

JESUS APPOINTS HIS DISCIPLES AS HIS AGENTS TO CONTINUE HIS DIVINE MISSION ACCORDING TO JOHN 17:17-19

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Abstract

This article attempts to point out that John 17:18 (καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καγὼ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον) does not refer to the historical sending of the disciples by Jesus, but rather the official appointment of the disciples as his agents to continue his divine mission in the world. The historical sending of the disciples will take place at a later stage, in 20:21 (καθὼς ἀπέσταλκεν με ὁ πατήρ, καγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς), after Jesus' resurrection. In order to prove this hypothesis the following aspects are considered, namely: The two complementary themes (Jesus' approaching departure and discipleship) in the Last Discourses, also mentioned in Ch 17, point to the continuation of Jesus' mission and converge in 17:17-19; the 'agency' concept in the Fourth Gospel constitutes the theological context in which the continuation of Jesus' mission is to be understood; a semantic-linguistic account and the theological understanding and interpretation of 17:17-19 approves the legitimacy of the above-mentioned hypothesis. Finally, a comparison of 17:17-19 with 20:21 also proves that 17:17-19 refers to Jesus' appointment of his disciples to be his agents in order to continue his mission, while 20:21 refers to the historical sending of the disciples by Jesus.

1. Introduction

The concept of 'sending' plays a central role in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus is depicted throughout the Gospel as the 'agent' of the Father; identified as 'the one whom the Father (or God) sent' and, correlatively, expressing the Father's identity as 'the Father who sent me'. He has been sent from the 'world above' with a divine mission to the 'world below' to *reveal* the Father and to bring *salvation* to mankind. This mission was only temporally (see 1:14: ἐσκήνωσεν). Jesus, having almost completed his mission, is on his way back to the 'world above'. In his Last Discourses with his disciples he prepares them for his departure. These discourses are dominated by the two themes of *Jesus' return to the Father* (cf. 13:3 εἰδὼς ὅτι πάντα ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ πατήρ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπάγει) and the *furnishing of his disciples* for their task to continue his

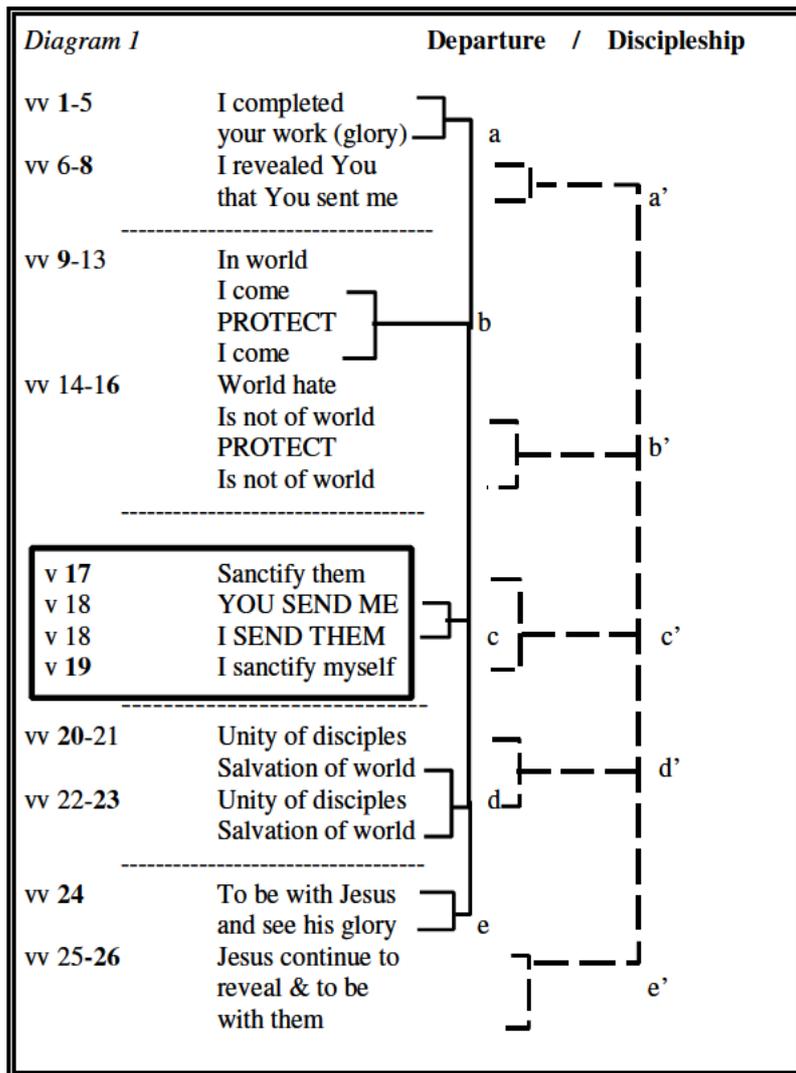
mission. Because Jesus has completed his divine mission as the Messiah (17:4) and is about to return to the Father (vv 11 and 13) he has to appoint other agents (according to the principles of agency in *halakhic* literature)¹ to continue his divine mission. This appointment occurs in 17:17-19.

This article attempts to point out that 17:17-19 refers to the disciples' appointment by Jesus as his agents to continue his mission, and not so much to the act of commanding to go and continue his mission. The actual historical sending out of the disciples into the world occurs in 20:21. In the process to prove all this we will focus on the following aspects: The two complementary themes (Jesus' approaching departure and discipleship) in the Last Discourses, which also occur in Ch 17, point to the extension of Jesus' mission and converge in 17:17-19; the 'agency' concept constitutes the theological context in which the continuation of Jesus' mission is to be understood; a semantic-linguistic account and the theological understanding and interpretation of 17:17-19 approves the legitimacy of the above-mentioned hypothesis. Finally, a comparison between 17:17-19 and 20:21 proves that 20:21, although it contains almost the same wording as 17:17-19, has to be interpreted differently – here Jesus *sends* his disciples to continue his mission.

2. Jesus appoints his disciples as his agents to continue his mission

2.1 The two complementary themes in Chapter 17 point to the continuation of Jesus' mission

Jesus' mission is almost completed (only the cross remains), and therefore he informs his disciples of his *approaching departure* and the characteristics of *discipleship* (Chs 13-16) (cf. Barrett 1978:436; Tolmie 1992:207-228). These two main themes run parallel in this section and are complementary to and inseparable from one another. The one infers the other. These two themes are also taken up and interwoven in Ch 17 into a logical coherent development in Ch 17. Therefore the *Zits im Leben* of Ch 17 should be sought in the context of *Jesus' mission*. Diagram 1 indicates the coherent development of these two motifs in Ch 17 and puts the understanding of vv 17-19 in perspective through this reasoning.



Discussion of this diagram

Departure: In *a* Jesus refers to the completed work the Father assigned to him. He has glorified the Father and was reciprocally glorified by the Father. In *b* Jesus says that he is now returning to the Father. Physically he will be absent from the world, but his mission must continue, therefore he appoints his disciples in *c* to continue his mission in the world so that the world will come to know / believe him through them (*d*) that Jesus has been sent by God. On account of their expected obedience Jesus requested the Father that his disciples should join him in the future to be with him and to see his glory (*e*).

Discipleship: In *a'* Jesus revealed the identity (name) of the Father to his disciples. Because they believe and obey God's word, Jesus therefore clearly states in *b'* that, just as he is not of the world, so are his disciples not of the world. Therefore, in order to accomplish their task, to continue Jesus' divine mission, they have to separate themselves (*c'*) from the world, to prevent

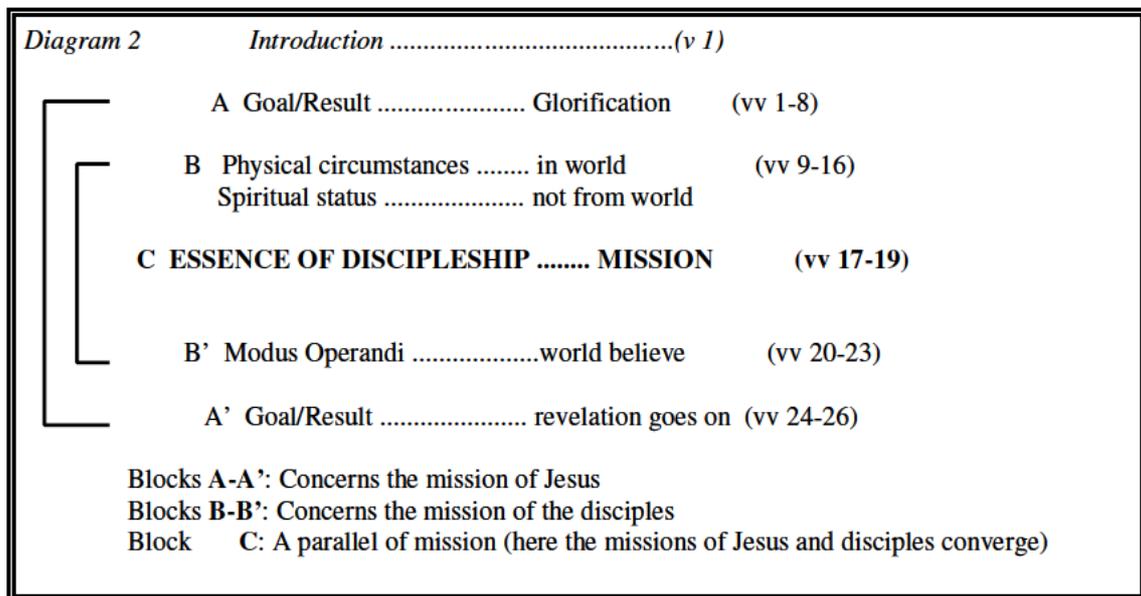
contamination by it and to prepare themselves for their enormous task. Central to this mission has to be a unity amongst them (*d'*), based on their unity with Jesus according to the unity that exists between Jesus and the Father. To accomplish all this Jesus will continue to reveal the identity (name) of the Father to his disciples and be in them.

This thematic analysis proves that Jn 17:17-19 has to be interpreted and understood within the theological perspectives of Jesus' mission, his departure and discipleship.

2.2 The textual emplacement of 17:17-19 in the context of Chapter 17

The two central themes in the Last Discourses (Chs 13-16), repeated in Ch 17, as indicated in 2.1, converge in 17:17-19. This will be discussed in the following analysis of the structure of Ch 17.

The following diagram brings out in full the main points in the argument of the Evangelist in Ch 17. 'Diagram 3' indicates the structure of the discourse that divides Ch 17 into five blocks, which form a chiasm, with block C as the focal point:



The relationship between these blocks will now be spelled out.

(i) Blocks A-A'²

Blocks A-A' are concerned with the missionary work of Jesus. His entire revelatory-salvific mission has been spelled out -- he came to reveal the Father as the 'One who sent me' and to save the world from sin. Block A is concerned with the past and present, while block A' relates to the future of Jesus' missionary work.

Block A: the following words and phrases indicate that Jesus completed his mission: ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα, νῦν δόξασόν με σύ, τὸ ἔργον τελειώσας. (Note the past tense of the verbs being used.) In the accomplishment of his task the Son glorified the Father, and is also going to glorify Him now. He revealed the Father by giving his followers the words his Father had given him. This revelation was so successful that they now know (believe) that Jesus was sent by the Father, which is the saving formula in the Fourth Gospel.

Block A': This block looks at the successful missionary work of Christ from both the heavenly (v 24) and earthly (vv 25,26) perspective. The salvation of men also had eschatological implications: His disciples will be united with him in the 'world above' and will see the glory of Jesus from another perspective. Jesus is still involved in this divine mission (v 26). He will continue to make known the Father and himself to his disciples.

(ii) Blocks B-B'³

These two blocks (B-B') concern the missionary work of the disciples, which relates to the revelatory-salvific work of Jesus.

Block B: Block B describes the physical position of the disciples in the world (vv 11-13), as well as their spiritual position in relation to the world (vv 14-16). The reality is that Jesus' departure is near (vv 11,12). He has completed his mission. He is going back to the Father while his disciples will remain in the world (vv 11,14). Because of their relationship with Jesus, his disciples can expect similar hostile attitudes and actions from the world. The world will hate them (v 14) as it hated Jesus, because they (disciples) remain in the world but are not from the world (vv 14,16). Therefore Jesus prays repeatedly for their preservation (vv 11,15).

Block B': Because Jesus' disciples will remain in the world, they are to continue the work he came to do (v 18); namely to act in a revelatory-salvific

way (vv 7-15). Jesus wants to continue his work through them by way of their unity with him and their unity with one another (vv 20-23). Only through this *mode* of oneness will they be enabled to witness, will the world be saved and know that Jesus had been sent by the Father (vv 20-23) to whom he has returned.

iii) Block C: a parallel mission -- the formula for discipleship

In Block C the mission of Jesus and his disciples converge. In Blocks A and B the Fourth Evangelist indicates that the time has arrived for Jesus to go back to the Father and for the disciples to continue with his mission. In Block C, which is the centre and focus of Ch 17 (see diagram), Jesus appoints his disciples as his agents to continue his divine mission. Jesus first refers to his mission and then to that of his disciples. This verse indicates that Jesus carried the divine mission (ἀποστέλλειν) to a certain point and then delegated this mission to his disciples.

(iv) Blocks A-A' in relation to Blocks B-B'

From all that has been said and done so far, it seems clear that the Fourth Evangelist relates the mission of Jesus (A-A') with the mission of his disciples (B-B'). Jesus is going back to his Father from where he came, while his disciples will remain in the world to continue his mission.

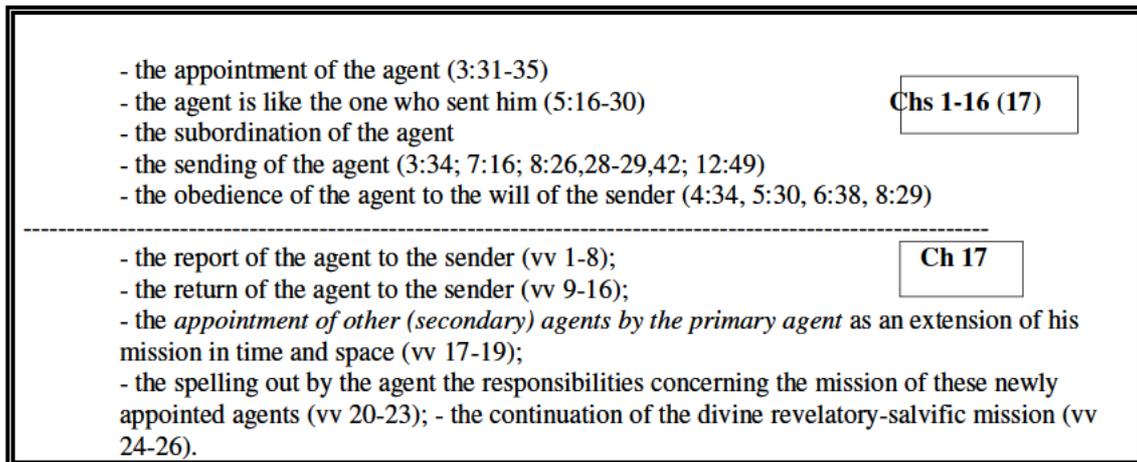
This structural perspective has pointed out that Block C forms the centripetal point of Chapter 17. Here the missions of Jesus and his disciples converge and Jesus transfers his mission to his disciples.

2.3 The 'agency' concept as theological context

The mission of Jesus, which pictures his relationship with the Father, is described throughout the Fourth Gospel in terms of the 'Agency' concept. This concept seems to 'offer a way of describing the person and work of Christ without the encumbrance of a theological jargon' (Harvey 1987:239).

Therefore the theological background against which the mission of the disciples has to be seen and interpreted is that of 'Jesus' agency'. After Jesus' performance of seven σημεῖα and revelatory-salvific teaching in the first 16 chapters, Jesus, the agent of God,⁴ has almost completed the work the Father has assigned to him (17:4). Because he is not from the 'world below' he is now going back to the Father in the 'world above' where he belongs. But the revelatory-salvific work he has started must continue. In order for this to

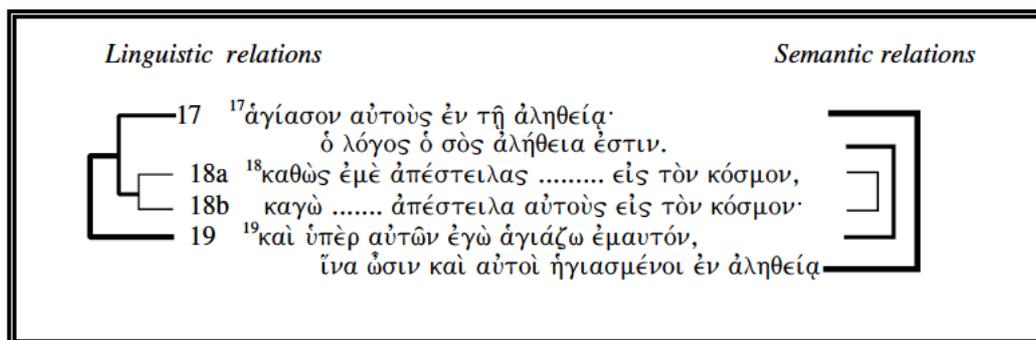
realize Jesus appoints his disciples as his agents (v 18) to continue this divine mission. Chapter 17 closely relates to the principles of agency as indicated in diagram 2:⁵



From this analysis of the ‘agency’ concept it is clear and makes sense that verses 17-19 refer to the appointment of Jesus’ disciples as his future ‘agents’. The Father’s sending of Jesus then serves as the basis for Jesus’ appointment (and sending) of his disciples (Kühl 1967:145; Brown 1975:1036).

2.4 A semantic-linguistic account of 17:17-19

The following is a discourse analysis to indicate the linguistic and semantic relations from which further deductions can be made concerning the appointment of the disciples as agents of Jesus:



2.3.1 Linguistic relations

Verses 18a and 18b combine owing to the fact that they form a parallelism. Verse 17 combines with v 18 because of the personal pronoun *αὐτοὺς*. Because the disciples will be *ἀγιάσον ... ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ* by the Father, Jesus

can appoint them as his agents to continue his mission. Verses 17 and 18 combine with v 19 through the copulative particle *καὶ*. This is because v 19 constitutes the basis on which the appointment of the disciples as Jesus' agents rests and because it constitutes the basis for the disciples' sanctification.

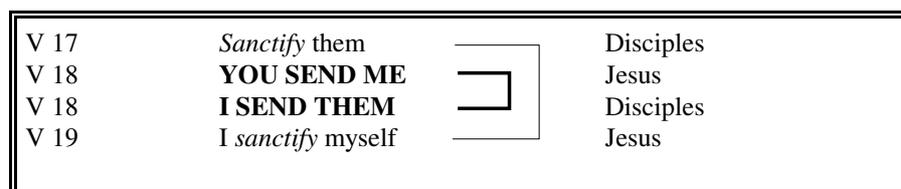
2.3.2 Semantic relations

John 17:17-19 has an important semantic structure which contributes to its interpretation. The semantic combinations indicate a concentric theological structure (cf. Malatesta 1971:205), which corresponds with a Christological interpretation instead of a missiological interpretation. A missiological interpretation emphasizes the *ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον* aspect, while the Christological interpretation emphasizes the parallelism (*καθὼς ... καὶ γὼ*) with its missiological implications. The preference for a Christological interpretation is due to the strong Christological tendency throughout Ch 17 and the close link between vv 17-19 and vv 9-16, which constitutes the background for vv 17-19. Verse 19 also supports a Christological interpretation since the mission of the disciples must be interpreted from the perspective of the consecration of Jesus. This implies that the missiological theme of v 18, which is also the centripetal point of Ch 17, must be interpreted from a Christological perspective.

This supports the hypothesis that verses 17-19 strongly refer to Jesus' appointment of his disciples as his agents, rather than to the sending out of the disciples, which would have been supported by a missiological interpretation of these verses.

2.4 Theological understanding of 17:17-19

From the following discourse analysis it seems clear that there are two mutually complementary themes in these verses: *sanctification* and *sending*, as indicated in the following diagram:



These two themes will now be briefly discussed.

2.4.1 Consecration

- (a) The resemblance of the consecration of the disciples with the ‘consecration’ of Jesus

In comparing Jesus’ appointment as God’s agent with the disciples’ appointment as Jesus’ agents an important resemblance is discernable in the following comparison:

10:36	ὃν ὁ πατήρ <i>ἡγίασεν</i> καὶ ἀπέστειλεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον <i>Jesus</i>
17:17 <i>ἀγίασον</i> αὐτοὺς(ὁ πατήρ) ¹⁸ καγὼ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον <i>Disciples</i>

The Son of God is characterized in 10:36 as ὃν ὁ πατήρ ἡγίασεν καὶ ἀπέστειλεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον (10:36). The verb ἡγίασεν, which in this context⁶ ‘is tied up with the mission of God’s Son into the world, must be connected with his endowment for his earthly task -- precisely that endowment which proves him to be God’s Son’ (Schnackenburg 1971:390f). To translate ἡγίασεν here as ‘consecrate’ will not do any justice to what is meant by the Fourth Evangelist. ‘*ἡγίασεν* is here used in its normal biblical sense: ‘to set apart for the purpose of God’.⁷ Newman & Nida (1980:346; cf. Danker 2000:9) correctly translate it as ‘setting aside a particularly significant object for a special function of a religious nature’.⁸ In this sense it is a suitable word to describe Jesus’ function: he was appointed by the Father to fulfil on earth the supreme purpose of the Father as his agent (cf. Sanders 1975:260).⁹

When looking at 17:17, we notice that through his conversation with the Father, Jesus incorporates the disciples into the divine plan of God. He now involves them directly in his mission. But in order to continue this mission of Jesus, the disciples first have to be ἀγίασον by God. In this context ἀγίε has both the meaning of ‘to set aside’ and ‘holiness’ (cf. Danker 2000:9,10). The meaning ‘to set aside’ relates to the disciples’ appointment as Jesus’ agents (ἀγία) and combines with ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον (v 18), and also relates to ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ (v 17).¹⁰

With reference to the above discussion and from the perspective of vv 9-16, which forms the background to vv 17-19, the following two interpretations can be given:

- to be consecrated to God (v 17),¹¹ or
- to be consecrated to a mission (v 18).

Hence the consecration of the disciples relates to Jesus' appointment to his mission in 10:36. The consecration to God and to a mission help to interpret v 18 as the appointment of the disciples as agents. The theme of consecration spells out the way of life of an agent.

(b) 'Consecration' of Jesus

The petition for the sanctification of the disciples of Jesus was theocentrically formulated: their sanctification proceeds from God. Jesus, as the agent of God, makes it possible for men to be sanctified and includes them within the divine sphere. If the disciples of Jesus are to continue his mission, they must themselves be sanctified. Because they cannot sanctify themselves, Jesus has to function as a mediator. In order to accomplish this he *ἁγιάζω ἑμαυτόν* (v 19)¹² (Schnackenburg 1975:212; Newman & Nida 1980:540). They are only to receive sanctification (*ἡγιασμένοι*--passive) as a gift from the Father (v 19). This gift is to proceed from the Father through what Jesus does for them. Out of the one sanctification and mission the other is to proceed (*καὶ*) (cf. Lenski 1961:1152).

If the 'consecration' and sending of the disciples is related to the self-consecration of Jesus, then their mission into the world could only have taken place after the death and resurrection of Jesus (20:21) (cf. Newman & Nida 1980:540). And if their consecration in truth involves the Holy Spirit, this confirms that their mission, and true discipleship, could only have taken place after they received the Spirit, which also took place after the death and resurrection of Jesus (20:22).

Only when the 'consecration' of Jesus has taken place, can his disciples come to know the truth about Jesus and to understand their connection with Jesus and what is expected from them. Then they will be enabled to go out into the world with a message. This brings us to the discussion of the disciples' mission into the world.

2.4.2 The mission of Jesus and the disciples

The mission of the Son demonstrates the will and mind of God (cf. Laskey 1991:206) and makes possible the interaction between the 'above' and the 'below'. This dualism runs throughout the¹³ Fourth Gospel. The purpose of Jesus' mission to the world was to reveal the Father so that people should accept him. Because he was the revelation of the Father (12:49f; 14:9-11;

17:21-23), people had to accept him (1:12). This revelatory-salvific mission has to be carried further by his disciples.

A comparison of the mission of Jesus and that of his disciples in v 18 raises some theological issues as indicated in the following comparison:

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>Mission</i>	<i>Destination</i>
καθὼς.....	ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας	εἰς τὸν κόσμον
κἀγὼ	ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς	εἰς τὸν κόσμον

Both Jesus and his disciples were sent on a mission into the world. The difference is in the fact that Jesus, who himself was sent, sends them.¹⁴ According to Lenski (1961:1149), ‘Jesus ... carries the Father’s mission to a certain point and then uses the disciples to carry it to completion. A certain part of the great work is thus graciously transferred to the disciples.’ Bultmann (1941:144) correctly refers to the ministry of the disciples as the continuation of the eschatological event which began in Jesus. In order to accomplish this, their mission must carry the same character and objectives as the mission of Jesus. Therefore Jesus compares their mission with his. Here the Fourth Gospel presents the mission of the Son as almost completed, and the mission of the disciples as just about to begin (cf. Barrett 1978:510).

This comparison will now be examined before comparing the mission of Jesus and that of his disciples.

(a) A comparison (καθὼς ... κἀγὼ)

This comparison constitutes a new relationship between Jesus and his disciples, namely that of agency. The official appointment of the disciples as Jesus’ agents was necessary, for this transfers the character of Jesus’ mission to that of the disciples’ mission. The καθὼς ... κἀγὼ construction sets up and formulates a parallelism between the relationships between the Father and Jesus, and between Jesus and the disciples; as the Father commissions Jesus, so Jesus commissions his disciples (cf. Brown 1872:762; also Bernard 1963:574). Elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel this parallelism is found in relation to life (6:57), knowledge (10:14f), love (15:9; 17:23), and unity (17:22).¹⁵ The author supports Tarelli’s (1946:175) argument that this construction suggests assimilation and not differentiation. Thus the Father-

Son relationship is a prototype for discipleship, which indicates the relationship that exists between Jesus and the disciples.¹⁶

The *καθὼς ... κἀγὼ* construction sets up a parallelism between what the Father has done for the Son and what Jesus has done for his disciples (Brown 1972:762). A certain part of this ‘divine mission’ has been transferred to the disciples (Lenski 1961:1149). Lenski (1961:1149) is correct when he says that the particle *καθὼς* (v 18) is inexact. But he wrongly interprets the parallel as relating to the persons indicated by the use of *κἀγὼ*. This is in fact a parallel regarding manner and objective. The character and meaning of the disciples’ mission lies in the choice and semantic meaning of *ἀπέστειλα* and the fact that the disciples’ mission is not a ‘new’ mission, but is part of Jesus’ mission; it is the continuation of the mission of Jesus. From v 26 it is clear that Jesus himself continues his mission through his disciples. Therefore Brown (1972:1036) remarks:

The special Johannine contribution to the theology of this mission is that the Father’s sending of the Son serves both as the model [the comparative aspect of *καθὼς*] and the ground [the explanatory aspect of *καθὼς*] for the Son’s sending of the disciples. Their mission is to continue the Son’s mission, just as the Father had to be present to the Son during his mission.

The disciples then are to *represent* Jesus, but also to *re-present* him. This implies that Jesus will be present in and through them in his Spirit as they continue his mission in the world. This fact is underscored by the frequent usage of the preposition *ἐν* and the adjective *ἐν* in the Last Discourse with reference to the disciples, and the emphasis on the disciples’ need for dependence and obedience to Jesus, their sender. They are to do the will of Jesus (cf. all the references to obey his commands). The disciples are to witness to Jesus and to represent him accurately. They are to know Jesus intimately, live in close relationship with him (Jn 15), and follow his example (Jn 13). Thus, *their* relationship to *their* sender, Jesus, is to reflect Jesus’ relationship with his sender, the Father (cf. Köstenberger 1998:191f).

The fact that in Ch 17 as a whole (particularly v 18) we are dealing with the ‘agency’ of Jesus, the continuation of Jesus’ mission would imply that ‘the agency concept’ is now transferred to the disciples and made applicable to them. The emphatic phrase *ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν* (v 19) is used in this sense. This correspondence is also marked by the fact that they are both to be *ἀγιάζειν*.

(b) The mission (ἀπέστειλας ... ἀπέστειλα)

The appointment of Jesus' disciples as his *agents* relates to Jesus' appointment by his Father. The double aorist indicates the historical moment of this appointment. The aorist (ἀπέστειλα) indicates the certainty of this predetermined future mission that awaits them. This is an anticipation of their actual commissioning as recorded in 20:21,22 (Bernard 1963:575; Brown 1972:762; Barrett 1978:510).

Nowhere in the Fourth Gospel are the disciples formally appointed or depicted as apostles. The only place in the Fourth Gospel where the noun ἀπόστολος¹⁷ is used is in 13:16, and here it is used without any overtones of the official 'twelve apostles'. The point of the aphorism in this context is only to indicate that 'no emissary has the right to think he is exempt from tasks cheerfully undertaken by the one who sent him' (Carson 1991:468).

The question that arises now is: Why did the Fourth Gospel not use the term ἀπόστολος in connection with the disciples, especially in connection with their mission? This question can only be answered by pointing at the strong 'dualistic' and complementary 'agency' motifs that run throughout the Fourth Gospel. Because Jesus is depicted by the Fourth Gospel as the heavenly 'agent', his disciples will be characterized also as 'agents' in their continuation of the mission of Jesus.

The use of the two aorists (ἀπέστειλας/ἀπέστειλα) in v 18¹⁸ relates to the viewpoint of the Fourth Evangelist and refers to the true mission, which realized after the resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit (Brown 1972:762; cf. Schnackenburg 1975:211f; Newman & Nida 1980:540).

3. Jesus sends out his disciples to continue his mission

The first incidences on the first Easter Day, the incidences in which Peter and the Beloved Disciple had found the empty tomb and the personal encounter of Mary Magdalene with the risen Christ, are followed by the appearance of Jesus to the disciples on the same day. This appearance was of decisive importance for Easter faith and for the life and future of the church. Jesus appears to the 'Twelve' while they are gathered in a room at Jerusalem. The time during which these events took place is indicated by τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων (v 19). Here Jesus speaks to them about their mission (v 21), the enabling gift

of the Spirit (v 22) and the authority they will possess (v 23).

The objectives of this cluster are: (i) First, to emphasize that the crucified Jesus is surely the resurrected Lord, the long-awaited Messiah. This would cause the disciples to believe *Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ* (cf. 2:22; 12:16; 13:26; 20:9), the foundation on which their mission would be based, as well as the content of their confession. (ii) Second, to emphasize the victory of Jesus over the ‘evil one’ (cf. v 19, τὸν φόβον) so that believers in Jesus can have peace in their hearts. From this emphasis the attention shifts to the sending of the disciples: *καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς*. With this command (v 21) the Fourth Gospel joins the Gospel tradition according to which the risen Jesus commissions his ‘already appointed agents’ (17:18) to begin with the continuation of this divine mission.¹⁹ It would be wrong to think of the disciples simply replacing Jesus now that he is returning to the Father. Carson (1991:649) correctly states that the use of the perfect tense *ἀπέσταλκέν* suggests that Jesus is in an ongoing state of being sent. His departure does not mean that he ceases to be the ‘one sent’ *par excellence* (cf. 9:7). Cook (1967:6) agrees with Carson that the perfect tense ‘indicates that the mission of Jesus is here viewed from the standpoint of the permanence of its effects.’

The organic relationship between the mission of Jesus and the mission of his disciples becomes clearer in the examination of the Fourth Evangelist’s use of the two verbs which relate to sending (*πέμπω*) and commissioning (*ἀπέσταλκέν*). Both are translated in English as ‘send’. Cook (1967:7) correctly states that the synonymous use of these two terms in the Fourth Gospel makes it difficult to set up a difference between ‘one who is simply sent’ (*πέμπω*) and ‘one being sent as an agent’ (delegate) with transferred authority (*ἀπέσταλκέν*). Rengstorf (1933:405; also Van der Merwe (1995:278-286), states that when Jesus uses *πέμπω* he refers to his historical ‘sending by God’, where a definite formula is used. The most common expression is *ὁ πέμψας με*. This usage is restricted to God and is sometimes expanded to *ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ*. When Jesus speaks of himself he uses other forms of *πέμπω* and never calls God *ὁ ἀπέστειλας με*. In fact, whenever *ἀπόστέλλω* is used it refers to the sending of Jesus by God and occurs in a statement. Rengstorf (1933:405) explains that while in the Fourth Gospel *ἀπόστέλλω* is used by Jesus when he wants to ground his authority in that of God, who appointed him, is responsible for his words and works, and guarantees the right and truth of these words and deeds, Jesus himself uses the *ὁ πέμψας με* to affirm God’s participation in his ministry and the

actio of his mission. This explanation corresponds with the Johannine view of Jesus as the one whose work originates in God and through whom God's work is done.

In 17:18 Jesus appoints his disciples as agents of God and now, in 20:21, he sends them. No reference is made to the disciples' destination in 20:21. The reason is to give this formula some emphasis. The same phenomenon is found in 1:36 when compared with 1:29 with reference to ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου).

When Jesus then uses the verb πέμπω instead of ἀπόστέλλω, it is to inform them that the historical moment has arrived for them to continue with his mission; now is the time for the disciples to proceed. The work of these disciples is to do the work (will) of him (Jesus) who sends them. Their mission is to continue with the Son's divine mission; and this requires that the Son must be present in them during this mission. Jesus said, καὶ ὁ θεωρῶν ἐμὲ θεωρεῖ τὸν πέμψαντά με (12:45); similarly the disciples must now show forth the presence of Jesus so that whoever sees the disciples will see Jesus who sent them (cf. 13:35). Throughout the ministry of Jesus people could see the presence of God (cf. Brown 1972:1036). The same idea is stated in 13:20: ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὁ λαμβάνων ἅν τινα πέμψω ἐμὲ λαμβάνει, ὁ δὲ ἐμὲ λαμβάνων λαμβάνει τὸν πέμψαντά με. This becomes possible only through the gift of the Spirit (v 22) whom the Father sends in the name of Jesus (14:26) and whom Jesus himself sends. The Spirit not only constitutes the presence of Jesus, but also has the task of enabling the disciples to fulfil their mission.

For this missionary task the disciples are immediately empowered by the bestowal of the Spirit: καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον (v 22).²⁰ If the disciples are to continue the ministry of Jesus (*his* ministry) the gift of the Spirit is essential.²¹ Cook (1967:8) correctly states that it is in the Spirit that the presence and participation of Jesus in their work is made possible.²² Therefore, the bestowal of the Spirit was essential before the disciples could be sent into the world .

4. Conclusion

From the above discussion it seems quite evident that 17:18 does not indicate the historical sending of the disciples by Jesus, but rather the official appointment of the disciples by Jesus as his agents to continue his divine mission in the world. The historical sending of the disciples takes place in

20:21. This is evident from the emplacement of 17:17-19 in the Last Discourses and Chapter 17, where it relates to Jesus' discussion of his imminent departure and his replacement by his disciples. Even the 'agency' concept constructs the theological context and the account of these verses (17:17-19) proves the 'appointment' interpretation.

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NOTES

1. Borgen (1968:137ff); Miranda (1977:130ff); Bühner (1977:421); Mercer (1992:461); cf. also Preiss (1954:9-31; Barrett (1958:216, 474); Harvey (1987:238ff).
2. Blocks A and A' are related on the following grounds:
 - (a) *Vocabulary*: The following words are used significantly in both blocks -- ἔγνωκαν, δόξαν, ἀπέστειλας, πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον).
 - (b) *Theologically*: Christ is the prominent character in these blocks.
 - δόξαν: In block A Jesus glorifies the Father and it is envisaged that he himself will be glorified.
 - In block A' reference is made to Jesus' future glorification. In both blocks Jesus' glorification relates to the glory he enjoyed before the foundation of the earth.
 - ἔγνωσαν: In block A Jesus reveals the Father to his disciples.
 - In block A' it is stated that Jesus will continue with this revelation.
3. Block B relates to B' in the following respects:
 - (a) *Vocabulary*: The following words are used significantly in both blocks -- κόσμος, περὶ, ἔν, καθὼς.
 - (b) *Grammatical constructions*: ἵνα-clauses and καθὼς-clauses occur in both blocks.

- (c) *Theologically*: The disciples are the dominant actants in these blocks.
- *κόσμος*: In block B the *κόσμος* is hostile towards the disciples.
 - In block B' the disciples must witness to the *κόσμος* in order for the *κόσμος* to come to faith in Jesus.
 - *ἐν*: In block B it is stated that the disciples are not one with the world because they are not from the world.
 - In block B' the disciples are said to be one with Jesus.
4. This thought is expressed five times in this chapter (vv 3,8,21,23,25).
 5. The mission of Jesus, which pictures his relationship with the Father, is described in terms of the 'Agency' concept which contributes to the unfolding and development of certain important Christological facets (Van der Merwe 1995:248). This structure integrates all other Christological motifs (cf. Loader 1984:192). See Borgen (1968), Mercer (1992), Kühl (1967), Miranda (1977), Bühner (1977), Kysar (1993), for a discussion of the agency structure and principles in the Fourth Gospel.
 6. In the Fourth Gospel *ἡγίασεν* is used only here (10:36) and in 17:17,19 where Jesus sanctifies himself for the sake of his disciples and prays to the Father to sanctify them too. In 17:19 *ἡγίασεν* refers to the death of Jesus on the cross. There is no real parallel in the rest of the NT. Only in 1 Pet 3:15 Christ is said to be sanctified, but with a different meaning (Barrett 1978:385). In Num 7:1 of the LXX it is used to describe Moses' consecration of the Tabernacle and the content of the Tabernacle for their holy purpose, and in Num 7:10f the noun *ἐκαίνισμος*, which relates to the noun used in 10:22 (*ἐγκαίνια*), is used with reference to Moses' dedication of the altar (Barrett 1978:385; Newman & Nida 1980:346; cf. Brown 1975:404; Carson 1991:399).
 7. The fact that Jesus was set apart (*ἡγίασεν*) for his mission by the Father, who *ἀπέστειλεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον*, is one of the main doctrines throughout the Fourth Gospel (Bernard 1963:369).
 8. Jesus' endowment and mission are characterized in analogy with the endowment and mission of the prophets of the OT. In Jer 1:5 we read: '... before you were born I set you apart'. In the LXX 'set you apart' is translated as *ἡγίακα σε* (cf. also Eccles 49:7 *ἡγίασθη προφήτης*). Thus, in the OT sense *ἀγιάζειν* denotes a 'consecration, setting apart'. If one compares the spiritual endowment of Jesus (1:33; 3:3; 6:63b) with that of the prophetic tradition (cf. Is 42:1; 61:1), Jesus' endowment is in line with the OT, but at the same time exceeds it (Schnackenburg 1971:391).
 9. If the Jews had recognized that the works of Jesus were the works of God, this would imply that God had sent Jesus, that he was God's agent. Thus his agency could be disproved by deeds not congruent with him (Barrett 1978:386).
 10. The use of *ἀληθεία* without the particle after the preposition *ἐν* (v 19) is common in the Johannine style and does not cause the meaning of *ἀληθεία*

to differ from that of ἀληθεία in v 17 (Brown 1972:762). The Greek phrase rendered ἐν ἀληθεία is literally ‘in truth’, while ἐν τῇ ἀληθεία in v 17 is literally ‘in the truth’. Newman and Nida (1980:540) maintain that if ἐν ἀληθεία were to appear in isolation, it would be normal to translate it as an adverb (truly). In the present context it seems best to understand this phrase (ἐν ἀληθεία) as equivalent to the former phrase (ἐν τῇ ἀληθεία – v 17). It can then be interpreted as ‘by means of the truth’. In v 19 ἐν ἀληθεία is more the ‘realm’ of the consecration of the disciples than the agency of that consecration--Jesus’ ἀγιάζειν of himself is the agent in the consecration of the disciples (Brown 1972:762).

11. The act of setting the disciples apart unto God is not the first act of this kind. In v 6 (and 3:17) Jesus says σοὶ ἦσαν; in v 12 ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς and ἐφύλαξα; in v 14 ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον σου and in v 16 ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσὶν. What Jesus did for these disciples through his ministry and what he taught them in the Last Discourse can be called a sanctifying and setting apart of the disciples unto God. Now the disciples need the sanctifying of the Father (and of the Spirit) in order to keep them as they are, a unity separate from the world (Lenski 1961:1146).

According to Newman and Nida (1980:539), the biblical concept of sanctification (ἀγίασον – 17:17) always involves ‘the dedication of something to the exclusive service of God’. If God himself is involved in the act of sanctification, which is the case, it would be clearly a matter of dedicating people to himself. This would mean dedicating people to his own service or to be his own possession (Newman & Nida 1980:539).

12. According to Schnackenburg (1975:213f), the same idea of sanctification is included in the ἵνα-clause (v 19) as in ἀγίασον in v 17. For this reason the phrase ἐν τῇ ἀληθεία, without the article, should not be interpreted in the sense of ἀληθῶς, as Bultmann (1941:391) suggested, but in the sense in which it was previously used with the article in the Fourth Gospel. Bultmann's interpretation involves a state (‘true holiness’) rather than the sphere in which ἡγιασμένοι takes place.
13. This tension can be seen in the different choices made in connection with Jesus by the Jews on the one hand, and the disciples, Samaritans (4:39) and Greeks (12:20) on the other hand. This is clear from 1:11,12; 3:18,20,21.
14. Carson (1991:566) interprets the aorist (ἀπέστειλας) ‘as firm evidence of anachronism, since the commission lies in the future’. Seen from the agency perspective this theological discussion of the mission of the disciples, which is going to realize in 20:21, is proleptic and not anachronistic (cf. Culpepper 1983).
15. Bultmann (1941:291) indicates that in the Fourth Gospel καθὼς often introduces not merely a comparison, but also an explanation (cf. 13:15,34; 15:9f,12; especially 17:11,21). Even if καθὼς had been used as an

- ‘explanation’, it would not have made any difference to the meaning in this context.
16. The comparison of the relationships between Jesus and his disciples and between Jesus and the Father is stated several times in the discourses in the Fourth Gospel. As the Father loves the Son, so sincere is the love of Jesus for his disciples (15:9). The glory that the Father gave to his Son was given by Jesus to the disciples (17:22). As the Son lives *via* the Father (διὰ τὸν πατέρα), so his disciples live *via* Jesus (δι’ ἐμέ) (6:57). As the Father knows the Son, and the Son the Father, so Jesus knows his sheep, and the sheep know their shepherd (10:14f). As the Son is in the Father, so are his disciples in Jesus (14:20). Corresponding to these teachings is the saying in 17:18 that *as the Father sent the Son into the world, so Jesus sent his disciples into the world* (6:57; 17:18; 20:21).
 17. The writer does not agree with Lenski’s (1961:1150) view that the commission of which Jesus speaks here includes the apostleship of the disciples. He derives the thought of apostleship from the use of the verb ἀποστέλλειν (v 18). It has already been indicated that, for the author of the Fourth Gospel, the concept of ‘apostleship’ does not exist. The Fourth Gospel’s character of discipleship substitutes apostleship. According to Brown (1975:128), the noun ἀπόστολος in the NT is used ‘only in the general sense of messenger, and particularly as the fixed designation of a definite office, the primitive apostolate’.
 18. The Fourth Gospel uses the aorist and the same verb (ἀπέστειλας ... ἀπέστειλα) when speaking about the mission of Jesus as well as the mission of the disciples in order to establish the closest possible parallel (cf. Schnackenburg 1975:212). Also take note of the use of different tenses in the historical sending of the disciples at Easter (20:21), where the risen Christ looks back to his own sending in the perfect tense (ἀπέστειλας) and sends the disciples in the present tense (πέμπω).
 19. According to the majority of scholars, the two different verbs used here by the Fourth Evangelist (ἀπέσταλκέν and πέμπω) are parallel, with no visible sign of distinction (Brown 1972:1022; Morris 1975:846; Barrett 1978:569). The parallel comprises the use of both words for the sending of Christ by the Father, and for the sending of the disciples by Christ (Carson 1991:648). For the Fourth Gospel this mission is modelled on the Father/Son relationship and is held up for all believers in Christ to imitate (Brown 1972:1034f). Van der Merwe (1995:279ff) indicates that the Fourth Evangelist uses these two terms in a slightly different way. In 17:18 the Fourth Evangelist parallelizes Jesus’ mission with the mission of his disciples. In 20:21, the situation is different. Although Jesus parallelizes his mission with the sending of his disciples, the meaning of this parallel is now as follows: Jesus, in his reference to his mission (καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ), reminds his disciples of his discussion of his and their mission in Ch 17 and tells them that they must ‘go’

now (καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς). The use of ἀπέσταλκέν is only to contextualize the historical act of sending ‘now’ (πέμπω) (cf. Carson 1991:649 and Cook 1967:6).

20. Schnackenburg (1975:383) correctly points out that the sending out of the disciples and the granting of the Spirit are the most important events of this moment. All the other themes are used in a supportive role. Compare the reference of Jesus’ sending (3:31-35) with that of the sending of the disciples (20:21-23): the references to the Spirit and authority that occur in both.
21. With the addition of the involvement of the Spirit and the theological modification of Jesus’ mission (the modelling of the disciples’ mission on the relationship of the Father/Son), the Fourth Evangelist is widening the horizon to include not only the ‘Twelve’ disciples of Jesus but also those whom they represent (Brown 1972:1035).
22. It is reiterated in the Fourth Gospel that the Spirit can only be given after Jesus has been glorified (7:39; 16:7).