CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TWO JOHANNINE VERBS FOR SENDING:
A Study of John's Use of Words with Reference to General Linguistic Theory[*]

Is there a distinction in meaning between the two words used for "sending" in the Fourth Gospel, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω? Not only does the answer to this question prove to be significant for the exegesis of several important passages in John's Gospel, the history of the debate surrounding this issue also provides an interesting case study of developments in linguistic theory as applied to New Testament Greek in this century.

A notable proponent of an earlier stage of this development is Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. In it Karl-Heinz Rengstorf argues for an important semantic difference in John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω.[1] Rengstorf's views, however, have not gone unchallenged. Nigel Turner has maintained that the terms constitute a "pointless variety in style," "a needless synonym," contending that "[t]here is no apparent point in these synonyms beyond the avoiding of monotony, however hard one looks for a subtle distinction."[2]

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[1]Cf. Karl-Heinz Rengstorf, "ἀποστέλλω, et al.," *TDNT* 1:398–446.

[2]Cf. Nigel Turner, *Vol. IV: Style*, in James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), 76. Some would argue that there is no such thing as a "needless synonym," since, in the words of Levinsohn, "Choice implies meaning . . . when an author has the option of expressing himself or herself in either one of two ways, the two differ in significance; there are reasons for the variations." Cf. Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek* (Dallas, TX: SIL, 1992), 8.

On a general linguistic level, Barr's well-known critique of the *TDNT* exposes the common fallacy of projecting one's own theology onto biblical words, a tendency from which Rengstorf may not be exempt.[3] This mindset, exposed by Barr, which frequently fails to distinguish between word meanings and concepts and attempts to establish a writer's theology on the basis of word studies, remains remarkably persistent to this day.[4] Indeed, as will be seen, numerous attempts have been made to modify Rengstorf's theses while leaving his basic approach intact.

The present study will seek to explain John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω within the framework of general linguistic theory. After a brief survey of the history of the debate, Rengstorf's theory will be tested against extrabiblical evidence. Modifications of Rengstorf's hypothesis will also be subjected to close scrutiny. This will be followed by a search for alternative explanations for John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω.

The History of the Debate

The issue of "Johannine synonyms" in general was first addressed by Abbott (1905, 1906) at the beginning of this century.[5] Abbott maintained, "The whole of this Gospel is pervaded with distinctions of thought, represented by subtle distinctions of word or phrase-words and phrases so far alike that at first the reader may take the thought to be the same, though it is always really different."[6] This view was challenged by C. C. Tarelli (1946) who concluded that

> [t]he Johannine usage . . . is dependent not upon difference of meaning, but upon difference of tense or mood, upon a preference for one verb in certain of

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[3]Cf. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: University Press, 1961), 206–62.

[4]This is lamented, amongst others, by Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning. An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 18–22. Cf. also id., *God, Language and Scripture. Reading the Bible in the light of general linguistics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 106–28.

[5]Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with Those of the Three* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1905) and *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906).

[6]Cf. Abott, *Johannine Grammar*, 645.

its grammatical forms and for the other in other forms. It is probable also that this preference was not personal, but dictated by popular usage.[7]

Freed (1964), in an article written half a century after Abbott's assessment, took issue with him, maintaining, "I fail to see these differences in most cases."[8]

In the more recent history of the debate, the spectrum of opinions has spanned the following range: a first group essentially follows Abbott in his contention that there are significant theological differences behind John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω (especially Rengstorf and many others following him); a second group, siding with Freed, fails to see any distinction at all (e.g. Turner); a third group embraces a mediating position similar to the one proposed by Tarelli, pointing to grammatical forms as explaining the different usage of the two "sending" words in John (e.g. Mercer); and a fourth group argues that these terms, though synonyms, play a part in John's stylistic variation in the framework of his construction of entire discourses (Louw).[9] It should be noted that the second, third, and fourth groups, while differing in their particular explanations, are united in believing that the two Johannine words for "sending" are essentially synonymous.

In interaction with the major studies on the subject, the ensuing discussion will seek to explain John's varied use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω by answering the following questions: (1) Do the words ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω themselves differ in meaning? (2) If they do not, is John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω based on grammatical, stylistic, or other considerations, or is a combination of these factors at work?

Semantic Difference?

Rengstorf, in a very influential study, believes to have found a clear distinction in John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, maintaining,

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[7]Cf. C. C. Tarelli, "Johannine Synonyms," *JTS* 47 (1946): 175.

[8]Cf. Edwin D. Freed, "Variations in the Language and Thought of John," *ZNW* 55 (1964): 167. To the writers referred to here should be added those commenting on John's use of a specific pair of words such as terms for "loving," "knowing," or others. Cf. e.g. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 52–53.

[9]Cf. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary* and *Johannine Grammar*; Freed, "Variation," 167–97; Turner, *Style*, 76; Calvin Mercer, "Ἀποστέλλειν and Πέμπειν in John," *NTS* 36 (1990): 619–24; J. P. Louw, "On Johannine Style," *Neot* 20 (1986): 5–12.

> There is also a significant difference from πέμπειν. In the latter the point is the sending as such, i.e., the *fact* of sending, as in the transmission of an object or commission or the sending of a man. ἀποστέλλειν, however, expresses the fact that the sending takes place from a specific and unique standpoint which does not merely link the sender and recipient but also, in virtue of the situation, *unites* with the sender either the person or the object sent. To this extent it is only logical that ἀποστέλλειν should also carry with it the significance that the sending implies a commission bound up with the *person* of the one sent.[10]

Essentially, Rengstorf argues that in ἀποστέλλω the emphasis is on the sender and his relationship with the one sent (i.e. unity, authority), while in πέμπω the focus is on the fact and the task of sending: "[W]e can say in general that when πέμπειν is used in the New Testament the emphasis is on the sending as such, whereas when ἀποστέλλειν is used it rests on the commission linked with it."[11]

Generally, Rengstorf believes that the "sending" words were "taken out of their ordinary meaning . . . and filled with religious significance."[12] He deems his observations of a semantic difference between ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω to be very significant not merely linguistically, but also theologically: "We can hardly overestimate the significance of this fact for the linguistic expression of the early Christian awareness of mission."[13]

The use of words for "sending" in John, Rengstorf finds "[a]t first sight . . . extremely odd."[14] He concludes:

> In John's Gospel ἀποστέλλειν is used by Jesus when his concern is to ground His authority in that of God as the One who is responsible for His words and works and who guarantees their right and truth. On the other hand, He uses the formula ὁ πέμψας με (πατήρ) to affirm the participation of God in His work in the *actio* of His sending.[15]

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[10]Cf. Rengstorf, "ἀποστέλλω," 1:398 (emphasis added).

[11]Ibid., 404.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., 399–400.

[14]Ibid., 405.

[15]Ibid. Cf. also Josef Blank, *Krisis. Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Lambertus, 1964), 70, n. 61, who essentially follows Rengstorf, albeit with slight modifications; Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1950), 30, n. 2; and Jan-Adolph Bühner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium. Die kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Entwicklung* (WUNT 2/2; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1977), 412–14, also following Rengstorf.

When such a distinction cannot be sustained in the use of a given writer, such as Luke, Rengstorf concludes that this author was insufficiently aware of such a distinction: "Lk. . . . also [like Josephus] seems to use the words as synonyms," but this, according to Rengstorf, is due to the fact "that neither Lk. nor Josephus has any true feeling for the special nature of ἀποστέλλειν."[16] However, to charge a writer such as Luke—who displays a significant degree of literary sophistication in his writings—with linguistic incompetence, claiming he was ignorant of the proper use of ἀποστέλλω (a word Luke uses twenty-six times, not counting compounds), in order to be able to maintain the validity of one's own general theory, as Rengstorf does, seems precarious indeed.

Moreover, Rengstorf's thesis is contradicted by the frequent synonymous use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω in Greek writings preceding and contemporary with the New Testament.[17] A study of Thucydides' *Historiae* (fifth century BCE.), for example, yields a number of instances where ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are demonstrably used synonymously (cf. *Hist.* 1.90, 91, 128–129; 3.4–7, 115; 4.16–17, 50, 80–81; 6.93; 7.7, 19; 8.28).[18] Compare, for example,

3.4: καὶ ἀνοκωχὴν ποιησάμενοι *πέμπουσιν* ἐς τὰς Ἀθήνας οἱ Μυτιληναῖοι . . . ἐν τούτῳ δὲ *ἀποστέλλουσι* καὶ ἐς τὴν Λακεδαίμονα πρέσβεις ("So the Mytilenaens, having concluded an armistice, *sent envoys* to Athens . . . Meanwhile they also *sent envoys* to Lacedaemon");

3.115: τὸν μὲν οὖν ἕνα τῶν στρατεγῶν *ἀπέστειλαν* Πυθόδωρον ὀλίγαις ναυσί, Σοφοκλέα δὲ . . . ἐπὶ τῶν πλειόνων νεῶν *ἀποπέμψειν* ἔμελλον ("Accordingly they   *dispatched* one of their generals, Pythodorus, with a few ships,

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[16]Ibid., 403–404. Other writers, such as Tarelli, also seem to have difficulty in subsuming Luke's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω under their general theory. Tarelli, while referring to Matthew and Mark, completely ignores the references to "sending" in Luke/Acts.

[17]It should be acknowledged that, strictly speaking, *absolute synonymy* hardly ever occurs. For the present discussion, it is sufficient to argue for a substantial semantic overlap between the two Johannine words for "sending" that amounts to virtual synonymy. At any rate, these technicalities do not materially affect the argument below. On synonymy, see especially Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 159–61; Anthony C. Thiselton, "Semantics and New Testament Interpretation," in *New Testament Interpretation* (ed. I. Howard Marshall; Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 90–93; and standard linguistic texts.

[18]Cf. Tarelli, "Synonyms," 175, who refers to Thucydides, 1.90–91. The various passages in extrabiblical Greek literature cited here and below were located by using the TLG data base of the IBYCUS system.

and were planning later on to *send* Sophocles . . . with the main body of the fleet"); or

> 7.19: μετὰ δὲ τούτους Κορίνθιοι . . . πεντακοσίους ὁπλίτας . . . ἀπέπεμψαν. ἀπέστειλαν δὲ καὶ Σικυώνιοι διακοσίους ὁπλίτας ὁμοῦ τοῖς Κορινθίοις ("the Corinthians *sent out* five hundred hoplites . . . The Sicyonians also *dispatched* at the same time as the Corinthians two hundred hoplites").

In all these instances, the uses of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω seem to be a function, not of different word meanings, but of stylistic variation. This is further underscored by the fact that in two of the three above cited examples ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are used in parallel fashion in the same grammatical form (3.4: pres. act. ind. 3d pl.; 7.19: aor. act. ind. 3d pl.), so that the author's preference for a certain grammatical form of ἀποστέλλω or πέμπω demonstrably does not play a part. Rather, these are clear instances of stylistic variation. A screening of Greek literature from the second century BCE to the first century CE yields similar conclusions. Polybius (202–120 BCE), Diodorus Siculus (first century BCE), and Josephus (37–100 CE) all use the two terms synonymously in close proximity to one another.[19]

It may therefore be concluded that the data from extrabiblical Greek literature invalidate Rengstorf's thesis that ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω differ semantically, not just in John, but in general Greek language use. If no such semantic differences can be found in Greek language in general, however, John would have had to be exceedingly idiosyncratic to deviate from general current usage. Since, as has been shown, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω occur frequently in Greek literature preceding and contemporary with John's Gospel in close proximity to one another with no apparent difference in meaning, these two terms should be viewed as virtual synonyms.

Excursus: Modifications of Rengstorf's Thesis
Despite the weaknesses just noted, Rengstorf's view has been very influential. Even the most ingenious efforts to eliminate the weaknesses of Reng-

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[19]Cf. Polybius, *Historiae*, 1.53, 67; 3.69, 75, 97; 4.10, 19, 22, 49, 52, 72; 5:27, 28, 35, 102, 110; 7.2–3; 8.19; 19.42; 14.1; 18.19; 20.3, 9; 21.37; 22.13–14; 25.6; 27.4; 28.15; 29.3, 24; 30.9, 19; 31.32; 32.15; 33.8; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 2.22, 26; 4.10; 11.21, 30, 92; 12.30, 41, 46–47, 60, 77; 13.1, 6–7, 9, 36; 14.8, 12, 20, 30, 35, 82, 109; 15.5, 13, 29, 45–46, 67, 73, 77, 82; 16.17–18, 27, 39, 44, 59, 65, 84; 17.12, 55, 73, 86; 18.12, 49–50; 19.61–62, 68, 71, 77, 79, 85, 97; 20.14–15, 19, 49, 79, 82; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1.255; 6.167–68, 222–23; 7.175; 8.50–51, 332–33; 9.24, 289–90; 11.317; 13.23, 45, 278; 14.126; 16.138–40; 18.112; 20.37.

storf's theory while maintaining its core tenet, however, cannot remedy its fundamental flaws. Rengstorf's thesis was adopted, among others, by Radermakers, who asserts,

> To emphasize the source, the origin, the Father, in Johannine vocabulary is to speak of apostolic "mission" (πέμπω): the sent one is the reflection of the one who sent him. To put the development, the unfolding, in perspective, the active outworking of the life of love and the faithful adherence to that expansive and transforming presence of God, is to speak of a missionary "apostolate" (ἀποστέλλω): the sent one is completely obedient to the one who sent him.[20]

As Radermakers contends, "The instances of πέμπω . . . stress the close bond uniting Son and Father. Those of ἀποστέλλω add to this a relationship with people; what is at issue is the ministry performed by the sent one in their midst."[21] Quite apart from the question whether Radermakers is correct in his reconstruction of the Johannine concepts of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, he confuses word meanings with the concepts which are elucidated by their respective discourse contexts.

Another attempt to modify Rengstorf's hypothesis has recently been made by Mercer.[22] This author, while finding fault with Rengstorf's emphasis on authority in John's use of ἀποστέλλειν, contends that the distinctiveness of this term lies in the idea of a special commission.[23] Mercer rightly maintains, contra Rengstorf, that "[u]tilizing the two categories suggested by Rengstorf, we find numerous instances of both ἀποστέλλειν and πέμπειν in which the fact of sending stresses the authority of the Father who sent Jesus."[24] However, when Mercer contends that ἀποστέλλειν in John focuses on a special commission from God while πέμπειν focuses on God himself, he fails to convince. Thus, for example, there is no commission statement in 1:24 where ἀποστέλλειν is used. Conversely, one finds a commission statement in 1:33 (ὁ πέμψας με βαπτίζειν; cf. 1:8: ἀπεσταλμένος . . . ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ; cf. also 4:38: ἀπέστειλα ὑμᾶς θερίζειν). The identification of the sender detected by Mercer in John's

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[20]Cf. J. Radermakers, "Mission et Apostolat dans l'Évangile Johannique," *SE* II/1 (TU 87; ed. Frank L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie, 1959), 120. Cf. also Johannes Riedl, *Das Heilswerk Jesu nach Johannes* (FTS 93; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1973), 55, concurring with Radermakers.

[21]Ibid., 111.

[22]Cf. Mercer, "Ἀποστέλλειν and Πέμπειν," 619–24.

[23]Ibid., 123.

[24]Ibid. Mercer lists for ἀποστέλλειν 3:34; 6:57; and 17:18; and for πέμπειν 4:34; 5:30; 7:16, 29; 8:16, 26; 12:49; 14:24; 15:26; and 20:21.

use of πέμπειν seems bound up with the (participial) formula ὁ πέμψας με (πατήρ) rather than with the term πέμπειν itself. That the issue is syntactical and not merely lexical is borne out by 5:36–38, where the phrases ὁ πατήρ με ἀπέσταλκεν (v. 36) and ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος (v. 38) are used parallel to ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ (v. 37). Mercer, by focusing on the morphology of individual words, neglects to consider syntax as a possible explanation for the different uses of the two "sending" verbs in John. Moreover, he does not deal with the possibility of stylistic variation.

Kuhl's assessment is more cautious.[25] He concedes that both Johannine terms for sending are frequently used for Jesus' sending by the Father and are therefore substantially equivalent. However, he still maintains that the different grammatical forms (participial or indicative forms) and the respective contexts in which the terms are found may point to nuances in meaning. At the same time, Kuhl seems to approve of Rengstorf's thesis that πέμπειν refers to the origin of the sending and the unity between sender and sent one while ἀποστέλλειν accentuates the authority of the sent one in his being sent.[26] Kuhl observes that in John 17 (which is strongly shaped by a spirit of unity between sender and sent one) ἀποστέλλειν is used (and that seven times), not πέμπειν (as Rengstorf's theory would require). He also finds it difficult to fit 6:57 (ἀποστέλλειν) or 13:20 (πέμπειν) into Rengstorf's scheme. One wonders how, in the light of such serious difficulties, Kuhl can still give a qualified endorsement of Rengstorf's thesis.

Finally, Seynaeve, too, sees a marked distinction in John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω. However, his reconstruction is different than Rengstorf's. Seynaeve concludes, "[W]hereas the verb ἀποστέλλω insists on the fact of Christ's coming as sent one, that is, on his actual presence, the verb πέμπω suggests the task or work to be accomplished."[27] He elaborates,

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[25]Cf. Josef Kuhl, *Die Sendung Jesu und der Kirche nach dem Johannes-Evangelium* (St. Augustin: Steyler, 1967), 54.

[26]William Loader, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* (BET 23; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 238, n. 54, seems to misjudge Kuhl's position at least partially, when he cites him as believing that there is no difference in meaning between ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω.

[27]Cf. J. Seynaeve, "Les verbes Ἀποστέλλω et πέμπω dans le vocabulaire théologique de Saint Jean," *L'Évangile de Jean. Sources, Rédaction, Théologie* (BETL XLIV; ed. Marinus de Jonge; Leuven: Gombleux, 1977), 389: "[A]los que le verbe ἀποστέλλω. insiste sur le fait de l'envoi-venue du Christ, sur le fait qu'Il est là, le verbe πέμπω suggère la tâche, l'oeuvre à être accomplie."

On the one hand, ἀποστέλλω rather points to the sent one himself having come, the Messiah's appearance in the world. Through the Father's free, sovereign initiative, Jesus has been sent; he finds himself being there, among human beings . . . On the other hand, πέμπω brings out more the service Jesus renders in his role as sent one: that he performs, that he accomplishes the commission he received from the Father.[28]

Despite Seynaeve's efforts to refine Rengstorf's thesis, his theory likewise fails to explain the use of the two Johannine "sending" words in passages such as John 20:21 (cf. 17:18). According to Seynaeve's view, 20:21a refers to Jesus' being sent into the world (ἀποστέλλω) while 20:21b focuses on the quality of the relationship between sender and sent ones (πέμπω). However, the question arises as to how one should explain the switch of sending words in 20:21 theologically. Is the meaning of the passage, "Just as the Father commissioned me to go into the world, I want you to live in a dependent relationship with me as your sender"? It seems that the presence of καθώς already implies that ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are used synonymously in 20:21.[29]

In light of the evidence from extrabiblical Greek literature, and the mutually contradictory explanations forwarded by those who argue for a semantic difference between the two Johannine verbs for "sending," one is inclined to conclude with Okure, "It is not evident that a different shade of meaning is intended in the use of each of these two verbs."[30] As another writer elaborates, "Both words are used for the sending of Christ by the Father, and for the sending of the disciples by Christ . . . This is an

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[28]Ibid., 388.

[29]Cf. Tarelli, "Johannine Synonyms," 175: " '*As* the Father hath sent me, even so send I you' surely suggests assimilation, not differentiation."

[30]Cf. Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission* (WUNT 31; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1988), 2, n. 4. Overall, Okure's treatment of the possibility of distinctions between ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω is rather cursory. Among those who do not see a distinction between these two terms in the Fourth Gospel are also C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 254: "The verbs πέμπειν and ἀποστέλλειν, used apparently without any difference of meaning . . ."; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 569; Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (SBT 47; London: SCM, 1965), 158, n. 2: "the two words are closely related to each other and are clearly synonymous and interchangeable in John"; and James McPolin, "Mission in the Fourth Gospel," *ITQ* 36 (1969): 113, n. 4: "it seems that a distinction in their meaning[i.e. of the two Johannine verbs for sending] has not been clearly proved."

instance of John's penchant for minor stylistic variations."[31] However, while we may concur that ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are virtually synonymous, is John's use of the respective "sending" verbs best accounted for by "stylistic variation"?

The Search for Alternative Solutions

Since there appears to be no semantic difference between ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω, it is necessary to explore alternative explanations for the Johannine use of "sending" words. Can this usage be accounted for by a preference for those words in certain grammatical forms? Should one view the usage as serving the purpose of stylistic variation? Is John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω completely arbitrary? Or is there a combination of these or other factors at work?

Preference for Grammatical Forms and Possible Obsolescence
That John uses πέμπω more frequently in certain grammatical forms than ἀποστέλλω and vice versa is undeniable. As a matter of fact, John's preference for a given "sending" word is absolute, for he never employs the alternative grammatical form of a "sending" verb, even where it was available to him through general usage. Specifically, John uses ἀποστέλλω twenty-one times in the aorist active indicative (75 per cent of all uses of ἀποστέλλω in John), four times in the adverbial or periphrastic perfect passive participle (15 per cent), and three times in the perfect active indicative (10 per cent). The term πέμπω is used by John twenty-seven times in the substantival aorist active participle (84 per cent of all uses of πέμπω in John), once in the aorist subjunctive (3 per cent), once in the present active indicative (3 per cent), and three times in the future active indicative (10 per cent).[32]

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[31]Cf. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 648, n. 1. Cf. Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 569; Leon L. Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 293–319; Loader, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 30.

[32]Note also that all four instances of πέμπω in Matthew feature the aorist participle πέμψας (Matt 2:8; 11:2; 14:10; cf. Mark 6:27: ἀποστείλας; and 22:7). Luke exhibits greater variety in his use of πέμπω. One finds, for example, the aorist passive indicative (Luke 4:26) and participle (7:6). Interestingly, in the pericope of the parable of the wicked tenants, Mark uses ἀποστέλλω five times (cf. Mark 12:1–6) while Luke uses ἀποστέλλω just once while featuring πέμπω three times (Luke 20:10–13). These observations suggest that, within certain boundaries, there remained room for individual writers to choose either

These data cause one to ask whether or not John's preference for the two "sending" words in certain grammatical forms was predetermined by the obsolescence of certain forms at the time of writing, as Tarelli contends, or whether other reasons should be found.

Table 4: Grammatical Forms of Sending Verbs in the New Testament

Form	Matt		Mark		Luke		Acts		John		Paul		Total	
	ἀ.	π.	ἀ.	π.	ἀ.	π.	ἀ.	π.	ἀ.	π.	ἀ.	π.	ἀ.	π.
P A I	4	0	6	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	14	3
P A S	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
P A Ptc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
P A Inf	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A A I	10	0	7	0	12	3	8	2	21	0	2	8	60	13
A A S	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	2
A A Ptc	2	4	3	0	3	0	4	2	0	27	0	1	12	34
A A Inf	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	3	1	8
A A Impf	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	4
A P I	1	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	1
A P S	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
A P Ptc	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pf A I	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	3	0	1	0	10	0
Pf P Ptc	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	4	0	0	0	9	0
F A I	3	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	2	6	6
Total	22	4	20	1	26	10	24	11	28	32	4	15	124	73

(NT: 132 79)

Going no further than the New Testament, one notes that other New Testament writers use the alternative grammatical forms to those used most frequently by John, that is, the aorist active indicative of **πέμπω** (cf. Luke in Luke 7:6, 19; 15:15; Acts 10:33; 23:30; Paul in 1 Cor 4:17; 2 Cor 9:3; Eph 6:22; Phil 2:28; 4:16; Col 4:8; 1 Thess 3:2, 5) as well as the substantival aorist active participle of ἀποστέλλω (cf. Matt 10:40=Mark 9:37=Luke 9:48; Luke 10:16; Acts 15:33). John's preference for ἀποστέλλω in the aorist active indicative, while following the general preference of the Synoptic writers, is contrasted by Paul's preference for **πέμπω** in the same grammatical form, which is probably due to Paul's epistolary context and literary convention. John's preference for **πέμπω** in the substantival aorist active participle differs from Luke.

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"sending" word based on their personal preference.

Regarding the less frequent forms, John's exclusive use of πέμπω in the future active indicative (14:26; 15:26; 16:7) is parallel to Paul's preference while running counter to the Synoptists so that personal style, not the obsolescence of forms, appears to be the determinative factor. Similar things can be said about John's one-time use each of πέμπω in the present active indicative (20:21) and in the aorist active subjunctive (13:20). In both cases, John's usage differs from that of at least some of the other New Testament authors and cannot be attributed to the obsolescence of forms. John's preference for the perfect passive participle of ἀποστέλλω, on the other hand, appears to be due to the obsolescence of the equivalent form of πέμπω.[33] Finally, obsolescence, or at least very infrequent usage, also appears to provide the explanation for John's exclusive use of ἀποστέλλω in the perfect active indicative (cf. 5:33, 36; 20:21; with the later passage possibly "echoing" the two earlier ones), since πέμπω never occurs in this form in the entire New Testament.[34]

I conclude that John's preference for ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω in particular grammatical forms is an important factor in his choice of "sending" verbs. Tarelli's proposed rationale for John's preference of the two verbs for "sending" in certain grammatical forms, that is, the obsolescence of the respective alternative grammatical form, however, only appears to apply to John's use of ἀποστέλλω in the perfect active indicative and possibly also to the periphrastic aorist passive participle of ἀποστέλλω. It does not furnish a rationale for the forms most commonly used in John, such as the aorist active indicative of ἀποστέλλω or the substantival aorist active participle of πέμπω, so that other explanations must be found.

Stylistic Variation?
If ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are virtual synonyms and John displays a preference for certain grammatical forms of the respective terms that is often not due to the obsolescence of alternative forms, does John perhaps at times use stylistic variation? Louw writes, "Though there seems to be no difference in lexical meaning however hard one looks for a subtle distinc-

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[33]A search of the TLG data base found no instances of the use of the perfect passive participle of πέμπω in the centuries surrounding the writing of John's Gospel.

[34]A search of the TLG data base yielded 11 uses of the perfect active indicative of πέμπω in the centuries surrounding the writing of John's Gospel: Polybius, *Hist.* 1.67; 4.49; Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 612; Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 13.8; 1 Esdr 2:20; 2 Macc 2:11; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.56; 13.45; 14.191; *Vit.* 55.5; 95.1.

tion, this tendency to variety in the use of similar words should rather be understood as a Johannine device to give flavor to a discussion which is syntactically very simple in structure."[35]

Louw argues, against N. Turner, that stylistic variation is not "pointless" but that it rather fulfills an important linguistic function, that is, that of "flavoring" (Louw's term) a discourse that otherwise would be repetitive and monotonous. He contends, "Perhaps the most notable [significant stylistic feature] is the tendency in the Gospel of John to employ relatively close synonyms with essentially the same meaning . . . John seems to be very fond of varying his diction for the sake of aesthetic embellishment."[36]

Louw cites as one example the use of two different words for "love" in 21:15–17 which, according to Louw, "seems to reflect simply a rhetorical alteration designed to avoid undue repetition."[37] He adds, "Style is not only concerned with individual words and phrases, but should also be considered in terms of a larger stretch of language such as the paragraph, and for this matter, even the total discourse . . . style involves both syntactic and semantic features, that is, the arrangement of words and of thought."[38]

Louw gives the following examples in John where an alteration between ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω occurs in the same discourse:

- 1:19–24: ὅτι *ἀπέστειλεν* . . . (v. 19) τοῖς *πέμψασιν* . . . (v. 22) καὶ *ἀπεσταλμένοι* (v. 24);
- 5:36–38: ὅτι ὁ πατήρ με *ἀπέσταλκεν*. καὶ ὁ *πέμψας* με πατήρ . . . (vv. 36–37) ὅτι ὃν *ἀπέστειλεν* ἐκεῖνος (v. 38); and
- 20:21: καθὼς *ἀπέσταλκέν* με ὁ πατήρ, κἀγὼ *πέμπω* ὑμᾶς.[39]

To these examples adduced by Louw, the following passages could be added:

- 7:28–33: ὁ *πέμψας* με . . . (v. 28) κἀκεῖνός με *ἀπέστειλεν* (v. 29) . . . *ἀπέστειλαν* οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς (v. 32) . . . ὑπάγω πρὸς τὸν *πέμψαντά* με (v. 33); and perhaps also

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[35]Cf. Louw, "Johannine Style," 7.

[36]Ibid., 6.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., 10,12.

[39]Ibid. Cf. 17:18 where ἀποστέλλω is used twice in an otherwise very similar passage.

• 9:4, 7: τὰ ἔργα τοῦ *πέμψαντός* με . . . *ἀπεσταλμένος*.[40]

Is John's varied use of "sending" words in these examples best explained by stylistic variation, as Louw maintains? While this appears possible at a first glance, a closer look indicates that in each case more probable explanations can be found. To demonstrate this claim, it will be best to group the relevant passages into categories of usage. The first category is made of instances where John uses a "sending" word in a set, stereotypical phrase. This may be ὁ πέμψας με (cf. 1:33; 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 37; 6:38, 39, 44; 7:16, 18, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 10:44, 45; 12:49; 13:16, 20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5) or ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος or a similar phrase (cf. 3:34; 5:38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 21, 23, 25). As will be argued below, this usage of "sending words" in fixed patterns should probably be viewed as an instance of John's tendency toward stereotyping, a practice that appears to be the exact opposite of stylistic variation. Leaving aside the three uses of πέμπω in the future active indicative in 14:26, 15:26, and 16:7 with reference to the expected sending of the Spirit, neither of which is adduced by Louw as an example of stylistic variation, and which has to be explained on other grounds, we are left with the following passages: 1:6, 19, 22, 24; 3:17, 28; 4:38; 5:33, 36; 7:32; 9:7; 11:3; 13:20; 17:18; 18:24; and 20:21.

Two initial observations can be made. First, one notes that in fourteen of these sixteen passages, ἀποστέλλω is used (except for 1:22; 13:20). This general preference for ἀποστέλλω, of course, is not only analogous to the New Testament usage in general (but see Paul), it also conforms to usage in the LXX where ἀποστέλλω is used almost exclusively (of the twenty-six uses of πέμπω, only five are in the canonical books: Gen 27:42; 1 Kgs 20:20; 28:24; Neh 2:5; Esth 8:5; twelve of the other references are in 1 Maccabees). With regard to genre boundaries, one observes that ἀποστέλλω appears to be preferred in narratives while πέμπω is used more frequently in epistolary contexts. Secondly, there are also instances in John where, according to Louw's theory, one might expect John to use stylistic variation, but where such is not used (cf. 13:20; and esp. 17:18). Was John therefore inconsistent or arbitrary at occasions, or are there more plausible ways to account for his use of "sending" words than stylistic variation?

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[40]For other New Testament examples of the use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω in the same discourse, see Matt 22:3, 4 (ἀ.), 7 (π.); Mark 5:10 (ἀ.), 12 (π.); Luke 7:3 (ἀ.), 6, 10, 19 (π.), 20 (ἀ.); 20:10 (ἀ.), 11, 12, 13 (π.), 20 (ἀ.); Acts 10:32, 33 (π.), 36 (ἀ.); 12:29 (π.), 30 (ἀ.); 15:22, 25 (π.), 27 (ἀ.); Rev 1:1 (ἀ.), 11 (π.); 22:6 (ἀ.), 16 (π.).

What, then, are the most likely explanations for John's usage in the sixteen passages given above? Genre (i.e. narrative) may account for the uses of ἀποστέλλω in about a third of these passages, i.e. 1:19, 24; 7:32; 11:3; and 18:24. In 13:20, one of only two passages left where πέμπω is used, this term is probably required to match the phrase ὁ πέμψας με later in the same sentence. The only remaining use of πέμπω in 1:22, while not as stereotypical as the other uses of the substantival aorist active participle, is in accordance with John's tendency to use only one "sending" verb in a given grammatical form. As already suggested, the use of the perfect passive participle ἀπεσταλμένος and the perfect active indicatives of ἀποστέλλω are explained by the obsolescence or rare usage of πέμπω in these forms. Three passages remain: 3:17; 4:38; and 17:18. Notably, 3:17 and 17:18, together with 10:36, are the only passages in the entire Gospel where the phrase ἀποστέλλω εἰς τὸν κόσμον is found. John 3:17 may echo the tradition enshrined in Gal 4:4 where the wording is virtually identical: ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεός τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ; 17:18 may echo both 4:38 and especially 3:17 and 10:36 (see further below).

If these detailed observations are correct, it is possible to account for John's use of "sending" verbs in each and every case without resorting to the (rather vague and generalizing) explanation of stylistic variation (at least as a primary or exclusive factor in John's usage). Rather, general factors, such as genre or grammar (including verbal aspect; see further below), as well as personal style characteristics, such as stereotyping or echoing, provide more plausible explanations of the detailed instances where a "sending" verb is used. This, of course, does not deny that the use of "sending" verbs by certain writers in Greek may have been due merely to stylistic variation; we have already seen instances in Thucydides' *Historiae* above where this is demonstrably the case. What it does suggest, however, is that the issue may be more complex and that "stylistic variation" should not be used prematurely as a catch-all phrase to describe a writer's (in the present case, John's) use of virtual synonyms. Synonyms they may be, but a writer may still have had other reasons for choosing one term over against the other in a given context than mere stylistic variation (see further below).

We may return briefly to the three examples adduced by Louw to see how the above analysis alternatively explains John's usage. In the first example, 1:19–24, ἀπέστειλεν is used in v. 19 due to the passage's narrative genre; τοῖς πέμψασιν in v. 22 conforms to John's preference for πέμπω in the substantival aorist active participle; and John's choice of ἀπεσταλμένοι in v. 24 is probably due to both genre and grammatical considerations (obsolescence of πέμπω in this particular form). In the sec-

ond example, 5:36–38, ἀπέσταλκεν in v. 36 is probably used owing to the obsolescence of the perfect active indicative of πέμπω; and both ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ in v. 37 and ὅτι ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος in v. 38 are set phrases due to stereotyping. Finally, John's use of the perfect ἀπεσταλκέν together with πέμπω in 20:21, likewise, rather than being due to stylistic variation, appears to be merely a function of the limitations imposed upon John when wanting to use a perfect active indicative form, that is, the obsolescence of πέμπω. Thus while a first glance may suggest mere stylistic variation, a closer look indicates that in each case other factors may have been ultimately determinative.

One final point should be made. Of the sixty uses of "sending" verbs in John combined, no less than forty-nine instances, or almost eighty per cent, feature various forms of the aorist (ἀποστέλλω: twenty-one out of twenty-eight; πέμπω: twenty-eight of thirty-two instances). It appears therefore that verbal aspect provides another parameter for John's use of "sending" verbs. This also means that attention is focused on the eleven instances where John chooses to deviate from his usual preference, especially the three uses each of the perfect (5:33, 36; 20:21) and also of the future (14:26; 15:26; 16:7), his use of the perfect passive participle of ἀποστέλλω (1:6, 24; 3:28; 9:7), and his one use of the present (20:21).

It is now possible to present the findings of the above analysis. A model will be used that is designed to do justice to the complexity of the issue at hand.

John's Use of "Sending" Verbs

Generally, genre and grammar, including verbal aspect, provide parameters for language use. Within these parameters, there is room for individual characteristics of style to be displayed, be it stereotyping, echoing, or stylistic variation. A few words should be said here about the stylistic characteristics of stereotyping and echoing. "Stereotyping" may be defined as a writer's, or speaker's, tendency to use words or phrases in fixed grammatical forms due to his own personal style for the sake of reinforcing a given massage or other reasons. In John's Gospel, it is especially the substantival aorist active participle ὁ πέμψας that takes on an almost technical force. Convenience, consistency, clarity of expression, and other factors may have contributed to the development of the Johannine sending terminology. The phenomenon of "stereotyping" is characterized well by Kraft, who writes on various "protective devices built into human experience":

A fourth factor contributing to communicational success and closely related to the habitual nature of our cultural activities is the fact that *what we do and say has a high level of predictability or, more technically, redundancy.* One aspect of this redundancy is the fact that we tend to deal most of the time with familiar subjects and in a way that finds us frequently saying the same or similar things over and over again. The content of many conversations and a large number of books is, in fact, so highly predictable that it is often possible to get almost all of the important content in a conversation by listening no more than half the time. We can also fairly well master the content of certain books by barely skimming them. Indeed, speed reading courses are based on this fact.

Such predictability leads to the energy-saving propensity of human beings that we call *stereotyping.* Though there are many negative things to be said about stereotyping, a positive one is that stereotypes enable us to guess fairly accurately most of the time many of the things we need to know in order to interpret properly. Stereotyping at its best is merely the categorizing of people, places, times, things, and so forth in such a way that the factors held in common by the members of any given category are kept in focus and, in a communicational situation, do not need to be restated. Such predictability and the reflective way in which we respond to it play an important part in our ability to accurately interpret communicational phenomena.[41]

By repeatedly featuring Jesus as the one who calls God "the one who sent me," and by using the term πέμπω in each case, John uses the linguistic phenomenon of "stereotyping" with considerable skill and effect in the way just described.

"Echoing" may be understood as a writer's deliberate specific reference to another similar or identical phrase, usually, but not necessarily, earlier in the book. The difference between "stereotyping" and "echoing" is that the former practice is rather general and almost subconscious, while the latter is specific and deliberate. Examples of possible echoes of "sending" verbs in John include the following: (1) 1:6 may echo (signal) 3:28; which may in turn be echoed by 9:7; (2) 3:17, which may itself "echo" Gal 4:4, may be echoed in 17:18, with a possible secondary echo of 4:38 in 17:18; and (3) 20:21 may echo 5:33, 36. It should also be

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[41]Cf. Charles H. Kraft, *Communicating Theory for Christian Witness* (rev. ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 104–105. Note that there is another, more narrow, use of the term "stereotype," usually bearing a negative connotation, which is touched upon by Kraft earlier in his book, i.e. with reference to the labelling of a *person* in a way which becomes a barrier to communication. The example Kraft provides is that of a student saying to him, "You don't act like a professor," thus implying that all professors are the same and act alike, plus the connotation that the way professors usually act is in accordance with their formal status and thus impersonable (p. 19). But the way the term "stereotyping" is used in the present essay is to describe the linguistic phenomenon illustrated by the quote in the text above.

noted that stereotyping, echoing, and stylistic variation seem to function along a continuum ranging from a high degree of determinacy of forms (stereotyping) to a high degree of flexibility (stylistic variation). While it is possible to find a combination of both stereotyping and stylistic variation in the same writing, one should generally expect one or the other characteristic to predominate.

The following outline describes John's use of "sending" verbs.

 I. General Parameters
    A. Literary Genre
        1. ἀποστέλλω (cf. LXX) commonly used especially in narratives
        2. πέμπω occurs more frequently in epistolary contexts
    B. Grammatical Form
        1. the perfect of πέμπω is very rare: generally ἀποστέλλω is used
        2. the periphrastic perfect passive participle of πέμπω is obsolete (or very rare)
        3. verbal aspect: the aorist is used in 49 out of 60 instances; other: 3 perfect active indicatives; 4 perfect passive participles, 3 future active indicatives, 1 present active indicative

II. Style Characteristics
    A. Stereotyping
        1. ὁ πέμψας με (πατήρ)
        2. ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος or similar phrase
        3. exclusive usage of given "sending" verb in certain grammatical form
    B. Echoing
        1. 1:6 echoing 3:28, which is echoed by 9:7
        2. 3:17, echoing Gal 4:4, is echoed in 17:18, which also echoes 4:38 and 10:36
        3. 20:21 echoing 5:33, 36
    C. Stylistic Variation
        may function in John's use of "sending" verbs as a supplementary
        (but not necessarily primary or ultimately determinate) factor

Conclusion

It has been argued that ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are virtual synonyms (contra Rengstorf and those following him). As a study of extrabiblical Greek literature from the fifth century BCE to the first century CE has suggested, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω often occur in similar or identical grammatical forms in close proximity to one another with no evident difference in meaning.

John's use of "sending" verbs was found to be largely determined by the author's preference for a given word in a certain grammatical form. This, however, was only in a few instances traced to the obsolescence of the alternative form. It was suggested that, within the general parameters of literary genre and grammar (including verbal aspect), various style characteristics were determinative for John's use of "sending" verbs, specifically "stereotyping" and "echoing." Stylistic variation thus was found not to play the exclusive or predominant role assigned to it by conventional wisdom in the relevant literature.

More work needs to be done to explore the linguistic and extralinguistic phenomena guiding a writer's choice of words and phrases in general, and of John in particular, such as studies of other potential Johannine synonyms (such as words for "love" or "know"). It will be important to face the complexity of the linguistic phenomena involved and to avoid dogmatism and monolithic theories. In this context, Stanley Porter's statement, made in his essay in this volume, is certainly confirmed by the results of this present study: "We have asked too many theological and not enough linguistic questions." It is hoped that the present essay may contribute to such a discussion both a general framework and a case study of a particular pattern of usage.