

Koinonia in I John

by

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Preface

In his doctoral dissertation on Koinonia in Christian Literature to 200 A.D., Stuart Dickson Currie¹ reviewed the occurrence of the word, koinonia, in John and noted the obvious facts. He suggested "fellowship" or "company" as the most fitting translation and also pointed out the singular characteristics of the Johannine occurrences.

To begin with, the usage is uncommon for John. It is an abstract noun; and John uses it only four times, all in the first epistle. (The related verb, koinonein, appears in 2 Jn 11; the adjective, koinos, in Apoc 21.27.) Secondly, its grammatical structure is unique. Whereas one might expect to find a verb, one finds instead a phrase consisting of the verb, echein, the noun, koinonia, and the preposition, meta, followed by a noun or pronoun in the genitive case. Finally, the sense in which John uses the word, koinonia, is decidedly different from that in which Paul uses it.²

Responding to a personal inquiry regarding possible avenues of further research, Dr. Currie, in a letter dated March 25, 1967, said that if he were to return to his own work, he would reconsider the section on John.³ It is this

¹S. D. Currie, Koinonia in Christian Literature to 200 A.D., (Emery University, 1962), p. 64.

²Currie followed pretty closely the conclusions reached by H. Sessemann, Der Begriff Koinonia im NT, (Giessen, 1933), esp. pp. 92-99.

³"I am far from settled in my own mind about the origin and significance of the usage in I John. It is to my mind anomalous, and if I were to return to the study of koinonia in the NT, this would be one of the places where my attention would be keenest." This thesis is investigating the significance of the term and leaves the question of its origin to another investigation.

problem to which this thesis attempts to turn more thorough attention: the precise significance of the term, koinonia, in Johannine usage.

Obviously, the fundamental lexical work involved in this study will be rather limited. With only a four-fold occurrence (I Jn 1.3 (twice), 6, 7) as a major focus, even consideration of synonyms, antonyms, etc., can shed little extra light. Yet such an investigation must begin at this point, though the conclusions must not be overemphasized. One must be careful to avoid the pitfall that Barr⁴ cautions against, namely, building a structure from a lexical stock and then assuming that the "shape of the structure reflects or sets forth the outlines of biblical thinking about a subject." In this case it would be fool-hardy to conclude the study of Johannine usage with the simply lexical study.

It is necessary to proceed beyond this point to a further line of research. The word, koinonia, occurs in John's first epistle in a section which gives evidence of being divisible into two very distinct literary units. This fact might have some bearing on the way in which the term is used. It might add or subtract a nuance that could never be gleaned from a simple consideration of the word in itself. Sound exegetical procedure, therefore, demands that each unit be examined carefully and independently in order to discover the precise meaning the term, koinonia, takes on in each passage.

At this point one might reasonably raise the question of authorship. Was the entire epistle written by one person? If so, why are there so many disparate sections? If more than one hand entered into the composition of the letter, why

⁴J. Barr, Biblical Words for Time, (Naperville, 1962), p. 12. Cf. also his earlier work, The Semantics of Biblical Language, (London, 1961), where he lays down the principles of his criticisms. Barr is especially concerned with works of the nature of Kittel's Wörterbuch and the possible unfortunate conclusions to which they can lead.

didn't the final redactor do something about smoothing out the differences in the disparate sections? Why did he choose to leave these sections juxtaposed in our canonical text? These and other questions, interesting and important as they may be will not be considered in this investigation. While they can certainly prove enlightening, especially with regard to literary history or the traditions involved in the passages under consideration, it is sufficient for this study to accept the canonical text as found in the scriptures and work exegetically from that starting point.

For this reason, a guiding principle of this investigation will be to let the epistle comment on the epistle. Wilder⁵ appropriately comments:

But we shall probably do the most justice to the epistle in all its aspects if we recognize its independent character. This carries with it also the rejection of the idea that the epistle was a covering letter or addendum to the Gospel.

While this statement could have definite implications regarding one's opinion about the authorship of the gospel and first epistle, it is not necessary for the success of this present study to examine those implications since the major concern is not the origin, but the meaning and usage of the word, koinonia, in the first epistle alone.

References made to other writings in the Johannine corpus as well as to other NT authors are made only from the literary point of view. Hobbs⁶

⁵A. M. Wilder in his introduction to "The First, Second, and Third Epistles of John," in The Interpreter's Bible, XII (1957), p. 215.

⁶E. C. Hobbs, "Recognition of Conceptuality as a Hermeneutical Tool," Studia Evangelica, III (1961), 471. Hobbs explains how language channels thought and, in a certain sense, limits a thinker. His understanding can be far greater than language allows him to express. Thus one must seek to get beyond the word or phrase to the understanding of the author. It is this understanding that is shared by many, in the opinion of Hobbs, more so than language. Cf. also the interesting work of L. Alonso-Schökel, The Inspired Word, tr. by F. Martin, (New York, 1965).

offers a clear statement of the reason for this position:

...conceptual structures are utilized by perhaps every man who thinks and talks. A given conceptuality may be shared by people who use several different languages; while people of one language may have diverse conceptualities. Nonetheless it is generally the case that people of a given time and place tend to share the same conceptual structure, even more so than the same language--i.e., a conceptuality tends to be more wide-spread than a language.

Thus, on this basis, finding a literary parallel would indicate that what may seem tenuous on the level of language alone is probably stronger on the basis of underlying conceptual structures.

This same principle could guide the research of this topic still one step further. For if people of a given time and place share the same conceptual structures even more than they do language, then it would be interesting to investigate the many suggested Qumrân parallels to John.⁷ It could be possible that both John and the members of the Qumrân community shared conceptual structures, and thus John would not be all that unique in his usage. But scholars have only been able to arrive at high degrees of probability and little more, and thus even though these possible relationships would be interesting to investigate, this thesis will limit itself to the canonical scriptural evidence.

In summary, then, this investigation intends to study the occurrence of

⁷A number of scholars have noted that although John's usage of *koinonia* does not have an OT background (for the contrary position of S. Talmon, "The Sectarian קהילה - A Biblical Noun," *Vetus Testamentum*, III (1953), 133-140) there does seem to be a parallel usage in the occurrences of *yahad* in the Qumrân documents. Cf. M. -E. Boismard, "La littérature de Qumrân," *Cultura Biblica*, XII (1955), 261; F. -M. Braun, "L'arrière-fond du quatrième évangile et la communauté de l'Alliance," *Revue Biblique*, LII (1955), 32; O. Böcher, *Der johanneische Dualismus im Zusammenhang des nachbiblischen Judentums*, (Gütersloh, 1965), p. 139; R. E. Murphy, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and New Testament Comparisons," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XVIII (1956), 271; R. E. Brown, "Second Thoughts X. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament," *Expository Times*, LXXVIII (1967), 21.

of the term koinonia in the Johannine corpus. It will pursue two basic lines of research. A preliminary lexical study of the word and the phrase in which it occurs will be undertaken in order to determine in some fashion the meaning John assigns to the term, and to understand the peculiar grammatical structure he uses to express his ideas.

Then, a more detailed study of the two distinct literary units in which the phrase occurs will follow, in order to determine whether the meaning of the word suffers any change or not.

I wish to express sincere gratitude to all who have contributed to my successful completion of the MA program. I am indebted to my community for providing this opportunity, but especially to Very Reverend Daclan Bluma, O.F.M., for granting the requisite permission, and to Reverend Edgar Smigiel, O.F.M., with whom I learned about and lived in true fellowship. To the theology community (faculty and student body) at Marquette University with whom I spent many pleasant and stimulating hours belongs a very special token of gratitude, but most especially to Fathers Noel Lazure, O.M.I., and Quentin Quesnell, S.J., without whose patient but prodding guidance this study could never have materialized.

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Chapter One

"To have fellowship with..."

The word, koinonia, appears in the entire Johannine corpus only four times, all in the first epistle. Though this fact limits the extent of the investigation to a certain degree, it also offers the possibility of being somewhat exhaustive. The lexical study of the word in itself as well as the phrase in which it appears will help determine its meaning with a considerable amount of accuracy. Furthermore, it will also be possible as a result of this phase of the study to determine whether the grammatical construction used by John in this instance is really as unique as Currie (cf. Preface, p. i) suggests.

The phrase, echein koinoniam meta... occurs in I, 1.3 (twice), 6, 7.¹ In I, 1.3, koinonia is had meth'hemon, who in turn have it meta tou patros kai meta tou huiou autou Iesou Christou. Later in v. 6 it is had met'autou (God, cf. v. 5); and in v. 7 it is had met'allelon. (A textual variation occurs in this latter instance; it will be taken up in Chapter Three, p. 27.)

Koinonia is an abstract noun (this is unusual usage for John; he seems to prefer verbs to abstract nouns)² which could mean association, communion, close relationship (like marriage), participation.³ As a working concept,

¹The system of citation from the Johannine corpus adopted in this study was suggested to me by N. Lazure, who followed a similar system in his own study, Les Valeurs morales de la théologie Johannique, (Paris, 1965), p. 9, note 3. Jn 3.16, for example, refers to John's gospel, chapter 3, verse 16. I, 1.6, is a reference to John's first epistle (the Roman numeral, I), chapter 1, verse 6.

²Cf. Seesemann, op. cit., p. 98, note 5; and p. 98, note 1: "Abstrakte Substantiva sind bei Joh überhaupt selten; pistis fehlt in Ev. und begegnet im Brief nur einmal; pisteuein dagegen findet sich in Ev. 98 mal und im Brief 10 mal. Usw."

³W. Bauer, A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other

"fellowship" will be adopted unless context or our investigations indicate a better choice. Fellowship in our texts is with no less than God the Father! This usage is indeed singular in the New Testament. Paul never uses the word in this way. (He comes close in 1 Cor 10.18, where it has been suggested that altar is an indirect reference to God the Father, but still he does not make explicit mention of God as John does.)⁴

The LXX similarly does not use the word, koinonia, to describe the relationship between God and men.⁵ In fact, koinonia makes only three appearances (Lev 6.2 (5.21); Wis 8.18; 3 Macc 4.6). Though they appear more often, cognates of koinonia are almost exclusively found in the wisdom literature and are used in senses other than that chosen by John.

Further, of all the Hebrew words we can think of, the hbr group best approximates koinonia in sense, but it too is never used in the Old Testament to describe the relationship between God and men. Curiously, the idea seems to be present (e.g., Ex 24.9ff; Ex 6.6ff, where one might expect to find the word but doesn't) but the word appears to be sedulously avoided. And wherever

early Christian literature, 4th rev. and augm. ed. by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, (Chicago, 1952), pp. 439-440; J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, (Grand Rapids, 1949), p. 351; F. Hauck, "koinos, etc." in A Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, (cited henceforth as TDNT), 798.

⁴Hauck, art. cit., 804.

⁵H. Hanse, "echo," in TDNT, II, 817 has suggested that the verb echein fulfills this role in the LXX, but he cites no texts to bear this out. It would be an interesting point to verify in detail. There are two citations in John which would seem to confirm this statement: I, 2.23: "He who confesses the Son has the Father also" -- a clear reference to special relationship with God; and II, 9b: "He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" -- and prior to that the verse claims that he who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God, and even more explicit use of the word "to have" with the noun, God. Yet if such usage is frequent in LXX, it appears to be rare in John: just these two citations.

the hbr words do appear in the Ot, the LXX seems to favor epi to auto and hama to translate them.

The only parallel to John's Greek usage is found in the Hellenistic Jew, Philo.⁶ In Spec. Leg., I, 221, he uses the word to describe the close fellowship between righteous men and God in the cultus, especially in the sacrificial meal (something one would expect in the situation described in Ex 24.9!) and again in Spec. Leg., I, 131, he describes God as the inheritance of the priests and gives as one reason for this the fact that they share with God in the thank-offering rendered to Him. There is one other pertinent locus, Vita Mos., I, 158, where Philo refers to the joy of partnership with the Father and Maker of all on the part of man. Other passages in Philo aren't nearly as pointed as these,⁷ but even these few make it clear that Philo's usage is in the same sense as John's. Thus while John is unique in New Testament literature, he loses this uniqueness in the New Testament world.⁸

His grammatical structure is also different. Koinonia is commonly used with pros, though eis and meta are also found.⁹ John consistently uses it only

⁶Hauck, art. cit., 803.

⁷A complete listing can be found in Philonis Opera quae supersunt, ed. L. Cohn et P. Wendland, (Berolini, 1896-1930), the Index, v. 2, pp. 460-461.

⁸Cf. Introduction, pp. iii-iv, especially note #7.

⁹Hauck, art. cit., 796, cites this as a fact and refers to Seesemann, op. cit., p. 16, for further examples. Yet, cf. J. Y. Campbell, "KOINONIA and its cognates in the NT," Journal of Biblical Literature, LI (1932), 372, who claims that the usage of meta with koinonia is unusual; it is more commonly used with pros. And R. Bultmann, Die Johannesbriefe, (Göttingen, 1967), p. 18, n. 4, says koinonia meta is "nicht grieschisch," though he himself cites Job 34.8 (LXX) and Cor. Herm. XIII, 9, for examples of similar usage. Perhaps what he means is that it is not "expected" Greek usage, but it can be found.

with the latter preposition. The preposition, meta, when used with the genitive denotes the company within which something took place. This bit of information alone doesn't add much to our notion of koinonia, but an examination of other texts in which meta occurs in Johannine literature does prove enlightening.

Jn 13.8 reads: ean me nipso se, ouk echeis meros met' emou. Here is a text clearly analogous to ours: there is the verb, echein, a substantive, the preposition meta, and a reference (in context) to Jesus. The context is that of the washing of the feet at the last supper and the statement is attributed to Jesus as he addresses a hesitant Peter. The underlying notion appears to be that a certain purity (or purification--from sin??) is an unconditional pre-supposition for fellowship with Jesus.¹⁰ Some¹¹ have attempted to draw out baptismal implications from this passage, while others¹² have found this difficult to accept. Perhaps closer investigation might reveal aspects of the argument this writer has not understood, but it appears rather difficult to read a baptismal significance in the given text. It is even more difficult to see a baptismal motif in the koinonia passages which form the subject of this thesis. In fact, at the present time such references seem forced and are better left aside until the evidence uncovers greater strength for the argument.

¹⁰J. Schneider, "meros," in TDNT, IV, 597.

¹¹M. -E. Boismard, in "Le lavement des pieds (Jn 13.1-17)," Revue Biblique, LXXI (1964), 5-24, lists some authors in favor of and some against seeing baptism in this passage. Among those in favor he lists: C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 401-402; C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to John, (London, 1962), pp. 367-8. In addition one might also consult with profit J. Schneider, Die Taufe im Neuen Testament, (Stuttgart, 1952), p. 59.

¹²Boismard, op. cit., p. 6, lists as opposed: W. Bauer, Das Johannesevangelium, (Tübingen, 1925), p. 172; and others who besides denying the baptismal theme, give other interpretations to the action.

Still, the usage of meta in Jn 13.8 under the circumstances described above does strengthen the tentative translation of koinonia as fellowship, especially in the sense of sharing. Boismard¹³ himself comes to a similar conclusion, when he identifies the phrase in this text as an aramaism signifying very close relationship, one in fact that has eschatological overtones. Jewish understanding, he explains, would see here an invitation not only to join himself with Jesus now, but to be assured of being with Him in the future time.

Of even greater significance is the Johannine usage of echein.¹⁴ It occurs some 80x in the gospel and 28x in the first epistle. A number of these latter are especially instructive as viewed in context: echein appears with koinonia, 1.3(twice), 6, 7; parakleton (Jesus), 2.1; entolen, 2.7; 4.21; hulon (Christ), 2.23; 5.12(twice); patera, 2.23; zeon (aionion), 3.15; 5.12(twice); parresian, 2.28; 3.21; 4.17; 5.14; and elpida, 3.3. All these passages speak of having or possessing a variety of items. But each item (apart from Christ or God himself) is possessed in dependence (direct or indirect, of one kind or another) upon a relationship to Christ, or to God the Father (through or because of Christ). Further, when used with a specific "good" of salvation, the word appears to carry the notion of full possession (though notice that the parresia which is possessed in 2.28 and 5.14 seems to come again later--in greater fullness??--in 3.21 and 4.17).

¹³Op. cit., p. 8ff. T. W. Manson, "Entry into Membership of the Early Church," Journal of Theological Studies, XLVIII (1947), 29-30, comments that in the early Church, the proper sequence went something like this: reception of the Spirit, confession of faith, baptism. Where texts invert this sequence, he suggests that we have adjustment on the part of later Christians. The interesting observation confirms our hesitancy to see baptismal overtones in this passage (Jn 13.8) as it stands, and even more so in the passages of I Jn under consideration.

¹⁴Hanse, art. cit., 818ff, esp. 825.

It is interesting to note that in secular usage¹⁵ the theologically significant appearances of echein appear to be predominantly with abstract nouns. Thus John, in using koinonia, appears to select the proper verb, echein, from two points of view: grammatically, it fits better; theologically, it says something that he likes to repeatedly emphasize--present possession of blessing of salvation in Christ. It is also interesting to note as some have suggested that the LXX often uses the word, echein, to describe fellowship with persons, and in later sections of the LXX even fellowship with God.¹⁶ If this last observation is correct, then John has definitely used a word that very aptly emphasizes his viewpoint.

In summary, then, this brief investigation appears to justify the tentative use of "fellowship" as translating John's understanding of koinonia. The unusual usage (fellowship with the Father) might be indicative of a new understanding that was gaining ground and finding increased expression at the time this epistle was being composed. (Further investigation of Philo and Qumrân parallels could add strength to the plausibility of this suggestion.) Still, John's use of koinonia is indeed a powerful expression in New Testament literature.

Further, whereas the grammatical construction is also singular, it is most aptly suited to expressing with due clarity and emphasis the intimate relationship obtaining between God and His Son and men. The combination echein koinonian meta does this admirably well.

A glance at the context of the occurrences of koinonia, however, reveals noticeable differences. Whereas the first two occurrences (v. 3) seem to be

¹⁵Ibid., 817.

¹⁶Ibid., but cf. footnote #5 above for this author's reservations about the statement.

situated in a promise of fellowship with the Father and the Son, the next two occurrences (vv. 6 and 7) are situated in a moral context: a criterion for determining whether or not one truly has the fellowship he claims to have. Literary analysis in fact does confirm the judgment that we are actually dealing with two distinct literary units here. It is to this question that we now turn more diligent attention.

Chapter Two

The Proem: I John 1.1-4

The Promise of Fellowship

A preliminary examination of the proem reveals a number of characteristics that confirm the opinion that this section forms a literary unit by itself.¹ At least three thematic words appear with unusual repetition in this brief passage: akekoamen (vv. 1, 3); heorakamen (vv. 1, 2, 3); and apangellomen (vv. 2, 3). Verses 1 and 3 contain the repeated "ho" constructions which sign them as intimately related.

At the same time, however, verse 2 appears to be an extraneous insertion. It lacks the repeated "ho" construction of vv. 1 and 3; it develops in parenthetical fashion a theme that is merely mentioned in v. 1; and the proem would read reasonably well by omitting this verse. Yet upon closer investigation

¹In the introduction to his own very recent commentary on the Johannine epistles, R. Bultmann, Die drei Johannesbriefe, (Göttingen, 1967), pp. 9-11, highlights the key articles which have contributed to the recognition by present day scholars that the first four verses form a unity, independent of the next section which is delineated differently by various scholars.

The literary analysis of the text attempted in this thesis has been aided by E. Malatesta, The Epistles of St. John: Structured Greek Text, (Fano, 1966), whose work makes it relatively easy to recognize elements such as hook-words, inclusions, etc. Problems of lower criticism were investigated and solved with aid of K. Aland et al, The Greek New Testament, (Stuttgart, 1966), and A. Merk, Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine, (Rome 1964). English versions are drawn from the Revised-Standard translation. Two other indispensable works greatly facilitated grammatical considerations: M. Zerwick's Analysis Philologica Novi Testamenti Graeci, (Romae, 1966³) and the same author's companion volume, Biblical Greek, tr. by J. Smith, (Rome, 1963).

Finally, the key that unlocked the treasures contained in each of these avenues of research was F. Fisher's How To Interpret the New Testament, (Philadelphia, 1967). Other general guidelines were drawn from H. M. Teeple, "Methodology in Source Analysis of the Fourth Gospel," Journal of Biblical Literature LXXXI (1962), 279-286; and from W. Nauck, Die Tradition und Charakter des ersten Johannesbriefes, (Tübingen, 1957).

it does fit into the literary unit of the passage. In addition to containing the thematic words already mentioned above, v.2 also seems to be linked with v. 1 by the word, zoe. Thus the second verse is not all that extraneous, as will be shown briefly, and the proem as a whole does exhibit characteristics of simple literary unity.

The invitational character of this passage seems highlighted by the word, apangellomen (we proclaim), especially as it is related to the other verbs (what we have heard, seen, felt, etc.). Apart from these occurrences in vv. 2, 3. the verb apangellomen appears only once again in all Johannine literature: Jn 16.25. Perhaps it is in view of this that Schniewind² calls the instances in I Jn a "highly specialized use." In classical Greek this word carried an official overtone, even moreso than anangelo, the koine synonym for apangelo. It also signified the activity of an envoy (presbys) in classical Greek. (Cf. Eph. 6.20; 2 Cor 5.20)

The LXX links our word with God's message, or cultic proclamations.³ Its occurrence here in I Jn definitely carries the notion of a message being proclaimed. (Cf. I, 1.5 where John gives one definition of his angelia.⁴)

²J. Schniewind, "apangelo," TDNT, I, 66 translates the German original "sehr prägnant" as "a highly specialized use." At first it seems as if this translation makes the German more significant than was intended, but after careful consideration of the context, the translator is probably correct in his choice of words.

³Ibid.

⁴J. Schniewind, "angelia," TDNT, I, 59-60 reports an interesting observation. The word, angelia, which appears in v. 5 of the first epistle, in its literary history carries with it the notion of announcement or proclamation AND command or order. Some commentators (e.g., Schlatter, Sprache und Heimat des vierten Evangelisten, p. 145) see a parallel to the Hebrew magid a technical term used in the Mekilta to indicate that "God or Sacred Scripture proclaims." If this relationship is valid, it could mean that John has chosen a key Judaic term to become a master concept for his proclamation of the

The ap- as opposed to anangelo bears this suspicion out, for the former verb stresses the role of the speaker. Practically speaking, however, the difference is not really that significant.

Martyroumen⁵ appears in our text together with apangellomen, but does not appear anywhere else in the NT in this conjunction. Of its six instances in the first epistle, only two (1.2; 4.14) bear reference to human-witness. In 4.14 it is through the Spirit that certain knowledge of fellowship with the Father is gained (he abides in us, etc.). It is then that testimony can be given to the fact that the Father has sent his Son as Saviour of the world.

This reference to the Spirit in the latter text (which reference is lacking in I, 1.2) seems to be accepted as a necessary part of witnessing in the Johanneine corpus. In Jn 15.26f it is the Spirit of truth who bears witness and the disciples too are witnesses. One of these disciples bears witness to the crucifixion and death of Jesus, that we might believe (19.30-37). Another witness, the Baptist, has seen the Spirit descending on Christ and he bears witness that this is the Son of God. (1.34)

True, Jn 15.27 cites Jesus as describing his disciples as witnesses, because of their being with Him from the beginning and this reference is obviously to eye-witnessing. Further, the various verbs of the senses used in

message. (Cf. W. Bacher, Die Exegetische Terminologie der Jüdischen traditionsliteratur, Darmstadt, 1965; Leipzig, 1899, 1905), p. 33 for discussion of the term haggadah; but note also that Bacher does not see the parallelism that Schlatter suggests; cf. W. Bacher, "Haggada: The Origin of the word Haggada," in Jewish Quarterly Review, Old Series, IV (1892), 406-429.

⁵ H. Strathmann, "martyrs," TDNT, IV, 498, claims that the word has special usage in John, referring to the figure of Jesus as such, His person and significance. It is this insight that persuaded me of the possibility of seeing in the proem a thrust toward faith-witnessing. The message of the proem seems to want to impress the hearers not so much with the facticity of the Incarnate Christ, but rather with his significance. It is this which demands faith.

our passage also might seem to favor eye-witnessing (we have seen, heard, etc.). Still the purpose of this announcement is to bring about fellowship with the preacher (or writer) and thus the real thrust of the passage is to win additional faith-witnesses. Those who (perhaps) have eye-witnessed and believed (the more important consideration!) now invite others to join the group of believers by accepting the testimony mentioned in v. 2.⁶

The next question of interest is precisely what is being announced or borne witness to. One hint might be sought in the four-fold occurrence of a neuter singular pronoun, ho, in v. 1 and a single appearance in v. 3. In v. 1, the first occurrence is nominative, the other three, accusative. But one wonders why the neuter form occurs when its only point of reference in context can be either logos (m) or zoe (f).

There are a number of possible explanations. For one, John frequently uses a neuter to represent a masculine subject (cf. I, 5.4 and 5; Jn 3.6 and 5; 4.22 and 23; 6.37a and b; 6.39 and 40; 17.2; 17.10 and 9). Thus in our case, he could be referring to logos. And then one must decide whether he simply intends "word" or THE Logos.

Another explanation⁷ suggests that John's neuter ho translates an indeclinable Aramaean d^e and could well be replaced with the Greek hon (masculine) and read as a clear reference to logos.

⁶Cf. H. A. Grey, "I John 1, 1-3," Expository Times, LXII (1957), 285. Cf. also H. Alford, The Greek Testament, v. iv, rev. by E. F. Harrison, (Chicago, 1958), pp. 424-5, for a good listing of various opinions on this point.

⁷J. Héring, "Y a-t-il des Aramaïsmes dans la Première Épître Johannique?" Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, XXXVI (1956), 115. Cf. also J. DeZwaan, "John wrote in Aramaic," Journal of Biblical Literature, LVII (1938), 155-171. On the other hand, regarding Semitic influences in general, cf., O. A. Piper, "I John and the Didache of the Primitive Church," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVI (1947), 44off.

Whatever the merit of these explanations, the final redactor saw fit to leave the neuters even though a parallel phrase in I, 2.13 contains a masculine form that clearly refers to the Logos. Thus, there does seem to be an awareness of a person in our passage, but this apparently deliberate ambiguity makes one wonder whether the redactor was more intent at this point upon the significance of the person than upon his facticity. Perhaps he was interested more in the person's message. This writer is inclined to accept such reasoning.

Further, the announcement is made about the word (peri tou logou) and one is almost immediately tempted to identify logos here with the Logos of Jn 1.1. Yet the structure does not allow such a hasty conclusion. The discussion above (concerning the neuters) provides some basis for the hesitation. Other occurrences of logos in the epistle add more basis. (Cf. 1.1; 2.5; 2.7, 14) One might be prone to see a possible indication of the Logos in 1.1 and 2.14, but this is rather difficult to prove conclusively.

This is not to say that the Logos idea is not there at all. Context would seem to indicate the contrary; it lurks in the background. The point is that the author does not seem interested in personifying logos in the proem.⁸

The preposition, peri,⁹ sheds some light on our conclusion. Logos could have been put directly into the accusative if the author was simply interested in the message. The preposition restores a bit of the person to the context; the neuter form of pronouns reduces the dimension of person and points

⁸R. Kittel and others, "logos," TDNT, IV, 127, argues from the neuter article and from general structure of the proem that the personification of the word has not yet taken place; it is still a dynamic equation of this word with Jesus Christ. Cf. also Grey, art. cit., 285.

⁹Cf. Alford, op. cit., p. 422, who links peri closely to the word, akekoamen, and thus adds strength to the opinion developed in this thesis emphasizing the importance of the significance of the person, or of his message.

(so it seems) more to the message or significance of the person.

Anxiety about seeing the Logos in our passage is erroneously heightened by the phrase, ap'arches. But note the contrast with Jn 1.1--en arche. Basically, this phrase, ap'arches, simply denotes a first point of time according to context.¹⁰ In our instance the phrase seems to delineate the logos, in its first temporal appearance. Thus the phrase points toward the Incarnation, but also leaves room for the message of the Incarnate Logos. In any case, simple identification with Jn 1.1 seems to be ruled out.

Other occurrences of the phrase, ap'arches, in the epistle seem to point more in the direction of the message, the preaching. This seems especially to be true in 2.7, 24; 3.11. This latter text even makes specific reference to an angelia which was heard!

To move on, the logos is described in I, 1.1 as a logos of life (genitive of quality), i.e., a word that is life-giving or life-promising, or life possessing. The hook-word in v. 2 tells us that it (this life) appeared visibly, and the explanation continues: it is everlasting and was with the Father.

The relative pronoun, hetis, is generally used with an indeterminate antecedent.¹¹ But when used with a determinate antecedent (zoe here) the word is considered not as individual, but as of such a nature. Thus the author's use of zoe (as opposed to psyche) and hetis indicate that his message concerns a special kind of life, everlasting life, which the logos possesses or gives.¹²

¹⁰G. Delling, "arche," in TDNT, I, 481, Cf. also A. P. Salom, "Some aspects of the Grammatical Style of I John," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXIV (1955), 102, where he identifies this phrase as a semitism, and points out its frequent occurrence in the epistle as contrasted with a very rare occurrence in the Gospel.

¹¹M. Zerwick, Biblical Greek, tr. by J. Smith, (Rome, 1963), p. 68.

¹²R. Bultmann, "zoe," TDNT, II, 870, notes John's distinction be-

This life is further described as being pros ton patera (Pater in John is used to designate God the Father, except when context obviously militates against this, as e. g., I, 2.13, 14). The phrase occurs again in I, 2.1 with reference to the parakleton, Jesus Christ. Thus the fact that both zoe and parakleton are pros ton patera and therefore are in some way related begins to emerge here, and is indeed explicitated in I, 2.24-25 and I, 5.11, 13, 20. The person does indeed begin to loom large in our consideration, but he is presented as an object of faith. The central thrust continues to be that of arousing faith.

True, the text of v. 2 clearly says that this life appeared in visible fashion (ephanerothe). The aorist indicates a single realization and in view of its visibility undoubtedly points to the Incarnation. But this fact only underscores the difference between v. 2 and vv. 1, 3-4 and strengthen the opinion that v. 2 might have been a later addition. It is in trying to explain the reason for the present position of v. 2 that one can conjecture that the author considered it sufficient to point to his concern for and interest in the historical Jesus in this verse while leaving the deceptive neuters in vv. 1 and 3 in order to make a stronger appeal to faith in the testimony of the believers who are summoning their readers/listeners to fellowship with the Father and the Son.

There still remain to be investigated the verbs in our passage. The fact that they are verbs of sensing might again prompt a hasty conclusion in favor of a primary interest in the actual historical existence of a person, the Logos.

tween psyche and zoe. Psyche is natural life to which death is the terminus, but zoe is eternal life, the life by which God himself lives. Jesus is zoe (Jn 11.25; 14.6) and he who believes in him gains this life (Jn 3.15; 5.24; 20.31). Thus the poem appears as a call to take a rightful share in the life this community of believers already possesses. Cf. also J. Frey, "Le Concept de 'Vie' dans l'Évangile de S. Jean," in Biblica, I (1920), 35-58; and also R. E. Brown, The Gospel According to John, (Garden City, 1966), pp. 505-508.

The following analyses, however, seem rather to indicate that real concern is for the message, or the significance of the person.

The verb, akekoamen (we have heard), in the perfect tense (I, 1.1, 3) points to lasting effects, a present state of affairs. Of the 13 appearances in the first epistle, a good number (1.5; 2.7; 2.24-25; 3.11; 4.5, 6 (twice) make a link with the angelia or the message that was heard from the beginning. True, it is difficult to distinguish the message from the person, but the primary interest in these passages seems to center on the message that was heard.¹³ Accordingly, two passages stand out as especially significant: 4.6 (twice). Mention is made that whoever knows God listens to us; if one has first listened to the message of God (I, 1.1-4) and has found fellowship with Him, one knows God. And knowing God and his message, one can identify it in others. Perhaps this is why the author can boldly say we are of God. Perhaps in this passage (4.6) he hearkens back to the proem where emphasis is placed on fellowship with God. This seems to be the desired result of listening.

The next verb, heorakamen (we have seen), appears only 7x in the first epistle, and of these, three appearances are in the proem. In this connection it is linked with akekoamen and martyroumen, and this latter relationship appears in other passages in the gospel. Jn 1.34 has the Baptist say that he has seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God. In Jn 3.32, the Baptist says that Christ has seen and bears witness to what He has seen; Christ tells us this of Himself in Jn 3.11. And finally, and perhaps most tellingly, the

¹³R. Kittel, "akouo," TDNT, I, 220, observes that there is a strong emphasis in the NT on hearing, for it offers salvation or solutions, but also demands a response. Thus he concludes, "the only marks to distinguish true hearing from purely physical hearing are faith (Mt 8.10) and action (Mt 7.16)." This appears to be borne out in our passage. The original hearers responded with faith; now they strive to pass on what they heard in order to arouse faith in new hearers.

author of the gospel in 19.34 clearly states: he who saw it has borne witness-- that you also may believe. This seems to bear out our understanding of I,1.1-4.¹⁴ The proclamation is made by an eye- (or perhaps simply a group of faith-) witness(es) with a view to adding others to the circle of believers.

The added emphasis given to true eye-witnessing by the phrase "with our own eyes" (cf. v.1) still does not weaken our emphasis on the thrust of faith. Cf. Mt 13.16; Lk 10.23; and Lk 2.30 which exemplify a usage that points toward faith-understanding. John's gospel has an abundance of such passages where "seeing" is accompanied by, or equivalent to believing: e.g., 1.50-51; 14.155; 19.35, 20.29, etc.¹⁵

Tense changes play a significant role here. The perfect tenses of akekoamen-heorakemen point to experiences that have had lasting effects. It is the resulting, the present state of affairs that is important: the faith of the speaker or writer.

The next two words in the aorist (etheasametha-epselaphesan) describe punctiliar action: at one time we perceived with understanding (the light finally

¹⁴W. Michaelis, "horao," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum NT (henceforth cited as TWNT), V, 345, in discussing what he terms "sehen des glaubens" appears to underplay the eye-witnessing element and gives more room to the notion of faith-witnessing. Specifically, he claims the word theaomai by itself does not strengthen the case for eye-witnessing. He also lists two interesting parallels which appear to add weight to our argument: Jn 3.32, as we mentioned in the text above, links seeing and hearing, though not in eye-witnessing sense; and the same seems true of Lk 24.39, a resurrection context where seeing and feeling are mentioned, though the thrust of the passage appears to be concerned rather with what is grasped or understood. Yet in a certain sense, the evidence is not really that strong in either direction. The words just discussed appear in such widely different contexts that it is nearly impossible to draw any very strong conclusions regarding precise meaning. Cf. also C. C. Tarelli, "Johannine Synonyms," Journal of Theological Studies, 47/48 (1946-47), 175-177, for a better appreciation of such ambiguities in John.

¹⁵Still, one must examine each citation carefully, as R. Brown, The Gospel According to John, (Garden City, 1966), p. 501ff points out.

dawned) and we also handled physically (grasped firmly...intellectually???) this message (perhaps even the person).¹⁶

The inverted order of the words akekoamen-heorakamen in vv. 1 and 3 does not seem to be of any consequence for interpretation.

Inconsistent use of the next verb, etheasametha (we have perceived), on the part of the author raises some problems for interpretation. Its three occurrences in the first epistle do not reveal very much (1.1; 4.12, 14). Bauer¹⁷ suggests that this word can indicate either seeing with physical eyes, or seeing with physical eyes but attaining spiritual perception. Yet the author interchanges this verb frequently with horao. (Cf. I, 4.12 and 4.20; also Jn 1.12; and I, 4.14 and Jn 1.34).¹⁸ Yet one wonders whether in an instance such as ours where both horao and theaomai occur in close proximity the author does not really mean to distinguish the two, as we suggested in the preceding discussion of the tenses. Allowing for the importance and validity of actual eye-witnessing indicated by heorakamen, the author could be moving on to the fact that spiritual perception followed (etheasametha) and faith resulted...and it is this which is intended to incite others to join the ranks of believers. The fact that etheasametha is used in conjunction with martyroumen in I, 4.14 seems to add strength to this possibility.

The final verb of sensing in our passage, epselaphesan ai cheires hemon (our hands have touched) is a hapax legomenon in the epistle and occurs only three other times in the NT (all without the noun "hands"): Lk 24.39 in

¹⁶Cf. Alford, op. cit., p. 423, who lists opinions (but without specific references to the authors cited) that differ from the one adopted in this study.

¹⁷W. Bauer, A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament, (Chicago, 1952), p. 353.

¹⁸Cf. Tarelli, art. cit.

resurrection context; Acts 17.27 indicating a search for God; and Heb 12.18 with reference to God's self-revelation at Sinai.

It is difficult to interpret the phrase. Other occurrences of the word "hands" in Johannine literature reveal that it is used more often in a figurative (Jn 3.34; 10.28, 29, 39; 13.33) than a literal (11.44; 13.9?) sense. Still the construction in our passage appears to be a deliberate attempt to convey the idea of actual grasping. At this point we call on the evidence of the preceding pages with reference to the context of the other verbs, tense changes, etc., to support our inclination to believe that perhaps the author intended this phrase to point beyond that which seems to be its most obvious meaning.

All the above verbs have been used in the first person plural, and one wonders whether this is just an editorial plural, or a real plural. In our own discussion we have been favoring a real plural: the author speaks of himself, to be sure, but also of a group of which he forms a very prominent part. I, 2.18ff talks of we and us as if referring to a group; they went out from us also indicates that some members departed from the group, and were never really a part of the group. Thus, even though there may be other indications in the letter to contradict our position, there seem to be enough to support it too. The we refers to a real group of witnesses.¹⁹

The content of the message as well as the proclamation itself have been

¹⁹C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, (London, 1956), pp. 9-16, claims that we have here a "preacher's plural" but in wider context he does think it includes more than just the individual speaker or writer. Stauffer, TDNT, II, 355, makes this interesting general observation about the use of We and I in Johannine writings. We, he says, generally introduces words of confession behind which stands a whole circle of witnesses and confessor. One speaks in the name of many with whom he knows he is united in faith and in knowledge. I, on the other hand, is always used authoritatively when ethical conclusions are drawn from common theological assumptions (cf. I, 2.7; 2.12ff). Cf. also Bultmann, Die Drei Johannesbriefe, pp. 15-16.

geared to one effect: that the recipients might have fellowship with those delivering the angelia. Then a contrast is drawn with the use of kai...de in the next occurrence of koinonia: our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. One might think that it is necessary first to establish fellowship with the community and only then with the Father and Son. This may be so, but one must be careful not to draw the distinction too carefully. The next passage (cf. Chapter Three) seems to indicate the reverse (one's fellowship with God will be reflected in one's relationship to the community and its individual members).²⁰ The real essential point here is fellowship with God; this is basic. Fellowship with the community is important only insofar as it itself is a living fellowship with God the Father and his Son.

Note too how the notion of real sharing is prominent in this passage. The entire thrust indicates concern on the part of those calling to fellowship that the readers/listeners should also be able to share what they themselves share in. Fellowship with God is seen to be intensely personal, as we indicated in Chapter One. And it also involves fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He, in fact, is the one who showed us that this fellowship was at all possible.

This latter consideration opens a discussion on a rather important topic in this passage: the christology of the epistle. Our text simply refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. This is important in itself, but must be complemented by the thought pattern of the entire epistle.

²⁰Cf. N. Lazure, Les Valeurs morales de la theologie Johannique, (Paris, 1965), p. 41, where he explains that the Son came into this world in order to form a koinonia among those who accept his message (I, 1.3) and thus community must take its source and foundation from life in God. Further, on p. 132, he indicates that the epistles indeed emphasize the ecclesial dimension of christian life much more strongly than the gospel. Still, proper perspective must not lose sight of the fact that one's relationship to God is basic.

There seem to be three key statements of Christology in the epistle.²¹ For one, Jesus is the Christ (I, 2.22; cf. also Jn 1.20; 3.28; 7.26, 41; 9.22; 10.24). Secondly, Jesus is the Son of God (I, 4.15; 5.5; cf. also Jn 1.34, 39; 6.69; 10.36). Sometimes both these notions are combined as in our passage (I, 1.1, 3; cf. also Jn 11.27; 20.31). And thirdly, there is the very significant statement that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (I, 4.2; cf. also I, 1.7; 5.6).

In all instances Jesus is of primary concern and this indicates an awareness of the historical, human personality known by the name, Jesus. But the predicate also tells much about him. This Jesus is the Son of God, he is also the Christ, the messiah who fulfilled messianic hopes (cf. Jn 1.34; 1.49; 11.27; 20.31). References to Jesus as the Christ could only be understood in a Jewish setting; this tells us something about the recipients of this letter.

But there are also other ideas in the letter that enrich the Christ-title: Jesus is the unique son of the Father (4.9); He was with God from the beginning (1.2; etc.); He is the mediator between God and man (2.1); he is divine in nature (4.15).

The promise of fellowship, therefore, is more than an invitation; it is a challenge. It requires confession (homologeïn; cf. I, 2.23; 4.2; 4.15) which springs from faith. Further, because of the Jewish implications and presuppositions in this letter, we may conclude that at the writing of this letter the author realized that many who believed were afraid to confess (for fear of persecution??--cf. Jn 12.42) and that he intended to encourage them wholeheartedly. In any case the constant opposition of homologeïn to arneomai²²

²¹Cf. V. H. Neufeld, The Earliest Christian Confessions, (Grand Rapids, 1963), pp. 69-107 presents a good summary of the usage of homologeïn in the Johannine corpus.

²²The contrast between homologeïn and arneomai calls to mind the

in this epistle points to the author's convictions that a strong external profession of faith is necessary at this time.

In I, 1.4 there occurs a minor textual variation. The reading, hemeis (we), is favored by \aleph , A*, B, P, ψ , while humin (to you) is supported by A^c, C, K. Interpretation of the text is not much affected by one or the other choice. While the combined evidence of \aleph , and B, strongly urge the adoption of humeis, there would seem to be good reason for favoring humin. We favor this latter lection because it seems to be more consonant with other instances of the verb pattern graphomen humin that occur in this epistle (cf. 2.12-14; 5.13).²³

Of greater importance is the word graphomen (we are writing). Three of the ten occurrences of this verb in the first epistle are followed by hina: 1.4; 2.1; 5.12. John expresses his set purposes for writing: that your joy may be complete, that you may avoid sin, that you may know that you have eternal life. (Cf. also the numerous parallels in the last supper account: tauta lelaleka humin hina...Jn 15.1; 16.1; 16.25; etc.)

Yet, of special significance is the parallel to Jn 21.24 (a witness has written) and 20.31 (that you may believe). In our passage the author writes

contrast between doing and lying which will occur in the next chapter of this study. At that point, perhaps the relationship between these pairs can be explained with better insight than at the present moment.

²³B. Metzger, The Text of the New Testament, (New York and London, 1964), pp. 191-2, in commenting on scribal errors states: "So widespread was this kind of scribal error that the testimony of even the best manuscripts respecting personal pronouns is liable to suspicion, and one's decision between such variant readings must turn upon consideration of fitness in the context." Alford, op. cit, p. 425 also adds: "The reading, hemeis, finds no favour with most of the modern critical editors, as neither does hemon below." Unfortunately none of these moderns is identified and I could find no corroboration of this statement.

what has been witnessed, and it seems as if the gospel texts would confirm the hunch that the author has written this proem to stir belief. He, in the name of a group of believers, is trying to stir others to belief.

The pronoun, tauta, which generally refers to what has preceded appears to bear out the above conclusion regarding graphomen. True, biblical Greek²⁴ sometimes uses this pronoun to refer to information that follows, but in our instance it is that which has preceded that should fill the listeners with joy (chara). The body of the epistle speaks rather of criteria for determining one's fellowship with God, or lack of it. This may not always make a person happy.

Joy (chara) is a hapax legomenon in the first epistle. The word appears again in 2 Jn 12 with slight variation (inversion of two words); and in 3 Jn 4 with the word echein. While the first two occurrences don't seem to indicate too much, the third brings to mind all the comments made earlier regarding echein (cf. p. 5). Thus John considers joy as a present possession, had in relationship to Christ, but something which (in this instance, anyway) may also grow or develop or be filled up. Schnackenburg describes the process aptly as "das Wirklichwerden einer Möglichkeit."²⁵ This wish of John's will indeed come true, if all that he has mentioned in the first three verses is verified: i.e., if one truly establishes fellowship with God and Jesus, one's joy will indeed be full.

Still another hapax in the epistle, the word pepleromene (fulfilled or completed) which describes the joy mentioned in v. 4, appears again in 2 Jn 12. Some interpreters²⁶ would try to distinguish it from teleiousthai (to end, to

²⁴Zerwick, Biblical Greek, p.67.

²⁵R. Schnackenburg, Die Johannesbriefe, (Freiburg, 1953), p.56.

²⁶Bultmann, Die drei Johannesbriefe, p. 20, n. 3.

finish, etc.). But John does not seem to respect this distinction (cf. I, 2.5 and Jn 3.29).

The final consideration needs to focus on one more textual variation. The word hemon (our), which modifies joy in verse 4 is supported by: δ , B, ψ ; while hymon (your), is found in A, C^{2vid}, K, P. Almost all translations favor our.²⁷ Yet other contexts in which graphomen occurs with hina (2.1; 5.12) suggest that the author would be prone to say "your" instead of "our." It is interesting to note that in point of fact, this very structure does appear (with slight variation, and with a variant reading for the key word--hymon--under discussion) in 2 Jn 12. Again, though the combined evidence of δ and B strongly urge the adoption of hemon, it seems that context here could justify hymon, which we adopt.²⁸ This choice too is of no major consequence for the ultimate meaning of the text.

²⁷For the contrary position, cf. Bultmann, op. cit.,

²⁸Cf. footnote #23 for appropriate comment.

CONCLUSION

The proem to John's first epistle has a distinctive invitational character. A very strong appeal is made by a group (or spokesman for the group) to others that they should join this community of faith. The group manifests its testimony that this is what they have heard from the very beginning. This message, this testimony is life, eternal life, life which was with the Father from the beginning. This life appeared in visible form and it is about this that the testimony is being given.

The readers/listeners are invited to join in the circle of believers by becoming themselves believers, by first establishing contact or fellowship with God and his Son. When this is done, the circle of believers can grow with new members.

The invitation to koinonia is thus more than a simple promise or exhortation. It is a challenge, it places a demand on the hearer to respond with faith, to confess too that Jesus is the Christ, that he has come in the flesh, that he is the Son of God.

Because of the terminology involved the invitation or promise as it stands within the epistle appears to be addressed especially to Jews. Thus this may or may not include eye-witnesses to the life and work of Jesus. Most probably these were not eye-witnesses and thus their response will depend pretty much upon the strength of the testimony given by those extending the invitation. Yet if they respond and establish fellowship with God and his Son, then indeed their joy will be full, their potentiality will be actualized, and they will experience something the likes of which they have never known before. It is here for the taking.

Chapter Three

1 John 1.5-10

Criterion for Fellowship with God

After a careful reading of the proem, the reader has no difficulty recognizing the promise of fellowship and the invitational character of the passage. Closer scrutiny even reveals the riches to which the invitation calls, fellowship with God and his Son Jesus Christ resulting in eternal life for the participant. In the passage immediately following, however, i.e., vv. 5-10, even the cursory reader notes a shift of mood and emphasis. The accent is now on norms or criteria for determining whether a person truly has fellowship with God or not.

The analysis of literary elements in the passage provides even more form assurance that this passage can indeed be considered as a literary unit distinct from and independent of the proem.¹ The words pseudometha (v. 6) and pseusten (v. 10) have been suggested as forming an inclusion and signaling the literary unity of this section.² While this suggestion has some merit, it also labors under difficulties: the words are actually two different words, and

¹Most scholars agree that the proem is indeed a distinct literary unit. It is identifying and separating the other units that presents a diversity of opinion. Bultman, Die drei Johannesbriefe, pp. 9-12 has outlined the progress of his own position in comparison with other articles since 1927 to the present time. According to his view that the author of the epistle used a source upon which he wrote a commentary, Bultman identifies 1.5-2.2 as the basic source which was later amplified. His outline can be seen in clear and schematic form in his article, "Johannesbriefe," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, III (1959), 836-839.

Another interesting and brief summary of opinion on the division of this epistle can be found in J. C. O'Neill, The Puzzle of I John, (London, 1966), terminating with his own view, on p. 6, that the epistle consists of "twelve poetic admonitions belonging to the traditional writings of the Jewish movement," each of which has been enlarged and commented on to show how Jesus fulfilled all. The theory is interesting, even if the argumentation is not always convincing.

²E. Malatesta, The Epistles of St. John, (Fano, 1966), p. 11.

they refer to different subjects. A more reasonable inclusion of v. 6 is with v. 8 by reason of their parallel construction (v. 6: ean eipomen hoti... ou poioumen ten aletheian; v. 8: ean eipomen hoti...aletheia ouk estin en hemin). Then vv. 9 and 10 contrast with each other, the former making God pistos, and the latter, pseustes.

Verse 5 stands just outside the inclusion and repeats some of the key words of the proem in slightly different form: anangellomen³ (cf. v. 2: spangellomen); he angelia hen akekoamen (cf. vv 1 and 3). These differences suggest that the final redactor might have inserted this verse as a logical connective between the apparently diverse strands of material that constitute the units vv. 1-4 and vv. 6-10.

Further indications of literary unity of vv. 6-10 include the word, hamartia, which in addition to being a hook-word in vv. 7-8 is also one of the thematic words of the unit (cf. vv. 7, 8, 9(twice), 10). Other thematic words as skotia (vv. 5, 6) and phos (vv. 5, 7(twice)) also play an important role in understanding this passage.

The theme of this passage is stated in clear terms in v. 5: ho theos phos estin. (Notice that later in the epistle, I, 3.11, the angelia is that we should love one another. The relationship of this to our verse will be made clearer as we proceed in the investigation.) This is the only place in the

³Cf. P. Jouon, "Le verbe αναγγελλω dans Saint Jean," Recherches des Sciences Religieuses XXVIII (1938), 234.

⁴Since God is light, one might attempt to draw lines of further development toward life (zoe), through such texts as I, 2.10, or I, 3.14. J. Weisengof, "Light and its relationship to life in St. John," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, VIII (1946), 448-451, draws from the complete Johannine corpus conclusions along these lines, but these are very often rather difficult to sustain with scientific exegesis. Efforts along such lines in this thesis did not prove exegetically acceptable and would require lengthy excursions beyond the limits set for this investigation

Johannine corpus where this statement is made. In the gospel, Jesus is the light (3.12; 9.5; 12.46). The identification of Jesus and the Father with light also relates them to each other, and helps understand why fellowship with one includes fellowship with the other.⁴

Note also that an immediate antithesis is drawn in v.5 by mention of darkness. God is light; there is no darkness in him at all. Vv. 6-7 continue: one must make a choice--either to be in light, or to be in darkness. There is no middle ground. If we walk in light, we have fellowship with God (v. 6 stated positively), since God is light (v. 5). Conversely, in God there is no darkness at all (v. 5). If we walk in darkness, we have no fellowship with God (v.6).

In I, 2.9-10, the measure of one's relationship to God, one's walking in the light, is love for one's brother. Loving one's brother indicates that one abides in light, that is, one has an intimate (and somewhat enduring or permanent) relationship to God, and therefore has life. Hating one's brother indicates that one is not related to God, one has no fellowship with Him, and therefore does not have life.

This criterion for fellowship with God raises the problem of the textual variation in v. 7. Some manuscripts in speaking of koinonia there, claim that instead of met'allelon which is strongly attested and almost universally accepted, one should read: met'autou. The only major manuscript to record this is A*.

⁵H. Seesemann, op. cit., p. 93, note 2, is perhaps the most complete treatment of the problem. Bultmann holds the same opinion in his earlier, "Analyse des ersten Johannesbriefes," in Festgabe für A. Jülicher, (Tübingen, 1927), p. 139, note 1; and in his most recent Die drei Johannesbriefe, p. 24, note 2. O'Neill, op. cit., pp. 9-10 is also a clear and concise treatment of the problem.

For a contrary opinion, however, cf. Schnackenburg, op. cit., p. 82, and A. R. George, Communion with God in the New Testament, (London, 1953), p. 212.

Both Seesemann and Bultmann maintain this reading.⁵ The former feels it is necessary because otherwise the following sentence reads rather awkwardly in that context. The latter, who also feels the following statement as awkward and identifies it as a later, church redaction, simply drops v. 7c, and retains met'autou because it seems to fit in better with the general thrust of the passage.

It also seems that both scholars pay no heed to the contrast in v. 3a to which these verses (6-7) might be an echo. And in neither case does the author explain how or why the reading met'allelon, which he rejects, should have been so widely attested, even in manuscripts earlier than the one upon which his argumentation is based. For this reason the more weighty evidence urges us to accept the more familiar reading: met'allelon.

The light-darkness pattern appears related in vv. 6-7 to still another contrasting pattern: truth-lying. If one is in darkness and says he has fellowship with God, he lies and does not do the truth (v. 6). Stated positively, if one is in light, and claims to have fellowship with God, he tells the truth and does the truth.

The contrast is of especial importance because its expression in our text takes the form of a semitism: to do the truth.⁶ Truth and falsehood in John's mind do not seem to be abstractions, but rather actions, things that are done and that carry with them grave consequences, in fact, they are a pattern of acting that becomes a way of life.

⁶Bultmann and others, "aletheia," TDNT, I, 247, has a very pertinent observation on this point. He says that in John the "criterion for knowing whether something is of God or not is actual conduct, i.e., the hearing or non-hearing of the word proclaimed in the Community. Thus, aletheia, insofar as it is proclaimed, can be right doctrine, and pseudos, error (I Jn 2.21), while poieo ten aletheian in I, 1.6 as the opposite of pseudesthai, characterizes a way of

Chapter three of John's gospel sheds appropriate light on this explanation. God sent his Son, that whoever believes in him might have eternal life (v. 16). Light (his Son) has come into the world (v. 19) and he who does what is true comes to the light (v. 21) "that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God." Thus, doing the truth is a deed worked "in God," in fellowship with God and his Son.

The light-darkness and truth-lying contrasts here have been considered merely as contrasts. John seems simply to be working with pairs. It might be suggested that these are traces of a dualism. To make a serious investigation of this suggestion would take us beyond the stated limits of this thesis, but one thing does stand out with sufficient clarity to justify our belief that these are simply pairs, and nothing more. In extra-biblical dualism, the struggle between paired forces is personalized to the extent that one is dealing with two mutually opposed items. In Johannine literature, wherever this struggle or tension is considered, it is seen to be quite simply between opposing tendencies or drives within a man, and not external to him.⁷ This appears quite clear in the present section under consideration.

life just as *aletheia* in 3 Jn 3 denotes a way of life determined by revelation." Cf. also Bultmann's *Die drei Johannesbriefe*, p. 25, especially note 4; and M. Zerwick, "Veritatem facere (Jn 3.21; I Jn 1.6)," *Verbum Domini*, XVIII (1938), 338-342; 373-77.

⁷ Cf. Bultmann, *Die drei Johannesbriefe*, p. 23. O. Böcher, *Der johanneische Dualismus im Zusammenhang des Nachbiblischen Judentums*, (Gutersloh, 1965), p. 99, points out the ethical nature of this dualism which is not generally to be found in other kinds of dualisms. Cf. also R. E. Brown, "The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XVII (1955), 403-19; 559-574; R. E. Brown, "Second Thoughts X. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament," *Expository Times*, LXXVIII (1967), 21; E. K. Lee, *The Religious Thought of St. John*, (London, 1950), p. 109, who also observes that in John this dualism is neither absolute nor final. For an interesting explanation of John's dualism as originating in Iran, cf. L. Mowry, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the background for the Gospel of John," *Biblical Archeologist*, XVII (1954), 78-97.

The structure of verses 6 and 8 suggest still another interesting relationship which adds one more element to the notion of fellowship, viz., sin.⁸

I, 1.8 If we say that we have fellowship with him and we walk
in darkness
we lie and do not do the truth.

I, 1.8 If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

The word, sin, in the epistle reveals some very key understandings of the author. It appears in the singular in the following situations: with echein in our text, 1.8; with poiein, 3.4; 3.8, 9; in definitions -- sin is lawlessness (anomia) (3.4); and unrighteousness (adikia) is a sin (unto death) (5.17). In Christ there is no sin (3.5). The final two appearances refer to sinning a sin (5.16), an apparent semitism.

The word appears in the plural in conjunction with homologein (1.9); and other words indicating that sins are removed, etc.: katharidzo (1.7); aphe (1.9; 2.12); are (3.5); and hilasmos (2.2; 4.10).

These observations suggest some conclusions. The singular occurrences point to single acts of sin; the plurals describe situations in which one would expect all possible sins to be mentioned. If they are confessed or are to be in some way removed, one wouldn't want to be so stubborn as to say he has only one sin; one would certainly want to be sure that all sins are included. Further, in all the passages treating of the removal of sins, Christ appears to play a role.

Whereas some statements merely indicate that Christ takes away sin, the passages in 2.2 and 4.10 which mention propitiation, as well as 1.7 which mentions blood indicate that the author has an awareness of Christ's redemptive death. He indicates a belief in Christ as a truly historical personage who

⁸W. Grundmann and others, "hamartano," TDNT, I, 305.

has suffered and died for the redemption of man, Thus fellowship with God is related to the redemptive action. If one walks in the light, his sins are forgiven. If one walks in the light (v. 6 in positive fashion), one has fellowship with God.

Our text also reports a phrase that appears 4x in the gospel (9.41; 15.22, 24; 19.11): (not) to have sin. Its varied usage indicates that it can refer to any and every kind of sin. In our text, I, 1.8, John calls the man who makes this statement a liar. If he refuses to admit any sin in his life, he deceives himself, he puts himself into a kind of blindness. He is not in the light, so to speak, and is thus far from the fellowship he claims to have (v. 6), or the fellowship which he is promised and to which he is invited (v. 3).

The verb, poiein, occurs with the noun 4x (1.8; 3.4, 8, 9). But the statements are rather striking, and 3.9 seems especially to contradict our key text, 1.8. Whereas the latter says that anyone who says he has no sin is a liar, 3.9 says no one born of God sins. Note the tenses, however, and observe that poiein appears in the present. Greek tenses deal not so much with the time of an action, as with its quality.⁹ The present tense points to an action in progress, or habitual action. Thus 3.9 says that one born of God cannot possibly sin as a matter of habit, while 1.8 seems to say, but if a man is honest he must admit he's sinned at least once, in some way.¹⁰

The instances of the verb, hamartanein, in the aorist add emphasis to this conclusion. The aorist describes punctiliar action: it happens once.

⁹Cf. M. Zerwick, Biblical Greek, pp. 77ff.

¹⁰This interpretation is personal to myself. For a different opinion, viz., that John here is exaggerating as he presents an ideal to his readers, cf. F. Gryglewicz, Listy Katolickie, (Poznan, 1959), p. 356.

Thus, while 3.9 denies the possibility of habitual sin for one born of God, 2.1 frankly says that if one commits a single sin (punctiliar action) he shouldn't fret, since he has an advocate (parakleton) with the Father, Jesus, who is the hilasmos for our sins.

Hamartanein appears also in the present tense (I, 3.6, 8, 9, etc.) in statements that point to a state of duration, or of one remaining in sin for a longer time. The appearance of the perfect tense in I, 1.10 also makes good sense since that tense speaks of something done once and for all, but the effect of which carries on. Thus, aside from the obvious meaning that it is impossible for man to say he has never failed God even once, the meaning added by the perfect tense is that if we deny we suffer the consequences of our sin, we make a liar out of God, i.e., we reject what he offers us because we tell him we don't need it.

Our passage thus extends the criterion for fellowship with God in still another direction: sin. Relating sin to self-deception (form of lying) and lack of truth merely enriches the complexity of all that is understood by the sacred writer as constituting true fellowship with God.

One of the sin passages (I, 3.9) indicated that no one born of God can sin, or ever commits sin. We already noted that reference here is to habitual sin, a certain duration of action, but consideration of the gennao passages adds still another insight.¹¹ Wherever such passages occur in John there seems to be emphasis on the ethical, or religious and ethical consequences of being born of God: such a person does righteousness (I, 1.29); he does not sin (5.4); and he believes in Jesus as the Christ (5.1). These notions too, from

¹¹F. Büchsel-K. H. Regenstorf, "gennao," TDNT, I, 671, describes John's peculiar and rich use of this term.

from this slightly different point of view, confirm the ideas developed immediately above in the sin passages, and indicate the richness of the notion of fellowship with God.

We have also noted in passing (p. 31) that Christ plays some kind of role in the forgiveness of sins. There appears to be just one condition, according to I, 1.9: we must confess our sins (homologeîn). Zerwick¹² observes that hina in our passage actually should be understood as heste and therefore this clause should be read as consecutive and not final. Thus, if we confess our sins, the actual result will be forgiveness. V. 7 says the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin, while v. 9 clearly states it is God ("faithful and just" are OT designations for God the Father, e.g., cf. Ex 34.6ff) who will forgive our sins. The close association of the verbs katharidzo (vv. 7, 9) and aphiemi (1.9; 2.12) with Christ assures us of the role Christ has on this point.

The concluding verse of our passage (v. 10) is curious: if we say we have not sinned (ever, even a single act of sin) we make of God a liar, and his word is not in us. One wonders how God can be made a liar; and it would seem to be an impossibility. In I, 5.10 the author gives a clue to understanding this passage as he explains that God has born testimony to his son (5.9), he gave us his son and in his son is eternal life (5.11). Whoever has the son has life; and who has not the son does not have life (5.12). But whoever does not believe God or his testimony, also makes a liar out of God (5.10; 1.10).

Elsewhere in the epistle, the liar is he who denies Jesus is the Christ (2.22) and in this denial is also included a denial of the Father as well (2.23). Thus our passage seems to be saying that making a liar out of God amounts to

¹²Zerwick, op. cit., 1. 122.

becoming a living contradiction to his promises, or to what he says he is achieving. It is not that God has become a liar in the sense that man can be a liar: rather it is the case that man does not believe God's promises, since he claims he has no need of what God is offering.

The subsequent phrase seems to bear this out: his word is not in us (1.10). The preposition en carries special weight in Johannine writings.¹³ It is used to describe religious fellowship. Its frequent appearance with enai (I, 2.5b; I, 5.20) or menein (I, 2.6, 24, 28; 3.6, 24; 4.12, 13, 15, 16) points to a personal relationship with God.

In this latter case especially,¹⁴ the Johannine conviction of intimate sharing with God becomes very clear. The immanence is of lasting quality. We abide in God (I, 4.13, 15, 16) and he in us (I, 4.12, 15, 16). We abide in Christ (I, 2.6, 27, 28; 3.6, 24) and Christ in us (I, 3.24). We also abide in both (I, 3.24). And many things abide in us as a result, goods of salvations, such as, God's word (I, 2.14); life (I, 3.15); love (I, 3.17); his anointing (I, 2.27); etc.

Thus, in summary, we make a liar out of God by saying that we don't need what he is promising because we have no sins. He has come to deliver a silly message, one which for us is no good news. John completes the phrase with a simple statement that his word is not in us, but therein is hidden a wealth of items of which he have deprived ourselves by our lie.

¹³A. Oepke, "en," TDNT, II, 543, presents the riches of this simple particle and points out that the reference in its occurrence is always to a "personal and ethical fellowship of will (I, 1.3, 6, 7 and analogous constructions with agape and logos (I, 2.14; 3.17)."

¹⁴F. Hauck, "menein," TDNT, IV, 576, writes very much to the point when he says: "In John such phrases (menein en) are developed into distinctive personal statements concerning the lasting immanence between God and Christ, or Christians and Christ. . .After the analogy of the personal statement, John uses menein en for the abiding of the expression of divine life in believers, e.g., God's word, etc."

CONCLUSION

The second section of John's first epistle in which the term, koinonia, appears is markedly different from the proem. Its thrust is decidedly moral and ethical: it aims at presenting criteria for determining who has fellowship with God, or when one has fellowship with God. Essentially, however, the meaning of the word does not change.

The norms for determining fellowship with God and his Son are presented under a set of images, *viz.*, light and darkness, and truth and lying. One cannot stand between: one must make a choice--it is a personal and responsible decision that is involved here. To opt for light, or truth, is to opt for God and to manifest an already achieved fellowship with Him and his Son. To choose the other pair, darkness and lying, is to manifest the contrary.

The test of being in light or darkness is love of the brethren. This, in fact, is not only the test, but also the proof of fellowship with God and his Son, or in other words, proof that one does indeed have eternal life. And love of the brethren must be such that it needs be born out in action. This is where truth and lying enter the picture.

Truth and lying are presented in a dynamic context, in terms of a semitism: to do the truth. This means that the words are indicative of more than just occasional happen-stances; rather, they point to a way of life, an intimate part of everyday living.

At this point (though in the text the intrusion of this idea seems very sudden) sin must be considered. Not to live in light and to walk in darkness can happen occasionally, or it can be an habitual thing. In either case, sin is involved and this too reflects one's state of fellowship with God and his Son, or lack of it. What's more, even the individual's attitude toward sin manifests

his fellowship or lack of it. In fine, occasional lapses are understandable by the sacred writer; he says we have an advocate in these instances to remove our sin. But habitual sin cannot co-exist with fellowship with God. The two are completely incompatible.

True fellowship with God brings in its wake not only life eternal, but all that can be shared by God with us: love, truth, his words, his anointing, and many, many more items.

All of this, stated in more positive terms than the scripture text presents, is what is envisioned in the second literary unit of John's first epistle in which the term koinonia appears.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to discover through exegesis the meaning of the term, koinonia, as it appears in John's first epistle. Specifically, it aimed at attempting to determine whether Dr. Currie's previous conclusions about its usage were valid,

1. the usage of the word is uncommon;
2. its grammatical structure is unique;
3. its sense is different from that which it has generally for Paul.

Regarding his first conclusion, the usage is uncommon, this must be admitted as generally true. John prefers verbs to abstract nouns; he uses koinonia only four times in the entire corpus. But one cannot terminate the investigation at this point. For words are important not as such, but for the ideas they convey, and so one must go beyond the word to the idea. In this instance, the idea conveyed by the word, koinonia, in the context of its occurrences is repeated again and again in the epistle. The word, for example, menēin en, finds a very rich usage in the epistle in conjunction with subjects and objects that definitely enrich the basic meaning of fellowship indicated by the word, koinonia, as it appears in this context.

As for the grammatical structure, this is unique only if one considers grammatical correctness and precision. The phrase is not what one might expect; there are better ways of expressing the idea. But John's writings were never considered exemplary models of literary Greek, and perhaps the judgment is unfair. John is very fond of using the verb, echein. Echein in its theologically significant appearances in secular Greek is used predominantly with abstract nouns. (Note that even though he avoids abstract nouns, in this

instance John seems to do the "proper" thing.) Its appearance with koinonia, though somewhat gauche, is also in a certain sense, "correct." And the preposition, meta, though not the expected preposition, nevertheless does find parallels (at least one) in both secular and sacred Greek usage. But the most impressive argument against special uniqueness of grammatical structure consists in one other New Testament passage, Jn 13.8, which parallels the usage in I John.

Finally, its sense is indeed different from that which it generally has in Paul. In view of the conclusions of Chapters Two and Three one can see a very rich significance for John, a significance that does not seem to be matched by Pauline usage. In the Johannine corpus fellowship is with none less than God himself and his Son. This fellowship gives eternal life to the participant together with many other gifts of God as his truth, love, etc. Furthermore, this fellowship is inconsistent with sin, with lying, or walking in darkness, or hating one's brother. Conversely, it is manifested by walking in the light, by doing the truth, and by loving the brothers. And the ultimate result is the formation of a group that shares fellowship and participates in all these gifts, a clearly discernible and definable group which can continue to grow, and which could well be identified as the church.

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