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# Biblical Theology and the Patristic Doctrine of the Trinity: In What Ways Can Their Relationship Be Established?

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The issue before us<sup>1</sup> is not just *whether* the doctrine of the Trinity—as defined at the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople—is based on the teachings of Scripture, but *how* it is related to Scripture. The first question is a matter of defending the faith against unbelievers and instructing new believers. The second question is a matter of interpreting and applying the doctrine in the life, work, and worship of believers. Both matters require attention. However, in Western theology, at least, the interpretive task has often taken second place to the apologetic one. As a result, the doctrine of the Trinity has sometimes won people's minds, but rarely has it won their hearts and lives. For example, the Reformed churches have faithfully confessed the truth of the doctrine, but (until recently) they have neglected to explore its deeper meaning.

Accordingly, we shall attempt to relate the doctrine of the Trinity to Scripture in two distinct (if not separate) ways. First, we shall ask: whether the doctrine of the Trinity is based on Scripture. In other words: Are there teachings in the New Testament which point to the doctrine of the Trinity as defined at Nicea and Constantinople? Second, we shall ask how the doctrine relates to the teachings of Scripture as a whole. In particular: What are the implications of the doctrine for our view of God, creation and humanity?

## I. Is the Doctrine of the Trinity Implied in Scripture?

No Christian teaching is more peculiar, more at variance with normal human logic, and more resistant to assimilation to other religious or philosophical systems than the doctrine of the Trinity. We believe God to be perfectly one in substance, energy, and mission, yet three distinct "persons" (the usual English translation of the Greek *hupostaseis* and the Latin *personae*): Father, Son, and Spirit. The Son and the Spirit are from the Father in their substance, energy, and missions—that is, in their eternal being, their cosmic functions (creation and providence), and their historical roles (revelation and redemption). Yet the three are inseparable, coinherent, and coequal. These points were established officially by the Council of Constantinople in 381. Earlier Christian theologians were not altogether

consistent in their terminology, but most of them would have agreed with the fourth-century church in its deliberations, the substance of which was conservative in spite of some innovations in terminology.

The procedure for exploring the basis of this doctrine in the teachings of the New Testament is familiar ground to any trained theologian.<sup>2</sup> I shall therefore focus here on a few areas that require special attention in the light of modern critical studies of the New Testament.

There are two levels of demonstration. First, we must establish the scriptural basis for the basic content of the doctrine: the unity of God; the distinctness of the three persons; and the coequality, coeternity and coinherence of the persons. But, in order to avoid the common charge that they never intended anything beyond disjointed expressions of adoration for Jesus, we also need some evidence that the writers of the New Testament (or the communities whose beliefs they reflect) were aware of the implications of their teachings.

The propositions concerning the unity of God and the distinctness of the three persons are the most easily established. No one seriously believes that the New Testament teaches the existence of two or three "gods." Conversely, the notion that there is just one divine "person" that presents itself variously as the Father in heaven, the Son in Jesus, and the Spirit in the church is untenable in spite of the popularity of Sabellian and Modalist (Modalistic Monarchian) teachings in both the early and contemporary church. As Tertullian pointed out so forcefully in the early third century,<sup>3</sup> no single divine "person" in his right mind would pray to himself, send himself, glorify himself, and return to himself. Any "god" that gave appearances so at odds with its inner being could not be the "faithful and true" God of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>4</sup>

A more difficult point to establish is the essential equality, coeternity and coinherence of the three persons, particularly in the cases of the Son and the Spirit.

### **The Status of the Son**

The most serious challenge to the patristic doctrine of the Trinity has always been the view that there is a significant inequality between God and Christ. There are two distinct degrees of inequality that need to be considered here. The most extreme is the view that Jesus was merely a man adopted and divinized by God. Originally referred to as Dynamic Monarchianism, it was later called "Adoptionism" in the West. Supporters of this view usually appeal to New Testament texts that speak of Jesus being "made Lord" or receiving the name of "Lord" (Acts 2:36; Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:4) or being declared "Son of God" at the resurrection (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4). Nevertheless, Dynamic Monarchianism is clearly

contrary to the New Testament teaching that the Word or Son of God existed already at the time of creation (e.g., John 1:1, 14; 8:58; 12:41; 17:5, 24; Col 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2).<sup>5</sup> Two points are decisive here.

First, even the earliest strata of the Gospels contain sayings in which Jesus spoke directly as the Wisdom of God (Matt. 11:27 = Luke 10:22)<sup>6</sup> or as Yahweh God (Matt. 23:37b = Luke 13:34b).<sup>7</sup> A Wisdom Christology is also present in the early letters of Paul, the earliest New Testament documents that we have.<sup>8</sup> As W. D. Davies pointed out years ago, it is inconceivable that allegiance to Christ could have replaced adherence to the law of Moses for a Pharisee like Paul if Christ were not more ancient than the giving of the law and the presence of the *shekinah* in the Temple.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it is difficult not to attribute an unduly skeptical bias to those modern scholars who see the notion of pre-existence as a late development in the New Testament.<sup>10</sup> The writers of Scripture did not value novelty and originality the way many of its modern critics do.

Second, we do need to take seriously the biblical texts that speak of Jesus being "made Lord" and "given a name above every name."<sup>11</sup> However, the New Testament writers did not value novelty in respect to Jesus' achievements any more than they did in respect to their own. Rather than implying that Jesus had become something he previously was not, these texts point to the belief that he had *always* been worthy of lordship and that his essential worthiness had now been demonstrated by specific deeds.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, the same things that are said of Jesus in the New Testament had also been said of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 17:7-8; Exod. 6:6; 15:18; Lev. 26:12; Ps. 9:7). Statements about Yahweh being enthroned and becoming the God of the Jewish people directly parallel those in the New Testament about Jesus. The Jewish *Tanhuma* gives us an idea of the way Jews of post-biblical times viewed the lordship of their God. Noting the fact that the name of God in Exodus 17:16 is simply "Yah" (rather than the usual form, "Yahweh"), the *Tanhuma* states that the throne of God will be incomplete until all Israel's enemies are vanquished:

As long as the descendents of Amalek are in the world,  
neither the name nor the throne [of God] is complete.  
When the descendents of Amalek will have perished, both  
the name and the throne will be complete.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, Paul teaches that the lordship of God the Father is contingent on that of Christ—or perhaps that the lordships of Father and Son are mutually contingent:

Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom  
to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler  
and every authority and power. . . . For "God has put  
all things in subjection under his feet." [Ps. 8:6] . . . When

all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:24-28)

If we were to conclude that Jesus only became "Lord" at the resurrection; then we would also have to say that Yahweh only became "Lord" at the Exodus or the founding of Zion or even that the Father is not yet God but will begin to reign only at the eschaton. Jesus is *homoousios* with God the Father in this sense, at least: whatever we say of one we must also say of the other.

Thus, we can rule out the extreme view of inequality between the Father and Son. But what of the more speculative form of subordinationism defended by Arius? In this view, Christ is pre-existent as the explicit Word (*logos prophorikos*) of God, as stated by orthodox Apologists like Justin and Athenagoras. In fact, the Word is as old as creation itself, but still not coeternal and coequal with the Father. The Word was only uttered, begotten or created (with no clear differentiation among these terms) by God at the beginning of time, the first of Gods acts *ad extra* and the foundation of all subsequent creation (cf. Prov. 8:22).

Here is where Athanasius and the Nicene Fathers had to think deeply. What was really wrong with saying that Christ was the eldest creature of God, the created creator of the world? Did not Paul himself refer to Christ as the "firstborn of all creation" and God's instrument for creating all the rest? (Col. 1:15-17). The issue joined with the Arians was not just a matter of proving that the Word pre-existed the incarnation. In fact, it was not decidable in terms of temporal language at all. Even Arius realized that he could not claim that "there was a time when the Word did not exist."<sup>14</sup> The issue was rather one of discerning the true nature of the Word and the quality of the Father-Son relationship. There are several ways to answer this important challenge.

One traditional way of demonstrating the deity of Christ is to point out texts in which Jesus is called "God" (*theos*). There are only five or six clear cases of this usage in the entire New Testament, however, and all occur in the later strata (John 1:1; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20?).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in the Hebrew Bible, the title of "God" could be applied to angels and even to humans like Moses and the Davidic king (Exod. 4:16; 7:1; Pss. 45:6; 82:1, 6). We must look for a better way to approach the problem.

### Jesus as Yahweh/Lord

A more promising way of demonstrating the true deity of Christ is to follow the lead of texts in which Jesus is identified as the Lord God of the

Hebrew Bible—with or without the use of titles like "Lord" and "God." Unlike the references to Jesus as "God," these texts occur in all strata of the New Testament. Even the very earliest of Paul's letters contains this prayer:

Now may our God and Father and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord [Jesus] make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, . . . And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (1 Thess. 3:11-13)

Note three things in this passage. First, prayer is directed to Christ as well as to God the Father.<sup>16</sup> As Basil was later to point out, Christ and the Spirit are not just intermediaries in our devotion to God. They are also the objects of our devotion alongside God the Father.<sup>17</sup>

Second, Christ is explicitly described in terms reserved for Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible. In verse 12, the words, "may the Lord make you increase . . .," apply the functions and attributes used to describe Yahweh in the Psalms to the "Lord Jesus" (cf. Pss. 71:21; 115:14). And, in verse 13, the phrase, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints [or, holy ones]," identifies Jesus with the Lord whose coming was anticipated by Hebrew Bible and Second Temple writers (Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Zech. 14:5; 1 Enoch 1:9 [quoted in Jude 14-15]; Martyrdom of Isaiah 4:14). According to Paul, the lordship of Christ was known already to the Hebrew prophets.

These are only two examples of a wider phenomenon. The New Testament contains more than a hundred texts that identify Jesus as Yahweh/Lord in this way (Appendix 1). These references are spread evenly over the various books of the New Testament.<sup>18</sup> The Letters of Paul and the Book of Acts describe the risen Christ as Yahweh/Lord; the Gospels focus on the earthly, "historical" Jesus as Yahweh/Lord; John and the Book of Hebrews even describe the pre-existent Son as Yahweh/Lord. The identification extends to all segments of the time-line; it is not restricted to the risen, ascended Christ. But the main point here is the equality with the God of the Hebrew Bible indicated by the use of Yahwistic texts and attributes.

Given the conclusion that "Lord" in 1 Thessalonians 3:11 means Yahweh/Lord, the third thing to note is the clear distribution of divine titles: "God" for the Father and "Lord" for Jesus. That Paul was accustomed to pray with the Thessalonians in this way and to describe Christ in these same Yahwistic terms when he was with them in person is indicated by the fact that he makes no attempt to defend his usage here. Therefore, we are dealing with the earliest practice of the church for which we have direct evidence.<sup>19</sup> In this earliest practice, then, Christ was addressed in the same

terms as Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible and on the same level as God the Father in the New Testament. As Leon Morris concluded in his commentary on 1 Thessalonians: "The deity of Christ was held from a very early date. It is not to be regarded as the culmination of a process of slow growth and reflection."<sup>20</sup>

Paul not only affirmed the deity, or "yahwehness," of Jesus; he affirmed the co-deity of Father and Son and formalized it with the titles of "God" and "Lord." This appropriation or distribution of divine names is uniform throughout the New Testament. Wherever the titles, "God" and "Lord" are applied to the first two members of the Trinity, the first is reserved for the Father and the second is assigned to the Son—never the other way around.<sup>21</sup> This usage was faithfully preserved in the Nicene Creed: "We believe in one *God*, the Father almighty . . . and in one *Lord* Jesus Christ . . . ." In fact, as Athanasius explained in his work on the decree of the Council of Nicea (*De decretis*), if the original meaning of the titles had been understood and agreed upon by all parties concerned, there would have been no need to introduce other terminology.

### Jesus as Son of God

Another way of demonstrating the true deity of Christ is to look at the relation between Father and Son in the New Testament. The title "son of God" *by itself* was not indicative of deity as the Church Fathers readily acknowledged. It was used in the Hebrew Bible to describe the Davidic king, the nation of Israel, and the holy angels, all of whom were clearly differentiated from the Deity. But the title is used in the New Testament to portray a degree of intimacy with God the Father that takes us quite beyond these standard types. As "Son," Jesus is more dear to God than Moses, David, and all the prophets of Israel (Mark 12:1-6, 35-37; Rom. 1:3-4; Heb. 1:1-2; 3:1-6)—even superior to the angels (Heb. 1:4-12).

The strongest of all statements of Jesus' divine sonship, in my view, is found in the *aqedah*, or "binding," motif in the New Testament. The Hebrew type of *aqedah* was Abraham's willingness to make the greatest sacrifice of his life.<sup>22</sup> No sooner had God given a child to Abraham than he tested him saying:

"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains [traditionally identified with Mount Zion<sup>23</sup>] that I shall show you" (Gen. 22:2).

Abraham obeyed—journeying to Moriah, binding his son and placing him on the firewood with his own hands (Gen. 22:9).

In later tradition the *aqedah* was remembered as a type of the Jewish martyrs and of the parents who stood by helplessly while their children were mangled and disfigured at the command of tyrants like Antiochus Epiphanes. The best known example is that of the brave Jewish woman who encouraged each of her seven sons to be faithful to God and accept death in the hope of being received into the company of the patriarchs and eventually being raised from the dead. The story is told in 2 Maccabees 7 and 4 Maccabees 8-18, where parallels are frequently drawn to Abraham's "binding" of Isaac (4 Macc. 13:12; 16:20; 18:11).

The feelings of the mother and her heroic struggle are brought out in full in the *Midrash Rabbah* on the Book of Lamentations. When Antiochus gave the order to kill the seventh and last son (said to have been only two and a half years old), the mother nearly broke down. She threw herself on top of her son, smothered him with hugs and kisses, and then dismissed him to his death with these words:

"My son, go to the patriarch Abraham and tell him . . . .  
'Do not preen yourself saying, I built an altar and offered up my son, Isaac. Behold, our mother built seven altars and offered up seven sons in one day! Yours was only a test, but mine was in earnest.'"<sup>24</sup>

Antiochus gave the order and his men killed the child while his mother was still holding him in her arms.

The cruelty involved in the execution (cf. p. 11) of young children can be described in fairly objective terms, but the deeper emotional anguish can best be expressed from the viewpoint of the parents. Like the patriarch Abraham, this Jewish mother delivered over the fruit of her body—everything she lived for, her very own future—in the persons of her children.

Amazingly, the New Testament uses the same language and makes the same claim about God as a Father. God has delivered over *his* only Son to suffer and die alongside the martyred children of Israel.<sup>25</sup> Paul uses the exact words of the Septuagint to say that God, like Abraham, "*did not withhold his own Son*, but gave him up for all of us" (Rom. 8:32; cf. Gen. 22:12, 16).<sup>26</sup> Likewise, John states that "God so loved the world that he gave *his only Son*, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16; cf. Gen. 22:2, 12, 16).<sup>27</sup>

The synoptic Gospels place the *aqedah* motif at two pivotal points in the narrative: at Jesus' baptism (the beginning of his public ministry) and again at the transfiguration (where the way to the cross comes into full view; Mark 8:31; 9:9, 31). In both cases, the words of the Father are heard saying, "You are [or, 'This is'] *my Son, the Beloved*" (Mark 1:11; 9:8)—the mirror image of God's words to Abraham, "*Take your son, your beloved*" (Gen. 22:2, Septuagint).<sup>28</sup> Against the background of Genesis 22 and the

tradition of the Jewish martyrs, the words of Jesus' heavenly Father are the words of a parent binding an only child and delivering it to the hands of its executioners.<sup>29</sup>

The baptism and transfiguration of Jesus point forward to the cross. There the response to the Father's words that we expect from Jesus is: "You are my Father; I will do your bidding," or words to that effect.<sup>30</sup> We have no indication of such a response to the Father in the baptismal scene or the transfiguration. It may be implied. But later, on the night when he was betrayed, we do hear the words:

"Abba, Father . . . not what I want, but what you want."  
(Mark 14:36)

"No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.  
Father, glorify your name." (John 12:27-28)

These words of Jesus correspond to the words of Isaac to Abraham in Genesis 22, as amplified in Jewish tradition.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the unique form "Abba" is the same as the address used by Isaac to his father in the Aramaic Targums of Genesis 22:7.<sup>32</sup>

Contemporary New Testament scholars, like Edward Schillebeeckx, have warned us against reading trinitarian dogma directly out of Jesus' use of "Abba."<sup>33</sup> Schillebeeckx is right as far as the mere use of the term, "Abba," is concerned. But when placed in the framework of the *aqedah* motif, the Nicene teaching of an organic union between God and Christ is seen to be implied by the use of the term. God is to Christ what Abraham was to Isaac. Conversely, Jesus was to God the Father, what Isaac was to Abraham, a son in whom all his love and life—his very future—were invested.

So, when the Nicene Creed states that Christ is "of one substance with the Father" (*homoousios to patri*), it is saying no more than what is taught in the New Testament—even in its earliest strata—and no more than what is summarized in the common root confession, "We believe in one *Lord*, Jesus Christ, the only *Son of God* . . ." In spite of the obvious differences between parent-child relations on the divine and human levels, Jesus Christ is just as truly begotten from the substance of God as Isaac was from the substance of Abraham or the seven children of Maccabean times were from the body of their mother. As Athanasius stated:

. . . the Son of God is so called according to the sense in which Isaac was the son of Abraham, for what is naturally [*phusei*] from any one . . . that in the nature of things is a son, and that is what the name [son] implies.  
(*De decretis* 10)<sup>34</sup>

So there is an immeasurable difference between saying that Christ is the first and greatest of all God's creatures, or a word just uttered at the



foundation of creation, as Arius claimed, and saying that he is God's only true Son.

Athanasius illustrated the difference by using the analogy of an architect or builder. A builder has a very different relationship to his son than to a house or ship that he has made. Both son and ship are "from" the builder, but one is by the organic generation of an image; the other is by working with external materials.<sup>35</sup> It would be very painful for the builder to have to turn over something he had made to his enemies and to see it destroyed before his very eyes. But he would far rather do that with any or all of his creations than with his own child. It was only because the Arians did not understand—or were unwilling to acknowledge—the deeper meaning of the New Testament phrase, "Son of God," that the Nicene Fathers had to introduce the Greek term *homoousios*, previously used by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, into their creed.<sup>36</sup>

Jesus Christ is of the very substance and life of God. When we hear him, we hear God. When we serve him, we serve God. When we are united to him—or filled with his Spirit—we are united to God. Anything that can be said of the character of God can be said of Christ, and anything that can be said of the character of Christ can be said of God—subject only to the qualifications that one is Father and the other is Son and that one became flesh while the other did not. Even the fact that one became incarnate whereas the other did not does not place them in different categories for, as we have argued, the lordship of the Father is contingent on the lordship of the Son (1 Cor. 15:24-28), and the vindication of God, like Abraham's, rests on the binding and resurrection of the Son in whom his life is completely invested (Rom. 4:13-25). According to John, Jesus looked forward to the cross and resurrection as the glorification of the Father's name as much as his own (John 12:28; 13:31-32; 17:1, 4).

The latter point may help us to resolve some of our difficulties with the ancient idea of the "monarchy" (*monarchia*) of the Father. The Son is from the Father and receives all that he has from the Father—not the Father from the Son (texts from John).<sup>37</sup> But it was not just a part or an aspect of the divine life that was invested in the Son; it was *everything*:

"All that the Father has is mine." (John 16:15)

"All mine are yours, and yours are mine, . . ." (John 17:10)

For in him [Christ] all the fullness [*pan to plēroma*] of God was pleased to dwell, . . . (Col. 1:19)

For in him the whole fullness [*pan to plēroma*] of deity dwells bodily, . . . (Col. 2:9)

Jesus has no existence other than as the Son of God. But God also has no existence except as the God and Father of Jesus (John 20:17; Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3). If the Son had been allowed to waste away in corruption, the deity of the Father would have been called into

question just as surely as the life of Abraham and the future promised to him would have been lost had Isaac not been redeemed. The deity and lordship of the Father are thus contingent on the resurrection and enthronement of the Son just as much as the deity and lordship of the Son are derived from the Father. The Son is in-and-from the Father in such a way that the life and the future of the Father are invested in the Son. There is complete reciprocity between the two in this respect (John 10:38; 14:10, 11, 20; 17:1, 21).<sup>38</sup> As Gregory the Theologian said, the monarchy of the Father is not limited to a single person.<sup>39</sup> It is shared by Father and Son.

So the patristic doctrine about Christ is well-founded in the teachings of the New Testament. Both uphold the unity of the Godhead as well as the distinctness and equality of Father and Son.

### The Status of the Spirit

We need not go through all the ways in which the patristic teachings of the deity and personality of the Spirit are founded on Scripture. The main points to consider are the fundamental parity between Christ and the Spirit, and the issue of the procession of the Spirit.<sup>40</sup>

#### 1. The Parity of Christ and the Spirit

Like Christ, the Spirit is "sent" by God (Gal. 4:4, 6) and, like Christ, comes to us "from heaven" (1 Pet. 1:12; cf. John 6:32, 33, *passim*) or from "on high" (Luke 24:49; cf. Eph. 4:8-10). The expressions "sent," "from heaven," and "from on high" all come from the Second Temple theme of God sending divine Wisdom to people (Wis. 9:10, 17). The New Testament writers thus understood the person and mission of the Spirit in terms of God's Wisdom and in direct parallel to the person and mission of Christ. Paul evidently even referred to the Spirit as "Lord" in the sense of the Yahweh/Lord of the Hebrew Bible (2 Cor. 3:16-18).<sup>41</sup> Since the identification with Wisdom and Yahweh/Lord implied a second divine person in the case of the Son, it implied for the church a third divine person in the case of the Spirit. But, whereas Christ was said to be "begotten" by God (1 John 5:18; Heb. 1:5), the Spirit was said to "proceed from the Father" (John 15:26).

The parity of the Son and the Spirit is maintained in other ways in the New Testament. As a result of being from God, the Spirit knows and is known by God, just as the Son knows and is known by God (Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; cf. Matt. 11:27; John 10:15). The Spirit is "another *paraklētōs*" like the Son (John 14:16; cf. 1 John 2:1). The Spirit "intercedes for the saints" as the Son does (Rom. 8:27, 34). The Spirit is life-giving (*zoopoion*) as the risen Christ is (2 Cor. 3:6; cf. 1 Cor. 15:45). Again the model is that of divine Wisdom as understood in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism (Prov. 8:35; Sir. 4:12).

Apparently the New Testament writers accepted the risen Christ and the outpoured Spirit as realities in their experience of the triune God. It did not occur to them to ask how these things could be so: how Christ could have a "father," but no mother; how the Spirit could be equal to the Son without being a second "son" and brother. Such questions could only arise when people began to theologize in the abstract as the Tropici and Pneumatomachi would do in the fourth century.

## 2. The Procession of the Spirit

On this difficult issue only a few points can be firmly established from Scripture. The Spirit is given to the church from the risen Christ as well as from God the Father.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Christ was anointed, empowered for mission, and raised from the dead by the Spirit as well as by the Father.<sup>43</sup> If the Spirit had not been fully invested in the Son to begin with, the risen Christ would not have been in a position to grant us this divine gift (John 1:32-33; 3:34-35; Acts 2:33).

All of these are referred to as external, or "economic," *operations*. The internal *relations* among the three divine persons are more difficult to discern and have yet to be defined by the church in a fully ecumenical council. Although we must not speculate in the manner of some Western scholastics, we must give some account of the relation between the internal being of God and the divine operations in history.

A foundation for this was laid in our discussion of the status of the Son. We said that Christ is from God—not the other way around. But, in view of the cross, God is none other than the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now we can also say that the Spirit is from God alone—not from any second source. But, in view of the resurrection, the Spirit is none other than the "Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom. 8:11).

If Jesus was declared to be "Son of God," according to the Spirit, then the Spirit is "the Spirit of the Son" as much as the Spirit of the God whose Son he is (Rom. 1:4; Gal. 4:6; cf. Matt. 10:20). If God is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," then the Spirit of God is the "Spirit of Jesus Christ" in more than just name (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19). The Spirit is thus defined in relation to the Son just as the Son is defined in relation to the Father (and vice versa). And, although the New Testament speaks in view of the resurrection, it does not define the Spirit only in relation to the risen Christ. Peter spoke of the "Spirit of Christ" being at work already in the Hebrew prophets (1 Pet. 1:11)!

So there is an organic relationship between Christ and the Spirit. Athanasius even spoke of the Son and the Spirit coinhering within each other just like the Father and the Son.<sup>44</sup> But intimate as the relation of the Son and the Spirit is, it does not circumvent the *primary* relation of

both to God the Father. The Spirit proceeds from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:26). Or, as Athanasius put it, the Spirit is "from the Father in the Son" and, being in the Son, is "through him in God."<sup>45</sup> It would be inappropriate to press for a more detailed mapping of these relationships.<sup>46</sup>

### New Testament Awareness of the Implications

The New Testament writers did not speculate about the relations of the divine persons. They did, however, show that they were aware of the paradoxical character of their teachings about the three.

We have already noted the appropriation of the divine titles, "God" and "Lord," alongside those of "Father" and "Son." This usage is exact and uniform throughout the New Testament. It is best accounted for on the supposition that the apostles wanted to affirm the deity (or "yahwehness") of both the Father and the Son while maintaining their distinctness. In other words, the apostles were aware of the fact that their confession of Jesus as Lord raised problems for their monotheistic faith.

According to the *shema' yisrael*, which Jesus and his disciples, being pious Jews, recited twice daily: "The Lord our God is *one Lord*. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:4, NRSV footnote). If Jesus was "Lord," as the apostles claimed, did this command require allegiance to the Lord Jesus or to God the Father? The apostles' Jewish audiences must have asked them this question every time they heard the gospel preached. What was their answer?

yet for us there is *one God*, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, *and one Lord*, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Cor. 8:6)

Oneness was deliberately affirmed alongside the distinctness of persons. In order to account for this daring paradox, we must suppose that the apostles were aware of it but felt compelled to believe and to confess it as the truth about God. Hence, they were quite aware of the implications of their teachings about the deity and sonship of Christ.

When needed, the same oneness was also extended to include the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but *the same Spirit*;  
and there are varieties of services, but *the same Lord*;  
and there are varieties of activities, but it is *the same God*  
who activates all of them in everyone. (1 Cor. 12:4-6)

And, in the Letter to the Ephesians, it is written:

There is one body and *one Spirit* . . .  
*one Lord*, one faith, one baptism,  
*one God* and Father of all, who is above all  
and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:4-6)

Here oneness was affirmed alongside the distinctness of all three persons without apology or explanation. The monotheistic *shema*' was upheld, and the radically new revelation of the divine being was communicated at the same time. So the New Testament writers would have understood Athanasius perfectly when he said that the Son's oneness was an image of the Father's oneness<sup>47</sup> and that the Spirit was the unique image of the Son in the same way.<sup>48</sup>

In summary, not only do the teachings of the New Testament provide an adequate basis for the patristic doctrine of the Trinity, but they exhibit an awareness of the problems of articulation that later gave rise to the patristic teachings and the official statements of the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople.

## II. What Are the Implications of the Doctrine for God, Creation, and Humanity?

So far, we have concentrated on the question of *whether* the patristic doctrine of the Trinity is based on Scripture. As explained earlier, if we are not only to believe but to live in accordance with the doctrine, we must also ask *how* the two are related. We need to know how the doctrine gives us a deeper understanding of God, creation, humanity, the offices of Christ, and the mission of the church—some of which might otherwise seem disjointed and unrelated to Christian life.

The Trinity is not a topic of doctrine that can be taught and then passed over as one moves on to other topics. As Hilary said, it is a "most serious and difficult science in which the *whole* faith is taught."<sup>49</sup> It is the framework for *all* of Christian faith and life. Unlike the first question we treated, then, this one can not even be summarized here.

I am reminded of the wonderful story about Alain of Lille (Alanus ab Insulis), the twelfth-century scholastic, also known as the *doctor universalis*. Alain studied assiduously and mastered all the arts as well as the discipline of theology. One day he announced that he would give a public lecture in which he would expound the entire doctrine of the Trinity. He prepared carefully.

The day before the lecture, Alain took a walk along a riverbank, and there he saw a little girl playing in the sand. The child had found a small snail shell, had dug a trench in the sand and was busy transferring water

from the river to the trench with the shell. Alain stopped and asked what she was doing. With the self-confidence of a child, she answered that she was using the shell to transfer all the water in the river into the trench she had made. Being a good teacher, Alain naturally tried to explain to the child that this was impossible. Then it dawned on him that, in lecturing on the meaning of the Trinity, he was trying to do something equally presumptuous.

The next day, at the appointed time, a large audience gathered to hear Alain speak. He stood up and said, "Let it suffice that you have seen Alanus." Then he left the auditorium without another word and went to Citeaux, where he was given charge of the monastery's sheep.<sup>50</sup>

I shall not be quite as brief as Alain of Lille was. But I shall limit myself to two areas that are related to the themes treated above. First, there is the *lordship* of God and its implications for our view of creation—the dynamic character of God and the responsiveness of creation. Second, there is the *fatherhood* of God and its implications for our view of humanity—the relational character of God and the social nature of humanity.

### The Trinity and Creation

When the Word came in human form to those whom he had created, enlightened, and formed into a people, "his own people did not accept him" (John 1:3-4, 10-11). As often as not, the lordship of Jesus was rejected by humans. In contrast, it was never rejected, or even resisted, by the natural elements. The seas were calmed, loaves and fish multiplied, water turned into wine, leprous flesh cleansed, and lifeless bodies restored to life—all in response to the simplest words of Jesus:<sup>51</sup>

"Be made clean!"

"Peace! Be still!"

"Little girl, get up!"

"Young man, I say to you, rise!"

"Lazarus, come out!"

These words were addressed not to living, free-willed beings, but to inanimate, insensible matter. The words came suddenly and without warning, but there is every indication that matter was always ready to respond. Even if the cosmos seems inert and indifferent to us, there is no indication of hesitance or even inertia in the presence of its Lord.

The centurion who appealed to Jesus on behalf of his servant understood the underlying principle. As he said to Jesus:

". . . only speak the word, and my servant will be healed.

For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under

me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." (Matt. 8:8-9)

In just the same way, the elements of nature are subject to Christ's word. They stand in readiness for instructions as much now as they did at the moment of their creation:

... when he [God] gave to the wind its weight, and apportioned out the waters by measure; when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt. (Job 28:25-26)

In the biblical worldview, the elements are always ready to praise God as well as to obey him:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! . . . Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed. Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command! (Ps. 148:1, 5-8)

The natural world is ready and responsive. It is open to God's presence, even if it sometimes resists human occupation and development.

If the biblical image of nature is one of openness, what is the corresponding image of God?

God gave to the wind its weight . . .  
God made a decree for the wind . . .  
God commanded and they were created.  
God established them for ever and ever . . .  
God fixed their bounds . . .

Images like these pervade the Hebrew Bible. They derive from the ancient idea of the council of God, in which issues were discussed, matters investigated, and decisions rendered (e.g., Ps. 82:1-7).<sup>52</sup> The nature and laws of all creatures were defined in the beginning in the divine council.

In other words, the readiness of nature to *respond* is the mirror image of the readiness of God to *speak*. If God were *mute*, nature would be *inert*. If God were essentially *dumb* or *wordless*—if, even though he may have spoken in the beginning, he had now lapsed back into a natural state of *silence*—then nature would be essentially *deaf*. Though it may have been moved once, in the beginning, it has now lapsed back into a natural state of *inertia*.

So the biblical view of the world of creation as always responsive to God presupposes a corresponding view of God as an intrinsically social,

conversational being, not a silent, isolated monad. From all eternity God has had with him his consubstantial Word and Spirit.<sup>53</sup> It is of his innermost essence to be living and speaking, even when outwardly he appears to be silent and inactive.<sup>54</sup> God is open to establishing and renewing relationships with his creatures because he is open to relationships in his own inner being.

Even though there are times when the natural world appears to be unresponsive—when God appears to us to be silent and distant—the story of nature is not without a script. The members of creation are in constant motion in accordance with the laws and ends with which God imbued them in the beginning. As Jesus ben Sirach put it:

God arranged the works in an eternal order, and their dominion for all generations. . . . They do not crowd one another, and they will never disobey God's word. (Sir. 16:27-28)

The dynamism of all creatures is a reflection of the divine life itself. They are energetic and yet orderly at the same time. Their harmony with each other is based on their obedience to God's word.<sup>55</sup> They are not autonomous or indifferent to God's lordship. At any moment, God's voice may be heard again. And, when it is heard, the elements are ready to respond for that is their character. In the meantime, they function in accordance with the orders they have from God. It is of the nature of creatures to respond just as surely as it is of the nature of the triune God to speak.

The doctrine of the Trinity shows us how deeply dynamic God is and, hence, how deeply responsive the natural elements are. If the implications of the doctrine for our view of creation were upheld, we should be able to avoid some of the problems Western theology has had in trying to hold together the lawfulness of nature and the active presence of God in her midst.

### **The Trinity and Humanity**

More than anything else, the Fathers stressed the fact that God is not an isolated monad. God is a communion of persons in perfect unity and harmony.

The Hebrew Bible also described Yahweh in relational, rather than metaphysical, terms. In the context of salvation history, he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But, even in the transcendent realm, God was described in relational terms—in relation to the angels (Gen. 1:16; 3:22; Ps. 82:1-7), or to Wisdom (Prov. 7; Sir. 24), or to "one like a human being" (Dan. 7).



From the Hebrew Bible alone, none of these associates of God could be understood to be anything other than creatures (as they are in the case of angels): God would not be known to have any eternal companions. For the most part, the Hebrew Bible gives us no definitive understanding of the inner being of God. On this basis alone, Advaita Vedanta and Process Theology could be right in saying that in his (or its) primordial nature, God is entirely without attributes and is completely ineffable. It was only with respect to the world—particularly humans—that God entered into relationships and took on positive attributes.

In fact, we do not have to go as far afield as Vedanta or Process Theology to see how distant a nameless, attributeless God would be. Rabbinic Judaism removed much of the ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible from its theology—partly in order to differentiate itself from the competing Christian theology. For instance, the widely-used synagogue hymn, *Adon Olam* ("Lord of the World"), addresses God as follows:

Lord of the world—he reigned alone  
While yet the universe was naught,  
When by his will all things were wrought,  
Then first his sovereign Name was known.

And, when the all shall cease to be,  
In dread lone splendour he shall reign.  
He was, he is, he shall remain  
In glorious eternity.

For he is one, no second shares  
his nature or his loneliness.<sup>56</sup>

The last two lines are clearly directed against Christian trinitarianism. The poem was written in eleventh-century Spain.

The rabbinic Jewish view of God stresses God's awesome transcendence. Ultimately this view makes the dynamic, relational aspect of God depend on the continued existence and faithfulness of Israel (cf. Ps. 22:3).<sup>57</sup>

The patristic view of God, on the other hand, is that, even if there were no human voices, even if there were no creatures at all, God would still be fully personal and perfect in attributes—including *personal* attributes. For God would have with him his Word and Spirit as companions in living community, full of love and joy. Origen was one of the first theologians to see this clearly, and Athanasius preserved his classic statement for us:

It is not right, nor is it safe for us, in our weakness, to rob God (as if we could) of his only-begotten Word, who ever dwells with him, who is his Wisdom, in whom he rejoiced [Prov. 8:30]. For, if we do this, we shall think of God as not always rejoicing.<sup>58</sup>

The ultimate truth about God—and, therefore, the ultimate truth about human existence as well—is life and joy, not isolation or silence. This is the key not only to our properly understanding and praising God, but also to our properly understanding and governing ourselves as human beings and as the church of Christ.

We were created in the image of God, not to live by, or even for ourselves, but to live with and for each other—in openness to each other's needs. Therefore, Jesus prayed that we might "all be one"—not one in undifferentiated uniformity, but one as the Father and Son are one—each living in the other, each glorifying the other, each working with the other, each knowing the other, each loving the other, each rejoicing in the other.<sup>59</sup>

If we can demonstrate this teaching in our lives—in our homes and in our vocations—as well as in our faith and worship, then "the world will know" that God is love, that Jesus is his beloved Son, and that the Spirit is God's love poured out on us. The truth of the trinitarian life will be evident to all even without our having to establish the scriptural support for our trinitarian doctrine.

## APPENDIX 1

### Texts that Identify Jesus as Yahweh/Lord of the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Second Temple Judaism

The occurrence of the title, "Lord" (Greek *kurios*), is neither necessary nor sufficient (by itself) to establish the Yahwehness of Jesus. The title of "Lord" (*adonai, kurios*) by itself could merely indicate a human being or angel, e.g.:

a prophet: 1 Kgs. 18:7;

an earthly king: Ps. 110:1; Isa. 26:13; Lam. 4:20 LXX; Pss. Solomon 17:36; 18:7; 1QIsa 1:24-25; 46:10; 51:5;

a polite form of address to any respected human: Gen. 32:18; 33:8, 14, 15; 43:20; Acts 16:30;

an angel: Dan. 10:16-17; T. Levi 5:5; 4 Ezra 4:3, 5, 22, 38, 41; Rev. 7:14.

Here we list New Testament texts in which the use of the Hebrew Bible descriptions makes it clear that Jesus is identified as Yahweh. To account for the exact wording of the NT texts, reference must frequently be made to the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek Bible widely used in the early church.

A. The Risen, Ascended, and Returning Christ (texts in roughly chronological order):

1 Thess.	3:12	Ps. 71:21; 115:14; Jer. 30:19
	3:13*	Zech. 14:5 <sup>y</sup> ; cf. Deut. 33:2;
		Ps. 68:17; 1 Enoch 1:9; Mart. Isa. 4:14
	4:6*	Sir. 5:3
	4:16	Ps. 47:5
2 Thess.	1:6-8*	Isa. 66.15-16
	1:9*	Isa. 2:10, 19, 21
	2:8*	Job 4:9a; 15:30 NIV
	3:3	Ps. 145:13, Isa. 49:7
1 Cor.	1:30-31 (?)	Jer. 9:24
	2:16	Isa. 40:13; cf. Rom. 11:34
	8:4-6 <sup>k</sup> ( <i>eis kurios</i> )	Deut. 6:4; cf. Isa. 26:13-14; 1 Cor 8:4; Rom.
	10:8-9	
	9:1	Isa. 6:1, 8 <sup>60</sup>
	10:9	Exod. 17:2-7
	10:21*	Mal. 1:7, 12 <sup>y</sup>
	10:22*	Deut. 32:21 <sup>y</sup>
	12:3 <sup>k</sup>	Lev. 24:15-16
2 Cor.	3:15-16*(?); cf. 4:5 <sup>k</sup>	Exod. 34:33-34
	3:18 <sup>k</sup> (?)	Exod. 33:18-23; 34:29
	10:17-18	Jer. 9:24
Rom.	10:8-9 <sup>k</sup>	Deut. 6:4-7; 30:14; Isa. 26:13-14
	10:9-13 <sup>k</sup>	Joel 2:32; cf. Acts 10:36
	10:12 <sup>k</sup> ( <i>kurios panton</i> )	Ps. 97:5; Wis. 8:3; 13:9; T. Joseph
		1:5; T. Mos. 4:2
	14:11; cf. 6-9	Isa. 45:23
Phil.	2:9-11* <sup>k</sup>	Isa. 45:23
Eph.	2:17*	Isa. 57:19
	4:5	Deut. 6:4
	4:8 <sup>c</sup>	Ps. 68:18 LXX
2 Tim.	2:19a	Num. 16:5
	2:19b	Num. 16:26; Isa. 52:11
	2:22	Joel 2:32; Deut. 6:5-6; cf. Rom. 10:8-13
	3:11*; 4:18	Ps. 34:19
	4:14*	2 Sam. 3:39; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12
Acts	1:24	Ps. 65:4; Prov. 24:12 LXX
	2:16-40; <sup>k</sup> 4:12; 8:12,	Joel 2:32; cf. Rom. 10:9-13
	35; 9:27-29; 22:16	
	10:36 <sup>k</sup> ( <i>panton kurios</i> )	cf. Rom. 10:12 above
	11:20-21 <sup>k</sup>	Exod. 34:33-34; cf. 2 Cor. 3:15-16

- 18:9-10 (*me phobou. . .* Gen. 26:24; Isa. 41:10; 43:1-2,  
*ego eimi meta sou*) 5; Jer. 1:8; 42:11<sup>61</sup>
- James 2:1 (*kurios tēs doxes*) 1 Enoch 22:14; 25:3; *passim*  
 2:7 Isa. 52:5; cf. Deut. 28:10, *passim*  
 5:7, 8 T. Judah 22:2  
 5:11\*(?) Exod. 34:6; *passim*
- 1 Peter 2:3\* Ps. 34:8  
 3:14-15<sup>k</sup> Isa. 8:12-13; Deut. 6:5-6
- Jude 14-15\*; cf. 4, 17, 1 Enoch 1:9  
 21, 25
- Rev. 1:14 Dan. 7:9  
 1:15 Ezek. 43:2  
 1:17-18\*; 2:8\*;  
 22:13\* Isa. 41:4; 44:6-8; 48:12-13; cf. Rev. 1:8  
 2:23\* Jer. 11:20; 17:10; Ps. 7:9; cf. Rom. 8:27  
 3:14; 19:11 Jer. 42:5; 3 Macc. 2:11  
 17:14\*; 19:16\* Deut. 10:17-18; 2 Macc. 13:4; 3 Macc. 5:35; 1  
 Enoch 9:4; cf. 1 Tim. 6:15  
 22:12\* Isa. 40:10; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; cf. Rom. 2:6
- John 6:27, 34, 52 Exod. 16:15; Pss. 78:24-25; 105:40; cf. John 6:31  
 20:28<sup>k</sup> Ps. 35:23; cf. Rev. 4:11

## B. The Earthly, "Historical" Jesus:

- 1 Cor. 2:8 (*kurios tēs doxes*) 1 Enoch 22:14; 25:3; *passim*
- Mark 1:2 Mal. 3:1<sup>y</sup>  
 1:3 Isa. 40:3; 1QS 8:12-14  
 2:7, 10 Pss. 65:2-3; 103:3; Isa. 43:25; Jer. 31:34  
 3:13-14 Num. 1-4<sup>y</sup>; Ps. 65:4  
 4:37-39 Pss. 65:5-7; 89:8-10; 106:9; 107:23-29; Jonah  
 1:5-6  
 5:22-23, 36 Ps. 107:17-19; Isa. 41:10; *passim*  
 6:35 Ps. 107:4-6  
 6:42 Ps. 107:9  
 6:48-49 Job 9:8, 11 LXX; Ps. 77:19; Isa. 41:3<sup>62</sup>  
 6:49-51 Ps. 107:23-29  
 6:50 (*egō eimi*) Isa. 43:10; 51:12, 15; t. Baba Batra 73a  
 6:50 (*mē phobeisthe*) Isa. 43:1-2, 5
- Q: Matt. 8:8 = Luke 7:7 Ps. 107:20  
 Matt. 11:10 = Luke 7:27 (?) Mal. 3:1<sup>y</sup>  
 Matt. 23:37b = Luke 13:34b Deut. 32:11<sup>y</sup>; Pss. 36:7; 91:4; Isa. 31:5;  
 Esdr. 1:30
- Matt. 8:25; 14:30 (*kurie soson*) Pss. 12:1; 18:3-5; 69:1-2;  
 118:25; Isa. 43:3 LXX<sup>63</sup>

	15:25 ( <i>kurie boethei</i> )	Pss. 94:18; 109:26
	18:20	Exod. 20:24b; cf. m. Abot 3:2, 6; Mek. R. Ishmael, Bahodesh 11 (trans. Lauterbach, 2:287)
	23:34	Jub. 1:12; cf. Luke 11:49
	23:37b	2 Chron. 36:15-16; Jer. 25:4; 2 Apoc. Bar. 41:4
	27:45-54	Zech. 14:4-9; cf. Joel 2:31
Luke	1:17	Mal. 3:1 <sup>y</sup>
	1:76*	Isa. 40:3
John	1:14	Num. 12:8
	4:26 ( <i>egō eimi ho lalōn</i> )	Isa. 52:6
	6:16-21 (independent of Mark 4:37-39; cf. 6:21 with Ps. 107:30)	Ps. 107:23-30
	6:20	see Mark 6:50 under B
	6:34	Exod. 16:15
	8:24, 28-29; 13:19	Exod. 3:14; 6:7; 10:2; Isa. 43:10
	18:4-6, 8	ibid.; cf. Clement of Alexandria, <i>Strom.</i> 1.23.154.2; Eusebius, <i>Prep. Evangelii</i> IX.27 <sup>64</sup>

### C. The Pre-existent Son:

Mark	3:13; 5:22-23	see above under B
Matt.	23:37b = Luke 13:34b	(Q)
Heb.	1:6	Deut. 32:43 <sup>y</sup> LXX
	1:10-12	Ps. 102:25-27(?) <sup>65</sup>
Rev.	1:17-18; 2:8; 22:13	see above under A
John	1:14 ( <i>eskēnosen en hēmin</i> )	Ps. 78:60
	8:58-59	Exod. 3:14; Deut. 13:1-5
	12:41*; cf. 17:5	Isa. 6:1-2

At least twelve books of the Hebrew Bible were mined for texts referring to Yahweh. The Hebrew books most often cited with reference to the yahwehness of Jesus are Isaiah (cited 30 times); Psalms (25 times); Deuteronomy (9 times, 4 of which are from the *shema*); Exodus (8); and Joel (7 times, all from Joel 2:32).

The listing shows that all major strata of the New Testament explicitly identify Jesus as Yahweh/Lord. The only books of the New Testament that apparently do not are Galatians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 2 Peter, and 1-3 John. References to Jesus as God occur, however, in Titus, 2 Peter, and 1 John (all late first-century).

Key to sigla: A New Testament text that is underlined is found in bold type in the United Bible Societies (UBS) edition. This

indicates that the New Testament text is a direct quote from a LXX passage describing Yahweh.

A New Testament text that has an asterisk is one for which Hebrew Bible parallels are cited in the footnotes of the UBS edition. This indicates that there is, in the judgment of the editors, a close relationship in wording between the New Testament reference to Jesus and the Hebrew Bible reference to Yahweh even though it is not a direct quotation.

A New Testament text that has a superscript *k* following it is one that contains, or is closely associated with, the confession of Jesus as Lord (*kurios*).

A New Testament text that has a (?) after it is one which may refer to God the Father or the Spirit, rather than to Jesus.

A Hebrew Bible text that has a (?) after it is one which may have been understood by the New Testament writer to refer to the Messiah or an angel rather than the Lord God.

A Hebrew Bible text that has a superscript *y* following it is one in which Greek translations like the LXX had the tetragram YHWH (in Hebrew or Aramaic), or the Greek equivalent IAO, instead of the Greek *kurios*.<sup>66</sup>

LXX designates the Septuagint, the widely used Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This paper was originally prepared for the Orthodox-Reformed Theological Dialogue held in Minsk, 2-6 October 1990.
- <sup>2</sup> One of the most thorough treatments is that of Arthur Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1962).
- <sup>3</sup> Tertullian, *Adv. Praxean* 23; cf. Athanasius, *De Sent. Dionysii* 26.
- <sup>4</sup> Hilary, *De Trinitate* II.8; IV.14; V.17.

- 5 Nestorians later combined Adoptionist views with the notion of the eternal pre-existence of the Word at the expense of the unity of the person of Jesus.
- 6 Cf. Job 28:23, 28; Wis. 8:4; 9:9; Bar. 3:32-4:4. Even if the stress in Matthew is on the unique filial relation, as Vincent Taylor and W. D. Davies argue, the comparison with divine Wisdom is assumed: Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice* (London: Macmillan, 1948), 37; Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1955), 156-8; cf. Wainwright, Trinity, 139-41 (on Matt. 11:28-30); James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 221-23; Robinson, "Jesus as Sophos and Sophia," in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Wilken (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 9-10; Ivan Havener, *Q: The Sayings of Jesus* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical/Michael Glazier, 1979), 80-81.

Ben Witherington argues that Matt. 11:27 may go back to Jesus himself; *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 224-28, 274-75. Witherington also regards two other Q sayings—Matt. 8:20b and 12:42—as identifying Jesus with God's Wisdom (cf. Sir. 24:6-22; 1 Enoch 42:2 on the homelessness of Wisdom) and treats Matt. 11:19b, which clearly does equate Jesus with Wisdom (cf. 11:2-4), as the original wording of Q (*Christology*, 51-53).

Ivan Havener and Patrick Hartin argue that Jesus is portrayed in Q only as an agent or envoy of God's Wisdom: Havener, Q, 81-82; Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 122, 126-34. This may be true for other texts like Luke 11:49, but the absence of phrases like "Wisdom cries out" or "Thus says the Lord" in the texts cited here is striking. Consider the fact that in relation to the prophetic Spirit Jesus is clearly portrayed as an agent in Q (Matt. 3:11 = Luke 3:16; Matt. 12:28 = Luke 11:20) and yet Jesus is never said to have identified himself with the Spirit as he did with Wisdom. In fact Jesus and the Spirit are clearly differentiated in Matt. 12:32 = Luke 12:10 in a way that Jesus and Wisdom never are even in Luke 11:49. Thus a deeper unity of the divine (Wisdom) and human natures is required than the model of Wisdom's agent or envoy allows.

- 7 Cf. Deut. 32:11; Pss. 36:7; 91:4; Isa. 31:5; 2 Esdras 1:30. In Matt. 23:38-39a = Luke 13:35ab, Jesus speaks as the departing *shekinah* of God; cf. the utterance of the *shekinah* in Pesiqta de Rab Kahana: "I shall go and return to my place till they acknowledge their guilt" (quoted in Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3d ed. [Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1990], 102); cf. 3 (Hebrew) Enoch 48C:1 (*Old Testament*

*Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [2 vols., Garden City: Doubleday, 1983-85], 1:311). Matt. 23:39b = Luke 13:35c is ambiguous: "the one who comes in the name of the Lord" may be the exalted Christ (at the second advent), or it may be his prophet, in which case Jesus would be the "Lord" of Ps. 118:26; cf. Mark 13:6 and par.; M. Eugene Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 225-7, 244.

- 8 Rom. 10:6-7 (cf. Deut. 30:12, referring to Torah); 1 Cor. 1:23-24; 8:6 (cf. Ps. 104:24; Wis. 9:1-2); 10:4 (cf. Wis. 10:17-11:4); 2 Cor. 3:17 (cf. Wis. 1:6-7; 9:17-18); Gal. 4:4 (cf. Wis. 9:10, 17). See Davies, Paul, 150-55; Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 114-31; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985), 240-60.
- 9 Rom. 10:4-13; 2 Cor. 3:12-18; Phil. 3:3-11. In Second Temple Judaism, the Wisdom of God was thought to have assumed the form of the Mosaic Torah: Sir. 24:3-12, 23; Bar. 3:36-4:1; 1 Enoch 42:2. Davies, Paul, 155, 172. As E. P. Sanders has shown, allegiance to Jesus superceded observance of the Law already in Jesus' own ministry, so that Paul was consistent with Jesus on this score: *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 206-7, 210, 255, 282-3.
- 10 E.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 151, 158, 194-5, 248-9.
- 11 For tactical reasons, Athanasius was forced to restrict the naming and enthroning to the human flesh of the Word; *Orat. con. Arianos* 1.38, 41, 59; passim.
- 12 Hence the role of Jesus as the Word in creation (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2-3, 10-12).
- 13 *Tanhuma ki tese* 11; quoted by Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 37.
- 14 Cf. Arius et al. to Bishop Alexander, *apud* Athanasius, *De synodis* 16.
- 15 Rom. 9:5 might be viewed as an early reference to Jesus as "God," but the concluding phrase is probably a doxology to God the Father rather than in apposition to Christ; cf. Rom. 1:25. For a thorough analysis of all these "God" texts, see Raymond E. Brown, *Jesus, God and Man* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier Macmillan, 1967), 1-38.
- 16 Elsewhere prayer is directed to the risen Christ in Acts 7:59; 9:14; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-14; 1 Cor. 1:2; 16:22; Eph. 5:19; Rev. 22:20.



- <sup>17</sup> Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 1.3. For earlier examples of this usage in prayer, see Mart. Polycarp 14.2; Origen, *De oratione* 33.1.
- <sup>18</sup> The only books that do not include such identifications are Galatians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 2 Peter, and 1-3 John. Except for Galatians and Philemon, these are all among the later texts—ones in which Jesus is identified as "God" (Tit. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20). If, among the others, Galatians is matched with Romans, Colossians with Ephesians, and 1 Timothy with 2 Timothy, it becomes apparent how consistently the deity or yahwehness of Jesus is affirmed in the New Testament.
- <sup>19</sup> In the category of indirect evidence, we have the eucharistic formulas, "Maranatha" ("Our Lord, come!") and "The Lord comes!", which undoubtedly go back to the Aramaic speaking church of Jerusalem (1 Cor. 11:26; 16:22; Rev. 22:20; Didache 10:6). Jesus himself pointed to the coming of the Yahweh (Mark 12:9), so the transference of this expectation from Yahweh to Jesus must have been conscious and deliberate; cf. James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 142.
- <sup>20</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 111.
- <sup>21</sup> When the Father is referred to as "Lord," Jesus is called either "Son" or "Christ"; e.g., Matt. 11:25-27 (Q); Mark 12:6-11; Acts 4:24-26 (quoting Psalm 2).
- <sup>22</sup> In later Jewish haggadah, the focus was placed on Isaac and his willingness to be immolated. A few scholars insist that the Hebrew term *aqedah* be restricted to this haggadic usage. So P. R. Davies and B. D. Chilton use phrases like "haggadic Aqedah" and "rabbinic Aqedah" to specify this preference ("The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 [Oct. 1978], 514-46, esp. 529, 533). Even if there were two distinct developments of the *aqedah*—one Jewish and one Christian—both were rooted in Second Temple Jewish interpretations of Genesis 22. Cf. Alan F. Segal, "He who did not spare his own son . . .": Jesus, Paul, and the Akedah," in *From Jesus to Paul*, ed. Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd (Waterloo ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1984), 173, 183-4.
- <sup>23</sup> Mount Moriah is the location of Solomon's temple in 2 Chron. 3:1; cf. Jubilees 18:13.
- <sup>24</sup> Lamentations Rabbah 50, translated in *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon (10 vols., London: Socino Press, 1939), 7:133. This

passage was drawn to my attention by Aharon Agus, who for some reason gives the reference as Lam. Rab. 53 (*The Binding of Isaac and Messiah* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988], 17-19).

- <sup>25</sup> Luke preserves a tradition in which Jesus expected to die at the hands of Herod. Some of the Pharisees actually warned him against going to Jerusalem. In this context, Jesus announced that "the third day I finish my course" (Luke 13:31-33). The "third day" here refers to the cross, not to the resurrection! It probably comes from the idea that the *aqedah* occurred on the third day of Abraham and Isaac's journey to Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22:4; cf. Gen. Rab. 56:1). Cf. Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 109-13; Robert J. Daly, "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (Jan. 1977), 71.

The Pharisees would have understood the reference. One of their models of "zeal for God" (1 Macc. 2:24-27, 50, 54; cf. Acts 22:3) was Phinehas, remembered as being so "jealous for his God" that he risked his life and "made atonement for the people of Israel" (Num. 25:13). Cf. Martin Hengel, *The Atonement* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 64.

- <sup>26</sup> The Greek of Rom. 8:32 has *tou idiou huiou ouk epheisato*. Compare the Septuagint translation of God's words to Abraham in Gen. 22:12 and 16, *ouk epheiso tou huiou sou*.

The words "gave him up for us all" (*huper hemon paredoken autou*) come from the LXX of Isa. 53:6 (*paredoken auton hamartias hemon*). But the idea of "delivering up" is also found in the words of Abraham to Isaac in *aqedah* texts like Pseudo-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities* 32:2 (*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, 2:345; Latin, *in manus te trado*; cf. the Vulgate of Mark 14:42, *tradetur in manus*). Significantly, Isaac's response in this context (*Bib. Ant.* 32:3), like that of Jesus to God in John 12:27, is that he had been born for the purpose of being offered as a sacrifice (Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961], 199-200).

For evidence that the *aqedah* motif was known (in its pre-haggadic sense) in New Testament times and was related to Isaiah 53, see Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 197-204, 215, 219, 220n.; Daly, "Soteriological Significance," 54-63, 75; Hengel, *The Atonement*, 60-63; Segal, "He who did not spare his own son," 173-7. Daly rates Rom. 8:32 as a "certain reference to the Aqedah in the New Testament"; "Soteriological Significance," 66-67.

- <sup>27</sup> In Jewish tradition, Abraham suppressed his love for his son in order that God's love might be expressed towards his people (Genesis Rabbah

56:10, translated in *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. Freedman and Simon, 1:500). The blessing of God's people of course meant a blessing also for the gentiles (cf. Gen. 22:18). Daly rates John 3:16 as a "probable reference to the Aqedah in the New Testament" ("Soteriological Significance," 68).

<sup>28</sup> The Greek of Mark 1:11; 9:8 has the words *ho huios mou ho agapetos*. Compare the Septuagint of Gen. 22:2, *ton huion sou ton agapeton*. The words are repeated in Gen. 22:12 and 16 in the genitive form, and its recurrence in the baptismal/transfigurational revelation is unmistakable. Daly rates the connection to the *aqedah* motif as "probable" and "almost surely" ("Soteriological Significance," 68).

The additional phrase, "with you I am well pleased," is remarkably similar to the Aramaic Targum version of the description God's servant/messiah in Isaiah 41:8-9; 43:10 (Bruce D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible* [Wilmington DE: Michael Glazier, 1984], 129-30). Both may their roots in the pre-Christian tradition that Abraham was "more pleased with [Isaac] than everything" (Jubilees 17:16; *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, 2:90; cf. William Richard Stegner, *Narrative Theology in Early Jewish Christianity* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989], 19-20).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Testament of Levi 18:6 (*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 1:795), which compares God's words to the new priest-king with those of Abraham to Isaac. In spite of its striking parallels to the synoptic accounts of the baptism of Jesus, this passage is now widely believed not to be a Christian interpolation. Cf. J. Edwin Wood, "Isaac Typology in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 14 (1968), 584-7.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the words of the Messiah in Ps. 89:26, "You are my Father [*Abba*' in the Aramaic Targum; cf. the Hebrew of Sir. 51:10]...", which form the antiphon to God's words in Ps. 2:7, "You are my son...." The reciprocity reflects the form of the dynastic promise to David: "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me" (2 Sam. 7:14).

<sup>31</sup> E.g., Pseudo-Philo, *Bib. Ant.* 32:3.

<sup>32</sup> For a convenient English translation of the relevant passages in Targums Onkelos, Psuedo-Jonathan (Jerusalem 1), and Jerusalem 2, see J. W. Etheridge, trans., *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel of the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum* (2 vols., London, 1862), 1:78, 225, 227. Cf. Joseph A. Grassi, "Abba, Father (Mark 14:36): Another Approach," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50 (Sept. 1982), 449-58; James Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 39 (April 1988), 37, 39.

- <sup>33</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (London: Collins, 1979), 260.
- <sup>34</sup> *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 4:156b. Cf. *Ep. ad Serapionem* I.16; II.6; IV.6. The analogy to the Abraham-Isaac relationship included awareness of the *aqedah* motif; Athanasius, *Ep. Fest.* VI.8; idem, *Orat. con. Arianos* IV.24; cf. Barnabas 7:3; Melito of Sardis, fragments 9-12 (*Ante Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 8:759b); idem, *Paschal Homily* 59, 69 (Campbell Bonner, ed., *The Homily on the Passion by Melito*, Studies and Documents 12 [ed. Kirsopp and Silva Lake, London: Christophers, 1940], 127, 133, 175, 176); Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereses* IV.v.4; x.1; Tertullian, *Adv. Iudaeos* 10.6, 13.20-22; idem, *Adv. Marcionem* III.xviii.2; Origen, *Hom. in Gen.* VIII.8. For references to the original language editions and further citations through the twelfth century, see Isabel Speyart Van Woerden, "The Iconography of the Sacrifice of Abraham," *Vigiliae Christianiae* 15 (1961), 252-3.
- <sup>35</sup> *De decretis* 13, 29; *Ep. ad Serapionem* II.6.
- <sup>36</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* II.16-17; Origen, Fragment on Hebrews 24.359 (Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God* [London: Hutchinson, 1972], 55; idem. *apud* Pamphilus, *Apol. pro Origine* (trans. Rufinus, *Patrologia Graeca*, 17:581); cf. Irenaeus, *Demonstratio* 47. Awareness of the use of the term *homoousios* in Clement, and probably also Irenaeus, makes Richard Hanson's arguments against Origen's use of the term less compelling; cf. Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), ch. 4.
- <sup>37</sup> John 1:14; 3:34; 5:19, 26, 36; 7:16; 10:18; 14:24; 17:3-5, 11-12, 22, 24; 1 John 5:18.
- <sup>38</sup> Hilary described the mutual *perichoresis* beautifully in *De Trinitate* III.1.
- <sup>39</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* XXIX.2.
- <sup>40</sup> Athanasius, *Ep. ad Serapionem* I.31.
- <sup>41</sup> N. T. Wright, "Reflected Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18," in *The Glory of Christ*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 144-47, shows that a reference to the Holy Spirit, rather than to Christ, as Lord in this text is more consistent with the overall context.
- <sup>42</sup> Luke 24:49; John 4:14; 15:26; 16:7; 20:21-22; Acts 2:33; Rev. 22:1. Athanasius, *Orat. con. Arianos* I.v.16, and Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto* I.119, 120, refer to the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, not to the eternal generation, when they speak of a "double procession" of the Spirit.

- <sup>43</sup> Mark 1:10-12; Luke 4:14-16, 18; John 1:32-33; 6:27; Acts 10:38; Rom. 1:4; 8:11; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:18-20. Other texts refer Jesus' prophesying, healing and exorcising to the power of the Spirit.
- <sup>44</sup> Athanasius, *Ep. ad Serapionem* I.21; III.3.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ep. ad Serapionem* I.33 ad fin.; III.5; Basil, *De Spir. Sanct.* 45. Athanasius used the phrase, "from the Father through the Son" only in respect to the giving of the Spirit: *Ep. ad Serapionem* III.2; IV.6.
- <sup>46</sup> So Gregory the Theologian, *Orat.* XXIX.8; XXXI.8.
- <sup>47</sup> Athanasius, *De decretis* 17; *Orat. con. Arianos* III.9; *Ep. ad Serapionem* I.16; IV.6.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ep. ad Serapionem* I.20, 24; III.3; IV.3.
- <sup>49</sup> Hilary, *De Trinitate* I.34.
- <sup>50</sup> Henry Osborn Taylor, *The Medieval Mind* (2 vols., London: Macmillan, 1911), 2:93.
- <sup>51</sup> Mark 1:41; 4:39; 5:41; Luke 7:14; John 11:43.
- <sup>52</sup> E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980).
- <sup>53</sup> Some of the Samosatenes and Arians accepted the idea that God had an inherent word (*logos endiathetos*) in order to avoid the charge that God was *alogos*, but this "word" was only an attribute, not an associate in God's life and work: Athanasius, *De decretis* 6; *De sent. Dionysii* 23, 25; *Or. con. Arianos* I.5; II.37; III.2; IV.15, 30.
- <sup>54</sup> Athanasius made this point against Marcellus: *Orat. con. Arianos* IV.11.
- <sup>55</sup> Athanasius gives a beautiful description of God's Word creating and upholding the harmony of creation in *Contra gentes* 42.
- <sup>56</sup> *Adon Olam*, lines 1-5; Joseph H. Herta, *Authorized Daily Prayer Book*, rev. ed. (New York: Bloch, 1948), 557. In all fairness, it should be noted that the poet went on to affirm the nearness and faithfulness of God. In fact, the tension between transcendence and immanence is what makes the hymn so moving.
- <sup>57</sup> E.g., *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana* 25:1; trans. Jacob Neusner (2 vols., Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 2:118. Following Franz Rosenzweig and earlier Kabbalistic systems like that of the Zohar, Pinchas Lapide gen-

eralizes God's dependence to include all of humanity; Lapidé and Moltmann, *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 32. The aim of Christian theology, however, is the inclusion of the Gentiles in receiving God's grace, not in upholding or contributing to God's being.

- <sup>58</sup> *De principiis*, frag. 34 (apud Athanasius, *De decretis* 27); G. W. Butterworth, *Origen, On First Principles* (London: SPCK, 1936), 315; cf. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, 4:168b.
- <sup>59</sup> John 5:17, 19-20; 10:15; 17:1, 5, 21-23; Wisd. 8:3; Prov. 8:30.
- <sup>60</sup> Kim, *Origin of Paul's Gospel*, 94.
- <sup>61</sup> C. B. Kaiser, *Doctrine of God* (Westchester IL: Good News/Crossway Books, 1982), 5.
- <sup>62</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 235-7.
- <sup>63</sup> Bornkamm et al., *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 265.
- <sup>64</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Garden City: Doubleday/Anchor, 1966), 818.
- <sup>65</sup> The LXX of Ps. 102:25-27 apparently transfers this phrase to the messianic king. Compare the comments of F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 21-23, with those of L. D. Hurst, "The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2," in *Glory of Christ*, ed. Hurst and Wright, 160-62.
- <sup>66</sup> George Howard, "The Tetragram and the New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977), 63-83; idem, "The Name of God in the New Testament," *Biblical Archeology Review* 4 (1978), 12-14, 56.

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