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THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION IN JOHANNINE LITERATURE THROUGH THE LENS OF 1 JOHN 4:9-11 AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

BY

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration. It has not been previously presented to any institution for any academic award. I give my consent that this dissertation may be available for reference at the discretion of St. Paul's University.

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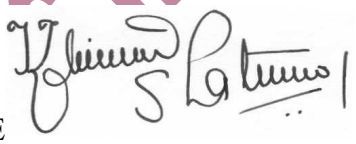
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DEDICATION

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my beloved husband,
Who always supports and encourages me
With my sincere love
My Husband, Samir

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ABSTRACT

The concept of reconciliation in Johannine literature offers a unique perspective on the alienation of humanity due to sin. It places a profound emphasis on the role of Christ and his redemptive work in reconciling individuals with God. Furthermore, it highlights the transformative influence of the Holy Spirit, which ultimately envisages reconciliation in the new heaven and earth. Additionally, Johannine literature underscores the importance of reconciliation among believers within the Christian community. Yet despite the uniqueness of the notion of reconciliation in Johannine literature, it has not received comprehensive theological investigation, especially in its vertical and horizontal dimensions. Besides, several scholars often turn to Pauline writings, which uses the term "καταλλαγή" which means reconciliation hence a theological gap in understanding reconciliation in the Johannine literature remains despite its extensive scholarship. This study aimed at illuminating the distinct theological concept of reconciliation in Johannine literature. It was guided by the following objectives; to illuminate the uniqueness of the theological notion of reconciliation as presented in Johannine literature, to analyse the two dimensions of Johannine reconciliation through an exegesis of 1 John 4:9-11 and to develop insights that guide practical applications of the Johannine concept of reconciliation for the religious context in Egypt. An exegesis of 1 John 4:9-11using Draper's Tri-polar model was conducted to elucidate the interconnectedness of the vertical reconciliation between God and humanity and the horizontal reconciliation between believers within the Christian community. The theoretical framework of this study drew inspiration from prominent reconciliation theories, though it examined primarily the Johannine literature. Data was analysed through a combination of rigorous exegesis of the given text and theological analysis. While the study explored the theological significance and implications of reconciliation in Johannine writings, it also sought to establish how this concept resonates with the unique socio-cultural context of Egypt. The study found out that highlighting the significance of trust-building, forgiveness and a shared sense of humanity in overcoming conflicts and differences is necessary for the Egyptian context. The study recommends application of the Johannine concept of reconciliation to foster dialogue, understanding, and community building in Egypt, which has a rich history and religious diversity.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter gives the background information under which the study is premised. It introduces the background of the study, outlines the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study and the research questions. It also explains the significance of the study as well as the assumption of the study. Also included is the scope of the study, preliminary literature review on which the study is anchored and the exegetical framework, the methodology to be applied and finally a conclusion.

1.2 Background of the Study

The biblical concept of reconciliation refers to the restoration of harmonious relations between God and humans through the work of Jesus Christ. According to Sinclair B. Ferguson (2003), the concept of reconciliation is one of the most fundamental concepts of the Christian message, which assumes the alienation of humanity from God because of sin. The Gospel of John, along with the Johannine Epistles (1-2-3 Jn) and the Book of Revelation, collectively known as Johannine literature, explore this theme in various ways.

Yet "καταλλαγή" (*katallagē*) the Greek word for reconciliation, is a Pauline word. It may seem rather strange to talk about "reconciliation" in the Johannine literature when the author never uses the word. As John Mark Hicks (2014:1) insists, the term is a Pauline word and a Pauline way of talking about what God has done in Christ to the restoration of a broken relationship between him and humanity. As such, some scholars, for instance Andreas Köstenberger (2009:216) argue that John has no explicit doctrine of justification just as he does not feature the Pauline corollaries to justification such as reconciliation, calling, election, adoption, and sanctification. However, it is important to note that reconciliation is presented in a very unique way in Johannine literature. This

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study illustrates that in Johannine literature, reconciliation is a central theme that emphasizes divine initiative in bridging the gap between humanity and God. It highlights the redemptive work of Jesus Christ as the means through which this reconciliation is achieved.

Yet despite the absence of the Greek word "καταλλαγή" in Johannine literature, the concept of reconciliation is presented in a very unique way. In the Gospel of John, reconciliation is depicted as the restoration of the broken bond between God and humanity through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Emphasizing Jesus as the incarnate word dwelling among humanity (Jn1:14) the Gospel portrays his sacrificial death and resurrection as the means to reconcile people with God. This act of reconciliation serves as a powerful manifestation of God's boundless love for the world "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son ("τον μονογενῆ"), that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*" (Jn3:16). Moreover, the reconciliation is presented in the description of Jesus as the lamb of God (Jn1:29) who takes away the sin which is the mainly cause of the alienation of humans from God (Ridderbos et al., 1997:73).

Throughout the Gospel, the theme of reconciliation is enhanced in Jesus' teachings about his role as the mediator between God and humanity. In John 14:6, Jesus declares, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*" underscoring the exclusive role of Jesus in facilitating reconciliation and highlighting the centrality of his redemptive work in restoring a broken relationship (Ladd, 1993:276). Moreover, reconciliation in Johannine letters is not merely a theological concept but also has practical implications for believers. John stresses the importance of living in harmony with God and one another as a result of being reconciled. In 1 John 4:11, it is written, "*Dear friends, since God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another*." This verse sums up the mutual nature of reconciliation, emphasizing that those who have been reconciled to God are called to embody that reconciliation in their relationships with others.

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Clearly, the text, according to DeSilva (2018:395), emphasizes the need for believers to reconcile with one another as the practical consequences of Christology where it links the vertical relationship with God to the horizontal relationship with fellow believers. He further asserts that genuine love for God is demonstrated through love for others within the Christian community. Furthermore, as C. MConway (2017:99) notes, in his letters, John addresses conflicts and divisions within the early Christian community. He encourages believers to seek reconciliation and unity rather than allowing disagreements to divide them. The author also highlights the role of confession and forgiveness in maintaining a reconciled relationship with God (1 Jn 1:9) and within the community of believers (Stott, 2017:60).

The book of Revelation presents a vision of ultimate reconciliation at the end times. It depicts a new heaven and a new earth where God dwells with his people, wiping away every tear and eradicating all pain and suffering (Rev 21:3-4). This vision symbolizes the complete restoration of harmony between God and humanity. Beale (2011:550) argues that, Revelation understands that Christians, when they begin to be restored to God through Christ, are still in a continuing exile under Babylonian oppression (Rev 18:2–4; 19:2). Accordingly, the section in the book that most clearly pictures the consummate restoration of true Israel (the church) from exile in Babylon (the world) is in Revelation 21:1–22:5. It can also be reckoned that restoration of God's people conceptually overlaps with the New Testament notion of reconciliation, though Revelation does not use the actual word reconciliation for this notion. In particular, this last vision of Revelation pictures the pilgrim people of God as having finished their journey through exile in the world and having been restored to God and Christ in the end-time temple, which is equated with the New Jerusalem, the restored Garden of Eden, and the new creation.

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As Sinclair (2003) notes, the writings of the apostle Paul, notably in Romans and 2 Corinthians, have been the focal point of extensive theological exploration regarding reconciliation, resulting in a rich body of literature. However, this study basically argues that the focus on the Pauline corpus has, at times, overshadowed the equally significant yet distinct perspective offered by Johannine literature. The Johannine writings, according to Ellis P. Forsman (2011:5-6), present a unique theological lens through which the concept of reconciliation is understood. While these texts contain profound theological insights into themes like love, light, and eternal life, their treatment with regard to reconciliation remains comparatively under explored in contemporary studies. This apparent oversight has led to a gap in understanding how reconciliation is conceived and presented in Johannine literature and thus forms the basis of this study.

Johannine literature is highly distinguished from other New Testament writings, especially the synoptic gospels. While both Johannine literature and the synoptic Gospels address the concept of reconciliation, they approach it from different angles. Johannine literature emphasizes reconciliation as an act of divine love and salvation through belief in Jesus Christ, highlighting the themes of union with Christ and spiritual regeneration along with the implications of this notion of reconciliation in the community of believers. The synoptic Gospels, on the other hand, focus more on the ethical dimension of reconciliation, emphasizing interpersonal relationships, repentance, and acts of mercy. These different perspectives contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the concept of reconciliation within the broader context of Christian theology.

Although the synoptic Gospels present the need for reconciliation between humanity and God, they focus more on the ethical dimension of reconciliation and its implications for human relationships. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:23-24) reconciliation is linked to interpersonal relationships and the importance of resolving conflicts and seeking forgiveness from others (France, 2007:231-

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232). The synoptic Gospels also highlight the role of repentance in the process of reconciliation. In Luke 15:7, repentance is portrayed as a necessary step towards reconciliation with God and others. It involves acknowledging one's wrongdoing, turning away from sin, and seeking forgiveness (Green, 1997:575).

Additionally, the synoptic Gospels emphasize the idea of reconciliation through acts of mercy and compassion. In Matthew 25:35-36, Jesus teaches about the final judgment, saying, "*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me*." The catalogued acts of kindness and care for others are seen as expressions of reconciliation and love (France, 2007:841).

The theory of reconciliation is of paramount importance as it offers a structured approach to conflict resolution, healing and rebuilding broken relationships. By addressing the root causes of conflicts and promoting forgiveness, understanding, and unity, it can bring about a sense of peace and harmony in both personal and societal settings. Reconciliation's positive impact is reflected in its ability to mend broken relationships, prevent the recurrence of violence and contributes to lasting peace and social cohesion. Additionally, it fosters empathy and justice as well as building trust, which are fundamental elements for a more just and harmonious world (Worthington, 2013:197-203).

The Christian community in Egypt grapples with complex internal and external divisions that shape its religious landscape. Internally, there are divisions among Christian denominations, with the Coptic Orthodox Church being the largest but not the only Christian group. These denominational differences can sometimes hinder the community's ability to present a unified front and address

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shared challenges effectively. Externally, the Christian community faces divisions with different religious groups, primarily the Muslim majority in Egypt. As McCallum Guiney (2008) maintains, while Egypt has a long history of religious coexistence, occasional tensions and conflicts have arisen, which can strain interfaith relations.

This study demonstrates that the Christian concept of reconciliation, besides the theory of reconciliation, carries profound implications for addressing both internal and external challenges that the Egyptian Christian community face. Internally, it offers a framework for healing and bridging divisions among Christian denominations. By emphasizing forgiveness, understanding, and unity, reconciliation as expressed in 1 John 4:9-11, helps to foster a sense of common purpose and solidarity among different Christian groups, enabling them to collaborate more effectively in addressing shared concerns. Externally, the Christian concept of reconciliation, which calls for engagement in interfaith dialogue and understanding, contributes significantly to easing tensions and promoting peaceful coexistence with other religious communities, particularly the Muslim majority in Egypt (Jørgensen, 2014:268-270).

Considering all of the above, despite the absence of the term "reconciliation" in Johannine literature, this study has demonstrated its unique incorporation into the text, addressing various aspects of the spiritual journey. It delves into human alienation caused by sin and emphasizes Christ's transformative role in bridging the gap between humanity and God. Furthermore, it offers profound insights into the implications of reconciliation, especially concerning conflicts within the Christian community. By examining these elements, the study aimed to reveal the distinctive features of reconciliation, providing theological insights relevant to contemporary challenges faced by the Christian community in Egypt, dealing with internal and external divisions. By exploring

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Johannine perspectives, the study sought to illuminate pathways to healing, unity, and hope in a context where reconciliation is both a theological imperative and a practical necessity.

1.3 The Statement of Problem

Despite the extensive scholarship on Johannine literature, a comprehensive investigation into the theological understanding of reconciliation, particularly in its two dimensions, remains notably absent. This study endeavoured to fill this omission by embarking on a thorough exploration of the Johannine writings. This includes the Gospel of John, the Johannine letters and Revelation, which collectively form a tapestry of theological insights. At the heart of this investigation lies the exegetical analysis of 1 John 4:9-11, a passage that uniquely intertwines the vertical reconciliation between God and humanity with the horizontal reconciliation among believers. Furthermore, this study sought to address the pressing concerns of the Christian community. Just as John penned these texts to guide the early church through times of internal strife and external pressures, today's Christian community, especially within the complex socioreligious landscape of Egypt, grapples with its own set of challenges and conflicts. Thus, this study expounded upon the implication of reconciliation in the Egyptian contemporary context. It sought to offer insights and guidance to navigate the intricate web of interfaith and denominational relations. It is hoped that a reading from 1 John 4:9-11 would facilitate healing and unity within the Christian community in light of what Jesus had already done by his sacrificial death to restore us back to God's fold where we are no longer his enemies but his beloved sons.

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1.4 Purpose of the study

This study sought to unveil the distinctive features of the Johannine concept of reconciliation in its vertical dimension, which pertains to the reconciliation between humanity and God. Besides, it sought to establish its horizontal dimension, which involves reconciliation within the Christian

community, especially in the contemporary Egyptian context. By conducting an in-depth analysis of the given Johannine text, this study aimed to elucidate the theological nuances and unique aspects of reconciliation as presented in (1 Jn 4:9-11). In doing so, this research not only contributed to a deeper understanding of Johannine theology but also shed light on the practical implications of reconciliation for the lives of believers today especially in the context of Egypt.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The study was informed by the following objectives:

1) To illuminate the uniqueness of the theological notion of reconciliation as presented in Johannine literature.
2) To analyse the two dimensions of Johannine reconciliation through an exegesis of (1 Jn 4:9-11).
3) To develop insights that guide practical applications of the Johannine concept of Reconciliation for the religious context in Egypt.

1.6 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. How does Johannine literature present the concept of reconciliation in a very unique way?
2. How does the exegesis of 1 John 4:9-11 via the tri-polar exegetical model illustrate the concept of reconciliation in its vertical and horizontal dimensions?
3. What practical insights can be developed to guide the application of the Johannine concept of reconciliation in the context of Egypt?

1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study

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A substantial portion of scholarly research on the concept of reconciliation primarily centres on the Pauline epistles, often overlooking its exploration within Johannine literature. By addressing this gap, the study sought to illuminate the unique perspectives on reconciliation as presented in Johannine literature. Through an exploration of the Johannine understanding of reconciliation, this study deepened the grasp of essential theological aspects, such as the role of Jesus Christ, the nature of reconciliation, and its relevance to believers. Furthermore, it unveiled how the historical and cultural context shaped this doctrine, making a valuable contribution to our comprehension of the texts. Moreover, it sought to promote interfaith dialogue by showcasing the distinctiveness of Christian theology, while at the same time demonstrating the ongoing relevance of the Johannine concept of reconciliation to contemporary theology and practice.

The significance of this study is on its potential to shed light on the uniqueness of Johannine concept of reconciliation and its broader implications for our Christian community today especially in the overly Islamic context in Egypt. In so doing, it thus snatches reconciliation from predominant Pauline literature and unveil it in Johannine perspective which is the best approach for Egyptian context.

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1.8 The Scope of the Study

This study focused on reconciliation as it is presented in Johannine literature, in terms of the nature of reconciliation between God and humanity, the role of Jesus Christ and the implications of reconciliation for Christian life and community through exegetical analysis of the text in 1 John 4:9-11 which presents in a very unique way the dual dimension. Besides, it provided the implications of the concept of reconciliation in Egyptian Christian community context which face a strong conflict from inside (Christian denominations) and outside (different religions).

1.9 Preliminary Literature Review

This section comprises the preliminary reviewed literature that informed this research. The selection of material for this work was informed by the objectives, being the main criterion on the relevance of the material to answer the main question of the research and to accomplish its objectives. Therefore, included under this section are the following subsections: reconciliation in Johannine literature, the bonding of the dimensions of the reconciliation in 1 John and implications of reconciliation for Egyptian Christian Community.

1.9.1 Reconciliation in Johannine Literature

Johannine literature primarily consists of the Gospel of John, the three Epistles of John (1-2-3 Jn) and Revelation. While recognizing that their authorship is contentious, this study attributed their authorship to Apostle John the son of Zebedee. Yet the study maintained that reconciliation is a significant theme in Johannine literature, which is often related to the reconciliation of humanity with God through Jesus Christ.

Reconciliation in Christian theology is an element of salvation that refers to the results of atonement. The imagery of atonement is formulated through the language of the law court, temple, slave market, military conflict and the notion of a personal relationship with Christ. Reconciliation embraces the fruition of all those things. The broken relation with God through Satan and sin is restored through the person and work of Christ. This reconciliation is a grand theme for us to contemplate and a great way to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ (Ferguson, 2003). Besides, Paul used the word "reconciliation" or "reconcile" only a few times (Rom. 5:10-11, 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:14-17; Col. 1:19-22). He reserved this word "reconciliation" as his most powerful way of expressing the meaning of the life, death, resurrection, and abiding presence of Jesus Christ. Although it is only used five times in the Pauline corpus, it is an essential term, describing the

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"substance" of the gospel and salvation. Ralph Martin, et al (1993:92-95) writing in the Dictionary of Paul and his Letters, suggests reconciliation is at the centre of Pauline theology.

The early traditional and Pauline theological theme of the crucifixion of Christ as the point and means of God's redemption and reconciliation of humanity is not lost in John (Smith, 1995:120). John's writings offer perspectives on the meaning of the death of Jesus from many angles. John offers no single reigning theory of atonement, but rather a body of metaphors, each a facet of a many-sided truth. For John, the death of Jesus was substitutionary, representative and vicarious (Rainbow, 2014:207). The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus serve various soteriological objectives. To begin with, Jesus is identified as "*the Lamb of God who removes the sins of the world*" (John 1:29). Additionally, Jesus is the bestower of eternal life (John 3:36). Lastly, as the incarnate God, Jesus is the true Lord of the world and will return to resurrect and vindicate his people as described in Revelation 21-22.

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According to Smith (1995:116), numerous passages in the Gospel of John unmistakably reference Jesus' death as a sacrificial act. He is hailed as the "lamb of God" who removes the world's sin (Jn 1:29) and God's love is demonstrated through Jesus' sacrifice (Jn 3:16). Jesus offers his flesh for the life of humanity (Jn 6:51) and is depicted as dying for the nation (ἔθνους) to prevent its destruction (Jn 11:51). This concept is echoed in 1 John (1:7; 2:2) and Revelation (1:5; 5:9; 7:14). According to Ridderbos (1997:73-78), John the Baptist's declaration in John 1:29 unambiguously identifies Jesus as the "Lamb of God," signifying his role in reconciling the world to God. By calling Jesus the Lamb of God, John implies that Jesus supersedes the daily temple sacrifices, symbolizing God's provision of the ultimate Lamb who takes away the world's sin once and for all. This proclamation signifies Jesus' responsibility for reconciling humanity to God and transcends traditional boundaries of worship, divine indwelling, and reconciliation. Jesus is depicted not only as a humble servant but

also as the authoritative agent for removing the world's sin and opening the way to God for all. John the Baptist's words mark a pivotal moment in salvation history, heralding a new era for his disciples as future agents of the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5: l8).

In effect God brings about reconciliation by removing the cause of alienation, i.e., human sins, which was the main obstacle to the right relationship. There is no possibility of true reconciliation until sin has been removed (Guthrie, 1981:488). For this reason, John reveals why we need the lamb of God who is the only one who can remove the sin and its consequences (like alienation and enmity) and reconcile us to God again. This is what Paul underlined in his letters also, the whole process of reconciliation was initiated by and carried out by God himself (2 Cor. 5:18). Reconciliation is accomplished through the cross of Christ, whereby God no longer counts the sins of believers against them (2 Cor. 5:19). Their sins have been placed on Christ, whom God has made to be sin (2 Cor. 5:21) (Schreiner, 2008:363). The apostle does not attribute the reconciliation to man but to God, the one who reconciles because of his love. He reconciled and he was not counting to men their sins, he is made Christ sin for us, and proclaim the reconciliation to the world (Ferguson, 2003).

Stanley Porter (1993:695-699) suggests a conceptual link between the reconciliation Greek word group *katallagē* (καταλλαγή) and the Hebrew word *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם), generally translated as "peace." Reconciliation as the concept in which enmity between God and humanity or between human groups, is overcome and peaceful relations restored on the basis of the work of Christ. According John R. W. Stott (1986:193), two New Testament terms confirm that reconciliation means peace with God, namely "adoption" and "access". With regard to the former, it was Jesus himself who always addressed God intimately as "Abba, Father", who gave us permission to do the same, approaching him as "our Father in heaven". The apostles enlarged on it. John, who attributes our

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being children of God to our being born of God, expresses his sense of wonder that the Father should have loved people enough to call them and indeed make them his children (Jn 1:12-13; 1 Jn 3:1-10) and emphasizes the privileges we have in being sons instead of slaves (Jn 15:15).

John the apostle outlines the pathway to salvation in (Jn 1:12-13), where he connects faith and spiritual birth as essential elements for attaining salvation and reconciliation. Throughout the Gospel, these motifs are expounded in their respective contexts. For instance, in John 3:3 and John 3:16 (and numerous other passages), Jesus emphasizes the necessity of spiritual rebirth and belief in Him for eternal life (Van der Watt, 2005:119). Faith holds a central position in John's gospel, with the verb "πιστεύω" used extensively, emphasizing the specific object of saving faith: Jesus Christ (Köstenberger, 2004:34). In contrast to other Gospels where Jesus's trustworthiness stems from his role as the Jewish Messiah, in John's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as the Son of God, incarnate deity. John's Prologue establishes that those who accept Jesus as the true light become children of God (Jn 1:4, 9, 12). According to Brown (1997:360), the primary aim of John's gospel is to lead people to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and to attain eternal life through this faith (Jn20:30-31). Salvation, synonymous with eternal life in John's theology, signifies reconciliation, transitioning from death (alienation from God) to life. The term "eternal life" is mentioned seventeen times in John's Gospel and six times in his First Epistle. In Revelation, the saved are recorded in the "book of life" and granted access to the "tree of life." Jesus, identified as "the way, the truth, and the life" and "the resurrection and the life," promises abundant life to those who believe (Jn14:6, 11:25, 10:10).

Keener (2012:328-329) adds that, "life" (ζωή- zōē) is used extensively because it comes thirty-two times in the narrative depicting his signs and four times in the discourse section. Even when not conjoined with "eternal," the term designates eternal life with one exception (which may have

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symbolic import, 4:50–51). Otherwise, John employs "ψυχή" (psyche) (Jn10:11; 12:25). Notably, John's use of "life" differs from contemporary Jewish sources and the Synoptic Gospels. Here, "life" is connected to present-tense verbs, signifying that the life associated with the kingdom era is accessible to believers in the present through their faith in Christ. This perspective aligns with the notion of realized eschatology, where Christ's resurrection initiates the awaited resurrection era.

Regeneration, depicted as the pathway to eternal life in John's writings, is notably highlighted in John 3. Jesus informs Nicodemus that one must be born again to perceive the kingdom of God (3:3), emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in this process (v. 6). Culpepper (1998:135) underscores that new birth is the sole means of participating in God's kingdom, which holds the ultimate value. Ridderbos (1997:128) argues that being "born of water and Spirit" in John 3:6 signifies submission to the Spirit's dominion, characterized by reconciliation, forgiveness, and renewal, rather than liberation from worldly aspects. This reign of the Spirit profoundly affects physical existence. In 1 John, regeneration is frequently employed to illustrate the Christian life, with John using the terms "born of God" or "born of him" nine times (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).

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While in Pauline writings, regeneration is presented in (2 Cor. 5:17) "*everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*" When we are reconciled with God our old life passes away and a new life takes over, propelling us toward wholeness. Through a process of casting off dysfunction in our emotions, spirit, psyche, and relationships, we become healthy. In this reconciled relationship with God, we find strength to live like new persons, even though our environment and our world often do not change (DeYoung, 2012:4). Evangelical theologian Philip Ryken (2001:118-119) describes Reconciliation as part of the message of Salvation that brings us back together with God where God is the author; Christ is the agent and we are the ambassadors of reconciliation. In Johannine literature, Jesus is called the "advocate" to the Father on behalf of sinning believers (1 Jn

2:1-2). Sin breaks fellowship between God and humans and between humans, and Jesus's work is the means to restore and to reconcile us to God.

According to Forsman (2011:5), reconciliation is possible because God has offered Jesus as a "propitiation" for our sins. The word "propitiation" describes a sacrifice that is designed to appease for sins. It was used to describe those sacrifices that the Gentiles offered to their gods. But in the New Testament, it is God who offers the "propitiation", not a human being! John the Apostle in his letters illustrates the great love God has for us, and how far he has gone in trying to reconcile man back to himself! Especially in two portions, in (1 Jn 2:1-2) and in (1 Jn 4:10) "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*." It is very obvious through these verses that the process of "reconciliation" goes along with "propitiation" because according to Calvin (1960:505), it describes reconciliation as the peace between humanity and God that results from the expiation of sin and the propitiation of God's wrath. However, it should be noted that the Greek word "ἱλασμός" is translated with both the words expiation and propitiation from time to time. However, there is a slight difference in the terms. Expiation in Christian theology entails making amends for sins by emphasizing Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the payment for humanity's sins, satisfying the demands of God's justice and enabling forgiveness without compromising his holiness. On the other hand, propitiation centres on appeasing God's wrath and restoring the broken relationship caused by sin through Jesus' sacrifice, highlighting the relational aspect of atonement. Expiation addresses the legal consequences of sin from God's perspective, while propitiation focuses on humanity's need for reconciliation and restoration (Stott, 1986:168-174).

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1.9.2 The Bonding of the Dimensions of the Reconciliation in 1 John

John's Gospel and First Epistle both have a strong theology of communal love. During the Last Supper, Jesus commands the disciples, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*" (Jn13:34-35). Jesus's final sermon to his disciples (Jn14-16) is about the love that characterizes the unity of God, which he establishes as a model for the love between his followers. First John repeatedly returns to the theme of love for one another. God, who is love, tells us that his love characterizes his dealings with us. It is because of his love, which does not correspond to human love since it is the entirely gratuitous love-a love for sinners that he has sent his son. This concept of God's love is embodied in Jesus' self-giving. The only requirement attached to this gift of love is that of sharing it with others.

The love for others draws humanity closest to union with the unseen God on earth. This notion possibly challenges secessionists who claim exclusive knowledge and visions of God (Brown, 1988:118). Calvin (1981:165-167) argues that since God is the source of love, his love extends wherever his knowledge reaches, making genuine knowledge of God evident through love for others. Just as John portrays God as light, illuminating all things, his profound love prompted reconciliation through sending his Son. Despite our sinful state provoking God's wrath, his love remains veiled, revealed through Christ, initiating reconciliation. Christ's on-going role in appeasing God's wrath and forgiving sins is a perpetual blessing, bridging the divide caused by sin and initiating new life through God's favour.

According to Köstenberger (2009:1653), John's central theme revolves around Christian love, rooted in God's love shown through the sacrifice of his Son for sins (1 Jn 4:10; cf. Jn 3:16). Believers, having experienced God's love, are urged to reciprocate it by loving one another (1 Jn 4:11). Though God remains unseen, believers manifest their relationship with him through mutual love (1 Jn 4:12; cf. Jn1:18). Marshall (1978:768) highlights love as a sign of new birth, extending it

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to emphasize that Christians should love one another due to God's sacrificial love. John portrays love's essence originating from divine love, implying that those who embody love are connected to God, born of him, and know him. John's focus isn't to impose obligation but to define love's nature, emphasizing its divine origin and its manifestation in believers' relationships.

It was evident from John that those who receive divine love should naturally reflect that love in their own lives. He could not fathom how someone could encounter the profound love of God and not feel compelled to love others in the same way. This connection between experiencing divine love and expressing love for others isn't merely a matter of philosophical reasoning but arises from the overwhelming experience of love, which in turn ignites a fresh outpouring of love. It is noteworthy that John does not emphasize that experiencing God's love should primarily lead to reciprocating that love to God; instead, he underscores our duty to love fellow human beings. While he initially focuses on love within the Christian community, his mention of God's love for sinners implies a broader vision that extends beyond the church and encompasses the world (Marshall, 1978:789).

Kithinji (2020:251) argues that reconciliation can be gotten through separation as presented in a postcolonial perspective in the first epistle of John. However, this study focuses on reconciliation in the pattern of love amidst conflict in 1 John, which is filled with love language, was authored in the midst of conflict. Based on the context it emerged, the author, which this study recognizes as John the apostle, was addressing a critical situation within the Christian community. Some believers have already chosen to separate themselves from the larger congregation, and the author, is writing to caution and guide the remaining members about the presence of false teachers who are actively attempting to deceive them. This situation aligns with the prophecy of Paul to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29-30), which was later renewed to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-4), wherein he foresaw the

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emergence of "savage wolves" that would disrupt the flock. John refers to these individuals as "false prophets," (1 Jn 4:1) "deceivers," (2 Jn7) and even "antichrists" (1 Jn 2:18,22). Yet while the reasons behind the secession of these individuals are complex, it is clear that they held significant theological differences from the mainstream Christian community (Carson and Moo, 2005:677-678). They denied that Jesus was the Christ, not in the sense of rejecting him as the expected Messiah of the Old Testament, but rather questioning whether the human Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. Furthermore, they denied the fundamental doctrine that Christ had come in the flesh. Additionally, their teachings downplayed the concept of sin, suggesting that it did not inherently define their nature, manifest in their behaviour, or hinder their relationship with God. Their conduct, characterized by arrogance, lack of love and schismatic tendencies, contradicted the very Gospel they claimed to possess unique insight into, leading some within the community to question whether they truly possessed the Holy Spirit.

Contemporary scholars often speculate that these opponents may have been influenced by one of three movements: Gnosticism, Docetism, or the heresy of Cerinthus, each of which held distinctive theological positions that clashed with orthodox Christian beliefs (Carson and Moo, 2005:678-679). Regardless of which heresy this outsider group belonged to, it is obvious that this action of division was not just about excluding those with divergent views or different interpretations. Rather, it was a strict stance against a heresy that could potentially undermine the community of believers. According to Kithinji (2020:251-263), this group of outsiders appears to have strayed irreversibly from the path of Christ. Here, those who have chosen to separate themselves from the faith are characterized as antichrists (1Jn 2:22, ὁ ἀντίχριστος), children of the devil (1Jn 3:10, τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου) and liars (1Jn 2:22, ὁ ψεύστης). As a result, a profound moral and theological disagreement had fractured this community of God's children. They found themselves drifting apart, and the author, driven by a compassionate yet pragmatic resolve, must take a resolute stance, akin

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to cutting off a hand to save the whole body (Mat. 5:30). Although the letter acknowledges the risks of continued association with these wayward believers, it is imperative to explore avenues for their potential restoration.

In response to these challenges, 1 John seeks to cleanse the community of any lingering influences from these secessionists. The author aims to solidify the neighbouring congregations' understanding of the faith, acting as a protective shield against the infiltration of secessionist teachings. Moreover, there is a pressing need for healing within the community due to the schism, as internal discord and animosity have taken root. The author's address emphasizes the importance of fostering love and mutual support among the faithful remnant, aiming to restore unity and spiritual health to a congregation that has been spiritually threatened (DeSilva, 2018:394). According to Kithinji (2020:262), "the usefulness of the first epistle of John is exposing how the gospel can wittily be opposed and how the believing group can be protected."

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1.9.3 Implications of Reconciliation for Egyptian Christian Community

A healthy relationship with God produces the desire to be at peace with all Christian sisters and brothers in the human and church family. When people have been truly reconciled with God, they hunger for a restoration to a primitive unity that was spoken into existence at the beginning of human history. Therefore, Genesis 1:26-27 implies that through Adam and Eve flow all persons who have ever existed on this earth. We have a common origin. We are one family (DeYoung, 2012:4).

In Johannine literature, reconciliation has a horizontal as well as a vertical plane. For God has reconciled us to one another in his new community as well as to himself. The passage in (Eph. 2: 11-22) focuses on this, and in particular on the healing of the breach between Jews and Gentiles. In

fact, Christ who "himself is our peace", has broken down the barrier between these two halves of the human race, and "made the two one" (Stott, 1986:195). The proclamation of peace to both Jews and Gentiles and access to the Father through the Spirit depend on the work of Christ on the cross. The apostle did not conceive of reconciliation apart from the cross, and it is intimately linked with justification and reconciliation (Schreiner, 2008:365). On the other hand, Keener (2014:262:300) presents this hostility in John's gospel in two portions (Chapters 4:7), portraying them as ethnic reconciliation. He asserts, Jesus is not neutral; he accepts the correctness of the Jewish position, although he does not allow that to remain as an ultimate barrier to ethnic reconciliation (4:22-23). This Reconciliation was a miracle of God's grace and power. It has resulted in the emergence of a single, new, unified humanity, whose members through the cross have been reconciled both to God and to one another. Formerly enemies, they have had their reciprocal hostility put to death. They are now fellow citizens in God's kingdom, brothers and sisters in God's family (Stott, 1986:195). The vertical pillars represent the reconciled relationship between God and humanity. The horizontal beams and rows of bricks represent the relationship between humans. The image assumes a closely knitted network of believers, who are finding themselves in an interlocking framework of harmony and peace. Moved by God's reconciliation they will move closer to each other and enter into the process of reconciliation themselves (Steyn, 2005:207).

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According to Grudem (1994:780), church discipline plays a crucial role in reconciling the Christian community. When sin disrupts fellowship among believers and their relationship with God, reconciliation becomes paramount. The primary aim of church discipline is twofold: restoration, guiding the offender back to right conduct, and fostering reconciliation among believers and with God. Just as wise parents lovingly discipline their children to guide them back on the right track, the church, in its discipline, acts out of love to restore those who have strayed, re-establishing them in a healthy fellowship and rescuing them from harmful life patterns. Even in extreme cases like

"excommunication," the hope for repentance remains. The overarching goal is to reconcile believers with each other and with God, guiding them back to righteous living and preventing the spread of sin.

In Egypt, Christians make up a significant minority, accounting for approximately 10% of the population and 90% of the population is Sunni Muslim. The majority of Christians in Egypt belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church, which has a long history dating back to the early days of Christianity. Throughout history, the Christian community in Egypt has faced various challenges and conflicts that have impacted their relationship with other religious groups and the wider society (Guiney, 2008:66-70). The Egyptian Government relies on so-called customary reconciliation to resolve these religious conflicts. Customary reconciliation is an ancient form of conflict resolution that predates the country's modern legal and judicial systems. It is legally recognized, especially in cases unrelated to more serious crimes such as homicide, major injuries, or theft. These reconciliation sessions operate based on a collection of established customary rules designed to address conflicts involving individuals, families, households, or professionals and workers in specific fields. In these sessions, disputing parties come to a mutual agreement, often involving compensation for breaches of the agreed-upon terms ('Report on International Religious Freedom: Egypt',2022). Customary reconciliation plays a complex role in addressing sectarian disputes, offering both advantages and drawbacks. On one hand, it can facilitate cultural sensitivity and community participation, potentially leading to swift resolutions while maintaining community relationships. However, its informal nature may lack the legal safeguards needed to ensure fair outcomes and can even perpetuate biases, discrimination, and harmful practices. The impact of customary reconciliation on sectarian disputes hinges on the specific circumstances, effectiveness, and impartiality of the process, as well as its alignment with legal and human rights (Fahmy, 2018).

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One of the key implications of the concept of reconciliation for the Christian community in Egypt is the promotion of interfaith dialogue and understanding. Egypt is a predominantly Muslim country, and tensions between Christians and Muslims have existed at times. Reconciliation calls for Christians to engage in dialogue with members of other faiths, seeking common ground and mutual respect. This can contribute to fostering peaceful coexistence and harmony within Egyptian society (Scheffler, 2007:5). Furthermore, reconciliation within the Christian community itself is crucial for its growth and development. Like any religious community, Christians in Egypt may experience internal divisions or conflicts that can hinder their ability to effectively witness their faith. Reconciliation is a process that causes us to overcome alienation through identification and in solidarity with 'the other,' thus making peace and restoring relationships. Embracing reconciliation means actively working towards resolving these differences through forgiveness, understanding, and open communication. This can lead to a stronger sense of unity among Christians in Egypt and enable them to collectively address societal issues and contribute positively to their communities (DeYoung, 2012:2-3). That is what the Egyptian Council of Churches aims to achieve (Michael Victor et al., 2013).

As a reconciled community and a body of prophets and priests, the church has to promote love and peace in society. It should act as a guardian in all processes of restoration of divided societies and of social cohesion. The same is true of Christians in society. Individual Christians, motivated by the reign of Christ and having been bestowed by the gifts of the Spirit, are all agents of reconciliation. They act as moral agents in many spheres such as politics, education, business, et cetera and in all of these they have to promote social coherence and peace. They have to enhance the reconciliation they experience in the exemplary church and resonate the prophetic testimony of the church in this regard in all their spheres of life (Vorster, 2018:1-8).

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This literature available shows that various models of reconciliation in the Egyptian Christian community have been tried out with some level of success but also with obvious limitations that as much as the literature available deals with reconciliation in Pauline literature, however, scholars in Egypt have not attempted to use Johannine models for offering reconciliation in the Egyptian context. This is the gap that this study desires to fill.

1.9.5 Theoretical Framework

The theory of reconciliation serves as a cornerstone in conflict resolution and relationship healing across diverse contexts (Wood, 2018:6-9). This approach aims to foster understanding, acceptance, and peaceful coexistence among opposing parties by addressing past grievances and promoting mutual forgiveness. Rooted in stages such as truth-telling, apology, reparations, justice, and trust-building, reconciliation is a multifaceted process (Worthington, 2013:197-203). It involves acknowledging painful truths, fostering remorse and responsibility through apology, compensating for harm with reparations, and holding wrongdoers accountable through justice mechanisms. Rebuilding trust, though challenging, is deemed essential (Rettberg and Ugarriza, 2016:518-523). Applied from interpersonal relationships to international conflicts, this theory underscores the significance of empathy, justice, and trust in achieving sustainable peace and cohesion. As such, it is a concept that has been developed and studied by various scholars and researchers in different fields. It is difficult to attribute the theory to a single individual as it has evolved over time through contributions from multiple sources. However, this study was guided by the work of Hannelie J. Wood who is a renowned scholar and practitioner in the field of reconciliation.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the concept of reconciliation, drawing from prominent theories and primarily examining Johannine literature, particularly 1 John 4:9-11. Reconciliation, as a multifaceted and deeply philosophical concept, was central to exploring

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interpersonal and communal relationships. The Johannine text, emphasizing divine love's transformative power in fostering unity, serves as the biblical foundation. Leveraging reconciliation theories and contextualizing within Egypt's socio-cultural landscape, this dissertation aims to unveil insights into applying the Johannine concept to the contemporary Egyptian context. The framework guides the exploration of theological and practical implications, shedding light on reconciliation's potential contributions to conflict resolution and harmony in Egyptian society.

1.10 Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach to delve deeper into the subject matter. In the realm of qualitative research, a comprehensive literature review was meticulously undertaken. This entailed a secondary data thorough examination of an extensive array of resources, including books, articles, and reports, all of which were pertinent to the specific focus of this study. This qualitative dimension was crucial in providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the subject by drawing from a diverse range of scholarly perspectives and insights. The study also employed biblical data, which was selected from 1 John 4:9-11, which was analysed through exegesis. Simply stated, exegesis is the critical interpretation of the biblical text to discover its intended meaning. In particular, this study employed the tri-polar exegetical model championed by Draper (2015:4-19) to illuminate 1 John 4:9-11. The model involves Distantiation, Contextualization, and Appropriation to shed light on the historical context of the text, provide a reading of the text itself, and offer an application to our context today. The researcher employed it as the unique method to the task of analysing data. Draper's exegetical model therefore helped to offer an exegetical analysis of 1 John 4:9-11 and other portions of scripture that were relevant to the understanding of the notion of reconciliation in Johannine literature.

1.11 Ethical Considerations

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This study did not involve human subjects and did not pose technical challenges. This study, which relied on secondary sources obtained from libraries, journals and books, was conducted in an ethical manner. The utilization of secondary data was approached with a strong commitment to professionalism and ethical standards. Rigorous efforts were undertaken to ensure that all sources are acknowledged and cited appropriately, aligning with the principles of academic integrity.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented the introduction to the study, the background of the problem, the objectives, questions and the scope of the study. The chapter also offered a preliminary literature review behind this study looking at the reconciliation in Johannine literature.

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CHAPTER TWO

RECONCILIATION IN JOHANNINE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the uniqueness of the concept of reconciliation as depicted in Johannine literature. It delves into an analysis of sin and its ramifications on humanity through the use of John's language and metaphors. Subsequently, it elucidates the multifaceted role of Jesus Christ in the process of reconciliation, portraying him as a tabernacle (Jn 1:14), the lamb of God (Jn 1:29), the mediator between God and humanity (Jn 14:6), the "I am" imagery (Jn6:35, 8:12, 10:7, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1, 18:5-6),and the embodiment of light and life (Jn 1:4-5; 8:12; 1 Jn 1:5-7; 4:9; 5:11). Furthermore, it discusses the fulfilment of his mission through his death on the cross. Finally, the chapter sheds light on the pathway to reconciliation for believers in John's framework, emphasizing the transformation into children of God through spiritual rebirth. It underscores faith as the exclusive means through which believers can attain salvation and reconciliation.

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2.2 Sin and its Consequences in Johannine Theology

In Johannine theology, sin has profound implications for the relationship between God and creation. The Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles offer insights into the nature and consequences of sin. In Johannine literature, sin is depicted as a basic problem, leading to humanity's separation from God. The world exists in a state of alienation and condemnation, characterized by darkness (Jn 1:5; 12:46), death (Jn 5:19-27; 8:37,44), sin (Jn 8:21,34), slavery (Jn 8:34-36), and falsehood (Jn 8:44) (promoted by the father of lies (the devil: Jn 8:44), who rules this world (Jn 12:31; 14:40; 16:11), all expressed in deeds of darkness (Jn 3:19) and in ignorance i.e. failure to know God. This whole mode of existence is described as "sin", and to remain in it is to die (Jn8:21), indeed it is already to be in death (Jn5:24) (Smith, 1995:81). Köstenberger (2013:227) notes that human sin results in the loss of life and moral darkness, and John emphasizes that sin is not just a moral transgression but a pervasive condition affecting everyone. Jesus' statement in John 8:34 "*Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is, a slave to sin*." underscores the binding power of sin, leading individuals away from God's presence and purpose for their lives (Smith, 1995:81).

In Johannine theology, sin has dual consequences—spiritual and relational. Sin disrupts the intimate relationship between humanity and God by creating a barrier that hinders communion with him "*We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will.*"(Jn 9:31). According to Ladd (1993:265), John's portrayal of death is minimal, treating it as a fundamental aspect of human existence in the world without delving into speculative discussions about the origins of Satan, sin, or death. The human race, steeped in sin, bears responsibility for succumbing to death, a prevailing characteristic of this worldly existence. However, the advent of Christ brings life from above, providing an avenue for all to transcend death and attain eternal life, as articulated in John 5:24. Furthermore, sin is depicted as darkness, defining the character of the sinful world. Despite the pervasive darkness, God has not forsaken the world since through ὁ λόγος, divine revelation pierces the obscurity with supernatural light. In this narrative, the darkness, potent as it may be, proves incapable of extinguishing the persistent light, symbolizing God's unwavering presence and the resilience of divine revelation (Jn1:5).

In the Gospel of John, sin is portrayed as a state opposed to God and Christ. John emphasizes that having sin is contrary to having life, equating wrongdoing with a reluctance to approach the light, where deeds are exposed (Jn3:20). Those engaging in such actions are associated with the world below and belong to a realm that harbours animosity toward Christ and his followers (Jn8:23, 15:18). This world is depicted as belonging to the devil, identified as the father of falsehood and the force behind the murderous intent against Jesus (Jn12:31, 8:42-44). Sin, according to John, represents a profound spiritual alienation from God, manifested in a particular way of life (Turner, 1990:108-109).

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John also highlights the contrast between light and darkness as symbolic representations of righteousness and sin. In John 3:19-20, it is stated, "*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed*." Here, sin is depicted as a preference for darkness over light, signifying a rejection of God's truth and righteousness. There is a parallel between light and darkness reminiscent of the creation narrative in Genesis 1. The distinction he makes between the children of God (1 Jn 3:1) and the children of the devil (1 Jn 3:10) mirrors God's separation between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent in Genesis 3:15 (*The reformation study bible: English standard version*, 2015:2265). John frames the entirety of the Christian journey as an ongoing extension of the cosmic spiritual conflict that originated with the fall and persists until the ultimate judgment. The adversaries in this spiritual battle are depicted as "antichrists," individuals who reject the incarnation of the Son in the flesh (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3).

As previously mentioned, the language of enmity between the children of God and the children of the devil is woven throughout the Johannine literature. In the gospel, John depicted the hostility between Jesus (as the woman seed) and "οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι," the term, which the gospel mostly uses to refer to Jesus's opponents (Conway, 2017:14). The term refers to "the Jews," whom Jesus clearly described as sons of devil (serpent's seed) in John 8:42-47. While in his first letter John portrayed the conflict between the group of believers and the outsider group, he contrasts those who walk in the light with those who walk in the darkness (1 Jn 1:6, 7). Besides, he contrasts those who practice righteousness with those who practice sin (1 Jn 3:1-10). He also contrasts those who believe God and those who do not believe, those who have the Son and those who do not (1 Jn 5:10-12) (*The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version*, 2015:2263). Finally, in the book of Revelation, John presented the feud between those who belong to Babylon and those who belong to Jesus.

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In first letter of John, the claim to have "fellowship" (κοινωνία) with God the Father is a lie when it is combined with a wandering in darkness (1 Jn 1:6). For John, walking in the light is grounded in the fact that God's divine nature is light (Strecker and Attridge, 1996:28). To "walk in the light" is to have fellowship with God (1:6). In 1 John 2:11, John points out that ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν "walks in the darkness" refers to μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ "hates his brother". In 1 John 3:14-15, John substitutes this phrase with "θανάτου" "death" (v. 14) and οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον "has not eternal life" (v. 15). Therefore, ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν would mean: "abiding in death" (3:14), "do not have eternal life abiding in that person" (3:14, 15) (Van der Watt, 2005:449).

In summary, sin holds a crucial role in Johannine theology, illustrating the separation between humanity and God. It affects all individuals, disrupting their relationship with God and causing spiritual and relational consequences. Despite this, Johannine theology highlights redemption through Jesus Christ, offering forgiveness and reconciliation. Essential components include confession, repentance, and faith in Jesus for experiencing forgiveness and restoring the relationship with God.

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2.3 Jesus' role in Reconciliation

Johannine theology underscores Jesus Christ as the key figure in the redemption from sin and the reconciliation of humans with God. Jesus' identity and role in reconciliation is disclosed in Jesus' own claims and in his signs. Jesus is able to offer the living water that will quench all thirst and bring the drinker eternal life (Jn 4:13). More especially Jesus is, and provides, the true bread humans need to eat (Jn 6:35); the light without which they remain: in darkness (Jn 8:12; 9:5); the resurrection without which they are in death (Jn 11:25); the truth without which they are in sin, falsehood and death (Jn 8:21-36; 14:6). He is the Lamb of God who will remove the cause of the

alienation namely the sin (Jn 1:29) through his sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus offers forgiveness and reconciliation for humanity. He is the tabernacle who dwells among us where restore the relationship between God and humanity (Jn 1:14). He is the mediator between people and God (Jn 14:6) where there is no one can come to the Father except through him. All this means Jesus is sent, or given, to become the Revealer/ Reconciler, and thereby the Saviour of human. John 17:3 "*This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*" (Turner,1990:102).

2.3.1 Jesus as the Tabernacle (The Incarnate Word, Dwelling among Humanity)

Guthrie (1981:486), highlights the presence of the concept of reconciliation in early Judaism, where the necessity of people reconciling with each other as a precursor to reconciliation with God was acknowledged. The awareness of estrangement from God manifested in the belief that the actions of the people of Israel, such as during their wilderness wanderings, had angered God. However, there was a conviction that the provision of the tabernacle served as a means of reconciliation. This notion of God's anger coexisted with a strong belief in his mercy, portraying him as a deity fostering peace within his creation and among his creatures. Notably, in examining New Testament evidence, it is crucial to recognize that Jews did not hesitate to speak of God being reconciled, signifying a mitigation of God's anger towards sinners.

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John gives such an astonishing statement: "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" (John 1:14). John uses the "forceful, almost crude" word, σὰρξ (flesh), to underscore the physical reality of the incarnation. Furthermore, the incarnated λόγος dwelt (ἐσκήνωσεν) in the midst of humanity or—more literally— "tabernacled" or "pitched his tent" in their midst (Booth, 2015:108). Noticeably,

there is a play of words in σκηνόω because the term embraces both "flesh" and "glory." The verb resembles the noun σκήνος, which can be connected with the idea of "flesh" because it often refers to the tabernacle of the human body. The verb σκηνόω can also be connected with the idea of glory, for it resembles the noun σκηνη, which the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible used for the Israelite tabernacle.... Therefore, tabernacle imagery is uniquely able to portray the person of Jesus as the locus of God's Word and glory among humankind (Koester, 1989:102). So, John exhibits a penchant for symbolism, evident not only in the Book of Revelation but also in his Gospel. One striking instance occurs in John 1:14 with the profound declaration, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" The term "dwelt" (Greek, σκηνόω) echoes the Old Testament, specifically recalling Israel's wilderness wanderings when God's glory resided among them in a mobile tent, the Tabernacle (Jamieson and Robert, 2002:2434). As noted by Walvoord (1983:273) in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, this mirrors the manner in which "God's presence was in the Tabernacle (Ex40:34), so Jesus dwelt among people". Essentially, this passage signifies that Jesus, the embodiment of God's glory, "tabernacled" among humanity.

According to Pink (1975:29-33), God manifested his presence among humanity through Jesus, his dwelling that parallels the Old Testament Tabernacle, designed for mobility during Israel's wilderness journey. Just as the Tabernacle was humble and unassuming appearance of the Tabernacle finds a parallel in the Incarnation, where Christ's divine majesty was veiled beneath human flesh. Like the Tabernacle, Christ serves as the meeting place between God and humanity, being the sole Mediator and bridge between deity and humankind. Additionally, the Tabernacle's role in preserving the Law aligns with Christ's perfect adherence to and magnification of God's Law throughout his life. Furthermore, the Tabernacle, as a place of sacrifice and worship, foreshadows

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Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and serves as a reminder that through him, we offer praise and worship, having access to the throne of grace.

According to Leon Morris (1992:103), it is obvious that John wanted us to recall God's presence in the tabernacle in the wilderness which seems clear from the immediate reference to "glory", for glory was associated with the tabernacle. When for example, it was first set up, "*the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle*" (Ex40: 34). Without a doubt the glory connected to the tabernacle holds significance in John's narrative (*The Reformation Study Bible*, 2015:1852). The glory resulting from the immediate presence of the Lord is referred to quite often in Jewish writings. It came to be linked with the Shekinah, a word which means "dwelling" i.e., God's dwelling among his people. That John had in mind the Shekinah and the glory that was associated with it is further indicated by the express statement that the glory was "*glory as of the only begotten from the father*" (Morris, 1992:104).

A. M. Ramsey (2009:59) notes that the current passage evokes reflections on the tabernacle in the wilderness, along with the prophetic imagery of Yahweh dwelling in the midst of his people and the Shekinah, which he causes to reside among them. Ramsey emphasizes that the flesh of Jesus serves as the definitive place of God's dwelling. Furthermore, he underscores the uniqueness of the present passage, stating that all previous manifestations of God's dwelling in Israel were transitory or incomplete, and they find fulfilment and supersession in the incarnation of the Word-made-flesh dwelling among humanity. God's Old Testament promises to "tabernacle" among his people (Lev 26:11; Ezek 37:27; Joel 3:17; Zech 2:10) found fulfilment when the Word of God—by whom all things were created—became flesh and lived among humans. This time the tabernacle presence of God appeared, not in a man-made structure, but in the God-man, Jesus Christ. Similarly, the

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Shekinah glory that had formerly filled the tabernacle and temple revealing the presence of God among his people, now radiated in the person of Jesus Christ (Booth, 2015:109).

2.3.2 Jesus as the Lamb of God

One of the most important mentions of reconciliation in the gospel of John is the pronouncement of John the Baptist in 1:29 which unmistakably points to Jesus as "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" This signifies his role in effecting the reconciliation of the world with God (Ridderbos, Vriend and Ridderbos, 1997:73). On the basis of the declaration that Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" the imagery becomes parallel with the role of the Servant in (Isa 53:4, 11, 12). John's articulation of the declaration shifts the focus to Jesus as the Lamb God provides for the eradication of sin. In essence, Jesus fulfils the Servant's role because his blood, shed in his crucifixion, serves as the divinely appointed means for purifying from sin and establishing communion between humanity and God. It is asserted that the death of Jesus is an atoning sacrifice, and its redemptive benefits, including reconciliation and fellowship with God, are presently received through faith (Turner, 1990:109-110). What John understood by this saying is undoubtedly illustrated in the First Epistle: "*You know that he appeared to take away (ἄρῃ) sins*" (1 Jn3:5; 1 Jn2:2; 4:10). The Lamb of God is he who atones by the shedding of his blood (Ladd, 1993:273).

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Taking into account the Lamb's cue in Revelation, Dodd (1968:230) has suggested an entirely different background of this term "Lamb of God," which denotes an original messianic title of power. In Revelation, the lamb shares in God's omnipotence (Rev. 22:1, 3) and engages in conflicts against God's adversaries (Rev 14:1-5; 17:14; cf. 5:6). This imagery is purported to appear elsewhere in apocalyptic literature, depicting the people of God as a flock and their leaders as horned sheep or rams, reminiscent of Revelation's mention of a multi-horned lamb. Additionally, he

contends that the phrase "take away sin" need not be exclusively understood as "vicariously bearing sin away" but could also signify "removal," portraying an act of power rather than one of expiation or atonement (Dodd, 1968:237).

Turner (1990:109-110) further insists that the avowal that Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" prompts many to interpret sacrificial and expiatory concepts within John's narrative. When we interpret the term "αἰρῶν" as "to take upon oneself," the imagery leans toward being propitiatory, drawing parallels with the role of the Servant in Isaiah 53:4, 11, 12. Alternatively, some propose that it could also signify "to take away" or "to remove," implying "expiation." In this interpretation, God graciously provides the lamb that "removes" the sin of the world. On a related note, Leon Morris (1992:148) suggests that the verb "taken away" conveys the idea of bearing off. While it may not specifically point to one particular means of atonement, it does signify atonement, particularly through substitution. Jesus bears the consequence of human sin in order that its guilt may be removed. It is removed completely, carried right off.

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As Ridderbos (1997:73) notes, Israel's ministry of reconciliation was centred not on a ritual of baptism but in the temple service, and that not only incidentally at the high points of the liturgy but rather in the continual daily morning and evening sacrifice of a one-year-old lamb. All that is said here in one splendid and comprehensive pronouncement is that from now on Jesus acts and answers for the reconciliation and indwelling fellowship between God and his people symbolized till now by the lamb - and does so for the whole world. God himself is now, once and for all, providing the true (eschatological) Lamb (cf. Gen. 22:8) that takes away the sin of the world (Ridderbos, Vriend and Ridderbos, 1997:73-74). This statement, which is repeated twice, is the distilled essence of the Baptizer's witness. Thus, the incarnate Christ is the fulfilment of both the tabernacle presence of God in their midst and the sacrificial Lamb of God who makes reconciliation possible (Booth,

2015:111). Although the origin of the Baptizer's statement is a matter of debate, undoubtedly it evokes memories of the Passover lamb, the daily sacrificial lambs, and the servant lamb of Isaiah 53 on the grounds that the Aramaic word *talya* can be rendered ether by "lamb" or by "boy, servant."(Ladd,1993:273). Köstenberger (2009:189) observes, however, that in contrast to these lambs, "the Messiah is God's lamb, that is, the lamb provided by God himself." The attendant implication is that God's lamb would accomplish a more efficacious removal of sin than the endless repetition of cultic sacrifices. Even more astounding is the fact that the Lamb of God is God—in the flesh. Significantly, Jesus removes not just the sin of the Israelites, but "the sin of the world" as well, both Jews and Gentiles (Jn1:29). The "Lamb of God" statement that summarizes the prophet's message is also a powerfully succinct summary of the reconciling work of Christ and the universal mission of God (Booth, 2015:111).

Notably, in Johannine writings, two distinct elements seem to enter into the conception. On the one hand, the Lamb is sacrificed (Jn 1:29; Rev. 5:6-12; 7:14) for the redemption of man. On the other hand, the Lamb is the leader or shepherd (Jn 10:11; Rev. 7:17) of the people of God. Jesus emerges as a profound figure embodying dual roles - that of the Good Shepherd and the sacrificial Lamb. The title "Good Shepherd" accentuates Jesus' compassionate leadership, where he willingly sacrifices himself for the well-being of his flock (Jn 10:11). His sheep, recognizing his voice, faithfully follow him, underscoring Jesus' role as the ultimate guide and protector (Jn 10:4-5). Simultaneously, Jesus is depicted as the sacrificial Lamb who removes the world's sins (Jn 1:29, 36). This representation extends to his atoning death on the cross, reconciling humanity to God and offering salvation to believers. The juxtaposition of these titles in the Johannine language highlights the multifaceted nature of Christ's mission - to both safeguard and save his followers, emphasizing the integral roles of compassion and sacrifice in his redemptive purpose (Dodd, 1968:231).

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The Mediator of reconciliation between us and God is Christ, where all of reconciliation comes to us through him. God was not counting men's sins against them (2 Cor. 5:19), but against Christ his Son. That is the most basic thing in the Bible. His righteousness, and our sin. That is the background of all the OT (Old Testament); the scapegoat expressing to us the alienable mystery of the double experience of Jesus Christ, on earth and before God (Ferguson and Sinclair, 2003).

2.3.3 Jesus as the Mediator

In Johannine theology, Jesus is depicted as the divine mediator of salvation who bridges the gap between humanity and God and reinforces the reconciliation through, at least, two vital announcements of Jesus. Firstly, when Jesus declares in John 14:6 "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*," he underscores his exclusive role of, and in facilitating reconciliation. Besides, he highlights the centrality of his redemptive work in restoring a fractured relationship between God and humans because of sin. Morris (1992:641) emphasizes that the term "Way" signifies a connection between two entities-the crucial link between God and humanity. God has appointed Jesus as the Mediator, entrusting him with control over the world and the dispensation of blessings essential for peace, forgiveness, and salvation. Underlining that Christ as the sole access to the Father, rejecting any approach to God without a Mediator, and emphasizing Christ's role in presenting his people to the Father for acceptance. Brown (1970:621) notes that "the way" is a prominent phrase in verse 6, building on Jesus' earlier statement about the way in verse 4 and responding to Thomas' question in verse 5. The second line of verse 6 concentrates on Jesus as the exclusive way to the Father, emphasizing, "No one comes to the Father except through me." This divine aspect of Jesus underscores his role as the mediator through whom reconciliation is made possible.

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Secondly, When Jesus replies to Nathaniel, "*Truly, truly I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man*" (Jn 1:51), almost all commentators agree that this verse contains an allusion to Jacob's vision at Bethel in Genesis 28:12,26. Similar to Jacob's vision, where the heavenly reality of an open connection was seen, the disciples will witness this connection on the Son of Man. The reference to Bethel emphasizes that Jesus is Bethel as a place where the metaphysical reality of heaven meeting earth is realized (Greene, 2018:432-433). According to Booth (2015:112), Jesus made the astonishing revelation that he, himself, is the fulfilment of Jacob's dream. The person of Christ is the exclusive place where heaven and earth meet. As the ladder between these two spheres, Jesus is therefore the only way to the Father (cf. Jn 14:6).

Ladd (1993:282), contends that this saying (Jn 1:52) clearly embodies an allusion to Jacob's vision of a ladder reaching to heaven, and a more natural interpretation in the context of Johannine thought is that Jesus as the Son of Man has come to establish communication between heaven and earth. This is a bit of "realized eschatology." The disciples will experience "see" in all Jesus' work the union with God that is his and his alone. Thus, the Son of Man is the "gate of heaven," the place of the presence of God's grace on earth, the only mediator between God and humans.

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2.3.4 The "I Am" Imagery in Johannine Writings

In the Johannine writings, Jesus reveals himself through the use of the "I am" imagery. This self-designation is a unique aspect of the Gospel of John, where Jesus makes numerous claims about his identity and relationship with God. In the Gospel of John, there are seven instances where Jesus uses the "I am" imagery to reveal his identity; "I am the bread of life" (6:35, 48); "I am the light of the world" (8:12); "I am the door of the sheep" (10:7); "I am the good shepherd" (10:11); "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25); "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6); "I am the true vine"

(15:1). In addition to such sayings are several where Jesus designates himself simply by the words "I am" (ἐγὼ εἰμί, cf. 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8).

According to Ladd (1993:187), translating this phrase literally is a formidable task, as the simple "I am" often lacks meaningfulness in English within most contexts. However, in John 8:58, the RSV opts for a translation that carries a more robust tone, stating, "Before Abraham was, I am." The Greek language used in this context conveys a much stronger assertion than its English counterpart, with the statement "Before Abraham was born (γενέσθαι), I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί)." Notably, this passage in the New Testament is distinctive, presenting a contrast between εἰμί and γενέσθαι. The audacious nature of Jesus' assertion led the Jews to pick up stones, seemingly in response to what they perceived as blasphemy. Despite the hostility depicted in John's Gospel, Jesus did not refute the charges; rather, the implicit claims embedded in his language suggested an equality with God (Jn 5:18) and even the assertion of being God (Jn 10:33).

The “I am” imagery is a powerful way for Jesus to assert his divinity and to demonstrate his unique relationship with God. By using this term, especially those used absolutely, is not to be found in the Hellenistic world but in the Old Testament. Jesus is drawing on the language of the Old Testament, particularly the burning bush episode in which God reveals himself to Moses as "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14), and in Isaiah God is to be known as "I am" (Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 46:4, etc.). In the use of the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμί, Jesus is in some real sense identifying himself with the God of the Old Testament. In the Johannine narrative, this comes to full expression after the resurrection in the confession of Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28) (Ladd, 1993:187).

In the Johannine writings, the “I am” statements attributed to Jesus hold significant symbolic and theological meaning, often pointing to his divine nature and mission. One key aspect of these “I

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am" declarations is their connection to the reconciliation between humans and God. For instance, in John 10:11 Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd, symbolizing his care for his followers and his role in guiding them back to God. Similarly, in John 10:9, Jesus presents himself as the gate for the sheep, emphasizing that through him, believers find access to salvation and reconciliation with God. Furthermore, in John 14:6, Jesus declares himself as "the way, the truth, and the life," emphasizing that reconciliation with God is attainable only through a relationship with him. These statements collectively highlight Jesus' pivotal role in facilitating reconciliation between humans and God.

2.3.5 Jesus as the Life and the Light

In Johannine theology, Jesus is portrayed as the embodiment of life and light, carrying profound significance in the Gospel and first epistle of John. These symbolic representations are central to understanding the nature of Jesus and his role in the salvation of humanity. In John's theological framework, connecting the primordial state "in the beginning" (Jn 1:1; cf. Gen. 1:1) with the incarnation of Christ, the depicted scenario serves as the contextual background for a more accessible understanding of Jesus's arrival. The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of humanity's fall due to sin, leading to the loss of life and moral obscurity. The pressing need emerges for the restoration of human life—specifically, "eternal life"—and light, representing liberation from the grip of sin. John, in contrast to the Synoptic writers and Paul, anchors concepts like God's kingdom, justification, and reconciliation in the foundational realities of creation that were distorted by the fall but have now been reinstated through Christ (Köstenberger, 2013:227-228).

First, the concept of life in Johannine theology extends beyond physical existence to encompass spiritual vitality and communion with God. Through his teachings and sacrificial death, Jesus offers believers a pathway to abundant and everlasting life. This theological perspective underscores the

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transformative power of Jesus' presence in the lives of believers. Where, the Gospel of John emphasizes Jesus as the source of eternal life. Jesus declares that the Son possessing the same authority as the Father to confer life (Jn 5:21, 26). Faith in Jesus as the Son of God leads to the possession of eternal life (Jn 3:35; 6:40, 47; 10:10), as he declares, "*I am the resurrection and the life*" (Jn 11:25) and holds the power to give eternal life according to the Father's will (Jn 17:2). These statements underscore Jesus' role as the conduit through which believers can attain eternal life. Furthermore, John 1:4 states, "*In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind,*" highlighting the inseparable connection between Jesus and life itself (Ladd, 1993:273). This concept of Jesus as the source of life is further developed in 1 John, where it is stated that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (1 Jn 5:11). The Johannine letters also stress that this life is characterized by love. In 1 John 4:9, it is written, "*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him*." Here, Jesus is presented as the embodiment of divine love, which brings life to humanity.

Second, the imagery of light also serves as a metaphor for moral purity and righteousness. It represents the contrast between spiritual enlightenment through faith in Christ and spiritual blindness resulting from unbelief. Through this symbolism, Johannine theology portrays Jesus as the ultimate source of enlightenment and moral clarity for humanity. Where, in the Gospel of John, light symbolizes divine illumination, truth, and spiritual awakening. John 8:12 records Jesus proclaiming, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life*." This declaration signifies Jesus as the guiding force that dispels spiritual darkness and leads individuals toward truth and salvation. Furthermore, 1 John underscores this symbolism by stating that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all (1 Jn 1:5). This association between God and light reinforces the idea that Jesus, as the Son of God, embodies

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divine light. The Johannine letters also emphasize that believers are called to walk in the light as Jesus is in the light (1 Jn 1:7), highlighting a moral dimension to this metaphor.

According to Köstenberger (2013:227-228), these symbolic, life and light, representations underscore Jesus' role as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the embodiment of God's redemptive plan for humanity. Where parallels from other parts of the Bible come to mind, particularly a passage from (Psalm 36:8-9) "*They enjoy the abundance of your house; you quench their thirst from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light, we find illumination.*" Consider Jesus's assurance of living water (Jn 4:10–15), the commitment to rivers of living water flowing from within individuals (Jn 7:38), and the pledge of abundant life (Jn 10:10). Drawing parallels, Jeremiah's lament highlights how people abandoned God, "the spring of living water," opting instead to "dig their own cisterns" (Jer. 2:13; cf. 17:13) and the subsequent call to return to the Lord. Furthermore, the enduring connection between light and life is underscored in the common expression "the light of life" (Job 3:20; 33:30; Pss.49:19; 56:13; Isa. 53:11; Jn 8:12). The book of Revelation vividly illustrates the fully restored, abundant life in God's presence (Rev. 22:1–2; cf. Ezek. 47:12).

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2.4 The Mission of Jesus Christ

According to Ladd (1993:273), Jesus' mission of salvation involves his death, and the gift of eternal life is mediated through this sacrificial act. Illustrated in a parable reminiscent of synoptic teachings, this idea is conveyed: "*Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit*" (Jn 12:24). This concept is reiterated in (Jn 12:32), where Jesus speaks of being lifted up from the earth to draw all people to himself. Jesus is acutely aware that the ultimate goal of his mission is his death, emphasized through the repeated themes of the Son of Man's exaltation, Jesus' consciousness of the fateful "hour" (Jn 2:4; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1)

and explicit statements about his deliberate act of laying down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11, 15). His death is not a random event but a purposeful and climactic element of his mission over which he has full control. In fact, the significance of the cross lies in its revelation of the Good Shepherd's profound willingness to "lay down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:15). This sacrificial act, as seen in John 10:15 and echoed in John 6:51, where Jesus likens the "bread" given for the world to his flesh, signifies that Jesus' death serves as a revelation of God's love for humanity—a love characterized by the self-devotion of the good shepherd. The cross, therefore, stands as the supreme moment of God's self-revelation in Jesus. In this context, the words signify that Jesus' death will draw all people to him (Jn 12:32), becoming a mediator of life to them (Turner, 1990:105-106).

According to Rainbow (2014:110-111), The impact of Jesus' death on God the Father is expressed by John through the concept of "propitiation" (ἱλασμός). In the twentieth-century New Testament scholarship, the exact meaning of this term was a subject of scrutiny and debate. However, in John's context, it carries its typical sense, widely accepted in non-biblical Greek, signifying appeasement or conciliation, evident in 1 John 2:1-2. John illustrates that a child of God who has sinned requires an "advocate *παράκλητος* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one," serving as a legal representative pleading the righteousness of the fallen individual. Considering the backdrop of God's judgment and wrath in the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse, John's use of "propitiation" in his First Epistle aligns with the concept of removing God's wrath. Contrary to human relationships, the metaphor of propitiation, when associated with the biblical concept of God, signifies the satisfaction of God's inviolable holiness, essential for extending forgiveness with integrity. This idea of God needing appeasement is not inconsistent with God's loving nature, as seen in 1 John 4:10, where God's love is demonstrated in sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Presenting Jesus' death as a divine satisfaction becomes the supreme expression of God's love, as it

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upholds God's unwavering holiness and emphasizes the extent to which God went to rescue the unholy (1 Jn 4:9-11, 19).

God's sending of the Son was aimed at nothing less than the redemption of the perishing cosmos. John the Baptist introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). God's purpose in sending the Son was not condemnation but salvation for the world (Jn 3:17; 12:47). Samaritan believers recognized him as "the Savior of the world" (Jn 4:42). Jesus, identifying himself as the bread from heaven, came to give life to the world (Jn 6:33, 51) and declared, "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). Through his disciples' witness, Jesus prayed for the world to believe in him (Jn 17:21, 23). Not only is Jesus the propitiation for sins within the believing community ("our sins"), but he extends this to the whole world (1 Jn 2:2). God sent his Son to bring life, making him "the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn 4:9, 14). The ultimate realization of this goal awaits the transformation of the kingdom of the world into the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ (Rev. 11:15), and the ultimate reconciliation between God and his people (Rev. 21:1-8) (Rainbow, 2014:140).

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2.5 Implications of Reconciliation

In Johannine theology, the concept of being "born of God" is a central theme in John's writings where to be reconciled with God means to be children of God. According to John's Gospel, Jesus is the Son of God who has come to earth to save humans from sin and its consequences. In order to be saved, one must be "born of God" or "born again" (Jn 3:3-8). Thus, the believers are not merely servants or followers of God but are adopted as his children. Noticeably, from the very beginning, the Gospel speaks of those who "receive" Jesus as the Light and "believe in his name, "those who are given authority to become children of God" by virtue of having been "born of God" (Jn 1:12-

13). Two chapters later Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Unless someone is born from above or "of water and Spirit", he cannot see or "enter" the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3, 5). According to Ridderbos (1997:128), being born of "water and Spirit" does not mean being released from the temporal and "fleshly" existence of this world; it means rather the subjection of the flesh to the reign of the Spirit, of reconciliation, forgiveness, and renewal, a reign that deeply enters the sphere of the flesh. All the above texts point to regeneration, which is the way of obtaining eternal life in John's writings. As Culpepper (1998:135) avers, only the Holy Spirit is capable of regenerating the spirit of a human being (v. 6). Nicodemus's status at birth or place in society is irrelevant; only new life in God's kingdom is worth anything, and new birth is the only way to participate in that kingdom.

Besides, the theme of being children of God is further expounded in 1 John 3:1-2, which states, "*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so, we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now*". This passage underscores the profound love and privilege bestowed upon believers as they are identified as children of God. Regeneration is frequently used in 1 John as a way of describing the Christian life. Nine times in this Epistle, John uses the terms "born of God" or "born of him" (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). These verses reveal the goal of regeneration in the Christian life: sanctified living. The one who is "born of God" in these passages "practices righteousness" (1 Jn 2:29), "does not practice sin" (1 Jn 3:9; 5:18), loves other believers (1 Jn 4:7-8), "believes that Jesus is the Christ" (1 Jn 5:1), and overcomes the world by faith (1 Jn 5:4). Thus, being children of God entails living a life characterized by righteousness and love. The epistles of John emphasize the moral implications of this identity, calling believers to walk in obedience to God's commandments and to love one another as evidence of their status as his children. Hence, the defining characteristics of birth from God are acts of the will, loving the "brother" or fellow child of God and believing (Lieu, 1991:36).

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2.6 Faith

The concept of "children of God" in Johannine theology encompasses theme of adoption into God's family through faith in Christ. This concept is rooted in the Gospel of John, where it is stated, "*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*" (Jn 1:12). This verse highlights the transformative nature of faith in Jesus Christ, leading to a new identity as children of God. Faith for John is not a general belief. Saving faith has a particular object: Jesus Christ. John's Prologue explains that those who receive him as the true light will be made children of God (Jn 1:4, 9, 12). According to Sinclair (2003), "God has reconciled sinners to himself in Christ, it is a finished and completed work. It is already accomplished and I do not participate in it at all, or add to it at all. I am active in the process only as I stretch out empty hands of faith to receive an accomplished reconciliation."

2.7 Conclusion

The main task of this chapter was to illuminate the uniqueness of the notion of the reconciliation as presented in Johannine literature through Johannine imagery for Jesus. Starting with examination of the sin and its consequences on humanity according to John's language and metaphors. This was followed by elaborating of the role of Jesus Christ in reconciliation as a tabernacle, the Lamb of God, the mediator between God and humans, the "I am" imagery, the light and life. Moreover, it discussed how his mission was accomplished by his death on the cross. Finally, shedding light on how the believers are reconciled with God through Jesus' work in John's terms namely to be children of God by being born from above and the only way through which believers can obtain salvation and reconciliation is through faith alone.

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CHAPTER THREE

LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF 1 JOHN 4: 9-11

3.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this chapter is on the exegetical examination of 1 John 4:9-11. Following the translation of the Greek text; the analysis encompasses both the historical and literary contexts. A detailed verse-by-verse exegesis is undertaken, delving into the theological significance especially the concept of reconciliation explored in its dual dimensions.

3.2 The Greek Text

9 ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ. 10 ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν ltὸν θεόν, ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. 11 ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν.

3.2.1 Working Translation

9 In this, God's love was revealed among us, since God has sent his uniquely begotten son into the world in order to be alive because of/ through him. 10 In that is the love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son [as] a propitiation/ sin-offering (an instrument for appeasing) for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we ought to love each other likewise."

3.2.2 Other Versions and Translation Problems

Three different translations were compared: the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the Revised Standard Version (RSV), and New International Version (NIV). There are small variations between these translations, mainly about words' selection and phraseological construction, most of them without affecting deeply the structure and the meaning of the text. In v.9 The most significant difference occurs with the words (ἐφανερώθη; ἐν ἡμῖν; τὸν μονογενῆ) "*By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live*

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through Him" (NASB). "*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him*" (NIV). "*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him*" (RSV). In v.10 the most significant difference occurs with the word "ἱλασμὸν" which indicates different theology understanding. "*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*" (NASB). "*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins*" (NIV). "*In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins*" (RSV). In v.11 all these different translations approximately follow the same construction "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*" (RSV).

3.3 The Historical Setting of 1 John 4:9-11

This section deals with matters involving the background information of the first epistle of John in terms of the authorship, the date of writing, the location of audience, the origin, purpose and recipients of 1 John. The section is modest in content dealing only with what seems relevant to the interpretation of the selected passage.

3.3.1 Authorship, Date of Writing and the Location of Audience

Keener (2014:706) notes the widely accepted historical belief in the stylistic resemblance between 1 John and the Gospel of John until the twentieth century, often attributing both to the same author. Despite some scholars pointing out minor stylistic variations and suggesting a different author within the "Johannine School," it's crucial to acknowledge the common practice of disciples imitating their teachers' styles. This proposal is not definitively dismissed on literary grounds, as the stylistic differences can be attributed to the distinct genres of an epistle and a Gospel. The alleged theological disparities may arise from addressing unique situations. Notably, the author of 1 John,

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claiming eyewitness status without a pseud epigraphic preface, stands out. Additionally, early testimonies in 1 Clement, the Didache, Papias, and Polycarp (by the first quarter of the second century) affirm the existence of 1 John. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria in the later second century specifically attribute the letters to John the apostle (Köstenberger, 2013:350).

Regarding the dating of this epistle, Carson (2005:676) suggests dating 1 John based on the heresy it addresses, proposing a placement after the fourth gospel due to the rise of proto-Gnosticism at the end of the first century. Support for this view comes from indications that some Gnostic heretics misused the fourth gospel. This misuse likely contributed to church schism, as seen in 1 John 2:19. Considering references in sub apostolic fathers and the growing influence of Gnosticism, a fitting date for the Johannine epistles is the early 90s. DeSilva (2018:393) adds to this by comparing 1 John with Ignatius and Polycarp's letters, placing them no earlier than 110 CE. These later writings condemn teachings similar to those in 1 John but more advanced, suggesting a dating of 1 John a few years before 110, possibly in the 90s.

In terms of audience location, according to Marshall (2011:307), Irenaeus is the earliest writer definitively placing John the apostle, to whom he attributes the letters, in the province of Asia. Irenaeus specifically mentions 'the church in Ephesus, founded by Paul and having John continuing with them until the times of [the emperor] Trajan' in his work, "Against Heresies." It is suggested that John likely relocated from Palestine to Ephesus around the time of the Jewish revolt in CE 66. Intriguingly, Irenaeus reports how as a youth he had listened to Polycarp, who himself had been a pupil of John.

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3.3.2 Origin, Purpose and Recipients of First John

Marshall (2011:308) highlights that the backdrop of 1 John involves combating false teachings, common in Asian Christian communities during the latter part of the first century. These teachings, a blend of pagan practices and Greek philosophy with Jewish or Christian beliefs, are reminiscent of challenges faced by other early Christian communities (Col, Acts 20:30, 2 Tim. 3:1–9, 4:3–4, Rev. 2–3). In 1 John, identified as 'antichrists,' certain individuals separated from John's community maintain communication to deceive (2:18–19, 2:26). Termed 'false prophets,' they attract outsiders with their message, as seen in 4:1–3 and their success noted in 4:5. Furthermore, the phrases 'if we say' and 'those who deny' in 1 John indicate opposition to specific teachings. Two main themes emerge: Christological errors (2:22-23, 4:1-3) and ethical distortions (1:8, 10, 1:6; 2:4, 6, 2:9; 4:20). The Christological errors involve denying Jesus as the Christ and rejecting the idea of the divine Christ being incarnate in the human Jesus. This echoes Docetism, seen in Ignatius's time. The ethical distortions include claims of sinlessness (1:8, 10) and professing love for God without showing love for fellow believers (2:9; 4:20), reflecting an ethical indifference reminiscent of certain gnostic groups (Marshall, Travis and Paul, 2011:309).

There is another voice concerning this heresy. According to Pate (2010:287), Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons (CE 120 – 202), conveys information about the heretic Cerinthus in his work Against Heresies. He recounts Polycarp's anecdote about John encountering Cerinthus in an Ephesus bathhouse and describes Cerinthus as the enemy of the truth (antichrist) where Cerinthus denied the true humanity of Jesus Christ. Cerinthus, educated in Egyptian wisdom, portrayed Jesus as the son of Joseph and Mary through ordinary human generation, though exceptionally righteous. According to Cerinthus, Christ descended upon Jesus after baptism, proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. Eventually, Christ separated from Jesus, who suffered and rose again, while Christ, being a spiritual being, remained unaffected.

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Lieu (1991:13-16) criticizes attempts, like "mirror-reading," to deduce the nature of the opposition in 1 John, stressing the letter's primary focus on the recipients' internal commitment, not the false teachers. The author strategically engages readers through rhetorical techniques ("If we say...") to guide them toward his position. In contrast, Painter (2002:87-93) agrees that the letter isn't directly targeting opponents but argues that "If we say..." statements carry a seriousness beyond rhetoric, potentially revealing significant claims by the adversaries.

3.4 The General Setting of 1 John 4:9-11

In 1 John 4:9-11, the author highlights key Christian theological principles. These verses emphasize God's profound love demonstrated through sending his Son for the purpose of sacrificial atonement. The passage underscores that this act was initiated by God's love and not by humanity. The term "atoning sacrifice" signifies Christ's redemptive work to restore the broken relationship caused by sin. Emphasizing God's unilateral love, the passage calls believers to reciprocate it, fostering transformed relationships and participating in the on-going narrative of divine reconciliation within the Christian community. Thus, it serves as a theological foundation for understanding reconciliation between God and humanity and its transformative power in shaping interpersonal relationships among believers (Pate, 2010:364-365; Calvin, 1981:165-168).

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3.4.1 The Literary Structure of 1 John 4:9-11

In terms of literary structure, 1 John 4:9-11 is part of a broader passage (1 Jn 4:7-16) emphasizing the profound connection between love for God and love for others. The author employs a parallel structure, systematically presenting related ideas and reinforcing the inseparable link between these two loves (Marshall, 1978:768). The structure begins with the revelation of "God's love among us," progresses to Jesus' atoning sacrifice, and concludes with the practical application: "Beloved, if God

so loved us, we also ought to love one another." This parallel framework illustrates that love is not just theoretical but a lived reality rooted in God's nature and expressed through Christ's sacrifice. It serves as a call to action, urging believers to mirror God's love in their relationships, reinforcing love as a core Christian theme with practical implications (Köstenberger, 2009:1653).

In terms of genre, the composition takes on a predominantly homiletic style rather than adhering strictly to the conventions of a letter. The absence of the typical epistolary prescript, such as opening and conclusion, should not be deemed surprising, as such elements were occasionally omitted when letters were combined into collections. The overall document unfolds more akin to a sermon, lacking the structured rhetorical conventions of its contemporary era. In essence, it bears a resemblance to a "letter-essay" in form, though it maintains a distinct focus on addressing the particular circumstances of its intended readership (Keener, 2014:706).

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3.5 Grammatical Analysis

Verse 9

"ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ."

In this, God's love was revealed among us, since, God has sent his uniquely begotten son into the world in order to be alive because of/ through him.

In terms of syntax the force of the genitive *τοῦ θεοῦ* it is a subjective genitive, emphasizing God's love for us rather than our love for God, because it describes God's action in sending his Son into the world (Merkle, 2019: 151). There is a debate about the meaning of the phrase *ἐν ἡμῖν*, some scholars favoring "in us" or "within us" (i.e., internally within believers) because in the context the concept of God's indwelling of the believer is mentioned in 4:12: "God resides in us" (F. F.,

2018:429) (Alfred Plummer, 1910:148). While others Jamieson, Robert, 2002:3538 (Vincent, 2010:1172) suggested that this phrase means "toward us" or "in our case" whereby the God's love was revealed *toward us* by sending his only son. The phrase is argued here as "in our midst" (among us), drawing parallels to John 1:14 with the followed mention of the only begotten Son. The use of *ἀπέσταλκεν* (perfect tense, active, 3rd person singular, *ἀποστέλλω*) underscores the incarnation as a sending, a concept prominent in John's writings, it is to send under commission, as an envoy.

The term "τὸν μονογενῆ" is translated as "uniquely begotten son" (Bauer and Danker, 2000:658). In Greek, it was used for an only child, or something unique and one-of-a-kind (cf. Heb.11:17; Luke7:12;8:42;9:38). In the Johannine literature of the New Testament, the term is reserved exclusively for Jesus, while all Christians are children of God τέκνα θεοῦ, Jesus is God's Son in a unique, one-of-a-kind sense (Liddell et al., 1992:1144). The word *ὁ κόσμος* is another of John's characteristic expressions, in his writings it generally means those who are alienated from God. The final phrase ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι᾽αὐτοῦ "that we might live through him" elucidates the purpose behind the sending of the only Son (ἵνα), that we may live ζήσωμεν (aorist, active, subjunctive, 1st person plural, *ζάω*), and not die. The preposition "δια" serves various purposes, one of which is to function as a marker of the instrument or circumstance through which something is accomplished or effected. In this context, Jesus serves as the instrument through whom reconciliation is accomplished (Bauer andDanker, 2000:224).

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Verse 10

ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.

In that is the love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son [as] a propitiation/ sin-offering (an instrument for appeasing) for our sins (Bauer and Danker, 2000:474).

In this verse, John once again begins with "ἐν τούτῳ," indicating a reference to what follows. There are two clauses which follow, both of which are explanatory to the phrase *ἐν τούτῳ* and explain what Love in its full perfection is seen: first, stated negatively, "not that we have loved God," and then positively, but in God's love to man, which reached a climax in his sending his Son to save us from our sins. The term ἐστὶν (present, active, 3rd person, singular) denotes something prior to God's manifestation *τὸν θεὸν* who is most worthy to be loved. *ἡμᾶς*- us who are most unworthy. The Greek aorist tense of *ἠγάπησεν* indicates not that we did any act of love at any time to God, but that he did the act of love to us in sending Christ to reconcile and restore us *ἡμᾶς*. In the matter *of περί τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν* (cf. Jn 8:46; Jn 10:33; Jn 16:8), the genitive case of that for which propitiation is made. Hence, our sins are the subject-matter of his propitiatory work.

The word *ἱλασμός* 'propitiation' occurs nowhere in New Testament but here and in 1 John 2:2; in both places without the article and followed by 'for our sins' inherent in the meaning of this Greek word is the idea of turning away the divine wrath and denotes the restoration of the disturbed relationship by an atoning sacrifice to be performed, so that "propitiation" is the closest English equivalent (Liddell et al., 1992:828). In recent times there has been much scholarly discussion of this Greek word *ἱλασμός*. Some say the term is not the placating of God's wrath against sin, but rather is an "expiation" or "cleansing" of sin itself. But the linguistic evidence for this interpretation is not persuasive. Besides, God's wrath against sin may not be a concept congenial to the modem mind, but it is thoroughly biblical. *ἱλασμός* could be fittingly rendered "propitiation" (cf. the noun *ἱλαστήριον*, "propitiation," in Rom. 3:25 and the verb *ἱλάσκομαι*, "to propitiate," in Luke18:13 and Heb. 2:17). The Cross has indeed propitiated (satisfied) God and has met his righteous demands so thoroughly that his grace and mercy are abundantly available (Walvoord, Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, 1983:887).

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According to Jameison (2002:3518), the propitiatory sacrifice, provided by the Father's love, removing the estrangement, and appeasing the righteous wrath, on God's part, against the sinner. The Greek "propitiation" answers in the Septuagint to Hebrew, "caphar," כפר to effect an atonement or reconciliation with God; and in Ezekiel 44:29, to the sin offering.

Paul's word is *καταλλαγή (katallagē)* (Rom. 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19). They are not equivalents since ἱλασμός has reference to the one party to be propitiated, while *καταλλαγή* to the two parties to be reconciled. From *ἱλάσκομαι* to appease, to conciliate to one's self, which occurs (Luke 18:13; Heb. 2:17). The noun means originally an appeasing or propitiating. However, the scriptural conception of the verb is not that of appeasing one who is angry, with a personal feeling, against the offender; but of altering the character of that which, from without, occasions a necessary alienation, and interposes an inevitable obstacle to fellowship (Vincent, 2010:1142). According to F. F. Bruce (2018:187-189), with the word *ἱλασμός* "Propitiation" or "atonement", if we use either word in its biblical sense not as something which men must do to placate God, but something which God has provided in his grace to bring men into his presence with the assurance that they are accepted by him, since he has removed the barrier that kept them at a distance guilt, with its consequent punishment. The "punishment" which is banished by "perfect love" (4:18). "*Now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ*" (Eph. 2:13). This is the truth that John states here in a different language.

Lieu (1991:64) suggests that in 1 John, however, there is nothing to demand a sacrificial understanding (other than the independent reference to the blood of Jesus in (1:7), particularly as not only did God send (aorist) Jesus as a *ἱλασμός* (4:10), but he is (present) one (2:2) - past act and

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present reality. In all the emphasis is probably on the reconciliation thus made possible and not on any precise model of its method.

Verse 11

ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν.

Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we ought to love each other likewise.

Once again the author of 1 John addresses his readers as beloved "*ἀγαπητοί*" wherewith he calls their attention, as to an important subject and an appropriate address to his subject, "love one another" (Jamieson, Robert, 2002:3538). The conditional sentence in the verse at hand, is a first-class conditional sentence with εἰ "if" followed by aorist indicative in the protasis indicates to Reality followed by apodosis clause indicating the result circumstances (Merkle, 2019:567). So, the author here using the condition to urge his readers, as genuine believers, If God took the initiative in so loving us, we also ought to take the initiative in showing love for one another. God's example of self-giving, sacrificial love – the giving of his only Son – in order to reconcile us with him serves as the model for believers to follow in loving and reconcile one another. According to F. F. Bruce (2018:432-433), God's love for us, supplies the motive power for his people's love for one another. The adverb "so" (*οὕτως*) has the emphatic force here that it has at the beginning of John 3:16. The explicit nominative subject pronoun of "*ἡμεῖς*" serves to help highlight the necessary connection between the actions of God and the actions of the readers (Culy, 2004:110). The usage of the verb *ὀφείλομεν* (present, active, 1st person, plural, *ὀφείλω*) "we ought" here underscores the author's perspective that mutual love among Christians is not optional but rather a duty integral to normative Christian experience and cannot be dispensed with (Dodd, 1966:112).

3.6 The Reconciliation in its Two Dimensions

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The passage in 1 John 4:9-11 unfolds a profound theological narrative emphasizing the concept of reconciliation within the Christian context. The passage begins by presenting the divine initiative in the act of reconciliation, portraying God's love as demonstrated through the sending of his son into the world. This deliberate action serves as the cornerstone of reconciliation, illustrating the divine plan to restore the severed relationship between God and humanity. The subsequent verse elucidates the essence of love, differentiating it from human affection and underscoring its sacrificial nature in the atoning work of Christ. As mentioned above, the concept of atonement implies reconciliation, as Jesus serves as the means to reconcile humanity with God by addressing the barrier of sin. The concluding exhortation in verse 11 forms a bridge between the theological exposition and practical application, urging believers to reciprocate the love they have received by loving one another. Building upon God's actions, John teaches that we should follow his example by practicing brotherly love, emphasizing that our love should be selfless, mirroring the love freely bestowed upon us by God. In this way, the passage not only unveils the theological intricacies of divine reconciliation but also calls for a lived experience of this reconciliation through communal love, accentuating the transformative power of God's redemptive love in shaping human relationships.

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The current passage resonates with an earlier event in John 13:14, where Jesus demonstrated profound love by washing the disciples' feet. Instead of anticipating reciprocal actions toward himself Jesus takes a different approach, stating, "*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet*." This unexpected directive emphasizes that the appropriate response to God's love is to extend love to one another. By this act of humility, Jesus underscores the importance of believers demonstrating love for each other as a tangible expression of their love for God in response to his love for them. According to Spurgeon (2022: Sermon 1707), genuine love should translate into practical actions. If someone has offended you, seek reconciliation, regardless of whether you consider yourself the offended party. Drawing a parallel to

God's example, which was wronged yet initiated reconciliation, Spurgeon encourages believers to do the same. Even if you feel insulted or believe the other party is unworthy, remember that God, despite our unworthiness, loved us and sent his son. Thus, Spurgeon advocates for aligning our actions with the divine example of love and reconciliation.

According to Kruse (2000:136), John's purpose in explaining the nature of God's love, manifested through the sending of his unique Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins (4:9–10), is profoundly practical and aligned with the central purpose of his letter. His aim is to reassure readers that they abide in the truth and equip them with criteria for discerning false claims made by the secessionists. John isn't merely providing a discourse on God's love for its own sake; rather, he emphasizes that God's love for us should compel reciprocal love among believers. Consequently, he implores, "*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" The assertion is that the divine love bestowed upon "us" carries an inherent responsibility for "us" to reciprocate that love toward one another.

One of the most important issues in this letter regarding the historical context of recipients is how to balance between truth and love? According to Marshall (2011:313), The balance between truth and love is very important within the community of believers. Therefore, 1 John insists on the importance both of holding to a true understanding of Jesus and of love for one another. His exposition of love is rooted in his conviction that the truth about Jesus lies in his embodying the love of God (4:9). How is it possible for people of faith to avoid stressing truth at the expense of love, or vice versa? Kithinji (2020:251) suggests that, at times, reconciliation may manifest as separation. In certain situations, such as the current one, there might be no reconciliation with heresy to safeguard the integrity of the creed and the well-being of believers, preventing the spread of false teachings. However, it is crucial for the Christian community to remember that this is not an opportunity to exclude those with divergent views or different interpretations. According to Mark

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Dever (2013:699), one of the vital nine marks of the healthy church is the church discipline which serves a restoration and reconciliation of believers who are straying from the path of righteousness. The discipline aims to address sin, hindering fellowship among believers and with God.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter dealt mainly with the exegetical analysis of 1 John 4:9-11. After translation of the Greek text, an analysis of its historical context followed by the analysis of its literary context. A verse-by-verse exegesis, and analysis of the relevant theological significance especially the concept of the reconciliation in its two dimensions.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOHANNINE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE EGYPTIAN CHRISTIAN CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the Johannine concept of reconciliation in the light of conflict the Egyptian Christian community is struggling with, which are either internal or external division. Besides, it presents the implications of reconciliation in the light of 1 John 4:9-11and the theory of reconciliation which provides some vital elements to enhance the reconciliation in the midst of conflict.

4.2 The Current Situation in Egypt

The Christian community in Egypt is struggling with internal divisions among denominations and with the Muslim majority respectively. These divisions have the potential to hinder unity and effective cooperation.

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4.2.1 External Division

The conflict between Christians and Muslims in Egypt is a long-standing issue that has been shaped by a variety of historical, political and social factors. Christians in Egypt, who are mostly Coptic Orthodox, make up approximately 10-15% of the country's population. They have faced various forms of discrimination and persecution throughout history, including restrictions on building and repairing churches, limits on employment in certain sectors and occasional attacks on churches and individuals (Guiney, 2008:66-70). The roots of the conflict can be traced back to the early centuries of Islam, when Muslim armies conquered Egypt and established the Islamic caliphate. While Christians and Muslims initially coexisted peacefully under Islamic rule, tensions began to arise over issues such as taxation, conversion, and the role of religion in public life (Hasan, 2003:31-53). However, it must be stated that perhaps the roots of the conflict and division could be traced to the early church Donatist controversy in North Africa, to which Egypt then belonged. According to Brian H. Warmington (2024), the name of the controversy is derived from Donatus who had been consecrated bishop. Donatism divided the early church because its followers "claimed that they alone constituted the true church of the martyrs." Besides, Christianity spread to other regions from Egypt, yet it is on record that powerful bishops of Alexandria consecrated local bishops who had ability to obtain help from Roman imperial authorities. Besides, the controversy was particularly associated with the rural population of less Romanized areas and with the poorer classes in the towns, whereas orthodox Christianity was the religion of the Romanized upper classes.

According to W. H. C. Frend (2020: 22-23), the early stages of Melitian controversy, which derived its name from bishop Melitios of Upper Egypt, seems to have been influenced by the Donatist's schism. Bishop Melitios accused bishop Peter of Alexandria, who was then in prison though he was administering the church, of lacking of courage. His clergy defied him and began to tour the whole of Egypt, putting the lapsed clergy into penance and conducting new ordinations. While this was

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similar to what the Donatists were doing, it caused division between the Orthodox Church and the incipient Church of the Martyrs. He opines that even before the Arab armies began to move against the Byzantine Empire, seeds of permanent religious division had been sown. Different Christian grouping of the time, such as Monophysites in Egypt, Monothelics, Manichees and Nestorians in the Eastern provinces such as well as Donatists in North Africa were disputing over the dominion of the Byzantine Empire with the Roman Catholic Church (2020: 2). So, it is clear that the Donatist controversy was most likely the mother of all divisions and conflicts, which are widespread in Egypt even to date.

In recent decades however, the conflict between Christians and Muslims in Egypt has intensified due to several contributing factors. Societal discrimination against Christians is pervasive, affecting various aspects of daily life such as education, employment, and housing. This discrimination has fuelled a sense of marginalization and alienation within the Christian community. Extremist ideologies, particularly propagated by groups like ISIS and its affiliates, target Christians as part of a broader campaign against non-Muslims. These extremist groups view Christians as infidels, advocating for their conversion or elimination. Additionally, criticisms have been directed at the Egyptian government, accusing it of insufficient efforts to protect the Christian community from attacks and discrimination. Some critics argue that government policies have fostered a climate of impunity for those perpetrating violence against Christians (Brownlee, 2018:74).

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The conflict between Christians and Muslims in Egypt has resulted in numerous incidents of violence and discrimination. In recent years, there have been several high-profile attacks on churches and individuals, including bombings, shootings, and arson (Barrie, Clarke and Ketchley, 2022:1-4) such as the Al-Azhar University riots in the late 19th century, Nag Hammadi Massacre (2010), Alexandria Church Bombing (2011), Maspero Massacre (2011), Church Attacks (2013) and

more recent incidents, highlight the complicated nature of this relationship (Brownlee, 2018:76-77). These attacks have led to dozens of deaths and injuries among the Christian community. Efforts to address the conflict have included calls for greater protection for Christians, initiatives to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding, and efforts to address the root causes of discrimination and marginalization. However, progress has been slow and uneven, and the conflict continues to pose significant challenges for both communities (Viola Fahmy, 2018).

4.2.2 Internal Division

As noted above, conflict between different Christian groupings, dates back to a long history before the coming of Islam in Egypt. The Coptic Orthodox Church, which is the largest Christian denomination in Egypt today, rejected the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) and maintained its Monophysite beliefs (Womack, 2020:190-197). As a result, the Copts were often marginalized and persecuted by the Byzantine rulers who supported Chalcedonian Christianity (Wigram, 2010:14-17). The implications of the Council of Chalcedon for Egypt were not only religious but also political. The division between Chalcedonians and Monophysites weakened the position of Egypt within the Byzantine Empire and made it more vulnerable to Arab conquest during the 7th century CE. After the Arab conquest, Egypt became a largely Muslim country (Wigram, 2010:190). Since then, there has been a deep rift in the relations between Christian denominations in Egypt, leading to mutual non-acceptance, prohibition of members from attending different denominations, conflicts over different doctrines, and rejection of the baptism of other denominations. This conflict and lack of cooperation significantly hinder societal extension and influence.

Despite this conflict, there have been on-going efforts towards unity and dialogue between different Christian denominations in Egypt. Pope Tawadros actively pursued the establishment of an Egyptian Council of Churches, building upon the initiative launched by his predecessor Pope

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Shenouda III of Alexandria, was the 117th Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. This historic endeavor, officially inaugurated on February 18, 2013, brought together the leaders of Egypt's major denominations - Coptic Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Anglican - representing mainstream Churches in Egypt. Rev. Safwat al-Bayadi emphasized that the ecumenical body aimed at fostering cooperation and robust interdenominational relations. Pope Tawadros further strengthened ecumenical ties through significant gestures, including his visit to Pope Francis in Rome on May 10, 2013, marking the fortieth anniversary of the historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III. This visit led to the signing of a Common Declaration, facilitating a broader dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Additionally, on March 12, 2013, Pope Tawadros extended outreach to the Catholic Church in Egypt by attending the Enthronement Ceremony of its new Patriarch, Ibrahim Isaac (van Doorn-Harder, 2015:101-102).

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4.3 Reading of 1 John 4:9-11 in Egyptian Context

In Egypt, a country with a rich Christian heritage dating back to the early days of the faith, the verses found in 1 John 4:9-11 hold profound significance. They serve as a powerful reminder of God's ultimate expression of love by sending Jesus Christ to redeem and reconcile humans. The emphasis on the importance of loving one another, mirroring God's own love, becomes a poignant directive, urging individuals to transcend differences and foster unity. In the face of historical challenges and persecution endured by Egypt, this biblical passage takes on added weight. It seeks to undermine divisions within the Christian community, promoting reconciliation and unity as essential virtues. The message of love and unity in 1 John 4:9-11, in amidst of conflict and division, resonates as a compelling call to the Christian community in Egypt. It serves as a timeless beacon,

urging believers to embrace harmony and reconciliation, particularly relevant in a context where different religions and cultures have coexisted for centuries. Amidst the complexities of this diverse landscape, the verses from 1 John inspire a collective pursuit of understanding, empathy, and unity, fostering a shared commitment to love and reconciliation as foundational pillars in the Christian journey in Egypt.

4.4 The Implications of Reconciliation

The biblical concept of reconciliation has significant social implications, leading to social reconciliation as a crucial outcome (Vorster, 2018:5). A harmonious connection with God sparks a desire for peace within the broader human family. The term "reconciliation" holds transformative theological power, accomplished through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, requiring active engagement in practicing reconciliation (DeYoung, 2012:4-5). According to Hannelie J. Wood (2018:6-8) in her theory of reconciliation, prescriptive elements such as confession, repentance, forgiveness, restoration, restitution, mercy, truth, justice, and peace pave the way for the church to be an agent of reconciliation. There are many forms of social injustice and the church must navigate the process of reconciliation in response to each of these forms. Reconciliation should not just be declared by the church and its members; it must also be embraced through faith. The most effective way to declare reconciliation is through relationships—between God and humans, within an individual and among different people. Recognizing that God initiates reconciliation allows this act to extend to various levels.

4.4.1 The Acceptance of Responsibility and Truth

Boraine (2000:288-291) delineates four types of truth: objective or factual truth, which pertains to revealed matters from public findings; personal or narrative truth derived from victim stories and oral traditions; social or dialogical truth, emphasizing individual experiences through interaction and discussion; and healing and restorative truth, contributing to rectifying past injustices and

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preventing future ones. Truth-telling involves distinguishing between current realities and ideal states. Once acknowledged, the truth prompts repentance to God, who, in turn, accepts and forgives. Truth-telling enables tapping into God-given faith resources for initiating change. Transparency, clarity, and revelation are associated with the concept of truth.

4.4.2 The Acceptance of Failure and Restoration

Once problems are acknowledged, and accountability for failures is embraced, a transformative process can commence. A prime illustration is David, who assumed responsibility for his shortcomings, and prompted by the prophet Nathan's visit, repented of his sins. As Galatians 6:1 emphasizes, God restores us through Jesus Christ and urges us to share each other's burdens. It is essential to support one another through mistakes, seeking restoration promptly when someone falters, fostering a conducive environment for swift reconciliation (Wood, 2018:7).

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4.4.3 Repentance

Following the acceptance of failure and the initiation of restoration, one must pivot away from past behavior. Repentance involves turning away from evil and redirecting towards the good. In Ezekiel 14:6, God calls upon Israel to repent, turning away from idols, offenses, and evil. Jesus, in the New Testament, commands repentance (Mt 4:17), and Peter, in Acts 3:19, stresses the need for repentance and conversion for the forgiveness of sins. Luke (17:3) instructs that when someone wrongs us, and they repent after being rebuked, we are to forgive them (Wood, 2018:7).

4.4.4 Confession and Forgiveness

In 1 John 1:9, we learn that confessing our sins leads to God's just and faithful forgiveness, cleansing us from all unrighteousness. Matthew 6:14–15 commands forgiveness and discourages

judgment, while James 5:16 urges confessing sins in prayer for healing. Forgiveness is integral to life. It's a transformative process, moving from past injustices to seeking the good for all today. As a vital aspect of reconciliation, forgiveness relies on God's steadfast, free, and forgiving love. Hence, the church's calling as an agent of change involves peace-making and serving as ambassadors of reconciliation (Stott, 2017:19-30).

Through God's grace manifested in the work, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the process of forgiveness initiates. It involves extending forgiveness to those who acted unjustly against us, not only for the sake of receiving forgiveness from God (Mk 11:25-26) but also that those who suffered injustice may be free. Forgiveness does not mean that there will be no consequences, neither does it mean that injustice will be forgotten; rather, it's an on-going process fostering a reconciled future. The church's role as an agent of change is crucial in actively practicing forgiveness, acknowledging and addressing all forms of harmful social injustices and discrimination (Stott, 2017:19-30).

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4.4.5 Actions Towards Restitution

Confession opens the path to redress or restitution, ensuring that what was lost or stolen is returned to its rightful owner. The church should prioritize teaching about restitution, fostering discussions on the topic, and aiding individuals in reclaiming their dignity through restitution. As Krog (2002:130) emphasized, healing and reconciliation, at both individual and community levels, hinge on adequate reparation and rehabilitation measures. In alignment with this, Matthew 5:23–24 instructs that, before presenting an offering at the altar, if one recalls someone harboring resentment, reconciliation should take precedence. Only then can one offer their gift to God.

4.4.6 Justice, Peace and Mercy

The terms 'justice' and 'righteousness' are often used interchangeably in biblical texts (cf. Deut. 16:20; Mat. 6:33). Righteousness is linked to a personal dimension, while justice pertains to a social dimension, both carrying moralistic and relational aspects. When social injustices, including inequality, broken relationships, and human suffering, occur, justice needs restoration. Thus, the church's role is to address harmful social injustices. The church could be the voice of those who were treated unjustly within society, speaking out against social evils (Wood, 2018:8).

Peace is intrinsic to our human context and goes beyond the absence of war or a balance between enemies; it is an integral part of the reconciliation process (Vorster, 2018:5). Attaining peace requires creative efforts by the church in the battle against social injustices. This involves educating society to take action against issues like indignity, inequality, and violence. Jesus, as the Prince of peace, reconciled humans with the Father (Wood, 2018:8).

Mercy, an act of kindness bestowed from one person to another, finds its roots in God, making it a divine initiative and act, as well as an acquired Christian virtue. This action encompasses elements such as forgiveness, support, acceptance, healing, and compassion. As a responsive and motivational reaction to someone else's suffering, mercy is grounded in love, as highlighted in Galatians 5:6, making individuals acceptable before God. The church should embody the principle of mercy as it holds significance in reconciliation, guiding and nurturing the world. Christian mercy, being a powerful force, has the potential to steer the world through various forms of injustices toward reconciliation (Wood, 2018:8). So, according to the biblical reconciliation especially as presented in Johannine literature the will of God is centered on sound and reconciled relationships. Broken relationships stem from sin and disobedience, but through Jesus, reconciliation is possible. In the face of various social injustices, the church must navigate the

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reconciliation process. It must serve as an agent of change, tackling social issues. Engaging in this task is no simple feat, requiring careful consideration of all elements of reconciliation and change.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the challenges faced by the Christian community in Egypt, whether arising from internal or external factors. Additionally, it provided a reading of 1 John 4:9-11 in Egyptian context and examined the implications of reconciliation within the framework of reconciliation theory, offering crucial insights to reinforce the reconciliation process amid conflict.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the summary of the research findings, its conclusion and recommendations.

5.2 Summary

Through biblical inquiry and guided by the first objective, the study delineated the uniqueness of the concept of reconciliation as portrayed in Johannine literature. It delved into the issue of sin and its consequences, including alienation from God, spiritual death, walking in darkness and the hostility between humans and God. Furthermore, it explored Jesus' description as the incarnate Word dwelling among humans, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin, and the mediator between God and humanity, particularly emphasizing his role as reconciler through I am imagery, especially as the life and light. Additionally, Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross restored the fractured relationship between God and humans, thereby promoting reconciliation. Building on this foundation, John identifies believers as children of God, no longer viewed as God's opponents but embraced as his beloved ones.

Through historical-grammatical analysis and guided by the second objective, the study revealed that the passage of 1 John 4:9-11 elucidates the two dimensions of reconciliation: vertically between God and humans and horizontally among believers. This portion presents the divine model of reconciliation by sending his unique Son into the estranged world and his sacrificial death as an atoning sacrifice to restore and reconcile humans to himself. Accordingly, John urges believers to emulate this model of divine love towards each other. This message, which was full of love was in the midst of conflict and division where some of the believers chose to separate themselves from the larger congregation. So, this passage plays a profound role to guide the believers within the

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Christian community which struggling with division and conflict to reinforce reconciliation and unity on the same way of God's reconciliation.

The third objective explored the implications of the Johannine concept of reconciliation within the context of Egypt, which grapples with two significant conflicts: internal conflict among various Christian denominations and external conflict between Christians and the Muslim majority. This examination was guided by Hannelie J. Wood's theory of reconciliation, which advocates for the church to serve as an agent of reconciliation within divided communities. The theory emphasizes biblical principles such as the acceptance of responsibility and truth, the acceptance of failure and restoration, repentance, confession, forgiveness, actions towards restitution, justice, peace and mercy.

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5.3 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to shed light on the concept of reconciliation in Johannine literature through the lens of 1 John 4:9-11 and its implications for Egyptian context. To achieve this aim, three main objectives were pursued: to illuminate the uniqueness of the theological notion of reconciliation as presented in Johannine literature, to analyse the two dimensions of Johannine reconciliation through an exegesis of (1 John 4:9-11), to develop insights that guide practical applications of the Johannine concept of Reconciliation for the context in Egypt. Based on thorough research, the study has drawn the following major conclusions:

Firstly- despite the absence of the Greek word "καταλλαγή - reconcile," the concept of reconciliation is uniquely woven throughout Johannine literature. Secondly- the biblical concept of reconciliation extends beyond theological abstraction to offer crucial practical implications for believers within the Christian community. One of the most vital passages in Johannine literature

elucidate the two dimensions of reconciliation is 1 John 4:9-11, where portrayed reconciliation in the pattern of love amidst conflict. Thirdly, in the face of historical challenges and persecution endured by Egypt, the message of love and unity in 1 John 4:9-11 resonates as a compelling call to the Christian community. Amidst conflict and division, this biblical passage holds vital significance, urging believers to embrace harmony and reconciliation.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of the conclusions drawn from this dissertation, there are several recommendations for further exploration and practical application of the Johannine concept of reconciliation within the context of Egypt. Firstly, further exploration could involve examining additional passages in Johannine literature or related biblical texts to deepen understanding of reconciliation. This could also include theological reflection to enrich theological understanding of the concept. Secondly, practical applications within the Egyptian context could focus on developing strategies or initiatives within Christian communities to promote reconciliation and unity, particularly in interfaith dialogue with the Muslim majority. Additionally, exploring the intersection between reconciliation and social justice issues could provide opportunities to address societal injustices and promote peace within Egyptian society. Educational initiatives, such as creating study guides or workshops, could facilitate engagement with the topic and foster a culture of reconciliation within the church. Collaborative efforts with local stakeholders, including churches, organizations, and academic institutions, could further research and promote reconciliation initiatives. Lastly, encouraging ongoing reflection and dialogue within Christian communities in Egypt will be essential for deepening understanding and fostering a culture of reconciliation and unity. By incorporating these recommendations, we can continue to advance the pursuit of peace, unity, and justice within Egyptian society.

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APPENDIX 1: PROPOSED SCHEDULE

Activity	**Months**
Proposal completion	November 2023
Proposal Defense	November-December 2023
Permissions & Ethical Review	December 2023
Analysis of literature	January-March 2024
Final report compilation	May 2024
Final Defense	June 2024
Revisions & Editing	July 2024
Binding final Dissertation	September 2024