



## Research article

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READING JOHN'S GOSPEL FROM A *GLOCAL*-MISSION PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

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With a sense of postmodern understanding of the rejection of absolute truth and the embrace of relativism, the Fourth Gospel has to be treated with a balanced understanding of it. The present essay attempts to answer the following questions: Does John's Gospel bridge the gap between the 'local' and the 'global'? How does John attempt to present his theology with a gnomic intent? Does John contribute something significant to the contextual realities of the postmodern world? And how does John's theology function at the *micro-*, *meso-*, and *macro-*levels of his narrative framework? Analyzing the entire gospel verse-by-verse is not the concern of this essay. Rather we will consider three important aspects seriously: first, the 'global' aspects of the Gospel in relation to the 'local' concerns; second, the Trinitarian nature of John's theology and its significance in a *glocalized* and at the same time postmodern cultural context; and third, the mission theology of John in relation to a globalized cosmic order. The task of the essay is not analyzing the Gospel as a whole. It is rather to develop an interpretative frame for the Gospel in a globalized and postmodern social context.



## Introduction

In a world in which a growing sense of integration and convergence is obvious, the Scripture has to be interpreted from an entirely different point of view.<sup>1</sup> The contemporary globalizing culture<sup>2</sup> fosters liquid social functionalism and trans-nationalism in a higher proportion.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the world is influenced by postmodern ideology which is characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, and relativism. Postmodernists foreground the view that truth cannot be objective or absolute but rather relative and subjective. As Christian theologians of the contemporary world, how do we prioritize the gospel message? When describing the genre of the gospels, Richard Burridge considers them as documents “about people, by people, for people.”<sup>4</sup> With insights from this important caption of Burridge, we here attempt to explore the local and universalistic significance of the Fourth Gospel. With a sense of postmodern understanding of the rejection of absolute truth and the embrace of relativism, the Fourth Gospel has to be treated with a balanced understanding of it. The present essay attempts to answer the following questions: Does John’s Gospel bridge the gap between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’? How does John attempt to present his theology with a gnomic intent? Does John contribute something significant to the contextual realities of the postmodern world? And how does John’s theology function at the *micro*-, *meso*-, and *macro*-levels of his narrative framework? Analyzing the entire gospel verse-by-verse is not the concern of this essay. Rather we will consider three important aspects seriously: first, the ‘global’ aspects of the Gospel in relation to the ‘local’ concerns; second, the Trinitarian nature of John’s theology and its significance in a *glocalized* and at the same time postmodern cultural context; and third, the mission theology of John in relation to a globalized cosmic order. The task of the essay is not analyzing the Gospel as a whole. It is rather to develop an interpretative frame for the Gospel in a globalized and postmodern social context.

## The Phenomenon of *Global* in John and in the Rest of the Bible

The Hebrew word *tēbēl* appears nearly occurrences, with a variety of connotations: first, “world” in the sense of the “created universe” (1 Sam 2:8; Job 18:18; Psa 18:15; 24:1; 50:12; Pro 8:3; Jer 10:12); second, in the sense of universal population of the earth (Psa 9:8; 33:8; Lam 4:12);<sup>5</sup> and third, as an entity that includes both people and other created phenomena

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<sup>1</sup> The word used to capture this new phase is ‘globalization.’ Cf. Neil J. Ormerod and Shane Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church: Ecclesiastical Investigations 6* (England: T & T Clark, 2009), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Walters defines, “Globalization as a concept refers to both the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole . . . both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole.” Malcolm Walters, *Globalization* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.

<sup>3</sup> See George Ritzer, *Globalization: The Essentials* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (EDBW [2005: 1065]) describes further, “The ‘world’ in this sense is explicitly declared to be judged by God (Psa 96:13; Isa 13:11).”



(Isa 24:4; 27:6; Nah 1:5).<sup>6</sup> In the NT, *kosmos*, the dynamic equivalent of *tēbēl*, denotes variety of meanings, as follows: first, the realm of humankind inhabited by various kingdoms and nations; second, the universal community of humankind;<sup>7</sup> third, the universe at the point of creation; and fourth, in the figurative sense, the sum total of one's realized ambition for wealth, power, and prestige.<sup>8</sup>

While the synoptic evangelists show a preference for the use of *gē* rather than *kosmos*, John shows a reverse tendency.<sup>9</sup> Painter says that, "Concentrated use of *kosmos* is matched by the distinctly dualistic framework in which it is set with references to 'this world' (planet earth) and 'the judgment of the prince of this world' (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). This world is not contrasted with some future world. Rather, the world below is contrasted with the world above, the world of darkness with the world of light."<sup>10</sup> While employing the word *kosmos*, the narrator uses it as an inclusive terminology. Through the voices of the narrator, Jesus the protagonist, and the witnesses, a consistent view of the world, its predicament, and its salvation are portrayed.<sup>11</sup>

While the synoptic evangelists portray a horizontal eschatological phenomenon as their major trend (i.e., 'this *aeon*' and 'the coming *aeon*'),<sup>12</sup> John orchestrates a vertical eschatological phenomenon (i.e., 'the world from above' and 'the world from below') as his major thinking pattern.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the author creates more space for a realized eschatological outlook. He uses the word "world" (*kosmos*) more often in a contrasting way: first, Jesus says that, "you are of this world, I am not of this world" (8:23);<sup>14</sup> second, Jesus comes 'from above' to judge 'this world,' i.e., this world is subject to judgment (9:39); third, after Jesus's arrival, 'this world' is divided between "those who gone after him (believing)" and those who are not believing (12:19);<sup>15</sup> fourth, the believing are persecuted by the unbelieving in 'this world,' but Jesus conquers 'this world' (16:33);<sup>16</sup> fifth, the believing (also Jesus), though in this world, do not belong to this world (17:14); and sixth, a mystical union is developed

<sup>6</sup> EDBW adds further that, "*heled* is a rare noun denoting 'world' in the quasi-philosophical sense of 'the age (or spirit) of the world' (cf. Psa 17:14). It also refers to the 'world' generally as the 'dwelling place' of human beings (cf. Psa 49:1)." See EDBW (2005), 1065; cf. John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community*, second edition (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992/1993), 887.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Matthew 18:17; John 3:19; 12:31; 14:27; 16:8; Heb 11:7; 1 John 2:2.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36; cf. John 12:19; 18:20.

<sup>9</sup> Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, 887.

<sup>10</sup> Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, 890.

<sup>11</sup> See James L. Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design and Point of View in John* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 130-131.

<sup>12</sup> Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, 887.

<sup>13</sup> Bennema addresses the world as a character within John's story, calling it "enveloped in darkness but loved by God." Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Bangalore: Primalogue, 2009), 31-37; also see John 8:23; 9:39; 12:25, 31; 13:1; 14:30; 16:11; 18:36.

<sup>14</sup> Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> D. M. Smith, *John*, Abingdon New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 43.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the NT: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 121.



between Father, Son, Spirit-Paraclete, and the believing over against the unbelieving world (17:21).

Three things are noticeable in the above proceedings: first, a *macro-division* between the world ‘from above’ and the world ‘from below’; second, a *meso-division* between the believing and the unbelieving in the global level; and third, a *micro-division* between the believing and the unbelieving at the local levels. While the synoptic evangelists present the story from a historical point of view, John is both a gospel of *reference* (history) and a gospel of *mimesis* (poetic).<sup>17</sup> Aristotle wrote about poetry that it was more valuable than history because history is concerned with the contingent while poetry is concerned with the universal.<sup>18</sup> Aristotle proposed that it is mimesis, the universalization of actions, which accounts for the greater value of the poetic over the historical.<sup>19</sup> Stibbe makes it clear that, “What is remarkable about John’s story is its fusion of poetry and history, of the universal and the particular.”<sup>20</sup> If we consider John narrowly as a historical document, we may miss its real purpose.

### **The Global God-Father in the Gospel**

The Greek name *theos* is a dynamic equivalent of Hebrew terms such as *’elōhim* and *YHWH*.<sup>21</sup> The God of the Book of Genesis can be well paralleled with the God of John’s Gospel, who was in the beginning, was with the Word, and was the *patēr* of the earthly Jesus.<sup>22</sup> John’s considerably more frequent use of *patēr* can be reckoned as a title of God.<sup>23</sup> In the Fourth Gospel, God is portrayed as the creator and giver of life (1:1; 6:57),<sup>24</sup> the loving Father (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, 35), the righteous judge (3:17-21; 5:19-29; 8:31-38), the sovereign and powerful God (17:1-13), and the only true God (17:13). Hurtado says that, “The God of Jesus’s religious experience was ‘Father’ in an unusually intense manner that involved a powerful sense of personal and special mission. And the mission to which God called Jesus apparently included extending an unusually intimate relationship to God as ‘Father’ among those who accepted Jesus’s proclamation of God’s kingdom.”<sup>25</sup> While Christopher Wright

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<sup>17</sup> For details about John’s differences from the synoptics, refer Bartholoma, *The Johannine Discourses and the Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics*.

<sup>18</sup> See M. W. G. Stibbe, *John, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> For more details about history and theology in the Fourth Gospel, see Martyn, *History and Theology of the Fourth Gospel*.

<sup>20</sup> Stibbe, *John*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> *EDBW* (2005:441) mentions that, “The former denotes the general expression for God as Creator and omnipotent deity, the latter constitutes the covenant name ‘Lord,’ the divine suzerain, initiator of the intimate bond with his people Israel.”

<sup>22</sup> J. G. van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and Letters*, T & T Approaches to Biblical Studies (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 34-35.

<sup>23</sup> It is used 109 times, more than twice the number for any other Evangelist.

<sup>24</sup> For more details about the idea of life in the Fourth Gospel, see Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: Barnes & Oates, 1980), 2:352-361.

<sup>25</sup> L. W. Hurtado, “God,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 276.



calls this Father “the God of Mission,”<sup>26</sup> David Bosch addresses the Father’s mission as *Missio Dei* (“Mission of God”).<sup>27</sup> The God of Israel is deciphered as the only true God (3:33; 5:44; 8:26; 17:3) whom only the Son has seen (1:18; 5:37; 1 John 4:12, 20). The God-Father is the source of life (2:22; 5:26; 6:57; 11:41), of truth (8:40), of protection (10:29; 17:15) as well as the source of, and power behind, all good [things] (9:31-33; see 19:11; 3 John 11) in the universe.<sup>28</sup> This God-Father reveals his glory in the local Israeli context to extend it to the global realms.

The Father reveals himself through his Son.<sup>29</sup> That means, the mission of God (through his Son) is revelatory in character. This special and unique relationship is evident through the pre-existence of Jesus (as the *Logos*). A world that was under the power of the ‘ruler of this world’ (12:31; 14:30; 1 John 5:19), a world that was characterized by the presence of darkness, death, and lies, was/is the arena of God’s mission.<sup>30</sup>

The mission of the Father was transformation of human beings, and along with them, the entire cosmic order. Transformation of the world ‘from below,’ in harmony with the world ‘from above,’ is the essence of God’s mission. In this mission of the *sender-God*, Jesus functions as the ‘agent,’ initiator to fill the ‘gap,’ giver of life, judge, authoritative figure, and ultimately the fulfiller of God’s plan and purpose. The mission of God in John is fulfilling the hour (*hōra*), lifting up of the Son of Man, driving out the ruler of this world, extending the love of God, and glorification of the Father/Son. Whereas the resurrection is the crucial point in the synoptic gospels, in John the death of Jesus takes up the prominence.<sup>31</sup> In John, Jesus’s death is deciphered as a “cosmic battle” in order to drive out the ruler of the world (12:20-36; 14:30-31; 16:8-11). This battle initiated by the Father, through his Son, is the paradigm of the mission of God. In the Fourth Gospel, this cosmic battle is portrayed with the help of dualistic terms and dialectic means.

### **The Global Savior-Son in the Gospel**

While the synoptic evangelists present their stories from a “once upon a time” perspective, John presents his story from a “once before time” perspective.<sup>32</sup> The incarnation of the *logos*, the beginning of the cosmic order and the pre-existent Christology are significant aspects in

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<sup>26</sup> C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narratives* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 71-188.

<sup>27</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991/2006), 488.

<sup>28</sup> Refer to van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and Letters*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Culpepper states that, “God is characterized by Jesus.” Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 113.

<sup>30</sup> God sends his ‘only begotten Son’ as the agent ‘from above’ to witnessing the truth in this world.

<sup>31</sup> Brant entitles the section John 12:12-19:42 as “Jesus’s Triumphant Hour.” J. A. Brant, *John*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 187-262.

<sup>32</sup> This is the main reason why Johannine narrator does not give any significance for the genealogy and the infancy narratives as it is in Matthew and Luke. But, the global Jesus’s speeches and actions are depicted with the help of local settings and characters.



John.<sup>33</sup> John's presentation of the cosmic order in a vertical 'from above' versus 'from below' fashion recapitulates the global outlook of the story world.<sup>34</sup> Painter says that, "John's prologue (1:1-18) provides a detailed reinterpretation of the Genesis creation story. A Jewish understanding of creation is daringly reinterpreted in the light of faith in Jesus as the savior of the world."<sup>35</sup> Jesus is presented as *light* of the world, *logos* of the cosmic order, and the source of *life* (light-logos-life // *licht-liebe-leben*).<sup>36</sup> He is *begotten Son* (*monogenēs*) of the Father and co-creator with God and through whom "all things came into being" (1:3).<sup>37</sup> The ironical expression "he came to what was *his own* and *his own* [people] did not accept him" (1:11) reveals his possessive relationship with the created world.<sup>38</sup> It also emphasizes his 'everywhere' and 'ever' relationship with the global order.

The expression "God's *logos* became flesh and lived among us" literally means that God's *logos* appeared in anthropomorphic fashion (v. 14). The idea "full of grace and truth" means that he came with the full measure of God's grace and truth before humanity. While Adam lost his glory in the Garden of Eden, Jesus reveals the glory of God in its "fullness." Toward the end of the prologue, the narrator explicitly brings out a contrast between Moses and Jesus.<sup>39</sup> While Moses reveals his potential as a 'local' leader to the people of Israel, Jesus manifests his glory as the 'global' Savior by extending the aspects of grace and truth to humanity. But, the significant thing here is that Jesus extends his global significance through a local historical act. Hence, in Jesus, we see the extension from 'local' to 'global.' That means, Jesus is the *glocal* figure of salvation.

The global phenomenon of Jesus is once again brought to the attention of the reader toward the end of the prologue. The narrator arrays three significant things here: first, God is an unseen reality; second, Jesus has seen God and "is close to the Father's heart"; and third, seeing Jesus is seeing God (v. 18). John is witnessing the "God of the beginning" through the historical revelation of Jesus 'here' and 'now.' Thus, the prologue of the Gospel of John provides several inferences with regard to the global phenomenon of Jesus. Jesus, here, is pictured as the eternal and global figure, agent of God 'from above,' co-creator (with God) of the world, and the reconciler of the transcendent with the imminent.

The body of the Gospel extends the above ideas profoundly. The "I am" sayings of Jesus reveal that Jesus is in equal status with the Father.<sup>40</sup> He is "the bread from heaven to

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<sup>33</sup> See how Christology, Soteriology, and Eschatology are merged together in John. Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxxxii.

<sup>34</sup> For more details about irony and dualism, refer Paul Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985).

<sup>35</sup> Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, 890.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Voigt, *Licht-Liebe-Leben*.

<sup>37</sup> See 1:10; cf. Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, 65-84.

<sup>38</sup> For more details about the Logos Christology, refer F. T. Gench, *Encounters with Jesus: Studies in the Gospel of John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 1-9.

<sup>39</sup> He says: "the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (v. 17).

<sup>40</sup> See 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5; cf. Exo 3:14.



earth,” “the light of the world,” “the good shepherd,” “the gate for the sheep,” “the resurrection and life,” “the way, the truth, and the life,” and “the true vine.” The universalistic significance of these metaphors is obvious through their global nature. The signs of Jesus are used as self-revelatory means. Jesus is introduced as a sign-performer in a Galilean wedding context (2:1-11), in the life of a royal man’s (possibly a Gentile) family (4:46-54), an invalid’s life (5:1-18), among a large crowd (6:1-15), on the natural realms (6:16-21), a man born blind’s life (9:1-41), and in a bereaved family setting (11:1-44).<sup>41</sup> Here Jesus involves in the lives of diverse walks of people and natural situations.

While the synoptic gospels usually show tenets of a ‘faith + miracle’ formula and remain in a *closed-end* fashion, John’s signs mostly follow a ‘sign + faith’ formula and remain *open-ended* to the universal community. Bauckham says, “In fact, no other figure has so extensively crossed the cultural divisions of humanity and found a place in so many diverse cultural contexts . . . . The search for an African Jesus, an Indian Jesus, a Japanese Jesus goes on, while people inspired by Jesus continue to find him in the poor, the sick, and the dying, wherever and whoever they are.”<sup>42</sup> In that sense, he considers Jesus as “a universal icon.”<sup>43</sup> In a personified sense, Jesus himself is God’s story to the world. This is the Johannine narrative stature typified through a Christo-centric literary structure.

The Son obediently executes the Father’s mission to please and glorify him (8:29; cf. 4:34; 17:4) and he does that with a knowledge that the Father is always with him (8:16; 16:32). The Son of God with authority “from above” comes to perform his mission and after completing it he returns to the Father. This descending-and-ascending redeemer motif creates a ‘U-shaped plot’ for the entire story of John.<sup>44</sup> In the high priestly prayer, Jesus reports back to the Father the outcome of his mission, i.e., establishment of the family of God (17:1-8). Jesus’s confrontation with the Jews makes the local arena for the mission. His global agenda is explicit through the conversion of the Samaritan woman and the people of Sychar in chap. 4. Jesus trespasses the Jewish territory and dialogues with the Samaritans.<sup>45</sup> The acceptance of Jesus as a prophet (4:19) and as the Messiah (4:25-26) by the Samaritan woman, and as the Savior of the world (4:42)<sup>46</sup> by the Samaritans reveal the acceptance of his messiahship beyond the Jewish circles.<sup>47</sup> Koester says, “The title ‘Savior of the world’ included and surpassed the previous expressions of Jesus’s identity. By calling Jesus ‘Savior’ (*sōtēr*), the towns-people recognized that ‘salvation’ (*sōtēria*) is from the Jews but is for all people.”<sup>48</sup> It

<sup>41</sup> Refer to Brown, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:xxviii-xxxix.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Bauckham sees the death of Jesus as a new beginning. See Bauckham, *Jesus*, 95-109.

<sup>44</sup> M. G. W. Stibbe, *John’s Gospel*, New Testament Readings (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), 35-36.

<sup>45</sup> R. Irudays, “Attitudes and Approaches Employed in the Dialogue of Jesus with the Samaritan Woman II: Their Relevance to Interreligious Dialogue Today,” *VJTR* 67 (August/September 2003), 707-716.

<sup>46</sup> Craig R. Koester, “The Savior of the World (John 4:42),” *JBL* 109/4 (1990), 665-680.

<sup>47</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written that you may believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: A Herder and Herder Book/The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999/2003), 126-148.

<sup>48</sup> Koester, “The Savior of the World (John 4:42),” 668.



is further strengthened by the quest for the Messiah by the Greeks and Jesus's proclamation about the coming of the awaited time (12:20-22).

The Acts 1:8 pattern of mission development is obvious in the plot development of the Johannine story. The Jerusalem-and-Judean-centric mission at the beginning (chaps. 1-3), the Samaritan mission in chap. 4, and the emphasis on the Gentile mission in chap. 12 follow this pattern. Jesus's mission in John is ushering salvation in the world that is controlled by darkness. In this way John introduces the aspect of *inclusive discipleship* and global mission. Salvation in John means bringing people to the family of God, introducing eternal life, and leading them into faith in Jesus and to spiritual birth. In the Fourth Gospel, believing means living or experiencing the life in its abundance. In that sense, faith is used as a means to attain salvation. Salvation is accessible without any restrictions. It is accessible irrespective of caste, class, race, color, and gender restrictions.<sup>49</sup> Here salvation means having faith in the Father and in the Son, being born into the family of God, and be children of light.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Global Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel**

John has a well-developed pneumatology in comparison to the rest of the NT writings. While in chaps. 1-12 he presents the Holy Spirit in synonymous terms with the synoptics, in chaps. 13-17 a personified form of the Holy Spirit is brought to the foreground. In the Farewell Discourse (chaps. 13-17), the identity formation of the disciples is emphasized. And the aspects such as individuals in relation to the church and in relation to the world are highlighted. The Paraclete<sup>51</sup> assures God's continuing presence within the community of faith and that remains as a source of the wisdom of God (cf. 14:15-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-11, 12-14; 1 John 2:1).<sup>52</sup> Richard B. Hays states, "Though Jesus must go away, returning to heaven to be with the Father, he will send the Paraclete to 'abide' in the midst of the community."<sup>53</sup> It was to the disciples as Jesus was to them—the comforter, the guide, the teacher, the helper and the advocate.<sup>54</sup> The continuing presence of Jesus through the Paraclete as an *Alter Ego* functions well within the dualistic framework of the gospel (14:16).<sup>55</sup> Maniparampil says, "Jesus is the first Paraclete; the Holy Spirit is 'another' counselor . . . . The Spirit-Paraclete is

<sup>49</sup> Adele Reinhartz, "Women in the Johannine Community: An Exercise in Historical Imagination," *A Feminist Companion to John*, Vol. 2 (London/New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 14-33.

<sup>50</sup> Mathew Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), 89-104.

<sup>51</sup> Paraclete is a combined word in Greek, *para + clētos*. Literally, it means "one who is called to one's side." It may mean "comforter," "defender," "mediator," or "helper." Cf. Maniparampil, *Reading the Fourth Gospel*, 319.

<sup>52</sup> Turner describes the following things: first, the Paraclete is modeled on Jesus; second, the Paraclete will mediate the presence of the Father and the glorified Son; third, the Paraclete as teacher and revealer; and fourth, the Paraclete as advocate in the Christian mission. See M. M. B. Turner, "Holy Spirit," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 349.

<sup>53</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to NT Ethics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 151.

<sup>54</sup> Also refer Brown, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2:1135.

<sup>55</sup> Maniparampil, *Reading the Fourth Gospel*, 319.





a specific way of the presence in the believer and action of the Holy Spirit in the believer.”<sup>56</sup> The Paraclete is “the Spirit of Truth” from the presence of God the Father (i.e., “from above”). If “God is Spirit” (4:24), then “Spirit is God.”<sup>57</sup> Hence it is the Spirit of God “from above.” Now, it works in the world “from below” in order to guide the community of God.

The aspect of ‘presence while absent’ is made obvious in John. The Father is present through the Son even when the Father is physically absent. Similarly, the Son is present through the Paraclete even when he is physically absent. As van der Watt says, “The *modus* of his [Jesus’s] presence is not physical, but *cognitive* and *functional*.”<sup>58</sup> The Paraclete guarantees an intimate relationship among the Father, Son, and the believer. In that sense, the “from above” extends its power and authority in the “from below” realm.<sup>59</sup> Turner says, “. . . the disciples are now ‘sent’ as Jesus was ‘sent’ (20:21; cf. 17:17-18), and the Spirit from the heavenly Lord is given to them to take over the earthly Jesus’s advocacy of the case (15:26-27; 16:7b-11).”<sup>60</sup> The post-ascension gift of the Spirit “continues the witness to Christ and so is ‘the Spirit of mission.’”<sup>61</sup> The role of the Paraclete in the post-Easter Christian community is efficaciously brought to the notice of the reader. Its function is not merely pictured as a local manifestation. Rather, it is universal and it functions as an inspiring Spirit to the community of God.

Johannine community is just a representative community, not the ultimate one, in this ever-continuing process. The same Paraclete was working within the Markan, Matthean, Lukan, and the Pauline communities. The work of the Paraclete is not merely a time-bound ministry within the first century context. Its involvement is universal in space and eternal in duration. As Johnson Chakkuvarackal says, “The centrality of the Holy Spirit provides theological stimulus for interpretation and has more relevance in the present day global context.”<sup>62</sup> What Chakkuvarackal says is tantamount to the Johannine presentation of the Paraclete.

### **The Global Mission of the Triune God**

The relationship among the Father, the Son, and human beings is outlined in the following fashion: first, the Father knows the Son (10:15), the Son knows the Father (10:15), the Son knows human beings (10:14), human beings know the Son (10:14), and human beings know the Father and the Son (14:7-8); and second, the Son is in the Father (14:10-11, 20; 17:21), the Father is in the Son (14:10-11; 17:21, 23), human beings are in the Son (14:20; 17:23,

<sup>56</sup> He is Jesus’s successor, which Tertullian expressed when he used the term *vacarius Christi* for the Paraclete. See Maniampil, *Reading the Fourth Gospel*, 319.

<sup>57</sup> Paraclete is also referred as the “Spirit of Truth.”

<sup>58</sup> Van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and the Letters*, 69.

<sup>59</sup> J. Joubert, “Johannine Metaphors/Symbols Linked to the Paraclete-Spirit and Their Theological Implications,” *Acts Theologica* 27/1 (South Africa: University of the Free State, 2007), 98.

<sup>60</sup> Turner, “Holy Spirit,” 350.

<sup>61</sup> Joubert, “Johannine Metaphors,” 99.

<sup>62</sup> J. Chakkuvarackal, “Toward a Spirit-centered Biblical Theology: The ‘From Below’ Aspects of the Holy Spirit,” *Bangalore Theological Forum* 35/1 (2003), 23; Maniampil, *Reading the Fourth Gospel*, 323.



26), and human beings are in the Father and in the Son (17:21).<sup>63</sup> The union of the Father and the Son is universal and is revealed in relation to human beings.<sup>64</sup> The so-called *Immanenzformeln* = formula of immanence (8:42; 10:38; 14:20; 17:21-23) show the relationship between the Father and the Son in emphatic terms.<sup>65</sup> In his mission to the world, Father not only *functionally equipped* his Son, but was also *actively involved* in the execution and *outcome* of the mission.<sup>66</sup>

Jesus is God as the Father is God (1:1, 18; 20:28; 1 John 5:20), who was/is *homoousios* (same substance) with the Father.<sup>67</sup> Though functionally different, substantially they are one. Jesus's identification as a human being was 'temporary,' missional and functional.<sup>68</sup> His mission in the world involves his incarnation in the human form (in a *physical human body* of flesh and blood, 6:51, 55; 19:34; 1 John 5:8; in a *physical human family* with a mother, father and brothers, 1:45; 2:1, 3, 12; 6:42; 7:3, 10; 19:26).<sup>69</sup> Jesus belongs to the heavenly Father as he is the only begotten Son, and at the same time he has 'this worldly' family relations.<sup>70</sup> This dynamic phenomenon reveals both the 'local' and the 'global' allies of the Father and the Son.

The Trinitarian mission theology of John is at the foreground through the very statement of Jesus that "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."<sup>71</sup> John uses the verbs *apostellein* and *pempein* in the gospel frequently (i.e., more than 50 times). These verbs are used to indicate the mission of Jesus (3:17, 34; 4:43; 5:23, 24, 36, 38; 6:38, 44, 57; 7:29), the mission of the disciples (4:38; 13:16; 17:18; 20:21), and the mission of the Holy Spirit (14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 13, 14).<sup>72</sup> Köstenberger states, "While there are important personal differences in the roles of the Triune God along salvation-historical lines (the Father sends, the Son is sent and sends, the Spirit is sent) the *missio Dei* is characterized by a deep underlying unity among the participants in this mission."<sup>73</sup> John's presentation of the Father, the Son and the Spirit demonstrates his globally-oriented mission theology.<sup>74</sup> Turner states, "In the Fourth Gospel the Spirit is to be understood primarily as a development of the Jewish

<sup>63</sup> A Father/Son system is undercurrent in the gospel. See N. R. Peterson, *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1993), 66-69.

<sup>64</sup> The arena of God's mission is the "from below" world.

<sup>65</sup> Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 21-22.

<sup>66</sup> Refer C. K. Barrett, *Essays on John* (London: SPCK, 1982), 19-36.

<sup>67</sup> In Greek, *homos* means "same" and *ousios* means "substance."

<sup>68</sup> Painter states, "The world in view is humanity. The coming of the emissary was to save, not to condemn the world (3:17; 4:42; 6:33, 51; 12:47), but condemnation is inevitable where the saving mission is rejected (9:39)." See Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, 890.

<sup>69</sup> Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, 890.

<sup>70</sup> Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 194.

<sup>71</sup> For more details about the relationship among the Father, Son, and Spirit, refer to Andreas J. Köstenberger and S. R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. R. J. Painter, *The Gospel of John: A Thematic Approach* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 61-70.

<sup>73</sup> Köstenberger, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 19.

<sup>74</sup> Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 158-164.



understanding of the ‘Spirit of prophesy,’ redefined christologically and developed in Trinitarian direction.”<sup>75</sup> The shape of Jesus’s mission determines the shape of the Church’s mission and the Church’s mission is guided and powered by the Paraclete. The aspects such as theo-centricism, christo-centricism, and pneumato-centricism are at the core of the Johannine theology.<sup>76</sup> And it is supplemented by cosmo-centricism. Thus, Johannine theology is Trinitarian in nature, global in focus, and missional in outcome.<sup>77</sup>

### **The Local-and-Global Dynamism in Christian Mission**

In its mission(s) the Church becomes a truly transnational and transcultural community. Within this community, diversity is not abolished but placed within the higher integration of a common faith. In that way, the Church is dynamically caught between the dialectic poles of particularity and universality, between apostolic rootedness and culture-transcending catholicity.<sup>78</sup> This is true with the missional tenets of the Johannine community. The Johannine community does not adopt a “rhetoric of distance” as the Qumran sectarians do, rather it introduces a “rhetoric of difference.” John’s community lived alongside of the mainstream Jewish community.<sup>79</sup> But, it adopted its own ethics and ethos as an inclusive community even when they were suffering oppression from their rivals. Bultmann saw ‘the Jews’ as theological symbols, representing the unbelieving world in general in its hostility towards Jesus and his followers.<sup>80</sup> The conflict that develops between Jesus and ‘the Jews’ is in essence the conflict between the world “from above” and the world “from below.”<sup>81</sup> The characterization of the world “from below” is drastically developed through the medium of the Jews in sharp conflict/contrast with Jesus’s “from above” character.<sup>82</sup>

The emerging opposition in Jerusalem (chap. 5), in Galilee (chap. 6), the domination of the Pharisees (chaps. 7-10), the domination of the chief priests (chap. 11), and Jesus’s trial and death (chaps. 18-19) are the local manifestations of the plot of this world against Jesus.<sup>83</sup> In John, the narrator uses certain narrative techniques to globalize the stories, as in the case of chaps. 5 and 9. Schneiders says, “Both the blind man [chap. 9] and the paralyzed man [chap. 5] are ‘nameless,’ suggesting that they are Johannine representative figures. Both characters are *anthrōpos*, theologically ‘everyperson.’”<sup>84</sup> In the process of reading the Johannine text, a reader has to consider a fusion of at least three horizons: first, the horizon of the pre-Easter

<sup>75</sup> Turner, “Holy Spirit,” 347.

<sup>76</sup> Kelly and Moloney suggest a Theo-centric Christology at the core of Johannine theology. See A. J. Kelly and F. J. Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2003), 18-20.

<sup>77</sup> H. Windisch, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1968), 1-38.

<sup>78</sup> Ormerod and Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 18.

<sup>79</sup> Stibbe, *John’s Gospel*, 5-31.

<sup>80</sup> Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 86-87; Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 31.

<sup>81</sup> Also refer to S. Motyer, *Your Father the Devil? A New Approach to John and ‘the Jews,’* Paternoster Biblical and Theological Studies (UK: Paternoster Press, 1997).

<sup>82</sup> Cornelis Bennema, *Excavating John’s Gospel: A Commentary for Today* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005), 14.

<sup>83</sup> S. H. Ringe, *Wisdom’s Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 10-28.

<sup>84</sup> Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 152-153.



Jesus; second, the horizon of the post-Easter Johannine community; and third, the horizon of the 'ever present' reading community.<sup>85</sup> Thus, the Johannine story does not simply remain as a descriptive history, rather a gnomic narrative to influence the paradigmatic reader eternally and universally.

The earliest manuscripts of John 20:30-31 use both present subjunctive (*pisteuēte*) and aorist subjunctive (*pisteusēte*) to refer the expression "that you may believe." If we consider the present subjunctive, the meaning can be "you may continue to believe" (*pisteuēte*). Then it has a pastoral target. But, if we consider the aorist subjunctive, the meaning can be "that you may come to believe" (*pisteusēte*).<sup>86</sup> Then it has a missionary objective. The purpose statement of the gospel in 20:30-31 (as the first conclusion) and 21:24-25 (as the second conclusion) firmly affirm the careful choice of the narrator and the representative nature of the Johannine characters. John's intention of writing this masterpiece is to address both the 'insiders' and the 'outsiders.'

John introduces marginalized characters such as the Samaritan woman (4:1-42), the man born blind (9:1-41), and Mary Magdalene (20:1-2, 11-18), and dominant characters such as the Jews and Judas Iscariot (6:64, 70-71; 12:1-8; 13:2, 10-11, 18-19, 21, 26-30; 18:1-8) in order to make his global point of view clear to the reader. Kobus Kok states, ". . . those who seek to speak of moral language in John should probably also include the reality of a missional-incarnational ethos that will transcend all boundaries (cultural, social, economical, and racial) to show love and be accepting of everyone."<sup>87</sup> The categorization of the characters into two such as good and evil or saved and damned will help us to reinterpret the story of John both at the local settings and at the universal realms.

The narrator dualistically categorizes men and women, Jews and non-Jews, and lowly and elite at the *micro*-level, believing and unbelieving (at a broader "from below" perspective) at the *meso*-level, and the world "from above" and the world "from below" at the *macro*-level.<sup>88</sup> Köstenberger suggests that "John's narrative focuses on Jesus and his messianic mission."<sup>89</sup> This mission became a paradigm for the mission of the Messianic [Johannine] Community.<sup>90</sup> The missional ethos of the Johannine community persuades a paradigmatic reader to transform her/his existential context(s) to an esteemed level.

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<sup>85</sup> J. G. van der Watt, "Eschatology in John: A Continuous Process of Realizing Events," *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 110.

<sup>86</sup> J. G. van der Watt, "Ethics through the Power of Language: Some Explorations in the Gospel according to John," *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian Writings*, Vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 141.

<sup>87</sup> K. Kok, "As the Father has sent me, I send you: Towards a missional-incarnational ethos in John 4," *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian Writings*, Vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 192.

<sup>88</sup> For more details about Johannine characterization and point of view, see Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 121-196.

<sup>89</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 13.

<sup>90</sup> See Köstenberger, *John*, 13-16.



The revelation/manifestation of Jesus's glory at the local Jewish context and its extension to post-Easter Johannine community can be viewed as follows. Martyn maintains that the Gospel of John is made up of two stories, namely, the story of Jesus and the story of the Johannine congregation who selected events from the life of Jesus to apply to their own situation, thus interweaving their own situation with the story of Jesus.<sup>91</sup> This resulted in a *two level story/drama*.<sup>92</sup> Van der Watt builds upon Martyn's position and argues in favor of a *third level*.<sup>93</sup> He says, "There is a (divine) story behind the (earthly) story, which also serves as interpretative frame for the earthly story of Jesus." In my observation, I see significant features in the interpretative frame of Van der Watt. The transcendental (universal) God takes initiative in redeeming the world "from below" through the local manifestation of Jesus. This local manifestation was further localized in the Johannine community. And that became an influential phenomenon for the universal communities forever. Thus, John provides a universal [the transcendental Father and Son realm]—local [the realm of Jesus's ministry]—local [the realm of the Johannine community]—universal [contemporary glocal context] formula. This formula informs us that 'local' and 'global' realms are part and parcel of God's mission.

In their social-scientific commentary on John, Malina and Rohrbaugh merge the first century Johannine Christian *local* context with the situations of the modern world.<sup>94</sup> Christopher Wright shapes a *missional hermeneutic* by bridging the OT and the NT.<sup>95</sup> Wright considers the Bible as the product of God's mission, in which the indicatives are present for the imperatives of mission.<sup>96</sup> As Biblical God is a mission-oriented God, as Jesus is the fulfiller of God's mission, and as Jesus continues his mission through the Spirit-Paraclete, humanity (the Church) is sent for a mission.<sup>97</sup>

Jongeneel comes up with the 'local' and 'global' manifestations of philosophy and science of mission. In his book, he explains in detail how the philosophy of mission (*Missionsphilosophie*) functions in its own right and in relation to the philosophy of religion

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 24-184.

<sup>92</sup> Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 37.

<sup>93</sup> Visotzky (2005: 104) says, "J. Louis Martyn and Raymond Brown were correct; there is a two-level drama in John: that of Jesus and that of the Johannine community. Yet it is sensitivity to levels three and four—the long history of (mis)interpretation of the Fourth Gospel and our own current biases—that allows us to fully understand those earlier levels of drama and suggest new ways for understanding their historic setting." See B. L. Visotzky, "Methodological Considerations in the Study of John's Interaction with First Century Judaism," *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown, S. S* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), 91-107.

<sup>94</sup> Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998) comment: ". . . both ends of the interpretative chain are of decisive importance." See Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

<sup>95</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 48-70.

<sup>96</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 48-51.

<sup>97</sup> Bosch sees *mission as disciple-making* in Matthew (pp. 69-103), *practicing forgiveness and solidarity with the poor* in Luke-Acts, and invitation to join the eschatological community in Paul. See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 104-152, 153-224.



(*Religionsphilosophie*).<sup>98</sup> Then he argues about the theology of mission (*Missionstheologie*).<sup>99</sup> Jongeneel is truly concerned of bridging the gap between the first century mission theology of the apostolic church and the twenty-first century mission theology of the global Christianity. Ferdinand Hahn says, “In the view of the fourth gospel mission can only be realized where the disciples are conscious of their contrast with the world; their message in the world is a message of ‘salvation universalism’ (*Heilsuniversalismus*).”<sup>100</sup> Thus, mission theologians attempt to fill the gap between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ manifestations of Christian mission. Toward that direction John’s Trinitarian mission theology contributes significantly. In that sense, the *descriptive* but *gnomic* relevance of John’s mission theology requires adequate attention.

### Implications and Conclusion

Today, one of the largest challenges a biblical scholar faces is to interpret the Scripture trans-culturally and trans-nationally. The contemporary culture demands new approaches and methods for interpretation to meet the philosophical requirements of the “global village.” This new situation influences us to view the Johannine text with a view of integration and convergence.<sup>101</sup> Its message cannot simply be viewed from a ‘there and then’ perspective. Rather from the point of view of a ‘here and now’ and ‘everywhere and ever’ perspective. John contains a mission agenda that is characterized as an *all-inclusive* and *gnomic* entity.

We must consider John the narrator and must engage with him in a relationship. A rhetorically-inclined reading of the text prompts the reader to be engaged. The deep structure of the text has potential and has a performative message to converse with the reader. This very nature of the text provokes the reader to engage with the text pragmatically and to attune its message to her/his local context.<sup>102</sup> In a globalized culture, a reader’s local interpretation/mission has potential to transform the universal. Umbrella expressions such as “family of the King”<sup>103</sup> and “household of God” are integrative in several respects.<sup>104</sup> Barus says, “. . . Fourth Gospel is composed both to initiate faith in Jesus (*Missionsschrift*) and to deepen the faith of the believing community (*Gemeindeschrift*). The characters embedded in

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<sup>98</sup> [J. A. B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: A Missiological Encyclopedia I: Philosophy and Science of Mission* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995/2006), 84-89, 91-99] also does the same with the science of mission (*Missionswissenschaft*) and the science of religion (*Religionswissenschaft*).

<sup>99</sup> Jongeneel also takes the biblical theology of mission into serious consideration. See Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology*, 1:113-155, 102-198.

<sup>100</sup> F. Hahn, *Theologie Des Neuen Testaments: Band I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1963), 136, 142, quoted in Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology*, 1:144.

<sup>101</sup> Stibbe, *John*, 15-16.

<sup>102</sup> Schneiders, *Written that you may believe*, 148.

<sup>103</sup> Van der Watt, *An Introduction to Johannine Gospel and Letters*, 67.

<sup>104</sup> As Ihenacho calls it, it is “the community of eternal life.” D. A. Ihenacho, *The Community of Eternal Life: The Study of the Meaning of Life for the Johannine Community* (Lanham/New York/Oxford: University Press of America, 2001).



the narrative world dramatize the evangelistic and edificatory aspects of faith.<sup>105</sup> The pastoral/missional intent of the Johannine text challenges the faith community to witness the truth *glocally*.

While Rensberger reads the gospel from the point of view of the marginalized, he recognizes a message that affirms solidarity with the oppressed (pp. 113-116) and a Jesus who stands firm for the downtrodden (pp. 118-124). He (pp. 124-130) states that Johannine 'love ethic' provides kernel for liberation.<sup>106</sup> The reading tenet of Rensberger has the credentials to guide a modern reader to interlock the local and the universal mission initiatives within the text. Johannine 'love ethic' has the potential to transcend the cultural barriers and to transform communities trans-nationally and trans-culturally. Thus, John remains as a flexible poetic to visualize the globe gnomically.

While the diachronic approaches mostly encourage the reader to look at the text from a local and fixed point of view, the synchronic approaches open avenues for trans-national and trans-cultural reading practices.<sup>107</sup> Gutiérrez considers humanity as the temple of God (pp. 106-109) and understands that knowing God is to do justice (pp. 110-115). He attempted to experience God, Christ, and the temple of God in the local Latin American context(s).<sup>108</sup> James Cone defends and argues for the cause of the Black experiences from the Scriptural references and with an understanding of Jesus as an agent of liberation (pp. 16-35). Cone acclaims that God of the Bible is "God of the oppressed."<sup>109</sup> Nirmal and other Dalit theologians attempted to localize the same Christ and the same Bible in the struggles of the Dalits.<sup>110</sup> In his book entitled *Jesus and Culture* Sebastian Kappen attempts to see Jesus on the crossroads of cultures.<sup>111</sup> The same is true with the Indian Christian theologians who see Christ as the *Crown of Hinduism* (cf. Panikkar)<sup>112</sup> and *Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (cf. M. M. Thomas).<sup>113</sup> Vashum and other tribal theologians from the North-Eastern Indian

<sup>105</sup> A. Barus, "John 2:12-25: A Narrative Reading," *New Currents through John: A Global Perspective*, eds. Lozada, F., and Thatcher, T (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), 140.

<sup>106</sup> D. K. Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988).

<sup>107</sup> Bultmann [quoted in B. K. Blount, *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting NT Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 28] argues that "language cannot be applied effectively if its symbols and terminology are foreign; it must first be interpreted, translated into an understandable idiom." See R. Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 19.

<sup>108</sup> G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988).

<sup>109</sup> Refer J. Cone, *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation and Black Theology*, Second Edition (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975/1997).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. V. Devasahayam, ed., *Dalit Theology* (Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, 1997); J. Massey, *Roots of Dalit History: Christianity, Theology, and Spirituality* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1996).

<sup>111</sup> S. Kappen, *Jesus and Culture* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002); S. Kappen, *Jesus and Society* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002).

<sup>112</sup> Samartha states, "The distinctiveness of Christian mission lies precisely in its being *Christian*, that is, in its being rooted in God through Jesus Christ and in being active in the world in the power of the Spirit, without denying, however, that neighbors of other faiths too have *their* 'missions' in the global community." See S. J. Samartha, *One Christ, Many Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 171.

<sup>113</sup> For more details about the Indian Christian reflections, refer to Boyd, 2000.



context search for the relevance of the Bible and its protagonist Jesus.<sup>114</sup> Samartha outlines the way Christian mission has to be done by accepting Christ as the agent of liberation in a multi-religious context.<sup>115</sup>

The Johannine Jesus who is localized in the above stated contexts is the universal figure of salvation. Catholic Church from its very beginning maintains the qualities of becoming both the local and the global at the same time.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, Pentecostalism “has the unique capacity to take on a shape that aligns to both global and local social realities.”<sup>117</sup> A dynamic interlocking of the local and the global is at the root of the Johannine theology. The Trinitarian mission agenda of John’s Gospel has rhetorical power to foster a theology of integration. As the universal gospel was localized in the *Sitz im Leben Jesu* and in the *Sitz im Leben Kirche* (Johannine community), the localized Palestinian mission-theology was universalized in the subsequent initiatives of the church. Furthermore, the universalized mission of Jesus was/is further localized by the mission practitioners and theologians of our time. In that sense, Christian mission is *glocal* in its very essence.

Our reading experience of John informs us that the Gospel is not simply a “museum product.” Rather it is a “pragmatic guide” or a “live/dialoguing character” for equipping the faith communities with an eternal and universal intent. Chow and Berheide argue that, “. . . the perennial popularity of John’s Gospel indicates that many readers do find it to be an engaging and meaningful text.”<sup>118</sup> This aspect of the Gospel is important to reckon with.

While Matthew extends his mission theology from particularism to universalism, John dynamically intertwines both the particular and the universal right from the beginning. The God of the universe comes to a local context and his own (creation) does not recognize him (1:10-11). The mission theology of John takes heed from this central irony. Jesus fulfills his mission and continues (through the Paraclete) to be with the faith community. As the Father has sent him, he continues to send the transformed to expand the ministry of witnessing (17:18). An exposition of John that combines theology proper, Christology, and Pneumatology coupled with cosmology guides our attention toward the Trinitarian missiology of the Gospel, both in hypothesis and in praxis.

Understanding John from a gnomic point of view enables the reader to comprehend its universalistic nature. A reading that moves away from the rigid and monotonous

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<sup>114</sup> Y. Vashum, *Tribal Theology and the Bible: A Search for Contextual Relevance* (Jorhat: Tribal Study Center/Eastern Theological College, 2011).

<sup>115</sup> In his book *The Gagging of God*, Carson delineates how Christianity confronts pluralism. See Samartha, *One Christ, Many Religions*, 162-175; D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>116</sup> Ormerod and Clifton emphasize that, “The very word ‘Catholic’ mean universal, so that a globalizing thrust has been symbolically captured in its very self-designation.” Ormerod and Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission*, 12.

<sup>117</sup> Refer Ormerod and Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission*, 17.

<sup>118</sup> Esther Ngan-ling Chow and Catherine White Berheide, eds., *Women, the Family, and Policy: A Global Perspective* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 5.





dogmatization to a flexible and integrative contextualization will guide us to comprehend the holistic and all-inclusive nature of the Johannine missiology. The holistic presentation of John's missiology is discernible through the integration of the physical, psychological, spiritual, familial, and communitarian emotions of diverse people groups and their life situations. John emphasizes the aspect of witnessing the truth that is salvific in essence. Thus, John's missiology is a *missiology par-excellence*.

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