

Prosopological Exegesis and Christological *Anagnorisis* in Jesus's Reading of Psalm 110

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Introduction

IN A RECENT BOOK ambitiously entitled *The Birth of the Trinity*, Matthew Bates has helpfully called attention to the significance of prosopological exegesis in the early history of Trinitarian thought.¹ Observation of this connection is not new. More than half a century ago, Carl Andresen rigorously traced the portentous appearance of the language of “person” (*prosōpon*) in theological speech to the second- and early-third-century practice of *prosopographische Exegese*.² Bates has, nevertheless, advanced Andresen’s claim by demonstrating that this mode of proto-Trinitarian scriptural interpretation (if not the explicit language of “persons”) can be solidly anchored in the text of the New Testament itself. More than this, Bates also means to attribute prosopological exegesis to “the historically plausible” Jesus himself.³

Historically, the emergence of the Trinitarian vision of God is certainly more complex than any one single explanation.⁴ A profound Christian

¹ Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in the New Testament & Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

² Carl Andresen, “Zur Entstehung und Geschichte des Trinitarischen Personbegriffes,” *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 52 (1961): 1–38.

³ Bates, *Birth of the Trinity*, 40–44.

⁴ See, e.g., Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicea: The Development and Meaning of*

engagement with the philosophical traditions of antiquity has long been appreciated in this regard (or observed with dismay, as the case may be).⁵ The ongoing role of biblically based exegetical argument is, nevertheless, increasingly recognized to be a factor of central importance. These scriptural modes of thinking were not only of importance for developing patristic theology, moreover. They were also of central importance in what may be called the “Christology of Jesus.” Thus, while I will suggest in the following study that a much more ample and variegated range of exegetical operations must be envisioned than Bates’s presentation of prosopological reasoning indicates, I emphatically agree in plotting an important source of Trinitarian thought in Jesus’s own acts of biblical interpretation. This exegesis, I also suggest, invites precisely the same sorts of theological tension that were ultimately resolved ecclesially through the Arian crisis: namely, a high mediator Christology coupled with claims of being the one true God.

In order to illustrate these aspects of Jesus’s personal understanding of the Scriptures—above all the way in which he finds himself spoken of in the sacred text—I focus upon what Martin Hengel called “the most important Old Testament proof passage for the development of Christology”: Psalm 110.⁶ Bates is hardly the first to see here a text of major significance, and Jesus’s direct quotation of the text in Mark 12:36 makes it an obvious cornerstone in any Christology that takes seriously the history of exegesis. Rather than seeking to draw from this psalm the preexistence theology that Bates has suggested, however, I prefer to propose another route. I will speak of “plenary *anagnorisis*” to designate a certain extension of the prosopological mindset that I see at work: a wider, less logocentric and dialogical slant on Jesus’s exegesis.

The essay has four parts. After offering an introduction to prosopological exegesis and its recent appearance in New Testament studies through Bates’s work, I will proceed to suggest certain limitations of this perspective as a foundation for Trinitarian exegesis, appealing to the so-called “iconic turn.” I will then propose *anagnorisis* as a more promising approach for historically imagining and theologically exploiting the

Trinitarian Doctrine (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

⁵ See, e.g., Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, 7 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1894–1899), 1:43–50, and J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 83–135.

⁶ Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish Hellenistic Religion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1976), 80. See also Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 119–226.

personal exegesis of Jesus. Finally, I will offer two examples of this wider perspective in application to Psalm 110.

Contextualizing Prosopological Exegesis

Tis legei pros tina kai peri tinos: “Who is speaking, to whom, and about whom?”⁷ Ancient interpreters routinely asked these careful questions in their efforts to make sense of the texts they set about to study. Made more urgent by the difficult, unmarked character of ancient manuscripts, “solution-by-person” (*lysis ek tou prosōpou*) or prosopological exegesis addresses the problem of determining the voice of the speakers by positing the adequate *prosōpa*: so-and-so is speaking to such another. Ultimately rooted in the work of Alexandrian Homeric scholars and the rhetorical exercises of the Greco-Roman age (i.e., *prosōpopeia/ethopoeia*), this interpretative method is perhaps best known today to readers of Augustine, the roman rhetor, through the studies of Michael Fiedrowicz and others.⁸

The concrete procedure is easily grasped. Confronted with a line such as *Iliad* 16.22–23—“With a wrenching groan you answered your friend, O my rider”—the exegete (both ancient and modern) must identify and reflect upon this startling Homeric use of apostrophe, the poet’s own direct address (*tis legei*) to the character of Patroclus (*pros tina*), speaking about his friend, Achilles (*peri tinos*). The result is a clarified understanding not only of the referential functioning of the phrase, but ultimately of the whole complex fabric of the poem (in this case, the unique poetic handling and significance of Patroclus).

Such secular exegetical techniques naturally and easily penetrated early Christian culture. Applied to biblical texts, this or that enigmatic verse was accordingly set in the mouth, say, of the Father and thus said to be spoken *ek prosōpou patros*, “from the Father’s person.” The textbook case is Genesis 1:26—“Let us make man in our image.” Here, of course, the voice of the speaker (*tis legei*) is not the only pressing question, but also

⁷ Hippolytus, *Contra Noetum* 4. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Second Temple and patristic works are my own.

⁸ See: Michael Fiedrowicz, “Introduction,” in Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms* 1–32, trans. Maria Boulding, The Works of St. Augustine III/15 (New York: New City Press, 2000), 19–49; and Fiedrowicz, *Psalmus vox totius Christi: Studien zu Augustins “Ennarrationes in Psalmos”* (Freiberg: Herder, 1997). See also, e.g., Balthasar Fischer, *Die Psalmen als Stimme der Kirche: Gesammelte Studien zur christlichen Psalmenfrömmigkeit*, ed. Andreas Heinz (Trier: Paulinus, 1982), 15–35, and Joseph T. Lienhard, “Reading the Bible and Learning to Read: The Influence of Education on St. Augustine’s Exegesis,” *Augustinian Studies* 27 (1996): 7–25.

the mysterious *pros tina*. Theophilus of Antioch provides the acceptable answer in *Ad Autolyicum* 2.18: *Ouk allō de tini eirēken Poiēsōmen all' ē tō heautou logō kai tē heautou sophai* ("To no one else than to His own Word and Wisdom did He speak").⁹

Far flung as the Fathers' prosopological reading of Genesis 1:26 may seem to modern minds, it is hardly a technique limited to the divine conversation about the creation of mankind—or limited to patristic authors, for that matter. Bates convincingly shows that the same sort of thinking can be solidly anchored in the text of the New Testament itself. Peter's application of Psalm 16 to Jesus is a perfect example. "You will not abandon my soul to death, nor let your Holy One see corruption." How could David be the speaker, Peter asks, when that king's tomb is here among us (Acts 2:29–31)?¹⁰ The words must be heard coming from the mouth of Christ, that is from his person. The same applies to Psalm 110 and the exaltation to God's right hand. "For David did not ascend into heaven," Peter argues; David cannot therefore be the one who is both spoken to and spoken of (Acts 2:34).

Bates's introduction of prosopological reading into the contemporary New Testament conversation is very welcome. It is important, moreover, to see what he means his new datum to contribute. His work belongs within a broader current in New Testament study, at once strongly attracted by the basic claims of the early high-Christology school, yet also in various ways dissatisfied. The effort, broadly, is to better explain both the origins and the precise character of the primitive Christian reconfiguration of Jewish monotheism.¹¹ Crispin Fletcher-Louis is perhaps the most significant voice of the school's dissatisfied adherents, but others could be mentioned.¹² For his part, Fletcher-Louis means to give more place to those chief agent and divine mediator figures that scholars like Richard Bauckham have severely marginalized. Bates, without entirely knowing what to do with

⁹ Trans. Marcus Dods, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Henrickson, 2004), 101 (slightly altered).

¹⁰ See Carl Holladay, "What David Saw: Messianic Exegesis in Acts 2," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 19 (2016): 95–108.

¹¹ On the present state of the question, particularly the debate over the role of mediator figures, see Anthony Giambrone, "Jesus and the Jerusalem Temple: Two Monotheizing Loci in Greco-Roman Judaism," in *From Polytheism to Monotheism*, ed. Uri Gabbay (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2020), 15–36. See also Larry Hurtado, "Observations on the 'Monotheism' Affirmed in the New Testament," in *The Bible and Early Trinitarian Theology*, ed. Christopher A. Beeley and Mark Weedman (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 50–70.

¹² Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015).

Bauckham, nevertheless has concerns with his "divine identity" language and prefers what, on the basis of this prosopological model, he promisingly calls a "Christology of divine persons."¹³ The design is to equip the discussion with more adequate historical categories for articulating an orthodox and systematically accurate doctrine of God.

Focus upon solution-by-person exegesis undoubtedly permits an alluring dialogical articulation of divine relations, in contrast to the unity intoned in Bauckham's notion of "divine identity."¹⁴ To the extent that a diversity of *dramatis personae* thus finds place within Bates' project, it is implicitly hospitable to the work of Fletcher-Louis. Bates even invokes Melchizedek in 11Q13Melch as a divine figure constructed through a prosopological reading of Psalm 110, in precise parallel to Christ.¹⁵ While there are quite good reasons to be open in this direction and prosopological thinking should take its place in our reconstructions, there are nevertheless also reasons to be concerned about placing too much weight upon the discovery of this manner of reading Scripture.

Trinitarian Exegesis and the Iconic Turn

In his enthusiasm to establish his model's importance in the scriptural shape of Trinitarian meaning (a significant, promising insight), Bates at times adopts a needlessly dismissive posture toward other forms of theological thought. Here the wider history of prosopological exegesis might itself serve as a ready warning. The easy adoption by Sabellian authors of *prosōpon*/mask language and development of the associated biblical interpretation was shown by Andresen. This highlights the need for clear philosophical underpinnings, if a doctrinally adequate approach to the tri-une God is ultimately desired. Plainly, the history of Trinitarian theology cannot be imagined apart from a great deal of ancient philosophy—even if central categories like "person" have stronger exegetical roots than many have heretofore appreciated. A raw historical approach will, therefore, in the end not be enough to fully equip an orthodox exegesis.

¹³ Bates, *Birth of the Trinity*, 2, 22–26.

¹⁴ Above all, see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). For a Catholic perspective on this very influential "divine identity" proposal, see Anthony Giambrone, "Neo-Arians, Richard Bauckham, and the Revenge of Alexandrian Christology: In Search of an Ecclesial Hermeneutic," *Angelicum* 94 (2017): 355–86.

¹⁵ Bates, *Birth of the Trinity*, 59–60; and Bates, "Beyond *Stichwort*: A Narrative Approach to Isa 52, 7 in Romans 10,15 and 11QMelchizedek (11Q13)," *Revue biblique* 116 (2010): 387–414.

In addition to this ancillary metaphysical reasoning, however, one must likewise be sensitive to the key contributions of alternative biblical modes of thought. Historically this factor is also clear. Noting the much greater role that typological and allegorical perspectives have classically played in the development of doctrine, as well as the ways prosopological interpretation risks discarding the *sensus literalis*, Christopher Seitz thus wonders in his review why Bates seems unwilling to “share the terrain” with a fuller range of exegetical techniques.¹⁶ The point is well made. For the depth and nuance of Trinitarian doctrine is not served by narrowing its biblical base or exaggerating the problems posed and answered with solutions-by-person.

It is revealing to observe in just this connection the manifest inadequacies of prosopological exegesis taken alone. The case of Genesis 1:26 again serves as a prime example. Neither Barnabas (Epistle of Barnabas 6.12) nor Justin (*Dialogus cum Tryphone* 62) in their prosopological readings ever detected a Trinity of characters in the plural forms of the verse, envisioning simply the two-way converse of Father and Son. Together with his contemporary Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus is the first to perceive a three-sided conversation between Father, Son, and Spirit; though even Irenaeus himself also settles for a two-member dialogue (see *Adversus haereses* 5.15.4 and *Epideixis tou apostolikou kēēymatos* 55.15), except in the celebrated image of the Son and Spirit as God’s two hands. The connection of the full Trinitarian vision with this anthropomorphic idea is crucial, for it also appears explicitly in Theophilus (*Ad Autolyicum* 2.5–6, 9, 18, 25, 35). Robert Grant suggested that Irenaeus knew Theophilus’s work, without ever mentioning him by name, and along with other evidence the shared two-hands trope makes some form of contact entirely likely.¹⁷ Unfortunately, Theophilus’s commentary on Genesis has not been preserved. Still, Irenaeus provides all that is necessary to recreate his Trinitarian reading of 1:26.

The famous image of God’s two hands is far too rarely contextualized, even within Irenaeus’ own work. It appears several times, but the foundational text comes in *Adversus haereses* 4, just after an affirmation that “it is impossible that the Father can be measured.” His unattainable height

¹⁶ Christopher Seitz, Review of *Birth of the Trinity* by Matthew Bates, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78 (2016): 765. Bates’s tacit dissatisfaction with *Stichwort* exegesis might be added to the list of ancient techniques worthy of more attention and esteem.

¹⁷ Robert Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 146–73.

of love has nevertheless been revealed in his Word and Wisdom (4.20.1). This comment refers back to a highly evocative statement several chapters before, where Irenaeus describes the Son as the *metron*, the measure of the immeasurable Father (4.4.2). Continuing in the present passage, Irenaeus then offers a monotheistic exegesis of Genesis's creation account—or the two creation accounts, to be more exact.

“And God formed man, taking dust of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life” (Gen 2:7). It was not angels, therefore, who made us, nor who formed us, neither had angels power to make an image of God, nor any one else, except the Word of the Lord, nor any power remotely distant from the Father of all things. [*virtus longe absistens a Patre universorum*]. For God did not stand in need of these [beings] in order to accomplish what he had himself beforehand determined should be done, as if he did not possess his own hands [*quasi ipse suas non haberet manus*]. For with him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and for his own will, he made all things, to whom also he speaks, saying, “Let us make man after our image and likeness” (Gen 1:26).¹⁸

It is well known that Genesis 1:26 was by an early date already a problem text for Jewish monotheism. Against his gnostic interlocutors, Irenaeus here obviously means to attribute all creative agency to God, to the exclusion of any outside demiurgic helpers. The a priori oddity of reconfiguring a defense of monotheism around a kind of two powers conception—albeit two powers “not far removed from the Father”—is a bold strategy to say the least.¹⁹ Yet the Lord God's modeling the clay in 2:7 has suggested the theme.²⁰ God's creative Word and his Wisdom first clearly appear as two distinct “powers” when they map onto the visual logic of his two hands.

¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 4.20.1, trans. Alexander Roberts, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Hendrickson, 2004), 487–88 (slightly altered). Cf.: 5.1.3; 5.15.4; 5.28.4.

¹⁹ On the “two powers” conception, see Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).

²⁰ The hint of an embodied God and a physical *imago* should not be overlooked—*quasi ipse suas non haberet manus*—though the idea must naturally also be properly contextualized (cf. Irenaeus *Adversus haereses* 5.7.1 and 5.16.2). See Alon Goshen Gottsein, “The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 171–95.

The twinned cosmogonies in Genesis 1 and 2 accordingly supply Irenaeus's parallel rhetoric of *verbum* and *manus*. In the majestic discourse of Genesis 1 the Lord creates by his sovereign Word, while in the anthropomorphic account of Genesis 2 his *hands* become the agents of creation: thus his Word and Wisdom (not just the Logos alone) like two hands do the creating. It is true that the word *yād* never appears—just as the verbal root *d-b-r* is also wanting. Later exegesis supplied what was implicit, however.²¹ The graphic imagery of Genesis 2:7, with its anthropomorphically imagined pair of hands, thus seems to provide an essential Trinitarian key, reversing for a moment the invisibility of the Sophia/Spirit. Accordingly, by the time Tertullian first explicitly names the Spirit as a *tertia persona* in the celestial conversation at the creation (*Adversus Praxeam* 12.3), the tri-personal reading had been grounded through an innovative fusion of allegorical and prosopological interpretations.

Such theologically fruitful blending of distinct image-based and speech-based exegetical logics is highly suggestive in grasping something of the very structure of revelation itself. A pattern of visualizing in duplicate what is elsewhere merely spoken is integral to the incarnational telos of prophetically ordered divine discourse. Without endorsing some post-rational bogeyman of “logocentrism,” exegetes and theologians would accordingly do well to reflect on the so-called “iconic turn” announced by Gottfried Boehm and others.²² Whether or not Boehm's *Bildwissenschaft* points exactly the right way forward, at a historical level it is perfectly clear that a much more associative and graphically minded exegetical logic must be highlighted and recovered.

The Trinitarian theophany at Jesus's Baptism underscores the point through the visible presence of the Spirit in the likeness of a dove. In Bates's rendering this silent dove vanishes completely before the disembodied words of Psalm 2, spoken to Christ *ex persona Patri*: “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” The dialogical, person-based exegesis remains essentially binitarian in form. When Sergei Bulgakov, by contrast, says that “the Holy Spirit was revealed as a dove because this image most resembled both the Holy Spirit and Christ the Lord,” his own dyadic perspective

²¹ 4 Ezra, for instance, has no hesitation in adding *dextera tua* to the creation narrative: “You brought him [Adam] to that paradise which your right hand planted before the earth came to be” (3:6). 2 Enoch says, “The Lord with his own two hands created mankind, in the facsimile of his own face both small and great he created them” (44:1).

²² See, e.g., Gottfried Boehm, “Jenseits der Sprache? Anmerkungen zur Logik der Bilder,” in *Iconic Turn: Die neue Macht der Bilder*, ed. Christa Maar and Hubert Burda (Cologne: DuMont, 2004), 28–43.

is playing on a robustly Trinitarian patristic trope.²³ The magisterial commentary of Cyril of Alexandria on this scene, for instance, perceives the identity of divine nature shared between both Son and Spirit precisely in the fact that Jesus like a dove is “gentle and humble of heart.” However tenuous modern minds may be inclined to judge it, unity of essence and trinity of persons were once grasped through the fruitful conjunction of image and word. Besides the famous *oublie du langage*, we must guard against the *oublie de l'icône* in reimagining the shape of Trinitarian scriptural thought.

Peri tinos: Christological Anagnorisis

If ancient habits of exegesis carry us far from what might be considered professionally sanctioned modern practice, such interpretative instincts are not inevitably so foreign. Hans Joachim Kraus thus begins his classic commentary on Psalm 110 with the perennial question *Wer redet?* (“Who is speaking?”)²⁴ Jesus, for his part, takes David to be speaking “by the Holy Spirit” (Mark 12:36). If solution-by-person logic is accordingly a key piece of the puzzle, it is best not to land exclusively on the query *tis legei*, but to pose the much broader question *peri tinos*: “*About whom* is the prophet speaking [*peri tinos ho prophētēs legei*]?” (Acts 8:34). This too invites a person-centered exegesis, yet without the same limiting orientation to dialogue. For while Jesus did evidently identify himself as a participant within various “divine dialogues” (as Bates calls them), including very importantly the enthronement Psalms 2 and 110, Christ’s interpretive self-detection inside the sacred text did not stop at the exegesis of biblical conversations, but extends to every shape and manner of prophecy.

I have found useful the language of *anagnorisis*, which in Greek means both reading and recognition, to describe Jesus’s plenary self-perception within every jot and tittle of the Scriptures, alternately as object, audience, and speaker.²⁵ I take this as a foundational principle, in fact. Christ reading

²³ Sergei Bulgakov, “The Holy Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (<https://www.fministry.com/2016/01/the-lords-baptism-theophany-insights.html>).

²⁴ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 346.

²⁵ See Anthony Giambrone, “Scripture as *Scientia Christi*: Three Theses on Jesus’ Self-Knowledge and the Future Course of New Testament Christology,” *Pro Ecclesia* 25 (2016): 274–90, at 283: “Jesus found himself in Scripture because he experienced himself with an unequaled focused intensity as the proper object and audience of Israel’s revelation. As the Lord’s servant, he lived in a state of obedient alacrity and heard God’s word addressed to him with perfect directness, an almost unimaginable immediacy: as if every word of the sacred text had that singular

the Scriptures is the incarnate Word regarding his own image in a mirror inspired by the Holy Spirit; it is the Son knowing himself through the *speculum scripturae*.

If I call plenary Jesus's intelligence of the Scriptures in order to secure theologically his status as revealer, there is certainly nothing wrong (or new) in singling out Psalm 110, the most quoted Old Testament Scripture in the New Testament. Scholars like Bauckham and Hengel, for instance, have leaned heavily upon this psalm to help explain the origins of so-called "Christological monotheism."²⁶ Bauckham is rather less venturesome than Bates, however, and perhaps rightly so, for congenial as is the latter's effort to detect here Jesus's robust self-awareness of his preexistence, the strong dependence of Bates's argument on the divergent Septuagint (LXX) tradition (an issue, in fact, throughout Bates's book) severely cripples the plausibility of his "historically plausible Jesus."²⁷

Bates's effort to support his case by appeal to 11Q13Melch, which he cites as precedent to Jesus's prosopological manner of reading, requires a number of uncertain and questionable assumptions.²⁸ With its disappearance we also lose a firm Palestinian hold. Thus, without overdrawing an outmoded and useless dichotomy, greater caution about the Hellenistic pedigree and context of the *lysis ek tou prosōpou* is in order. It is no accident that Acts and the Letter to the Hebrews are the two main New Testament loci where the practice is found. Bauckham saw the matter with clarity twenty years ago, laying stress precisely on the contrast between the huge importance Psalm 110 holds in early Christian reception and its near complete neglect within the Jewish milieu.²⁹ This discrepancy likely owes

power that gripped St. Anthony when he walked into the church and heard the reading of Matthew's Gospel."

²⁶ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 22, 173–75; Hengel, *Studies*, 119–26.

²⁷ Bates is aware of the basic problem, but judgments will differ whether his effort to address it is sufficiently thorough (*Birth of the Trinity*, 54n25).

²⁸ Bates usefully appeals to a narrative logic in his reconstruction and sensibly tries to hold the various biblical traditions about Melchizedek together ("Beyond *Stichwort*," 390–403). His attempt to move from how Psalm 110 *can* be read prosopologically (e.g., taking nouns as vocatives), to how it *was* in fact read at Qumran *in persona Melchizedek*, requires some significant jumps, however, which are not clearly articulated in (or always demanded by) his larger argument. The highly associative nature of the exegesis in 11Q13Melch, nevertheless, offers a very good instance of the wider interpretative matrix against which I mean to position Jesus's behavior.

²⁹ See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 174–75: "There is no convincing case of allusion to Psalm 110:1 (or any other part of the psalm) in Second Temple Jewish literature, apart from *Testament of Job* 33:3 where it used [*sic*] quite differently . . .

as much to the linguistic factor as anything else: in Hebrew the psalm is frankly less impressive. The double Greek *kyrios* mystifies two perfectly distinct Hebrew characters, Yhwh and Adonai, who share neither a single name nor unambiguously sit upon a single throne.³⁰ The former's begetting of the latter before the morning star also disappears in the Masoretic Text (MT) like the morning dew. Adrien Schenker, carefully examining the infamous textual issues, makes the intriguing suggestion that the underlying Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX betrays the influence of a polytheistic Mesopotamian royal ideology, later sanitized by the (proto?) rabbinic monotheism of the MT recension.³¹ This perspective would privilege the LXX as the earlier text form, but also strengthen the differentiation of the two *kyrioi* elided in the Greek, pushing in the opposite direction from a *homousios* understanding of *pro heōsphorou exegegnēsa se*. Of course, who knows ultimately what form of the text was in circulation in Jesus's time and place? And who knows how exactly mediator figures (*Mittelwesen*) were assimilated into the Jewish monotheism of the period, including that variant form called "Christological monotheism"? The debate is far from settled.³² I have no fetish about the MT and do not exclude the possibility of some text-critical resolution, but the ground around Psalm 110:3 will always be uncomfortably shaky.

If Jews of the period saw little in the text of Psalm 110, as Bauckham emphatically insists, what then drew Jesus to it? It is a question of underestimated importance. In the final section of this paper I would like to propose two ways to come at the text of the psalm, both representing a

Psalm 110:1, perhaps the most foundational text for the whole configuration [of key messianic texts applied to Jesus], was a novel choice, evidence of the exegetical and theological (the two are inextricable) novelty of the earliest Christian movement."

³⁰ Fletcher-Louis is keen to underscore this point in his treatment of the psalm: "In various ways the psalm stresses the subordination of the 'messianic' *kyrios* to the divine '*Kyrios*'" (139; see 138–41 more generally).

³¹ See Adrian Schenker, "Textkritik und Textgeschichte von Ps 110(109),3: Initiativen der Septuaginta und der protomasoretische Edition," in *La Septante en Allemagne et en France: textes de la Septante à traduction double ou à traduction très littérale; Septuaginta Deutsch und Bible d'Alexandrie: Texte der Septuaginta in Doppelüberlieferung oder in wörtlicher Übersetzung* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 172–90.

³² See Giambrone, "Jesus and the Jerusalem Temple," 20: "Perhaps, in the end, it is . . . better to think in terms of 'Christological *monotheizing*' and see primitive Christology as a very particular stage in Israel's perennial wrangling with its surrounding polytheistic culture(s): a decisive new phase that engaged the world of the Greeks with unheard of openness, energy, and boldness."

kind of archeology of Christological *anagnorisis*: contextualized by the exegesis of the epoch and suitable, I submit, for any historically plausible Jesus.

Jesus and Psalm 110

Jesus' self-identification with Psalm 110 was presumably not attracted in the first place by the Greek riddle of the psalm's dialogue partners. Instead, within the hermeneutical circle, one might propose as a kind of exegetical first principle Jesus's provocative self-understanding as eschatological priest and living temple. With this approach to the psalm we confront a type of associative logic that admirably coheres with the pervasively iconic character of ancient biblical interpretation. This perspective opens the doors to the plenary intelligence just invoked, situating the psalm within a much larger web of interwoven biblical readings.

The Priesthood of Melchizedek

Bates's appeal to 11Q13Melch points in a helpful direction, though the question of prosopological exegesis at Qumran obscures the more important exegetical dynamic. *Jesus, like other Jews of the period, was evidently attracted to the pattern of priesthood embodied in the mysterious figure of Melchizedek.* This, it seems, has something very important to do with his special interest in Psalm 110. It is true that Jesus never mentions Melchizedek's name in our surviving sources, just as 11Q13Melch for its part never cites Psalm 110. Both, nevertheless, play with a shared, interlocking series of Scriptures pointing to an eschatological Jubilee.

It is not difficult to see how the figure of Melchizedek was pulled into a discussion of Jubilee regulations and speculation. In Genesis 14, Abraham pays a tithe to Melchizedek, the first mention of tithing in the Bible. Sadly, a lacuna interrupts the text of the Book of Jubilees just at this point in the story, but it is clear enough that, for those who believed that Abraham observed Torah *avant la lettre*, Melchizedek stands in here for the priestly attendants in Deuteronomy 14:22–26, appearing as a kind of protological version of the Jerusalem priesthood (see Jubilees 13.25–27). Through its citation of Deuteronomy 15:2, it is clear that 11Q13Melch has made a similar interpretative connection, now stressing a specific link between Melchizedek and the Sabbath year of release (II.3). From here a rich cluster of intertextual connections crystallizes, as Deuteronomy's year of release easily leads the author to the Jubilee legislation in Leviticus 25:9, 13 and ultimately to the "Year of the Lord's Favor" in Isaiah 61:1–3. In fact, the passage from Isaiah—which already represented a theologized reapplica-

tion of the financial arrangements proscribed in Leviticus 25³³—becomes the controlling text in 11Q13Melch, supplying Melchizedek's characterization as the Anointed One who liberates captives from the "debt" of sin in an eschatological Jubilee (II.6).³⁴

If 11Q13Melch never actually cites Psalm 110 in shaping its picture of Melchizedek as the anointed figure of Isaiah 61:1, it is critical to recall that we possess only very damaged and partial fragments of the complete scroll. The possibility of some exegetical interaction with the psalm should not therefore simply be excluded.³⁵ At the very least, one must readily allow that a Second Temple Jew might have easily moved exegetically between Isaiah 61 and Psalm 110.

This brings us to Jesus. When he cites Psalm 110 and introduces himself as the *addressee* spoken to by Yhwh, he thereby invites an implicit and potent reading of the entire psalm. Bates pushes directly to the thorny expressions in verse 3b: a defensible, but rather risky move, as noted. An alternative, more historically secure approach would be to move to the steadier footing in verse 4. Indeed, whatever mysterious attributes we consign to the silent, character created by the second person statements of the psalm, there is no mistaking the significance of this figure's priestly status: "The Lord has sworn an oath he will not change, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" The suggestion is thus very simple. Jesus's interest in Psalm 110 can be explained, at least in part, by a concomitant interest in the figure of Melchizedek, with whose priesthood Jesus somehow identified.

The argument here is obviously circumstantial, but it goes deeper than simply the general Second Temple interest in Melchizedek. It is based on a prominently shared scriptural middle term. Through Isaiah 61, the Lukan tradition has unmistakably presented Jesus as the proclaimer of a Jubilee of forgiveness, in striking parallel to the role assigned to the eschatological

³³ See Bradley Gregory, "Post-exilic Exile in Third-Isaiah: Isa 61:1–3 in light of Second Temple Hermeneutics," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007): 475–96.

³⁴ See Pierpaolo Bertalotto, "Qumran Messianism, Melchizedek, and the Son of Man," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures*, ed. Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov, and Matthias Weigold, *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 140, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1:335: "As acknowledged by many scholars, Isa 61:1–2 stands in the background of the entire sectarian text of 11QMelch. Melchizedek is identified as the one who has to perform the liberation of the captives (II:4–6). . . . It seems probable therefore that the title 'Anointed of the Spirit' [in II.18] was borrowed from this same prophetic passage."

³⁵ Pace Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 174n50.

high priest Melchizedek in 11Q13Melch.³⁶ The Sermon at Nazareth is Luke's most ostentatious illustration of this conception; yet the Jubilee motif has a variety of other echoes, while the identity centered on Isaiah 61:1–3 is more deeply embedded in the Synoptic tradition than this very Lukan passage might suggest. It certainly cannot be dismissed wholesale as a fabrication of the Third Gospel. The citation of Isaiah 61:1–3 in Matthew 11:2–6 and Luke 7:18–23, attributed to Q in the Two Source Theory, is widely accepted as going back to the historical Jesus and indicates that Luke 4's dramatic presentation of Jesus as the Anointed One of Isaiah 61 is anything but pure Lukan fantasy. It evidently owes something to a primitive tradition of Jesus's own messianic self-identification with the figure who proclaims Isaiah's prophecy of the arrival of the Lord's Year of Favor. Coupled with his self-perception as the addressee of Psalm 110 and the exegetical traditions known from 11Q13Melch, it is accordingly hard not to suspect some concern with the eschatological priesthood of Melchizedek.

Additional, image-based indices of this typological role might be adduced to fill out the picture. The use of bread and wine at the Last Supper, above all, should not be too summarily dismissed in this connection. The pattern of Melchizedek's sacrificial offering in Genesis 14 is naturally not necessary as an explanation of Jesus's use of these elements at the meal; yet his behavior nevertheless fits a broader pattern inspired by an eschatological high priestly order. One way or another, the extraordinary iconic force of the Eucharistic bread and wine must not be bypassed or negated. Its hearty reception in early Christian homiletics and art insists upon the connection with Melchizedek; and from the perspective of Boehm's *Bildwissenschaft* such referential logic is compelling.

To conclude: A Second Temple hermeneutical circle binds Genesis 14, Psalm 110, and Isaiah 61. The missing link in both 11Q13Melch and the Gospels is a citation of Psalm 110:4. Buttressed by his self-recognition in Isaiah 61:1–3, however, and through graphic typological hints like his offering of bread and wine, Jesus's certain self-recognition in Psalm 110:1 grounds an assumption concerning his identification with the priestly character in verse 4. The "novelty" of Jesus's exegesis in this hypothetical reconstruction would thus be essentially twofold. He would exploit the latent Melchizedek potential of the psalm, otherwise unattested in the pre-Christian literature of the period (not so daring); and he would apply

³⁶ See Anthony Giambrone, *Sacramental Charity, Creditor Christology, and the Economy of Salvation in Luke's Gospel*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 439 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 127–39.

this priestly messianism to himself (much more audacious). As such, Jesus's own exegesis would contextualize the claims developed at length in the Letter to the Hebrews. That letter's focused combat against angel Christology would further add to this mediator theology an important anti-Arian reading of Psalm 110, pointing presciently ahead to later theological controversies.

The Son/Stone Temple

Another hermeneutical epicycle similarly links up with Psalm 110. Again the exegetical texture reveals a pattern of Jesus's self-recognition in the Scriptures, much wider than prosopological thinking. We may take as two fixed points of departure two broadly accepted interpretative acts. To begin, Jesus cites Psalm 110 not only in the question about David's son (where the question is indeed explicitly *pros tina*), but a second time in answering the high priest before his Passion, now in conjunction with Daniel 7:13 and the coming Son of Man. It is the shared image of enthronement—not any speaker or *Stichwort*—that brings these two passages into relation. Iconic logic is thus already at work assembling a biblical base, with the enthronement of Psalm 110 in prominent position. Second, Jesus also identifies himself as the stone rejected by the builders in Psalm 118:22, just after the parable of the vineyard (cf. Mark 12:10; Matt 21:42).

These two seemingly distant scriptural self-descriptions—Daniel's enthroned “son man” and the rejected stone of Psalm 118—together point very forcibly to one common, yet concealed messianic text: the stone not hewn by hand in Daniel 2. In perfect parallel to “the one like a son of man” in Daniel 7, the mysterious stone in chapter 2 enters the visionary drama to mark the final end of the sequence of four world empires. For any ancient reader, the linkage of the two visions with their parallel characters would have been automatic. Hippolytus, in fragment 4 on Daniel, makes explicit that ancient readers indeed saw the two visions and two figures as one. Josephus records a popular Hebrew play on words between “son” and “stone,” *bēn* and *'eben*, understood as messianic titles, which would only have reinforced the connection (*Bellum judaicum* 5.6.3). As for Psalm 118, the link here is not only the stone image itself, but above all the odd fact of its not being quarried. Luke 20:18 confirms the logic holding these two particular texts together by adding to Mark's parable of the vineyard an open allusion to Daniel 2. Josephus and 4 Ezra, finally, both confirm the messianic character of this Danielic stone. When Jesus thus circles around this text in a kind exegetical enthymeme, it is hard not to find him making the same connections as other ancient readers.

Where then does this bring us? To an aniconic iconic turn, if the

expression be permitted. For the action of the unhewn stone in crushing the colossus is not merely triumphalist David-and-Goliath messianism, although it is that. "He will shatter kings on the day of his great wrath" (Ps 110:5). The statue seen by Nebuchadnezzar and crushed by the stone is cast precisely as an idol, a false image—and not a typical Babylonian bearded bull, but a simulacrum of the *imago dei*: a human form. When the stone that demolishes this image is described in Daniel 2:45 as being cut *lo' bida'in*, "without two hands" (dual form in the Aramaic), we have stumbled on the back side of a monotheistic polemic topos. The stone/son is being consciously contrasted with those false images of wood and stone, the mere works of human hands. But, like the unhewn sacred steles of the ancient Near East or the altar in the temple, which could also not be hewn (Exod 20:25), it is the hands of God that have directly shaped this *'eben*.

The sacred stone that brings down the statue replaces the idolatrous image as the God-made locus of true worship; and the mountain that grows out of the stone is widely recognized to be the image of a temple, a Babylonian ziggurat recalling the world dominance of Mount Zion. "In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be greatly exalted" (Isa 2:2). The temple was seen in Tannaitic tradition to be the work of God's hands to a still greater degree than creation itself.

When the Holy One, blessed be he, created his world he created it with but one hand, as it is said, "Yea, my hand has laid the foundation of the earth" (Isa 48:13). But when he came to build the Temple, he did it, as it were, with both his hands, as it is said: "Thy sanctuary O Lord which your hands have established" (Exod 15).³⁷

We have here something greater than Genesis's *imago*. A *cultic* and not merely a military dominion is being depicted in the stone's victorious elevation over the collapsed (may we say fallen?) image of the man. On cue in Daniel 2:46, Nebuchadnezzar drops in worship, confessing the one true God.

In identifying himself with Daniel's iconoclastic and imageless work of God's own hands, Jesus makes a mysterious messianic claim about his more than human origin and about his mission. He who was reported to say that he would build a sanctuary *acheiropoiëton*, "not made by hands" (Mark 14:57), identifies himself through Daniel 2 and Psalm 118 as being the very cornerstone of that eschatological temple. This identification

³⁷ Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Shirata 10. Translation from the Lauterbach edition (vol 2., p. 79), lightly modernized.

transpires, moreover, within as a strident a Second Temple monotheistic discourse as we might wish to find. Daniel 2 is determined to say that the no mere human should be worshipped. In this context, Jesus's graphic self-depiction as a divinely fashioned image and as the living foundation of a post-exilic temple is not so dissimilar to Paul's operation with the divine name in Philippians 2 and 1 Corinthians 8. But on several counts, it is a new way of envisioning Jesus's own "Christological monotheism."

Were we to pursue this agglutinative process of visual logic it could take us quite far quite fast: Isaiah's cornerstone and stone of stumbling (Isa 8:14; 28:16); Zechariah's stone of seven facets (Zech 3:9; 4:7; 12:3); even the itinerant stone gushing water in the desert (see 1 Cor 10:4). One picture leads to another as the Christological portrait accumulates ever-new dimensions, accenting both divine essence and personal distinction—and importantly, also the human nature of Christ. Yet we can leave this work to the authors of the New Testament and the Fathers, who admirably perceived and advanced the scriptural "pressure" (to borrow an idea of Brevard Childs). It suffices to say that Jesus approached the Scriptures in a similar way to other ancient readers, generating vast webs of interpenetrating associations—with the great difference that, unlike other readers, he ever placed himself in the center of the *mise-en-scène*.

Conclusion

Prosopological reading highlights a massively significant Christological datum. Yet Jesus's self-projection into the Scriptures is not limited to his assuming roles in Scripture's divine dialogues. It extends to a startlingly comprehensive range of prophetic images and tropes. To this degree, insofar as the origin of Trinitarian exegesis is bound up with Jesus's own reading of Psalm 110, it seemingly has its roots in a prior, Scripture-oriented awareness of himself as at once a cosmic priestly mediator and the unique locus of worship of the one true God: both the Anointed One and the Father's Son, God's true Image not made by human hands.

By expanding the scope and nature of Jesus's self-identification with key biblical characters, we move away from an overly logocentric, puzzle-based model of his self-discovery in the Scriptures, toward a "recognition" on the swift order of intuition. Dialogical self-definition between Father and Son clearly plays a hugely important revelatory role, but in his humanity the Logos has no need to apprehend his divine *ousia* by exegetical calculations.³⁸ He spoke from the fullness of his two natures and found both

³⁸ For the sake of illustration, Bates (*Birth of the Trinity*, 65) reconstructs a syllogistic act of Jesus's exegesis of Psalm 2, in which he reasons his way to the prosopological

spoken of in the word prophetically revealed by the Spirit.³⁹ In the creative tension of Jesus's scripturally/pneumatically expressed identity as the uncreated mediator of the created cosmos we can anticipate the controversies in which the Church later parsed its orthodox understanding of God. In Jesus's reading of texts like Psalm 110, we discern the primitive Christological ferment in which this Trinitarian exegesis was born. N.V.

conclusion "this *me* was begotten before the time of the speech." Whatever such ratiocination might correspond to in the psychology of Christ's human nature (he was certainly capable of exegetical argumentation about what pertained to him), I prefer to intone a more mysterious and instinctive, even experiential mode of *anagnorisis* (reading/recognition) in the delicate matter of Christ's self-knowledge. On Adoptionism and Jesus's self-perception in Psalm 2 (not only as Son but also as Servant), see Giambrone, "Scientia Christi," 285–90.

³⁹ I would add here a significant fact noted neither by Andresen nor by Bates. *Lysis ek tēs physeōs*, solution-by-nature—that is, attributing Jesus's logia in the Gospels to the human or divine nature of Christ respectively—was the inevitable Christian development of prosopological reading.