



THE
ESSENTIAL
TRINITY

New Testament Foundations
and Practical Relevance

EDITED BY
BRANDON D. CROWE &
CARL R. TRUEMAN

Today there are many books on the market dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity. This is my favorite. It is a clear presentation, discussion, and application of the historic doctrine by people who believe it and have studied it deeply. The essays have kept close to their source, the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. When they refer to the history of doctrine, and when they apply the Trinity to believers' lives, they do so in order to clarify the theology of the church, not to add something to the biblical teaching. I do not agree with every detail of every essay; they do enter into some controversial areas. But the reader will learn even from that controversy to engage the Scriptures with more thought and devotion. To such readers, this book will be an edifying study.

—**John M. Frame**, Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

What a pleasure to commend this book—an exegetical treasure, unpacking the doctrine of the Trinity on the Bible's own terms; a refreshing presentation of the doctrine's vital importance for the Christian and the church; and a rich resource for the preacher.

—**Fred G. Zaspel**, Executive Editor, *Books at a Glance*; Associate Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Pastor, Reformed Baptist Church, Franconia, Pennsylvania

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To all those who have faithfully preached and taught
the trinitarian faith to us and our families

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CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Bauckham is Emeritus Professor of New Testament studies in the University of St Andrews, Scotland, and Senior Scholar at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, England. A Fellow of the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh, he is the author and editor of numerous books, including *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*; *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*; and *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*.

Brandon D. Crowe is Associate Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *The Obedient Son: Deuteronomy and Christology in the Gospel of Matthew* and *The Message of the General Epistles in the History of Redemption: Wisdom from James, Peter, John, and Jude*.

Mark S. Gignilliat is Associate Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. He is the author of *Karl Barth and the Fifth Gospel*; *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism: From Benedict Spinoza to Brevard Childs*; and *Paul and Isaiah's Servants: Paul's Theological Reading of Isaiah 40–66 in 2 Corinthians 5:14–6:10*.

Benjamin L. Gladd is Assistant Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. He is the author of *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (with G. K. Beale); *Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life*

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of the Church (with Matthew S. Harmon); and *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on 1 Corinthians*.

Jonathan I. Griffiths is a tutor for the Proclamation Trust's Cornhill Training Course, UK. He is the author of *Hebrews and Divine Speech* and the editor of *The Perfect Saviour: Key Themes in Hebrews*.

Daniel Johansson is a lecturer in New Testament studies and Academic Dean at the Lutheran School of Theology, Gothenburg, Sweden. He has authored several scholarly essays in the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* and *Currents in Biblical Research*, and is a contributor to *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. His PhD thesis is entitled 'Jesus and God in the Gospel of Mark: Unity and Distinction'.

Robert Letham is Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Union School of Theology in Bridgend, Wales. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*; *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology*; and *The Work of Christ*.

Michael Reeves is President and Professor of Theology at Union School of Theology in Oxford, UK. He is the author of numerous books, including *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* and *Rejoicing in Christ*, and the co-editor (with Hans Madueme) of *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives*.

Brian S. Rosner is Principal of Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia. He is the author of numerous books, including *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*; *Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor*; and (with Roy E. Ciampa) *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Pillar New Testament Commentary).

Scott R. Swain is Professor of Systematic Theology and Academic Dean at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. He is the

CONTRIBUTORS

author of several books, including *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation*; *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology*; and *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity in John's Gospel* (with Andreas J. Köstenberger).

Alan J. Thompson is a lecturer in New Testament at Sydney Missionary and Bible College in Sydney, Australia. He is the author of *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan* and *One Lord, One People: The Unity of the Church in Acts in Its Literary Setting*.

Mark D. Thompson is Principal and the head of the department of Theology, Philosophy and Ethics at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia. He is the author of several books, including *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture*; *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method in Luther's Approach to Scripture*; and *Too Big for Words? The Transcendence of God and Finite Human Speech*.

Carl R. Trueman is Paul Woolley Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church. He is the author of several books, including *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom*; *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*; and *The Creedal Imperative*.

ABBREVIATIONS

General

art.	art.
<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud
col.	column(s)
esp.	especially
EVV	English Versions
Gk.	Greek
lec.	lecture
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
pl.	plural
prol.	prologue
q.	question
tr.	translation, translated
<i>y.</i>	Jerusalem Talmud

Bible versions

AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ESV	English Standard Version, Anglicized
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible

ABBREVIATIONS

NET	New English Translation
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIV	New International Version
NJPS	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text</i>
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version, Anglicized
OG	Old Greek
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Theo	Theodotion

Apocrypha and Septuagint

1 Macc.	1 Maccabees
2 Macc.	2 Maccabees
Sir.	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

Dead Sea Scrolls

1QH ^a	Thanksgiving Hymns ^a
4Q381	Non-canonical Psalms B
4QFlor	<i>Florilegium</i>

Mishnah and Talmud tractates

B. Meş.	<i>Baba Meşi'a</i>
Ber.	<i>Berakot</i>

Old Testament pseudepigrapha

1 En.	1 Enoch
2 Bar.	2 Baruch
2 En.	2 Enoch
3 Macc.	3 Maccabees
4 Macc.	4 Maccabees
Jub.	Jubilees
T. Reub.	Testament of Reuben
T. Sol.	Testament of Solomon

ABBREVIATIONS

Other Greek works

Diogn. *Diognetus*

Josephus

Ant. *Jewish Antiquities*

J. W. *Jewish War*

Modern works

AB Anchor Bible

ANRW *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, pt. 2: *Principat*, ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–)

AThR *Anglican Theological Review*

BBR *Bulletin for Biblical Research*

BDAG W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt and W. F. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)

BECNT Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

BETL Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium

Bib *Biblica*

BibInt Biblical Interpretation Series

BibSac *Bibliotheca sacra*

BNTC Black's New Testament Commentary

BST The Bible Speaks Today

BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

CBR *Currents in Biblical Research*

CD Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, tr. G. W. Bromiley, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–75)

CJT *Canadian Journal of Theology*

CO Calvini opera

ABBREVIATIONS

ConBNT Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series

<i>CQR</i>	<i>Church Quarterly Review</i>
<i>EBT</i>	Explorations in Biblical Theology
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>ICC</i>	International Critical Commentary
<i>IJST</i>	<i>International Journal of Systematic Theology</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JPT</i>	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LCC</i>	Library of Christian Classics
<i>LFC</i>	Library of the Fathers of the Church
<i>LNTS</i>	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works</i> , ed. J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–86)
<i>NAC</i>	New American Commentary
<i>NACSBT</i>	New American Commentary Studies in the Bible and Theology
<i>NICNT</i>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIGTC</i>	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NPNF</i> ²	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 2, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 1890–1900, 14 vols. (repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994)
<i>NSBT</i>	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>PG</i>	Patrologiae, cursus completus, patres ecclesiae, series graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, 162 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1857–86)
<i>PL</i>	Patrologiae, cursus completus, patres ecclesiae, series latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1844–64)

ABBREVIATIONS

PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
PRSt	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
ProEccl	<i>Pro ecclesia</i>
RTR	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SEÅ	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and its World
ST	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TrinJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TTKi	<i>Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke</i>
TynB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Schriften</i> , ed. J. K. F. Knaake, G. Kawerau et al., 66 vols. (Weimar: Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883–)
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

INTRODUCTION

Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman

The Trinity is foundational to Christian theology. Indeed, for more than fifty years Christian theological discussion has been increasingly dominated by discussion of the doctrine, in large part due to the provocative move by Karl Barth in making it the every principle of his dogmatic enterprise. Unfortunately, however, it is not uncommon to encounter the view that the Trinity is a non-biblical doctrine (or perhaps one *possible* way of reading biblical texts) that arose only on the basis of later philosophical speculation. Likewise, many consider the Trinity to be a ‘take it or leave it doctrine’ when it comes to living the Christian life. The Bible – according to many – does not contain the doctrine of the Trinity, and even if it did, that would be something only for theologians to debate. However, historically in the Christian church the Trinity has been understood to be a robustly biblical doctrine with immense relevance for practical living. It is with this in mind that we present this volume, one that eschews overly technical discussion and focuses attention on the importance of the doctrine for every Christian.

The chapters in part 1 consider the trinitarian contours of every corpus of the New Testament, along with a chapter reflecting on the Old Testament roots of trinitarian doctrine. Here we must be clear: the term ‘Trinity’ and key terminology such as *homoousios* do not appear in Scripture; the technical terminology for trinitarian doctrine comes later, being crystallized in the fourth century. However, this

precision of language does not import something foreign into the biblical texts, but faithfully articulates the content of those texts. In other words, it is the presupposition of this volume that trinitarian doctrine legitimately and necessarily follows from the phenomena of Scripture, rightly understood. Therefore, when using the term ‘Trinity’ or ‘trinitarian’ throughout this volume in relation to biblical books, we speak of the triadic contours of the text that lead – inexorably – to the doctrine of the Trinity. Stated differently, one of the aims of this volume is to show that faithful exegesis of biblical texts necessitates a trinitarian reading of the biblical texts, especially in the New Testament, where the doctrine is more fully revealed than in the Old Testament. The chapters in part 1 focus primarily on the New Testament witnesses, but also necessarily include reflections on the Old Testament backgrounds for the New Testament theological perspective. Indeed, chapter 8, on Revelation, and chapter 9, the final chapter in part 1, which is devoted to Old Testament revelation, will consider in greater detail how the New Testament’s trinitarian witness is rooted in the Old Testament.

In part 2 we will address, at least implicitly, the charge that the Trinity is irrelevant as a practical doctrine. We will begin with a concise definition of the Trinity, followed by several chapters considering topics relevant for Christian life. Some will be more geared to leaders in the church, but we believe that all readers will benefit from the wisdom contained in these chapters.

The contributors to this volume represent a spectrum of theological perspectives, yet all agree that the Trinity is based on Scripture (part 1), and that the Trinity matters for how we live (part 2). This agreement on trinitarian doctrine reflects the agreement of orthodox Christian theology through the centuries. Christian theology has always affirmed the Trinity as a non-negotiable aspect of the one catholic and apostolic faith, even when differences persist over some other theological and ecclesiastical elements. Though one would not expect each contributor to agree with every other in all respects, the scope of the volume provides strong evidence from contributors with various backgrounds that the Trinity is a *necessary*

INTRODUCTION

doctrine – necessary both to interpret Scripture faithfully, and necessary for day-to-day living.

The editors would like to acknowledge our gratefulness to Philip Duce and the entire team at Inter-Varsity Press for their support for this volume, along with the contributors for their labours and participation. We would also like to thank the board, faculty and administration of Westminster Theological Seminary for their support in various ways that have helped enable the completion of this project. Special thanks go to our families, especially our wives, Cheryl and Catriona. Finally, we give highest thanks and praise to our triune God, not least because of the grace of the gospel, which bears a trinitarian shape. *Soli Deo gloria.*

PART 1

NEW TESTAMENT FOUNDATIONS

1

THE TRINITY AND THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Brandon D. Crowe

The Gospel of Matthew provides many insights into the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We find that Jesus is the obedient Son of God who enjoys an unparalleled relationship to God the Father. Along with the high Christology of Matthew we also find the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit closely related to both the Father and the Son. We will examine these features in this chapter in the following way. First, we will briefly look at the conception of God the Father in Matthew. Second, we will spend much of the chapter examining the divine Christology of Matthew. Third, we will look at the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son.

GOD THE FATHER

We begin with the concept of God as Father.¹ When we read of God as Father in Matthew, we are not encountering a new or previously unknown deity, but are reading about the same God of the Old Testament, the covenantal God of Israel. Therefore, we must understand the foundational self-revelation of God in the Old Testament

1. In this chapter I will use 'God' and 'Father' virtually interchangeably.

to understand the context for God in Matthew. It will be helpful to delineate three overarching aspects of the *theology* of Matthew.

First, God is the God of Old Testament Scripture. We can readily see Matthew's indebtedness to the theological outlook of the Old Testament by observing the frequency with which he quotes from and alludes to the Old Testament throughout his Gospel.² The number of quotations from the Old Testament is well over fifty (including ten notable fulfilment formula quotations), and allusions and other subtle references are too numerous to count.³ These quotations often point to the role of Jesus in relation to the Old Testament, but we should also not miss their role in underscoring the theological presuppositions established in the Old Testament.

A brief survey of some of the Old Testament texts that Matthew references will give us a sense of his overall understanding of God. Jesus states that God is in control over the affairs of humanity, and even over the created realm (Matt. 6:25–33; 10:26–33), which echoes the descriptions of God we find in the Old Testament as one who cares for his people (Ps. 37:4, 25). God hears the prayers and knows the needs of his children (Matt. 6:5–13), which is consistent with his responsiveness to prayer in the Old Testament (Gen. 25:21; Exod. 3:7–8; 1 Kgs 9:3; 2 Kgs 19:20; 20:5; 2 Chr. 7:1, 12, 15; Pss 6:9; 65:2; 66:19–20; Prov. 15:8, 29; Dan. 9:21). In Matthew we read that God is good to all, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45), which is consistent with the psalmist's poetic reflections on the goodness of God towards all that he has made (Ps. 145:9). Jesus further declares that God resides in the power and holiness of the heavens (Matt. 6:9), which reflects the transcendence of God's power in the Old Testament (Deut. 4:39; 10:14; 1 Kgs 8:23; Ps. 115:3; Dan. 2:28, 44). In sum, to contextualize what we learn about God in Matthew, we must first of all appreciate the continuity of God's character with the Old Testament Scriptures.

2. I will refer to the author of the first Gospel as 'Matthew', though the Gospel does not explicitly identify its author.

3. For further discussion on the OT in Matthew see Brandon D. Crowe, *The Obedient Son: Deuteronomy and Christology in the Gospel of Matthew*, BZNW 188 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 6–27.

Second, building on the previous point, in Matthew's theological outlook God alone is truly God: he has no rivals to his supremacy. God's dwelling in his glorious, heavenly habitation is consistently explained as the unique prerogative of the God of the Bible. Thus Moses proclaims in Deuteronomy 4:39 that the Lord is God in heaven, and there is no other. Additionally, the heavenly God alone is to be worshipped. We see this explicitly affirmed in Jesus' response to Satan's third temptation (Matt. 4:10). When Satan promises Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if he will worship him, Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, 'You shall worship the LORD your God and serve him only' (my tr.). Thus we find in Deuteronomy two fundamental tenets of the New Testament's understanding of God: God alone is the supreme Creator, and therefore he alone is to be worshipped. We see this again at Caesarea Philippi in Matthew 16. Here, in the ancient city that was the legendary home of the Greek god Pan, Peter affirms Jesus' identity as the Son of the 'living God' (Matt. 16:16). The phrase 'living God' highlights the reality and the activity of the biblical God in distinction from idolatrous so-called gods who did not intervene because they were not the Creator. Therefore, they were not to be worshipped (Deut. 5:26; Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26, 36; 2 Kgs 19:4; Pss 42:2; 84:2 [84:3 EVV]; Jer. 10:10; Hos. 1:10).

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of God's uniqueness as the Creator who is to be worshipped in Jesus' day; this was fundamental to the world view of Jewish monotheism⁴ that emphasized the Creator-creature distinction: God alone is the Creator, and all else falls under the category of 'creature' that must not be worshipped. Jesus' response to Satan in the wilderness is therefore consistent with core beliefs about God from the Old Testament. Indeed, in his temptation Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6 twice, which is the context for one of the most important monotheistic texts in the Bible known as the Shema (Deut. 6:4). The warnings against worshipping a created being in the Old Testament are numerous and clarion (e.g. Deut. 5:6-10; 9:10-21;

4. See Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Num. 25:1–13; Isa. 40:18–23; 43:10–15; 44:6–20; 45:15–23; 46:1–11). What is remarkable in Matthew, as I will argue in the next section, is the attribution of worship to Jesus in a way that does not in any way undermine the monotheism of the Bible.

Third, and also deriving from the Old Testament, we find in Matthew that although God is the creator of all things, he is also known specifically as the covenantal God of Israel. This means that to understand the contours of God in Matthew we must consider the history of Israel in the Old Testament. Matthew 1:1 begins by invoking two leading figures from Israel's history, as Jesus is identified as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. Matthew then includes a genealogy that gives not only the royal lineage of Jesus, but also traces the history of Israel from the humble beginnings of Abraham to the glories of David, to the nadir of the exile, and concludes with the glorious hope of the Messiah. God redeemed his people from Egypt and entered into covenant with them at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19). As the covenant God of Israel, God is known as Father to the nation (e.g. Exod. 4:22–23; Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 14:1–2; 32:4–6, 18–20, 43; Isa. 1:2; Jer. 3 – 4; 31:9, 20; Hos. 11:1). Therefore it is not a completely new development when we find Jesus referring to God as *Father* throughout Matthew. We already find that the Davidic king was known as God's son in the Old Testament (Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14), which grew organically out of the sonship of the nation as a whole (and indeed, out of the sonship of Adam). God had always been a Father to Israel, though, to be sure, we find Jesus speaking of God as Father with unparalleled intimacy.

In sum, to understand God in Matthew we must look first of all to the Old Testament, where we find that God is the one true God who had entered into covenant with Israel. At the same time, we learn more about God in Matthew than was revealed in the Old Testament. In particular, we learn that God is pre-eminently the Father of Jesus, who is the Son of God in a unique sense. But how does the distinctive sonship of Jesus relate to the existence and worship of the one true God of the Old Testament? This will be the focus of my next section, where I will examine the high Christology of Matthew.

JESUS, DIVINE SON OF GOD

Though we find in Matthew continuity with the character of God in the Old Testament, we must also note the new revelation we encounter in Matthew, particularly as it pertains to the relationship between the Father and the Son. We will see that Jesus as Son of God stands in clear continuity with Israel, but his sonship surpasses what was true of the nation and the king as son of God. Remarkably, in Matthew Jesus the Son is placed on the Creator side of the Creator–creature distinction.

Jesus and Israel as Son of God

We begin with one of the main Christological concepts in Matthew: Jesus as Son of God. To understand Jesus as Son of God we should again look first of all to the Old Testament. God was Father to Israel, and Israel was God's firstborn son (Exod. 4:22–23), and later this sonship finds particular focus in the Davidic king (2 Sam. 7:14). Thus Jesus' sonship in Matthew is like Israel as son of God, and like David as son of God. So the first clear reference to Jesus as Son of God in Matthew portrays Jesus' sonship in the light of Israel's sonship. In Matthew 2:15 we find Hosea 11:1 applied to Jesus ('out of Egypt I called my son', my tr.), which is an Old Testament text that speaks of God's love for his covenant people. Similarly, Jesus is identified as the beloved Son of God at his baptism (3:17), which may again recall the sonship of Israel, though the filial parallel to Israel is clearer in the temptations of Jesus. In Matthew 4:1–11 Jesus recapitulates the filial temptations of Israel in the wilderness as Jesus' own sonship is tested. Thus Satan explicitly questions the nature of Jesus' sonship in the first two temptations (Matt. 4:3, 6). Additionally, Jesus' first response comes from Deuteronomy 8:3, which derives from a context that underscores God's fatherly discipline of Israel (Deut. 8:5). Therefore it is commonplace to observe that 'Son of God' in Matthew 'must have to do in part with Jesus as the personification or embodiment of true, obedient Israel'.⁵

5. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel*

A comparison with the Gospel of Mark highlights the prominence of the Son of God theme in Matthew, since Jesus is identified as Son of God more frequently in Matthew. For example, in addition to the identification of Jesus as Son of God in Matthew 1 – 4, we find Jesus' sonship confessed by the disciples in Matthew 14:33, it is part of the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi (16:16), it is proclaimed by the heavenly voice at both the baptism (3:17) and the transfiguration (17:5), it is part of Caiaphas's question to Jesus at his trial (26:63), and the sonship of Jesus is also the focus of a round of taunts lobbed at him while nailed to the cross (27:39–43). The Son of God title also points to Jesus' kingly status, since Jesus is also the Son of David in Matthew (1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30–31; 21:9; 22:42; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7).

Jesus' privileged relationship with the Father

And yet there is more to the sonship of Jesus than simply recapitulating the history of Israel or fulfilling the hope of the Davidic king. In Matthew we find that Jesus is the Son of God in a way that goes beyond the filial precedents from the Old Testament. Jesus enjoys a unique and privileged relationship with God the Father. This becomes clearer as we move closer to the end of Matthew. Thus we must pay attention to the way that the identity of Jesus is progressively revealed throughout the Gospel, climaxing in the Great Commission (28:18–20).

We begin with the virginal conception and birth of Jesus (1:18–25). We do not find out everything there is to know about Jesus' special relationship to God in this text, but the whole passage is pregnant with significance. First we read that, in distinction from everyone else in Matthew's genealogy, no physical father is attributed to Jesus; we read simply that Jesus *was begotten* (*egennēthē*) of Mary (1:16). Given the cadence of the genealogy to this point in which every king is begotten by a father, this brief statement regarding Jesus' conception stands in sharp relief. Jesus' unique birth receives a bit more explanation in 1:18–25. We read again that Mary was found to be with child (passive voice) before she knew Joseph, her betrothed. At this

According to St. Matthew, ICC, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97), vol. 1, pp. 263–264.

point Matthew informs us that the child is conceived by the agency of the Holy Spirit (1:18, 20). Nowhere in 1:18–25 do we read explicitly that God is the Father of Jesus, but this reality becomes clearer as Matthew’s narrative progresses, and in the light of the whole Gospel we are on firm ground to identify a Son of God Christology in Matthew 1.⁶ This Son of God Christology, combined with the role of the (Holy) Spirit in Matthew, indicates that even from the conception of Jesus Matthew is pointing the reader to the remarkable relationship between Jesus and his Father. This special relationship is further underscored with the identification of Jesus as *Immanuel*, which is translated ‘God with us’ (1:23). I will return to this key theme of Matthew below, but can say by way of introduction that Immanuel is remarkably suggestive nomenclature to use of anyone, especially one who was conceived by the agency of the Holy Spirit in distinction from all other children.

What is introduced in Matthew 1 is therefore clarified as the Gospel progresses. We look next at the baptism of Jesus, which precipitates the opening of heaven, and the divine voice affirming Jesus’ sonship (3:16–17). Remarkably, at the baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit is again mentioned, and rests upon Jesus in the form of a dove. Moreover, the heavenly, fatherly voice identifies Jesus as his Son in whom he is well pleased, utilizing the term *eudokēsa*, which may allude to a pre-temporal choice of the Son of God as Messiah.⁷ But regardless of how one interprets this divine good pleasure, the collocation of Father, Son and Spirit in the baptism of Jesus is remarkable.

We also see Jesus’ privileged relationship to God in the way he speaks of God as ‘my Father’ throughout the Gospel. Jesus speaks about the Father with an intimacy and authority that bespeaks his own

6. See further Brandon D. Crowe, ‘The Song of Moses and Divine Begetting in Matt 1,20’, *Bib* 90 (2009), p. 52.

7. See Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), pp. 73–74; D. A. Carson, ‘Matthew’, in F. E. Gaebelin (ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984; repr. 1995), vol. 8, p. 109. Thus the language would entail the premise that the Son existed before the incarnation. Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus: The Modern Debate About the Messianic Consciousness*, ed. J. G. Vos, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953; repr. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2002), p. 186.

privileged relationship to the Father. Thus we read in the Sermon on the Mount that it is only those who do the will of Jesus' Father that enter into the kingdom of heaven, and this is closely linked with hearing and doing the words of Jesus (7:21, 24). Jesus further states that whoever acknowledges or denies him before men, he will acknowledge or deny before his Father in heaven (10:32–33). Here Jesus makes a pronouncement about the heavenly destinies of individuals in a way that invokes his own relationship with his Father. One's relationship to Jesus is determined by doing the will of Jesus' Father (12:50), and one's destiny in relation to Jesus' Father depends on one's relationship to Jesus (25:31–40).

Elsewhere we read that Jesus is privileged to know the mysterious will of his Father. When Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus affirms Peter and indicates that it was Jesus' own Father who revealed Jesus' true identity to Peter (16:17). Jesus also has the knowledge that the angels of the 'little ones' always see the face of his Father in heaven (18:10 *ESV*), and where two agree on earth, Jesus states that it will be done for them by his Father in heaven (18:19). Jesus also knows what his Father will do if we do not forgive our brothers from our hearts (18:35), and he knows that it is his Father who grants the privilege to sit at Jesus' right and left hand in the kingdom (20:23). Indeed, Jesus knows that he has but to ask and his Father will send him more than twelve legions of angels (26:53)! Jesus further affirms his own role as the Son of the Most High (26:63–64).

In addition to these profound statements Jesus can make about his Father, we should note how often he speaks of God as '*my* Father'. Even though God was the Father of Israel, it is rare to find individuals addressing God in this way, and certainly not to the extent or with the intimacy with which Jesus addressed God as '*my* Father'. It is instructive to observe that Jesus also grants his disciples the privilege of being sons of God, and often refers to God as '*your* Father', but he never uses the phrase '*our* Father' in a way that would imply he and the disciples share an identical sort of sonship. The reason is that Jesus' sonship is qualitatively different from the disciples' sonship. Jesus' sonship is unmediated; the disciples' sonship – though a wonderful blessing and

high privilege – is mediated through Jesus as Son of God.⁸ Thus Jesus' statements in Matthew not only reveal a deep knowledge about God and his will, but he even determines access to the Father! In sum, we find in Matthew that Jesus possesses an intimacy and knowledge of the deep things of his Father that excels all created beings.

Perhaps the most explicit statement we have about the relationship between Jesus and his Father is found in Jesus' prayer in 11:25–27. Here we are granted a marvellous insight into the depths of the divine unity of the Father and the Son.⁹ In this prayer Jesus thanks his Father for his divine good pleasure to hide the realities of eschatological salvation in Christ from the wise and understanding, and reveal them to the childlike. It is crucial to note the balance and mutuality of the statements in this prayer in two ways. First, we see in 11:27 that no one *knows* the Son, but the Father knows him. Perhaps this statement is to be expected since the Father knows all things. But Jesus rounds out this thought in 11:27 by saying no one knows the Father except the Son! The Father's divine knowledge of the Son is thus mirrored by the Son's divine knowledge of the Father. This mutual knowledge denotes the closest possible relationship between the Father and the Son, though they are different persons. Here is an indication that the Son was not created at a moment in time, but he must eternally be the Son to know the Father with the depth that he does; were he ever to have become the Son at some point in history, his knowledge of the Father would be limited.

A second way we see the mutuality of the Father and the Son is in the task of *revealing*. In 11:25 we read that the Father has revealed the knowledge of salvation to the childlike, whereas in 11:27 we read that Jesus has the authority to reveal the Father. In other words, a comparable revealing function is attributed to both the Father and the Son. What is even more remarkable is that Jesus reveals *the Father*.

8. See Richard J. Bauckham, 'The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology', *SJT* 31 (1978), pp. 245–260; cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. et al., 5 vols. (Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham, 2012–), vol. 1, pp. 52–53.

9. In the parallel passage in Luke 10:21 Jesus rejoices in *the Holy Spirit*, bringing the trinitarian aspects even more clearly to the fore.

Thus, although no one knows the Father except the Son, Jesus not only knows the Father but has the authority to reveal the Father to whomever (*hō ean*) he (the Son) desires, since all things have been given to him by the Father. Indeed, we also must not miss the parallelism between the Father's lordship of heaven and earth (11:25) and the 'all things' that have been given to Jesus (11:27 *ESV*), indicating Jesus as the steward of divine authority.¹⁰

We can say even more about this remarkable prayer. When Jesus speaks of the Father's good pleasure (*eudokia*, 11:26), given the context here and the usage of this term throughout the New Testament, this is most likely a reference to the Father's divine decree, especially in foreknowledge and election (cf. Luke 2:14; Eph. 1:5, 9; 1 Peter 1:2).¹¹ It is this divine purpose that Jesus as the Son speaks about with confidence, and the phrasing may even suggest that the Son knew of this plan before his incarnation.¹² Though this aspect may be debated, we must not miss the centrally important role of the Son himself in this prayer. As one scholar has noted:

Jesus' joy and thanksgiving do not relate to something taking place outside of Himself . . . Jesus thanks God because His own Person is the pivot, the center of the whole transaction. The glory of the Gospel dispensation with its sovereignty and wisdom is focused in His own Person.¹³

In other words, Jesus the Son occupies a central role in the revelation of salvation, even as he is privy to a knowledge of God that is

10. Cf. Joshua E. Leim, *Matthew's Theological Grammar: The Father and the Son*, WUNT 2.402 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), pp. 83–87.

11. See Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, tr. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–8), vol. 2, pp. 270, 272; Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, p. 80.

12. Note the aorist *egeneto* in Matt. 11:26, combined with a phrase that is not always obvious in English translations (*emprosthen sou*), which seems to denote the immediate presence of God (cf. BDAG, 'ἔμπροσθεν', p. 325, §1.b.β [cf. §1.b.δ]; Matt. 10:32–33). Could we have here an allusion to the eternal, trinitarian plan of salvation often known as the *pactum salutis* or Covenant of Redemption? See also Luke 2:49; 22:29; John 17:4; *Diogn.* 9.1; and historically Zech. 6:13; Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, pp. 84–92; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pp. 212–216.

13. Vos, *Self-Disclosure*, p. 147.

unparalleled among any created being. Jesus' position is squarely on the Creator side of the Creator–creature divide.

The disciples and Jesus' divine sonship

The prayer of Jesus in Matthew 11 provides a window into Jesus' own insight into the Father–Son relationship, and as the Gospel progresses we find that the disciples begin to understand more and more who Jesus really is. The next key text to consider comes in Matthew 14, where Jesus is recognized by the disciples as the Son of God (14:33). Jesus' actions in this context are dripping with divine significance. First, Jesus comes walking on the sea to his disciples in the midst of a raging storm. This action is more than just an impressive feat: it communicates to the disciples (and the reader of Matthew's Gospel) the divine identity of Jesus. For we read in the Old Testament that God alone tramples the waves of the sea (Job 9:8); it is the Lord alone in Isaiah who makes a way in the sea (Isa. 43:16); and, most impressively, we read in Psalm 77:20 (77:19 EVV; 76:20 LXX) that God made his path in the midst of the chaotic sea. In the same way, Jesus walks confidently upon the sea.

Second, in response to the stupefaction of the disciples (it is no wonder they thought Jesus to be a ghost), Jesus responds with words of comfort and authority that should be read in the light of God's self-revelation in the Old Testament: 'Take heart; it is I [*egō eimi*]; do not be afraid' (14:27, my tr.). The divine presence that should calm our fears is characteristic of God's unique supremacy in Isaiah 40 – 55. Third, not only does Jesus walk on the sea, but in his presence the wind and waves flee (14:32). This further recalls the divine presence in Psalm 77:17, along with texts such as Job 26:11–12¹⁴ where the waters tremble at the divine presence. Miracles that demonstrate mastery over the natural realm are singularly impressive, and Matthew 14 is arguably even more impressive than Matthew 8:26, where Jesus calms a storm with only his speech. Although one should not underestimate the significance of Jesus' actions in Matthew 8, it appears that the disciples

14. For other relevant texts see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 2, pp. 509–510; Leim, *Matthew's Theological Grammar*, pp. 139–147.

are even more amazed at the silence of the waves without a word in Matthew 14:32.

The disciples' amazement leads to a fourth observation, which is the worship of Jesus in 14:33, in conjunction with the confession that Jesus is the Son of God. Due to a combination of factors, it is best to understand the potentially ambiguous *proskyneō* as 'worship', since Jesus' actions and words are divine – he walks on the sea, calms the storm with his presence and speaks in a way that is proper to God. Thus again we see how greater clarity into Jesus' identity is gained as the Gospel unfolds, here in reference to the worship of him. In Matthew 2 we find the magi worshipping Jesus in his infancy (2:11). Though it is unclear how well the magi understood the significance of their actions, they are portrayed positively in Matthew's narrative. In contrast to King Herod, they have responded appropriately to the birth of Jesus. When Jesus is tempted by the devil in the wilderness, he affirms the teaching of Deuteronomy that only the Lord God should be worshipped and served (Matt. 4:10; cf. Deut. 6:13). The prerogative of God alone to be worshipped was axiomatic in Jesus' Jewish context. Therefore it is most remarkable in Matthew 14 that Jesus himself does not rebuke his disciples when they worship him as Son of God. Indeed, all signs in the narrative, not least of which is the theophanic language, point to the legitimacy and propriety of worshipping Jesus as the Son of God in a transcendent sense in 14:33.¹⁵ The reader of Matthew is being swept up in the Christological momentum of the Gospel that is leading to the crescendo of the Great Commission.

The disciples' experience in Matthew 14 finds verbal expression in Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ in Matthew 16:16. As J. P. Meier has observed, 'What 14:22–33 presented by way of dramatic narrative now receives its full explication in the words of Peter and Jesus.'¹⁶ Thus it is important to read Matthew 16:16 in the light of what

15. So John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1991; repr. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2004), p. 100; Charles L. Quarles, *A Theology of Matthew: Jesus Revealed as Deliverer, King, and Incarnate Creator*, EBT (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2013), pp. 169–170.

16. Meier, *Vision*, p. 108.

has come before it, since the Gospel progressively reveals the mystery of the person of Jesus the Son; we know more about who Jesus is the closer we come to the end of the Gospel. Much ink has been spilled on the role of Peter and the church in Matthew 16, but we must not miss the significant Christological point that is foundational to Peter's confession. Particularly noteworthy is the remarkable way that Peter's confession recognizes Jesus' status as uncreated. As noted above, when the Bible refers to God as the *living* God, it underscores the ontological reality that God alone is the true God who really exists. It is also an indication that God is the source of all life, and he is therefore self-sufficient. He is not in need of anything else to be; he simply is. Peter's statement in Matthew 16:16 is thus more than a messianic confession (though it is certainly that); it is also a confession that Jesus is the Son of the Father who shares the quality of *living* and therefore has all life in himself.¹⁷ As the Son of the living God, Peter is pointing to the unique position that Jesus inhabits not only as Messiah, but as the divine Son of God. This is one reason why Jesus blesses Peter's answer and tells him that the Father has revealed this mystery to Peter (16:17). It also helps us understand why Peter would rebuke Jesus for announcing his impending death. How could the Son of the *living* God face *death*? But the cross is at the heart of Jesus' messianic task, and we further learn that as the Son of the living God Jesus will not be bound by death, but will overcome death in the resurrection (16:18, 21). Thus to understand the significance of Peter's confession we may rephrase it by saying Jesus is the *living* Son of God who has all life in himself. Again we see Jesus on the Creator side of the Creator-creature distinction.

In Matthew 16 we reach a turning point in the Gospel. From this point Jesus moves deliberately and explicitly towards Jerusalem. From this point the die has been cast, and now we see Jesus speaking with a greater clarity about his person and mission. After Jesus' prediction of his impending death and resurrection, his true glory is revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration (17:2). In the last week of his public ministry Jesus receives the praise of children in the temple (21:9, 14-15;

17. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 109; Vos, *Self-Disclosure*, p. 180.

cf. Ps. 8:2),¹⁸ and confounds the Pharisees from Psalm 110:1 by asking how the Messiah can be both David's son (Jesus came from the line of David) and David's Lord (since he has authority over and existed before David).¹⁹ Indeed, Jesus' use of Palm 110 appears to be even more remarkable, since he implies that he himself is 'my Lord' to whom the Lord (YHWH) spoke in David's psalm.²⁰ After this exchange, no one dared to ask Jesus any more questions (Matt. 22:46).

One of the most climactic moments in the Christological revelation of Matthew comes when Jesus stands trial before the high priest. At this moment Caiaphas adjures Jesus by the living God (!) if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus responds by pointing to Caiaphas's own confession of who he is, and counters with a rebuke of sorts. Jesus quotes Daniel 7:13 in conjunction with his status as Son of Man – the one who is at the right hand of God's majesty and is coming with the clouds of heaven. The title Son of Man is much debated, but it is widely agreed that it is a title used to refer to Jesus' ministry, his passion and his coming again in glory. We therefore must not miss the exalted nature of Jesus that is found in the title Son of Man – though the Son of Man suffers, he will reign and come with the clouds. If we take the cue from Matthew 26:64 and trace the Son of Man back to Daniel 7, which is the most likely option for the imagery of this title, we find that the Son of Man comes to the presence of the Ancient of Days and is given an everlasting kingdom that will never be destroyed.

Jesus as Immanuel

This Son of Man imagery also plays a role in the Great Commission when the resurrected Jesus explains his authority over all things. This brings us to one of the most important Christological themes in all of Matthew: Jesus as Immanuel. This is the theme of the first of Matthew's ten fulfilment formula citations (1:22–23), and serves as

18. Cf. Leim, *Matthew's Theological Grammar*, pp. 166–173.

19. On which see Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 236–238.

20. Cf. Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 47–54.

an *inclusio* that bookends Matthew's Gospel. We find the mention of Jesus as 'God with us' in the first episode following the genealogy (1:18–25), and we find it again in the last statement of the Gospel in which Jesus promises to be with his disciples even to the end of the age (28:20). It is important to understand what is entailed by identifying Jesus as 'God with us'. Most simply, it refers to Jesus as the fulfilment of the divine covenant presence, which is the highest covenant blessing imaginable. God's covenant presence was the blessing experienced by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God's presence was promised to the Israelites as they looked forward to the Promised Land (Lev. 26:12). God's presence filled the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34–35) and later the temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11; Pss 74:2; 76:2; 132:13; etc.). In Matthew Jesus is greater than the temple (12:5–6), greater than Solomon who built the temple (12:42) and greater than the priests who served in the temple (9:1–8). For Matthew, Jesus as Immanuel underscores the Son as God's covenant presence with us in the most profound sense.

Yet we must not neglect to consider the various implications of God's covenant presence. It is indeed the most glorious blessing imaginable that Jesus is God's presence with us, yet this presence is a curse for those who oppose him. Put differently, Jesus is God's presence for blessing or for cursing, depending on one's relationship to Jesus. We can see this by looking to the Old Testament context, where we find Immanuel. In Isaiah 7 King Ahaz of Judah refuses to heed God's command to ask him for a sign, opting instead to trust the Assyrians for protection. In response Isaiah informs Ahaz that the Lord himself will provide a sign to Ahaz – the child who will be called Immanuel. In Isaiah the sign of Immanuel is a curse to Ahaz, who is rebelling against the word of God. However, this same child is a blessing to those whose hope is in the Lord. In the same way, Jesus' presence is a curse for those who, like the Pharisees, reject his word (Matt. 23), but a blessing for those whose trust is in the Son of God (Matt. 14:22–33; 18:20).

In the light of these features of Jesus-as-Immanuel, does this title mean that Jesus is divine? To answer this question, we must again pay careful attention to the way Matthew's Gospel provides more

information for the reader as the narrative progresses. That which is introduced suggestively at the beginning of the Gospel is apprehended with greater clarity by the Gospel's conclusion. In Matthew 1 we read of Jesus' lineage deriving from David and Abraham. We read that he is born of Mary, without the agency of a physical father, but conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. His birth is miraculous, and numerous aspects of his early life are fulfilments of Scripture. We have also traced the intimate relationship Jesus shares with his Father beyond any created being, to which we should add the immense authority of Jesus over sicknesses, the demonic and the natural realm. Later Jesus makes the incredible promise that wherever two or three of his disciples in the church are gathered in his name, there he is with them (18:20). Finally we read in the Great Commission that Jesus is worshipped and all authority in heaven and earth belongs to him,²¹ and he will be with his disciples always, even to the end of the age (28:20). Jesus' final promise of his continued presence with his disciples clarifies what is already present in 1:23: he is the fulfilment of God's covenant presence with his people in a way that transcends the presence of any created being. Jesus is the divine Immanuel, who is placed in closest collocation with the Father and the Spirit (28:19). In the light of these textual features we should conclude that Jesus is always with us as the divine Immanuel.

FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

Now that we have seen the supremacy of God and the divine nature of the Son of God, we should note the way that Matthew expresses the nature and role of the (Holy) Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son. What we find is a remarkable unity among all three persons in a way that points to the divine role of the Spirit, surpassing any created being.

The Holy Spirit is identified in a number of ways in Matthew. First, Matthew closely associates the Spirit with God the Father. At the

21. Notice the parallels to the authority of the Father in 11:25.

baptism in 3:16 it is the Spirit of God who rests upon Jesus, and Jesus casts out demons by the Spirit of God (12:28), which closely follows the citation of Isaiah 42 that speaks of the Lord's Spirit on the Servant (12:18). The Spirit is elsewhere known as the Spirit of the disciples' Father (10:20).

Second, we also see a close association of the Spirit with Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the creative power behind Jesus' conception (1:18, 20),²² and it is the Spirit who empowers Jesus for his messianic ministry (3:11, 16; 4:1; 12:18, 28). To blaspheme the Son of Man will be forgiven, but blaspheming the Holy Spirit (who empowers the Son of Man) is blaspheming God and will not be forgiven (12:31–32). Additionally, it is the Spirit who inspired David's prophecy that the Messiah would be both David's son and David's Lord (22:43; cf. Ps. 110:1). In a few instances we find Jesus speaking of both his Father and the Holy Spirit, in addition to Jesus' own role as Son of Man (10:20–33; 12:28–32). Taken together, these texts reveal the personality of the Spirit, which is a crucial aspect in recognizing his deity. In sum, in Matthew the Spirit of the Father is also known as the Spirit of God, and this is the Spirit who empowers Jesus for his ministry. The role of the Holy Spirit in Matthew underscores the principle that 'all persons of the Trinity share in all the external acts of God (*opera ad extra trinitatis indivisa sunt*)'.²³

Further supporting this principle, in Matthew we have several texts that present Father, Son and Spirit – sometimes all three present at the same time – in a way that indicates the divine status of each person. At the birth of Jesus we find the Holy Spirit – who, as we have seen, is the Spirit of the Father – is the agent of the conception of Jesus (1:18–20).²⁴ At the baptism of Jesus we find the voice of the Father, the descent of the dove on Jesus and the sonship of Jesus proclaimed (3:16–17). Here is no modalism, but the simultaneous existence of all three persons of

22. Cf. J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1930; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), p. 140.

23. Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 43.

24. The divine passive is also used in 1:16, 18, 20.

the Godhead at a crucial moment in the history of redemption – the anointing of Jesus for his messianic ministry. In sum, we see the presence of the Father, Son and Spirit throughout the Gospel of Matthew. The Spirit occupies a central role in the work of Jesus the Son in the inauguration and instruction on the kingdom of God the Father.

A similar moment is found on the mount of transfiguration, where the Father, the glory cloud and the Son are all present at the same time as Jesus heads towards the cross (17:5). Though the Spirit is not mentioned explicitly in the way he is at the baptism, one may argue that we have scriptural warrant for connecting the theophanic glory cloud in Matthew 17 with a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, especially since the wording of the divine voice is so similar to the baptism account where the Spirit descends as a dove.²⁵

The climax of Matthew's Gospel comes in the Great Commission (28:18–20), and this is also the clearest text in Matthew, and indeed one of the clearest texts in all of the New Testament, that explicitly coordinates the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The interrelatedness and distinctions between the persons of the Godhead, which were perhaps more opaque at the beginning of the Gospel, are stated much more forthrightly in Jesus' resurrected state. In Matthew 28 we read that Jesus is the one who has all authority in heaven and on earth, and he commands his disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in *the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. It is significant that the singular *name* encompasses Father, Son and Spirit. Additionally, the definite article is repeated before each person of the Trinity to emphasize the distinctness of each person. The implications seem to be that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are able to be described by one name, yet this does not lead to a conflation of divine persons: Father, Son and Spirit remain distinct persons who share the one name.²⁶ And as the climax of Matthew's Gospel, we must wrestle

25. On the glory cloud as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit see Meredith M. Kline, 'The Holy Spirit as Covenant Witness' (ThM thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1972), pp. 5–26; Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), pp. 15, 29; Vern S. Poythress, *The Manifestation of God: A Biblical Theology of God's Presence* (forthcoming), chs. 5, 16–17, 43.

26. See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, pp. 270, 305–306.

with the implications of this statement in the light of the whole Gospel that precedes the final commissioning scene. Put differently, the final words of Jesus sum up his teaching, and our understanding of Jesus in Matthew must be related to the trinitarian directive he gives in his parting words. Therefore it is incumbent upon us to identify and address the trinitarian nature of Matthew's Gospel.

CONCLUSION

We find in Matthew the good news that is trinitarian in nature. It is good news that comes from Jesus, the resurrected Messiah, the one who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus is the Son of God and Mediator who grants us the privilege of becoming sons and daughters of his Father in heaven. Along with this privilege comes the abiding promise that he is Immanuel, who is with us now and will continue to be with us until the end of the age.

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BRANDON D. CROWE (MDiv, Reformed Theological Seminary; PhD, University of Edinburgh) is associate professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary and book review editor for the *Westminster Theological Journal*.

CARL R. TRUEMAN (MA, Cambridge University; PhD, Aberdeen University) is professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and pastor of Cornerstone OPC in Amblert, Pennsylvania.

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