

THE JOHANNINE JESUS as BRIDGE and MODEL for the INCORPORATION of the BELIEVERS into the DIVINE TRINITY (I)

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Even if you do not believe Me, believe the works so that you may come to know and continue to know that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father.
(John 10:38)

The fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, has long intrigued both scholars and common readers because of how distinct it is from the so-called Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Its distinctiveness derives from a number of factors, the most obvious of which is its inventory of information.¹ The fact that the work was composed near the very end of the first century AD goes far in accounting for its distinctiveness. It seems that the three Synoptic Gospels had already fulfilled the need for works of their kind, works that attempted to portray the historical events of the life of Jesus in a framework that supported the particular evangelical motive for each Gospel. While there is much dispute among scholars concerning the motives of each Evangelist, some comments can be made about the Synoptic motives that may help to further illuminate the uniqueness of the fourth Gospel. While contested to some extent today, the motive of Matthew has long been held to be an appeal to Jewish sentiments—directly as a testimony to Jews or indirectly as an early church work for use in encountering Jews—to accept Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah and King of Israel. He is the King-Savior,² whom the Old Testament promised and the saints expected. Mark, on the other hand, appeals more pointedly to a Gentile world and attempts to show, despite Jesus' Jewish background, that He is the Savior of all the world. The Markan Jesus goes out of His way to conceal His intrinsic identity as the Son of God in service to His great mission to save humankind. He is the Slave-Savior, who in His divinity and yet without ostentation serves fallen human beings and continually attends to their greatest need, entry into the kingdom of God. Luke presents Jesus as the Man-Savior, paying careful attention to His human traits and showing that He brings God's salvation to human beings by meeting their

needs through His excellent humanity, which is on the highest moral plane because of His intrinsic divinity. The major emphasis of the Synoptics is on Jesus the man in the various roles that each synoptic Evangelist presents. Certainly His deity is not ignored in the Synoptics, but the major message is that Jesus is the right man for our salvation, as seen from the particular perspective of each Evangelist.

The Gospel of John, no doubt because of its later date of composition, is more reflective concerning who Jesus is and more attentive to His divine identity than the Synoptics. This is not to say that the Synoptics do not announce that Jesus is God. But their message is more concerned with the excellence of Jesus' humanity, and His divinity is expected to, and no doubt does, "dawn" upon their readers. The Gospel of John is much more forthright about the divinity of Jesus; indeed, the extended prologue makes it clear that God Himself is the subject of this Gospel and that historically God has become flesh in order to carry out His economy of salvation. Perhaps a more succinct characterization can be offered: In the Synoptics divinity is predicated to the human Jesus; in the Gospel of John humanity is predicated to the eternal God. Because of this, it can be said that the Synoptics argue from the standpoint of history to account for the divine identity of the Savior, while John argues from the standpoint of "theology" to account for the human history of the Savior. The exact "theology" that John presupposes is a hotly debated topic today and will form a major portion of the remainder of this essay, but in anticipation of my thesis below I would like to simply say here that this "theology" is according to the most radical sense of the term, that is, the relationship between God (*Theos*) and the Logos, between the Father and the Son. As such, the Gospel of John requires faith as its starting point. In this sense it is not evangelical at all, but it is nevertheless heraldic. Being mystical in its premises and requiring some faith from its readers, it can hardly be called historical in

the same sense that we could call the Synoptics historical. Rather, it begs for the acceptance of a declaration of who God is when He enters human history and employs narrative history to support its mystical premises.

But there is another characteristic that distinguishes John from the Synoptics. The Jesus of the fourth Gospel is more attentive to the future community of the church than He is in the Synoptics. Although the church is explicitly mentioned in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17, very little else is said about the future community of the believers in the Synoptics. The many references He makes to the believers as the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the heavens are as relevant to His present audience as they are to His future church. When mention concerning the community of the believers after His resurrection is made, it is usually within the context of the tribulations and persecutions that the believers will suffer at the end times. In the Gospel of John, however, the post-resurrection church is more strongly alluded to. For example, the long discourse in chapters fourteen through sixteen along with the Lord's final prayer in chapter seventeen anticipate the condition among the believers after His resurrection and provide an intimate and striking "blueprint" for the ongoing relationship between Christ and His believers after His physical presence terminates. Again, this point of distinction must certainly owe itself to the late composition of the work, when the church, now well established, looked back to the earthly life of its Savior to find guidance and pattern for its ongoing existence.

In this two-part essay which follows (the second part to appear in a subsequent issue) I hope to show that these two distinctives of the Gospel of John, Jesus as God the Savior and the post-resurrection church as His continuation, taken together, present a unique theological message concerning not just the Author of God's salvation but also the ultimate aims of it. Who the Johannine Jesus is reveals what His corporate continuation should be. As such, in the Gospel of John Jesus turns out to be the Progenitor of salvation, not merely a redemptive Substitute, as He is in the Synoptic Gospels, and the church, which in John issues from His death, resurrection, and ascension, turns out to be the corporate expansion of what He is individually, not merely His stranded representative on earth. In this first part of the essay I will focus on who the Johannine Jesus is, and this relates to His intrinsic existence as the expression and incorporation of the Father. In the second part of the essay I will examine the relationship between the Johannine Jesus and the Spirit, which the Gospel of John

details in a very fine and explicit way. In the Gospel of John the Spirit is promised as the hypostatic means for the believers in the post-resurrection church to be incorporated into the Johannine Jesus for His expression and for the expression of the Father. In the second part of the essay I will also present the many indications in the Gospel of John that point to this incorporation of the believers into the Triune God through grace.

Who the Johannine Jesus Is

The preamble to the Gospel of John (1:1-18) sets the tone for the entire Gospel and, upon careful examination, establishes the identity of who we are to understand Jesus to be. It begins elegantly and mysteriously with a declaration concerning the pre-existent Christ: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (vv. 1-2). He was with God and He was God. These two propositions characterize the identity of Jesus in the rest of the Gospel. The Jesus of John, besides being more than simply a man, is more profoundly God incarnated and living among human beings. Further and more importantly,

the Gospel of John, better than any other book of the New Testament, depicts the existential and operational relationships among the three of the Divine Trinity in the activities of the incarnated Son. Throughout the book there is an almost maddening interplay between the operations of the Son of God and

those of the Father and the Spirit. Some scholars have found this to be problematic and theologically messy, but perhaps the depiction is intended to have a complex texture. We are not observing the life of simply a man nor of God become a man in the simple sense of who God is; instead, we are seeing the Triune God in operation in the actions of the human life of the incarnated Son of God. This, I wish to assert, is the theological message of the Gospel of John.

It is a well-recognized principle of the life of the Trinity that in every action of the one the three operate. Except in its very first two verses, John does not much reach back into the immanent Trinity to comment on the interrelationships of the three in their self-existence, but throughout the Gospel there are numerous statements that describe the interrelationships in the economic Trinity for the accomplishment of the economy of God. In 1:3 the text turns markedly toward the activities of economic Trinity in creation, and the interplay of operations is implied: "All things came into being through Him [the Word of v. 1], and apart from Him not one thing came into

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being which has come into being.” Creation is said to have come into being through the Word, the Son, but no actual Agent of creation is mentioned. The Father as the Creator is implied here, and we understand that the Son is the active instrument through which the Father created. Hebrews confirms this in more explicit language: “[God of v. 1] has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the universe” (1:2). Later in the preamble of the Gospel of John, again the interplay of Trinitarian operations occurs:

But as many as received Him [the incarnated Word], to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality. (1:12-14)

The incarnated Son came into the world to make children of God of His believers. In point of fact, believing is not simple mental assent but the actual receiving of Christ into the believer (Col. 2:6; 1:27), yet such receiving is counted as the begetting of God (the Father). Further, human beings no different from us were able to see in the man Jesus the glory of the Son of God (Matt. 17:1-2, 5; Luke 9:32; 2 Pet. 1:16-18), yet this glory, while certainly “His,” was specifically the glory of One eternally and continuously sourced in the Father. It was not that at some point in time the Son was begotten by the Father, but the Son is eternally, that is, continuously begotten of Him,³ and this is the glory that is uniquely His and that He bears to humankind, both in the days of His flesh and now in His heavenly ministry.

In the final verse of the preamble there is quite nearly a “thesis statement” for the entire Gospel, by which we gain a helpful clue to the presentation of the Lord’s life in the ensuing narrative: “No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (1:18). A separatist view of the persons of the Trinity could easily overlook some very subtle complexities here. First, it is quite natural to understand that the Son, standing apart from the Father, simply represents or testifies of or speaks for (or functions in any number of other separate ways for) the Father, but the language describing the Son here is packed: He is “only begotten” and “in the bosom of the Father,” and as such He declares “Him.” Again, the reference to His being begotten of the Father points not to some past event but to His continuous ontological source in the Father. He exists in the continuous state of being begotten of the Father; and beyond that, as the One “who is in the bosom of the Father,” He remains in an intimate relationship of ongoing

and continuous fellowship with the Father. Thus, His declaration of the Father is anything but separate from Him; indeed, His declaration results from the state and activity of His ongoing existence in dependence on (not in independence from) the Father. Second, there seems to be a careful contrast being made here between seeing God and declaring the Father. Whether intentional or not, a crucial distinction is preserved. God is unseen, and according to the wording of the text here He is not ever said to be seen, even with the Son’s declaratory activity. The meaning of the Greek perfect tenses in this verse does not precisely correspond to that of the English perfect tenses that the English versions use to translate them. There is to be understood in the original language not some indefinite past events, as the English perfects here denote, but two abiding present states derived from implied past events, one hypothetical (“has seen”) and one actual (“has declared”). God remains eternally unseen, but by virtue of the existential activity of the Son (His *raison d’être*, so to speak) the Father is declared; that is, He is explained, led forth “narratively” (as the Greek verb denotes), in the life and living of Jesus the Son of God, a very apt description of the activity of the Word of God. The nuanced juxtaposition of the noun *God* with the noun *Father* preserves the mystery of an unseen immanent Triune God who makes Himself known in His economic aspect. We posit the qualities of His immanent existence, eternally one and yet eternally three, by the actions and operations of His economy. Without these activities, though He is immanently the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, to humankind He could just as well be indistinctly God; through the activities of the economy of God, chief of which is the Son’s declaration of the Father among humankind, we realize, we perceive, we encounter the reality that God is anything but internally indistinct, that He is mysteriously Father, Son, and Spirit. Verse 18 shows not only that the Son manifests God but more deeply that He manifests what kind of God He really is, the Triune God who exists unseen in His own eternal immanence and yet who can be, and is, declared through the marvelous activities of the Son with the Father and by the Spirit in their economic existence.

Incorporation Defined

The salient point in all this is that in the Gospel of John we do not see the Son alone, as we do more so in the Synoptics; rather, we see the Son as He is most intrinsically, as the incorporation of the Triune God among humankind. This point, established in the preamble, surfaces again and again in the Gospel and provides the unique quality of the Johannine Jesus. By the term *incorporation* I do not wish to refer to the mystery of the incarnation, although in itself the term may seem to suggest that. Rather, in using the term *incorporation*, I wish to refer to the mystery of mutual existence, mutual

indwelling, and mutual operation that exists in the Godhead.⁴ There does not seem to be a single term that describes this reality in God, but *incorporation* at least approaches the meaning if we allow ourselves to strip from it the radical nuance of a physical body and the common notions associated with the legal formation of business entities. Commonly the term refers to the union of one entity with another entity already in existence (see *American Heritage Dictionary*, under “incorporate”). Of course, in this common usage of the term there is sequentiality, which we cannot admit in our understanding of the Divine Trinity. Further, the common notion supposes a prior separation of entities, also something that an orthodox view of the Trinity cannot admit. But what is salvageable and what is germane to the reality we hope to express by the term is the recognition of the oneness of entities in existence while at the same time admitting the distinction between them. Like many terms used to express the realities in the Godhead (e.g., see the discussion on *begotten* above), *incorporation* serves merely as a token for an intricate discourse that more fully (though not completely) expresses the reality. By *incorporation* I mean to refer to the reality that exists in God by which the three of the Godhead and all three of the Godhead exist in relation to each other and act in relation to each other.

The more intricate discourse that the term *incorporation* stands as token for should include three notions that have long been accepted in the theology of the Trinity: coinherence, perichoresis, and the mutual operations of the three in every action of the one. The first two of these notions may seem to some to be synonymous, one derived from Latin theology and the other from Greek theology, but it is in point of fact that the two notions differ at their fundamental levels even if they can be crudely used to point to the same ideational reality. Coinherence (or circuminsession), most technically, refers to the mutual existence of the three of the Trinity, whereby any one of the three is said to exist because of the existence of the other two. For example, the affirmation of Alexander of Alexandria at Nicea in AD 325, that if there is no Son, then there can be no Father, illustrates the notion of coinherence. The Father exists as Father because there is a Son and a Spirit, the Son exists as Son because there is a Father and a Spirit, and the Spirit exists as Spirit because there is a Father and a Son. On the other hand, perichoresis (or circumincession), from the Greek theological tradition, refers less to existence and more to the mutual interpenetration and dynamic fellowship of life that exists among the three of the Trinity. The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father (14:10, 11), and

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this reality is expressed best by the term *perichoresis* (Greek for “mutual interpenetration”). On a more subtle level, this mutual interpenetration and fellowship is expressed in the fine use of the Greek prepositions that we sometimes find in the Gospel of John when the relationship between the Father and the Son is mentioned. For example, the Son (the Word) is said to be “with God [the Father]” (1:1), but the Greek preposition *pros* is more literally ‘toward’ and not simply ‘with,’ and in 1:18 the Son is said to be “in the bosom of the Father,” but the Greek preposition *eis* is more literally ‘into’ and not simply ‘in.’ These uses of the prepositions show not merely that one is in the other but that there is eternal “motion” toward each other, that is, that there is an eternal going-to in the Godhead which suggests the intimate fellowship among the three.⁵

The final theological notion that I would like to include in our token term *incorporation* is that of the mutual operations of the three in the action of any one. We have touched on this in the discussion of the preamble above, but here it may be helpful to look back at Augustine for a more thorough description of the notion. Commenting

on the manifestation of the Father’s voice as the Son stood in the baptismal waters and the Spirit hovered overhead in bodily form (Matt. 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-33), Augustine says,

Not that the voice could be produced without the activity

of the Son and Holy Spirit (the Triad works inseparably); but it was produced to manifest the person of the Father alone, just as the Three produced that human being of the virgin Mary and yet it is the person of the Son alone—the invisible Three producing what is the visible person of the Son alone. (110)

Contrary to the modern, popular view that the three of the Godhead are and act separably, Augustine affirms that in no way are they separate or act so. What seems to be the very best illustration in the Bible of an apparent separation of the three of the Trinity turns out to be, in Augustine’s view and, by adoption, of the historic Christian church, the very best illustration of the inseparable operations of the three in the actions of any one. Here each of the three has a very physical manifestation: The Son stands in the baptismal waters, the Spirit hovers overhead in the bodily form of a dove, and the Father utters His good pleasure for the Son audibly in a voice from heaven. It is striking that Augustine illustrates the mutual operation of the three in the activity of each one by this gospel episode. He is quite bold in his declaration

of the inseparable operations—“Not that the voice could be produced without the activity of the Son and Holy Spirit (the Triad works inseparably)”—but he is also quite firm in his affirmation that the operations of the three manifest each one *alone*. Hence, it was the *Father's* voice that was heard and not the Son's or the Spirit's, and it was the *Son* who was incarnated and not the Father or the Spirit, even if in each instance all three were inseparably operating so that each one could function distinctly. Unfortunately, this mysterious and beautiful principle concerning the Triune God is all but lost to the majority of Christians today. It is not that it should be understood thoroughly (it cannot be) but that it should be held firmly, and, sadly, it is not.

Much of what follows in this essay illustrates this third principle, but all three notions are seen in the one life of the Savior as seen in the Gospel of John. He was the incorporation—again, I am not referring to the incarnation—of the complete Triune God in His distinct activities on the earth, just as we can say that the Father is the incorporation of the complete Triune God in His distinct activities in the heavens and that the Spirit is the incorporation of the complete Triune God in His distinct activities in and among humankind. Indeed, the Triune God is an incorporation of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. In the Gospel of John this point is very finely demonstrated. The Jesus in the Gospel of John is distinctly the incarnation of the Son of God, but He is not incarnated separately from the Father and the Spirit, as is commonly understood by many Christians today. I wish to counter this notion strongly and call it what it is without blush—error which can lead (and has led) to heresy. What I wish to affirm in this two-part essay is that the Jesus in the Gospel of John is the incarnation of the Son of God as the incorporation of the entire Triune God, that He is the incarnate incorporation of the Triune God.

The Son's Incorporation of the Father

Since the Gospel narrates the life of the incarnate Son, it rightly emphasizes the relationship between the Son and the Father. Although there are a number of statements that describe the relationship between the Son and the Spirit and among the Son, the Father, and the Spirit, in the first part of this essay I will focus on those statements that relate particularly to the Son and the Father. In the second part of the essay (to follow in a subsequent issue of this journal) I will present those statements that detail the Spirit's relationship in this incorporation.

In order to present the many instances of this mystery of incorporation in the Gospel of John, I would like to now adopt more of a catalog-and-commentary format. In what follows I will present groups of verses arranged by similar theme, and following each group, I will provide some

comments which I hope will bring out the qualities of this incorporation. In each group I will arrange the verses thematically and not necessarily in the order in which they appear in the Gospel of John.

Incorporation in the Divine and Human Living

The first group I wish to present show, in a general way, the incorporation of the Son and the Father.

And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone. (8:29)

Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. (16:32)

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?...the Father who abides in Me.... (14:10)

Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. (14:11)

All that the Father has is Mine. (16:15)

These verse fragments show in the most general way that the Son was not on His own in His incarnation but that the Father was with Him at all times. Further, the Father was always with Him not simply because He had the Father's presence or because the Father from heaven always observed Him and approved His activities; rather, the Father was with the Son because of the perichoresis (circumincession) that the Father and the Son enjoy eternally: The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. Because of this, all that the Father has is at the same time the Son's. In this context the “all” here should refer to the divine “substance” of the Godhead, as implied in the theological notion of consubstantiality. Between them there is a mutual possession of the fullness of the Godhead, as Paul later declares: “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). The Son in His incarnation did not bear the Godhead separately from the Father; though distinctly the Son in incarnation, He bore all the fullness of the Godhead within Himself. Apart from Him there is no God, even if the Father and the Spirit are distinct from Him.

Incorporation in the Divine Life and in the Divine Love

Beyond these general texts, the Gospel of John presents a number of statements that detail various aspects of the incorporation of the Father in the Son. The first two groups of texts that we should examine relate to the very inner existence of God: to the divine life itself and the divine love, both of which exist among the Trinity and flow among the three eternally.

For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son to also have life in Himself. (5:26)

As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father. (6:57)

Even as You have given Him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. (17:2)

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wills. (5:21)

The divine life appears to be the most basic characteristic of the relationship among the three of the Godhead. While it is difficult to reach beyond the mainly historical and economical statements concerning the three of the Godhead that we find in the New Testament in order to understand the eternal conditions of the inner life of the Trinity, at least we have the terms *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* themselves at our disposal, and we should not ignore the full import of their meanings. What binds these three terms together is their membership in a semantic domain related to life. A life relationship binds a father and a son together, and breath (spirit) is reasonable evidence that something is alive, that something possesses life. The Father is the Father because there is a Son who exists and by that existence makes Him the Father. The like can be said of the Son in relation to the Father. However, this mutual interdependence of existence, this coinherence (circuminsession), is particularly defined by the mutual possession of the divine life among them. It differs from any other mutual interdependence of existence that obtains between the first and the second of the Godhead. For example, there is a Sender and a Sent One, but this mutual existence does not depend on the divine life per se; rather, it depends on an eternal sending action within the Godhead, which defines the first as the Sender and the second as the Sent One. Thus, the basic terms of the distinctions among the three of the Divine Trinity, as declared to us by the Son Himself (Matt. 28:19), are that there is a Father, a Son, and a Spirit, and these invite us, indeed compel us, to understand that the fundamental condition in the inner existence of the eternal Godhead is one of divine life.

The verses above detail the relationship between the Father and the Son relative to the divine life. The Father self-exists in life, and the Son self-exists in life; however, it is given to the Son by the Father that the Son self-exists in life. Thus, there is a distinction between the

Father and the Son with regard to the inner divine life. The Father, as always, is the source of the life within the Trinity; and though the Son fully possesses the divine life simultaneously with the Father, it is of the Father that He is able to do so. This is more explicitly stated in 6:57, where the Son declares that He lives because of the Father. By calling Him “the living Father” and by declaring that He lives because of the Father, the Son makes the distinction between Himself and the Father in the matter of the divine life even more pronounced than He does in 5:26. Further, in 17:2 the Son confesses to the Father that His own function to give the eternal life (cf. 10:10) derives from the Father and is under His authority. Here the text may suggest that the Son is separate from the Father in this activity and that at most He represents the Father in giving life to those chosen by the Father. But in 5:21 the action of giving life to the dead (and these may not necessarily be only those who are physically deceased but may also include those who are dead in spirit prior to regeneration; cf. Eph. 2:1, 5) is more clearly shown to be an action of incorporation. The Father gives life to the dead, and the Son likewise gives life to the dead. It is not that there are some who receive life from the Father and

some others who receive life from the Son independently of the Father’s operation; rather, it is that the Father and the Son operate in the one action of giving life to the dead.

The next group of texts refer to the love that exists among the three. Love has been tra-

ditionally viewed as a prime reality that defines the first as Father and the second as Son; that is, the Father is Father because there is a Son toward whom He directs His love, and the Son is Son because there is a Father who directs His love toward Him. Thus, at the core of the defining relationship of mutual interdependence of existence (circuminsession) between the Father and the Son is love, according to the traditional lines of theology, as argued by Augustine (*De Trinitate* VI:7, XV:29, 31; cf. VIII:14) and Aquinas (*Summa* I:27:3). While love cannot be doubted as a prime reality that distinguishes the hypostases of the Trinity, at the same time it cannot be easily held to be more fundamental to Their distinctions than the eternal divine life of the Trinity, because it is more fundamental to see in the terms *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* relations in life rather than relations in love. Nevertheless, the divine love among the three is a divine reality and forms another characteristic of the incorporation that the three exist in.

The Father loves the Son and has given all into His hand. (3:35)

The basic terms of the distinctions among the three of the Divine Trinity are that there is a Father, a Son, and a Spirit, and these invite us, indeed compel us, to understand that the fundamental condition in the inner existence of the eternal Godhead is one of divine life.

For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing. (5:20)

I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (15:10)

The first two of these verses are similar to each other in structure and are probably similar in force. The paratactic structure of each sentence here (i.e., clause-a + "and" + clause-b), so common in the Gospel of John, probably has more to it than simply the coordination of two unrelated propositions. I would suggest that there is a noticeable nuance of logical (though not temporal) consequence in the conjunction *and* that conjoins each clause in the two sentences. Thus, we can read,

The Father loves the Son and therefore has given all into His hand.

The Father loves the Son and therefore shows Him all things that He Himself is doing.

Both of these statements appear to relate to the economical actions of the Trinity, a matter we will delve into more fully below. Here, however, it is important to see that these economical actions result from the inner love that defines and distinguishes by coinherence (circuminsession) the three of the Godhead. Because the love that defines the Father is directed at the Son, the Father can and does give over to the Son all things for the Son's action (indicated by the phrase *His hand*). That deep internal love, which is not only between the Father and the Son, but more importantly, which makes one the Father and the other the Son, causes the actions of the Son upon all things to be in actuality the operation of the Father Himself. Further, at a more internal level, the actions of the Son depend on what He sees the Father doing, as He declares in 5:19: "The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that one does, these things the Son also does in like manner." This verse, coupled with the verse here in review (5:20, which immediately follows it), indicates that the Son's motivating seeing and His consequent doing are reflexes of the Father's loving. That deep internal love, which is not only between the Father and the Son, but more importantly, which makes one the Father and the other the Son, causes the Father to show the Son all things that He Himself is doing and thus to "trigger" the Son to act, and this action is in actuality the operation of the Father Himself. Hence, the incorporation which exists between the Father and the Son is a consequence of the love that defines and distinguishes the three of the Godhead.

The third verse above (15:10) has, I believe, a similar pregnant paratactic structure, but in this case the conjunction *and* carries the slightly different nuance of means:

I have kept My Father's commandments and thereby abide in His love.

This verse says much the same thing as the two previous ones we examined. Here, however, the Son's actions are characterized as keeping His Father's commandments. This should not be understood as behavior similar to that of proper Old Testament saints, who likewise kept God's commandments. Relative to the Son's activities, there is something deeper here, because the commandments are those of His Father, and the internal life and the internal love within the Godhead are implied. Thus, the commandments here should not be confused with the Mosaic precepts in the Old Testament; rather, they are the direct fellowship within the Godhead. This fellowship—the Father's directing the Son—as we have said, is a reflex of the love that exists between them and causes them to exist distinctly.

I have deliberately withheld one piece in the presentation above, and that is the relationship of the Spirit to the internal life and the internal love within the Godhead. In the second part of my essay, we will examine all the pertinent texts that involve the Spirit in the incorporation I am describing, but particular notice should be made here regarding the Spirit in relation to the life and the love within the Godhead. In their explorations of the divine love as that which defines and distinguishes the Father and the Son, Augustine and Aquinas went further to identify, in effect though not in term, the Holy Spirit as the hypostatic Love that exists between the Father and the Son. Their speculation is not without scriptural basis, because in 1 John we read that God is love (4:8, 16), and if He is love (and not merely loving), there must be an aspect to His existence that John could identify as love. This aspect must be hypostatic; that is, it must be able to be equated with God Himself and not merely with some attribute of God, for the text of 1 John does so. Further, if this aspect of God's existence, this love, is a prime reality that defines and distinguishes the Father and the Son, it must necessarily be distinct from the Father and the Son. These matters taken together strongly suggest that indeed it is by the Spirit that the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. Again, there are scriptural indications that love is to be identified with the Spirit, most notably in Paul's excellent phrase "the love of the Spirit" (Rom. 15:30), which we would not be abusing if we took it to be a so-called exegetical genitive and rephrased it as "the love which is the Spirit."

A long similar lines, I would like to suggest that the Spirit is to be identified with the internal divine life that defines and distinguishes the Father and the Son even more fundamentally than love. He is hypostatic Life. Again, if we admit that the Father is Father by virtue of the life that makes Him a father to a son and that the Son

is Son by virtue of the life that makes Him a son to a father, then there must be an aspect to God's existence that we could identify as life. Further, if this aspect of God's existence, this life, is a prime reality that defines and distinguishes the Father and the Son, it must necessarily be distinct from the Father and the Son. This strongly suggests that it is by the Spirit that the Father has the life to be a father and the Son has the life to be a son. Some scriptural support for this can be found in Paul's use of the phrase "the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2) and in several verses where the divine life is variously predicated to the Spirit (John 6:63; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:8).

Incorporation in the Divine Glory

The following group of verses is related to the preceding two groups on the life and the love within the Trinity in that this group also refers to an attribute of the Godhead that is held mutually and completely by the three, that is, the divine glory. As we saw with the divine life and the divine love, in the Gospel of John reference is made to the divine glory both as it is in the Godhead apart from creation and as it is in the historical actions of the incarnated Son of God.

And now, glorify Me along with Yourself, Father, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (17:5)

I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do. (17:4)

But when Jesus heard it, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, in order that the Son of God may be glorified through it. (11:4)

Then when he went out, Jesus said, Now has the Son of Man been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him. If God has been glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and He will glorify Him immediately. (13:31-32)

Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You. (17:1)

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified....Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice came out of heaven: I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. (12:23, 28)

In His prayer to the Father before His crucifixion, the Lord speaks of the eternal glory, which He had with the Father before the world was. There is some mystery here which we cannot penetrate, but it is safe to say, based on

the text of 17:5, that when He was on the earth, the Son was somehow without the glory that He had with the Father in eternity past. This glory, which He put off outwardly in incarnation for the economy of salvation, He now asks the Father to apply to Him again, in order to thereby glorify Him along with the Father. Paul alludes to this putting off of glory when he says that Christ "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men," and was "found in fashion as a man" (Phil. 2:7-8). We cannot construe this emptying—the so-called kenosis (from the Greek verb for *emptied* here)—as a putting off of His divinity in toto; otherwise, He would not have been God at all during His earthly life, and His death on the cross would have lost its redemptive efficacy. And although the exact terms of this emptying are controverted variously by Catholic and Protestant theology, they must be held to encompass (if not to amount to) the putting off of the divine glory. As He is about to die and resurrect for our redemption and justification, the Son asks the Father to glorify Him with that eternal glory once set aside, and in doing so, to glorify Himself along with the Son. In so saying, the Son enunciates a principle within the Trinity, that is, that the

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Son is glorified in the glorification of the Father and the Father is glorified in the glorification of the Son. A prime function of the Son's incarnation was to glorify the Father on earth, and the Son fulfilled this mission by finishing the work the Father had given Him to do (17:4). An example of this is His raising

Lazarus from the dead, calling the latter's illness a sickness "not unto death, but for the glory of God" (11:4). The Son's action of raising His friend Lazarus from the dead glorified the Father, who gives life to the dead, but the very same action also glorified the Son Himself, who likewise gives life to the dead (5:21) because the Father has given Him authority to do so (17:2). We see in this glorifying action a relational quality to glory, as we saw in the eternal life and the eternal love. There is one who glorifies and one who is glorified. The Son acted, and the Father was glorified; and as the Father was glorified, the Son was likewise glorified by the Father. In 13:31-32 the Lord speaks of this mutual glorification of the Son and the Father in fine detail. As Judas Iscariot left to do his treacherous deed, the Lord declared that the Son of Man, the incarnate Son of God, was now to be glorified through the events He was about to suffer and that in His being glorified the Father was to be glorified as well. Further, since the Father was being glorified in the Son's activities, the Father, by His own operation, would glorify the Son in Himself and would do so straightway. In 17:1, when He is just hours from His betrayal and death,

the Son prays to the Father that He would glorify the Son that the Son may glorify Him. In these passages the agencies of the Father and the Son are explicitly mentioned; each is said to act so as to glorify the other. This mutual glorification can hardly be viewed as two separate actions of the Father and the Son, but as one action in which the Father and the Son both act; however, the agency of each has a distinct object—the other—and the agency of each requires the operation of the other. So blended are the actions and operations of the Father and the Son in this mutual glorification that in one breath the Son can speak of Himself being glorified and in the next of the Father being glorified (12:23, 28). There is no separate glorification of the Son apart from the glorification of the Father and no separate glorification of the Father apart from the glorification of the Son; rather, each incorporates the operation of the other to glorify the other.

Incorporation in the Divine Fellowship

Among the three of the Godhead there is perpetual and perfect fellowship, and this fellowship is reflected in the actions of the Son. This next group of verses relate to the fellowship between the Son and the Father, which motivates the incorporating actions of the Son.

The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner. (5:19)

Not that anyone has seen the Father, except Him who is from God, He has seen the Father. (6:46)

Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I knew that You always hear Me. (11:41-42)

We have discussed 5:19 previously, but it is worthwhile here to emphasize that all the Son's activities on the earth were done as a reflection of the intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son. We certainly cannot fully understand what the Lord is referring to here, but between the Father and the Son there is a fellowship of operation in which the Father operates and the Son beholds, and as the Son beholds, He also operates. This mutual operation is manifested in the Son's actions on the earth. Thus, when He acts, it can be said that it is His action, but at the same time it must be said that He can do nothing from Himself, that His action is not separate from the Father but incorporates the operation of the Father and indeed has its source in the operation of the Father. The Son's declaration here is striking: He cannot do anything from Himself. We should understand this not as a matter of permission or authority but as an existential necessity, as a description of the relational existence between the Son and the Father which, by constraint of their very existence, cannot possibly be violated.

John 6:46 more narrowly focuses on the unique ability of the Son to see the Father. He alone beholds the Father, and He beholds Him continually. In 11:41 and 42 the Son refers to the Father's attention to Him, showing the other side of the intimate fellowship between the two. Here, where the English versions have a present perfect verb ("have heard"), the Greek has an aorist verb, which refers to a past action. The past action should probably be the Father's response to some prayer by the Lord prior to His speaking here. But the Lord continues to pray: "And I knew that You always hear Me" (v. 42). On its own, this statement could easily refer to the attention God pays to the pleas of a righteous saint (Prov. 15:29; James 5:16), but the relationship between Jesus and God is not merely between a righteous Old Testament saint and the God of Israel. Whereas this statement could be applied to any human being, when it is applied to Christ, it should be understood at a much deeper level to refer to the intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son. As a man, the Son prayed much to the Father, but this was not merely the prayer of a righteous man; rather, it was the physical and outward expression of the internal fellowship between the Father and the Son, which exists eternally.

Incorporation in the Divine Expression

Within the Godhead, the Son is the expression of the Father, and in His incarnation this functional relationship is maintained, as the next group of verses indicate.

What He [the Son] has seen and heard, of this He testifies. (3:32)

If I testify concerning Myself, My testimony is not true. (5:31)

The fellowship which we examined above is referred to here in 3:32 as that which "He has seen and heard." The Son is referring to His seeing and hearing the Father, which becomes the substance of what He testifies to the world around Him. He does not testify concerning Himself, for that would violate His intrinsic existence as the One who expresses the Father. The Lord is quite strong on this point: If He expresses Himself instead of the Father who sends Him, His testimony is not true, because intrinsically He is the testimony of the Father.

Incorporation in the Divine Will

Action of any sort, human or divine, is motivated by the will of the agent, and in the case of the incarnate Son the exercise of will is a particularly striking demonstration of the Son's incorporation of the Father.

For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. (6:38)

I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. (5:30)

Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work. (4:34)

And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up in the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes into Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day. (6:39-40)

The history of theology requires that we tread carefully here as we consider the matter of will in the person of Christ. There are two wills that need to be properly understood, the divine will and the human will. We should understand that among the Godhead there is only one divine will. This will is numerically one and thus at the same time the will of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Thus, it is not possible within the Godhead for the Son to have a will separate from that of the Father. On the other hand, every human being, almost by definition, has a human will. If we are to accept that Christ was truly a human being, we must confess that He possessed a genuine human will. It was crucial to our redemption that Christ was a genuine human being; otherwise, His redemptive sacrifice would have been ineffective, and God's salvation would have been void. Thus, a genuine human will in Christ is a matter of great importance. As God, He possessed the divine will, and as man, He possessed a genuine human will. We should not suppose, as the Monothelites in the seventh century did, that Christ, who was but one person, had but one will, some single divino-human will which was attendant to a supposed single divino-human nature, a *tertium quid* ("third thing") of Eutychianism. The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 declared that Christ was one person in two natures, the human and the divine, and the Council of Constantinople (the Sixth General Council) in AD 678 condemned the notion that in Christ there was only one will and affirmed the two wills in Christ, the human and the divine. These affirmations form the orthodox view concerning person, nature, and will in Christ: one person in two natures with two wills. We should hold these affirmations as truths of our faith, regardless of our predilections for or against the validity of the Councils.

With this understanding we can more easily see what the Lord is saying in the verses above. In the first two verses

He refers to "My own will" and "the will of Him who sent Me." This latter will is, without doubt, the single divine will. Since it is placed in contrast to *My own will*, and since He speaks of His will as His own, we must understand *My own will* as a reference to a will that is not the divine will but His genuine human will. We see here, therefore, that as a human being, Christ bent His will to conform to the divine will, making His human will subject to the divine will and indeed causing it to express the divine will. Though the faculties of will in Christ are two—the human and the divine—the will willed, that is, the decision that issues from the dual volitions in Christ, is but one. Hence, in the person of Christ, particularly as seen in His human actions, there is an echoing of the one will within the Godhead, even if it derives from the two actions of willing in Christ. In the Godhead there is one volition and thus one resultant decision; in the God-man there are two volitions but only one resultant decision, which, in fact, turns out to be the very same one decision in the Godhead. The effect of this is that Christ lived out the divine will by willing, in His humanity, to do so. He chose to do the will of the One who sent Him, whose will it was that He would so choose. It is important to note

Christ calls doing the will of the One who sent Him His food, and by this we should understand that in incorporating the divine will into His human will He was inwardly supplied and spiritually nourished in His humanity to live the life of a God-man on this earth.

that here we see Christ in His humanity incorporating the Godhead in His actions. It is not a matter of the Son of God yielding His will over to that of the Father—that is not possible, for there is but one will in God—but of the incarnate Son as a human being incorporating the one will of God into His human and

physical actions. It is indeed a beautiful picture of how Christ was in His human living, fully in harmony with, indeed fully expressive of, the divine will.

In addition, Christ calls doing the will of the One who sent Him His food (4:34), and by this we should understand that in incorporating the divine will into His human will He was inwardly supplied and spiritually nourished in His humanity to live the life of a God-man on this earth. We would not be far off in also saying that as His food, His incorporating the will of God into His human will was also a source of great enjoyment to Him. In this aspect of will, the Johannine Jesus serves as the perfect model for all the believers who are regenerated and indwelt by Him. As He was supplied to incorporate the divine will into His human will, and found great pleasure in doing so, so also we the believers have the ability to partake of this "food" and likewise incorporate in our living the divine will into our human will. Such an experience is no doubt characterized by the Lord's declaration in 6:57: "As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me."

As to its content and intent, the divine will which Christ incorporated into His human will reflects the eternal incorporation that exists within the Godhead. The Father wills that “everyone who beholds the Son and believes into Him should have eternal life” and that all those whom the Father has given to the Son would be kept eternally in the divine life (6:39-40). The divine will, here called “the will of My Father,” is that the believers would receive the eternal divine life and be held in this life eternally, yet it is the Son who acts to accomplish this will. He loses none and raises all who are given to Him by the Father. Again, in the Son’s action the operation of the Father is seen, and this incorporating action of the Son is said to be the will of the One who sent Him.

Incorporation in the Divine Actions

Will, of course, results in action, especially when it is the divine will incorporated into the human will of Christ. The next group of texts show the incorporation of the Father’s operation into the actions of the Son.

I came forth out from God and have come from Him; for I have not come of Myself, but He sent Me. (8:42)

I have come in the name of My Father. (5:43)

But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working. (5:17)

Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing. (5:19-20)

The works which I do in My Father’s name, these testify concerning Me. (10:25)

If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, even if you do not believe Me, believe the works so that you may come to know and continue to know that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father. (10:37-38)

Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe because of the works themselves. (14:11)

And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one. (10:28-30)

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life. (3:14-15)

The first of these verses is a general reference to the incarnation of the Son viewed as a single action. Here Christ speaks more from the vantage of His eternal deity than from that of His humanity. He is the One who came forth; that is, He is the agent of His coming in incarnation, but He did not come of Himself. By this we should understand a few things, based on what we have seen already. First, as we saw in the previous section, the Son’s coming was not an action motivated by His own will, as though He, as the divine Son, has a distinct will; rather, His coming was His action that accomplished the one divine will of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Further, His coming had its source in the Father. This is how we should understand the Greek preposition *ek*, which is translated “out from.” The notion here is not one of separation, as that would suggest tritheism. Instead, what we should see is that when He came, He was at all times going forth from the Father and had at all times His ontological source in the Father. Additionally, while it can be said that the Son was incarnated and was distinct from the Father in His actions on the earth, it cannot be said that He was at any time apart from, or separated from, the Father and alone. At all times the Father was with Him (8:16, 29; 16:32) because eternally He exists with the Father. Hence, at the same moment the incarnation is not simply the Son’s coming but also the Father’s sending; it is an activity that should be assigned to the Son distinctly, but at the same time we must understand that it is also an operation of the Father (and of the Spirit; cf. Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35).

This gives greater meaning to what may seem to be the casual statement made by the Lord in 5:43: “I have come in the name of My Father.” Some may commonly understand this to mean that the Son comes as the representative of the Father, but in light of the many passages we have seen thus far, coming in the name of the Father should have greater significance. In point of fact, when the Son came, the Father was with Him, and the Father was operating in all His activities; hence, when He came, He did so with the Father as His continual source, with the Father’s continual presence, and by the Father’s constant operation. This is far from mere representation. Rather, it is the Son’s full manifestation of the Father, an aspect of His eternal function as the Son of God. For Him to come in the Father’s name is for Him to come with, by, and, yes, as the Father. This is not to say that the distinction between the Son and the Father is lost, but the Father comes in the Son, and the Son comes manifesting Him. He who has seen the Son has seen the Father (14:9). When the Son comes in the name of the Father, the Father is in the fullest way present and operating in the Son’s actions.

The next two texts, 5:17 and 19-20, show the dual operation of the Son and the Father in the Son's works. At first glance, the Lord's word in 5:17 may seem to suggest that there are two actions going on here, but His later declaration, two verses later, makes it clear that when He acts, the Father is working and He also is working, that there is the operation of each in His action. We have previously noted that the Son's actions reflect the inner fellowship within the Godhead, as indicated by His seeing the Father's doings. Now we should add to this that when the Father operates, the Son joins in the operation as well. Thus, in all that the Son does, both the Father and the Son operate together in the one action.

The works which the Son does, He does in the Father's name (10:25). The characterization is not trivial, and again it should not be minimalized to refer to a representation of the Father or even a deputization by the Father. The Son acts in, with, by, and even as the Father, and His works testify to this. I have quoted 10:38 at the head of this essay because it shows that the Son's works are intended to help us recognize Him not as the lone incarnate Son but as the incarnate Son who incorporates the Father: "Believe the works so that you may come to know and continue to know that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father." The works make manifest that the Father is in Him and that He is in the Father, and this is what we should believe concerning Him. The text of 14:11 says much the same thing. If we see in the Gospel of John a lone Son, incarnated as a man and acting individually on the earth, we have missed the central message of the Gospel. The Son who came to be a man is the incorporation of the Father, and His works bear the clear character of the Father's operation. This incarnate Incorporation is the grand Protagonist of the Gospel of John.

In the Gospel of John the work that the Son does, though varied and extensive, is all ultimately for the purpose of giving eternal life to those whom the Father has given to Him. This one work is eternally effective because it is guarded by His hand and by His Father's hand. Here we see the dual operation of the Father and the Son in the Son's one action to enliven and safeguard the believers, that is, to make their salvation by life eternally secure. In this matter, which sums up the entire economy of the salvation of God, the Son declares that He and the Father are one. While He and the Father are certainly distinct and have their respective operations, they are one in action at all times. The Father does not operate in a manner that would have Him acting apart from the Son, nor does the

Son operate in a manner that would have Him acting apart from the Father. Rather, each one operates so as to incorporate the operation of the other for the performance of every action that is distinctly each one's.

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the crucifixion of Christ, which is described via allegory in 3:14. Historically, we would view the crucifixion of Christ as His laying down of His own life for the redemption of His believers (10:11, 15, 17). Although He could not physically crucify Himself, He had the power to resist His death (cf. 7:30; 8:20) but did not choose to do so. He died through the exercise of His own will, which He had conformed to the divine will of the Father (Matt. 26:39, 42, 44). We confess that it was the man Jesus who died on the cross (Rom. 8:34; 1 Thes. 4:14). Yet here in chapter three of the Gospel of John the death of Christ is likened to Moses' lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness for the salvation of Israel. The image serves to expose the hidden reality at the cross, that the Father was operating to lift up the Son of Man so that all who look on Him in belief may receive eternal life from the Father. At the risk of straying into caricature, we can probe the allegory a little more

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deeply and note that Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole (Num. 21:9). The reality of this is that the Father fashioned the Son of Man in a way to resemble fallen humankind (Rom. 8:3) without the actual "poisons" of the fallen human nature (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 John 3:5) and then set Him

on the cross to die because of our sins and for our salvation. From this perspective, the death of Christ looks to be primarily an operation of the Father. Taken together, both the open and the hidden details in the one act of Christ's sacrifice demonstrate how fully it was an act that incorporated the operations of the Father and the Son.

Incorporation in the Divine Speaking

Much of the work of the Son in His earthly ministry involves His speaking. Like the other Gospels, the Gospel of John is built around the sayings of Jesus, and His speaking in this Gospel is, by His own testimony, an action of incorporation with the Father.

I speak the things which I have seen with My Father.
(8:38)

For I have not spoken from Myself; but the Father who sent Me, He Himself has given Me commandment, what to say and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life. The things therefore that I

speak, even as the Father has said to Me, so I speak. (12:49-50)

As My Father has taught Me, I speak these things. (8:28)

Jesus therefore answered them and said, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. (7:16)

The word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. (14:24)

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe because of the works themselves. (14:10-11)

The Lord's speaking, like all His other actions, is not from Himself but manifests the inner fellowship He has with the Father. He beholds the Father inwardly and speaks forth what He has seen while with the Father. This declaration in 8:38 should govern all His statements concerning His speaking. Thus, His statements in 12:49-50, 8:28, and 7:16 should not be taken to refer to a general speaking on behalf of God, which, for example, the Old Testament prophets did. While Christ was very much like the Old Testament prophets in that He lived and spoke for God, we cannot put Him on the same level as them (cf. Matt. 17:4-5). As the Son of God, He participates in a unique relationship with the Father, and His speaking has a similar uniqueness to it. What He speaks and what He teaches are not simply words passed on from the Father, but the Father's operation within Him and hence the word of the Father Himself (14:24). In 14:10-11 the Lord speaks of His incorporation with the Father (circumincision) and offers as proof for it the words that He speaks. Here He testifies, as He did in 12:49, that He does not speak from Himself; rather, when He speaks, the Father, who abides in Him, works. Hence, the Son's speaking, which is distinctly His, does not occur solely through His operation but incorporates the operation of the Father (and the operation of the Spirit; cf. 6:63). As we saw in the discussion on 10:38 above, the works that the Son does, which here are more directly called the works that the Father does, should help us to believe that the Son incorporates the Father in all His actions and that the Father incorporates the Son in all His actions. Again, by His own admonition, this is what we should believe concerning the Son of God. How short many believers are in their understanding of who the Christ is in whom they believe! He is and acts as the incorporation of the Father.

Incorporation in the Divine Judgment

The final group of texts that I will examine in this first

part of my essay relate to the Son's specific work of judgment.

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wills. For neither does the Father judge anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son. (5:21-22)

But even if I do judge, My judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me. (8:16)

And He gave Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all in the tombs will hear His voice and will come forth: those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have practiced evil, to the resurrection of judgment. I can do nothing from Myself; as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. (5:27-30)

In the Bible the action of divine judgment is said in some passages to be an action of the Father (e.g., Psa. 68:5; 1 Pet. 1:17) and in others, an action of the Son (e.g., Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1); in some other passages God is said to judge by or through the man Jesus (Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16). These last passages resolve the apparent discrepancy between the first two groups of passages. In the Gospel of John, judgment is presented as the incorporation of the Father in the action of the Son. In 5:22 the operations involved in the action of judgment should be interpreted in light of the preceding verse (as well as other verses in the Gospel). The Father operates to give life to the dead, and as we have seen, His operation incorporates the operation of the Son to also give life to the dead. The dual operations result in one action. The text continues to speak of judgment, an action which, by the context, should be understood to have the same sort of operations. Thus, when we read, "For neither does the Father judge anyone," we cannot take this as an absolute statement and use it to deny that the Father judges; rather, we must understand that the Father does not judge anyone *on His own*, just as the Son does not judge anyone on His own (5:30). While in actuality the Son will sit as Judge at the end of this age (Matt. 25:31-46), His judgment will conform to His own testimony concerning His judgment in 8:16: He is not alone and He does not judge on His own; the Son and the Father who sent Him operate to accomplish the one action of judgment. The last verse above details the incorporation of the Father and the Son in the Son's action to judge the dead. Judgment belongs to the Father, but He gives authority to the Son to carry out this judgment because the Son became a man and can both righteously and mercifully judge human beings. The judgment will be initiated by the Father, whose voice will

resurrect the dead, some to life and some to condemnation. This seems to be an activity of the Father, but in a more delicate sense it is actually the operation of the Father in the action of the Son, for the text goes on to point out that the Son does not judge from Himself, but as He hears the voice of the Father, so He judges. As in 8:16, He testifies here that His judgment is just because it is not according to His own will but of Him who sent Him. We should infer that He is not alone in His action but that in judging He incorporates the operation of the Father as well.

Conclusion

Like the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John is a narrative of the life of Jesus Christ, and at first blush it seems that the Jesus in this Gospel is very much as He is in the Synoptics. However, upon further scrutiny the depiction of the Johannine Jesus differs greatly from the depiction of the Jesus in the Synoptics. The extended discourses in this Gospel allow us to hear Him say much more about who He is, and when we listen, and when we reflect deliberately and deeply, we learn from Him that He is not simply the Son of God incarnated to be a man, as we see in the Synoptics. That alone would be (and has been) very good news to us and would indeed satisfy our human desire and need, based on our lost condition, to be found by a caring and loving God. But He desires that we see more deeply concerning Him, and to this end we need the Gospel of John to unveil to us that this saving Jesus is not simply the lone Son in incarnation but the incarnate Son bearing in Himself the Father, who exists with Him mutually, abides in Him continually, and operates with Him in all His actions and words. This Jesus is the incarnate incorporation of the Triune God. And yet, this deeper view of Jesus is not for mere theological fascination. There is much more to the incorporate Christ than His relation to the Father, for in the Gospel of John the revelation continues, and greater works are promised (5:20; 14:12). Ultimately, the incorporate Christ, through the operations of the Triune God and particularly through the operation of the Holy Spirit, acts to introduce the believers economically into the life and living of the Triune God (yet without violation of His complete otherness), so that they too are incorporated into the Son and thus into the entire Triune God. As we shall see in the second part of this essay, the Gospel of John goes on to show how the Spirit in His activities incorporates the operations of the Son and of the Father, and that His activities serve to incorporate the believers into the Son

and into the Father. In this way the believers become the reproduction, expansion, and physical continuation of the incarnate and incorporate Son of God and indeed the organism of the Triune God Himself. **ATC**

Notes

¹Kümmel (200-201) lists the major topological, chronological, and rhetorical differences as well as the differences in the inventory of narrative material.

²The epithets *King-Savior* (for Matthew), *Slave-Savior* (for Mark), and *Man-Savior* (for Luke) are taken from Witness Lee (5, 168, 247).

³Such, of course, is the deeper conviction of the Christian church and the affirmation of Nicea in AD 325: "But those who say: 'There was a time when He was not;' and 'He was not before He was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'the Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic church" (Schaff 29).

⁴The term is suggested by Witness Lee in *The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by the Father with the Divine Glory* (21-22, 24-26, 40-42).

⁵See Roger Good's article "The Trinity and the Prepositions" for a more extensive treatment of the Greek prepositions as they relate to the relations among the Trinity.

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