

CHAPTER 2

THE TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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INTRODUCTION: HISTORY OF RELIGION (ECONOMIC) AND THEOLOGICAL LITERAL SENSE (ONTOLOGICAL) CONSIDERATIONS

THE idea of a 'Trinity in the Old Testament' will strike most in the present period as anachronistic and an inaccurate handling of the Old Testament's literal sense and historical integrity. At most, it would mean an undertaking to describe the kind of religious frame of reference, in terms of the depictions of God at home in the scriptures of Israel, that manifests a potential for later theological descriptions in Christian hands. Angels, the divine council, curious accounts of hidden divine action (as with the men/angels in the story of Sodom), David as 'son of God', the 'let us' of Creation, or the 'one like a Son of Man' in Daniel's fiery furnace—these and other accounts would have to be correlated with what we know of Israelite religion in its ancient near eastern context and held to be, from the modern perspective, capable of explanation as adumbrations of something like Trinitarian conceptuality, albeit in crude and imprecise form.

This history-of-religion undertaking must work carefully (if for some, unpersuasively) in order to guard the historicity of the Old Testament witness, at the same time endeavouring to show that the God of Israel, in the light of a dynamic life with a people, is related to the world and the covenanted Israel in ways that find religious correlation with the later views of Christian faith, when it comes to the Doctrine of the Trinity. The economic life of God with the people of the Old Covenant, as expressed in the literal/historical sense of the Old Testament witness, would have to be preserved, such that the ontological claims of the later witness would not materially adjust that economic depiction, except as this might be shown to have some religious potential for future reference. Here, ironically, the fact that Israel worshipped one God and not many created the

dynamic necessity of relationship through a variety of media (prophetic word, angelic vocation, cultic presence, creational co-work, divine presence in affliction, sonship) if God was to be truly transcendent and holy and present and active, all in one selfsame Deity. That is, the non-polytheistic eccentricity of this One God of Israel led to the development of a religious lexicon for expressing his 'hypostases' in the life of Israel, with the character of economic foreshadowings of later Christian formulation.

In the modern period, this effort to clear the ground for a Trinitarian adumbration within the economic life of God in the Old Covenant is not frequently pursued, though it has been undertaken on occasion from the side of New Testament reflection (Hurtado 2003; Viviano 1998). This reticence is tied up with a concern to honour the historical context of the Old Testament and its 'literal sense' depictions, and not to extrude into that world the conceptualities and theological convictions of a later period (on the possibility of a philosophical disconnection between a text's judgements and a text's conceptuality, see Yeago 1994).

At issue, then, more broadly speaking, is just what is meant by the Old Testament's 'literal sense' as well as what is meant by 'history' and 'historical context'—words which in the present period may seem enticingly univocal, but which were by no means taken to be such at earlier periods of the history of biblical interpretation.

For the purpose of introduction, consider an alternative way of thinking about the Trinity in the Old Testament. Here it would be held that certain expressions in the literal sense—beginning, light, word, first of ways, wisdom, son—themselves could not refer univocally to a single referent. That is, the literal sense of the Old Testament had an historically determined meaning at one level—it made sense to an audience in time and space within Israel's ancient referentiality—but pointed as well to a further reference. This sense of multiple reference does not evacuate the historicity of the witness nor the meaningfulness and intelligibility of the economic activity of One God. Rather, it evolves from an awareness that the subject matter being vouchsafed is richer than a single intentionality in time can measure. If this is so, a history-of-religion account of the economic life of God can only get one so far, and indeed, it could misunderstand the character of the literal sense and how it is to be appreciated.

To say, for example, that the wisdom referred to as the first of God's ways, in Prov. 8:22, refers to a specific set of Israelite beliefs about God and his character (call it 'wisdom theology') only begs the question, but what exactly is this 'theology of wisdom' from the standpoint of God's own working and self? Or, to say that the 'let us make man in our own image' does not have as its subject matter 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' is nevertheless to ask, why such a plurality at all and just who is this 'we'? 'God in the divine council', one will respond. But what is this 'divine council' ultimately and why does God speak in his own single voice as 'we'? Similarly, what does the collocation of word, spirit, beginning, and God ('*elohim*') mean when the Bible begins its narrative (Gen. 1:1–3)? To answer with a source-critical description of the work or intention of an author ('the Priestly Writer') is to restrict the scope of the enquiry artificially, it could be held. Equally, to ignore the sense-making conjunction of sources in the intentionality of the final form could be an offence against the literal sense said to be respected by historical enquiry of a

certain sort. Here again, we simply run up against the complexity of what it means to speak of a literal sense and mean by that both historicity and also a proper appreciation of the subject matter under discussion in the light of the canonical witness. How, then, can the historicity of the witness be retained (as much for theological as for purportedly historical reasons) but the subject matter under discussion not artificially limited to a single authorial intention as we can reconstruct that with critical tools (itself a sort of science of conjecture)?

‘THE TRINITY AND THE OLD TESTAMENT’

Rephrasing the title helps illustrate the character of the challenge for thinking about Trinitarian language in respect of the scriptures of Israel. It could be argued that the descriptions of God’s identity and work testified to in His life with Israel, and how these diverge from alternative presentations in the surrounding culture, are what actually fund a Trinitarian conceptuality. That is, it is the unique theological depiction of the Holy One of Israel that forces one to reflect dynamically and dogmatically on the triune life of God as true to that life in an ontological sense. This is quite a different undertaking than hunting for threesomes hidden away inside the activity of God in the Old Covenant. The pressure toward accounting for the eternal life of God as ‘Trinitarian’ emerges because of the character of claims made about God in the scriptures of Israel, to which one frequently assigns the term ‘monotheistic’. The problem here is that the term ‘monotheism’, when used in reference to the Old Testament, is nothing but a placeholder serving to rule out some obvious alternatives (Israel did not worship multiple gods in a pantheon) but in itself it is imprecise. At issue is the *kind* of monotheism said to mark the life of God with his people Israel. The very fact that this life belongs to the Holy One of Israel, and not several discrete deities, means that the ways in which this One God is personally related to his people must refract through a single lens but in such a way that God is truly present and truly alive in relationship and truly in communication. The terms the OT uses to express this Living character are manifold but not limitless. God creates through wisdom. God speaks through his word. God enlivens through the spirit. God is present in holiness and yet remains transcendent. God relates to an elect people and to creation as a whole but has also a beloved son (Psalm 2). Humanity is said to be made in the image of God. There is a beginning (*bereshith*) in relationship to God which can be seen as a begotten agency, through whom the heavens and earth are made (Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8; more below). Above all, God has a name, YHWH, the name above all names, but by which he can be called upon by those to whom he has made himself known. The offices governing Israel’s life—prophet, priest, sage, king, promised ancestor, hymn writer—respond to and speak forth the various ways that God acts dynamically in relationship to the world and to his chosen people.

Stated negatively, the fact that Israel ‘shall have no other gods before me’ (Deut. 5:7) does not result in a limitation of communication or a restriction of relationship, based

upon simple arithmetic. Rather, this core conviction creates the conditions for the most personal kind of relationship because it is focused on a single divine referent, whose character is known through covenantal persistence in relationship—in judgement and in mercy—through time. Theologically, it is the peculiar eccentricity of this Holy One of Israel—the LORD, the LORD, compassionate and merciful—that calls forth a description of the divine character as inherently dynamic and personal, offering the potential for further clarification, such as Trinitarian claims will wish to make.

For later Christian theological reflection, it is the very existence of the scriptures of Israel and their commitment to a peculiar kind of monotheism that gives rise to Trinitarian convictions about the character of God, such that, lacking these scriptures and their specific literal-sense declarations, we would simply have no Trinitarian talk at all, but rather something like the divinization of Jesus (with the help of borrowed titles having not much to do with him in reality). The precondition of Trinitarian reflection, in other words, is precisely the Old Testament of early Christian reception and interpretation. Had there been no reception of these writings as the sole authoritative witness to the work and identity of God, during which period the New Testament writings were coming to form, the conditions would not have been in place for the kind of Trinitarian theological thinking that emerged. This thinking is witnessed to in nascent form in the writings that would come to form a second canonical record, the New Testament, in early Christian hymns and in specific exegetical handling of the OT in the NT. But the pressure for this nascent witness, as it comes to expression in the second testament, came from the literal sense of the Old Testament and what it said of God (Rowe 2002; Childs 1993; Bauckham 1999).

To say that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' is not then to answer a concern for awarding him a status above angels or other intermediaries and thus to legitimate Christian worship of Christ and insist that such worship is not blasphemy. Nor is it, in the first instance, to ward off efforts to divinize Jesus that would separate his deity so stated from what could be said of the God of Israel, the God of 'Jewish Scriptures'. These challenges will take form very quickly from different quarters and they are hovering around early New Testament descriptions, but they do not form the primary background or logic for why the Trinitarian talk that does emerge in nascent form emerges in the first instance.

The reason for this is that it is everywhere assumed that the scriptures of Israel describe God as God is, and that no other means of speaking of God, or of understanding who God is, are available in the most basic sense. The fact that the scriptures of Israel, moreover, do not exist in the form of tidy theological propositions, but rather describe the lived life of God with a people, in 'many and various ways' present and communicating within a single literal sense witness (Hebrews 1), does not lessen this restriction just stated but enriches it. Early Christian argument about the character of Jesus Christ and his identity, therefore, cannot be anything more or less than *accordance with the scriptures* (Seitz 1998: 51–60). Jesus Christ is who he is *in accordance with* a witness stating the nature of God, alongside of which there is simply no rival. Earliest Christian belief is predicated on being able to distinguish between 'it is written' and what that entails, as against the general religious milieu of Judaism (itself variegated), on the one hand; and

full acknowledgement with the Judaisms of the period that 'the oracles of God entrusted to the Jews' (Romans 3) come from within a privileged witness and cannot be accessed otherwise, but only correlated in crude ways (Paul's efforts with the very religious at Athens, for example).

Accordance can of course take the form of economic accounts, as in the speeches of Acts from Stephen, Peter, and Paul, where who Jesus is belongs within a sacred history, selective accounts of which serve to locate God's actions in time in respect of the earthly Jesus, 'who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, died and was buried'—much as the narrative creeds and early baptismal interrogatories will state this. These selective accounts may choose to focus on creation, ancestors, judges, David, prophets, psalms, depending on the occasion and context, but they all assume that this selection, however wide or limited, is the only true description within which the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his ascension and coming again, make sense, gain their theological truthfulness and their capacity to convict and persuade.

The authority of the received scriptures, their irreducible accounts of the One God, and the kind of accounts these are, given the monotheism being testified to, are what create the conditions for the other kind of accordance we see in the NT, for which shorthand we label 'ontological accordance'. At issue here is describing Jesus Christ not as he can be located on a temporal grid, enclosing that which is set forth in the scriptures of Israel and then using that same time-line as well to speak of the place of the Church and Israel before his Coming Again. That is, allowing the first economic time-line to expand such as we see it in Romans 9–11, for example, and in this way deferring to its authoritative character ('the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable') whilst also seeing in it a 'mystery' only now fully grasped, in respect of the Church as comprised of circumcised and uncircumcised 'fellow heirs' both (Romans, Colossians, Ephesians).

This other kind of accordance is a reaction of theological and exegetical reflection occasioned by the pressure of the literal sense of the scriptures of Israel. It understands within the literal sense descriptions of God's eternal life with Israel there to be a surplus, planted in the original inspired testimony and so ingredient in the witness and so also in God's act of self revelation. It is not a sense *ad extra*. Moreover, if it were a dogmatic *ad extra*, or if it was the creation of an imaginative exegesis capable of correlation with Second Temple methods historically made more precise (as useful as this is in its own way), and *understandable chiefly on those grounds*, it would not be the kind of Trinitarian claim that Christians could say was true to who Jesus Christ genuinely is, such that he is to be worshipped and called Lord. What Christians (comprised in the first instance of the one people of God) claimed to be true of Jesus they grounded as truthfully alive in the one literal sense witness of the only scriptures, and their only true account of who God was and is and is to be, YHWH, the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

Thus far we have been speaking about nascent Trinitarian reflection because, strictly speaking, we are speaking of the identity of Jesus Christ as enclosed within the literal sense reference of statements the scriptures of Israel—the sole scriptures of the early Christian movement—make about the One God. As such, they are strictly speaking 'binitarian', so long as we keep in view that the term is a weak one, meaning only that the character of

the Holy Spirit as a Person of the Trinity requires extrapolation from within the same conceptual framework which, in the first instance, declares that the earthly Jesus is the Christ through whom all things were made, the eternal Son of God, the one to whom has been given the name above every name (YHWH), at the right hand of the Father, and so forth. The difficulty attending to the Holy Spirit's co-ordination with the Father and Son is well known and cannot be the subject of a detailed treatment here. It is mentioned only to acknowledge that the challenge exists (and we will examine one creative account of it below), but this need not hinder the retrieval of the conditions under which the first Christians claimed that Jesus Christ was eternally within the identity of the One God of Israel, YHWH, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. We return to the Person of the Holy Spirit at the close.

THE LITERAL SENSE AS THE SPIRITUAL SENSE

In his exegesis of Psalm 22 (LXX 21), Thomas Aquinas refers to the condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia, in the light of his interpretation of this and other psalms (translation made available online by DeSales University as part of their Aquinas Translation Project: <http://www4.desales.edu/~philtheo/loughlin/ATP/Psalm_21.html>; the issue is a much wider one, of course; Theodore held that only three psalms referred to Christ via prophesy). Aquinas speaks of the historical reading of Psalm 22, whereby the human author is held to intend a single referent only (David) and declares it an attenuated sense—such was the reading of Theodore in his view and in the view of Church councils (we speak here only of the record and not to rise in its defence). Aquinas is well aware of the problems attending prodigal sense-making and his own appeal to the literal sense of this and other psalms is remarkably constrained. He is fully aware that the author of the psalm refers both to realities in the days of Israel and especially to matters that relate more naturally at one level to the David of history (the reference to sins in verse 1 (LXX v. 2), as brokered by the translation process into Greek and Latin from the Hebrew's more neutral 'groans'). Along with the tradition, he nevertheless sees Christ as the referent of the psalm and says that 'sins' refers to that which Christ bears for the Church. The subject matter of the psalm has to do with David and Christ both. The author is inspired to see something which in God's providence has a dual reference. This is the literal sense, and for Aquinas the alternative to a literal sense is not a higher, spiritual sense but the restricted historical sense-making undertaken in the interpretation of Theodore. No, the literal sense *is* the spiritual sense, he states, as if self-evident. By this he means that the human author, as inspired by God, spoke of things of such lofty significance that the final intentionality might well not have been clearly seen, and indeed probably was only seen for what it was at a later time. Yet, that single author's literal sense-making contained the reality in earnest.

We see here an example of flexibility in thinking about authorial intention and sense reference that guards the historicity of the witness, but refuses to say that intentionality

is governed or restricted by what we can say about the historical context of the inspired agent's literal sense. Subsequent use of the Psalm—as in the NT's recording of the crucifixion, with its various psalmic resonances—is allowed room to be included in what one can say about the author's intention and in that allowance Thomas and others believed they were comprehending the divine intention (the literal spiritual sense) which first warranted the speaking as such, within the historicity of Israel's life with God.

While this particular example functions against the backdrop of two testaments, we can also see it at work in the early interpretation of Christ's identity with God, within the context of a single authoritative witness (the Old Testament). How was this so? First, it was recognized (often in line with the instincts of someone like Philo, who was concerned with the dynamics of divine action and identity and was seeking to understand that in the context of kindred concerns of his day to speak of the divine logos, for example, apart from the scriptural witness which oriented his own enquiry) that to speak of the One God in relationship to the world and to an elect people was already to ask about the internal logic of scripture's literal sense. What was needed was a way to make the proper correlations. If Prov. 8:22 spoke of God creating a 'beginning' of ways, what might this have to do with the 'beginning' of Genesis 1? Or from within a very different set of constraints, if God spoke of a beloved son who would rule the nations, what did it mean that David did this only provisionally if at all, if the literal sense was to mean anything other than rhetorical excess? Psalm 89 described this same son as firstborn, a status God had to make for him (Ps. 89:27). What was one to make of what we might call the composite intentionality of these various different passages?

For our purposes, given the scope of this entry, we will focus on one prominent example: the way in which 'beginning' was seen to point to a divine agency generated from God's own self. The key texts are Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8—the latter of which would prove to be the major testing ground for Christian efforts to speak of Christ's relationship to God, in the generations leading up to and then culminating in Athanasius' *Contra Arianos*. Leaving the particularities of that long trail aside, it must be stressed that the debate was a thoroughgoing interpretative and exegetical one. At every point along the way, at issue is the strict letter, its appearance in a variety of textual traditions (Hebrew; the competing Greek versions; Jerome's own translations), word studies (what does the Hebrew verb *qnh* mean and what do the various Greek renderings clarify or obscure), and above all, associations across the Old Testament and within the flow of Prov. 8:22–31 itself (do the verbs relate to the same action of generation; various aspects of that; or of generation and incarnation, etc.). That is, the mature Trinitarian discussions, as these pertain to the relationship of Christ to God, are textual and exegetical ones, and they have to do with the way the Old Testament delivers its sense. It is for this reason that, while the discussion ranges over several centuries, after the existence of a two testament Christian Bible (in various forms), it is important all the same for our purposes, because it believes that the Trinitarian convictions of the Christian faith are grounded in the one scripture given by God to Israel and received through Christ by the Church. It is concerned with the sense-making of the Old Testament for the language about God, which will become Trinitarian in various ways.

Colossians offers a good example of the way in which the literal sense of the Old Testament was seen as delivering up an account of Christ as eternally at work with God, an account which tracks well into subsequent Christian interpretation and argumentation. Christ is image (1:15), and from the various indications of Colossians' speaking of a New Creation, we can conclude that Christ is seen to be the image of Genesis 1, now restored and living the risen life into which the Church has been transported (Col. 3:10: 'being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator'). But most importantly Christ is firstborn (Col. 1:15) and—taking the cue from the language of 'before' that follows and the notion of creation through Christ (Col. 1:16–20)—it is clarified that this 'first-bornness' is *before* creation. The imagery being used and the terms being deployed come from the way in which the Old Testament is said to be delivering its literal sense, once one grasps the composite intention of Proverbs 8 and Genesis 1 (Burney 1926; Beetham 2008). The 'in beginning' of Genesis 1 is heard alongside Prov. 8:22, 'he acquired/begat me the beginning of his ways' (the proper translation of which comes by grasping the implications of the verb *qnh* as shown elsewhere in the OT; and in relationship with the verb 'bring forth' which follows in vv. 24–5; and in the light of the companionship clearly stated in verse 27), with the result that one speaks of Christ as 'begotten before' or *proto + tokos*. The Old Testament's literal sense, when heard in its composite intentionality, declares the reality of an agency with God before creation, not independently acquired or made (as a dominant later Greek translation would intimate, through the verb *ektisen*—compare *ektesato* of Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus or *bara*' of the Targum—creating debates within Christian circles, especially in the exegesis of Arius). Now Genesis 1 can be heard as saying: 'in *arche*—in beginning—in firstborn' God created the heavens and the earth. The rabbinic idea of 'in beginning' as referring to Torah, as 'in Torah God created the heavens and the earth', tracks closely alongside this, and it is likewise derived from the way in which Proverbs 8 was thought to be speaking of 'eternal generation' and 'creation through', in this case, by/of Torah ('Now the Law says, "By *reshith* God created"; and there is no *reshith* except the Law; compare the passage, "The Lord gat me as the *reshith* of His way"' (*Bereshith Rabba*)). When then John speaks of 'in beginning (*reshith*; *arche*) was the word, and the word with God' he also is tracking very closely the exegetical penetration of the literal sense of Genesis and Proverbs, consistent with the logic of Col. 1:15–20. Note carefully that this is at some remove from what one might call 'allegorical' interpretation, and it is equally distant from finding threesomes in obscure episodes of God's dealing with Israel. Rather, the earliest (incipient) 'Trinity in the Old Testament' is a conviction that the One God of Israel acts through the agency of his eternal companion to bring creation into being and order. In so doing, ruled out is tritheism or bitheism. And also to be denounced is any sense that the monotheism of the sole scriptural witness, so carefully guarded, because so true to God's character as the Holy One of Israel, has been voided or replaced.

Others have shown how the mature declaration of Christ as 'of one substance' with the Father—the Greek term never appearing in Christian scripture—is precisely the judgement rendered by the texts of scripture when one hears Phil. 2:5–11 properly, in the light of Isa. 45:20–5 (Bauckham 1999; Seitz 1998, 2001; Yeago 1994). The latter insists—in

the strongest language the OT provides—that YHWH is God alone, ‘there is none beside me’. This declaration is stronger, one might conclude, than henotheism (‘you shall have no other gods’) or Ezekiel’s ironic intimations that if ‘gods’ (*’elohim*) exist, they are ‘dung balls’ (*g’lulim*). God is alone, there is no other, and he can swear only by himself, and so only by his own name, declaring that every knee will confess his Lordship and in so doing be saved (Isa. 45:22–5). When Philippians, then, speaks of receiving the name above every name, it is declaring that Christ has the authority of The Name, YHWH, and exists within that selfsame identity. This happens in such a way that the Father is glorified, in accordance with Isaiah, but now stated in incipiently Trinitarian terms: ‘Therefore God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name (God’s own majestic name YHWH), that (now) at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow (so the solemn oath of Isa. 45:23), to the glory of God the Father’ (Phil. 2:11). Not far away are the Johannine ‘I am’ statements, and the declarations that Christ has declared the name (17:26) and kept his disciples in the name (17:11–12).

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF THE TRINITY AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

The conviction that God in creation acts through the agency of his word or wisdom finds its way into Hellenistic Judaism and early Christian writers like Theophilus of Antioch and Athenagoras. The former can speak of wisdom and word as hands of God (the means by which the ‘let us’ of God, Wisdom, and Word created humankind, as against creation by the word alone, 2.18). Less clear however is the relationship between Wisdom and Spirit. Ps. 33:6 (LXX 32:6) can be cited in such a way that its word and spirit refer to word and wisdom, but at other places this is left unstated. *Targum Neofiti* (difficult to date specifically) also provides Gen. 1:1–2 with a creation through wisdom and word. The fact that spirit is mentioned in verse 2 is not specifically correlated with this.

In these cases the confusion exists because of the way in which the various texts (Proverbs 8, Genesis 1, Psalms) when combined do not create a single or overly uniform account. So we can find Theophilus simply providing a kind of catalogue of titles which sum up the pre-existent agencies who operate with God, bringing about creation of the world and in time inspiring the prophets.

Therefore God, having his own Logos innate in his own bowels (*cf.* Ps. 109:3), generated him together with his own Sophia, vomiting him forth (Ps. 44:2) before everything else. He used this Logos as his servant in the things created by him, and through him he made all things (*cf.* Jn 1:3). He is called beginning because he leads and dominates everything fashioned through him. It was he, *Spirit of God* (Gen. 1:2) and *Beginning* (Gen 1:1) and *Sophia* (Prov. 8:22) and *Power of the Most High* (Lk. 1:35), who came down into all the prophets and spoke through them about the creation of the world and all the rest (*cf.* *Ad Autolyicum* 2,9). For the prophets did not exist when the world came into existence;

there were the Sophia of God which is in him and his holy Logos who is always present with him. For this reason he speaks thus through Solomon the prophet (citing Proverbs 8). And Moses, who lived many years before Solomon—or rather, the Logos of God speaking through him as an instrument—says, ‘In the Beginning God created the heaven and earth’ (*Ad Autolyicum* 2,10 (Grant 1970)).

Proverbs 8 can refer to either Word or Wisdom/Spirit in some of the earliest Christian accounts, including Irenaeus as well. In *Adversus Haereses* IV,20,3 the Word was always with the Father as well as the Spirit, in this instance declaring that the wisdom referred to in Proverbs 8 is the Spirit, not the Logos. In Athenagoras (*Legatio* 10.4) it appears that the reference to the Spirit in connection with Proverbs 8 means that agent of inspiration who clarifies that the referent of 8:22 is the Word (Schoedel 1972). Only with Clement and Origen do we begin getting a consistent referent for Prov. 8:22 as the Word, where ‘Beginning’ is a virtual title for Christ (Young 2003:105).

Of course we are on very different ground when it comes to the Holy Spirit than we are with the question of Jesus Christ and the Holy One of Israel within a Trinity in the Old Testament. This is because the Holy Spirit is an agent in his own right in the Old Testament, even with allowance for the distinction between spirit/wind and the more specific third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is active in both testaments, inspiring Israel, as with David’s psalmic compositions (‘the Spirit of the Lord speaks by me’, 2 Sam. 23:2) or Zechariah’s thanksgiving or Elizabeth’s confession (‘his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit’ or ‘Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit’, Lk. 1:41, 67). The idea of the Spirit of God inspiring prophets, priests, sages, judges, hymn-writers, and singers is ingredient in how divine action is understood. What takes time is understanding the Spirit of the Lord as his own person, and as we have seen, this happens in conjunction with the way in which God’s activity in creation is comprehended in respect of the Word of God, in Jewish and Christian circles. The specifically Christian challenge is one of relating this Logos of God with God and the Holy Spirit both. Only in time will the language of generation and procession emerge, and the technical discussion will not govern and control all Christian talk at this point, just as matters of the Holy Spirit’s procession will divide the East and the West. Some of the challenge, as relevant for our purpose, comes from handling the letter of two testaments carefully and knowing exactly how to relate the work of the Spirit (‘who spake by the prophets’) with the Pentecostal gifting itself. Luther fought on two fronts at this point, challenging an account of the Spirit which located his work in the councils of the Church, on the one hand; and the other which saw the Spirit as a special gift only available this side of Pentecost and independent of an account of the Church or Israel at all. The independence of the Holy Spirit at work in the Old Covenant assured his integrity as a Person of the Trinity. David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was gifted to see the inner Trinitarian life, as the Holy Spirit showed him the Father and the Son in beloved dialogue before the day of Pentecost or the councils of the Church (Helmer 2002).

The Old Testament shows the Holy Spirit to be that Person of the Trinity whose sole agency is to point away from himself and to the God who is the source of creation and inspiration. He is the person whose activity is deferential. He is that ‘hand of God’ from

the 'let us' of Gen. 1:26 whose sole divine vocation is to place Israel's and the Church's hand in the hand of their Lord. When in Psalm 2 or Psalm 110 we get direct speech from God to David; or when in Proverbs 8 we hear of God's 'Beginning of ways'; in all cases it is the Spirit with the divine warrant to reveal the inner life of God's own self, who says to His beloved Son 'today I have begotten you'; or 'sit at my right hand'; or 'the LORD made me Beginning of his ways'. This spirit who spake by the prophets is the Holy Spirit of Christian Trinitarian conviction, proceeding from God, alongside the Word, 'who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified'.

Several key NT passages also indicate that the Spirit of Israel's Lord is now in identification with Jesus Christ. In 2 Cor. 3:16 the unveiled turning to the Lord bespeaks Moses' unveiled beholding of God's glory in the Old Covenant (Exodus 34:34), and Paul calls this beholding an acknowledgement of the Spirit: the Lord is the Spirit. Turning to YHWH is a turning to the Spirit of the Father (to use the language of Trinitarian differentiation). This beholding in the New Covenant is a beholding enabled by Christ, and of Christ, also 'the Lord'. Paul uses *kyrios* to identify the Spirit Lordship of the Father and the Son. 'Read canonically, then, the full unity of God as expressed through his name *kyrios* is that of the Father, Son, and Spirit: the *kyrios heis* (one Lord) of Deut. 6:4 is in the New Testament differentiated into *kyrios pater* (Father), *kyrios iesous* (Son), and *kyrios pneuma* (Spirit). Thus the oneness and unity of God is not impaired but dynamically upheld through the use of his name *kyrios* for the Father, Son and Spirit, the One Lord God' (Rowe 2002: 304). A similar move is at work in Gal. 4:4–6, where God's sending forth of his Son is paired with the sending forth the Spirit of the Son, a sending forth which enables us to cry out 'Father'. And in Rom. 8:9–11 the explicit movement back and forth of referents to the Spirit ('The Spirit' in 8:9a; 'Spirit of God the Father' in 8:9b; 'Spirit of Christ' (8:9c and 10), and 'Spirit of God the Father' in 8:11) means that the Spirit of the God of Israel now differentiates in One Lord, in three persons (see also Rowe 2002, and compare Soulen 1999).

CONCLUSIONS

The Trinity in the Old Testament is not an invitation to search for threesomes in the scriptures of Israel, but instead is tied up with a proper understanding and confession about how the literal sense speaks of its divine referent. It is important to observe how the discussions of the Trinity in the Early Church are relentlessly exegetical in nature, and indeed must be: YHWH, the Holy One of Israel, is the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit not because such was required for a proper estimate of Jesus Christ as God or the Spirit as God, but because this was held to be what the literal sense of the Old Testament required when its deliverances were properly grasped, in the light of Christ, as conveyed by the Holy Spirit. Later creedal formulations are the scriptures of Israel and the New Testament accordances 'coming to boil'. Luther was right to argue that

any account of the Trinity must be based on a proper understanding of the semantics of Old Testament sense-making, and not be conceived either as later historical developments or located in the Church's authority to see something, and so warranting the Trinitarian talk from within its own sense-making. The Holy Spirit 'spoke by the prophets' and so revealed from the Old Testament the majesty of YHWH, the Lord, upholding this majesty and showing it to be properly understood as a Trinity of Persons in One God.

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SUGGESTED READING

Bauckham (1999); Burney (1926); Viviano (1998); Young (2003).

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