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Father, Son and Spirit

THE TRINITY AND JOHN'S GOSPEL

Andreas J. Köstenberger

and

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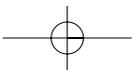
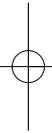
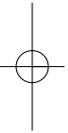
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This book is offered humbly
To the triune God
Revealed in the Scriptures
Believed on in the church
Father, Son and Spirit
Whom we serve with gratitude and gladness

May this volume be
'to the praise of his glory'
(Eph. 1:14)



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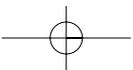
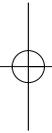
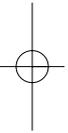
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Series preface

New Studies in Biblical Theology is a series of monographs that address key issues in the discipline of biblical theology. Contributions to the series focus on one or more of three areas: (1) the nature and status of biblical theology, including its relations with other disciplines (e.g. historical theology, exegesis, systematic theology, historical criticism, narrative theology); (2) the articulation and exposition of the structure of thought of a particular biblical writer or corpus; and (3) the delineation of a biblical theme across all or part of the biblical corpora.

Above all, these monographs are creative attempts to help thinking Christians understand their Bibles better. The series aims simultaneously to instruct and to edify, to interact with the current literature, and to point the way ahead. In God's universe, mind and heart should not be divorced: in this series we will try not to separate what God has joined together. While the notes interact with the best of scholarly literature, the text is uncluttered with untransliterated Greek and Hebrew, and tries to avoid too much technical jargon. The volumes are written within the framework of confessional evangelicalism, but there is always an attempt at thoughtful engagement with the sweep of the relevant literature.

One trap we would not want a series devoted to biblical theology to fall into is a kind of implied depreciation of systematic theology. Biblical theology and systematic theology are differentiable but overlapping and complementary disciplines. The former tends to ask theological questions about individual biblical books and corpora and about the trajectories that run right through the biblical corpora; the latter tends to ask theological questions that are primarily atemporal (e.g. 'What is God like?' and not 'What does the Gospel of John tell us about God?'). For those of us who hold that Scripture must be the norming norm, both disciplines, to be responsible, no matter how much they learn from each other and from other contributing fields such as historical theology and philosophical theology, must ground

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themselves in the exegesis of Scripture. And of course, that exegesis is itself shaped, inevitably, by antecedent theological understanding.

This present volume is the joint product of a *Neutestamentler* and a systematic theologian. In their collaboration they have simultaneously attempted a detailed exegetical and theological understanding of what the Fourth Gospel says about God, using the categories of that Gospel itself, *and* mature understanding of the links between that text and the systematic formulations of what came to be called the doctrine of the Trinity. In what sense is it proper to think of the doctrine of God in John's Gospel as trinitarian? Some are so suspicious of links between biblical exegesis and systematic theology that they will deplore any ostensible connections between the two, afraid that the latter will domesticate the former and stain it with anachronism, or that the former will dilute the latter and render it insipid. Drs Köstenberger and Swain, thankfully, are not numbered among them. For those who want to know what they *ought* to believe – surely one of the functions (though not the only one) of constructive systematic theology – out of God's self-disclosure in Scripture, this book will be a stimulating delight. In addition to its contribution to Christian understanding of God (can there be any higher subject?) it stimulates serious thought about how we move from careful study of biblical text to theological formulation. Nothing would please us more than if this book were to become a model for a lot more theological work of the same order.

D. A. Carson
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Authors' preface

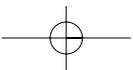
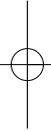
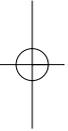
We are grateful to our dear wives for their unwavering love, support and partnership.

I (Andreas) would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my mentor in things Johannine and others, Don Carson, for his theological acumen and commitment to excellence, and to the school where I teach, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), for the administration's continued affirmation of my writing ministry. In the spirit of 'ironing sharpening iron', may I also acknowledge the stimulating influence of my doctoral students at SEBTS and of the readers of my blog, www.biblicalfoundations.org, and its Spanish version, www.fundamentosbiblicos.com.

Several others deserve thanks as well. Fred Sanders and Josh Leim read and helpfully commented upon earlier portions of the present manuscript. Michael Farrell, Associate Librarian at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, provided assistance in obtaining vital resources, and Matt Lytle compiled the indexes. Pete Schemm was the original catalyst for this work.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Don Carson for the opportunity to contribute to the present series, a series from which we have both benefited so much, and the dedicated staff at Inter-Varsity Press, especially Philip Duce and the copy editor, Eldo Barkhuizen, for the phenomenal speed and competence with which they processed the manuscript. Our prayer is that the present volume will be a fitting contribution to an already excellent series. Even more, we pray that this volume will be a blessing to the church, that community gathered into the fellowship of the Father and the Son by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 John 1:1–3; 4:13). *Soli Deo gloria!*

*Andreas J. Köstenberger
and Scott R. Swain*



Abbreviations

<i>1 Apol.</i>	<i>Apologia i</i> (Justin Martyr)
<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 Enoch</i>
1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>
1Qsa	<i>Rule of the Congregation</i>
<i>2 Clem.</i>	<i>2 Clement</i>
<i>2 Esdr.</i>	<i>2 Esdras</i>
4Q246	<i>Apocryphon of Daniel</i>
4QFlor	<i>Florilegium</i>
4Qmess	<i>Messianic Apocalypse</i>
11QMelch	<i>Rule of Melchizedek</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols., New York: Doubleday, 1992
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i> (Josephus)
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
Aram.	Aramaic
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
<i>b. 'Erub.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud 'Erubin</i>
<i>b. Ketub.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud Ketubbot</i>
BBCS	Blackwell Bible Commentary Series
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries

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<i>BRev</i>	<i>Biblical Review</i>
<i>b. Ta'an.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit</i>
<i>b. Yeb.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud Yebamot</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>C. Ar.</i>	<i>Orationes contra Arianos</i> (Athanasius)
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>Civ.</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i> (Augustine)
CTJ	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i> (Justin Martyr)
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
EBS	Encountering Biblical Studies
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. H. Balz and G. Schneider, 3 vols., ET Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–3
EMSS	Evangelical Missiological Society Series
ESV	English Standard Version
ET	English translation
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
<i>Fid. orth.</i>	<i>De fide orthodoxa</i> (John of Damascus)
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i> (Irenaeus)
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Histories</i> (Tacitus)
<i>Jo.</i>	<i>In divi Joannis</i> (Cyril of Alexandria)
<i>Inst.</i>	J. Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> , trans. F. L. Battles, London: SCM; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IVPNTC	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>John</i>	J. Calvin, <i>The Gospel According to St. John</i> , 2 vols., trans. T. H. L. Parker, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959 and 1961
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
LXX	Septuagint version
<i>Mir ausc.</i>	<i>De mirabilibus auscultationibus</i> (Aristotle)
<i>Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Mosis</i> (Philo)
NAC	New American Commentary
<i>m. Ber.</i>	<i>Mishna Berakot</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Mosis</i> (Philo)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , ed. W. A. VanGemeren, 5 vols., Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997
NIV	New International Version
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NT	New Testament
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTSI	New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel
<i>NZStH</i>	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	<i>De opificio mundi</i> (Philo)
<i>Orat.</i>	<i>Orationes</i> (Demosthenes)
<i>Or. 29</i>	<i>Oratio theologica tertia: de Filio</i> (Gregory of Nazianzus)
<i>Or. 30</i>	<i>Oratio theologica quarta: de Filio II</i> (Gregory of Nazianzus)
OT	Old Testament
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Quod omnis probus liber sit</i> (Philo)
<i>ProEccl</i>	<i>Pro ecclesia</i>
<i>Pss Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
<i>QG</i>	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin</i> (Philo)
<i>Quis div.</i>	<i>Quis dives salvetur</i> (Clement of Alexandria)
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (supplement to <i>Numen</i>)
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>

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SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>StudBib</i>	<i>Studia biblica</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich; trans. G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>T. Jud.</i>	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
TNIV	Today's New International Version
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i> (Augustine)
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
<i>VE</i>	<i>Vox evangelica</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>ZRG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte</i>

Introduction

John's Gospel and the church's doctrine of the Trinity

From the patristic period until today, John's Gospel has served as a major source for the church's knowledge, doctrine and worship of the triune God. The Fathers found in the Fourth Gospel both a primary text concerning the trinitarian mystery of salvation¹ and ammunition for the refutation of heresies such as modalism and Arianism.² In expounding their full-orbed trinitarianism, major fourth-century pastors and theologians were 'drawn like a magnet' to John's Gospel.³ The reason for this lies close at hand:

Among all New Testament documents the Fourth Gospel provides not only the most raw material for the church doctrine of the Trinity, but also the most highly developed patterns of reflection on this material – particularly, patterns that show evidence of pressure to *account* somehow for the distinct personhood and divinity of Father, Son, and Spirit without compromising the unity of God.⁴

In John's Gospel, the distinct personal identities of Father, Son and Spirit and their unity in being, will and work are equally affirmed. While there are important personal differences in the roles of the triune God along salvation-historical lines (the Father sends, the Son is sent and sends, the Spirit is sent) the *missio Dei* is characterized by a deep underlying unity among the participants in this mission. As

¹ See Wiles 1960: 148–161.

² See Plantinga (1991: 303, n. 2), citing Hilary of Poitiers, the Nicean *homoousios* clause and Tertullian's refutation of Sabellianism. Pollard (1957: 334–349) documents the use of John 10:30 in early trinitarian controversies.

³ Plantinga 1991: 305.

⁴ *Ibid.*

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the fourth evangelist puts it, Father and Son are 'in' one another, and they are 'one' (10:30, 38; 14:10–11).

Given John's perennial impact on the church's trinitarian confession, it is surprising that, with the exception of Royce Gruenler's *The Trinity in the Gospel of John*,⁵ no contemporary, book-length study of John's trinitarian theology is available. Fine studies related to aspects of John's doctrine of God have been published by M. M. Thompson,⁶ Bauckham⁷ and others,⁸ but none that summarizes and synthesizes what John has to say about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This void is a subset of the larger neglect of theology proper in NT studies,⁹ which is itself a symptom of the systematic separation of dogmatics and exegesis in the modern era.¹⁰

The tide of NT studies is turning, however. A recent spate of articles and books devoted to God and/or the Trinity in the NT has emerged.¹¹ Contemporary with this revival in trinitarian NT studies is a shift in the playing field of the theological disciplines and theological method. On the one hand, many theologians increasingly acknowledge the role that biblical interpretation must play in their own discipline. Biblical exegesis is not only the territory of professional Bible scholars and biblical theologians.¹² On the other hand, many biblical scholars recognize the role that theological reflection must play in the exegetical enterprise. The Bible is, after all, a profoundly *theological* document.¹³ Readings that fail to move beyond literary and genetic/historical issues

⁵ Gruenler's (1986) work treats trinitarian themes by way of a brief, running commentary on John's Gospel. Though not without its problems (see below), the book is full of excellent insights. However, the scope of Gruenler's book limits its engagement with much of the ancient and contemporary literature on Johannine and/or trinitarian theology. Moreover, Gruenler's work is dedicated to demonstrating the problematic thesis that John's is a 'social' view of the Trinity. For these reasons, we believe there is still much work to be done.

⁶ M. M. Thompson 2000, 2001.

⁷ Bauckham 1998, 2005.

⁸ See e.g. Stibbe 2006.

⁹ See Dahl 1991.

¹⁰ This separation was enshrined in Johann Philipp Gabler's famous address delivered in 1787 at the University of Altdorf, 'An Oration on the Proper Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each'.

¹¹ See Yeago 1994; Bauckham 1998a; N. T. Wright 1991, 1992; Fee 1994, 2007; Watson 2000; M. M. Thompson 2000, 2001; Jenson 2002; Das and Matera 2002; Witherington and Ice 2002; Rowe 2000, 2002, 2003, 2006; and Bockmuehl 2006.

¹² On the 'theological interpretation of the Bible' movement, see Fowl 1998; and Vanhoozer 2005b.

¹³ I. H. Marshall 2004: 19.

INTRODUCTION

to substantive doctrinal ones thus fail to grasp the Bible's main subject matter.¹⁴

Corroborating this (re)new(ed)¹⁵ methodological approach is an increased historical awareness that the church's great dogmas, including the doctrine of the Trinity, originated not as a consequence of a priori theological reflection but instead as interpretative principles, principles that were derived from a believing engagement with Scripture.¹⁶ Indeed, Augustine traces his understanding of the Trinity to 'all the Catholic *commentators*' whom he 'read on the divine books of both testaments' (*Trin.* 1.7; italics added).

To be sure, there is a danger associated with speaking of the Bible's, or even of John's, 'trinitarianism'. We must not import fourth-century discussions into our exegesis of biblical texts.¹⁷ Anachronism should be avoided. Nevertheless, we believe it is legitimate to label John's teaching about God 'trinitarian' for at least two reasons.

First, John's Gospel is 'trinitarian' in an obvious, non-controversial sense: John presents Father, Son and Spirit as three characters whose identities are bound together in a profound and mutually determining way. Admitting this point does not concede a full-blown doctrine of the Trinity. Even Arius spoke of a 'trinity' of 'three *hypostases*' in this sense (Arius simply denied that two of the three characters were fully divine!).¹⁸ The present point simply justifies our concentrated focus on Father, Son and Spirit as they are portrayed in their mutual relationships and actions in the Fourth Gospel. It also assures us that such a focus will not lead us away from John's own interests and intentions.

Second, in keeping with an increasing body of literature (see n. 11), we believe there is a strong and natural link between the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments and later trinitarian formulations and terminology (e.g. the Nicene Creed, *trinitas*, *hypostasis*, *homoousios* etc.). Simply put, John's portrayal of Father, Son and Spirit (along with the rest of the Bible) put 'pressure'¹⁹ on fourth-century discussions about the nature of God in such a way that later formulations and terminology should be viewed less as evolutionary developments beyond the NT data and more as attempts 'to describe

¹⁴ Childs 1993: 80–85; N. T. Wright 1992: 467–476.

¹⁵ Before the modern era, the history of theology simply *is* the history of biblical interpretation.

¹⁶ Behr 2001: 1–70; O'Keefe and Reno 2005; cf. Jenson 2002: 338–339.

¹⁷ See Dunn's comments (1996: 9).

¹⁸ See Arius' 'Letter to Alexander of Alexandria', in Rusch 1980: 31.

¹⁹ See the quotation of Plantinga above; and Rowe 2002.

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and analyse the way in which Jesus Christ and the Spirit' were 'intrinsic to' Scripture's way of speaking about God.²⁰ In other words, the creeds represent a 'descriptive grammar' of the Bible's own *intrinsically* trinitarian discourse.²¹ Jenson explains:

The real question about the relation of church doctrine to biblical witness is not about the development of ideas, but about whether the church's Trinity doctrine and Christology make – and then develop and analyze – the same judgments about Jesus that Scripture does.²²

Admittedly, the present point is more controversial than that of the preceding paragraph.²³ But we believe the present volume will bear it out, at least in the case of the Fourth Gospel.²⁴

The approach of the present study

In the light of the preceding discussion, we believe that a fresh examination of the Fourth Gospel's trinitarian teaching is in order. To accomplish this fresh examination of John's trinitarian vision, we have employed a variety of interpretative tools and methodologies:

1. We have sought to build on the fine work done by scholars like Bauckham, Hurtado and others in reconstructing John's historical and cultural milieu, especially pertaining to Second Temple Jewish monotheism.
2. We have attempted to pay close attention to the Gospel's literary art, including its storyline, characterization and ideology.
3. We have read John's Gospel in its canonical, salvation-historical context.
4. We have enlisted the aid of the church in our study, including its official doctrinal pronouncements (e.g. the Nicene–Constantinopolitan Creed, the Chalcedonian Creed etc.) and its

²⁰ Hays (2002: 141) is describing Paul's trinitarian logic; but the same point goes for John as well. For an excellent historical account of the present point, see Behr 2001, 2004.

²¹ Of course, this is not the *only* thing that creeds do. Creeds make assertions about reality, form and inform the church's praise etc.

²² Jenson 2003: 194. Jenson here follows Yeago 1994. Cf. Dunn 1996: 250.

²³ For the historical factors that gave rise to this controversial state, see Babcock 1991; and Muller 2003: 120–140.

²⁴ For further discussion of the relationship between Scripture and trinitarian dogma, see Yeago 1994; and Rowe 2002.

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most trusted teachers (e.g. Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, John Calvin etc.).

5. Finally, we have read the Fourth Gospel with awe and wonder and with prayerful dependence upon ‘the Spirit of truth’ (14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

In each case, our various reading strategies are rooted in convictions concerning the Johannine ‘thing’ (*res*) we have attempted to understand. Our approach is thus one of ‘confessional criticism’.²⁵ We read John’s Gospel in its *historical and cultural context* because we believe that the book was not written in a vacuum but instead was penned in order to engage the world at a specific time in a specific place. We read the Fourth Gospel using the tools of *narrative criticism* because, when John set out to publish his trinitarian Gospel, he told a story. Because John claims that his trinitarian story constitutes the fulfilment of the OT storyline,²⁶ we read the Fourth Gospel within the salvation-historical context of the *canon*. We read John’s Gospel in and with the *church* because Jesus promised to lead that body of *lectors* into ‘all truth’ (16:13) and because we believe that the church’s great trinitarian creeds do not represent corruptions of the biblical message but instead constitute mature, exegetically trustworthy pathways into Holy Scripture.²⁷ Finally, we read with *humility, prayer and faith* because we recognize that many who encountered Jesus still rejected him and, in doing so, rejected the Father who sent him. Reading, as Graeme Goldsworthy recently observed, is ‘spiritual warfare’.²⁸ We therefore acknowledge our utter dependence upon the same Spirit who inspired John’s Gospel to illuminate our minds that we might know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent (17:3). But dependence is not despair. For Jesus promised, ‘I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them’ (17:26; cf. 16:13–15). In the light of his promise, we trust that our labour of reading is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58; cf. 2 Tim. 2:7).

The present volume proceeds in three parts. In part 1, we attempt to situate John’s trinitarian teaching within the context of Second

²⁵ Wolters 2000: 91.

²⁶ See Evans 2000.

²⁷ O’Keefe and Reno argue that the patristic exegetical tradition bears similarities to a modern scientific research programme (2005: 114–139). The wager of the present study is that a more traditional approach to reading John will prove more exegetically fruitful than critical traditions inherited from Spinoza and Socinus.

²⁸ Goldsworthy 2006: 314.

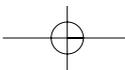
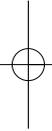
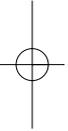
FATHER, SON AND SPIRIT

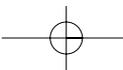
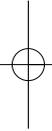
Temple Jewish monotheism. Part 2 is devoted to the characterization of God (*theos*),²⁹ Father, Son and Spirit in John's Gospel, followed by a brief synthesis of these individual treatments. In each case, the Johannine narrative will be followed in order to trace the development and contextual nuances of the Fourth Gospel's characterization of God as Father, Son and Spirit. The careful, exegetical tracing of John's trinitarian story in part 2 identifies the tracks upon which our theological reflection in part 3 may run. Part 3, then, deals more fully with major trinitarian themes in the Fourth Gospel, including its trinitarian account of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and mission. A final chapter discusses the significance of John's Gospel for the church's doctrine of the Trinity. A brief conclusion summarizes some of the practical implications of the present study.

²⁹ Stibbe (2006) does not provide an adequate treatment of *theos* in his study of the Father in the Fourth Gospel. We seek to remedy this omission in the present study.



Part 1: Historical Context





Chapter One

John's Gospel and Jewish monotheism

John's Gospel was not written in a vacuum. One's construal of the most likely context in which the Gospel was written will significantly affect the way in which one understands the Gospel's teaching on God, Jesus and the Spirit. In this chapter, the ensuing study of John's presentation of God, the Father, the Son and the Spirit, will be set within the larger framework of the notion of monotheism in the OT and Second Temple literature. In this context, it will also be helpful to consider the most likely background for John's portrayal of Jesus' pre-existence. This will enable a more accurate assessment of John's teaching on this subject in relation to notions of God in the larger Jewish and Greco-Roman world in which he lived.

John's context

The traditional view holds that the apostle John, at the urging of some of his disciples, wrote the Gospel toward the end of the first century AD in Ephesus in Asia Minor.¹ On this view, John's Gospel, alongside the Synoptics, occupies a place well within the mainstream of first-century Christianity. The sources underlying the Gospel not merely comprise what may be called 'Johannine tradition' (i.e. material independent of the so-called 'Synoptic tradition') but the Gospel is ultimately grounded in eyewitness testimony on the part of one of the key participants in the actual story and history leading to Jesus' crucifixion (cf. e.g. 19:35; 21:24).²

¹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.2. For a more detailed account, see Köstenberger 2005a: 205–242. Though see the recent challenge of this reading of Irenaeus' testimony by Bauckham 2006: 452–468 and the response by Köstenberger and Stout (forthcoming). It should be noted that the internal evidence, in our view decisively, supports the apostolic authorship and the eyewitness character of John's Gospel, and that patristic testimony has a subordinate, though nonetheless significant, role in confirming authorship. See further the discussion and critique of Bauckham below.

² Note the recent case made for the Gospels as eyewitness testimony by Bauckham 2006.

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In the wake of the Enlightenment, scholars began to question the traditional attribution of apostolic authorship to the Gospel of John. Edward Evanson believed the author was familiar with Platonic philosophy.³ Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider construed the background as Philonic Alexandrian philosophy.⁴ David Friedrich Strauss viewed the Gospel as mythological, an understanding refined and further developed by Rudolf Bultmann, a proponent of the history-of-religions school. Bultmann, for his part, believed John was aligned with Mandaean Gnosticism and saw numerous parallels in Hellenistic mystery religions.⁵ Similarly, C. H. Dodd detected parallels in the Hermetic literature.⁶

Others, however, such as Adolf Schlatter and B. F. Westcott, maintained that John's Jewish background predominates.⁷ Schlatter adduced detailed rabbinic parallels, while Westcott located the context of John's Gospel in the matrix of three major events: (1) the Pauline Gentile mission; (2) the destruction of the Jerusalem temple; and (3) the emergence of Gnosticism.⁸ In the second half of the twentieth century, a rather novel construal of the setting of John's Gospel emerged, the 'Johannine community hypothesis' in its various permutations. J. L. Martyn proposed that the reference to synagogue expulsion in John 9:22 actually refers to a then-recent event in the life of the Johannine sect: its expulsion from its parent synagogue.⁹

According to Martyn, the primary setting of John's Gospel is not its overt location in Jesus' earthly ministry (c. AD 30), but rather the life of the 'Johannine community' (c. AD 90). In order to unearth this latter history, Martyn devised a 'two-level hermeneutic' that substitutes symbolic or allegorical references to the 'Johannine community' for language overtly pertaining to the historical Jesus. An important historical datum for Martyn's fully fledged version of the 'Johannine community hypothesis' was the 'curse of the Christians' (*birkat-ha-mînîm*) that was allegedly added to Jewish synagogue liturgy around AD 90 and applied to messianic, Christian Jews.¹⁰

³ See Köstenberger 2001b: 17–47.

⁴ See Baird 1992: 312–314.

⁵ Bultmann 1925: 100–146.

⁶ Dodd 1953.

⁷ Schlatter 1902, 1948; Westcott 1975 (1881).

⁸ Westcott 1975 (1881): xxxvii–xxxviii, cited in Köstenberger 2005a: 207 = 2006: 71.

⁹ Martyn 2003 (1968, 1979); 1977: 149–175.

¹⁰ For a cogent critique of Martyn's thesis in general and his reading of 9:22 in particular, see Carson 1991: 360–361, 369–372.

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Others, such as Raymond Brown, held to a form of 'Johannine community hypothesis' without mentioning the *birkat-ha-mînîm*. Brown, for his part, postulated a five-stage trajectory of development of the 'Johannine community' inferred from the Gospel's and the epistles' internal evidence.¹¹ However, many forms of the 'Johannine community hypothesis' are essentially sectarian,¹² which was recognized by some to be rendered unlikely by the manifest mission thrust of the Gospel.¹³ For this reason, efforts were made to refine the hypothesis to accommodate the mission emphasis.¹⁴ The alleged role of the *birkat-ha-mînîm*, as well as the 'Johannine community hypothesis' in its various forms, has undergone extensive critique in recent years.¹⁵

The demise of the 'Johannine community hypothesis', especially in its sectarian form, is apparent in that a substantial recent volume on the contexts of John's Gospel does not even mention this hypothesis.¹⁶ Instead, a plurality of studies is presented on a variety of Johannine topics, and an integrative approach is urged that combines smaller detailed investigations into a coherent whole. Tellingly, however, the work itself does not actually attempt such a larger synthesis. In another important development, the recent substantive rehabilitation of the historical reliability of John's Gospel has rendered the essence of the traditional view more plausible once again (or at least the view that John contains eyewitness testimony), and studies of the OT background of John's Gospel underscored the predominance of its Jewish background.¹⁷

In this context, Richard Bauckham's work *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (2006) has broken new ground by showing that the Gospels constitute

¹¹ Brown 1978, 1979. See the helpful summary in Carson 1991: 35–36.

¹² E.g. the widely influential article by Meeks 1972: 44–72.

¹³ See esp. the discussion in Köstenberger 1998b: 203–206 *et passim*.

¹⁴ See e.g. Onuki 1984; Okure 1988.

¹⁵ See esp. Hengel 1993; Bauckham 1998b; Hill 2004; Köstenberger 2006.

¹⁶ Frey and Schnelle 2004.

¹⁷ See Blomberg 2001; Köstenberger 2001a: 1–216; 2007. Bauckham 2006 believes that John's Gospel was written by John the Elder, not John the apostle. But in keeping with Bauckham's own argument, John's Gospel is not merely eyewitness testimony, but *apostolic* eyewitness testimony (see Bauckham 2006: 93–113 on the role of the Twelve as 'authoritative collegium'). Also, it is highly unlikely (and in fact in conflict with Mark 14:17 and Luke 22:14, who indicate that Jesus was at the final Passover with the Twelve/apostles; see further below) that a person outside the apostolic circle participated with Jesus in the Last Supper (13:23; cf. 21:20), as Bauckham contends, much less occupied a place next to Jesus (ironically, the cover of Bauckham's book features Jesus at the Last Supper with his *twelve* disciples). What is more, Bauckham's reading of the patristic material is doubtful as well, on which see Köstenberger and Stout (forthcoming).

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eyewitness testimony. According to Bauckham, the ideal source in ancient Greco-Roman literature is not the dispassionate observer, but the eyewitness.¹⁸ The written Gospels, Bauckham contends, contain oral *history* related to the personal transmission of eyewitness testimony, not merely oral *tradition* that is the result of the collective and anonymous transmission of material.¹⁹ Bauckham (2006: 93) states his own thesis as follows:

It is the contention of this book that, in the period up to the writing of the Gospels, gospel traditions were connected with named and known eyewitnesses, people who had heard the teaching of Jesus from his lips and committed it to memory, people who had witnessed the events of his ministry, death, and resurrection and had formulated the stories about these events that they told. These eyewitnesses did not merely set going a process of oral transmission that soon went its own way without reference to them. They remained throughout their lifetimes the sources . . .

In this context, the Twelve served as ‘an authoritative collegium’.²⁰ Especially important in this regard is the phrase ‘from the beginning’, which is found at several strategic points in the Gospels and the NT record (e.g. Luke 1:2; 1 John 1:1; cf. John 1:1). Several other literary devices are used to stress the Gospels’ character as eyewitness testimony, such as ‘the *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony’ (see esp. Mark 1:16–18 and 16:7 for Peter; John 1:40 and 21:24 for the Beloved Disciple). According to Bauckham, the transmission process of the Jesus tradition resulting in our written canonical Gospels is best understood as a formal controlled tradition in which the eyewitnesses played an important, and continuing, part.²¹

What is more, the Gospel material was transmitted not merely in a given community’s quest for self-identity but for profoundly theological reasons, in the conviction that the events of Jesus’ history were of epochal historical significance when understood in the larger framework of the (salvific) activity of Israel’s God. Jesus was viewed not merely as the founder of a movement, but as the source of salvation, and Christianity was not just a new movement: it celebrated the

¹⁸ Bauckham 2006: 8–11.

¹⁹ See esp. *ibid.* 36.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 94.

²¹ *Ibid.* 264 *et passim*.

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fulfilment of God's promises in Jesus the Messiah who had now come, died and risen.

With regard to John's Gospel, Bauckham contends that the Beloved Disciple should be regarded as the author, but he identifies John the Elder (not John the apostle, the son of Zebedee) as the author, primarily, it appears, because of his reading of the patristic evidence (Papias, Polycrates and Irenaeus) and because of his understanding of the reference to the 'sons of Zebedee' in John 21:2. Regarding the latter point, Bauckham finds the Beloved Disciple's anonymity throughout the Gospel an insurmountable obstacle to the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel, since the 'sons of Zebedee' are named (though not by first name); he believes the Beloved Disciple is one of the two unnamed disciples in that list.

This may be so, but there seems to be no good reason why John the apostle (if he was the author) could not have put himself inconspicuously at the scene without lifting his anonymity as the author. Put a different way, since the Beloved Disciple must be one of the seven disciples mentioned in 21:2, but since he cannot be Peter, Thomas or Nathanael, there is at least a one in four possibility that he is John the son of Zebedee, and if his brother James is ruled out (as he should be), the probability rises to one in three. The argument for John the apostle as the author becomes all the more compelling when one considers the following list of concerns with Bauckham's argument:

1. Mark 14:17–18 clearly places the Twelve in the upper room with Jesus at the Last Supper (cf. Luke 22:14: the 'apostles'); this militates against Bauckham's thesis that the author was not one of the Twelve and seems to pit one apostolic eyewitness (Peter as the source for Mark) against another eyewitness (that of the Beloved Disciple).
2. What is the historical plausibility of someone other than one of the Twelve being at Jesus' *side* at the Last Supper, even more so as we know that Judas (one of the Twelve) was on the other side?
3. Bauckham makes nothing of the strong historical link between Peter and John the apostle in all of the available NT evidence (all four Gospels, Acts and Galatians); this is especially significant in the light of the fact that Peter and the Beloved Disciple are indisputably and consistently linked in John's Gospel.²²
4. The presence of the phrase 'I suppose' (*oimai*) in John 21:25 as a device of authorial modesty (in keeping with the label 'Beloved

²² See Quast 1989.

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Disciple') supports the integrity of the entire Gospel as from the same author, who is identified as an eyewitness at strategic points in the Gospel (e.g. 13:23; 19:35; cf. 21:20).²³

5. Methodologically, the question arises as to how legitimate it is to put a large amount of weight on one's reading of the patristic evidence over against the internal evidence of the Gospels themselves.
6. How likely is it, in the light of Bauckham's own theory, that the primary eyewitness behind John's Gospel is a non-apostle, yet one whose testimony is superior even to that of Peter? In this regard, the question arises whether the early church would ever have received such a gospel, especially if written a generation after the Synoptic Gospels and in the light of the crucial importance placed on apostolicity in the canonization process.
7. Why did the author leave out the name John, other than for the Baptist? Surely, it is surprising that someone as important as John the apostle would not be mentioned in the Gospel at all (apart from 21:2). Would it not be considerably more likely that he is in fact the Beloved Disciple and author of the Gospel?
8. Which other John was ever credited with the authorship of the Gospel of John in the early church?²⁴

The cumulative force of this list suggests that Bauckham's argument, while generally sound when he affirms the importance of eyewitness testimony for the Gospels, is unduly biased when examining the evidence for the authorship of John's Gospel. In fact, one gets the impression that non-apostolic authorship is all but assumed at the outset of Bauckham's argument. This is all the more surprising as it seems to follow most naturally from Bauckham's overall thesis. After all, Bauckham's point is not merely that eyewitness testimony is important for the Gospels, but that we are dealing here with *apostolic* eyewitness testimony, that is, eyewitness testimony that is credible because it comes from those who were closest to Jesus during his earthly ministry. In this regard, it is hard to see how the testimony of one largely unknown 'John the Elder' (not mentioned in any of the Synoptics or other non-Johannine NT writings)

²³ Köstenberger 2004b; cf. Jackson 1999.

²⁴ Polycrates' possible conflation of the John mentioned in 13:23 with the John referred to in Acts 4:6 (adduced by Bauckham 2006: 439) is no real exception. Contra Bauckham (2006: 444), there is no evidence that Polycrates thought the author of John's Gospel was anyone other than John the apostle (such as John the Elder; see Köstenberger and Stout forthcoming).

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would satisfy Bauckham's own criterion. On the other hand, the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel, coupled with Peter's importance as a secondary witness, would fit perfectly with Bauckham's overall theory.

For these and other reasons we welcome and concur with Bauckham's overall thesis on the Gospels' eyewitness character, yet do not find his case against the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel convincing. Much more likely, in our opinion, is the view that John's Gospel, like the other three canonical Gospels, is founded on apostolic eyewitness testimony, and that John, in fact, is the Gospel written by the apostle who was closest to Jesus during his earthly ministry, a claim that fits historically only with the apostle John, who, according to the unified witness of Matthew, Mark and Luke was one of three members of Jesus' inner circle together with Peter, and John's brother James.

With regard to the occasion for writing John's Gospel, recent studies have focused particularly on the Johannine temple theme and explored the possible connection between the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70 and the composition of John's Gospel.²⁵ It has been argued that now that the temple has been destroyed, the resurrected Jesus is without peer or rival as the new tabernacle, the new temple, and the new centre of worship for a new nation encompassing all those who are united by faith in Jesus as Messiah. Over against non-messianic Jewish hardening against the Christian message and the formation of rabbinic Judaism, and over against the emergence of proto-gnosis (see 1 John), John seized the opportunity for evangelizing Jews and Diaspora proselytes.

In the light of this plausible reconstruction of the Johannine context, how is one to understand John's teaching on God and the deity of Jesus within the framework of Second Temple Judaism, Greco-Roman thought and early Christianity? Only the broad contours of such an approach can be sketched here. As will be seen, first-century Jews held to a strict form of monotheism rather than blurring the lines between God and other divine mediator figures. At the same time, John did not violate exclusivist Jewish monotheism by attributing divinity and pre-existence to Jesus, because he understood Jesus as belonging to the identity of God rather than as a second, separate, distinct God, resulting in his portrayal of Jesus as Son of the Father.

²⁵ See Köstenberger 2005a (slightly revised, 2006) and the literature cited there.

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John's portrayal of Jesus and Jewish monotheism

The Jews' belief in one God was firmly grounded in the Shema: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one' (Deut. 6:4). The Decalogue, likewise, in the first two commandments forbade Israelites from having (monotheism) or worshipping (monolatry) any gods other than Yahweh (Exod. 20:2–6; Deut. 5:6–10). Everywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is this one God who manifests his character and acts in human history both redemptively and in terms of revelation.²⁶ This includes seminal events such as the exodus (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 4:32–39; Isa. 43:15–17), the giving of the Law, and the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. This God is the Creator and sole and sovereign Ruler of all things.²⁷

Not only is God recognized as the one and only God; he alone is worshipped. As Bauckham notes, 'Judaism was unique among the religions of the Roman world in demanding the exclusive worship of its God. . . . Jewish monotheism was defined by its adherence to the first and second commandments.'²⁸ This sharp distinction between God as being alone God and worthy of worship stood in distinct contrast to Hellenistic conceptions which held that worship was a matter of degree because divinity, likewise, was a matter of degree, so that worship was to be rendered to the extent appropriate to its object. Judaism, on the other hand, viewed God as unique, and thus uniquely worthy of worship.²⁹

The belief in, and worship of, one and only one God set Israel apart from the polytheistic beliefs and practices of its pagan neighbours, including the Greco-Roman pantheon, which was made up of dozens of gods. While the Jews had lapsed into the worship of other deities in the period prior to the exiles,³⁰ post-exilic Judaism, including that of the first century AD, was committed to monotheism and monolatry.³¹ In fact, this became an important distinguishing characteristic

²⁶ See esp. Machinist 1991, who notes that affirmations of the uniqueness of Israel's God are found in every genre and at every stage of OT literature; similarly, Clements 1984; and the chart in C. J. H. Wright 2006: 104.

²⁷ See esp. Isa. 43:11; 44:6; 45:5–6, 14, 18, 21–22; 46:9; Bauckham 1998a: 10–11.

²⁸ Bauckham 1992, 3: 816. See also Gnuse 1997; MacDonald 2003, 2005; Bauckham 2004 (including a critique of Gnuse); C. J. H. Wright 2006: 73–74.

²⁹ Bauckham 1998a: 15. Cf. Hurtado 2003: 31, who notes, 'For devout Jews, the core requirement of Judaism was the exclusive worship of Israel's God.' Hurtado also points out that none of the 'divine agents' of God were 'treated as rightful recipients of cultic worship in any known Jewish circles of the time' (2003: 31).

³⁰ See Lang 1981, 1983; Olyan 1988; M. S. Smith 1990, cited in Hurtado 2003: 29–30, n. 5.

³¹ See esp. Hurtado 1998a.

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of Jewish religion in a polytheistic environment and was recognized as a hallmark of Jewish faith by Greco-Roman historians such as Tacitus, who wrote, 'The Jews conceive of one God only' (*Hist.* 5.5).

As C. J. H. Wright (2006: 105) observes, faith in the one and only God anchored 'the theocentric, monotheistic worldview of first-century Jews' and constituted 'the assumptive bedrock of Jesus and all his first followers'. 'This God', Wright continues, 'was acknowledged now by Israel, his covenant people. But the God of Israel was also the universal God to whom all nations, kings, and even emperors must finally submit.'³² As the NT attests, strikingly, Jesus claimed, and his followers believed, that he shared the identity of Yahweh, the one and only God of Israel and of the nations, indicated by the application of *maranatha* (Aram. 'O Lord, come') to Jesus (1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20) and the appellation of Jesus as *kyrios* (Lord) in the Christian confession *kyrios Iēsous* ('Jesus is Lord'); see esp. Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11 cf. Isa. 45:22–23).³³

In the light of the Jewish context of John's Gospel noted above and the Jewish belief in monotheism, it is apparent that any claims to deity by an individual such as Jesus would have been fiercely opposed by pious first-century Jews. Numerous passages in John's Gospel suggest that this is in fact what occurred when Jesus' Jewish contemporaries repeatedly attempted to stone Jesus on account of blasphemy (e.g. 5:18; 8:59; 10:31–33; cf. 11:8). Also, at Jesus' trial before Pilate, the Jews, after initially insinuating Jesus was a political threat to Roman imperial power, eventually insist that Jesus 'must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God' (19:7). Hence Jesus died first and foremost because he claimed to be God (cf. Matt. 26:65; Bock 2000).

Some believe that Second Temple Judaism held to a strict monotheism that rendered it impossible to attribute divinity to anyone other than God. In this case, only a radical break with Judaism would have allowed his followers to attribute divinity to Jesus. Hence Maurice Casey contends that 'the deity of Jesus is . . . *inherently* unJewish. The witness of Jewish texts is unvarying: belief that a second being is

³² C. J. H. Wright 2006: 105.

³³ See ch. 4 in C. J. H. Wright 2006, esp. pp. 106–109; and Rowe 2000, 2003, 2006. Contra Dunn, who claims that 'only in the Fourth Gospel can we speak of a doctrine of the incarnation' (1996: 259; but see e.g. the critique by Cranfield 1987 with regard to Romans; and Fee 2007: 500–512). A full critique of Dunn's work is beyond the scope of the present volume. It should be noted, however, that the recent works by Bauckham, Lee and Hurtado et al., discussed in this chapter, have decisively undercut Dunn's thesis.

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God involves departure from the Jewish community.³⁴ Others favour the view that Second Temple Judaism was more flexible, pointing to various intermediary figures such as angels, exalted humans or personified divine attributes, claiming that these provide Jewish precedents for identifying Jesus as divine.³⁵

Indeed, the OT and Second Temple literature feature several passages where beings other than God are called 'god'. Philo refers to Moses as 'god' (*Mos.* 1.155–158; *Prob.* 42–44; cf. *Exod.* 7:1).³⁶ Human judges are called 'gods' in the LXX (*Exod.* 22:27), as are angels (*Pss* 8:6; 82:1, 6; 97:6; 138:1) and the mysterious figure of Melchizedek (*11QMelch* 2.24–25).³⁷ Yet intermediary figures such as these were understood as creatures, and the line between God and created beings was clearly drawn (cf. *Ezek.* 28:2; *Hos.* 11:9). In passages such as these, rather than blurring divine–human distinctions, beings who are not God are shown to exercise divine prerogatives.³⁸ Hence these instances cannot serve as genuine precedents.

Rather than pointing to Jewish intermediary figures, therefore, it is most plausible that the early Christians identified 'Jesus directly with the one God of Israel' and included 'Jesus in the unique identity of this one God'.³⁹ If correct, this view has revolutionary implications for understanding the Christology of the NT. In Bauckham's words:

[T]he highest possible Christology, the inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity, was central to the faith of the early church even before any of the New Testament writings were written. . . . Although there was development in understanding this inclusion of Jesus in the identity of God, the decisive step of so including him was made at the beginning . . .⁴⁰

³⁴ Casey 1991: 176, cited in M. M. Thompson 2001: 28. See the critique of Casey's work in Hurtado 2003: 43–44; and Dunn 1994.

³⁵ Cf. Hurtado 1998a, 2003. Though see the important clarification in Hurtado 2003: 29, n. 3, where Hurtado notes that he believes Jewish 'divine agency' traditions 'were *not* by themselves sufficient to explain the emergence or distinctive character of devotion to Jesus'.

³⁶ Philo also calls the Logos 'a second god' (*QG* 2.62; cf. Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 63.15; *Dial.* 56.4).

³⁷ See Jesus' citation of Ps. 82:6 per John 10:34, on which see the discussion later in this volume.

³⁸ So rightly, M. M. Thompson 2001: 45.

³⁹ Bauckham 1998a: 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 27. Bauckham's findings stand in sharp contrast to those of Dunn 1996 (except for a new foreword, unchanged from 1980).

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What is more, this high Christology was entirely possible within strict Jewish monotheism. This explains why neither John nor the other NT writers evidence any consciousness of tension between the attribution of deity to Jesus and their Jewish monotheistic beliefs. Jesus' inclusion in the unique deity was novel, but did not compromise Jewish monotheism. John's Gospel also shows Jesus appropriating the divine name *'anî hû'* (LXX: *egō eimi*).⁴¹ At times, the expression is used simply meaning 'I am' without indicating a claim to deity on Jesus' part. At other times, especially in the seven absolute 'I am' sayings, Jesus' deity is clearly implied.⁴²

In keeping with Isaiah's vision of a new exodus for God's people, the Gospels provide a new narrative of God's acts.⁴³ Just as Israel knew God as the one who delivered the nation out of Egypt and told the story of that God, the NT writers identify God as the God of Jesus Christ and tell the story of Jesus as the account of the deliverance of God's people from sin.⁴⁴ This new story is consistent with the OT account of God and his acts on behalf of his people, yet it is new in the way God now has revealed himself and provided redemption in a final and universal way (1:18; cf. Heb. 1:1–3). In Jesus, the Creator and Ruler of the world has become its universal Saviour (4:42; cf. Luke 2:1).

Jesus' inclusion in the identity of God means that God must be conceived in relational terms, uniting God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God thus transcends one-dimensional conceptions of human identity. This entails an element of novelty: 'Nothing in the Second Temple Jewish understanding of divine identity contradicts the possibility of interpersonal relationship within the divine identity, but on the other hand there is little, if anything, that anticipates it.'⁴⁵ Jesus is now 'God with us' (Matt. 1:25) and 'will be with' his people (Matt. 28:20).⁴⁶ 'The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit' names the newly disclosed identity of God revealed in the Gospels' account of Jesus (e.g. Matt. 28:19).⁴⁷

⁴¹ Harner 1970; Ball 1996; Williams 2000; Bauckham 2005: 153–163.

⁴² 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8. Both Isa. 40–66 and John's Gospel feature a total of nine (seven plus two) references to God or Jesus as 'I am'.

⁴³ Bauckham 1998a: 71; 2006: 277. See also Vanhoozer 2005a, in further development of Balthasar 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994.

⁴⁴ See esp. John 1:14–18 with its repeated allusions to Exod. 33–34, esp. 33:18 and 34:6.

⁴⁵ Bauckham 1998a: 75.

⁴⁶ See the important monograph-length treatment by Kupp 1996.

⁴⁷ Bauckham 1998a: 76.

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With this we have come full circle, and yet have come to realize a massive advance in God's self-revelation in and through his Son. As noted at the outset, OT Israel's belief in one God is grounded in the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4. In 1 Corinthians 8:4–6, Paul applies this most foundational of all Jewish monotheistic texts decisively and unmistakably to Jesus, inserting Jesus into the 'one God, one Lord' formula and connecting him with the creative work of God the Father:

We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth . . . , yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Richard Bauckham aptly draws out the implications of Paul's statement for biblical monotheism:

The only possible way to understand Paul as maintaining monotheism is to understand him to be including Jesus in the unique identity of the one God affirmed in the Shema'. . . . Paul is not adding to the one God of the Shema' a 'Lord' the Shema' does not mention. He is identifying Jesus as the 'Lord' whom the Shema' affirms to be one. In this unprecedented reformulation of the Shema', the unique identity of the one God consists of the one God, the Father, and the one Lord, his Messiah (who is implicitly regarded as the Son of the Father).⁴⁸

This shows that Paul and the early church, as well as John, included Jesus within the identity of the one God confessed in the Shema and believed that Jesus shared in the identity of Yahweh, in keeping with Jesus' own claim that he and the Father are one. Contrary to the Jewish charge that Jesus' claim constituted a breach of their monotheistic beliefs (cf. e.g. John 10:31–33), Jesus' followers understood that Jesus' claim did not imply that he was a second God alongside, and in addition to, God the Father (ditheism), but that his deity

⁴⁸ Bauckham 2004: 224, cited in C. J. H. Wright 2006: 111–112. See also N. T. Wright 1991: 120–136; Hurtado 2003: 123–126 (with implications for Jesus' pre-existence, on which see also Moo 2005: 178–179 and the discussion below) *et passim*; Capes 1992; and Fee 2007: 88–94.

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was to be accommodated within the framework of Jewish monotheism in such a way that the one and only God affirmed in the Shema could accommodate the notion of Father, Son and Spirit – three in one – as God.⁴⁹

The background of John's portrayal of Jesus' pre-existence

One important question that has received considerable attention in recent years is what led the early church to conclude that Jesus pre-existed with God in eternity past. In a recent study, A. H. I. Lee demonstrated convincingly, and against the preponderance of much contemporary scholarship, that neither Jewish angelology nor the pre-existent Messiah ever exerted sufficient influence on early Christology to serve as ready-made categories for viewing Jesus as a divine and pre-existent being alongside God. Rather, the early Christian understanding of Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God is the result of early Christian exegesis of Psalms 110:1 and 2:7 in the light of Jesus' self-understanding as the Son of God.⁵⁰

According to Lee, Jewish wisdom traditions never issued in personified divine attributes that took on divine hypostases separate from God. Rather, these enabled Second Temple Jews to speak of God's activity in the world without sacrificing the notion of his transcendence. Viewing himself as sustaining a unique personal relationship to God as his Father, Jesus was the Messiah because he was the Son of God, and his consciousness of divine sonship played a significant role in the development of early Christology. Hence Jesus' self-understanding is foundational for the early Christian conception of Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God. The parable of the wicked tenants, for example, makes clear that Jesus was God's Son sent into this world from above.⁵¹

In particular, Jesus' consciousness of divine sonship laid the foundation for the early church's messianic exegesis of Psalms 110:1 and 2:7

⁴⁹ This is why there is no contradiction between the church's worship of God as the Trinity and its claim that its God is Israel's God, a question addressed by B. D. Marshall, who notes that '[t]he lack of referential fixity in Christian discourse about the God of Israel teaches us . . . that the Father is the God of Israel, the Son is the God of Israel, and the Holy Spirit is the God of Israel, yet they are not three gods of Israel, but one God of Israel' (2001: 258).

⁵⁰ A. H. I. Lee 2005; see also Juncker 2001. See already Bauckham 1998a: 29–31; and Gathercole 2006 on the Synoptic material (though see the critique by Dunn 2007).

⁵¹ See the important discussion of Mark 12:1–9 in Bockmuehl 2006: 215–220.

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with reference to Jesus (rooted, again, in Jesus' own usage). Through its messianic exegesis of these two Psalms references and other similar passages, the early church came to confirm what it was already beginning to believe on the basis of Jesus' self-consciousness and his resurrection. In Psalm 110:1, the early church found biblical grounding for the notion of Jesus' resurrection as his exaltation to God's right hand (see esp. Acts 2:34–35). Importantly, the early Christians did not view Jesus' resurrection as conferring on him an essentially new status but as confirming the status he already possessed.

The early Christian understanding of Jesus as Lord finds an important point of departure in Jesus' treatment of Psalm 110:1 with reference to himself as David's Lord who stands and exists before David. This implies Jesus' claim of pre-existence, which is also confirmed by his statement before the Sanhedrin in Mark 14:62. Psalm 2:7, likewise, was understood by the early church as a prophecy concerning Jesus' divine sonship that was decisively fulfilled at his resurrection and exaltation (Acts 13:33; cf. Acts 4:25–26). Jesus did not become God's Son at the resurrection; he already was God's Son prior to the crucifixion, and his resurrection and exaltation merely confirmed his status as Son of God.

Conversely, wisdom Christology is not clearly present in Paul's writings.⁵² Rather, the early Christian understanding of Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God, aided by its messianic exegesis of certain psalms, led it to express this conviction by using Jewish wisdom traditions. Hence the church expressed the implications of its conviction that Jesus was the Son of God, namely that Jesus was active in creation and coeternal with God the Father, in terms provided by Jewish wisdom traditions. Thus the latter were not the *source* for the church's understanding of Jesus' pre-existence but rather one way of expressing the *implications* of this conviction at which the church had arrived on different grounds.

If Lee is correct, John did not derive his Christology from Jewish wisdom traditions,⁵³ but rather chose to contextualize his understanding of Jesus' pre-existence and divine sonship by couching some of the implications in Jewish wisdom categories, a different procedure altogether.⁵⁴ This hypothesis comports well with the internal data of John's Gospel, mentioned above, regarding the grounds of Jewish opposition to Jesus during his earthly ministry, namely Jesus' implicit

⁵² Fee 2007: 594–619.

⁵³ Contra e.g. Witherington 1995 (following Dunn).

⁵⁴ See also Ebert 1998.

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and explicit claims to deity. Intermittent attempts to stone Jesus on account of blasphemy throughout John's Gospel and the Jews' remark before Pilate that Jesus deserved to die because he claimed to be the Son of God confirm that Jesus claimed to be God.

Christ-devotion and exclusivist Jewish monotheism

In his work *Lord Jesus Christ*, Larry Hurtado argues three basic inter-related theses: (1) 'devotion to Jesus emerges phenomenally early in circles of his followers, and cannot be restricted to a secondary stage of religious development or explained as the product of extraneous forces'; (2) 'devotion to Jesus was exhibited in an unparalleled intensity and diversity of expression, for which we have no true analogy in the religious environment of the time'; and (3) 'this intense devotion to Jesus, which includes reverencing him as divine, was offered and articulated characteristically within a firm stance of exclusivist monotheism, particularly in the circles of early Christians that . . . helped to establish what became mainstream . . . Christianity'.⁵⁵

According to Hurtado, 'the exclusivist monotheism of ancient Judaism is the crucial religious context in which to view early Christ-devotion', and this monotheism helped shape Christ-devotion 'especially in those Christian circles concerned to maintain a fidelity to the biblical tradition of the one God'.⁵⁶ Central to this exclusive monotheism is a sharp distinction between legitimate and illegitimate recipients of worship: 'Jesus is not reverenced as another deity of any independent origin or significance; instead, his divine significance is characteristically expressed in terms of his relationship to the one God.'⁵⁷ Hence Jesus-devotion was binitarian (worshipping both God and Jesus), but not ditheistic.⁵⁸

John's claim that Jesus is 'Christ' and 'Son of God' amounts to more than asserting that Jesus is Israel's rightful king. Rather, these designations express the belief that Jesus was also divine and of heavenly origin.⁵⁹ Other than in the Synoptics, where the charge of blasphemy surfaces only at the trial of Jesus, in John's Gospel Jesus is charged with blasphemy throughout his ministry (cf. 5:18; 8:59;

⁵⁵ Hurtado 2003: 2–3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 48.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 51.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 52–53.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 362.

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10:31–33). John's adaptation of the Isaianic 'I am' formula and of the 'glory' and 'lifted up' motifs also intimately associate Jesus with God in a way unparalleled by any other Jewish tradition of the period.⁶⁰ Remarkably, Jesus is given 'glory' by God (e.g. 17:5, 24) despite the fact that God does not share his glory with another (Isa. 42:8; 48:11).⁶¹

On the basis of the identification of Jesus with Isaiah's suffering Servant, which is doubtless grounded in Jesus' own self-understanding (e.g. Luke 4:18), John read Isaiah 40–55 as referring, not to one, but to two divine figures, God on the one hand and the suffering Servant on the other.⁶² In Isaiah, John found warrant for seeing Jesus as a figure properly identified with the 'I am' of Isaiah and the exodus (cf. Exod. 3:14) and sharing the glory of God as the one who bore the transgressions of many and who was 'lifted up' and exalted by God.⁶³ Indeed, the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus as the Word sent by God, which, once it has accomplished its purpose, returns to the one who sent it, derives directly from Isaiah 55:11.⁶⁴

Other startling attributions of divinity in John's Gospel are entailed by its emphasis on Jesus being given God's name (e.g. 17:11–12), the requirement of believing in Jesus' name (e.g. 1:12) and by the frequent references to prayer being rendered in Jesus' name (e.g. 14:13–14). At the same time, Jesus is portrayed by John as both obedient to the Father and yet equal to him (compare 14:28 with 10:30); and as both human and divine (compare 4:9 or 11:35 with 8:58 or 17:5).⁶⁵ Jesus is a historical, earthly, human figure who is primarily perceived by his contemporaries as a rabbi, a Jewish religious teacher, though, at the same time, he is also the Son of God.⁶⁶

Jesus' humanity (his 'flesh', 1:14) is required particularly for the efficacy of his redemptive cross-death (e.g. 6:51–58).⁶⁷ Significantly,

⁶⁰ Ibid. 379.

⁶¹ Note the possible connection between the Johannine 'glory' and 'temple' motifs, to be further developed in Köstenberger forthcoming.

⁶² Hurtado 2003: 380, citing Juel 1988: 119–133 and Bauckham 1998a: 47–69.

⁶³ On the 'I am' motif, see briefly above. Regarding the phrase 'lifted up', compare 3:14, 8:28, 12:32 with Isa. 52:13, which speaks of the suffering servant being 'raised and lifted up and highly exalted' in the context of a reference to the disfigured servant 'sprinkl[ing] many nations' (v. 15). On the use of Isaiah in John's Gospel, see esp. Evans 1987: 221–236.

⁶⁴ Köstenberger 2004c: 27.

⁶⁵ On the former, see Cowan 2006; on the latter, see M. M. Thompson 1988 (contra Käsemann 1968).

⁶⁶ See Köstenberger 1998a: 97–128.

⁶⁷ On the nature of Jesus' work, see Köstenberger 1998b: 74–81.

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the fourth evangelist bears witness to Jesus' full humanity at the cross (19:34–35). Jesus is also shown to be endowed with the Spirit (1:32–33; 3:34) and as performing a series of startling signs confirming his messianic identity (e.g. 2:11). The Spirit's role as 'other helping presence' and as sent by both God and Jesus ties him intricately to Jesus the Son. The triunity of Father, Son and Spirit forms the paradigm and basis for the love and unity among Jesus' followers and for their mission to the world as they re-present his message and follow their Lord (20:21; cf. 17:18).⁶⁸

Implications for John's Gospel

The understanding of the Jewish monotheistic framework for the characterization of Jesus in John's Gospel is relevant for a proper reading of John's prologue and for understanding the portrayal of Jesus throughout the Gospel as the Son of the Father, as one with the Father, and as the 'I am'.⁶⁹ The depiction of the Word in John 1:1 and of its instrumentality in creation in 1:3 makes clear that the Word, rather than being a creature, belongs to God's own unique, uncreated identity and thus has life in itself (1:4; cf. 5:26). John's Christological retelling of Genesis has several Second Temple precedents, though it is of course unique in its reference to Jesus as the Word.⁷⁰

According to John, the Word, while distinct from God, is at the same time intrinsic to his own identity: it existed with God 'in the beginning' (1:1).⁷¹ In the Gospel proper, however, the designation of Jesus as the Word is, naturally, superseded by Jesus' own way of speaking of himself as the Son of the Father. In its portrayal of Jesus as distinct from God and yet intrinsic to his identity, John's Gospel does not compromise Jewish monotheism, since, while being 'with God', the Word 'was God' in its own right, and hence one with God (1:1–2; cf. 10:30; see also 5:26), rather than a second God, that is, a

⁶⁸ See Köstenberger 1998b; and chapter 9 below.

⁶⁹ See esp. Bauckham 2005: 148–166.

⁷⁰ Bauckham 2005: 150.

⁷¹ Note in this regard Bauckham's (2006) thesis that the four canonical Gospels, including John, constitute eyewitness testimony and his proposal that John, like Mark and Luke, features an *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony, in 1:40 and 21:24. This may be so, but, more importantly, it seems that 1:1, in conjunction with 1:18, indicates that Jesus himself, who was 'in the beginning' with God, serves as the ultimate eyewitness (cf. 18:37), whose testimony is foundational for the Beloved Disciple's testimony (compare Jesus' position *eis ton kolpon* per 1:19 with the Beloved Disciple's position *en tō kolpō* of Jesus per 13:23 [reiterated in slightly different terms at 21:20]).

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divine entity apart from the one and only God revealed in Scripture as the Creator and Ruler of all things.

Implicit in Jesus' inclusion in the identity of God is his right to receiving worship (5:23; cf. 9:38; 20:28). His inclusion in the divine identity is also indicated by the possible allusion to the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 in John 10:30 (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6).⁷² As Bauckham writes:

Without contradicting or rejecting any of the existing features of Jewish monotheism, the Fourth Gospel, therefore, re-defines Jewish monotheism as Christological monotheism. Christological monotheism is a form of monotheism in which the relationship of Jesus the Son to his Father is integral to the definition of who the one true God is.⁷³

With this, we are ready to embark on our study of John's characterization of God: the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

⁷² The change from masculine to neuter 'one' is a necessary adaptation of language (Bauckham 2005: 163).

⁷³ Bauckham 2005: 165.