

ABIDING IN LIFE: THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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Abstract. The concept of abiding underlines the unity between the believers and the members of the divine family as the quality of eternal life. John uses a complex form of this metaphor by depicting a threefold union between the believers, Jesus and God: the believers abide in Jesus, who abides in God. The metaphorical perception of this unity reflects on the functionality of the relation between God, Jesus and human beings; this is uncovered by an analysis that uses the insights of cognitive linguistics.

Keywords: Gospel of John, metaphor, cognitive linguistics, abiding, love, relation, eternal life.

Introduction

The concept of abiding in the Gospel of John² has been analysed by several scholars, but by using the insights of cognitive linguistics we may be able to extend our understanding of it or, at least, see it more clearly.

There are several instances where earthly life is conceived as presence on earth (1,9-11.14; 12,35 – to mention only a few). The metaphor *life is presence here*³ perceives earthly life as a bounded region, the space where human beings are in.⁴ From the presence on earth, the believers move to the *presence* in the

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² For the place and composition of the Gospel, see, among others, Raymond E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ABRL), New York: Doubleday, 2003; Rudolf BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (ed. R. W. N. HOARE, J. K. RICHES, trans. G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY), Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971; Barnabas LINDARS (ed.), *The Gospel of John* (NCB), London: Oliphants, 1972; R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (IBT), Nashville: Abingdon, 1998; Paul N. ANDERSON, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011, 95–124.

³ The statements like LIFE IS PRESENCE HERE are artificial constructions that express how the idea of life is conceived in a text; they are not linguistic expressions found in the text. See George LAKOFF, Mark JOHNSON, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

⁴ George LAKOFF, Mark TURNER, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 98.

family of God (3,3.5). Because of this conception of life, it is possible that eternal life is elaborated by the metaphors *being in love* or *abiding in Jesus* that perceive abstract concepts and even the person of Jesus and God as containers. Via the Great Chain Metaphor we understand that divine characteristics and behaviour are described through human characteristics and behaviour. life is being present here is combined with the Great Chain Metaphor, and thus, eternal life can be described in terms of human categories and can be seen as being in God or in the love of God.

Relation between the Container and the Contained

The Fourth Gospel centres on the idea that those who believe in Jesus receive life and this life is partaking in the life of God in unity with the Father and the Son. The special union between the Father, Jesus and the believers is depicted in the image of the vine and the gardener in 15,1-8:

Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀμπελος ἡ ἀληθινὴ
καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ γεωργός ἐστιν. (15,1)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower.⁵

μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί,
καὶ γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν.
καθὼς τὸ κλῆμα οὐ δύναται καρπὸν φέρειν ἄφ' ἑαυτοῦ
ἐὰν μὴ μένη ἐν τῇ ἀμπέλῳ,
οὕτως οὐδὲ ὑμεῖς
ἐὰν μὴ ἐν ἐμοὶ μένητε. (15,4)

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

The metaphor of the gardener, vine and branches is an agrarian metaphor⁶ that similarly to the water image (4,14) reveals God's life-giving

⁵ The translation is taken from the NRSV.

⁶ CULPEPPER, *The Gospel*, 213: "The grapevine and the vineyard often symbolize the fruitfulness of the land in the Old Testament, so it was a short step for the vine to become a symbol for Israel." CULPEPPER, *The Gospel*, 214, points out that in Sir 24,17-19 wisdom "likens herself to a vine," and concludes that "because the wisdom tradition exerted a formative influence on John's Christology, the use of the image of the vine in that context provides a key to understanding John's use of this image. It is only a short step from the use of the image of the vine to depict Wisdom to its association with the Messiah. [...] The striking feature of the symbolism of the vine in John 15 is that it

power as well as the idea that life is linked to God and Jesus; apart from God that is the source of life, there is only death. God as the gardener assures prosperity by providing opportunity for people who link with Jesus.⁷ Mary Magdalene confuses Jesus with the gardener in 20,15. The picture is symbolic: those who abide in Jesus have life. The relational aspect of eternal life in the Gospel of John is emphasized via the metaphors of abiding. The *be in*-formulas (Immanenzformeln) describe that Jesus is in God and God is in Jesus; those who abide in Jesus will also be in Jesus and God (6,56; 10,38; 14,10-11.20; 15,4-5.7; 17,21.23.26).⁸ Here human beings, Jesus, but also God is perceived as containers.⁹ life is being present here is combined with the Great Chain Metaphor. Jesus and God are perceived as containers in which another entity, another person, is kept:

ἵνα γινώτε καὶ γινώσκητε
ὅτι ἐν ἐμοὶ ὁ πατήρ
καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ. (10,38c)

so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

If we consider the Great Chain Metaphor described by Lakoff and Turner,¹⁰ we can see that the metaphor of abiding does not only disclose a very close unity between God and Jesus, but it also reveals the characteristics of this relationship. The Great Chain Metaphor is actually a complex ensemble consisting of four parts: the Great Chain cultural model, the Nature of Things theory, the generic is specific metaphor and the Maxim of Quantity principle. All these parts are needed in conceiving a higher order being in terms of a lower order being or the other way around. The Great Chain is a cultural model

ceases to represent Israel and takes on Christological significance. It represents Jesus himself. Whereas one's salvation had depended on identity with Israel, the people of God, Jesus declares that life depends on abiding in him."

⁷ Craig R. KOESTER, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008, 39; Jerome H. NEYREY, *The Gospel of John* (NCBiC), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 253–261.

⁸ Barclay M. NEWMAN, Eugene A. NIDA, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (HeTr), London: United Bible Societies, 1980, 209: μένω, *remain* is a very important term for John that indicates the relationship between the Father and the Son, but also the believers and the Son.

⁹ See LAKOFF, JOHNSON, *Metaphors We Live By*, 29–30, for container metaphors.

¹⁰ See the whole description of the Great Chain Metaphor in LAKOFF, TURNER, *More than Cool Reason*, 160–213.

that consists of a vertical scale on which higher order beings and lower order beings are placed; naturally it also includes the scale of the properties that characterize these beings.¹¹ The Nature of Things theory links these properties to certain behaviour.¹² The generic is specific metaphor “maps a single specific-level schema onto an indefinitely large number of parallel specific-level schemas that all have the same generic-level structure as the source domain schema.”¹³ Thus, it “allows us to understand a whole category of situations in terms of one particular situation.”¹⁴ The Maxim of Quantity communicative principle restricts the application of properties from one domain into another; it picks up “the highest-ranking properties” defining that level.¹⁵ Via the Great Chain Metaphor we understand that higher order beings (human beings) are understood in terms of lower order beings (complex objects). The Nature of Things theory together with the Great Chain of Being helps us understand that complex objects have “structural attributes” that lead to “functional behaviour.”¹⁶ Due to the Maxim of Quantity that restricts the application of the properties, the perception of human beings as containers in which wisdom dwells has to be viewed in terms of structural attributes and functional behaviour, the “highest-ranking properties”¹⁷ of complex objects. The container and the contained together form a unit; this is a functional unity. Accordingly, if the unity of God and Jesus is perceived as a complex object, we have to think of the functional property of this relation.¹⁸ Thus *abide in me* describes

¹¹ The scale of the Great Chain of Being from the bottom to the top is as follows: natural physical things, complex objects, plants, animals and human beings – this is the basic Great Chain. The basic Great Chain can be extended to include society, God and cosmos. See LAKOFF, TURNER, *More than Cool Reason*, 170–171, 204–213. Zoltán KÖVECSÉS, *Language, Mind, and Culture: A Practical Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, 128, notes that in the Jewish-Christian tradition God is on the top.

¹² LAKOFF, TURNER, *More than Cool Reason*, 169.

¹³ LAKOFF, TURNER, *More than Cool Reason*, 162.

¹⁴ LAKOFF, TURNER, *More than Cool Reason*, 165.

¹⁵ LAKOFF, TURNER, *More than Cool Reason*, 173.

¹⁶ LAKOFF, TURNER, *More than Cool Reason*, 171.

¹⁷ LAKOFF, TURNER, *More than Cool Reason*, 173.

¹⁸ Addressing the question of equality-subordination, ANDERSON, *Riddles*, 29, draws attention to the “rhetorical emphasis” that is “the reason the Father and Son are presented as being in relationship has to do with the agency of the Son. He is to be equated with the Father precisely because he is sent from the Father; to receive him is to receive the Father, but to reject him is to forfeit the approval of the One who sent him.”

functional unity, thinking and acting in a similar way (13,12-17; 14,23-24).¹⁹ That the container and contained switch (e.g. sometimes the text says that Jesus is in God, at other times it says that God is in Jesus) also underlines that the metaphor has to be taken as referring to functionality; *God is in Jesus* and *Jesus is in God* probably means the same that is unity in thinking and acting (5,19; 8,28-29; 10,37-38; 11,22; 14,10-11).²⁰ The Son is educated by the Father (5,19-30),²¹ he carries out the Father's will (4,34; 6,38-39; 10,25;²² 12,49-50; 14:31; 17:4.6-8; 18,11),²³ and he does this with the Father (8,28-29; 10,37-38; 14,10-11).²⁴ Thus, the Father

¹⁹ Jan G. VAN DER WATT, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (BibInt 47), Leiden: Brill, 2000, 210. Charles Harold DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953; repr., 1968, 194, says that "I in the Father and the Father in me," is conceived as a dynamic and not a static relation; it consists in an activity originating with the Father and manifested in the Son. It may be described as obedience to the word of the Father, or imitation of His works, but at bottom it is nothing so external as mere obedience or imitation. It is the sharing of one life, which is of course life eternal or absolute."

²⁰ CULPEPPER, *The Gospel*, 210–211: "the prologue affirms a metaphysical union and Jesus repeatedly affirms that he acts at the direction of the Father (a moral union). This moral union is also possible for all believers."

²¹ VAN DER WATT, *Family of the King*, 207: "Jesus' ability to give life is based on his intimate relation to the Father. [...] Jesus sees and hears (what God does) and acts accordingly because he does not seek to fulfill his own will, but the will of his Father, the one who has sent him (see 7:15-16). Consequently the Son is given ability to give life as the Father does." Nevertheless, Jesus has real authority. VAN DER WATT, *Family of the King*, 208: "The fact that Jesus can give life to whom he wants to (5:21), emphasizes the reality of the participation in the power and knowledge of the Father by Jesus (see also 3:34-35). In the same way Jesus judges in absolute accordance with the judgment of the Father (5:30), to such an extent that John can state that the Father does not judge anymore (5:22)." For the authority of Jesus, see also Jan G. VAN DER WATT, "Salvation in the Gospel according to John," in Jan G. VAN DER WATT (ed.), *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (NovTSup 121), Leiden: Brill, 2005, 109-113; George R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John* (WBC 36), Waco, TX: Word, 1987, 75.

²² In 10,25-32 the unity between the Father and the Son is expressed in terms of *works*; the same holds for the believers; see Hans-Ulrich WEIDEMANN, "The Victory of Protology over Eschatology? Creation in the Gospel of John," in Tobias NICKLAS, Korinna ZAMFIR (eds.), *Theologies of Creation in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity: In Honour of Hans Klein* (DCLS 6), Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2010, 319–320.

²³ The revelation is later continued by the Paraclete (14,26; 16,13-15). See CULPEPPER, *The Gospel*, 103, 213.

²⁴ Referring to 5,17 (my Father is working still and I am working), Jerome H. NEYREY, *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, 180, says: "This statement functions as an apology for *not* resting on the Sabbath;

can be experienced through his actions in Jesus (5,17-30).²⁵ Whenever Christ acts and speaks, it is the action and words of the Father he communicates: ἡ ἐμὴ διδαχὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὴ ἀλλὰ τοῦ πέμψαντός με²⁶ (7,16b). The metaphor also expresses permanence in unity. Moreover, because of the generic is specific metaphor the particular unity of Jesus and God can be applied to the unity between Jesus and the believers:

ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ γνώσεσθε ὑμεῖς
ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μου
καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν ἐμοὶ
καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν ὑμῖν. (14,20)

On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

The metaphor resembles the Russian Matryoshka dolls which are kept in each other. The union of Jesus and God becomes present in the believers. We can also see a somewhat reverse order of the entities in each other in 17,21:

καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὦσιν

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us.

The container and contained are switched, thus, once again underlining the functional aspect of abiding: the believers think, behave and act in harmony with Jesus (12,25-26; 13,12-17; 14,23-24; 15,11).²⁷

and it implies that God also did *not* stop creating on the seventh day but continued working. [...] Jesus is imitating God's continued creative work by his healing on the Sabbath." WEIDEMANN, "The Victory of Protology over Eschatology?," 314, notes the link between ἔργον, and ποιέω, τελειόω in John 4,34; 5,36 and 17,4, and concludes that "the Evangelist presumably had in mind the text of Gen 2:1-3 (and in this perspective the other Old Testament passages, which speak of God's work of creation)." Accordingly, there is a "shift of the protological language-game 'completion/perfection of works' into the description of the working of the *earthly* Jesus."

²⁵ Josef BLANK, *Krisis: Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Lambertus, 1964, 112. KOESTER, *The Word of Life*, 37, finds the image of God as a *craftsman* in John 5,17ff.

²⁶ "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me."

²⁷ Commenting on 14,23-24, CULPEPPER, *The Gospel*, 212, says: Jesus "is not referring either to post-Resurrection appearances or to the Parousia, but to something more vital for the Christian community: his presence and that of the Father with the community of believers through the Spirit. [...] The future eschatology of abiding with Jesus in heaven

Abide in the Love Relation of the Father and the Son

The unity in the family of God is also manifested by mutual love. John 17,22-23 links the metaphor of abiding in Jesus with love:

ἵνα ὡσιν ἓν
καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἓν·
ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς
καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί,
ἵνα ὡσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν,²⁸
ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος
ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας
καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς
καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας.

so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The love the text speaks of is an eternal love between the Father and the Son (3,35; 5,20; 10,17; 14,31; 15,9-10; 17,23-24).²⁹ The Father loves the Son πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου³⁰ (17,24), and the Son loves the Father (14,31: ἀλλ' ἵνα γινῶ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι ἀγαπῶ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ καθὼς ἐνετείλατό μοι ὁ πατήρ, οὕτως ποιῶ³¹). This mutual, eternal love is poured out to the creation to encompass the whole humankind.³²

(14:2) has effectively been transposed into a realized eschatology: Jesus abides with us now.”

²⁸ CULPEPPER, *The Gospel*, 182, referring to John 10,30, says: “The Greek numeral here is neuter, not masculine; Jesus and the Father are one entity, not one person.” But the expression also points to the relation between Jesus and the Father (see above) that extends to all believers.

²⁹ NEWMAN, NIDA, *A Translator's Handbook*, 104, mentions that most scholars see no difference between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in John. See also Craig S. KEENER, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003; repr., 2012, 1:324-325. NEWMAN, NIDA, *A Translator's Handbook*, 104, also points out that “the primary focus in the biblical concept of love is always that of giving rather than of receiving.”

³⁰ “Before the foundation of the world.”

³¹ “But I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.”

³² See also Cornelis BENNEMA, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 2/148),

οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον,
ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν,
ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν
αἰώνιον. (3,16).

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

We can see the picture of the all-powerful Creator here, who loves and saves (3,16-17).³³ His love³⁴ towards the creation is so strong that He gives “his only Son”³⁵ to save the believers.³⁶

Here alone in the Fourth Gospel the love of God for the rebellious *world* is stated to be the reason for the incarnation and death of Christ [...] it is the fundamental summary of the message of this Gospel and should therefore be seen as the background of the canvas on which the rest of the Gospel is painted.³⁷

The coming of the Son into the world makes the love of the Creator God visible. Jesus’ acceptance of the suffering and cross is the fulfilment of God’s

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002, 114, 117, who emphasizes the soteriological aspect of the love between the Father and the Son.

³³ The parallel in 3,16a/17a-16bc/17bc emphasizes God’s will to save the whole cosmos. However, only ὁ πιστεύων (3,16b) can have eternal life because salvation is found in Jesus alone.

³⁴ NEWMAN, NIDA, *A Translator’s Handbook*, 89: “In Greek, the tense of the verb loved points to a specific action in the past; that is, to God’s giving of his Son.”

³⁵ BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 51: τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν “embraces both incarnation and vicarious death.”

³⁶ KEENER, *The Gospel of John*, 1:568: “This special love from Father and Son was an early Christian conception (e.g., Rom 8:37; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:4; 5:2, 25; 2 Thess 2:16) undoubtedly treasured in John’s circle of believers (1 John 3:16; 4:10, 19; Rev 1:5; 3:9).” KEENER, *The Gospel of John*, 1:567–569, notes that the idea of the loving God also appears in the Hellenistic religion of that period, whereas the idea occurs with frequency in Jewish tradition. However, he notes that in Jewish thought God’s love is shown mostly towards the righteous or Israel, while John emphasizes the idea that God loves the whole world. We shall note that the idea that God loves all that he created appears in Wis 11,24-26 as well.

³⁷ BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 51. BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John*, 153: “The event which is brought to fulfilment in the exaltation of the Son of Man is grounded in the love of God which sent him, so that faith might receive eternal life.” Bultmann also adds: “The real miracle, therefore, is the mission of the Son, which men believe when they believe in the exaltation of the Son of Man” (*The Gospel of John*, 153).

love (10,11f). That is how love reaches the world in the person of the Son; he does not only make God's love present, but transmits this love to the believers:

καὶ ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου
καὶ γνωρίσω,
ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ἣν ἠγάπησάς με ἔν αὐτοῖς ἦ
καγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς. (17,26)

I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

All those who believe will take part in this love-relationship of the Father and the Son. But this love-relationship also implies the extension of this love to the other believers (15,12).³⁸ This manifestation of love can be paralleled to the way the dynamics of life is pictured in 6,57 (see 14,21. 23; 16,27). Jesus' declaration in 5,42, τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς,³⁹ defines the relationship with God in terms of love. Love, therefore, is also functional;⁴⁰ it is related to the mission of Jesus and that of the disciples.⁴¹

We have seen different texts related to love; one last interesting one is 15,9-10 where the metaphor life is presence here is explicitly combined with love is a container:

Καθὼς ἠγάπησέν με ὁ πατήρ,
καγὼ ὑμᾶς ἠγάπησα·
μείνατε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐμῇ.
ἔάν τὰς ἐντολάς μου τηρήσητε,
μενεῖτε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ μου,

³⁸ ANDERSON, *Riddles*, 17: "A striking feature of Jesus' love command in the Johannine tradition is that it emphasizes loving one another as an expression of one's love for Jesus." See 13,1-11.34-35; 15,9-10.17. For the relation between love, laying down one's life, and washing of the feet, see CULPEPPER, *The Gospel*, 203–209.

³⁹ You do not have the love of God in you.

⁴⁰ Gerald L. BORCHERT, *John 12-21* (NAC 25B), Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002, 146.

⁴¹ Jan G. VAN DER WATT, Jacobus KOK, "Violence in a Gospel of Love," in Pieter G. R. DE VILLIERS, Jan Willem VAN HENTEN (ed.), *Coping with Violence in the New Testament*, (STAR 16), Leiden: Brill, 2012, 179, say that love is "the main ethical demand in the Gospel." They explain it in the following way: "In the same way that the Father loved the world, his children should also love the world (John 3:16). The love towards people outside the Johannine community is rooted in the mission of Jesus, and, therefore, also in the missionary agenda of his followers" ("Violence in a Gospel of Love," 179).

καθὼς ἐγὼ τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ πατρὸς μου τητήρηκα
καὶ μένω αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

The abstract concept love is viewed here as a container that one enters if he believes in Jesus. The metaphor of love is combined with life is presence here; thus, eternal life is viewed as abiding in the love of Jesus and God. Here the text links love to keeping the commandments, just as in the next verses relates friendship to obeying Jesus:

μείζονα ταύτης ἀγάπην οὐδεὶς ἔχει,
ἵνα τις τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῆ ὑπὲρ τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ.
ὕμεῖς φίλοι μου ἔστε
ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἃ ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι ὑμῖν.
οὐκέτι λέγω ὑμᾶς δούλους,
ὅτι ὁ δούλος οὐκ οἶδεν τί ποιεῖ αὐτοῦ ὁ κύριος·
ὕμᾶς δὲ εἵρηκα φίλους,
ὅτι πάντα ἃ ἤκουσα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐγνώρισα ὑμῖν. (15,13-15)

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

These verses relate friendship to love, unity in acting and knowledge – these characterize Jesus' intimacy with God as well (5,20).⁴² True friendship is based on virtue according to the ancient idea of friendship.⁴³ The OT states that God is the source of virtue, and thus, as the source of friendship.⁴⁴ The Johannine idea of friendship is close to both: the disciples that do what Jesus commands, so they are true friends of Jesus (see also 15,4-12). This also means

⁴² See the other references to Jesus' functional unity with God above.

⁴³ ARISTOTLE, *Eth. nic.* 8.3.6.

⁴⁴ See the ancient Jewish and Greek concept of friendship in VAN DER WATT, *Family of the King*, 360–362; David KONSTAN, “Friendship, Frankness and Flattery,” in John T. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (NovTSup 82), Leiden: Brill, 1996, 7–19.

that their communion with Jesus is permanent.⁴⁵ *Abiding*, therefore, does not involve the thought of

becoming a Christian but of staying a Christian, i.e. living out and acting the Christian life. This implies an inner commitment with reciprocal obligations: the believer abides in Christ and Christ and his words abide in the believer.⁴⁶

Other related qualities also appear: frankness and openness (7,26; 10,24; 18,20; 16,25-30),⁴⁷ and loyalty (6,35.37).⁴⁸ We can also observe another the essential element of friendship in the text above: to seek the other's well-being even to the point of dying for him. This is not a Jewish idea of friendship, but it was very common among the Greeks.⁴⁹ Friendship with Jesus means thinking and acting in unity with him. However, this is one of the unequal friendships since the disciples have to do what Jesus commands; in turn, Jesus lays down his life for them (3,14-16), an act of extreme sharing. The disciples' actions are, nevertheless, not "blind" actions, since friendship in Jesus also means sharing

⁴⁵ Following Raymond E. BROWN, *The Gospel according to John*, 2 vols., (AB 29, 29a), Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966-1970; repr., 2008, 1:510-512, Jerome H. NEYREY, "Spaced out: 'Territoriality' in the Fourth Gospel," *HvTSt* 58 (2002) 651-652, describes two connotations of the expression μένειν, "permanence" and "immanence/relationship" – the latter is associated with "being in" (see John 14,10. 11); in the references to Jesus and the Father "being in" describes Jesus' role as "the bridge between the heavenly and earthly worlds" (652). Brown relies on two important studies: G. PERCORARA, "De verbo 'manere' apud Joannem," *DivThom* 40 (1937) 159-171, and Rudolf SCHNACKENBURG, "Zu den joh. Immanenzformeln," *Die Johannesbriefe*, Freiburg: Herder, ²1963, 105-109.

⁴⁶ Chrys CARAGOUNIS, "'Abide in Me': A New Mode of Relationship between Jesus and His Followers as a Basis for Christian Ethics (John 15)," in Jan G. VAN DER WATT, Ruben ZIMMERMANN (ed.), *Rethinking the Ethics of John: "Implicit Ethics" in the Johannine Writings*, vol. 3 of *Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik = Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics* (WUNT 291), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012, 262-263.

⁴⁷ KONSTAN, "Friendship, Frankness and Flattery," 15: "One particular modulation of the ideal of frankness or παρρησία is the Christian ideal of perfect openness before God." Cf. William KLASSEN, "Παρρησία in the Johannine Corpus," in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World*, ed. John T. FITZGERALD (NovTSup 82), Leiden: Brill, 1996, 240-254.

⁴⁸ VAN DER WATT, *Family of the King*, 366.

⁴⁹ PLATO, *Symp.* 179B; ARISTOTLE, *Eth. nic.* 9.8.9; CICERO, *Amic.* 7.24.

in his knowledge,⁵⁰ Jesus revealed everything to the believers, and based on this knowledge they can act in unity with him and the Father.

Conclusion

Eternal life in the Gospel of John does not only have a quantitative meaning, but it implies a relation. The relational aspect of life is stressed via the metaphors of abiding where life is perceived as the human beings' presence in Jesus and God and in their love. It is the unity between Jesus and God that is extended to the believers, who take part in the family of God (17,20-23). The believers receive a new life through being born of God: "You in me, and I in you" is the way the new life is perceived. Using the insights of cognitive linguistics lets us perceive different aspects of the metaphor of abiding. God, Jesus and human beings are understood in terms of complex objects. As a result, their characteristics and behaviour are viewed as structural attributes and functional behaviour. Thus, the unity of man with Jesus and God viewed in terms of being in each other perceives the structural unity of this relationship, as well as its functional aspect: Jesus works in unity with the Father, and man works in unity with Jesus; this involves proper actions towards God, but also towards fellow human beings as well.

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⁵⁰ Charles K. BARRETT, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, London: SPCK, 1955, 398: "It is characteristic of John that that which (according to him) distinguishes the friend from the slave is knowledge, and that knowledge should be very closely related to love. The existence of a superior group of φίλοι, distinguished from δοῦλοι, recalls both Gnosticism and the mystery cults [...]; but it must always be remembered that for John the distinguishing marks of those who become φίλοι are the obedience and humility shown by Jesus himself."

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