

**Toward a Christology of Divine Persons:
Trinitarian Dialogues and the Question of Identity**

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I am delighted to be here with you today. The title of my paper is: “Toward a Christology of Divine Persons: Trinitarian Dialogues and the Question of Identity.”

As a few of you might know, some 10 years ago I spent several years working intensely on the doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible. That research work culminated *The Birth of Trinity*, published by Oxford University Press in 2015. Then my research took me in a different direction for the next five, as I pursued questions about faith as allegiance and what this might mean for the gospel and soteriology.

But I’ve been itching to get back to this work on the Trinity in order to tease out implications. My paper today seeks to extend my previous work on the Trinity to a related area of inquiry—to early Christology. These are initial soundings for a book intended as a sequel to my *The Birth of the Trinity*. It is tentatively titled *The Birth of Christology*. It is contracted to be published by Eerdmans, that is, if I can get my act together sufficiently to finish the intended book. Hence, my paper’s title, “Toward a Christology of Persons,”

reflects the tentative nature of this project. I'm probing. I'm seeking to think through how my work on the Trinity speaks to Christology, but the project is still taking shape. I'll be grateful for your feedback during our subsequent conversation, since that will help me recraft and solidify.

What's my thesis? See item #1 on the handout. My thesis for today: **I am going to argue that in light of the NT and other early Christian texts it would be best to stop speaking of a "Christology of Divine Identity" and to speak instead of a "Christology of Divine Persons."** How am I going to convince you that my proposed model—a "Christology of Divine Persons"—is a more appropriate than a "Christology of Divine Identity"? Three easy steps. What are these three easy steps?

First, I am going to explain what is meant by a "Christology of Divine Identity." We'll do this by looking at Richard Bauckham's *God Crucified*, for his work has provided the impetus for all others. Second, I am going to demonstrate, briefly, that this relatively new identity model is indeed in vogue. It has been used for example by N.T. Wright, Richard Hays, Kevin Rowe, Simon Gathercole, Michael Gorman, Chris Tilling, Wesley Hill, Crispin Fletcher-Louis, and others. Third—and this third step is vitally important, so it will be the longest portion of the paper. Third, I will show that there is data in the NT itself that pertains to early Christology and early Trinitarianism that is being ignored and/or miscategorized by all current models. This is a bold claim: that all current Christological models are ignoring or misconstruing important NT data.

This data pertains to interior dialogues between divine persons in the OT as detected by NT authors through a specific reading method they employed—prosopological exegesis

(or person-centered exegesis). You may have no idea what prosopological exegesis is. You may even have trouble saying it. (I had to practice it in private for several years before I was ready to go public! [*Wink.*]) That’s okay—we will get to a fuller definition of prosopological exegesis in due course. But for now, in short, through prosopological exegesis our NT authors sometimes construed the Father, Son, and the Spirit as divine persons capable of conversing with one another in the Old Testament. Yet current models, including “divine identity” or versions of mediated Jewish monotheism (e.g., Hurtado’s model), have not successfully integrated these intra-divine conversations.

So that is it—three steps (which I have summarized as your item #2): (1) explore Bauckham’s “Christology of Divine Identity,” (2) observe that it is indeed popular, (3) test prosopological exegesis as a resource for a “Christology of Divine Persons.” The result, I hope, is that you will agree that the “Christology of Divine Persons” model I am proposing could prove helpful in overcoming weaknesses in Bauckham’s identity model. Or at least that you’ll be intrigued enough that you’ll rush out to buy a copy of *The Birth of the Trinity* so that you can explore the evidence further!

Part I: Richard Bauckham’s Christology of Divine Identity.

In 1998 Richard Bauckham advanced his Christology of Divine Identity model in his book *God Crucified*. It’s a simple yet powerful model that has rightly been celebrated. Personally I remember browsing through *God Crucified* at the turn of the millennium in the Regent College bookstore, during my seminary years. I was so smitten by the thesis that I immediately purchased the book (even though my book budget was razor thin). But Bauckham’s explanation of “divine identity” fills only two pages in his book. It’s wildly

underdeveloped. I continued to ponder *God Crucified* for a number of years, hoping that the brief theoretical sketch of “divine identity” would be elaborated by Bauckham in due course. So when Bauckham’s *Jesus and the God of Israel* appeared in 2008, I was eager to work through it. But I was disappointed. For although it is an excellent supplemental study, it provides essentially zero theoretical advance regarding “divine identity Christology”.

While reading *Jesus and the God of Israel*, my own research on prosopological exegesis was causing me to question the identity model. I’ll circle back to explain why later. But right now let me describe Bauckham’s model. Regarding Bauckham’s model, the following seven things can be said (and I have summarized each point as your item #3).

1. “God acts as a character in the [scriptural] story.”¹ Bauckham states (and I quote), “Since the biblical God has a name and a character, since this God acts, speaks, relates, and can be addressed and, in some sense, known, the analogy of human personal identity suggests itself as the category with which to synthesize the biblical and Jewish understanding of God.” And we can agree with Bauckham that God is a character in Scripture since Scripture is a literary product; yet it is unclear what this literary move means for historical referentiality, ontology, or the relationship between the economic and immanent Trinity.

¹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 6.

2. “The God of Israel had a unique identity” in the scriptural story.² This term “identity” is both vague and lacks an ancient pedigree, so Bauckham explains further what he means by the term. He says “identity” is constructed through story, narrative, plot, and character development.³

3. God’s identity is analogous to human identity. The most precise statement Bauckham offers about what he means by ‘identity’ is his quotation of Vanhoozer. Bauckham approvingly cites Vanhoozer as follows: “‘Identity’ is, of course, susceptible of several meanings: numeric oneness, ontological sameness or permanence in time, and the personal identity of self-continuity”⁴ Then Bauckham clarifies, “The last is the meaning employed here [meaning: “identity” = “the personal identity of self-continuity”].” Bauckham continues, “Reference to God’s identity is by analogy with human personality, understood not as a mere ontological subject without characteristics, but as including both character and personal story (the latter entailing relationships). These are the ways in which we commonly specify ‘who someone is’”⁵ So, by the term identity Bauckham forthrightly says that he intends “**the personal identity of self-continuity**” not numeric oneness, nor ontological sameness, nor permanence in time.

4. “Identity concerns who God is; nature concerns what God is or what divinity is.”⁶ For Bauckham, then, the dominant way of conceptualizing God in Second Temple

² Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 6.

³ Citing Hans Frei, Robert Jenson, Robert Krieg, Kevin Vanhoozer, and others.

⁴ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 6 n. 5 citing Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Does the Trinity Belong in a Theology of Religions? On Angling in the Rubicon and the ‘Identity’ of God” in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 41-71 here 47.

⁵ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 6 n. 5.

⁶ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 7.

Judaism is ‘identity’ as constructed through story rather than by predicating metaphysical attributes (e.g., incorruptibility, immutability, etc.).

Now we get the really crucial moves in Bauckham’s identity argument:

5. The God of Israel has several *totally unique* character qualities—e.g., creator, absolute Sovereign, his name, and his exclusive claim on worship.

6. Jesus shares in these totally unique character qualities, so he is found to be within the ‘divine identity’ of the God of Israel.

7. “A Christology of Divine Identity” takes us “beyond the fundamentally misleading contrast between ‘functional’ and ‘ontic’ (or ‘ontological’) Christology.”⁷

Bauckham thinks his model shows that this tendency in NT studies to separate function from ontology is unsustainable.

So, in sum, what is Bauckham’s “Christology of Divine Identity”? (item #4). It asserts: (a) the God of Israel was known as a character with an identity as constructed on the basis of the OT story. (b) Portions of that identity were totally unique to the God of Israel. (c) Jesus, however, is described by the earliest Christians as sharing in those unique portions of God’s identity. (d) Therefore, the NT evidences a “Christology of Divine Identity.”

Part II: The Popularity of Bauckham’s Christology of Divine Identity.

In just a moment I will offer a critique of Bauckham’s model by showing that it neglects NT evidence. But first, very briefly, I want to show how Bauckham’s popular model is being deployed. I already mentioned a few scholars who have (at least to a

⁷ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 30.

degree) adopted this model——N .T. Wright, Richard Hays, Kavin Rowe, Simon Gathercole, Michael Gorman, Chris Tilling, Wesley Hill, and Crispin Fletcher-Louis. Given the time constraints, I can only give a couple quick examples.

Consider N.T. Wright’s *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Wright welcomes a Christology of Divine Identity, calling it “something beyond the largely sterile debates between a ‘functional’ and ‘ontic’ christology” (p. 652). How does Wright deploy the model? For example, Wright describes the incarnation, for Paul, as an end-of-the-exile event, a YHWH-coming-to-his-people event. He calls all this a Christology of Divine identity, saying “The Jesus who is spoken of in Galatians 4.4 is thus not only Israel’s Messiah and the representative of the new-exodus people; he is the embodiment of the one God, returning as promised to rescue his people.” Wright continues, “This is a christology of divine identity, specifically of exodus-shaped and then Messiah-shaped eschatological monotheism” (p. 658). In fact, Wright affirms Paul’s acceptance of a ‘divine identity’ in some 25 places in his two-volumes.

Meanwhile, Wesley Hill in his *Paul and the Trinity* also welcomes this “divine identity” language as helpful in describing how God gives Jesus the “name that is above all names” in the Philippians Hymn.⁸ Later while speaking of the asymmetrical relationship between God and the Son, he summarily states, “I argued that God and Jesus share the divine identity—they each bear the same divine name (unity)—but their personal uniqueness is not thereby impaired (distinction)” (p. 170). So Hill invokes the “divine identity” category as a way of simultaneously maintaining divine unity and distinction.

⁸ P. 94.

Many more examples of the popularity of “Divine Identity Christology” could be given. But as a segue to my critique, let’s consider Crispin Fletcher-Louis’s recent book *Jesus Monotheism* (2015). First, Fletcher-Louis clearly accepts Bauckham’s “Christology of Divine Identity,” for he affirms Bauckham’s basic thesis as well as Hurtado’s, suggesting that a consensus has emerged. Moreover he uses the phrase “divine identity” 85 times in his book, “christology of divine identity” 7 times, and “divine identity Christology” 2 times.

On the other hand he also, rightly to my mind, throws up a caution. Fletcher-Louis indicates that a Christology of Divine Identity can problematically elide God and Jesus in the narrative. It can fail to take seriously enough narrative features that distinguish God and Jesus. For example, Fletcher-Louis explores problems that result in Bauckham’s model in the case of Jesus’ cry of dereliction, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Fletcher-Louis even suggests that Bauckham’s Jesus here is “rather docetic,” for “Jesus chooses from his divine identity to voice the words of a godforsaken Israel and all of humanity’s godforsaken individuals. In other words, this is the divine Son of God speaking on behalf of others with whom he identifies himself. This is not a human Jesus speaking of his own (very real) experience of divine abandonment” (p. 87). Fletcher-Louis goes on to critique Bauckham, saying: “For Bauckham, this is not, apparently, the human Jesus crying out, but rather simply “God’s unique act of self-identification with the godforsaken.”” (p. 87).

So while Fletcher-Louis has embraced divine identity, he appears conflicted, seeing that it tends to erase the distinct personhood of Father and Son.⁹

I think if Bauckham and Fletcher-Louis were to more precisely identify the interpretative technique being used vis-à-vis the cry of dereliction—namely that this is prosopological exegesis of Psalm 22:1—then we’d be moving in the right direction. In other words, I think that the person of Jesus Christ is so much constructed and identified vis-à-vis the other divine persons—Father and Spirit—that it would be better simply to speak of a Christology of Divine Persons rather than of divine identity. Now I’ll turn to my evidence for a Christology of Divine Persons.

Part III: Prospological Exegesis as Trinitarian Critique.

Now I hope to show that a Christology of Divine Identity has failed to appropriate very important data in the NT itself. I warned you that this will be the longest and most important portion of the paper. What do I want to argue here in this portion of the paper? I want to begin with a claim. Here it is (item #5): For our NT authors Jesus was regarded as divine not merely because he shared in God’s unique divine “identity” (whatever that slippery term might mean) but because Jesus as the Christ was regarded as a preexistent divine *person* who dialogued with the God of Israel via the Holy Spirit. That is, any data suggesting that we have a Christology of Divine Identity in the NT must be corrected against the data that demands we find a Christology of Divine Persons. What do I mean by a Christology of Divine Persons? See your item #6: *A “Christology of Divine*

⁹ In fact, he summarily states that “the distinction between the divine ‘persons’ is a vital aspect of the theological shape of NT Christology that needs to be given more attention than it has received in the emerging consensus.” (p. 90). I couldn’t agree more!

Persons” contends that Jesus was “picked out” or “identified” by the earliest Christian as a divine person who spoke with other divine persons via prophetic discourses in the OT beyond the ordinary categories of time.

But in order to show you that a Christology of Divine Persons is a better descriptor, we are going to need to explore an ancient rhetorical technique used both outside and inside the bible called *prosopopoiia*. Prosopopoiia involved taking on another character in the middle of a speech in order to help make a speech more persuasive. So, in this portion of the paper I will be arguing that prosopopoiia—taking on a character during a speech—was not just a rhetorical technique, but also could be inverted as a reading strategy, and I believe that this has significant implications for how we understand Paul’s letters.

Part IIIa. Topic and subthesis. Prosopopoiia, temporarily slipping into the guise of a different character during a speech in order to persuade the audience, was a common rhetorical strategy in the New Testament era. This rhetorical technique is quite well-known in biblical scholarship, especially through the work of Stanley Stowers. I will exemplify prosopopoiia as described and used in ancient sources in a few moments. However, there is a hitherto unobserved dimension of prosopopoiia that I would like to explore with you today.

Some of the early Fathers of the church, such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, employed prosopopoiia not in order to persuade their audiences, but as an exegetical technique—that is, as an excavative reading strategy when interpreting the Old Testament. In other words, when reading the scriptures, Justin and Irenaeus assumed that a putative speaker such as Isaiah might not speak as Isaiah, but might slip into the guise of a different

character, speaking from an alternative prosopon or “person,” and they sought to discover the true identity of this alternative speaking character. Moreover, I am convinced that our New Testament authors used prosopopoiia in this fashion as well.

Part IIIB. Understanding prosopopoiia in the ancient sources. Realizing that prosopopoiia may not be fresh on your mind, first, I simply want to give a couple of relevant ancient descriptions of this rhetorical technique.

Several ancient rhetoricians discuss the figure of προσωποποιία. For example Ps.-Demetrius, who is treating the topic of crafting forceful speech, describes it thus (text #7). Ps-Demetrius says:

Now another figure of thought purposed toward forcefulness, called προσωποποιία may be utilized, such as: “Imagine that your forefathers, or Hellas, or your fatherland, after having taken on the figure of a woman, might reproach you and say this and that to you” (*Eloc.* 265).

Thus, prosopopoeia, as it is described by Ps.-Demetrius, involves the fictional introduction of a character for whom the rhetorician invents and delivers an appropriate speech.¹⁰

Quintilian discusses prosopopoeia along with impersonation (*fictio personae*), identifying it as putting “words of advice, reproach, complaint, praise or pity into the mouths of suitable persons.” However, Quintilian does not intend to restrict the figure of prosopopoeia to human characters alone, because he later states that the figure can be softened for nonhuman applications. As a non-human application he gives an example in

¹⁰ Ps.-Demetrius illustrates further by giving an example of a speech in Plato that uses prosopopoeia, asserting that the introduction of a character (πρόσωπον) makes it “much more lively,” “more forceful,” and “it becomes very dramatic.”

which Cicero has the nation of Italy fictitiously address him. Moreover, not only people but also abstract qualities, such as Fame, Virtue, Pleasure, Life, and Death can be so portrayed. Quintilian claims that this prosopopoeia is helpful for displaying the inner thoughts of adversaries and for inventing revealing conversations among others, as long as a simple rule is followed in the use of this figure. He states, “we shall only carry conviction if we represent them [the adopted characters] as uttering what they may reasonably be supposed to have had in their minds.”

Not only was prosopopoeia a figure used by orators, it was also a classroom exercise. For example, Aelius Theon (probably first century C.E.), in his collection of progymnasmata, defines prosopopoeia as “the introduction of a person to whom words are attributed that are suitable to the speaker and have an indisputable application to the subject discussed.” He goes on to give some specific examples of possible compositional exercises one might assign a student involving prosopopoeia. Aelius Theon states, “What words would a man say to his wife when leaving on a journey? Or a general to his soldiers in a time of danger?” He asserts that a successful student should know not only the personality of the feigned speaker, but also his/her social status, gender, age, and the occasion, since these will impact the speech invented.

Part IIIc. Prosopopoiia as Excavation: Evidence from the Early Church

Fathers. Now that we have looked at a few ancient definitions and descriptions of prosopopoiia, I want to show that some of the earliest Fathers of the church assumed that the divine author might employ prosopopoiia, so that readers must beware when

interpreting the Old Testament. In other words, for the earliest Fathers, when reading the Old Testament, it was necessary to search for “in character” speeches or dialogues.

Among the earliest Fathers, Justin Martyr gives the clearest and most vital theoretical statement. Thus, Justin’s statement will form the backbone of my own treatment (text #8):

But whenever you hear the sayings of the prophets spoken as from a person [ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου], you must not suppose [the sayings] to be spoken from the inspired persons themselves, but from the divine Logos [θείου Λόγου] who moves them. For sometimes he speaks as one announcing in advance things which are about to happen; sometimes he speaks as from the person of God, the Master and Father of all; sometimes as from the person of Christ; sometimes as from the person of the people giving answer to the Lord and his Father. (*1 Apol.* 36.1–2).

There are three things I would like to point out about Justin’s statement. The first thing is absolutely vital—right at the center of what I am trying to present today. Notice Justin says (and we are still in text #8): “sometimes [the divine Logos] speaks as from the person of God, the Master and Father of all; sometimes as from the person of Christ, etc.” Justin says that the divine Logos, who is to be considered the true author of all the prophetic sayings, deliberately speaks from the *prosopon*, that is, from the character, of such diverse entities as God the Father, Christ, and the people. In short—and this is crucial—Justin believes the divine inspiring agent can author an “in-character speech” and place it in the mouth of various persons, whether human or divine.

Second, a point about terminology. Note well that Justin affirms that the divine Logos is the ultimate source of the prophetic sayings as well as the dynamo that moves the prophets to speak—hence, I would argue (following Marie Josephe Rondeau, a patristic scholar) this mode of exegesis is best termed prosopological exegesis—combining the term for “person” (prosopon) and divine inspiring agent (here, the Logos)—for prosopological.

The third noteworthy item in Justin’s statement in *1 Apol.* 36 (we are still discussing text #8) is the disjuncture in time that the prophetic Spirit is capable of introducing by speaking, “as one announcing in advance the things which are about to happen.” Justin explains that even when a prophet such as David or Isaiah is speaking about a *future* occurrence, he might adopt a *past-tense form* of speech when taking on the alternative prosopon. For example, if Isaiah is speaking from the prosopon of the future Christ, then the time of the future Christ becomes the new fulcrum around which the verbal tenses pivot, so the past tense might be appropriate. This use of the past tense when the future might otherwise be expected is typical of prosopological exegesis. It will be important later when we look at Paul’s exegesis of the Psalter in 2 Cor 4:13.

As a second ancient description of prosopological exegesis, consider Irenaeus *Epid.* 49-50 (and this one is not on the handout, so you’ll just need to listen):

Since David says: *The Lord hath said to me* [Ps 2:7 LXX], one must say that it is not David who is speaking; nor does any other at all of the prophets speak in his own name, for it is not a man who utters the prophecy; but the Spirit of God, taking form and shape in the likeness of the person concerned, spoke in

the prophets; sometimes He spoke on the part of Christ, sometimes on that of the Father. So most properly does Christ report in the first person, through David, the Father's speech with Him; and most properly also does He say the other things too through the prophets in the first person, as for example through Isaias as follows: *And now thus saith the Lord, who formed me as His servant from the womb . . .* [Isa 49.5-6]. (Irenaeus *Epid.* 49-50).

Irenaeus states that the prophet David is not speaking in his own name in Ps 2:7, but is speaking from the person or the character of Christ. Likewise in Isa 49, for Irenaeus it is fitting that Isaiah slips into a first-person speech, because Isaiah is not speaking on his own, but rather from the prosopon of the future Messiah. So, Isaiah has adopted an alternative persona, the character of the yet-to-be-revealed Christ, and speaking as the Messiah he says, “And now thus saith the Lord, who formed me as His servant from the womb...”

So, now we have examined together how ancient readers such as Justin and Irenaeus interpreted the Old Testament in search of suitable characters to explain certain speeches. I have called this prosopological exegesis and, by way of summary, offer the following definition (item #9).

Prosopological exegesis is a reading technique whereby an interpreter seeks to overcome a real or perceived ambiguity regarding the identity of the speaker or addressee (or both) in the divinely inspired source text by assigning a nontrivial prosopon (i.e., nontrivial vis-à-vis the "plain-sense" of

the text) to the speaker or addressee (or both) in order to make sense of the text.

Part IV. Some examples of prospological exegesis. I will draw most of my examples from Paul’s letters as I think it is important to establish that it is present in our earliest stratum of Christian literature.

a. “I Trusted, Therefore I spoke”—2 Corinthians 4:13 citing Ps 115:1 LXX.

The potential applicability of prosopopoeia to the Pauline corpus has been recognized by several scholars. In particular, Stanley Stowers, as part of his overall concern to delineate the diatribal style of Romans, has convincingly argued that Paul uses this rhetorical figure in several passages in Romans (2:1-5, 17-29; 3:1-9; 3:27–4:2; 7:7–8:2; 10:6; and 11:19). The presence of prosopopoeia as a rhetorical device in Paul lends some *prima facie* credibility to the notion that Paul might have deployed such “in-character” techniques not only in his rhetoric, but also, as I am arguing, in his scriptural exegesis.

Here I want to explore a possible use of prospological exegesis by Paul in his citation of the Psalter in 2 Cor 4:13. In the midst of his lengthy apology for his new covenant ministry (2 Cor 2:14–7:4), Paul describes the intense suffering this ministry has entailed for himself and his coworkers (4:7-15). Yet this intense suffering, with all its seeming shame, is actually an enacted proclamation of the gospel message. It is only by way of the weakness of the human vessel, through suffering to the point of death, that the power of God can fully be displayed. It is in this setting that Paul draws on the Psalter for support, giving a very laconic quotation: ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα (“I believed/trusted, therefore I spoke”—Ps 115:1a LXX [116:10a ET]).

For contextual reference I'll read the full text of 2 Cor 4:11-14, although I've only given you 2 Cor 4:13-14 (as item #10). Paul states:

11For we who are living are perpetually being handed over unto death for the sake of Jesus, in order that also the life of Jesus might be revealed in the mortal body we possess; 12so that while death is at work among us, life is at work among you. 13Moreover, since we have the same spirit of trust in accordance with which it stands written, "I trusted, therefore I spoke," [ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα ; Ps 115:1 LXX = Ps 116:10 ET] so also we are trusting and therefore we are speaking, 14knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus also will raise us with Jesus and he will present us together with you.

So, here is the question. Why in 2 Cor 4:13 has Paul appealed to Ps 115:1 ("I trusted, therefore I spoke")? Does Paul show any concern for the broader context of the psalm, or as Chris Stanley has argued, is Paul just seizing a decontextualized yet convenient proof-text? Moreover, for Paul, who is the one speaking the words of this psalm?

From the Reformation onward the overwhelming consensus was that the precise identity of the speaker of the psalm was largely irrelevant for Paul. Whether the speaker is David or another, Paul is merely citing the psalm as a generic proof-text in support of the necessity of faith ("I believed"). Also, it was felt, Paul locates in the psalmist's words a warrant for proclamation of the gospel ("therefore, I spoke"). So, on this majority reading

of Paul, the psalm is cited as proof that “faith” is necessary (“I believe”) and that the proclamation of the gospel is likewise necessary (“therefore, I speak”).

More recently, A. T. Hanson, Richard Hays, Thomas Stegman, Kenneth Schenk, and Douglas Campbell have proposed that Paul understood Jesus Christ to be the speaker of the words of Ps 115:1 (“I believed, therefore I spoke”). These scholars generally invoke a typological model to explain how this might have worked. I think they are correct, that Jesus is the speaker, but that the method employed by Paul is not typological exegesis, rather prosopological exegesis.

Within our timeframe, I cannot present all of the evidence in favor of Paul’s prosopological identification of Christ as the speaker of “I trusted, therefore I spoke.” I give more evidence in the relevant portions of *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation* and *The Birth of the Trinity*, and I would encourage anyone who is interested to explore the details there—and of course, buy a copy for yourself and for your grandmother. However, in brief, as a foundational piece of evidence, I want to outline how the narrative sequence in which Ps 115:1 is situated encourages this interpretation.

The sequence of action within the narrative world of Psalms 114–115 LXX (one psalm originally) is best reconstructed as follows: (1) First the speaker was “brought very low” (114:6; 115:1b), that is, he went through an ordeal in which he felt the “anguishes of death” and in which the “dangers of Hades” found him (114:3). During this time of affliction, pain, and bondage (114:3; 115:7), the speaker was also surrounded by such grievous liars that the speaker was astonished (Ps 115:2). (2) Yet the speaker “trusted, and therefore [he] spoke” (Ps 115:1a)—that is, even though he was feeling the anguishes of

death and Hades, he trusted God and called upon his name, saying: “O Lord, rescue my soul!” (114:3-4). (3) After which, God rescued the speaker into the fullness of life (implied action between 114:4 and 114:5), a fullness the speaker is presently enjoying. (4) So the speaker is now offering praise for this abundant life (114:5-9; 115:3-10). (5) In the future, a sacrifice of praise will be offered to the Lord God in the presence of the people (115:8-10). In summary, the past-tense activities for the speaker of this psalm included: crisis unto death/Hades, trust, speech calling out for deliverance in the midst of the crisis, and rescue. Yet, the speaker is presently: still enjoying the benefit of the rescue in his ongoing life, offering praise, and anticipating future praise. This narrative sequence fits extremely well the pattern of Christ’s suffering unto death/Hades, resurrection, and exaltation to full life at the right hand of the Father.

In light of this narrative sequence I submit that, for Paul, the setting from which the prosopon of the Christ is speaking is after his death, resurrection, and enthronement. The Christ speaks from the position of exalted Lord, where he is in the presence of God. This is an oracle spoken by a prophet in the past tense, but which really pertains to future realities because the prophet is speaking from the vantage point of a future character within the divine drama. Paul seems to believe that the citation is in the past tense [specifically, the aorist], “I believed, therefore I spoke,” because within the divine economy the enthroned Christ is talking about events that now lie in Christ’s own past—suffering, death, Hades, a decisive posture of trust, and a crying out to God the Father for deliverance.

I submit that this explanation makes a significant advancement beyond the proposals of others who have posited that Christ is the speaker, by (1) identifying the specific interpretative device that facilitated such a reading (prosopological exegesis); (2) delineating the most likely setting within the divine drama for the delivery of this in-character speech (Christ speaks as the enthroned one); and (3) explaining the past tense verbal forms. Moreover, it also makes excellent sense contextually as part of Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 4. Paul's words "I believed, therefore I spoke" are not a generic exhortation to "have faith" and "preach the gospel" as is typically argued by commenters. Rather, Paul's meaning is precise. Just as Christ trusted when facing extraordinary hardship and cried out to God for deliverance, so should we, knowing that God raised Jesus from the dead and therefore that he can also raise us up from any ministerial crises that we might experience.

Summary by Periphrasis. Hence, by way of summary I provide a periphrastic expanded translation of 2 Corinthians 4:13-14 as follows. Paraphrasing then, Paul states in 2 Cor 4:13-14:

We have the same disposition of trust as is on display in those words that were spoken by the psalmist—who was in fact speaking in character as the Christ—and those words stand written as follows: "I trusted in God when I was experiencing a crisis unto death, therefore I spoke a plea to God for deliverance." Since we have this same disposition of trust, we also are trusting in God during our ministerial hardships for the sake of Jesus, and

therefore we are speaking our own plea to God for deliverance, knowing that the very God who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus.

I submit that this interpretation of Paul's reading of Psalm 115:1 in 2 Corinthians 4:13 makes better sense than other proposals—that is, better sense of the meaning of Psalm 115:1 in light of the whole psalm, and better sense of the function of the citation within Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians.

Let me give a few additional examples to make concrete my claims about a christology of divine persons in the NT.

b. Psalm 68:10 LXX in John 2:17 and Romans 15:3

Consider the person-centered interpretation of Ps 68 LXX in earliest Christianity. Jesus Christ was understood to be the speaker of the following words by both the author of the Gospel of John and by Paul:

(item #11) Psalm 68: 7-10 LXX: Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame because of me O Lord, O Lord of hosts; do not let those who seek you become dishonored because of me O God of Israel; because for your sake I bore insult; dishonor covered my face; I became alienated from my brothers, a stranger to the sons of my mother; because zeal for your house consumed me [cf. John 2: 17] and the insults of those who were insulting you fell on me [cf. Rom. 15: 3].

In John's Gospel, after Jesus' temple actions, his disciples are said to have remembered that it stands written, "Zeal for your house has consumed me". In so doing the author of John represents the disciples as having taken Jesus to be the true speaker of those words. For the author of John, Jesus is felt to be addressing God (the Father), so that we might paraphrase as follows:

(item #12) *The Christ* (speaking to *God*): Zeal for your house, O God my Father, has devoured me, your Son, the Christ. (John 2:17 citing Ps. 68: 10 LXX)

A dialogue between persons has been exegetically assumed. Meanwhile in Romans 15, while seeking to describe how “the strong” should behave with respect to the weak, the Apostle Paul gives a likeminded interpretation of this same psalm. He says, For even the Christ did not please himself, but just as it is written” and then proceeds to quote Psalm 68:10 LXX. We might paraphrase Paul’s interpretation as follows:

(item #13) *The Christ* (to *God the Father*): The insults of those who insulted you, O God my Father, they fell upon me, your Son, when I suffered on the cross. (Rom 15:3 citing Ps. 68:10)

Notice that the Christ is not only presented as dialoging with God (the Father), he also acts as the one who shields God the Father from the insults of the wicked. Might we dare to suggest, that on the cross the Son acted in some fashion as a substitute in place of the Father, bearing the insults of that the wicked hurled at God the Father? Whatever the case, we see that the Christ is best construed in this passage not as within the divine identity, but as a divine person capable of speaking with God the Father, another divine person.

c. Psalm 17:50 LXX in Romans 15:9. Then, just a few lines later we find the Apostle Paul taking Jesus to be the speaker of an entirely different psalm, Psalm 17 LXX. Once again God is the addressee. We might paraphrase the dialogue accordingly:

(item #14) *The Christ* (speaking to *God the Father* after his enthronement): For this reason I will profess you, O God my Father, among the nations and I will sing your name. (Rom. 15: 9 citing Ps. 17: 50 LXX)

These are just a few of a great many examples in which an intra-divine conversation in the Old Testament is presumed by our NT authors.

What I want to point out is that these dialogues indicate that “who Christ is” is “who Christ is as he converses with God via the agency of the Spirit.” So we have what is best called a Christology of Divine Persons. These fragments of intra-divine conversation have been ignored by current Christological models. I think this has happened, at least in part, because these moments in which Christ speaks in the OT have been misidentified (in my scholarly judgment) as examples of *typology* (following mainly Richard Hays) rather than as *prosopological exegesis*.

Summary. My claim is that the NT authors were undertaking prosopological exegesis in interpreting the Septuagint and that this has Christological and Trinitarian implications. (item #15) When our NT authors considered the question, “Who is Jesus the Christ?,” they answered by asserting that Son had conversed with God in the OT via the inspiration of the Spirit or Logos through the prophets. *In other words, in these examples we find not a Christology in which Jesus is found to be within “the divine identity” because his narrative identity overlaps or elides with that of God the Father, but rather we find a story about God and Jesus in conversation—a dialogically constructed Christology of Divine Persons.*

Conclusion.

Well, I hope that this paper has proven to be of some assistance to all of you. I have reviewed Bauckham’s model. I have suggested that it is deficient because we don’t consistently see “personal identity of self-continuity,” with respect to the Father and Son, but distinct persons in dialogue with one another. “Divine identity Christology” fails to account for important data in the NT itself that suggests the Christ was understood to be a

distinct divine person capable of conversing with God the Father as facilitated by the Spirit beyond the ordinary boundaries of time.

Let's end with a final thought—an implication—about a risk within “divine identity Christology.” Here it is (item #16): *By downplaying the “person” category in Christology, the divine identity model obscures how the church came to the conclusion at Nicaea/Constantinople that God is three divine persons [prosōpa] that subsist in one divine essence.* In other words, I think it can be proven that the road from the NT to Nicaea involved continuity in the method, aims, and assumptions of prosopological exegesis. Unless it is at the very least supplemented by a “Christology of Divine Persons,” the identity model risks obscuring this continuity in prosopological exegesis. In sum, I have suggested that it may be more prudent to speak of a “Christology of Divine Persons” than a “Christology of Divine Identity.” Thanks for your kind attention. I look forward to your questions and feedback in the subsequent conversation.