

The Johannine idea of sonship may be regarded as a fuller exposition of what may be gathered of the filial consciousness of Jesus from the Synoptics, and it is important to stress its full content against the reduction of the meaning of sonship in developed Trinitarian theology. Sonship involves the unparalleled mutual intimacy of Father and Son. . . . The Son is the perfect reflection of the nature and character of the Father. . . . He represents the Father among men [*sic*] (Jn. 5.19. . .). The Son is the Father's true Son only in his absolute renunciation of his own will and his whole-hearted identification of himself with his Father's will (Jn. 6.38). So far from heightening the Christology implicit in Jesus' use of Abba, the Fourth Gospel's tradition of his teaching stresses dependence and obedience of the Son to a remarkable degree. . . . This obedience of course is not the obedience of the slave but the obedience of the Son, who in love willingly identifies himself with the Father's purpose (Jn. 14.31). Neither in the Synoptics nor in John do we find that sonship is static being; sonship is a relationship to be fulfilled in mission, and as such both determines and is validated by Jesus' whole life and fate. The credibility of his claim to unique sonship cannot be separated from his path to the cross, nor from his resurrection as the Father's seal of approval on the accomplishment of the filial mission. This is why the glory of the Johannine Son is fully attained on the cross.²³

We have seen in this survey the great importance to the Fourth Evangelist of three sorts of christological language: (1) the Wisdom language, which explains the most about this Gospel, (2) the Son of Man language, which helps bridge the human and divine sides of the Son, and (3) sonship language, which like the other two sorts of terminology can be used to express the full gamut of the career of the Incarnate One. There are of course other titles that are sometimes used, such as Shepherd, Lamb of God, Holy One of God (John 6.69), Teacher and Master (13:13-14), King of Israel (1:49), or in the passion account King of the Jews (chapters 18-19), but they play minor roles compared to these three categories we have discussed.²⁴ John of course uses the term "Christ" with some frequency and knows for instance that Christ is not just a name but is first a title (4:25-29), and one especially appropriate for a Jew to confess of Jesus (1:41, 7:26-31, 11:27). Indeed he thinks it is something Christians must believe and confess (20:31). But John wishes to go beyond more limited Jewish categories in order to say something about a universal savior, not unlike Luke did, and furthermore the verses where the term "Christ" appears do not really add much to what we have already noted from these other categories. Notably, Christ is almost never a term that Jesus uses to speak of himself in this Gospel [but cf. 17:3, where it is a name].

CHRIST COME IN THE FLESH: THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES

Whether one thinks the epistles predate or postdate the final form of the Fourth Gospel—and it is my view that the former is the case—it is clear enough that these epistles have a close connection with John's Gospel in the matter of Christology. This is not to say that these letters are loaded with christological material. For example, there is really nothing in 3 John of christological substance or significance at all, and so we will not discuss it.²⁵ 1 and 2 John, however, present us with some crucial data, and it has been said that the "nucleus of the teachings of 1 and 2 John is the view of Christ. No other NT writing stresses the importance of the humanity of Jesus for Christian faith as do these two documents."²⁶

It also seems clear that these two documents have been formulated in the heat of a christological controversy over whether "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (2 John 7). They thus reflect what must have been one of the earliest christological controversies in church history.²⁷ It is not surprising, then, that our author is concerned about the "doctrine" (*didachē*) of Christ (2 John 9) and that these letters reflect in a fresh way that there is something called christological orthodoxy. Even in the first century, christological orthodoxy was forged or revealed in the fires of controversy. We will begin by examining 2 John and work our way back to 1 John.

At the outset of 2 John we find the characteristic emphasis on Jesus being the Father's Son. Verse 7 is the key confessional statement that we also find in 1 John. The author insists that Christians must acknowledge that "Jesus has come in the flesh." We will discuss this recurring phrase in some detail when we get to 1 John 4:2. Verses 9-10 express the typical Johannine exclusiveness—the only avenue to the Father is through the Son. Continuing in Jesus' teaching (or is it continuing in the doctrine about Jesus?) is the means by which one has God, both the Father and the Son. It is possible that Christ's divinity is implied by the parallel construction at the end of the clauses at v. 8a and 8b.

We turn now to 1 John and will concentrate our discussion on this important document. 1 John is probably not a letter but a homily that was circulated in the Johannine community (cf., e.g., Hebrews). It has often been noted that the beginning of 1 John is similar to John 1, but

the differences are also telling. 1 John speaks of *what* was from the beginning, *what* we have heard (the *what* being identified at the end of v. 1 as "the word of life"). Furthermore, v. 2 also seems to indicate that the subject here is not a person but rather something—the eternal life that was with the Father or the word about it.²⁸ Yet it cannot be a mere oral message, for the author speaks of seeing it, and it cannot be a mere abstract concept, because he also speaks of touching it. Perhaps one may say there is some sort of interplay here between the Son as Word and what he brought to believers—the word and indeed the reality of eternal life. One may also ask what the phrase "from the beginning" means. Does it mean from the beginning of time, or does it refer to what has been heard from the beginning of Jesus' ministry? Perhaps the latter is more likely, not least because the author speaks of hearing, seeing, and touching this something. Yet we cannot be sure that the author means the Word of life has been *touched* or heard since the beginning. Supporting the conclusion that 1:1 is about something, a something that had a beginning in time, such as a message, is the closely parallel phrase in 3:11, where the subject is clearly "the message you have heard from the beginning" (again *ap' archēs* as in 1:1).

Verses 3 gives the first clear reference to Christ called "his Son Jesus Christ" and, as is typical in Johannine contexts, the reference is found in tandem with the mention of the Father. We see here already the characteristic ways Jesus will be referred to in this homily—as Jesus Christ (with Christ used as a name) and as God's Son. There are no references to Jesus as Son of Man in this document or in the Johannine epistles as a whole, which is perhaps something of a surprise with the emphasis on Christ having come in the flesh. The Son is Christ, and in our author's view to have fellowship with the Son is also to have fellowship with the Father.

1 John 1:7 brings into play the Elder's understanding of what Christ accomplished on the cross—"the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin." Though such a notion is perhaps implied in the Fourth Gospel, it is nowhere stated in this fashion, but then the Gospel is an example of narrative theology, not an assemblage of theological propositions. Both the Gospel and 1 John place plenty of emphasis on the importance of Jesus' death and its salvific benefits in general terms.²⁹

In 1 John 2:1b Jesus is called "the Righteous One," a title we have already seen predicated of Jesus in Acts.³⁰ Not only did Jesus' death cleanse others from sin, he himself was without sin (cf. Hebrews). Also in this verse is a concept that comports with the forensic and trial lan-

guage that occurs repeatedly in the Fourth Gospel—namely, that Jesus is the believer's Advocate. This presumably means that he is a witness or an intermediary for the defense of Christians in heaven. As an innocent or righteous one, he is qualified to represent human beings without bias. On top of this he is able to plead his own righteousness and his righteous deed on the cross in the believer's behalf (cf., e.g., Heb. 9:24, 1 Tim. 2:5).

The one who denies that Jesus is "the Christ" is said in 1 John 2:22 to be a liar. The use of the title rather than the name Christ here suggests the author's Jewish background and that he is familiar with how the term was used before it became a name. He goes on to say in the same verse that the denial that Jesus is the Christ is tantamount to denying both the Son and the Father. This is amplified and clarified in the following verse in the form: "No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father." It seems clear that these statements arise out of a context of controversy, where some, even some involved in the Christian community to whom the Elder is writing, were denying these crucial christological ideas. In other words, remaining in the Christian fellowship, which our author equates with remaining or participating in the Son and the Father (1:3),³¹ requires that one believe certain things about Jesus. Spiritual incorporation is dependent on orthodoxy in some sense.

We are told in 3:8 why the Son was revealed—to destroy the works of the devil, which, in the Elder's view, are chiefly sin and death. The verb *ephantōthē* implies the incarnation. The Son existed before he was revealed on earth. 1 John 3:16 states that believers know what love is by considering the cross. Love is defined by the christological paradigm—"he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for one another." Throughout this homily belief and obedience go together and nowhere is this more clear than in 3:23–24, where God's commandment (singular)³² is that "we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another" with the result that, according to v. 24 "all who obey his commandments abide in him."

Believing in the name of Jesus is a Jewish way of saying believing in the person and nature and character of Jesus. It is not as though the name is assumed to have some sort of magical quality; in Jewish thinking a name is not a mere label but normally connotes or conveys the nature of the one named. This formulation is quite striking if we compare it to texts like Mark 12:28–31 and par., where the two great Old Testament commandments (loving God and neighbor) are called a sin-

gle commandment. Here we have a christianized version of this, where belief in Christ takes the place of loving God in the twofold single commandment. This is not a surprise, since for our author loving or believing in the Son also entails loving and believing in the Father. One may also wish to compare another and different christianized version of the *SHEMA* in 1 Cor. 8:6.³³

The critical text of the letter thus far in christological matters is 1 John 4:2. The context has to do with the testing of the spirits—one can recognize a person who has the Spirit of God if their "spirit" recognizes that Jesus has come in the flesh. Every spirit that doesn't confess Jesus is not from God.³⁴ Now this confession does not mean simply that one recognizes that Jesus was human or a man but rather that he preexisted and took on human flesh, and thus is more than (though not less than) a human being. This is evident from what follows in 1 John 4:9, where we are told that God sent his Son. Someone must first exist before they can be sent. Our author is not talking about a mere concept in the mind of God that he then equates with or sees as embodied in a person named Jesus. Thus, the character of this crucial confession is really twofold: (1) Jesus was a real human being; (2) he was the divine Son of God, who came to earth and took on flesh. There is perhaps also a third implication, namely, that Christ is still in the condition of having flesh, though glorified flesh in heaven.³⁵ The concept of the incarnation is crucial to the Elder for several reasons, not the least of which is its present implications about Christ in heaven and about the life of the believer. In his view, Christ is still the God-man, albeit in a glorified state and place. He did not cease to be human or Jesus when he rose from the dead and ascended on high. In other words, in one sense the effect of the incarnation on God's Son is permanent, and the author can speak about the incarnation in the present tense even long after he believes it first came about. There is undoubtedly an anti-docetic thrust to some of the Elder's message, but there is also an anti-low Christology thrust as well. Our author wants to assert both the divinity and ongoing humanity of the Son.

1 John 4:14 again speaks about the Son who was sent from heaven by the Father, but here something new is added. He was sent as Savior of the world. This Hellenistic phrase, which would have seemed quite familiar to those who knew anything about the emperor cult in the first century, may be an attempt by our author to better relate his essentially Jewish ideas to a largely Gentile audience in the Diaspora (in Ephesus perhaps). Verse 15 makes essentially the same sort of

remark we have already seen about acknowledging Jesus, only here instead of talking about acknowledging him as the Christ, the subject is acknowledging him as the Son of God. The former would have to do with his relationship to Israel, if the terms are being used specifically (i.e., he is the Jewish Messiah), the latter with Jesus' intimate relationship to the Father. Such a confession leads to mutual indwelling between the believer and God. Clearly the Elder thinks that one must believe something definite about Jesus to participate in Christian spiritual life.

1 John 5 begins again with a focus on confession. New birth hinges on belief in Jesus as the Christ. 1 John 5:6 is certainly one of the most debated verses in all of the Johannine corpus. Since at least the Middle Ages many have seen here a reference to Christ coming to the believer through the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Bound up in this discussion is the relationship of this text to John 3:5-6. I have shown at length elsewhere that these texts must be interpreted in light of their Jewish background, not in light of later Christian thinking about the sacraments.³⁶ When this is done it will be seen that water is a frequent Jewish metaphor for various parts of the process of human conception and physical birth including (1) semen, which is called a drop of water and the wife a well where the water of life is to be placed; (2) the breaking of the waters as the process of birth begins in earnest; (3) the actual birth itself, with the fluids that come forth with the baby. John 3:5-6 provides us with a classic example of parallel structure—to be born out of water and of Spirit is explained in v. 6 to mean to experience physical birth and then spiritual birth ("Flesh is born of flesh, and spirit is born of Spirit").

Likewise here in 1 John 5:6 the discussion is not about sacraments and their effects but about Christ, with water referring to his physical birth or incarnation and blood referring to his death. In our author's view the three that testify to the believer, telling the real truth about Jesus and who he is, are (1) the incarnation; (2) the atoning death of Christ; and (3) the Holy Spirit. The Elder in fact calls these three God's witness or testimony to who Jesus is. The coming of Christ to the believer spiritually could not have happened if Christ had not first taken on flesh; second, died on the cross; and third if the Spirit had not conveyed the benefits of the life and death of Jesus to that believer. Thus, the birth, the death, and the Spirit are the three great witnesses that testify Jesus is the Incarnate One and Redeeming One who is risen above and can send the Spirit.

The one who has the Son has eternal life, but the coming of God's Son not only conveys life to the believer but also light or understanding, as 1 John 5:20 makes evident. There has been some debate as to whether 1 John 5:20 provides us with another example where *theos* is predicated of Christ, but the Greek sentence structure and word order do not favor this conclusion. Verse 20 refers to "the one who is true" as someone distinct from the Son whom the Son has revealed to the believer, and furthermore the next major clause refers to "his Son Jesus Christ," again distinguishing the Son from the Father. With the twofold use of the phrase "him who is true" to refer to God the Father, it is only natural to take the final portion of the verse ("he is the true God and eternal life") to refer to the Father, not the Son. The believer is in both the Father and the Son, but the former is called "he who is true" not least because the elder has said in 1 John 5:9 that it is ultimately God who has testified to who Jesus is in a threefold manner.

It is clear enough that this homily is not a doctrinal tract or mere theological exercise. It is an attempt to combat christological problems which have caused soteriological misunderstanding and also practical problems of community division (see 1 John 1:18-19). Our author is polemical enough to call those whom he attacks antichrists because in his view they are guilty of aberrant, not merely inadequate, christological beliefs. He sees their presence in the community as a sign his churches are in the end-times (1 John 1:18). In response to the problems these now-departed persons have caused, our author stresses the incarnation and its implications and benefits. There is nothing here that does not comport with what we found in the Fourth Gospel, but there are nuances and expansions of the basic Johannine christological ideas here forged in the fires of controversy.

The Elder does not draw on the Johannine Son of Man material, nor on the whole does he reflect the deep indebtedness to the Wisdom corpus that we found in the Fourth Gospel, though his conception of the incarnation and of Christ as a corporate personality does seem to owe something to the Wisdom material. Our author is concerned with the affirmations about Christ as Son of God and as the Christ, and to a lesser extent as world Savior. Specifically he is worried about denials of the proposition that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, denials that undercut not only the humanity of Christ but also his atoning work on the cross and present ongoing benefit to believers. In other words, the focus of this homily is more single-mindedly on the importance of the incarnation and its implications for the Christian's confession and

faith. Doubtless we should not take these ad hoc documents as encompassing all of what the Elder thought about Christ. What we can, however, gather from these documents is that he had a very high Christology indeed, seeing Christ as both divine and human, and seeing the confession of that belief as essential to being a Christian. As we turn to the last of the Johannine documents in our next section, which seems to come from a hand different from that of the Elder, we must keep these fundamental Johannine ways of looking at and expressing things in mind.

THE LION AND THE LAMB: THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE APOCALYPSE

The book of Revelation is different enough in genre and Christology from the Gospel and Epistles of John that it could warrant a separate treatment, but it is similar enough to the other Johannine material to justify placing it in this chapter, especially because it likely is written by someone named John who was a part of that community, was influenced by the various ideas and themes we find in the Fourth Gospel and Epistles, and this has affected the way he articulates or communicates the various apocalyptic visions he had as a seer or prophet.

To say the book of Revelation is indebted to Jewish apocalyptic literature is to say too little. It is part of a corpus of such literature that shares many features of the genre including the recounting of heavenly visions and journeys, the use of hyperbolic and fantastic metaphors and multivalent symbols to speak about certain historical and eternal realities, the interest in how God will end human affairs and in matters of the general timing of such events, and a passion for justice for God's people, who are experiencing difficulties including persecution and in some cases even death. Apocalyptic literature is in general minority literature and speaks in a kind of symbolic and coded language about things that in many cases could not be aired in public. Often this literature is concerned with the question of theodicy, how God can be good and yet bad things happen to God's people.³⁷

The book of Revelation was probably written during the last decade of the first century, and was certainly written to Christians in cities in western Asia Minor who were experiencing various difficulties. The lateness of the document does not prevent it from having a plethora of primitive and also some highly polished images of and ideas about

Christ. Since Revelation is a document meant to address Christians in physical and spiritual danger, we should not be surprised if it concentrates on images and ideas of Christ that would be helpful to address that situation. It is natural then for the author to stress the sovereignty of God, the power of Christ, Christ's judgment of the wicked for the saints, and the like.

Nor is it surprising that we do not really find a gentle Jesus meek and mild in this book but rather one who sits on the judgment seat with his Father, one who rides forth in judgment with a sword proceeding from his mouth, one who even when he can be seen as a lamb at the same time can also be seen as a lion. Here is a mighty and fearless Christ indeed, with most of the emphasis on what Christ in heaven now is (an exalted Lord) or will be for believers when he returns. There is little attention then here to the ministry of Jesus or the merely human side of Jesus except by way of emphasizing his death and its benefits. There is some justification for Richard's conclusion that the author employs Christology to convey his apocalyptic message, but the reverse could also be argued.³⁸ Perhaps it is best to say that apocalyptic thinking has affected how this author expresses his Christology.

A quick survey of the various titles applied to Christ in Revelation reveals the following: Christ appears only seven times, Son of God once, Son of Man twice (but in each case as part of an analogy, not a title), Logos or Word once, but Lord twenty-three times (used also interchangeably of God and of Christ) and Lamb twenty-eight times. In this work none of the human titles of Jesus such as Teacher, Rabbi, Servant, Prophet, or human being are used. It is equally interesting that some of the more Hellenistic titles such as Savior or God are also notably absent. In other words, the terminology and titles of this book are very different from John's Gospel, where Son of God and Son of Man dominate the landscape and from the Epistles, where Christ and Son of God are prominent. The extreme Jewishness of this document and its different christological terms are enough to make one suspect it was not written by the same person who wrote either the Gospel or the Epistles or both, an opinion that is only reinforced when one notes the very different sort of Greek we have in this document compared to the rest of the Johannine corpus. This document has a very high Christology stressing Christ's heavenly exaltation and roles since and because of his death and resurrection.

The christological tone for the whole book is set in the very first

chapter with the first christological vision of John of Patmos. The book begins with the assertion that this is "the revelation of Jesus Christ," and it is probably no accident that it is only in this chapter that we have the title Jesus Christ (three times). "The first Christian readers would need to be led from Jesus Christ to the Lamb, the name which dominates the second part of the book."³⁹ Jesus is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5) and also the one who will come on the clouds in the future for judgment (1:7). Revelation 1:5 also mentions Jesus' redemptive death and blood.

It is also in this chapter that we have the first of only two references in this book to Jesus as one like a Son of Man; only here his garb makes clear his divinity. What is interesting about this is that the author begins here a trend that will continue throughout the work of applying Old Testament images and names formerly used of Yahweh but now applied to Christ or both the Father and Christ. Whereas it was the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 that had such raiment, here it is Christ who is both divine and one like a Son of Man (1:13). It is not clear whether the person referred to as Alpha and Omega in Rev. 1:8 is God or Christ (see also Rev. 21:6), though it is probably God, but more clearly in 1:17-18 Christ is referred to as the First and Last (and in Rev. 22:13 he is the Alpha and Omega), the one who was dead but is now alive forever and has in his hands the keys of Death and Hades and also holds the churches in the palm of his hand, something a Christian under fire might find comforting. From this lofty christological height the book never descends.

It is worthwhile considering for a moment the significance of calling both God and Christ the Alpha and Omega. R. Bauckham is likely correct in suggesting that it conveys the idea that the person in question "precedes and originates all things, as their Creator, and he will bring all things to their eschatological fulfillment. The titles can not mean anything else when they are used of Christ in 22:13."⁴⁰ Furthermore, it needs to be stressed that when Jesus is called the First and the Last this seems to be grounded in Isa. 44:6 and 48:12, where it is a divine self-designation of Yahweh. Not only so, but it is used in a context where it aids in stressing the exclusive monotheistic proposition "besides me there is no God." Here in Revelation it probably does not mean anything very different from what Alpha and Omega mean.

This interpretation comports with Rev. 3:14, where Christ is called "the origin (*arche*) of God's creation," which likely does not mean that he is the first created being or the firstborn from the dead (for which

other terminology is used), but rather is another way of saying about Christ what is said clearly in Rev. 22:13. In other words, Christ, as in the logos hymn in John 1, is seen as preceding all things and as in part the source or creator of all things, along with the Father. By saying that he is the Omega or the Last, we are probably meant to think of Christ's assumption of the role of the coming final judge on the eschatological Day of the Lord (see Revelation 19). It is Bauckham's conclusion about this First and Last/Alpha and Omega language that "as a way of stating unambiguously that Jesus belongs to the fullness of the eternal being of God, this surpasses anything in the [rest of the] New Testament."⁴¹ It is not then surprising that in Revelation, perhaps more than in any other New Testament book, Jesus is the object of worship and adoration, which in this same book is said not to be appropriate for mere angelic supernatural beings (cf. 19:10; 22:8-9).

Because Jesus is included in John of Patmos's definition of God, he is seen as an appropriate object of worship. In Revelation 5 we are introduced to the image of Christ as the Lamb, which is to become the dominant image in the book thereafter. In Rev. 5:8 the Lamb, who has triumphed through his death and resurrection, is the focus of the circle of worship in heaven, which includes the worship of the living creatures and the elders, the representatives of all kinds of creatures both animal and human (cf. 5:6 and 7:17).⁴² It is precisely as slain lamb that this Lamb conquers and then judges with righteous wrath (6:16). The worship of the Lamb is not somehow separate from or distinct from the worship of God but is seen as a part of it in 5:13. If a doxology is a clear indication of the object of worship, then the one offered to Christ alone in Rev. 1:5-6 surely indicates that he is being approached as deity. This doxology should be compared to two other such doxologies offered to Christ alone in 2 Tim. 4:8 and 2 Pet. 3:18, which suggest that the practices described in Revelation of worshipping Christ was not somehow an aberration but rather a widespread practice in a variety of Christian communities.⁴³

It is perhaps right to note that John of Patmos does not, as is the case in the Fourth Gospel, really choose to use the concept of the Wisdom of God to include Christ in the Godhead. Indebtedness to Wisdom of Solomon does, however, seem to be apparent at one crucial point. In 19:11ff. the conquering warrior is called the Word of God. To this we must compare Wis. Sol. 18:16ff., where the Word or Wisdom leaps from heaven with a sharp sword.

John stresses that Christ shares the names, the throne, the work,

and the worship of God.⁴⁴ While it is true to say that for Christians, because Christ functioned as God—namely, as creator, redeemer, present Lord, and coming future judge—he was thus worshiped, this is probably to say too little. At the end of the day, he believes that only God can perform what Christ performs, and thus there is at least an implicit assertion of Christ's divine nature in all this material. Consider what it means to say that the slaughtered lamb is seen on the throne and is worshiped for his overcoming through death and resurrection the powers of this world.

It must surely include the notion that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, but more to the point the way God rules the world is by and in the slaughtered and exalted Lamb. Christ's suffering and death are seen as the act of an eternal being thus having eternal efficacy and making evident how God has chosen to overcome evil and rule the world. Only God saves, and he has done this as the Lamb.

The one who is called ruler of God's creation in Rev. 3:14 is also in that same chapter called the one who holds the key of David (3:7), and thus is the Jewish Messiah. Just because John thinks Jesus is more than the Jewish Messiah does not mean he leaves behind this notion as unimportant. In Rev. 5:5 he is seen as Lion of the tribe of Judah and also the Root of David. The lamb image is of course also thoroughly Jewish, and a slaughtered lamb is the ultimate symbol of atonement for sins in a Jewish context. But John has transformed this image to speak not only of a lamb slain but of something else of which no early Jew who was not a Christian had spoken—a lamb once slain but now glorified and powerful. Here the story of Jesus has transformed this Jewish image into something unexpected, paradoxical, new. It is no surprise that the slain Lamb image arises repeatedly in a document written to Christians who are being persecuted. They too are lambs for the slaughter, but like Jesus they in the end will have victory over death and their human tormentors.

Another image transferred from God to Christ is the image of Jesus being the one who has the book of life and also the one who opens the scrolls that disclose God's future plan and will. Only he is said in Revelation 5 to be worthy enough to open not only the scroll but all the seals upon it. We see here the notion of Christ as the implementer of divine justice on earth.

The concept of redemptive judgment may seem foreign to us, but it is a prevalent concept in the Old Testament, especially Joshua and Judges. The idea in a nutshell is that God redeems his oppressed people

by judging their enemies, hence the term redemptive judgment. Thus, our author is not saying anything novel by predicating both judgment and redemption of his deity; the only novelty is that Christ is said to be assuming these divine roles. He is both Savior of the saved and Judge of the wicked. The end result of the battle of good and evil will be and indeed in John's view already is that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever" (11:15). "Lord" here refers to God rather than Christ, and Christ is used in its titular and Jewish sense. Our author is not guilty of Christomonism, though he clearly includes Christ within his description of God alongside the Father. This way of putting things in 11:15 suggests that our author was in touch with the earliest Jewish Christian ways of confessing their monotheism, such as we have seen in 1 Cor. 8:6.⁴⁵

Thus, the Lamb will triumph and one day invite his own to a wedding feast (19:9). He will also come as the pale rider, the grim reaper or executioner spoken of in Revelation 19. The Lamb is also the Lion. As Christ, he will reign for a thousand years with his martyrs (Rev. 20:4ff.), which may refer to his present reign in heaven with the martyrs already there, but in view of the discussion of resurrection in John 20, it probably refers to a future reign on earth at the close of the age. Christ is the one who began and will bring to a close God's plan for humanity.

At the end of Revelation we are told in Revelation 21 that Christ and the Lord God (here the Father) will be the temple and glory of God's people and they will dwell together forever—beyond disease, decay, death, sin, suffering sorrow, tears, or torment. For now, our author sees Christ as one who stands at the door of human hearts and knocks, but one day he shall burst on the human scene as a ravaging Lion destroying or at least judging the wicked and thereby rescuing the righteous. Thus believers are urged at the close of the book to urge him to come—the one who is Daystar dawning on history's horizon. Both horizontal and vertical eschatology fuse in the final vision of things such that heaven and earth in effect merge. The New Jerusalem descends from above, making a new earth to go along with a new heaven. The one who lies at the center of this vision, indeed the one who turns this vision into reality, is according to John none other than Jesus, who is at once Lamb, Lion, and Lord. We should have expected this Christocentric and theocentric conclusion in view of the fact that we were

told at the outset of the book that this is "the revelation of (and about) Jesus Christ."

It is well to ask at this point in what way or ways John of Patmos seems indebted to the Christology we find in the other Johannine documents. In some ways this is an easy question to answer. We may point to texts like Rev. 7:17, where we see Christ as Shepherd leading his people to springs of living water. This parallels what we find in John 10 (cf. John 21), where Christ claims to be the Good Shepherd. On the other hand, when we try to examine the way our author uses the term *logos* in the form "the Word of God" in Rev. 19:13 compared to what we find in John 1 the context is very different. Here the Word as in Wisdom of Solomon (cf. above) is involved in judgment, but in John 1 the image is used to speak of a role in creation and redemption. Or again we may ask about the similarities between the Lamb in John 1:29, 32 and in Revelation. It is immediately notable that a different Greek term for lamb is used in each (*amnos* in the Gospel, *arion* in Revelation) and in the Gospel the Lamb is seen as purely redemptive, one who takes away sin, whereas in Revelation the Lamb's role involves both redemption and judgment. In John 10:7 Jesus is said to be the gate, while in Rev. 3:20 he stands outside it and knocks. In the Fourth Gospel, Son of Man is an important title with a cluster of key ideas surrounding it. In Revelation it is simply part of an allusion to the analogy found in Daniel 7.

The overall impression one gets is that John of Patmos knows Johannine Christology, but he is not interested in slavishly imitating it or simply passing it along. Rather he deliberately varies or modifies what he knows of Johannine Christology to suit the message he wants to convey. There is on the whole a much more varied scope of images and ideas that come into play in Revelation than in the other Johannine documents, but then the other documents are not apocalyptic literature and do not really use pictographic language.

All of the texts in the Johannine corpus share an emphasis on the importance of Jesus' death and an emphasis on both the true humanity and the divinity of Christ. It is repeatedly the Christ of glory, the exalted one, that appears in these documents, even in the account of the ministry in the Fourth Gospel. These documents have no problem with using the various names and titles of God for Jesus Christ, nor do they have any problem with offering worship to Christ as God. They all seem prepared to redefine Jewish monotheism to accommodate

what they wish to say about Christ. Thus, we may say that certainly some of the highest Christology to be found in the New Testament can be found in these books. After these documents, the remainder of the canonical books will appear on the whole much less imaginative and challenging in their christological expressions as we shall now see.

NOTES

1. See the introduction to my commentary on the Fourth Gospel, *John's Wisdom* (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox, 1995).
2. See the discussion of J. A. T. Robinson, "The Use of the Fourth Gospel for Christology Today," in *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 61-78.
3. The chief difference from Marthew comes in the Johannine discourse material, where the focus is on Christology, while in Marthew the teaching focus tends to be on the coming of the kingdom and how disciples should respond to its arrival.
4. R. Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels: A Biblical Christology*, trans. O. C. Dean (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox, 1995), p. 219.
5. See pp. 78ff. above.
6. See now the helpful discussion in Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels*, pp. 283-89, where he comes to much the same conclusion as this study about Jewish Wisdom thinking being the origins of most of the concepts here.
7. See, e.g., C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), p. 156: "The absence of the article indicates the Word is God, but is not the only being of whom this is true."
8. See M. J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), pp. 74-84.
9. Notice also the careful distinction in 1 John 5:18 between the child and Son of God's relationship to God.
10. John 21 is an appendix to this Gospel added by the final editor or Fourth Evangelist.
11. See rightly Harris, *Jesus as God*, p. 129.
12. See pp. 17ff. above.
13. See E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), pp. 8-9.
14. Schnackenburg notes that while the humanity of Jesus is clearly affirmed, his humanness is not brought to the fore in the same way it is in Luke (*Jesus in the Gospels*, pp. 240ff.). For example, the terms mercy and pity do not really turn up in John in the way they do in the Synoptics.
15. See pp. 11ff. above. On the use of agency language in this Gospel, see E.

Richard, *Jesus: One and Many. The Christological Concept of New Testament Authors* (Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, 1988), pp. 208-9. He argues that high Christology in this Gospel develops because of and out of agency Christology. This is partially correct, but he fails to adequately consider the sapiential influence on this Gospel.

16. See Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels*, pp. 248-51.
17. See pp. 75ff. above.
18. Here I follow R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 106.
19. See the helpful discussion in Jerome Neyrey, *Christ is Community: The Christologies of the New Testament* (Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, 1985), pp. 160-61.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-63.
21. See S. S. Smalley, "The Johannine Son of Man Sayings," *New Testament Studies* 15 (1968-69), pp. 278-301.
22. Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels*, pp. 260-74. "The cross is the ladder on which Jesus climbs up to the glory of the Father" (p. 261).
23. R. Bauckham, "The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31 (1978): 245-60, here pp. 259-60.
24. See Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels*, pp. 270-81. Jesus the eschatological prophet foretold by and like Moses could also be mentioned.
25. 3 John speaks about seeing God or being from him (v. 11), and there may be an allusion to Christ in the reference to traveling for the sake of the name (v. 7), but otherwise there is nothing of relevance in this document for our purposes.
26. R. Kysar, "John, Epistles of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:909.
27. Richard, *Jesus: One and Many*, pp. 224-25.
28. "The Eternal Life" could perhaps be a somewhat odd and oblique title for Jesus, but it is not clear that this is so here.
29. See the discussion in Neyrey, *Christ is Community*, pp. 190-91, about the stress in 1 John on the fact that flesh and earthly deeds matter in the eternal scheme of things.
30. See pp. 154 above.
31. The translation of *koinonia* in 1:3 as "fellowship" is probably not entirely apt. The term tends to have a more active sense of sharing something in common with someone or participating with someone in something. In short, fellowship would be the by-product of person's sharing the Father and Son in common, but our author is probably discussing the sort of spiritual union and active sharing involved in a living relationship with Father and Son, not just its effect on the relationship between believers, though that is mentioned first in v. 3 (there are two uses of *koinonia* in this verse).
32. The context indicates that the Father is meant; see vv. 20-22.
33. See pp. 116ff. above.

34. There may be some value in comparing 1 Cor. 12:3 at this point, where it is also affirmed that a true confession is possible only at the prompting of God's Spirit in one's life, and that by contrast a cursing of Christ proves that the Holy Spirit is not in a person's life.

35. P. Minear has attempted to argue that 1 John 4:2 is not about the incarnation but about Christ's spiritual entry into the believer's life. See his "The Idea of Incarnation in 1 John," *Interpretation* 24 (1970): 291-302. This mistakes the result or effect of the incarnation for the cause itself, and it is the latter with which our author is primarily concerned here.

36. See my "The Waters of Birth: John 3.5 and 1 John 5.6-8," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 155-60.

37. A very useful survey of this kind of literature is J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984).

38. Richard, *Jesus: One and Many*, p. 425.

39. See D. Guthrie, "The Christology of Revelation," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1994), pp. 397-409, here p. 398.

40. R. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 55. In the next few paragraphs I shall be echoing and amplifying some of Bauckham's arguments with which I am in agreement.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

42. Even as the Lamb, Christ is seen not as weak but rather as powerful and fully capable of overthrowing enemies, not unlike the lamb symbol in the *Testament of Joseph*. There is perhaps some indecency of John to the author of this work, for in *Test. Jos.* 19:8-9 we hear of the twofold Messiah who is presented as both Lion and Lamb.

43. Does it say anything to us that these three texts may all be addressed to Christians in Asia Minor in areas where emperor worship was prevalent?

44. Richard rightly stresses that the image of the throne occurs so frequently (the term is mentioned forty-six times) in order to stress God's or God in Christ's lordship over the entire historical process (*Jesus: One and Many*, p. 430). As he says, "The book is about power and the lack of power which the Christians of Asia Minor experienced during the reign of Domitian. . . ."

45. See pp. 108ff. above on this text.

The Suffering Servant and His Journey through the Heavens: The Christologies of the General Epistles

THE SO-CALLED GENERAL EPISTLES are, for the most part, not really a homogeneous group of documents that could be said to belong together. Yet, apart from James and Hebrews, they do share certain things in common christologically and perhaps in terms of literary relationship as well. Clearly enough there is some sort of relationship between 1 and 2 Peter, which present us with the most christological substance among these letters, except for Hebrews. Equally clearly, there seems to be some sort of relationship between Jude and 2 Peter, as a close comparison between Jude 5-16 and 2 Peter 2 will show. Yet what then do we make of the fact that we find similar ideas about Christ in Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4-6, and also 1 Pet. 3:18-20? Hebrews, on the other hand, does not seem to have any literary links with these other documents but does share a Jewish Christian way of viewing matters. There is then some justification for treating three of these documents together in this study, and Hebrews is included at this point because of its traditional inclusion in the so-called General Epistles.

JAMES: SUBMERGED CHRISTOLOGY¹

James can be dealt with rather rapidly; indeed, we could have and perhaps should have included it much earlier in our study in the discussion of early Jewish Christian Christology. It may well be one of the earliest of our New Testament documents, and it certainly reflects deep indebted-