle that everyone is born into an existing community or lives as a community member (Gyekye 1996:36; Appiah *et al*. 2007:201). Hence, in Akan philosophy, society is not merely a necessary condition for human existence but something natural to man. Living in a community is congruent with the nature of a human being (Gyekye 1995:155, 1996:36). Thus, human beings are naturally communitarian. It explains why banishment used to be one of the punishments for heinous crimes: it strips the person of the privilege of belonging to his natural habitat. And since the naturalness of community originates from the fact that God created humanity as theomorphic beings and placed them in various communities, it is not wrong to conjecture that Akan communitarianism is not a human invention but divine.

Furthermore, the origin of man in Akan epistemology is the root of Akan humanism. It defines the worth of a human being and how the community must value human life. If all human beings are perceived to be theomorphic, a universal community of children of *Onyame*, it follows that community members must treat everyone with dignity (Gyekye 1996:24). Gyekye (1996:24) notes:

> The insistent claim made in this maxim is based on the belief that there must be something intrinsically valuable in God: the human being, considered a child of God, presumably by reason of having been created by God and having in his or

her nature some aspect of God, ought also to be held as of intrinsic value, worthy of dignity and respect.

Consequently, Akans have aphorisms indicating their appreciation for the dignity of the human being. To accentuate the worth of the human being, some of the proverbs affirm the need to value people above wealth or material possessions (cf. Opoku 1997:12; Appiah *et al*. 2007:201; Gyekye 1996:190-191). The following are a few examples: It is a human being that counts; I call upon gold, it answers not; I call upon cloth, it answers not (Opoku 1997:10; Gyekye 1996:190; Danquah 1968:193); A human being is more beautiful than gold/money (Opoku 1997:12; Gyekye 1996:25), and man is more important than money (Appiah *et al*. 2007:201).

Analysing these proverbial sayings through the prisms of the Akan view of poverty and wealth is critical because it helps to appreciate their communicative intentions. Poverty is one of the necessitating factors of the degradation of the human spirit (Gyekye 1996:104). Akans avow that poverty is madness (that is, the poor man acts like a lunatic). The proverb: in the extremes of need, a human being will live in the forest also adds that poverty makes people live like animals (Gyekye 1996:104). Akans also perceive poverty as a disgrace because it necessitates disgraceful actions (Opoku 1997:54). The awareness of the impact of poverty makes their appreciation of money or wealth meaningful. Akan proverbs link wealth to an elevation of social status through the opportunities it creates and the encumbrances in life it helps to overcome (money is sharper than the sword; Gyekye 1996:98-99; Opoku 1997:105). It is not surprising that wealth is the ultimate possession in Akan thought (when wealth comes and passes by, nothing comes after; Gyekye 1996:98-99). Therefore, the comparisons promulgated in these proverbs reflect the appreciation for the worth of the human being in Akan ideations of community.

And now, what are the implications of these proverbs? The proverb (It is a human being that counts) accentuates the worth of human beings above all material things (Opoku 1997:10; Gyekye 1996:25). Humans are to be considered above material things because the human being is of real value, especially in perilous or precarious times (Gyekye 1996:25). In such moments, material possessions do not respond. Since the human being responds in debilitating times – something material possessions cannot accomplish – 'it is a human being that is needed' and 'man is

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more important than money' (Gyekye 1996:25; Appiah *et al*. 2007:201). The appreciation of human worth is also a motivation for the Akan proverb, 'a human being is more beautiful than gold/money' (Opoku 1997:12; Gyekye 1996:25).

Understanding the worth of the human being in Akan epistemology and anthropology is pertinent because it defines how to treat human beings and build a foundation for human fellowship (cf. Opoku 1997:11; Gyekye 1996:25-26). First, these proverbs oblige us to accord humans the dignity and respect they deserve, proscribing inhumane acts against them. Hence, the Akan proverbial saying, human beings are not weeds to be cut away or trampled upon (Opoku 1997:11; cf. Gyekye 1996:25-26).

Additionally, proverbs that accentuate the worth of the human being aim at justifying human fellowship by emphasising its overriding importance for the well-being of the individual (cf. Gyekye 1996:25). Gyekye (1996:25; cf. Opoku 1997:12; Appiah *et al*. 2007:201) lists the following: 'A human being is more beautiful than gold/money; it is a human being that counts or matters; it is a human being that is needed.' The first proverb deserves special mention because of its significance. Portraying the human being as beautiful denotes ascribing to humankind the property of beauty Gyekye (2016:25). Gyekye (2016:25) elucidates that assigning this property (beauty) to humans means enjoying them for their own sake. The Akan thinker clarifies that enjoyment in this context denotes appreciating the worth of a human being by showing compassion, generosity, and hospitality. Having this disposition towards the human being allows openness to the interests of the other, making it a moral responsibility to offer help when necessary (Gyekye 2016:25). The Akan concept of communitarianism rests upon this understanding of human fellowship. Consequently, what follows discusses Akan view of communalism.

4.3.2 Akan view of communitarianism

The above discussions establish that the Akan community concept is divine because of its inextricable link to the children of God motif. This motif defines the worth of a human being, the brotherhood of humanity, and fellowship as the outflow and natural concomitant of appreciation for human value to explain the substratum of the communalistic traits in the Akan social order.

Against this backdrop, Akans have multifarious proverbs that elucidate their view of communitarianism. Among these, the motivation for Akan communitarianism is a predominant motif. In this regard, certain proverbial sayings demonstrate that communitarianism in Akan philosophy hinges on the naturalness of society to the human being. One of these is, for instance, when a person descends from *osoro*, he drops into human society (Gyekye 1995:155, 1996:36; cf. Appiah *et al*. 2007:201; Opoku 1997:11; Danquah 1968:193). The adage stresses that community is natural to a human being because it agrees with human nature as theomorphic beings and the habitat of their birth (Gyekye 1996:36; cf. Appiah *et al*. 2007:201).

Furthermore, the naturalness of community to the human being denotes the necessity of human fellowship for the well-being of an individual. Hence, Akans have proverbs that express the preponderating significance of relationships, such as it is a human being that is needed (matters), and a human being is sweet (Opoku 1997:10; Gyekye 1996:25). The second proverb deserves special mention because of its meaning: a human being is good to have (sweet). Explaining from the Akan perspective the intensity of the necessity of having a human being, Opoku (1997:10) asserts that a human being is so valuable that the Akan prize the presence of miscreants above empty homes (Opoku 1997:10). It is pertinent to note that the maxim does not denote condoning social deviance by making the house a haven for them. Akan proverbial lore forbids the concealment of such characters (see Appiah *et al*. 2007:201). Therefore, though a house could symbolise security or safety, interpreting the maxim through this prism is at variance with the concealment of the wicked in Akan view of communitarianism (Arthur 2001:164). The focus of the proverb is on brotherhood, which is also one of the meanings of a house (cf. Opoku 1997:10; Arthur 2001:164). For Akans, being human requires being in a relationship with others (Opoku 1997:10). Why is human fellowship central in the Akan view of what community entails?

Studying the proverbs enumerated thus far meticulously shows a correlation between proverbs that prize human worth above material possessions and those that emphasise the necessity of human relationships – they all accentuate the need for human fellowship because of its concomitant prospects (for instance, a human being is sweet, and it is a human being who counts or matters; cf. Opoku 1997:12; Gyekye 1996:25). One of these benefits (as the research has already established) is

that human beings count because of their ability to help or respond to the needs of fellow humans when the situation demands them (Gyekye 1996:25). The Akan view of human help makes the centrality of human fellowship even more perspicuous. An example of an adage helpful for probing the Akan thought on the interconnectedness of human relationships and assistance is the proverb 'the human being needs help' (cf. Opoku 1997:11; Gyekye 1996:24). Gyekye (1996:24-25) explains that the Akan word *hia* (needs) has a normative connotation, making it a moral obligation to assist a human being because s/he deserves and ought to receive assistance. However, receiving assistance can only transpire in the context of human fellowship, making it a prerequisite for such demonstrations. Wherefore, a life of seclusion must be discouraged because it impedes the reception of help. Thus, human fellowship is central because it provides legitimacy as the conduit for help (cf. Gyekye 1996:24-25).

The necessity for help is rooted in the Akan view that a human being is not self-sufficient. In cognisance of this human reality, Akans employ multifarious proverbs to expatiate their view of human insufficiency. One of them states: A person is not a palm tree that he should be self-complete or self-sufficient (Appiah *et al*. 2007:203; Opoku 1997:12; Gyekye 1996:37; cf. Danquah 1968:193). The explanation of Opoku is worth mentioning because it follows a literal translation of the proverb (cf. Opoku 1997:12). His literal interpretation of the maxim, which reflects the Twi construction, suggests that the palm tree is self-complete or self-sufficient because its branches surround it. Since human hands, by nature, do not surround the body like the branches of the palm tree, a human being needs helping hands to accomplish many things. Perhaps, the interpretation of the proverb promulgated by Appiah *et al*. (2007:203) – a human being cannot be self-sufficient – stems from the Akan's awareness that a human being is naturally insufficient and incapable of attaining a state of self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, acknowledging human insufficiency necessitates a community where members complement each other, thereby creating a chain of interdependence necessary for accomplishing individual goals. Thus, *obi dan bi*, to wit: one person depends on another, or a man must depend for his well-being on his fellow man (Opoku 1997:11; Gyekye 1996:45). Other aphorisms deserve consideration to understand the purpose of interdependence. One of them is the proverb, *onipa na*

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oma onipa ye yiye (Danquah 1968:193; cf. Gyekye 1995:155). It reveals that interdependence is necessary because the well-being of man depends upon another (cf. Danquah 1968:193; Gyekye 1995:155). The others include: the left arm washes the right arm and vice versa; the reason two deer walk together is that one must remove the mote from the other's eye (Opoku 1997:17; Gyekye 1996:188; Ackah 1988:52-53). They deserve special mention because they elucidate how interdependence fills the lacunae created by human insufficiency. Opoku (1997:17) and Gyekye (1996:37) explain that the first proverb, for instance, affirms that each hand is not self-sufficient because one hand cannot cleanse itself without the assistance of the other hand. However, it can wash the other hand. Therefore, the left hand must depend on the right and vice versa for cleansing. Akans express a similar thought in other proverbs (two deer walk together so that one would remove the mote from the other's eye (cf. Opoku 1997:17; Gyekye 1996:188). These aphorisms imply that 'human interdependence contributes to the development, security, and the survival needs of the individual' (Opoku 1997:11; cf. Gyekye 1996:37). Consequently, Akan proverbial sayings that espouse the community concept express appreciation of the worth and pertinence of the community.

Since Akans recognise that human inadequacies warrant interdependence, they emphasise the significance of collectivism. Some adages that espouse the importance of collective efforts are one finger cannot lift a thing (heavy load), when two people carry a log, it does not feel heavy, many hands catch a valiant man, and one person alone cannot build a town (Opoku 1997:13, 17, 83; Gyekye 1996:37). The first two proverbs teach, for instance, that cooperation minimises the burden of work due to shared responsibility, thereby making it light (Opoku 1997:17).

Another benefit of interdependence espoused in these proverbs is that it produces a community of action that makes even challenging tasks achievable. Lifting a heavy object requires all fingers, not just one. A gallant man can also be powerless when confronted by many men. In both instances, strength, a natural concomitant of numbers, make amends for the individual inadequacies, thereby overcoming the insurmountable to accomplish tasks through the accumulative effects of collective endeavours. The interpretation is akin to the meaning of the second proverb: it underscores the centrality of cooperation in undertaking something worthwhile and extraordinary (cf. Opoku 1997:13).

Apart from the prospects of collective efforts enumerated above, Akans believe that there is safety in numbers. Hence, the proverb, one person alone does not arrest a lunatic (Appiah *et al*. 2007:19). If a group of people apprehend a lunatic, it saves the individuals from potential harm because collectively, they have an overpowering presence that prevents the lunatic from targeting anyone. Even if the lunatic attempts, the target can depend on the strength of the others for his safety.

Finally, interdependence enhances decision-making. The Akans assert that 'the head of a single person has no thoughts' (Appiah *et al*. 2007:19). The proverb underscores the difficulty of spawning wise decisions solely on a person's cognitive strength. It does not suggest the impossibility but the problem of making some decisions without taking counsel from others. Consequently, the Akan indicates the necessity of making decisions with the assistance of others in the proverb, 'wisdom is not in the head of one person' (Gyekye 1995:50, 144). According to Gyekye (1995:50, 144), the maxim means some equally wise individuals may offer better ideas. Thus, the individual should not consider his opinions superior to others but expect them to evaluate his positions, thereby enriching them.

The portrait of communalism espoused in these proverbs and Akan epistemology gives the impression that the individual has no place. But this is misleading. Thus, what follows considers how the individual fits into Akan communitarianism.

4.3.3 The place of the individual in the community

Most definitions of the Akan (or African) community concept suggest that the group subsumes individuality. Such interpretations are inaccurate. The Akan expression of communitarianism is not radical because it does not 'reduce a person to intellectual inactivity, servility, and docility' (Gyekye 1996:56). It recognises that the individual, though a social being, exercises personal will and identity (Gyekye 1996:47). This characterisation denotes the distinct nature of a person in Akan thought.

Akan proverbial sayings project the individuality of each person. These aphorisms mostly contain a word about the human head. Akan philosophers use it because of its communicative force: it is synonymous with the word person or individual (cf. Gyekye 1995:159; Appiah *et al*. 2007:275). Consequently, it is not surprising that they employ it to depict the distinctness of a human being. The following are some examples of proverbs that stress the individuality of a human being: all men have

one head, but heads differ (Danquah 1968:193); all heads are alike, but the thoughts in them are not the same (Opoku 1997:19; Appiah *et al*. 2007:275). Akan scholars suggest that the proverb means resemblance in looks is not tantamount to the sameness of character (Opoku 1997:19; Appiah *et al*. 2007:275). The point is that all human beings have different temperaments and attitudes. Therefore, they are not the same.

Additionally, the idiosyncratic nature of the individual human being is evident in his capabilities. Thus, the Akan proverb: if your head is oversized, it is not everything that you can carry (Appiah *et al*. 2007:275; Opoku 1997:19). The meaning of this adage is that everyone has a limit, irrespective of one's capacity (Appiah *et al*. 2007:275). It is pertinent to note that the adage does not denote the absence of potential but its limitedness. It means a human being has peculiar capacities that require the company of others or an environment that breeds shared obligations to flourish (cf. Opoku 1997:19). Opoku (1997:19), for his part, opines that this is the import of the proverb. He argues that the Akan must recognise that being human means to belong and, to do so, is to have an obligation to other community members (Opoku 1997:19). He intimates that the community maintains its balance when the people exercise this obligation. Society is based more on responsibilities than individual rights: it is a place where people assume their rights in exercising their duties, making society a chain of interrelationships (Opoku 1978:11; Gyekye 1995:156-162). Therefore, the individual has a responsibility not to break the chain but to ensure that his abilities, though limited, contribute to the general good of society.

Moreover, the individual has personal responsibility toward fulfilling his dreams. Adapting the definition of Gyekye, responsibility is the caring attitude an individual must have concerning her well-being (cf. Gyekye 1996:63). The individual responsibility towards society must not forbid individuals from seeking personal advancement in life. Conversely, appreciating the worth of the community does not imply that in the Akan social order, the group performs the obligations of the individuals. Akans recognise that the individual, having a personal will and identity, must make them count (cf. Gyekye 1996:47). The outcome of his life will depend upon what he makes of life. Thus, the Akans say, life is as you make it (Gyekye

1996:48; Appiah *et al.* 2007:63).[160] It has the same import as the Swahili adage: a person becomes what he wants to become (Gyekye 1996:65).

The purpose of the adage is to conscientise the individual not to abuse the community's appreciation for interdependence by being overly dependent on others to the point of forgetting her responsibilities. Akans do not encourage excessive dependence. 'The person who helps you carry your load,' they say, 'does not develop a hump.' The implication is that the helper does not solely bear your burden (Gyekye 1996:49). Understanding this reality of life discourages the proclivity to blame others, instead of ourselves, for the result of our lives. When a person has a deep sense of personal responsibility that enjoins him from excessive dependence, it will be difficult for him to blame others for his failures. Consequently, this leads to another prospect of personal responsibility: the awareness that the individual has ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of his life. The proverb, it is by individual efforts that we can struggle for our heads, reminds the Akan of this personal responsibility (Gyekye 1996:48).

Finally, though the espousal of the significance of taking personal responsibility is beneficial for community life, a critical analysis of some proverbs culminates in a tension between the communalistic and individualistic values in the Akan social order. This tension denotes that the traditional definition of the Akan social order rests on questionable assumptions. Thus, the subsequent section interrogates the interplay between individualistic and communalistic values in the Akan milieu.

4.3.4 Tension between communality and individuality in Akan proverbs

A careful study of some Akan proverbs reveals their 'philosophical' constructs of community. These aphorisms unveil the communal life of the Akans and the place of the individual in this setting. However, when proverbs on communality and individuality are juxtaposed, it blurs the line between communalism and individualism, making it difficult to accept the traditional designation of the Akan social order as completely communalistic. To authenticate the candour of the

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[160] Though Appiah *et al.* (2007:63) decrypt the Akan proverb as a character is what you alone have formed, he places in parenthesis the word life as the literal translation of the word translated character.

communalistic label, what follows explores the implications of some Akan proverbs on their community concept.

4.3.4.1   Communalistic features of Akan social order

Scholars generally describe the Akan social order as communalistic (Gyekye 1995:154; Appiah *et al*. 2007:201). Two reasons inform this designation. First, the communalistic view of the Akan social order is an offshoot of the traditional understanding of the African concept of community. African scholars like Mbiti (1989:141), Gyekye (1995:154), Dickson (1977:4), Menkiti (1984:171-181), Ikuenobe (2006:53) and many others argue that indigenous Africans practice communitarian egalitarianism. On the communalistic nature of the African community, Mbiti (1989:141) writes: 'The philosophical awareness of the individual is 'I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am.' The existence of the individual is the existence of the corporate.'

Secondly, the traditional Akan community manifests features of communitarianism. In the understanding of the Akan, to be human is to relate with others – community (Opoku 1997:xviii; cf. Mbiti 1989:101). The individual cannot exist alone, except corporately (Gyekye 1995:155; Mbiti 1989:106). Communalism is the indigenous Akan's (African) authentication and validation of reality (Dogbe 1980:790). Consequently, some cultural practices and values of the Akans indicate that they value collectivism. These cultural practices include marriage ceremonies, child-outdooring, and child-rearing (Dogbe 1980:792-795; Gyekye 1996:76-81; cf. Mbiti 1989:118-129).

Among the Akans, marriage is not a union between the husband and wife but a group union: it is between two families (Kyeremateng 2010:67; Gyekye 1996:79; Asante 1995:138; cf. Nukunya 2016:52). Consequently, the families of prospective couples play various roles. These responsibilities commence before the marriage. When a man of marriageable age identifies a woman he would like to marry, he informs his parents to investigate her background (Kyeremateng 2010:67-68). However, this is not the privilege of one family. Custom requires that contracting families make enquiries about each family to ascertain if there are no traces of despicable and nefarious factors – congenital diseases, suicide, or traits of anomalous behaviours – to prevent the recurrence of these traits if they accept to

marry their relative (Opoku 1997:26; Kyeremateng 2010:67-68). The proverb, investigate before marrying, emanates from the awareness of these communal responsibilities (cf. Opoku 1997:26). But since the woman needs to be sure about the proposal before investigating his background, it is most likely that her family will be the last to do their background check before accepting their request. After this, courtship begins. Subsequently, there is a formal introduction through the father of the to-be husband, where parents jointly seek their daughter's consent (Kyeremateng 2010:68). Then the family invites the parents to perform the necessary rites to schedule a day for the formal presentation of their daughter to the groom – on the wedding day.

In Akan tradition, weddings are not private events; they bring together families and friends from far and near to commemorate the ceremony. It transpires whether they hold the wedding in a rural or urban community. The presence of the immediate family, especially parents, is pertinent for two reasons. First, the community considers it a sign of approval. Second the parents (or immediate family) are not mere witnesses; they are participants. For instance, traditionally, the bride's father (and in his absence, his representative) gives the hand of his daughter willingly in marriage. Consequently, you cannot conduct the ceremony with only the individuals. Even if it is done 'privately' (in the presence of a few family members and friends), these people and other members of both families must be around to witness and welcome the person into the family.

Given that both families performed these responsibilities in the awareness that marriage is between two families, they expect the couple to perform some duties towards their families and the new family they married into or from. Custom requires that they show concern for the welfare of these families to the best of their abilities or risk being branded selfish by the families (Gyekye 1996:79). Showing concern for the families entails participating in their moments of sorrow and joy. Thus, members expect their presence and gifts during events like marriages and child-outdooring ceremonies. The bereaved expect that they will be around to mourn with them. The Akan maxim, 'the family loves a corpse,' sums up these responsibilities (Opoku 1997:29). It enjoins family members to participate in all activities that funeral rites and burials entail, including contributing money to offset debts after burials when necessary. These factors give credence to the saying that marriage is a group union

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and showcases marriage as one of the communalistic features of the Akan community.

Akans perceive marriage as a sacred institution that legitimises the establishment and continuity of families through procreation (Kyeremateng 2010:67; Gyekye 1996:76-77; cf. Nukunya 2016:51). Thus, in the Akan conceptual scheme, one of the functions of marriage is procreation (cf. Nukunya 2016:63; Gyekye 1996:76). Like the celebration of marriage, the birth of a child and its concomitant cultural practices portray it as one of the communal features of the Akan social order. In a traditional Akan setup, procreation is critical because it is the basis of life and ensures continuity of the family (Kyeremateng 1999:107; 2010:67). So, children belong to the community, not just their parents. It explains the proverbial saying that children resemble their father but belong to a family (Opoku 1997:42). However, to consider children as part of the family, physical birth is not enough unless accompanied by rites that incorporate them into the larger community (cf. Mbiti 1989:106). Therefore, parents wait until eight days after birth before outdooring the child (Kyeremateng 1999:107; 2010:67; Tanye 2010:270). This cultural practice emanates from the belief that the newly born are ghosts whose ghost-mothers are searching for them and could culminate in their death (Kyeremateng 2010:70). Thus, they interpret their survival as an abandonment of the search or an indication that the child has come to stay and, consequently, name the child on the eighth day (Kyeremateng 2010:70; cf. Tanye 2010:270).

Given that children belong to the family, the parents alone do not decide on the name the child would bear or perform the rites. Before the outdooring, the father consults his father for the child's name (Kyeremateng 2010:70).[161] On the day of the occasion, the family outdoors the child. The term derives its meaning from the purpose of the customary act: a day to introduce the child to the world (Dogbe 1980:792). It is also the day the parents incorporate the child into the family through rites performed during the naming ceremony (Tanye 2010:270; Salm & Falola 2002:128; cf. Mbiti 1989:106). Therefore, they are significant family rites that bring together family and community members and conclude with communal feasting and

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[161] Customarily, if the child is a male, he is named after his grandfather. Conversely, the child is named after the grandmother if she is a girl. However, the grandfather can still direct that the first baby bears his name (Kyeremateng 2010:70).

drinking (Tanye 2010:270-271; Kyeremateng 2010:71). In the awareness that the child belongs to the family and community, traditional Akans and Africans generally see the new-born child incorporated into the family as 'our child,' not 'my child' (cf. Mbiti 1989:107).

Since the child belongs to the community, the responsibilities of society toward the child commence after his incorporation. Like any traditional African Community, the community raises a child, not just his parents (cf. Dogbe 1980:793-794; Mbiti 1989:107). Hence the proverb, 'it takes a village to raise a child.'

These cultural practices and many others affirm the communalistic features of the Akan community concept. It is pertinent to note that these cultural practices have a foundation. Communalism thrives in an enabling environment – a community where members appreciate and demonstrate collectivistic values. The root of the communalistic tendencies in the Akan social order is their communalistic values. They underpin and guide their social relations (Gyekye 1996:35). Gyekye (1996:35) writes:

> Communal values are those values that express appreciation of the worth and importance of the community, those values that underpin and guide the type of social relations, attitudes, and behaviour that ought to exist between individuals who live together in a community, sharing a social life and having a sense of common good (see also Opokuwaa 2005:26; Sogolo 1993:119).

Examples of communal values include unity, love, care, service, reciprocal obligation, and communality (Gyekye 1996:35). Akan epistemology is replete with aphorisms espousing appreciation of these values. Here, attention will be given to a few examples and make a passing reference because the next chapter comprehensively examines these communalistic values.

Most Akan proverbs accentuate more than one cultural value. Proverbial expressions such as 'the left arm washes the right arm, and the right arm washes the left arm,' 'the tortoise says, the hand goes, and a hand comes,' and 'the reason two deer walk together is that one must take the moth from the other's eyes,' stress the need and significance of reciprocity (Opoku 1997:17; Gyekye 1996:188-189; cf Ackah 1988:52-53). They also denote mutual help, service, and cooperation (Ackah 1988:52-53). Akans also express the importance of unity in proverbs. One of the

proverbs employed predominantly for this purpose draws lessons from the functions of a broom to emphasise the strength of staying united. It states that when you remove one broomstick, it breaks. But when you put all the broomsticks together, they do not split (Boakye 2018:36). Finally, love is one of the communalistic values in Akan epistemology that the community encourages and promulgates proverbially. If someone loves you, love him in return is one of such (Opoku 1997:77-78).

However, it is pertinent to note that interpretations differ when scholars describe the Akan social order as one which accentuates communitarianism. Some hold an overly simplistic view that suggests that the Akan community is purely communalistic. And in so doing, no attention is given to individuality. Opokua (2005:26), for instance, notes: 'Akan community living is communal, not individualistic.' In Gyekye's (1995:56, 154) view, this position prejudges the place given to individuality because it reduces a person to rational inactivity.

In cognizance of this problem, some scholars opine that, in praxis, it is inaccurate to describe the Akan community as purely communalistic. It would be more accurate to define it as amphibious because it expresses communalistic and individualistic features (Wiredu 2010:202-203; Gyekye 1995:154). Unless the individual is willing to cooperate or collaborate with others, there will be no communalistic community (Opoku 1978:11; Gyekye 1995:156-162; Danquah 1968:136).[162] Thus, it is legitimate to recognize individuality as a significant feature in any discourse on Akan communalism.

4.3.4.2   The individualistic features: character and implications

As Gyekye (1995:154, 1996:37) rightly affirms, 'African communal system does not exclude individualistic values;' it recognises that social beings also have individuality and a personal will that must be permitted to express themselves (Gyekye 1996:47). Thus, in the Akan context, both concepts coexist because there is a meaningful cooperative relationship between them (Neequaye 2020:100; Gyekye 1995:154, 1996:47-50). Indeed, the presence of cooperation, reciprocity and other values which

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[162] To demonstrate how individual roles enhances communalism, Danquah (1968:136) uses the traditional dance as a metaphor to describe this harmony. In such a dance, he notes, 'there is a recurrence of accent – rhythimic, elegant, concordant, harmonious, orchestral, unified, in which each individual contributes in order for a communal experience to take place.'

characterise communalism require distinct individuals who are willing to express these tenets.

In consequence, just like communitarian egalitarianism, Akans have multitudinous proverbial expressions to that effect. The following are some examples of proverbs that intimate the place of individuality in the Akan community: For instance, 'The clan is like a cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appear huddled together, but which would be seen to stand *individually* when closely approached' (Appiah *et al*. 2007:67; Gyekye 1995:158, 1996:47; Blay 2009:24).[163] The proverb establishes that the presence of the cluster (Akan family, with its concomitant sense of communalism) does not imply the submergence or obliteration of *the individual* tree (the individual). Individuals express distinct personalities. The following aphorisms explain the import of the above: 'All men's thoughts are not alike,' and 'All people have heads, but their heads are not alike' (Appiah *et al*. 2007:204) or 'All heads are alike but the thoughts in them are not the same' (Opoku 1997:19).

It is pertinent to note that allowing space for individuality has both merits and demerits. And depending on where the pendulum swings, it could either enhance communalism or breed individualism. When proverbs on communalistic and individualistic values are juxtaposed, one discovers a precarious relationship that exposes the deep-rooted individualistic proclivities in the Akan social order. The following adages exemplify the problem: 'A tree is not a forest (Or one/a big tree does not constitute a forest),' (Opoku 1997:82; Apt 2000:225) and 'The clan is like a cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appear huddled together, but which would appear to stand *individually* when closely approached' (cf. Appiah *et al*. 2007:67; Gyekye 1995:158, 1996:47; Blay 2009:24). The first one teaches that the human being is not self-sufficient, therefore, needs a community to become 'a forest (reach their goals or be complete)'. The second proverb indicates that even if this 'tree' finds itself in a cluster of trees, constituting a forest, it only appears huddled together when seen from afar but stands *individually*. Hence, 'The clan is (mere) a multitude,' meaning that 'there are no specific and reliable persons to turn to for the

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[163] This maxim is translated differently by various authors. Blay (2009:24), for instance, translates as: 'The clan is like a forest. When you are outside, it is dense; when you are inside, you see that each tree has its place.' However, they express the same thought.

fulfilment of one's needs' (Gyekye 1996:47-48). Thus, everyone must be responsible for what they want to become ('Life is as you make it'; Gyekye 1996:48).

The portrayal of the family in these proverbs is noteworthy because of what it reveals about the Akan community concept. Accentuating the significance of the family unit is one of the distinct characteristics of African societies (Gyekye 1996:75). The emphasis emanates from the roles that traditional African communities, including the Akans, assign to the family. They perceive the family as blood relatives whose genealogy is traceable to a common progenitor and held together by obligations to each member (Gyekye 1996:75). This mutual obligation requires that communalistic values – interdependence, solidarity, care, reciprocity, and mutual helpfulness – find their most heightened and extemporaneous expression in this institution (Gyekye 1996:75). Arguing along those lines, Nukunya (2016:63) identifies three functions of the traditional family: procreation, socialisation, and economic cooperation. He asserts that there is economic cooperation in the family, allowing members to contribute to making a living (Nukunya 2016:65). Therefore, to suggest that 'there are no specific and reliable persons to turn to for the fulfilment of one's needs (the clan is a multitude)' is paradoxical and antithetical to Akan ideations on a family. It exposes a colossal cultural failure. Even though Gyekye (1996:49) suggests that the adage points to the value of self-reliance, this explanation alone is not satisfactory (cf. Gyekye 1995:161; 1996:48-49). Indeed, he admits that the maxim denotes that Akans exaggerate the relevance of the clan (Gyekye 1995:161). Hence, though the multitude is not amorphous or fictitious, there are no specific and reliable people to turn to address your needs because it appears huddled together, but members stand *individually*.

Akan proverbial expressions reveal what could account for this: the concept of personal responsibility. Most of the adages enumerated as expressing a sense of responsibility seem to point to a sense of individualism. Consider the proverbs, for instance, each of us protects his head, and it is by individual effort that we can struggle (Gyekye 1996:48; Appiah *et al*. 2007:275). The meaning of the first one is that each man cares for himself first (Appiah *et al*. 2007:275). The implication is that the individual's interest takes precedence over the group's interest. The second maxim reveals how prioritising individual interest affects the group. Gyekye (1996:48) explains that the word 'head' denotes fortunes, interests, and goals.

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According to him, the adage underscores the role of individual effort in reaching our goals or fulfilling our needs. He indicates further that the phrase (we can struggle) refers to competition (or the effort required to fulfil individual goals) and that African social thought recognises it.

Even though encouraging the need for individual efforts is noteworthy, recognising competition in African (or Akan) social thought is problematic; it is at variance with the tenets of collectivism. A community that allows competition or contest to fulfil individual goals produces competitors instead of partners. Cooperation flourishes more in an environment where community members partner with one another. But competition disrupts social harmony (cf. Malina 2010:22). As a result, there could be attempts to outsmart one another. Hence, 'If fish eats fish, then it grows fat' (meaning, we climb by pushing down others (Appiah *et al*. 2007:104). Thus, in the end, what should trigger a sense of personal responsibility breeds selfishness and exacerbate the tension between communalism and individualism. When people cannot find reliable persons to benefit from the chain of interrelationships in a community that prides itself on being communalistic and resort to competing with one another, the balance between communality and individuality tilts more in favour of individualism (Opoku 1978:11).

Finally, many things militate against the tenets of collectivism. These factors unveil the substratum of the individualistic proclivities in the Akan social order. One of these is the Akan thoughts on the value and acquisition of wealth. As already highlighted, some proverbs indicate that the Akan accentuates the worth of human beings above all material things. For instance, it is a human being that counts; I call upon gold, it answers not; I call upon cloth, it answers not (Opoku 1997:10; Gyekye 1996:190; Danquah 1968:193); A human being is more beautiful than gold/money (Opoku 1997:12; Gyekye 1996:25), and man is more important than money (Appiah *et al*. 2007:201). Yet, in some instances, they suggest otherwise. Whereas some make wealth the most pertinent thing in life, others seem to put human value and wealth on a pedestal – a disposition that blurs the line concerning what the community considers valuable. For instance, the paradox of affirming the worth of human beings above material possessions and yet, classifying money as the ultimate possession in life create ambiguity (cf. Gyekye 1996:98-99). Some maxims also indicate that money can make up for the absence of family and friends if you are rich. For

example, 'the brother of a single person is money' (Appiah *et al*. 2007:19). The proverb equates money with family – human beings and the only milieu where communalistic values find their highest expression. The characterisation of money and the comparison between money and family in these aphorisms stem from the materialistic or acquisitive elements in the Akan character, something many scholars overlook (cf. Gyekye 1996:99). The characteristics of materialism, coupled with the concept of personal responsibility, blur the line between appreciation of the worth of collectivism and individualism.

Other possible factors of individualistic propensities are urbanisation and economic challenges (Abraham 2010:14; Gyekye 1996:51; Howard 1986:28). These two are inseparable; urbanisation can occasion cultural changes, causing the subservience of traditional communal values to individualistic tendencies because of the pristine socio-economic conditions in the cities (Gyekye 1996:51; Abraham 2010:14). Commenting on the impact of urbanisation on communalism, Abraham (2010:14) correctly notes:

> Again, all African countries have experienced urbanization and technological expansion. These are processes which have brought with them influxes of populations from the country into the cities. These movements have disrupted the protective connections and the certitudes which generate the bonds and fellowship of rural life. The material facet of rural life, including property systems, and relations to land and labour; the institutional facet of rural life, including customs, ritual, political and social relations; the value facet of rural life, including ethics, religion, art, and the aspirations and wisdom which they enshrine: everything falls, in different degrees, into abeyance in the face of such mass population movements.

He argues further:

> Urban Africans and Africans, trained for urban living, think, learn, work, conceive their hopes and aspirations within a new belief system which comes with its own axioms and postulates, its own norms, and its own ethic. In consequence, problems of the individual psyche, problems of the relations between individuals, problems relating to the responsibilities of individuals to the group, and the individual's attitude to nature, indeed the very idioms of interpersonal discourse,

are deprived of the context of traditional cultures, and arise like outcroppings of rock in a bed of sand (Abraham 2010:16).

Given the materialistic character of the Akan social order, evident in their concept of wealth and wealth acquisition, urbanisation with its concomitant economic situation is more likely to provoke individualism. Because of these circumstances, maintaining a balance between being communalistic and individualistic is not easy (Gyekye 1996:51; cf. Abraham 2010:16). Thus, the community tilts more in favour of individualism. These elements expose the tension between communalism and individualism and conditions militating against the foundation of communitarianism in the Akan social order.

4.3.5   Other issues

Many other issues reveal why the Akan Christian needs something beyond his culture to revitalise the sense of communitarianism plagued by materialistic elements and individualistic proclivities due to factors such as urbanisation and economic conditions. As previously described, the Akan community concept hinges on the value and worth of humans as theomorphic beings because it defines the brotherhood of humanity, the naturality of community and how a human being must be treated (cf. Gyekye 1995:19-20; Opoku 1997:11; Appiah *et al*. 2007:201). Thus, the Akan conceptual scheme stresses the intrinsic worth of a human being and the universalisation of the family of God. The proverb, 'humanity has no boundary,' espouses this idea (Gyekye 1996:22, 27). Yet, in praxis, some Akan Christians set boundaries in some spheres of their life. One widely known example is marriage. They prohibit their children from intermarriages in the Ghanaian context on tribal grounds. The irony is that some of them allow their children to marry citizens of foreign nations – Europeans and Americans especially – for economic reasons and the joy of having mixed-race descendants. It affirms what has been discussed previously – the acquisitive elements in the Akan character (cf. Gyekye 1996:99). It can also be attributed to individualistic tendencies because individual interests occasion these things.

Moreover, Gyekye (1996:29) notes another paradox in the Akan character: the coexistence of the appreciation of human worth and that twin evils – domestic slavery and human sacrifice prevalent in some communities decades ago. These

evils are at variance with the Akan appreciation of the intrinsic worth of a human being. Given that the appreciation of the value of a human being is the substratum of Akan communalism, domestic slavery and human sacrifices raise issues about whether collectivism exists purely in theory, praxis, or both.

Against this background, Akan believers need something outside their traditional epistemology about the community concept that will help to revaluate and revitalise their cultural values challenged by individualism, materialism, and urbanisation. Given that Akan Christians believe in the transformative power of the word of God and that communalism is also a theological and missiological value, they can rely on the Johannine community concept because it allows them to critique, challenge and transform the situation. Consequently, the subsequent chapter engages some of the cultural values in the text and Akan reality through an intercultural reading.

Chapter 5

Intercultural reading of the Johannine concept of community

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter focuses on the final step of the methodology, that is, an intercultural reading, an approach to African biblical interpretation. Given the ongoing desire to enculturate the Bible through intercultural exegesis, many exegetes who study the Bible in the African context employ the term on different levels. For instance, Ukpong (1995:6) considers intercultural reading as an "interactive engagement between the biblical text and a particular contemporary sociocultural issue where the gospel message serves as a critique of the culture, or the cultural perspective enriches the understanding of the text." Gatti (2017) employs the term in her dialogic hermeneutics, considering the text and culture as partners of a dialogue from which a call to action arises, addressed to the believing community. It is akin to how Ossom-Batsa (2014) employs the term in his communicative approach. Therefore, in the awareness of the application of intercultural exegesis on different levels, this study follows the definition of Loba-Mkole (2008:1347-1359). He refers to intercultural reading as the constructive dialogue between an original biblical culture and a receptive audience. Thus, the study employs intercultural reading as a constructive dialogue between the Johannine and Akan community concepts.

The study employs this intercultural exegesis because it recognises that the interpretation of the Bible is incomplete until the text meets the reader. The theoretical foundation of this idea is the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer; it proposes a fusion of the horizon of the reader and that of the text (Gadamer 1989:304-305). In his view, understanding emanates from a fusion between the reader's preconceptions and the text. Similarly, when Akan Christians read the Johannine community concept, there is a fusion of horizons: Akan preconceptions about communalistic values and the cultural values or *modus vivendi* of the community of God in John. Since Akan Christians and John belong to different cultures, the fusion or dialogue between the two concepts is intercultural, allowing

the gospel message to critique the culture or the cultural perspective to enlarge and enrich the understanding of the text (cf. Ukpong 1995:6).

5.2   THE CALL TO ACTION IN THE TEXT

From the narrative analyses in Chapters 2 and 3, the understanding that emanates from the study is that John casts the believing community as a panacea to its religious and sociocultural problems. As the divine remedy to these maladies, the narrative characterises the believing community as culturally collectivistic. There are three reasons why God requires the disciples to be communalistic: the composition, character and calling of the believing community.

The formation of the believing community entails an engagement between two cultures: divine and human. The eternal community engages people in a collectivistic society through the incarnation. The interaction between the two communities culminates in incarnating, exegeting the ideal community, and inviting the human community to participate in the 'social' Trinity (cf. Grenz 2000:112). The Logos who was with God the Father from eternity becomes flesh to incarnate and explicate the concept of a community of God as the only authoritative expositor (Jn 1:1-18). The objective (as explained in Chapter 1) is to invite the human community to participate and mirror its divine purpose. Thus, those who accept the invitation enter the kingdom of God through spiritual birth, becoming children of God (Vincent 2009:49; Morris 1995:87; cf. Keener 2003:403). They become part of an inclusive community constituting Jews and Gentiles, united in Christ, the Vine (Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993). Thus, the group can be described as a universalised and collectivistic community, given that it entails translating people from diverse communities into a unified body with one community identity (cf. Ngewa 2003:17).

Moreover, the community's character is communalistic. As the paradigm, the community of God has its peculiar culture, prescribing and proscribing certain attitudes to those who enjoy the grace of participating in it. The analyses of selected narratives and the narrative development of the theme indicate that John characterises the relationship between Father and the Son as communalistic. To cultivate that culture, the disciples' involvement in the community of God conditions a lifestyle that reflects their identity and opposes values at variance with the character

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of the community they represent (cf. Ridderbos 1997:523; Köstenberger 2004:464; Carson 1991:525; Brodie 1993:485). The purpose of such values is to enable the believing community to fulfil its calling.

The disciples have a calling to incarnate the divine community (cf. Jn 13:34; Jn 15:12, 17). The vine metaphor ties the character of the community to its calling. The metaphor teaches that abiding in the Vine makes the individuals members of society: the community of God (Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993). In this community, members have a calling to be fruitful. Being fruitful, in this context, includes the fruitfulness of Christian life or mission as *living* (Ridderbos 1997:522). It is a life that reflects the communal values experienced in the community of God (cf. Brodie 1993:483; Keener 2003:1004; Ridderbos 1997:520; Moloney 1998a:64). In the farewell discourse, Jesus highlights unity, love, service, care, reciprocity, and communality as examples of these values.

In the awareness that inculturation allows the gospel message to critique a particular contemporary sociocultural issue, and the interpreter's preconceptions enlarge the understanding of the text, the subsequent discussions focus on how Akan Christians can appropriate these cultural values to revitalise and redefine their communalistic values through the prism of the concept of community in John in an intercultural reading (cf. Ukpong 1995:6).

5.3 INTERCULTURAL EXEGESIS

From the exegesis of the Johannine and Akan community concepts, the reader discovers that they share some commonalities: they affirm that the community label is a derivative of the quality relationship people demonstrate in their interactions with members of their group. They are also collectivistic cultures. Consequently, they reveal that a communalistic culture must manifest features such as unity, love, service, care, reciprocity, and communality. However, the difference is that whereas Akan communalistic values focus on personal gains, the other derives its impetus from the eternal community and paradigm from what Jesus demonstrated. The acquisitive character of Akan cultural values stems from their purpose: to fill the lacuna created by the insufficiency of the human being. Thus, they derive their impetus from the benefits gained through the reciprocity in collectivism. However, the community of God exists to fulfil a divine mandate. Therefore, even though its

cultural or communalistic values bring mutual benefits to the community members, the aim is to reflect God – incarnate its values, testify about the community, and continue the salvific work of Jesus and the Spirit. It, thus, raises the standard and redefines community life. Given that the study focuses on Akan Christians, the intercultural reading, which considers the interplay between both cultures, allows them to critique and transform their values to reflect the community of God.

Generally speaking, values are qualities and direction of life required of human beings to epitomise in their behaviour (Pilch & Malina 1993:xiii; cf. Gyekye 1996:35). Thus, communalistic values are those qualities underpinning and guiding the behaviour that ought to exist between individuals who live together in a community (Gyekye 1996:35; cf. Pilch & Malina 1993:xiii). In the Akan culture and believing community in John, unity, love, service, care, reciprocity, and communality are examples of these communal values. Hence, the subsequent section engages these values interculturally.

5.3.1   A united community

5.3.1.1   The Akan ideation of unity

In the Akan conceptual scheme, unity is one of the communalistic values that stress their appreciation for the worth of the community. In the discussions on the place of the person in the Akan community concept, it was indicated that the community does not subsume individuality because Akans hold that though humans are social beings, they exercise personal will and identity (Gyekye 1996:47). Thus, Akans understand unity as distinct individuals operating in harmony.

Furthermore, the Akan concept of unity receives its impetus from the benefits it produces. Thus, it raises the question of the possibility of upholding these tenets in the absence of personal interests. Proverbial expressions that espouse Akan ideation of unity legitimise these concerns. The adage that focuses on lessons drawn from the functions of a broom (symbol of unity) is an example of how personal benefits sustain unity in Akan thought. The proverb states: when you remove one broomstick, it breaks easily. But when combined, they are unbreakable (Boakye 2018:36). The proverb contrasts the strength of a collection of broomsticks with a single rib. It reveals that in a group, broomsticks are unbreakable, especially with the hand. But they are fragile when isolated. The lesson is that there is strength in

numbers: thus, being united benefits the individual member of the community, not just the community (Boakye 2018:36). The communicative force of the proverb becomes even more perspicuous when situated in its cultural context. Traditional Akan communities manufacture brooms from the ribs of the leaflets of palm trees. For the broom to sweep rubbish effectively, irrespective of its weight and size, they tie together a sizeable number of ribs to accomplish the task through their collective strength. But when one attempts to perform the same chore with a rib of the leaflet of a palm tree, it will either break or cannot sweep that quantum of refuse from that compound within that time limit. The implication is that working in unison benefits the individual and the group.

Other proverbs that stress the significance of unity affirm that the benefits of a community of action that unity occasions are the motivation for unity and define the Akan view of unity. The reason is that Akans appreciate this communal value because of the insufficiency of the human being (see Appiah et al. 2007:203; Opoku 1997:12; Gyekye 1996:37; Danquah 1968:193). The inadequacy of a human being requires that he cooperates with others to achieve his purpose (cf. Opoku 1997:11; Gyekye 1996:45). Thus, adages like one finger cannot lift a thing (like the broom); and if a person scraps the bark of a tree for use as medicine, the pieces fall to the ground, emphasise the notion that unity of action is a prerequisite for mutual benefits and accomplishment of anything worthwhile and extraordinary (Opoku 1997:13, 17, 83; Gyekye 1996:37).

This characterisation of unity can enrich and enlarge the understanding of oneness in John; it enhances appreciation for the role of oneness in the eternal community's incarnation of the ideal community concept and the significance of unity to the believing community's role in that mission. John ties oneness in the divine community to the collaborative works of its members (Jn 10:38; 14:10; cf. Jn 5:17-20). Additionally, he situates the prayer for unity in the original and future believing communities in a missiological context – their mission to the world (Jn 17:20-22). The Akan concept deepens the meaning of the Johannine unity concept because it espouses the importance of unison for accomplishing tasks and, therefore, helps to understand it. For instance, the proverbs above – concerning the impact of the collective efforts of fingers and the leaflets of the palm trees united as brooms – give the reader an informed understanding of the narrative context of the

oneness prayer; they help to appreciate the Johannine significance of making unity a prerequisite for witnessing, demonstrating how the bond of unity allows Christians to accomplish this worthwhile mission (cf. Opoku 1997:13, 17, 83; Gyekye 1996:37). They also illustrate how Christians can remain unbreakable and fulfil their mission amidst hostilities or persecutions (just like how united leaflets of a broom overcome obstacles to perform their role as a natural concomitant of unison).

However, the Akan concept of unity poses several challenges for the Akan community concept. It makes personal and reciprocal benefits the motivation for building a united community. Thus, rather than unite for human fellowship, community members might naturally become attached to people based on personal interests when a society makes accomplishments the purpose of unity. Therefore, many may connect with people whose contributions can help them accomplish their goals, not with individuals incapable of rendering any significant assistance in their area of interest. The implication is that human relationships become a means to an end, not the cultivation of a sense of communalism. The ripple effect is that it might be uncommon to expect unity if it does not culminate in fulfilling personal interests.

Most importantly, placing benefits above enjoying communalism for the sake of humanity defeats the purpose of belonging to the Akan community because it contravenes Akan tenets of communalism. For instance, maxims that explain the Akan belief that the human being is worth more than material gains emphasise that depicting human beings as beautiful implies that community members should enjoy human beings just for being humans and nothing else.[164] However, from the above, the contrary is the case; what counts in praxis is not always the human being but what that individual contributes to advance the life of the one he partners with or community member.

Against this background, the Akan Christian seeking an informed understanding of a united community can read John for the character of unity worthy of believers because it contains Jesus' redefinition and illustration of what this entails and provides a paradigm for contextualisation. Finally, its applicability to the Akan

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[164] It is a human being that counts; (Opoku 1997:10; Gyekye 1996:190; Danquah 1968:193); man is more important than money (Appiah et al. 2007:201), and a human being is more beautiful than gold/money (Opoku 1997:12; Gyekye 1996:25).

believing community emanates from the fact that Jesus makes the implication of the paradigm he delivers to the messianic community a prerequisite for future believers (cf. Jn 17:20-22).

5.3.1.2 The revelation and transformation that John provides

The Johannine concept of unity offers insights that can transform the Akan Christian community into a society that reflects God's purpose of creation. Thus, it is expedient for the Akan reader to note the theological foundation established by Jesus as the substratum of unity to appreciate the theological import of the concept in John. Explaining the theological foundation for unity among members of the community of God, Jesus employs the term "one," given its theological potency, to promulgate the unity between him and the Father and its implications for the community (cf. Jn 10:30; Jn 17:11, 21-22). Since unity is a theological value that the believing community must imbibe from the eternal community, its theological import can only be appreciated when it is situated within its narrative context, considering the oneness statements.

In John, the oneness statements emerge from interactions between Jesus and the Jewish leaders and his farewell prayer for the disciples (cf. Jn 10:30; Jn 17:11, 21-23). Explicating his relationship with the Father to the Jews, Jesus posits that he is one with the Father (Jn 10:30; cf. Jn 17:11, 21-23). Having been accused of blasphemy because of this assertion, he restates his claim, indicating to the Jewish interlocutors that he is in the Father and vice versa (Jn 10:38). Analysing these statements allows the reader to appreciate the Johannine elucidations on unity in the Godhead and its reverberations on the culture of the believing community. Thus, the subsequent discussion situates the statements within John's narrative context for their theological import.

In the prologue, John establishes how the concept of ontological equivalence and some communal attributes function inextricably to portray the relationship between the Logos and God as a community (cf. Jn 1:1-2). Employing the phrase, ἐν ἀρχῇ, he promulgates that the Logos and God (the Father) enjoy eternality and coeternity and are, therefore, ontologically equal (cf. Jn 1:1). The Greek preposition that describes the character of the relationship (πρὸς) also distinguishes between the Logos (the Son) and the Father, indicating that the Father is not the Son and vice versa (Harris

2015:18-19; Ridderbos 1997:24; Vincent 2009:34-35; Mounce 1993:27; Borchert 1996:106; Kanagaraj 2013:1-2; Voorwinde 2002:32). However, John ties the personal distinctions in the Godhead, coupled with coeternity and ontological equivalence to an intimate relationship to justify its communalistic character (cf. Jn 1:1-2; Vincent 2009:34; Harris 2015:18; Kanagaraj 2013:1; Keener 2003:369; Morris 1995:70; Borchert 1996:103; Tenney 1997:64).

Consequently, the interpretation of the oneness statement can only be complementary (not contradictory) to the idea of eternal distinctions already underscored, given the impact of the prologue on the themes in John (cf. Carson 1991:394). Thus, their oneness and the perichoretic relationship they enjoy do not denote the sameness of persons. The Jewish ecclesiastical authorities did not interpret the communicative force of the statement as sameness of persons; they understood his oneness with the Father as ontological equality with God (Jn 10:33; cf. Harris 2015:202-203). It is in line with the concept of mutual penetration (being in-one-another) that the perichoretic union denotes unity of being (Köstenberger 2004:431), a relationship that allows the individuality of the eternal distinctions to be maintained while sharing in the life of each other (cf. McGrath 2001:325; Carson 1991:494; Bauckham 2007:251). As a term, 'one' denotes two things: singularity (or individuality) and unity (Bauckham 2015:19). However, in the community of God, both meanings converge; unity requires a unification of two or more distinct individuals.

The implication is that unity is one of the intrinsic values of the community born out of ontological unity, not a tool to fill the lacuna created by inadequacies. The Father and the Son demonstrate unity because they are united in being – it is one of the two compatible sides of the eternal God (Borchert 1996:106; cf. Grenz 2000:112). Their union establishes ontological equality as the reason for participating in the life of each other and unity as a natural concomitant of being one in essence. It further suggests that unity should be the *modus vivendi* of beings who enjoy ontological equivalence, not a means to an end. They were ontological coequals eternally before collaborating to create the world (cf. Jn 1:1-3). Thus, their functional unity is only an outflow of what existed ontologically or a manifestation of what is compatible with the divine nature. The oneness of will and task, a unity of purpose producing a community of actions, proceeds from this (cf. Carson 1991:394-395). Jesus

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attributes the functional unity he enjoys with the Father – his works and words – to his ontological unity and mutual interpenetration with the Father, considering them as products of divine partnership (Jn 10:38; 14:10; cf. Jn 5:17-20).

Similarly, the imitators of the community of God must bear these marks in their expression of unity as a theological and communal value (cf. Carson 1991:394). Thus, Jesus reveals that unity in the believing community is analogous to the community of God (Jn 17:11, 21-22; cf. Carson 1991:568). In the farewell prayer, Jesus prays to the Father for the disciples that they will be one just as he and the Father (Jn 17:11, 21-22). The Greek word (καθὼς) is both causative and comparative, affirming that divine unity is the cause of Christian unity and that the believing community is analogous to the community of God (Harris 2015:293; cf. Carson 1991:568). What relationship exists between the divine and human communities to warrant the comparison?

Akin to the meaning of oneness of the eternal community, John does not imply the sameness of persons in his applications of the term to the relationships that must characterise the believing community. Such a description would be antithetical to the oneness theology in John, given its application to the community of God and the fact that the believer's goal is to participate in the mission of Jesus: incarnating the eternal community (cf. Jn 10:33; Harris 2015:202-203; Bauckham 2015:26). The kind of unity required of them is akin to the community whose interest it represents (Carson 1991:568). Bauckham (2015:26) affirms that in line with the Johannine theology of the community of God, the term concentrates on the unity of persons, not the singularity of persons. In the farewell discourse where Jesus promulgates unity as a theological value, for instance, he often addresses the disciples employing the second person plural, indicating the plurality of persons (For example, Jn 13:12; Jn 15:3-12). Further, he likens the disciples to the community of God (cf. Jn 17:11, 21-22; Carson 1991:568). Thus, what Jesus requires from the disciples are cultural values redolent of the eternal community – that they imitate the unity existing between the Father and the Son (cf. Jn 17:11, 21-22).

Therefore, in Johannine theology, oneness is the unification of distinct ontological coequals into one body with a unity of purpose. The ontological unity stems from how God incorporates believers into the community. John indicates that membership

is not by blood (οἳ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων) nor by the will of the flesh (οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς) nor by the will of man (οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς) – an indication that natural birth does not give the individual the authority become a member of this community. It is critical because natural birth defines national identity or nationality. In a status-conscious social system such as the first-century Mediterranean world, status is a concomitant feature of natural procreation (cf. Malina 1993:107; Keener 2003:468). Permitting human reproduction as a means of entry is tantamount to allowing the factors that produce social classifications to continue. Spiritual procreation proscribes unity based on social standing because it ushers all believers into a new status despite their social status (Morris 1995:87) or identity (Van der Watt 2000:182). It redefines community as a group of people joined together primarily on the grounds of ontological equivalence (τέκνα θεοῦ), enjoying an intimate familial relationship with God, and sharing in the community life of God (Van der Watt 2000:182; cf. Keener 2003:403). It is a relationship centred on the "community of nature," allowing believers to participate in the divine nature (Vincent 2009:49; Morris 1995:87), that is, the life of the 'social' Trinity (Grenz 2000:112, 1998:49; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2; Bauckham 2015:48). Consequently, their interpersonal relationships mirror the oneness of the Trinity and not the dictates of their societies plagued by social classifications.

Just like the community of the Trinity, ontological equality must define functional unity – the oneness of will and task. Rather than considering functional unity merely as an instrument for accomplishing personal goals, community members must see their ontological equivalence as the common denominator and need for cooperation. In God's community, ontological unity translates into the oneness of purpose (cf. Jn 10:38; Jn 14:10; Jn 5:17-20; Carson 1991:394-395). John traces Jesus' words and works to his ontological equality with the Father and the relationship of mutual penetration or unity, providing a paradigm for the believing community (cf. Jn 10:38; Jn 14:10; Jn 5:17-20; Carson 1991:394-395). Given that the members of the believing community are part of the community of God and exist to incarnate it, their concept of unity is akin to its paradigm: translating ontological equality into the unity of purpose.

What is the significance of the unity of purpose for the historical and the Akan disciples? In the narrative context of the prayer, Jesus ties the oneness of the

believing community to their participation in the divine activity of *sending* or mission as *going* (Jn 17:18, 20-26). In John, the sent are witnesses who testify about the community – John the Baptist (Jn 1:7-8, 15; Jn 3:26; Jn 5:33), Jesus (Jn 3:11; Jn 8:18), the disciples (Jn 15:27; Jn 17:20), and the Spirit (Jn 15:26). As elucidated in the participatory role of the believing community, believers have a responsibility to witness to expand the community (Carson 1991:159; cf. Talbert 2005:86; Köstenberger 2004:453). The foundational principle of genuine Christian expansion is witnessing (Carson 1991:159; cf. Talbert 2005:86). Therefore, John calls the disciples and Akan Christians to unity, given that it is a necessary provision for a productive and God-pleasing mission (Borchert 2002:197). Moreover, since the creation of the believing community was by divine unity, its sustenance requires the oneness of the human community called to participate in the mission. Thus, Akan Christians must see unity as a prerequisite for witnessing and employ it in this divine mandate.

Mission as *living* is the other aspect of the binary character of mission in John, where God requires unity from the believing community in their relationship with one another. It is a paradigm set by God. John portrays the Father and the Son as distinct ontological coequals preexisting in unity and demonstrating functional unity as a natural concomitant of ontological unity (cf. Jn 1:1-5). Similarly, being disciples requires the believing community to imitate God. Whereas witnessing is their responsibility to the world, being united is their duty to each other. Thus, the oneness of the disciples also entails living in unity with each other (cf. Jn 17:11, 20-22). Jesus makes it a prerequisite for the believing community of all generations by praying this prayer for the successive communities of believers (cf. Jn 17:20-22). The implication for every believing community is that unity is a mark of obedience to the Lord, fulfilment of their communal obligation, and testimony of imaging the community of God. When this becomes the motivation, personal benefits and interests do not determine and contaminate the kind of unity undergirding interpersonal relationships.

5.3.2   Loving as a community of God
5.3.2.1   Love in Akan epistemology

Love is one of the communalistic values in the Akan culture that John challenges Akan Christians to revisit. Akans distinguish between natural love between parents

and children and brotherly and sexual love between couples (Ackah 1988:56-57; Opoku 1997:77-78). They regard love as the greatest virtue (Gyekye 1996:70; Opoku 1997:77). Hence, the proverb, "when charity comes and passes by, nothing comes after" (Gyekye 1996:70; Opoku 1997:77). Consequently, some Akan proverbial sayings reveal what they identify as a mark of love or differentiates genuine from spurious love. Money induced love is, for instance, considered spurious. Proverbs such as *odo wonni no sika* (true love is not motivated by wealth) and "love that money buys can also be destroyed by money" expose the dangers and inauthenticity of love prompted by wealth (cf. Opoku 1997:77).

Conversely, the preponderant character of genuine love espoused in Akan epistemology or proverbs is that it impels sacrificial giving (Ackah 1988:29, 56-57; cf. Opoku 1997:78). One of these adages is, for instance, *odo nti na Esiamma kaw nam mono mu* (It is out of love that Esiamma bit a raw fish into two) (Ackah 1988:29, 56-57; cf. Opoku 1997:78). The proverb portrays someone dividing raw fish with her teeth (instead of a knife), disregarding the risk of getting injured by bones because of her willingness to give. Understanding the etymology of the name further clarifies the import of the proverb. Esiamma means a parsimonious or tight-fisted person called Esi (Ackah 1988:29; Opoku 1997:78). Thus, the act reveals how love motivates stingy people to give sacrificially, something uncharacteristic of their nature.

Furthermore, Akan proverbs accentuate reciprocal love. Thus, Akans say, "if someone loves you, love him in return" (Opoku 1997:77). The maxim implies that for the Akan, love is reciprocal. Thus, the one who loves expects reciprocation. And the individual who receives love understands the responsibility that accompanies it.

Though this characterisation of love has its challenges, one of the benefits is that it enhances Akan believers' understanding of love in John. It places Akan Christians in a better position to appreciate critical aspects of love in John – sacrifices impelled by love and reciprocation of love – than some other cultures because these attributes share commonalities with the Johannine community concept and, thus, they approach John as people whose ideations and preconceptions of love include sacrifices and reciprocity of love. Their prejudices about love can become a point of departure and prism through which the reader analyses the Johannine love concept.

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Nevertheless, there are problems with the portrait of love presented in Akan philosophy. The adage above suggests that love can motivate a stingy person to give sacrificially. However, reconciling parsimoniousness with love-motivated or sacrificial giving is challenging. The reason is that a tightfisted person is naturally selfish and uncharitable. Therefore, stinginess and love or sacrificial giving are contradictory; it implies demonstrating what is uncharacteristic of the individual. Consequently, if a tight-fisted person sacrifices, he may have an ulterior motive or expectation of reciprocation.

Furthermore, the Akan ideation of love promulgates conditional love. For instance, the adage on reciprocal love (if someone loves you) makes love 'conditional' in the Akan setting because it obliges an individual to reciprocate love only upon reception. It is noteworthy because many consider Akans a communalistic society and love as their greatest virtue (Gyekye 1996:70; Opoku 1997:77). Therefore, it is legitimate to expect that demonstrating love would not be predicated upon conditionalities. Enjoining community members to reciprocate love on the condition that they receive has further consequences. Members will only show love to those who love them. Additionally, they would not be obliged to initiate love. Given that love in this context is predicated upon reception, the absence of initiation creates the possibility of a society where encountering love is not a certainty, as the individual may or may not experience it.

Moreover, between wealth and love, Akan proverbs blur the line concerning what is more important. Proverbial sayings that espouse the value of wealth and love express a similar thought about the two. Akans say, "when charity comes and passes by, nothing comes after" (Gyekye 1996:70; Opoku 1997:77). Similarly, "when wealth comes and passes by, nothing comes after" (Gyekye 1996:98-99). The ramification is that whereas wealth is the ultimate possession, love is the greatest virtue in Akan thought (Gyekye 1996:70; Opoku 1997:77). The materialistic elements in the Akan culture and the recognition of wealth-impelled love make it legitimate to think of the difficulty of striking a balance when wealth is involved.

Given the challenges enumerated above, how can Akans who embrace Christianity build a culture that reflects their mission as a community of God? One of the possible ways indicated by the NT writings is by imbibing the idea of community that Jesus

explicates and promulgates in John. Therefore, the subsequent section explores the Johannine ideations of love by analysing the call to love.

5.3.2.2   The call to love

John invites the Akan Christian reader to learn how to demonstrate love as members of the community of God. The Johannine narrative, therefore, offers a paradigm to epitomise. It commences with understanding the love relationship between the Father and the Son. There are various reasons why it is very pertinent to analyse the character of love in the community of God as the reference point of any academic autopsy on this communal value. The community concept with its concomitant values in John is divine. The believing community also exists to imitate the community of God. Moreover, love flows from the divine to the believing community (cf. Bauckham 2015:31-32). Hence, it is expedient to trace its thematic development from the eternal community, the originator of the community concept.

The discussions on the love relationship in the ideal community concentrate on how Jesus and the Father relate, describing their union primarily as a loving relationship (cf. Jn 3:35; Jn 5:20; Jn 10:17; Jn 14:31; Jn 15:9-10; Jn 17:23, 24; 26). In this relationship, Ridderbos (1997:519) correctly notes that the Father is the source and energy of love. Thus, John defines the Father's love as the substratum of his actions connected to the contextualisation of the community, employing two verbs – δίδωμι (to give) and δείκνυμι (to show) (cf. Jn 3:16, 35; Jn 17). The narrative traces the incarnation of the Logos to the Father's act of giving (Jn 3:16). Love is also the reason for putting all things into the hands of the Son (Jn 3:35; Jn 13:3; Jn cf. 17:7). Beyond these, in the farewell prayer, Jesus enumerates many things the Father gave him – authority (Jn 17:2), believers (Jn 17:2, 6, 9, 24), words (Jn 17:8), the divine name (Jn 17:11-12), and glory (Jn 17:22, 24). The application and interconnectedness of love and giving characterise giving as a natural constituent element of love. It marks the loving community customarily as a society where giving is a lifestyle.

Furthermore, John relates love to the verb δείκνυμι, another love-motivated act of the Father (Jn 5:20). The verb is critical because of its connection to the functional unity of the Father and Son. Jesus proclaims that his works are products of paternal love – that is, he only accomplishes or replicates what the Father does and shows him out

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of love (Jn 5:19-20). In the narrative context, ἔργα refers to judgment and life-giving prerogatives (Jn 5:20-30; Morris 1995:278; Moloney 1998b:178, 182; Köstenberger 2004:183; Harris 2015:113; Beutler 2013:154). However, in John, Jesus employs ἔργα to refer to his vocation and everything he does (Jn 4:34; Jn 5:36; Jn 17:4; Painter 207:242). By extension, what the Father unveils to the Son includes all the above, and as the obedient Son, Jesus does what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19). The adverb ὁμοίως (likewise) indicates the identity of *action* (functional unity) culminating in perfect parallelism between the Father and the Son (John 5:19; Vincent 2009:135; Carson 1991:252). In other words, it unites the functions so that the product is both the work of the Father and the Son – one work (Kysar 1993:43; Thompson 2001:77-78; Barrett 1978:260; Ngewa 2003:88). Thus, it would be accurate to surmise that the connection established between love and the verbs (δείκνυμι and ἔργα) demonstrate that in the community of God, love initiates, undergirds, underpins, and contributes to the functional unity of its members given that the entire process originates from it (cf. Jn 5:19-20).

Moreover, whereas the Father is the source and energy of love, the Son reciprocates the Father's love, creating an environment of mutual love. John discusses the reciprocity of love between the Father and Jesus in the prologue and the narrative (cf. Jn 1:1-2, 18; Jn 14:31). The prologue commences on the note that the Logos enjoys communion and intimacy with God (Vincent 2009:34; Harris 2015:18; Kanagaraj 2013:1; Morris 1995:70; Borchert 1996:103; Tenney 1997:64; Wuest 1983:209) and ends with the indication that the Son εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, an expression that depicts mutual love (Carson 1991:134; cf. Köstenberger 2004:49). The narrative reiterates this idea, revealing Jesus' love for the Father and demonstrating his commitment to the love relationship through perfect obedience to his commands out of love (Jn 14:31; Jn 15:9-10; Köstenberger 2004:456; cf. Harris 2015:269; Keener 2003:1003). By these, he affirms the reciprocity of love discussed in the prologue.

Additionally, John casts love as an eternal communal value in the community of God. The eternality of the reciprocity of love is implicit in the grammar and theology of the Johannine prologue and narrative. The prologue sets the discussions on the community of God in the context of eternity, evoking Genesis 1 and employing the imperfect tense (which shows the continuing existence of a state) to establish that

the relationship between the Son and the Father predates the creation (Jn 1:1-2; cf. Köstenberger 2004:25, 115; Borchert 1996:102; Ngewa 2003:11; Vincent 2009:24). The prologue situates the loving relationship that the community members enjoy in this milieu through the Greek preposition (πρὸς) and asseverates that the Son is in the bosom of the Father (Jn 1:1-2, 18). It means that the Son enjoys unparalleled and timeless intimacy with the Father (Jn 1:1-2, 18; Köstenberger 2004:49; Voorwinde 2002:32; Vincent 2009:60). In the farewell prayer, Jesus affirms the eternalness of the Father's love by declaring that it precedes the foundation of the world (Jn 17:24). The clues from the prologue and narrative suggest that John ties the community's existence to eternal and reciprocal love, thereby rendering them coeternal and inextricable.

Before proceeding further, it is pertinent to recap some conclusions drawn from love in the quintessential community. The study has established the nature of love characterising the community of God, revealing that it provokes giving and fosters functional unity because of transparency. It also contends that though the love between the Father and the Son is mutual, the Father's love is the substratum and origin. Finally, it affirms the eternality of love. These points are noteworthy because love flows from the ideal community to the disciples, and the paradigm is Jesus' love, a reflection of the Father (Carson 1991:520; Köstenberger 2004:456; Barrett 1978:475). Hence, it is critical to note the expression of love in the community of God for its reverberations on Jesus' model of love for the believing community.

Jesus' love for the believing community replicates what he enjoys with the Father. He patterns his love for the disciples after the eternal love relationship; therefore, it shares similarities with the attributes of the quintessential community (Jn 15:9-10; cf. Carson 1991:520; Köstenberger 2004:456; Barrett 1978:475). Akin to the divine model, the relationship between Jesus and the believing community portrays an inextricable connection between love, giving and showing (Jn 15:13-15; cf. Jn 17:26). However, it is vital to note that whereas the two expressions (δίδωμι and δείκνυμι) are not employed explicitly, the narrative maintains their imports: showing and giving because of love.

The farewell discourse reveals two acts of Jesus prompted by love: offering his life for the disciples and giving them an elevated status (Jn 15:13-15; cf. Jn 17:26). The

narrative makes love the motivation for surrendering his life for his friends – what he labels greater love (Jn 15:13; cf. Harris 2015:269; Barrett 1978:476; Carson 1991:521-522; Beasley-Murray 1987:274). Laying down one's life for a friend is the ultimate sacrifice friends can make for each other (Ridderbos 1997:520). Thus, by making this the paradigm and epitomising it through his death, Jesus defines the character of love required from his friends.

Moreover, John ties love to the elevated status of the believers. From the gathering and inception of the community of faith, John describes the members as disciples of Jesus. However, in the farewell address, the people who were hitherto classified disciples become friends of Jesus (Jn 15:13-16; Köstenberger 2004:459; Beasley-Murray 1987:274; Barrett 1978:477; Brodie 1993:483). The change of identity to friends is a more elevated status (Köstenberger 2004:459; Schnackenburg 1982:110; cf. Esler & Piper 2006:91). He gives them this new status as an act of love (Beasley-Murray 1987:274; Barrett 1978:477; Brodie 1993:483; Keener 2003:911).

In the context of this elevated status or friendship is transparency (or *showing*). The reader discovers that the new relationship occasions the transmission of heavenly information to the believing community, just as the narrative makes the intimate relationship in the ideal community a prerequisite for the transparent disposition of the Father towards the Son (Harris 2015:270; Carson 1991:522-523; cf. Ridderbos 1997:521). Jesus, just like the Father, withholds nothing from his friends but shares with them everything he heard from the Father, finalising his exegesis on the Father (Jn 15:15; Jn 17:26).

Most importantly, the narrative flow of the theme indicates that the goal of Jesus' exegesis and demonstration of love to the believing community is to prepare them to imbibe the culture of his community (cf. Jn 1:18). It is evident in the love commandment issued to the disciples (cf. Jn 13:34; Jn 15:9, 12, 17). Jesus commands the community of faith to remain or abide in his love (Jn 15:9). In the theology of John, this refers to the love of the Father – love originates from the Father (cf. Jn 15:9; Ridderbos 1997:519). Moreover, Jesus affirms this, making the love of his Father the model of what he demonstrates: he loves just as the Father (Jn 15:9). Thus, the imperative implies continuing the chain of love initiated by the Father and replicated by the Son (cf. Jn 15:9). Hence, it furnishes us with a hermeneutical

key for understanding the import of the love command – that it must be interpreted through the prism of the eternal relationship since Jesus makes his imperative to the believers analogous to his obedience to the commandments of the Father (cf. Jn 15:10). In the familial relationship, Jesus keeps the commands of the Father out of love (Köstenberger 2004:456; cf. Harris 2015:269; Keener 2003:1003). Thus, the ramification for the disciples is to remain in Jesus' love by obeying his commands as the expression of love, not by compulsion, because obedience grounded on coercion is not love (Ridderbos 1997:519; Carson 1991:520; cf. Moloney 1998a:64). Conversely, love devoid of adherence to commands is uncharacteristic of the community of God because the two are mutually dependent (Barrett 1978:476).

Additionally, the command clarifies the character of love expected from the believing community. Remaining in the love of Jesus is to love one another as he has loved them (Jn 13:34; Jn 15:9, 12, 17). The Greek word καθὼς has a comparative and causative force (Harris 2015:293). However, in the context of love, Jesus employs it preponderantly to compare the quintessential and believing communities, making love (and other communal values) in the former the paradigm for the latter (cf. Jn 13:34; Jn 15:9-12; Jn 17:11). Thus, loving one another as he has loved them denotes demonstrating what is comparable or analogous to the ideal model Jesus promulgates to the believing community. The comparison with its concomitant responsibilities allows the believers to see a new portrait of love.

From the above, there are traces of qualities in the community of God that Jesus requires Akan Christians to mirror in their mission of replicating the cultural values of the community of God. For instance, the command to love one another implies that the community members demonstrate mutual love (cf. Köstenberger 2004:457; Carson 1991: 521; Ridderbos 1997:520; Beasley-Murray 1987:274; Barrett 1978:476). It evokes the reciprocity of love in the community of God (cf. Jn 1:1-2, 18; Jn 14:31). In the divine portrait, community members love and receive love in return. Thus, the command to mirror the eternal paradigm mandates all members to love and be loved. It is also pertinent to note that the paradigm of reciprocity of love does not promulgate conditional love. Jesus neither enjoins believers to demonstrate love as a response to the reception of love nor gives specific conditions to warrant it. He only commands everyone to love just as he loves (Jn 13:34; Jn 15:12, 17). Therefore, the community members must exhibit love out of obedience to the divine

imperative, whether they enjoy reciprocation of love or not. The implication is that John invites Akan believers to incarnate the love of Christ in their cultural expression or become an extension of his humanity.

In addition, John calls Akan readers to revaluate the principles that undergird functional unity. The text challenges Akans to make love the undergirding and necessitating factor of functional unity like the quintessential community, not cooperation instigated by human inadequacy and benefits. Whereas the former encourages fellowship, the latter employs human relationships for self-aggrandisement.

Love is the undergirding and necessitating factor of unity in the quintessential community. It promotes the level of transparency necessary for a community of actions exhibited in incarnating the community of God (cf. Jn 5:19-20). Since the community anthropomorphised its concept through functional unity, its continuance rests on the collaborative work of the witnesses. Indeed, the advancement of incarnating God's idea of community necessitates the participation of a community of witnesses that obeys the foundational principle of Christian expansion by a repeated process of testifying about Jesus to others (cf. Jn 15:27; Carson 1991:159; Talbert 2005:86). It is a role that gives them the privilege of participating in a mission initiated and sustained through functional unity of the community of God and so, need this quality to perpetuate it. Therefore, akin to the quintessential community, imbibing the love culture of the Father and Son stimulates functional unity necessary for the mission.

Beyond this, the narrative reveals what must characterise the interpersonal relationships of the members of the Akan Christian community: the character of relationships demonstrated by community members should reflect Jesus' example since their mission demands replicating him. In this regard, John states that Jesus loves his own (Jn 13:1). The phrase (his own) evokes what Jesus reveals in the Good Shepherd metaphor about his relationship with his disciples (Jn 10:1-21). Here, Jesus identifies them as his (own) sheep (Jn 10:3). Evoking this concept, John employs the expression (his own) as a designation for the disciples of Jesus as the object of his love (Kruse 2003:279; Harris 2015:242; Köstenberger 2004:395; Carson 1991:460-461). Loving his own makes it the shared responsibility of Akan readers to

love their own, something that the love command reiterates (Jn 10:1-21; cf. Jn 13:34-35; 15:12, 17).

Another issue revealed in this example is the extent of his love and its reverberations on the community of God (cf. Jn 13:1). The theological import of this love for the believers lies in the interpretation of the Greek word phrase εἰς τέλος. It could be adverbial or temporal (Kruse 2003:279; Harris 2015:242; Carson 1991:460-461). If considered adverbially, the focus is on the intensity or quality of love: uttermost love (Harris 2015:242; Kruse 2003:279; Carson 1991:460-461; Ridderbos 1997:452; Keener 2003:899). When taken temporally, the communicative force is that Jesus loved them to the end of his life (Kruse 2003:279; Harris 2015:242; Carson 1991:460-461; Keener 2003:899). In his relationship with the disciples, he demonstrated both – he loved to the uttermost and the end of his life (Kruse 2003:279; Ridderbos 1997:452; Köstenberger 2004:402; cf. Harris 2015:242; Keener 2003:899). Not only did Jesus love to the end of his life, but love also ended his life. He sacrificed his life for love. Uttermost love is sacrificial love. He epitomised this as the Good Shepherd laying down his life for his sheep or a man for his friends.

Therefore, the text calls Akan Christians to redefine their concept of sacrificial love. They must replace conditional love with greater love. It entails loving the community members to the end: loving to the uttermost or expressing reciprocal sacrificial love (Barrett 1978:476; Carson 1991:521-522; cf. Beasley-Murray 1987:274). By demonstrating mutual sacrificial love, they incarnate the culture of the ultimate community with giving as a paradigmatic feature. A community in which members reciprocate sacrificial love will not struggle with demonstrating all other forms of giving that are not at variance with the culture of the community of God, given that this is the ultimate, greater love. Further, their obedience to the command identifies them (not make) as his friends (cf. Jn 15:14; Harris 2015:269; Carson 1991:522) and evokes the image of the self-sacrificial love of Jesus for sinful humanity (cf. Jn 13:35; Ridderbos 1997:477).

5.3.3 A call to godly service and care
5.3.3.1 Serving and caring in Akan thought
Given that Akan epistemology recognises the insufficiency of the human being, the culture promotes mutual care and service as essential tools for realising individual

and collective goals. Opoku (1997:17), Ackah (1988:52-53) and Gyekye (1996:188-189) outline the following proverbs to that effect: "The left arm washes the right arm, and the right arm washes the left arm," "The tortoise says, the hand goes, and a hand comes," and "The reason two deer walk together is that one must take the moth from the other's eyes." The fundamental principle espoused in these proverbial sayings is that cooperation and mutual helpfulness exemplified through reciprocal care and service are critical conditions for individual welfare (cf. Opoku 1997:17; Ackah 1988:52-53).

These aphorisms demonstrate how the Akan concepts can contribute to enhancing the Johannine ideations of care and service; they reveal the necessity and benefits of reciprocity of service and care to communal life. John does not elaborate on or state the social benefits of these communalistic values; he only indicates that they are divine imperatives that the believing community must obey and characterise. However, the Akan concepts specify that and demonstrate that serving and caring for each other is necessary for the survival and progress of the individual and community because human beings are not self-sufficient. Thus, the Akan believing community's preconceptions of these communal values can enrich the understanding of the Johannine concept.

Even though the purpose of these values is to complement one another, individual interests drive the Akan concepts of care and service. It presupposes that the persons performing these 'communalistic' acts concentrate on their interests. It does not mean that one cannot find genuine care and service among the Akans, but that the community members generally tie reciprocal care and service to personal benefits. The premise for this conclusion can be extrapolated from the character of the above proverbs.

The first two proverbs have some commonalities. Employing how human hands function during bathing, the adages demonstrate how reciprocal service and care culminate in mutual helpfulness in the Akan culture. It is pertinent to note that the relationship is between members of a pair of hands, not the hands and another body part. The latter presents a scenario where reciprocity is most unlikely. For instance, the head cannot reciprocate the services of the hands after washing it. However, the first scenario, the intent of the adage, warrants reciprocity: the two hands bathe each

other because complete cleansing requires mutual care and service. Thus, they are conditional services grounded on personal benefits, not a genuine concern for the other.

The third adage is analogous to the first two. It also presents a relationship between two ontological coequals (two deers) with a shared interest. It paints a portrait of service tied to personal interest and the expectation of reciprocation: a deer serves and cares for another deer in return for the same benefits. The implication is that it is not common to see members be of service to those below them or people who cannot meet their needs, knowing that it would not occasion any substantial gain.

5.3.3.2   Service redefined

Analysing these cultural values through the prism of John, the reader recognises that Jesus reveals how Akan Christians can transform their concept and practice to reflect their mandate as a community of God through his exemplary lifestyle (cf. Jn 13:3-17). For example, in the foot-washing narrative, he epitomises, redefines, and calls the believing community (Akans included) to emulate what he reveals and exemplifies (cf. Jn 13:3-17). Ridderbos (1997:458; cf. Carson 1991:462; Keener 2003:907) affirms that in the symbolic act of the foot-washing, Jesus lays down the foundation on which alone the future fellowship of the believing community as the church in the world could rest. Thus, the activity and the perlocutionary force of the illocutionary act it occasioned is the substratum of reciprocal service in the community of God.

However, to appreciate the implications of the symbolic act, paying attention to the narrative context is critical. John makes Jesus' awareness of his departure to the Father the motivation for his action (cf. Jn 13:4-5). Knowing the limitedness of his time on earth, he prepares to establish how the community must live when he is physically absent (cf. Ridderbos 1997:458; Carson 1991:462; Keener 2003:907). Therefore, he arose from the table, took off his outer robe, tied a towel around himself, and poured water into a basin to wash and wipe the feet of the disciples (cf. Jn 13:4-5). Peter, the first person Jesus decided to wash his feet with, contested initially by questioning the motive behind the act (cf. Jn 13:6). The question was legitimate, given the cultural connotation of foot-washing: it was the duty of servants, a status shunned by Jews and Gentiles (Köstenberger 2004:402; Carson 1991:463;

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Ridderbos 1997:460; Keener 2003:904; Bauckham 2015:62-63; Harris 2015:243). It is pertinent to note that though Gentile servants performed the task of foot-washing, wives and children did it sometimes (Harris 2015:243; Talbert 2005:199; cf. Keener 2003:903; Carson 1991:461-463). However, what is happening is different because Jesus and the disciples do not fit into the scenarios above. There is no literary attestation in Jewish or Greco-Roman sources suggesting that superiors washed the feet of inferiors (Köstenberger 2004:405; Harris 2015:243). Thus, Harris (2015:243; cf. Carson 1991:462) asserts that only the expression of the deepest love, the love that makes one willing to be a servant to the beloved, would warrant the performance of the most humiliating acts of service.

The love that prompted Jesus' willingness to take the form of a servant and serve the disciples is evident in the process that culminated in the foot-washing, not just the act of washing their feet (cf. Jn 13:4-5). By his actions – laying aside his outer garment and girding around his waist a towel for this menial task – he demonstrates humility to serve (cf. Carson 1991:463; Harris 2015:243; Köstenberger 2004:404; Keener 2003:908). Beyond this ubiquitously held view, most scholars opine that the phrases (lay aside and take up) echo the words (I lay down my life and take it) of Jesus in the narrative of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:17-18; Ridderbos 1991: 458; Talbert 2005:199; cf. Köstenberger 2004:405). If so, John ties the foot washing to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, painting a portrait of sacrificial service (cf. Köstenberger 2004:405).

Further, performing the servile act of foot-washing affirms the point above. By this, Jesus accomplishes what had no historical antecedent for the disciples, thereby reversing the role (Köstenberger 2004:405; Harris 2015:243). For the disciple, executing any act of service to a master is an obligation (Köstenberger 2004:405). However, it excluded dealing with the feet since that was too degrading for a free person (Keener 2003:911). It explains why Peter resisted initially (Jn 13:6). The Greek construction accentuates and clarifies the force of the implication of the decision to wash the feet of Peter and its concomitant astonishment. By juxtaposing the Greek emphatic pronoun σύ to μου and commencing the sentence with Κύριε and ending with πόδας, the narrative indicates indignant emphasis: Jesus, their Lord and master is performing what the society classified ignominious for even disciples to do for their masters (cf. Keener 203:908-909; Carson 1991:463; Harris 2015:243;

Ridderbos 1997:459; Köstenberger 2004:405). The narrative later affirms the humility demonstrated by Jesus in his appropriation of the servile act for the disciples through the inversion of the order of κύριος and διδάσκαλος (cf. Jn 13:13-14). As Harris (2015:245) correctly notes, it highlights the humbleness of the κύριος in acting as a δοῦλος in the foot-washing.

Finally, the primary purpose of inverting the order of κύριος and διδάσκαλος is to indicate the perlocutionary effect of the servile act on the communal life of the disciples – make it a model that will define the future interpersonal relationships of the disciples and subsequent believing community members (Jn 13:14-15). The culture considered it honourable for leaders to motivate followers by the virtues they epitomise (Keener 2003:904). Similarly, the imports of ὑπόδειγμα and καθὼς in the narrative suggest that Jesus does that and even more. The Greek term ὑπόδειγμα denotes a pattern or an example (Köstenberger 2004:405; Carson 1991:467; Harris 2015:245). Furthermore, several Second Temple texts and Greco-Roman writings associate the word with virtues (Köstenberger 2004:405). Consequently, Jesus motivates the disciples to demonstrate virtues worthy of their calling by his example through the foot-washing act. The Greek conjunction (καθὼς) affirms that there is a connection between the pattern and its motivating effect on the disciples: it indicates not only similarity and devotion to a standard but also the substratum on which this discipleship rests and the source from which it gains its strength (Ridderbos 1997:463).

In this narrative, what Jesus models and motivates the community to imitate through the performance of the menial task is the humility for service (Ridderbos 1997:462; Harris 2015:245; Keener 2003:902; Carson 1991:467-469). Hence, the command to imitate his example is not to wash the feet of one another as a required act of devotion but to emulate the servanthood of Jesus through humility, mutual service, and renouncing every form of power game in the community (Harris 2015:245; cf. Ridderbos 1997:462; Carson 1991:467-469).[165] Jesus does not only want the community to know, but he also wants them to practice. He demands that orthodoxy

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[165] Talbert (2005:202) who argues that the import of the narrative is that the disciples forgive one another those daily trespasses that characterise one human being's infringement upon another. However, he accepts that the widely held view is that humility and service are the focus (Talbert 2005:201).

begets orthopraxy or that orthopraxy accompanies orthodoxy concomitantly. It means that their practice must match the teachings they received and not be at variance with the divine will (cf. Harris 2015:245).

Similarly, Jesus calls the Akan reader to practice what he epitomises in the narrative, making it a model for their interpersonal relationships with the community members (cf. Jn 13:14-15). It entails demonstrating the willingness to serve one another sacrificially in humility and love, not with the expectation of benefiting from the reciprocation of service.

5.3.3.3   Pastoral care

John identifies pastoral and reciprocal care as two ways of caring for community members that can transform the Akan Christian's cultural concept of care. Whereas pastoral care defines how leaders of the believing community must cater for the people under their leadership, the latter concentrates on the responsibility of the members towards each other. Nonetheless, both are inextricable, given that reciprocity is their point of confluence or convergence. To restate, leaders are first, community members, thus, beneficiaries of reciprocal care.

In the epilogue of John, the encounter between the resurrected Jesus and his friends offers a teachable moment for an informed understanding of the Johannine concept of pastoral care (cf. Jn 21:1-17; Carson 1991:678; Ridderbos 1997:666; Talbert 2005:272). After directing the disciples to harvest a multitudinous number of fishes after a fruitless night, Jesus invites them for breakfast (Jn 21:3-12) and initiates a conversation, asking Peter slightly divergent questions on three occasions (Jn 21:15-17). The Greek construction of the first question has generated two main views (ἀγαπᾷς με πλέον τούτων;). Since other gospel narratives declare that Peter had boasted of a greater loyal love for Jesus than his friends before the crucifixion, scholars generally agree that the phrase (more than these) refers to the disciples (Jn 21:15; Morris 1995:768; Köstenberger 2004:597; Carson 1991:675-76; Harris 2015:343; cf. Ridderbos 1997:665; Keener 2003:1236). For these scholars, Jesus is asking if Peter still stands by his confession, considering the present action – fishing. Furthermore, some scholars assert the possibility that Jesus had Peter's profession also in mind when asking the question, given the narrative context (Talbert 2005:271; Keener 2003:1236; Harris 2015:343). However, the possibility that the

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question is redolent of the need to prioritise Christ over earthly food as in the Bread of Life image cannot be overlooked, since the breakfast precedes it (Keener 2003:1236).

Why does Jesus question Peter's love for him repeatedly? There are two possible reasons: the betrayal of Peter and the role of love in the assignment given to him after his reinstatement. The betrayal of Peter is one of the reasons for repeating the question (cf. Carson 1991:678; Ridderbos 1997:665; Köstenberger 2004:595; Harris 2015:343). He betrayed Jesus thrice; therefore, his restoration must reflect the number of times he demonstrated that perfidious character (see Carson 1991:678; Ridderbos 1997:665; Köstenberger 2004:595; Harris 2015:343). Most importantly, however, his reinstatement, with its associated charge, makes it more reasonable to surmise that the question was necessary because of the responsibility given to Peter concerning the community (Jn 21:15-17; Keener 2003:1237; Carson 1991:678; Köstenberger 2004:596).

To give the charge its proper context, Jesus employs the metaphor that is one of the most recurring portraits for the care of the church – the shepherd imagery (Ridderbos 1997:666). Both the Old and New Testaments are awash with the shepherd metaphor. It is rooted in the portrayal of God as shepherd of his people (Ridderbos 1997:666). Given that it originates from God, the Old Testament establishes a relationship between devotion to God, the source, and caring for his flock (Ezr 34; Jr 3:15; cf. Köstenberger 2004:597). It explains why the New Testament and John portray only Jesus, the incarnate Word, as the Good and Chief Shepherd (cf. Jn 10:11-18; Ridderbos 1997:666). Therefore, employing the imagery implies evoking John 10 to draw attention to something patterned after the concern or care of the Good Shepherd for the believing community (cf. Jn 10:11-18; Ridderbos 1997:666). It explains Jesus' questions to Peter before entrusting to him such responsibilities given that its execution flows from his love for the Lord (cf. Carson 1991:678; Harris 2015:343; Köstenberger 2004:596).

As a natural consequence of his love for Jesus, Peter must demonstrate pastoral care for the community. To clarify what this entails, Jesus employs the verbs βόσκω (to feed) and ποιμαίνω (to shepherd) because jointly, they are redolent of the fullness of the task (Köstenberger 2004:597). By employing verbs and not nouns to

define the ministry, the focus is to work, not hold an office (Carson 1991:678). Consequently, the idea of Peter's elevation to pastoral primacy promulgated by some scholars because of this narrative rests on questionable assumptions (see Ridderbos 1997:666; Carson 1991:678-679; Harris 2015:343; Keener 2003:1237). Like the other disciples, Peter is also an undershepherd of Jesus (cf. Ridderbos 1997:666; Carson 1991:678-679; Harris 2015:343; Keener 2003:1237). As an undershepherd, the verb βόσκω denotes he is obligated to feed the flock (Keener 2003:1237; Harris 2015:343; Köstenberger 2004:597). Furthermore, his role entails performing the entire responsibilities of a shepherd, such as guiding and protecting the sheep as the verb ποιμαίνω denotes (Harris 2015:343; Keener 2003:1237). Thus, the two verbs are purposefully combined to stress the measure of attention required from Peter and pastoral care: the total or all-inclusive care of a shepherd (Harris 2015:343; Ridderbos 1997:666; Keener 2003:1237). Performing the functions of a shepherd, just like Jesus epitomised, is a call to utter self-sacrifice and potentially death, given that the work of the Chief Shepherd, the model for Johannine pastoral care, culminated in sacrificing his life for the flock (Jn 10:11, 15; Jn 21:18-19; Keener 2003:1237; cf. Talbert 2005:272).

Thus, the above portrait reveals that John invites the Akan Christian to view pastoral care through the prism of the revelations that proceed from the interaction between Jesus and Peter. In this, John projects pastoral care as a call to love and utter sacrifice. Leaders must recognise that pastoral care is a natural consequence of their love for Jesus (cf. Jn 21:15-17). John ties love for Jesus to the observance of his commandment (Jn 14:15). Consequently, loving Jesus is a prerequisite for the pastoral role, given that it entails fulfilling the command to feed and perform the total care of a shepherd. Finally, following the example of Jesus, Akan Christians must see pastoral care as a call to utter self-sacrifice.

5.3.3.4   Reciprocal care

Apart from pastoral care, the narrative addresses how members of the community of God must care for one another. This can be considered in two ways: examining the new relationship established at the foot of the cross and the interconnection between this and other communalistic values. John employs what transpires at the foot of the cross – a portrait of profound care – to define the new interpersonal relationships that must characterise the believing community (cf. Brodie 1993:547; Moloney

1998a:146; Ridderbos 1997:613; Keener 2003:1145). In the crucifixion scene, Jesus establishes a mother-son relationship between Mary and the beloved disciple, entrusting Mary to the beloved disciple as a mother and vice versa (Jn 19:25-27). The beloved disciple responds to this by taking Mary to his own home. Many interpret Jesus' words and the corresponding response of the disciple as the responsibility of caring for her (Harris 2015:316; Ridderbos 1997:613; cf. Barrett 1978: 552; Brodie 1993:547). Additionally, most scholars agree that the import of the narrative – caring for one another, applies to the believing community (cf. Brodie 1993:547; Moloney 1998a:146; Ridderbos 1997:613; Keener 2003:1145). Thus, as part of the universal community of God, John invites the Akan Christian to participate in the quality of interpersonal relationships Jesus establishes at the foot of the cross for the microcosmic messianic community – reciprocal care.

Another way of analysing how the community members must care for one another is by assessing how demonstrating the various communalistic values culminates in reciprocal care in the community of God. The established relationship between pastoral care, love, and service makes it increasingly conspicuous that demonstrating concern for community members is not an independent value. John connects it to other communal values, especially communalism, unity, love, and service. Thus, it is impossible to live in a united, loving community that demonstrates reciprocal service without witnessing the virtue of mutual care since the divine pattern and the command to replicate these communalistic values make its expectation natural.

In the first place, the entire concept of the community of God hinges on reciprocal care. Borchert (1996:106; cf. Grenz 2000:112) concisely and correctly notes that community and unity are two compatible sides of God. This affirmation implies that God exists as a community (Borchert 1996:106). The prologue clarifies what legitimises this union as a community by indicating that the distinct ontological coequals do not live independently but demonstrate community and unity (ontological and functional) through coeternity and the intimate union or communion they enjoy (cf. Vincent 2009:34; Morris 1995:70; Tenney 1997:64; Harris 2015:18; Kanagaraj 2013:1; Voorwinde 2002:32; Newman & Nida 1980:8; Keener 2003:369; Borchert 1996:103-106). The narrative also reiterates that these attributes characterise the community of God. The portrait of the community presented is

redolent of reciprocal care between the ontological coequals because of God's character and the values upheld by the community members. These factors make it impossible to assume that mutual concern is not inherent in the community members or implied in their coeternity, unity, and intimate relationship.

The reverberation of this conclusion on the Akan believing community is that the invitation to be part of the community of God is a call to participate in this communalistic life (Grenz 2000:112, 1998:49; cf. Kanagaraj 2013:2; Bauckham 2015:48). It explains the motivation for making the concept of community, unity, and love in the believing community analogous to the community of God (Jn 15:9-12; Jn 17:11, 21-22; cf. Carson 1991:568). Therefore, to exist as a community of God requires replicating this social life by imbibing its values, including caring for one another.

Moreover, a critical analysis of the communalistic values indicates that mutual love and care are intertwined. The study affirms the reciprocity of love in the eternal relationship of the Father and the Son, indicating that the Son enjoys communion and intimacy with God (Vincent 2009:34; Harris 2015:18; Kanagaraj 2013:1; Morris 1995:70; Borchert 1996:103; Tenney 1997:64; Carson 1991:134). Further, the narrative establishes that the Father is the source of love and that Jesus patterns what he demonstrates to the believing community after that fatherly love (cf. Jn 15:9; Ridderbos 1997:519). In the first relationship, love motivates giving and disclosure of the works of the Father to the Son (Jn 3:35; Jn 5:19-20; Jn 13:3; Jn 17). Contextualising this in the believing community, Jesus demonstrates love by giving the disciples an elevated status to warrant the disclosure of what he receives from the Father and the ultimate sacrifice – laying down his life for his friends (Jn 15:13; Jn 15:15; Jn 17:26; cf. Harris 2015:269; Barrett 1978:476-477; Carson 1991:521-522; Beasley-Murray 1987:274; Brodie 1993:483; Keener 2003:911). He presents this love as the model for imitation and commands a mutual demonstration in the believing community (cf. Jn 13:34; Jn 15:9, 12, 17). Given its character, the reader can infer that the idea of reciprocal care is inherent in the love command; anyone who can sacrifice his life for a person is showing that he cares. Moreover, Jesus, the model of love, applies a title to himself suggestive of care – the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn 10:11-18; Ridderbos 1997:666). He also interprets his sacrificial love through the prism of the holistic care of the Good Shepherd, making it impossible to detach care

from the greater love he requires the community to emulate (cf. Jn 10:11-18; Ridderbos 1997:666; Harris 2015:343; Keener 2003:1237).

Additionally, the narrative links reciprocal service to mutual care through love. There are two reasons to believe that love binds these communalistic values together – the portrayal of the model and the command to reciprocate what Jesus epitomised. Many scholars affirm that by indicating that Jesus laid down his garment to wash the feet of the disciples, John evokes the Good Shepherd narrative – a metaphor for care (Jn 10:17-18; Ridderbos 1991: 458; Talbert 2005:199; cf. Köstenberger 2004:405) – and ties the event to the crucifixion to make it an act of sacrificial service (cf. Köstenberger 2004:405). Furthermore, the foot-washing is an expression of the most profound love, given that only love can make an individual, most especially the Lord, perform the most humiliating acts of service for his disciples (Harris 2015:243; cf. Carson 1991:462). Secondly, John indicates that this sacrificial service, which originates from love, is an example for the community to replicate reciprocally (Jn 13:15). The relationship between the portrait of care, love and service requires the (Akan) community to revisit and reinterpret its concept of mutual love, service, and care through the prism of what Jesus established in John.

5.3.4 Reciprocity

5.3.4.1 Reciprocity in Akan culture

The principle of reciprocity is one of the communalistic values appreciated in the Akan community concept. The centrality of reciprocation is evident in its inextricable connection to other communal values – love, unity, service, and care. Tracing the correlation between reciprocity and communalistic principles in Akan epistemology and culture, one can find that the Akan community concept expects reciprocation in the context of love. In this regard, some adages are worth mentioning. One of them is, for instance, if someone loves you, love him in return (cf. Opoku 1997:77). Similarly, other maxims also affirm the Akan cultural view that communal living requires reciprocation of values. For instance, "the left arm washes the right arm, and the right arm washes the left arm," and "the reason two deer walk together is that one must take the moth from the other's eyes" support reciprocity of service and care.

Therefore, the benefit of this concept to John is the Akan Christian preconceptions of how reciprocity enriches the lives of the community members by complementing their insufficiencies to achieve what one party cannot, thereby culminating in enlarging the understanding of mutuality in John.

Furthermore, though the Akan culture appreciates reciprocation, it encourages positive mutuality (returning a good deed) rather than condoning negative reciprocity – endorsing any activity that seeks to repay evil with evil or makes evil a recompense for good (Ackah 1988:62; 75). Thus, Akan say do not pursue evil (Ackah 1988:62; 75). It is also pertinent to note that they do not advocate returning evil with good either.

Nevertheless, because reciprocity is a point of confluence for the various communal values, the challenges associated with expressing these communalistic principles affect Akan practice of reciprocity. For instance, the study has demonstrated that Akan proverbs, the compendium of inestimable information about the culture, promulgates conditional love, the condition of returning love upon reception. Consequently, members mostly show love to those who love them or do not feel obliged to initiate that process of demonstrating love. Thus, though the Akan concept of love encourages sacrificial and reciprocal love, not everyone is likely to enjoy it because of the above and other factors, such as the acquisitive elements in Akan culture, the recognition that wealth impels love and the difficulty of maintaining the balance between love and money. Further, since Akans regard love as the greatest virtue, any cultural delinquency has ripple effects on the Akan expression of other communalistic values (cf. Gyekye 1996:70; Opoku 1997:77).

Furthermore, this cultural failure affects the Akan concept of care and service. Akan epistemology teaches that the culture values reciprocal care and service. However, a critical analysis of Akan maxims on the subject reveals that these values are demonstrated more in the context of personal gains because community members generally tie reciprocal care and service to individual benefits. The resultant effect is that the desire to fulfil personal interests dethrones a genuine concern for the other or the community members, thereby turning what must be expressions of communalistic values into conditional service and care because of the expectation of reciprocation.

5.3.4.2 Reciprocity in a community of God

John makes reciprocity in the eternal community the substratum of the reciprocal relationship required of the human community. The portrait of the relationship between the Father and the Son presented in John shows the eternal distinctions demonstrating reciprocity in diverse ways. In the narrative, the intimate relationship between the Father and Son is reciprocal (Jn 1:1-2, 18). Thus, love is mutual though it flows from the Father (Jn 1:1-2, 18; Jn 14:31; cf. Ridderbos 1997:519). Reciprocity is evident even in the Johannine characterisation of unity; it suggests that the distinct ontological coequals participate in the life of one another (cf. McGrath 2001:325; Carson 1991:494; Bauckham 2007:251).

It is worth noting that John does not cast reciprocity as a panacea or remedy for the inadequacy of the members of the eternal society. The only portrait given is that it is an intrinsic and communalistic value characterising and legitimising the relationship between the eternal distinctions as a community. To state it differently, the undergirding principle of reciprocity demonstrated by the Father and the Son is love for communalism, not mutual benefits. Given that Jesus makes the tenets of reciprocity in the eternal community the standard for the believing community, this is necessary to note.

The call to participate in the life of the 'social' Trinity entails replicating the character of reciprocity epitomised by the eternal community. Therefore, Jesus employs the language of reciprocity (doing something for one another) in promulgating the application or contextualisation of the communalistic values. Given that Jesus applies the values that characterise the eternal relationship as the ideal concept of reciprocity to the believing community, he redefines reciprocity. He requires from the believing community reciprocal love (Jn 13:34; Jn 15:9, 12, 17), service (Jn 13:13-15), care (Jn 19:25-27) and unity (Jn 17:11, 21-22), values known to Akan Christians. However, since Jesus redefines these communalistic values, the rudiments of reciprocity, it has a ripple effect on the concept of reciprocity required of the Akan believing community. For instance, whereas mutual benefits inform the Akan expression of reciprocal love, service, care and unity, Jesus invites Akan Christians to demonstrate reciprocity as an expression of the love for communalism, not because of mutual benefits. Thus, he does not make the demonstration of communalistic values a requirement for reciprocation. In other words, he does not

command the disciples to love or serve in response to love or service. The command is to love and serve the community members whether the one who is loved or served reciprocates it or not. It is, nonetheless, legitimate to expect reciprocation because Jesus commands the community to remain in his love by obeying his commands (cf. Ridderbos 1997: 519; Carson 1991:520). Love and obedience are mutually dependent (Barrett 1978:476).

Furthermore, the first-century Mediterranean culture believes in the need to fulfil the expectations of other community members (Malina 1993a:68). They reveal these communal obligations, and members respond accordingly (Neyrey 1993:88). One of these is to seek the good of one's neighbour (Neyrey 1993:88). Therefore, since the command on reciprocation possesses these attributes – entails seeking the welfare of each other – one expects the believing community to approach adherence to the communalistic values as a collective responsibility, thus creating a chain of interdependence.

5.3.5 Communality

Discussing communality as one of the values that must characterise the believing community is vital because communal values presuppose or warrant a community; they find expression in the community context. Additionally, the goal of expressing these communalistic values – unity, love, service, reciprocity, and care – is to build a communalistic community. Moreover, the focus of the previous discussions is on how the theoretical and practical values guide the reader towards an informed understanding of the Johannine and Akan concepts of communalism. Hence, it is proper to conclude with a summary of how these values culminate in appreciating communalism in both cultures and the revelation and transformation John provides for the Akan believing community.

Given the impact of communal values on the character of communalism in a particular sociocultural context, it is legitimate to conclude that the Akan Christian needs to redefine communalism because of the gap between the theoretical and practical value and the impact of the acquisitive elements on Akan expression of unity, love, service, care, and reciprocity. Communal values grounded on the insufficiency of a human being and driven by personal interests and the material elements in the Akan culture defeat the purpose of communalism because these

traits are antithetical to the tenets of collectivism and breed individualistic propensities.

Therefore, John invites the Akan believing community to emulate the true character of communalism. In John, the call to communal living is divine. The narrative, especially the farewell discourse, reveals that God expects believers to live as a collectivistic society and not be individualistic. As this study has reiterated, this is the purpose of God for the human community – to participate in the social life of God (cf. Borchert 1996:106; Grenz 2000:112). Thus, the various symbols employed for the believing community point in this direction. For instance, the prologue indicates that believing culminates in a familial relationship with God as one of the τέκνα θεοῦ (Jn 1:12; Van der Watt 2000:166, 182). It is a relationship that allows believers to share in the community life of God (Van der Watt 2000:166, 182; cf. Keener 2003:403).

Consequently, participating in the social life of God is an invitation to mirror the character of relationships in the eternal community. One of the attributes of the community of God is that it is communalistic. Therefore, any community replicating God must epitomise this trait. Jesus employs two metaphors to accentuate this: the Vine and the temple. In the temple cleansing narrative, Jesus refers to his body as a temple, signifying the universalised community of God or the new place where God's purpose for universal communal worship transpires (cf. Köstenberger 2004:105; Brodie 1993:179; Barrett 1978:195). He employs the vine metaphor for a similar purpose. The metaphor denotes the new community of God constituted by believing gentiles and Jews (Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993). And the command to abide in the Vine implies remaining in the community of God (Jn 15:4; cf. Köstenberger 2004:449; Ridderbos 1997:516; Keener 2003:993). It stands to reason that God wants the believing community to coexist (in him) communally. It also justifies the communalistic values prescribed as imperatives for the believing community to embody.

However, communal living is not foreign to the culture of the Johannine community. An analysis of the New Testament reveals that the reader can only learn about people by their relationship to someone or something – to place, school, family, clan, and nation (Neyrey 1993:49-51, 88-89). Similarly, collectivism features prominently in the Akan ideations of community. The difference, however, is that John interprets

communitarianism through the prism of the eternal community and the model Jesus presented to the disciples. Hence, John characterises the Christian community as a society with a collectivistic social structure patterned after the community of God, proscribes individualistic tendencies, and promotes communalism. He requires community members to be united, in line with their divine mission and mandates the believing community to see collectivism as a *modus vivendi*, not a means to an end. Finally, the narrative requires love as the undergirding principle of communal values – reciprocity, mutual love, care, service, and communality.

5.4   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The reader concludes that Akan believers must fulfil their mission – incarnate the communalistic values of the divine community – like Jesus and live like the quintessential community. Incarnating God's concept of a community like Jesus entails loving, serving, and caring like Jesus. To love like Jesus, they must demonstrate love in praxis, not theoretically. Such love requires transparency (cf. Jn 15:15; Jn 17:26). It is inseparable from giving (15:13-15). In this context, it is a call to love to the uttermost and the end (Kruse 2003:279; Ridderbos 1997:452; Köstenberger 2004:402; cf. Harris 2015:242; Keener 2003:899). Such love requires loving their own (Jn 10:1-21; cf. Jn 13:34-35; 15:12, 17) and performing the ultimate reciprocal sacrifice of sacrificial giving (Ridderbos 1997:520; Barrett 1978:476; Carson 1991:521-522; cf. Beasley-Murray 1987:274).

Furthermore, being in a believing community entails serving like Jesus. John makes the service of Jesus a ὑπόδειγμα, a pattern or an example for believers (Köstenberger 2004:405; Carson 1991:467; Harris 2015: 245). The ὑπόδειγμα calls believers to sacrificial service (cf. Köstenberger 2004:405). As such, it requires humility for service, that is, 'getting down from the table, laying aside the outer garment and girding around our waist a towel to perform menial tasks' (cf. Carson 1991:463; Harris 2015:243; Köstenberger 2004:404; Keener 2003:908). However, this is only possible when there is love; the willingness to serve sacrificially is a derivative of love (Harris 2015:243; cf. Carson 1991:462).

Beyond this, the Akan believing community must characterise the caring nature of Jesus in exemplary leadership and the interpersonal relationships of community members. John's concept of pastoral care portrays the leader as a worker, not an

office holder (Carson 1991:678). Like Peter, leaders are undershepherds who emulate the Chief and Good Shepherd (cf. Ridderbos 1997:666; Carson 1991:678-679; Harris 2015:343; Keener 2003:1237). By its very nature, the leader's work is a call to utter self-sacrifice; it entails performing the total or all-inclusive care of shepherds (cf. Jn 10:11, 15; Jn 21:18-19; Harris 2015:343; Ridderbos 1997:666; Keener 2003:1237).

Also, the portrait presented by the community at the foot of the cross indicates that caring for one another is a communal responsibility (Jn 19:25-27; cf. Brodie 1993:547; Moloney 1998a:146; Ridderbos 1997:613; Keener 2003:1145). The commands of reciprocation of love and service reinforce this thought. The divine imperatives affirm that belonging to the community of God requires demonstrating characteristics that express the appreciation of the significance of community, culminating in the replication and reciprocation of values, such as love and service. The obedience to the commands makes it a corporate responsibility for Akan Christians to care for each other.

Therefore, the criticality of love is undeniable in the concept of the community of God, considering its place in the communalistic values; it is the cord that binds service and care together. As elucidated earlier, the pattern of service and care epitomised by Jesus are love motivated. Consequently, it is not surprising that Jesus accentuates the necessity of remaining in his love and reciprocating it. A loving community will naturally serve and care for one another. Therefore, the Akan believing community must recognise that it must operate all communalistic values in love to be different from its culture.

Furthermore, these values affirm that being a community of God entails living like the quintessential community: being collectivistic. Borchert (1996:106; cf. Harris 2008:68; Grenz 2000:112) perspicaciously and aptly notes that community and unity are two compatible sides of the eternal God. The implication is that God exists as a community of united, coeternal, and ontological coequals. Again, there is reciprocity in this relationship (cf. Jn 1:1-3; 18). Hence, a believing community demonstrates unity, mutuality, and communality as part of its calling. It is pertinent to note that in the theology of John, these are not independent but represent a community of interconnected communalistic values. Therefore, being a believing community

requires exhibiting these attributes. A group of individuals can be legitimately labelled as a community only if they are communalistic.

Chapter 6

Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

This Chapter concludes the study with a synopsis of the work and critical research findings, considering the research objectives and questions that shaped the study. It also recommends further and future research.

6.1 SUMMARY

'The concept of community in the Johannine gospel' is an intercultural reading of the community ideations of John and the Akans. The study emanates from the commonalities between the biblical culture and the Akan reality: the emphasis on communalism and the inability to incarnate the communalistic values of their respective cultures. Thus, the research aimed to explore how John addresses this sociocultural crisis and examine its ramifications for the Akan believer plagued by this sociocultural malady.

Consequently, the study implemented Ossom-Batsa's communicative approach as the theoretical framework. He proposes a frame of interpretation – a tripartite level – constituted by adherence to the text, attention to the call of action, and the interpreter's context. The study employed the Narrative Criticism proposed by Marguerat and Bourquin for the first – adherence to the biblical narrative to establish the communicative force of the community theme in John. Further, it analysed Akan proverbs for their preunderstanding of community (step 2). Finally, the study engaged the call to action in John in the sociocultural context of Akans in the intercultural exegesis to see how John helps the Akan believer transform their communalistic values and the questions the Akan culture poses to the text. Thus, the organisation of Chapters followed the progression of thought captured by the methodology of the study.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus preponderantly on the exegesis of the biblical culture, that is, the concept of community in John. Chapter 2 explores the community theme by analysing three selected narratives (Jn 1:1-18; Jn 5, Jn 15-16:3), laying a foundation to trace the narrative development of the concept of community in Chapter 3. The study considers the prologue as the substratum of the community theme and thus,

commences with its analysis. The analysis allows the reader to discover the origin, meaning, and characterisation of the Johannine community concept. Further, it guides the reader to ascertain the relationship between the incarnation of the Logos and his critical role in the explication and replication of the divine concept of community in the human community. It also unveils the invitation given to the human community and the appropriate response it must occasion. Finally, it prepares the reader for the exegesis of God – the divine community.

Furthermore, studying John 5 through the lens of the community theme culminates in appreciating the need for the explication and imitation of the divine community concept. John selects the marginalised (the paralytic) in the microcosmic community and the magnified (religious authorities) to demonstrate how the Johannine community failed to fulfil the divine intentions for its establishment. The Bethesda community fails to live by the religious-cultural values worthy of a religious community. The response of the custodians of the law – the Jews – to the healing and the exegesis on the eternal community it occasioned also discloses the exacerbated nature of the problem: the custodians of the law are neither willing to accept the incarnate Logos nor have the word of God abiding in them (Jn 4:38-40). The failure of the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities necessitates the introduction of a new community that imitates God.

Against this background, the Chapter concludes with the analysis of John 15:1-16:3 to establish the proposed solutions to the problem. In this regard, John employs the vine metaphor to demonstrate how Jesus presents the community of God as the divine remedy. The metaphor evokes the vine (a symbol of the old believing community) to depict an inclusive community of believers called to participate in the mission of the Logos – expanding the community of God through witnessing and contextualising its communal values in their culture, thereby becoming the cure for the religious, cultural, and social problems of the community.

Building on this foundation, Chapter 3 traces the narrative development of the community theme, focusing on narratives that develop the foundation and formation of the ideal (divine) community, expose the sociocultural maladies, and reveal the proposed remedy. Thus, the study analyses the foundation of the Johannine community concept, establishing the significance of the eternal relationship in the

prologue to the Johannine community concept. Further, it explores the conception and the mission of the community of God, revealing that John ties the narrative development of the believing community to its sociocultural malady, thereby exposing the root of the social, cultural, and religious problem. Given these challenges, the study explores the proposed remedy – the divine portrait of a community and the participatory roles of the eternal and believing communities in the incarnation of the ideal community paradigm.

Given that intercultural reading requires a biblical culture and a contemporary sociocultural context, Chapter 4 exegetes the Akan community ideations as the second partner of the intercultural exegesis. The examination of the Akan community concept reveals that though the community is amphibious (manifests both collectivistic and individualistic traits), the acquisitive elements in the Akan culture militate against the genuine expression of collectivism; they tie communalism to personal interests. Communalism, grounded on personal gains, sounds more like individualism because it focuses on the individual.

Therefore, Chapter 5 engages some cultural and communal values that emanate from the narrative analysis of John and the exegesis of Akan reality – unity, love, service, care, reciprocity, and communality. It explores the Akan Christian's preunderstanding of the subject and the challenges with the Akan concept. Finally, it challenges Akan believers to evaluate their communalistic values through the prism of what Jesus proscribes and prescribes for the members of the Johannine believing community as the divine response to the sociocultural problems in their milieu: the struggle with the incarnation of religious-cultural values.

6.2   CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed to explore the narrative development of the concept of community in John through narrative analyses of relevant narratives and examine its significance for the Akan community in an intercultural reading, using the communicative approach as the theoretical framework. It presents the summary of the findings below.

6.2.1   The community of God

The study aimed to investigate the relational dimension of community in the eternal community – the quality of interpersonal relationships between the eternal

distinctions – and its reverberations on the believing community (cf. Gusfield 1975:xv-xvi; Cohen 1985:12; Klink 2007:52). The findings indicate that John provides the reader with a different perspective on the scholarly labelling of community. In John, the community concept originates from the eternal community because they coexist coeternally in an intimate relationship (Jn 1:1-3, 18). The Johannine portrayal of the eternal distinctions legitimises their relationship as the first and only paradigm of community.

It also redefines a community as a group of people participating in the eternal community, not just demonstrating quality relationships. Consequently, John distinguishes creation (or the world) from the community of God, given that the definition restricts the community to a section of humanity (Jn 1:12-13). The participants are those who receive the Son or get born ἄνωθεν (Jn 1:12-13; Jn 3). The condition – spiritual birth – explains why not everyone who has gone through biological birth is part of this community. It also implies that anyone who fulfils the requirement – irrespective of race and gender – can be part of the community: it is the participation of children of God in the community of God (Jn 1:12-13). The implication is that John elevates the community concept above the anthropological view, making it a theological value.

The relationship between the anthropological and Johannine views is that they converge and diverge at some point. The convergent point is the relational dimension of community supported by the two concepts. However, the difference is that whereas the anthropological view makes the people or culture the determinant of quality interpersonal relationships, John makes God the paradigm. The implication is that it is possible to express 'quality' relationships without belonging to the community of God (the community concept presented by John); nevertheless, self-interests are often the motivation for such relationships (as the discussions on the Akan community concept have demonstrated). Furthermore, culture is dynamic; thus, with time, many factors affect cultures, drawing a line between the theoretical values and practices of a community. However, the culture required of the believing community is unchanging and time-tested; it is an eternal concept prescribed for all generations (cf. Jn 1:1-3; Jn 17:20-22). Further, God requires that believers dwell on the collective and missiological significance of living communally (Jn 13:34-35).

John enumerates various reasons as justification for these differences. The narrative clearly defines the character of relationships redolent of a community of God through what Jesus teaches and personifies. Thus, 'quality relationships' is not an ambiguous term but simply participating in the culture of the eternal community. John affirms that abiding in the Vine prescribes the lifestyle that must be evident in the community: they must demonstrate communal values experienced in God (cf. Brodie 1993:483; Keener 2003:1004; Ridderbos 1997:520; Moloney 1998a:64). It also establishes a relationship of mutual indwelling, giving them the impetus to meet this divine standard (cf. Jn 15:4-5; Köstenberger 2004:451; Ridderbos 1997:517; Harris 2015:267). It implies that the community of believers receives strength to demonstrate what God requires of them (mission as *going* and *living*) as members of the community of God, akin to the vine-branch relationship (Jn 15:4-5). Finally, demonstrating the values of the community of God is a divine imperative they obey in love (cf. Ridderbos 1997:519; Carson 1991:520; Köstenberger 2004:453).

6.2.2   The Logos' contribution to the incarnation of the community of God

The study aimed to explore the contribution of the Logos to the exegesis and incarnation of the eternal community. What does this mean? John employs three designations for Jesus in the prologue in this order: the pre-incarnate Logos (Jn 1:1-3), the incarnate Word (Jn 1:14) and the Son (Jn 1:18). He does not employ the Logos title after identifying him as the one who incarnated and dwelt in a human community. However, he sustains the characterisation of the Logos as the Son in the narrative and identifies him as Jesus. Thus, the focus is to examine the contributions of Jesus, the pre-incarnate and incarnate Word, to the incarnation of the eternal community concept.

The study indicates that the Logos' relationship with God makes the concept of the eternal community meaningful. The pre-incarnate Word's (Logos) coeternal relationship with the Father is the origin of the Johannine community concept: it defines what it entails to be a community (cf. Jn 1:1-5). The values characterising this eternal relationship – union, intimacy, fellowship, reciprocal love, and functional and ontological unity – legitimise the characterisation of the relationship as a community, furnishing the reader with an idea of what constitutes a community in John (Vincent 2009:34; Harris 2015:18; Kanagaraj 2013:1; Keener 2003:369; Morris 1995:70; Borchert 1996:103; Tenney 1997:64; Voorwinde 2002:32; Newman & Nida

1980:8). It further presents the prologue as a hermeneutical key for an academic autopsy on the community theme, given the impact of the prologue on the themes in John: it *tells* what the narrative *shows* (see Moloney 1993:24; Köstenberger 2013:44, 1998:87; Morris 1995:63; Carson 1991:111).

As the incarnate Word, his identity and relationship with God present him also as the only authoritative exegete of the eternal community (cf. Jn 1:18; Jn 3:13). Thus, John ties the exegesis of the community of God to the goals of the incarnation, revealing that ἐξηγήσατο encompasses in a glimpse the whole life of Jesus on earthly; therefore, the reader should read the narrative, a compendium of incalculable information about the community theme as his exegesis on the subject (cf. Harris 2015:39; Köstenberger 2004:50). John reveals that the declarations on the ideal community entail two things: his relationship with the Father and the relationship between the eternal and human society (cf. Jn 5:20-23; Jn 10:30; Jn 14:7-11; Jn 15). Whereas the former focuses preponderantly on his ontological and functional unity to the Father and the shared values, the latter entails the human participation in the community of God and its concomitant fruits worthy of the new identity (cf. Jn 5:20-23; Jn 10:30; Jn 14:7-11; Jn 15). Consequently, one of the contributions of the Logos to the incarnation of the community is that he exegetes the community as its sole authoritative expositor.

Additionally, through his earthly ministry, the divine purpose for the human community becomes clearer. For instance, he redefines the identity and sociocultural role of the community. Jesus reveals that God's purpose is an inclusive community constituted by both Jews and Gentiles or a universalised community of believers in Christ with the mandate of becoming a remedy to the sociocultural maladies of their communities (cf. Jn 2:1-11, 13-21; Jn 4, Jn 5:6-9).

Moreover, John links the incarnation to the conception of the believing community, making it part of the contributions of Jesus to the contextualisation of the community. The invitation to the human community that culminated in the conception of the believing community is the product of the incarnation (Jn 1:12-13; 35-42). The gathering of the first community affirms the entry requirements of the community of God stipulated in the prologue, allowing subsequent believers to understand how to become members of the community (cf. Jn 1:12).

Furthermore, through the incarnation, Jesus demonstrates the possibility of contextualising the values of the eternal society in the world and how the disciples must live as participants in the community of God. For instance, in the foot-washing narrative, he demonstrates the nature of reciprocal service that must characterise the community by washing the feet of the disciples and making that value a paradigm for emulation (Jn 13:3-17; cf. Ridderbos 1997:458; Carson 1991:462; Keener 2003:907). Additionally, he redefines love for the disciples through his death by demonstrating what it must impel – sacrificial giving – and commands them to imitate him through reciprocal love (cf. Jn 15:13, 17).

Most importantly, the death of Jesus is an essential component of the mission of universalising the community of God. Though Jesus discussed the theme of the universalisation of the believing community before his crucifixion and Gentiles became part of the community, his death reinforced this reality. Through his death, he destroyed the temple wall that divided worshipers into Jews and Gentiles and enforced the divine will for the new community of God (Barrett 1978:195; Brodie 1993:179; Köstenberger 2004:105). Given that the crucifixion could only happen in the context of the incarnation (not in his pre-incarnate state), it serves as one of the contributions of the Son to the mission of contextualising the eternal community.

Thus, the above indicators reveal that the Logos (Jesus) plays a critical role in establishing the origin and character of the concept of an eternal community in John and the incarnation of its values on earth. It further indicates that building a genuine communalistic community starts with a relationship with Jesus as the Way and expositor (Jn 1:18; Jn 14:6). Union with Jesus, the Way, gives the individual access to the community of God. Furthermore, as the expositor of the ideal community, embracing Jesus culminates in receiving the revelation about the *modus vivendi* or character of the community of God and the impetus necessary for transforming the believing community into a society that participates in the mission of God for the world by incarnating its values.

6.2.3 The relationship between John's culture and that of the Akans

The study aimed to analyse the relationship between John's culture and that of the Akans because it helps establish how the biblical culture can guide Akan Christians to revitalise their tradition of communalism, challenged by urbanisation, globalisation,

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and the materialistic elements in the Akan culture. The study indicates that both cultures share similarities that legitimise the application of solutions proposed by John to Akan sociocultural maladies. Some of these are, for instance, the emphasis on communalism and the struggle to incarnate cultural values.

The study reveals that both cultures appreciate collectivism. Communalism in the Akan culture emanates from Akan anthropology: the creation of human beings and their placement on earth. It commences with the theomorphic view of a human being – an Akan anthropological position on the origin of the human being that teaches that all human beings have a part of God, the Creator, in them and, therefore, are children of God (Gyekye 1995:20, 1996:24; Appiah et al. 2007:205; Danquah 1968:193). The Akan anthropological concept further promulgates that when God brings these children onto the earth, they descend into a human community, making a society natural to humanity (Gyekye 1995:155, 1996:36; cf. Appiah et al. 2007:201; Opoku 1997:11). And whiles on earth, they must live communally because none of them is self-sufficient (Appiah et al. 2007:203; Opoku 1997:12; Gyekye 1996:37).

Similarly, the culture of John – the first-century Mediterranean culture – is communalistic (Keener 2003:xxvi): it promotes seeking the neighbour's good and, therefore, does not countenance competition because it culminates in social disharmony (Malina 2010:22; Neyrey 1993:89). Furthermore, a critical analysis of John reveals that the narrative ties the appreciation for the worth of the community in the culture to their relationship with God, making it a theological value. For instance, the temple symbolises their national, communal, and religious identity (cf. Köstenberger 2004:105). Therefore, their connection to God through temple worship creates a community of worshippers united by one God and temple. Moreover, Jewish feasts feature prominently in John because of their significance in the communal life and piety of the believing community (Yee 2007:27). An example of feasts connected to the community life is the Sabbath. One of the goals of the Sabbath celebration is to destroy social classifications and re-enact in the community the original status of humanity (Nelson 2004:83; Hasel 1982:32). Therefore, breaking it is practically tantamount to touching their communal identity (O'Day & Hylen 2006:64).

Nevertheless, the Akan and Johannine cultures grapple with incarnating their cultural values. In his submissions on communalism in the Akan culture, Gyekye (2013:212) admits that even though society fulfils its duty of imparting various forms of moral knowledge from generation to generation, not everyone practices the values communicated to them. Furthermore, the analysis of Akan maxims in Chapters 4 and 5 uncover the tension between Akan ideations on communalistic values and practices and the impact of the acquisitive element on their concept of collectivism.

Similarly, the biblical culture has its challenges. In John, the marginalised microcosmic religious community (Bethesda) that lived in expectation of divine mercies does not demonstrate values worthy of its identity (cf. Jn 5:1-8). Moreover, the abuse of the court of Gentiles exposes the Jews' lack of understanding of the theological significance of the temple for God's agenda for the human community and their inability to incarnate their religious values (cf. Köstenberger 2004:102). The cultural challenges in the marginalised and religious communities (religious leaders) reveal the magnitude of the problem – that it transcends gender and social standing.

Consequently, John can guide Akan Christians to reevaluate their concept of communalism. The reasons are that the Akan reader identifies with John because of his emphasis on collectivism and the struggle with incarnating cultural values. These elements in John indicate appreciation of the problems confronting Akan communalism. Additionally, John addresses some sociocultural challenges – the problem with incarnating communalistic values. Furthermore, it explains the divine paradigm and how the believing community can become a remedy to its sociocultural challenges. Finally, Jesus demonstrates through his exemplary earthly life that it is possible to incarnate values worthy of the community of God. Since Akan Christians are part of the universalised community of God and have a call to imitate God, they can depend on the proposed solutions in John because of their revelatory and transformative character: participating in the eternal and ideal community by dwelling in the Vine for the strength to contextualise its communal values (cf. Jn 15:1-17).

6.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals that though the Akan community appreciates collectivism, the gap between theory and practice, coupled with the tension between communalism and

individualism, makes it imperative for Akan Christians to reevaluate their cultural values through the lens of the idea of community in John. Therefore, the research makes the following academic and pastoral oriented recommendations.

For academia, the researcher recommends further research on the Akan culture, focusing on the aspect of the Akan community concept that many scholars overlook – the materialistic elements in the culture – for a better appraisal of Akan communalism (cf. Gyekye 1996:99). It also recommends further studies on the Johannine community concept to complement this study.

For pastoral ministry, the study recommends that Akan Christians consider the concept of the church as a 'community of God' in John. Though Akan proverbial sayings postulate an idea of the children or community of God, the believing community exists to imitate God. Further, given the transformative power of the Word of God and the inadequacies in the Akan concept, paying attention to what Jesus proposes in John helps the believers fulfil their mission of imitating the eternal community.

Moreover, it urges the Akan believing community to redefine Christian leadership through the lens of the Johannine characterisation of Jesus. Emulating the servant-leadership style of Jesus helps to renounce every form of power game and ignite a sense of humility, service, and sacrifice in the community of faith.

Finally, it advocates that love should be the undergirding principle of communalism, not mutual benefits.

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