

WILLIAM R.G. LOADER

Christology,
Soteriology, and Ethics
in John and Hebrews

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

478

Mohr Siebeck

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William R.G. Loader

Christology, Soteriology, and Ethics in John and Hebrews

Collected Essays

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

The articles collected in this volume stem from my engagement with the Gospel according to John and the Letter to the Hebrews. They reflect research interests which have accompanied me for over 50 years. For Hebrews, the field of my doctoral research, there was a hiatus of 45 years of mostly silence. By contrast, John's gospel, in particular, its christology, remained a constant, culminating in my monograph, *Jesus in John's Gospel: Structure and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017). The papers in this volume represent my dealing with what I have perceived as key questions in the light of that research.

I express my gratitude to Murdoch University, Perth, Australia, where I taught as Professor of New Testament for many years and am now Professor Emeritus. A strong research ethos and infrastructure support helped make this research possible. I also thank the Uniting Church in Australia, in which I served for over forty years in its ministerial formation programme in Western Australia. Its commitment to taking engagement with historical research seriously both enriched me and enabled me to enrich others.

I have appreciated also being part of an international network of Johannine scholars, most recently in the form of the *Colloquium Ioanneum* conferences where a number of the papers in this volume were first presented. Invitations from the Hebrews Seminar of *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* to revisit my research beginnings in Hebrews with papers on high priesthood christology and ethics account for two of the three papers on the epistle in this volume.

Since the collection brings together works published in a range of academic publishers, often with differing style guidelines, I have sought to reshape all to fit a single style, mostly following the SBL Handbook of Style, the source of reference also for common abbreviations. References to my earlier work, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, are changed to refer to *Jesus in John's Gospel*, which incorporates that earlier work in revised form. Otherwise texts remain unchanged. English translation of biblical writings normally follows the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version), unless otherwise indicated.

I am grateful to Professor Jörg Frey and to Mohr Siebeck for their willingness to make this volume possible. I also acknowledge the support of Gisela, my wife, and the blessing of family life with our two children Stefanie and Christopher. That all began on one single day in 1972 when I picked up Gisela and baby, Stefanie, from the maternity hospital in Mainz and the same afternoon picked up the copies of my dissertation from the printers!

William R. G. Loader, FAHA

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Introduction

The articles published in this volume reflect two important streams of my academic research. While most deal with issues relating to the fourth gospel, the latter three which focus on Hebrews reach back to the beginnings of my research interests. For in 1972 in Mainz, Germany, I completed my doctoral dissertation, on the basis of which I was awarded a Dr theol, with the title, *Sohn und Hoherpriester. Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes*.

The interest in Hebrews had its beginning in my theological studies undertaken in the Trinity Methodist Theological College, Auckland, New Zealand, 1964–66. Already then, my interest was awakened in the development of christology and continued to grow in subsequent years. That interest was stimulated by the work of scholars such as Reginald Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1965) and James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977), but also by the penetrating insights of German scholars, Ernst Käsemann, Günther Bornkamm and Joachim Jeremias in the wake of the major contributions of Rudolf Bultmann. When encouraged during my College days to contemplate postgraduate study, I resolved to pursue that in Germany from which at that time so much leading New Testament research emanated. That I subsequently met and in 1966 married my wife, Gisela, visiting New Zealand from Germany, in that period, has, of course, elicited playful allegations that this was all part of a strategy. It was not but it was, indeed, a blessing for a scholar starting out with Germany in mind.

Beyond my initial three years of theological study as part of formation for ministry and the simultaneous completion of a BA in Classics from Auckland University with Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and German, I pursued a BD from Otago University, initially during one year full time and then during the first two years of my probationary ministry, 1968–69. During these years, building on my year of doing German as part of my BA and benefitting from spousal language support, I began the uphill struggle of reading books in German, foremost among them Ferdinand Hahn's *Christologische Hoheitstitel. Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), whose work I had known indirectly through Fuller's book and also Wolfhart Pannenberg's extensive use of it in his *Jesus: God and Man* (London: SCM, 1968). On a visit to New Zealand, Eduard Schweizer had recommended that I approach Ferdinand Hahn with a view to doing doctoral

studies under his supervision in Mainz, which I duly did and arrived in Mainz in April, 1970.

There are three important strands of influence which shaped my approach to this research and have shaped my approach to research ever since. Firstly, my BD studies included philosophical theology and a major part of that was linguistic analysis, in particular, the study of how language works, its surface but also its deep structures. Secondly, the excellent background given to us in pastoral studies made me aware of the importance of listening, in particular, listening not just to people's words but to the feelings and the underlying meaning which might come to expression in diverse ways in their language, including that the presenting problem may be a long way from the real problem. This was about learning how to read. Exegetical perception and careful non-judgemental pastoral listening were two sides of the same coin. Thirdly, through the work of the scholars mentioned above, I was struck by the variety and sometimes diversity of christological titles, motifs, and explanations in the New Testament tradition. This raised for me the question of the degree of their coherence and what, to use Dunn's terms, was the unity amid that diversity.

These were also the days when traditiohistorical approaches, looking behind the text, were met increasingly with caution and by some with a quasi-evangelical mission to insist that we should focus only on the text, embrace the new insights from literary studies and cease efforts to look behind the text as futile speculation. I saw no need to take sides but embraced both diachronic and synchronic approaches as compatible approaches to research and still do. Fundamentalisms and narrowly focused literary critics were strange bedfellows in the effort to find shortcuts to truth which avoided the ambiguities of history in which faith claims its foundations. It was, indeed, my faith that convinced me that academic integrity, acknowledgement of diversity and facing up to the fragility of historical scholarship was not to be feared but to be embraced.

Hebrews

When, inspired by research into the development of christology at the beginnings of Christian faith, I turned to Hebrews, it was because I saw there great potential for further understanding of those developments as well as a need to investigate how it all hung together within that document as a whole. It became very clear that Hebrews uses christological motifs which have their origins in royal messianic ideology but also motifs which have a background in Wisdom christology and could comfortably juxtapose them.

This is strikingly evident in its opening statements. Clearly the opening references to the "Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds ... the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (1:2-3)

and “In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands” (1:10, applying Ps 101:26 LXX to Jesus) reflect the Wisdom christology evident in John 1:1–3.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

And in Col 1:15.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

The Son is pre-existent, mediator, sustainer, and goal of creation, the image of God.

Yet in the same context the author employs motifs drawn from royal messianic christology according to which Jesus is exalted to God’s right hand and given the name “Son” at his resurrection (1:3b–5).

When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, “having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. 5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you”? Or again, ‘I will be his Father, and he will be my Son’?”

It goes on to speak of God at that point giving birth to his firstborn, enthroning him, anointing him.

And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” (1:6)

But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” (1:8–9, citing Ps 44:7–8 LXX).

On the other side of the citation of Ps 102 in 1:10–12 echoing Wisdom christology, it depicts royal messianic enthronement with the words of Ps 110:1, already echoed in 1:3. “But to which of the angels has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’?” (1:13). That enthronement christology reappears in chapter 2: “you crowned him with glory and honour, subjecting all things under his feet” (2:7b–8, citing Ps 8:7b LXX).

What may appear a contradiction – about when Jesus became Son (in pre-existence from the beginning or since his resurrection/exaltation) – is for the author no contradiction at all but simply the unity of two diverse streams of thought flowing into his depiction of Jesus’ superiority over the powers, both before and after earthly life. Both the synchronic and the diachronic

perspectives are worth pursuing: the synchronic, how the author integrates his diverse traditions and the diachronic, how we can recognise christological development through two diverse streams of thought. Indeed, we see a similar phenomenon in the so-called Colossian hymn in Col 1:15–20, where, again, Wisdom and royal traditions are juxtaposed, and earlier already in the opening verses of Romans where Paul can similarly speak of God’s “Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be [appointed ὀρισθέντος] Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead” (1:4).

My pursuit of the tradition linked with Psalm 110:1 led me to the realisation that it formed indeed part of an association of ideas, to which belonged usually the title, “Christ”, reference to death and resurrection, followed by allusions to Ps 110:1 and Ps 8:7b, and reference to superiority over powers/angels. It was to be found in 1 Cor 15:20–28; Rom 8:34–39; Eph 1:20–23; 2:5–6; Col 2:10, 15; and 1 Pet 3:18–22, and behind Hebrews 1–2. What formed a chapter in the dissertation I expanded to become a fuller discussion in my article, “Christ at the Right Hand – Ps. cx.1 in the New Testament,” *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978/79): 199–217.

This was just the beginning because two further pursuits followed: how did the author relate what he said in his opening statements to what followed in the letter, especially in relation to his distinctive development of a high priest christology, and what streams of tradition underly it? I sought thereby to sense not only what the author was saying but why. It clearly mattered to the author to emphasise Christ’s elevation above the angels – just a flight of speculative adulation? More probably, because he sensed hearers had some fears about powers. What mattered for the author is clearer in the first use of the high priest motif in 2:17–18, which the author brings in a way that foreshadows later developments in his letter:

Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tempted through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Here we begin to see how the author seeks to relate what he and his hearers confessed about Jesus to their current situation.

To summarise, the author employs the allusion to Psalm 8:7b LXX, which belonged to his royal messianic stream of christological tradition, to relate what it says of Christ’s present elevation to Christ’s earthly existence and to draw out the implications. Accordingly, he cites Psalm 8:7b LXX directly and expands the citation to include also Psalm 8:5–6 LXX, exploiting the possibility of a temporal sense of the words βραχύ τι (a little while) to apply them to Jesus’ earthly life: “You made him for a little while lower than the angels” (citing Psalm 8:6). This makes it likely that ἄνθρωπος and υἱὸς

ἀνθρώπου reflect awareness of christological use of “Son of Man”. The author then expounds the text:

Now we do not yet see everything subjected to him, but we see Jesus having been made a little lower than the angels for a short time through the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour that by God’s generosity he might taste death for everyone. (2:7–9)

Already in chapter 2 we see beside the reference to the Son’s exaltation two further key elements whose significance for his hearers the author will proceed to expound: Jesus’ saving death and Jesus’ earthly life in which he was confronted with suffering and temptation. The second of these is the first to receive elaborate attention.

Thus, the author proceeds to assure his hearers that in order to achieve their salvation and bring them to glory the Son entered their experience of being flesh and blood (2:10–15). In doing so he experienced suffering and faced the temptation to give up and did not and so. As a result, he can intercede for them when they face similar dangers. He has been on that path before them. For this reassurance the author uses the high priest motif, depicting Jesus as a sympathetic and compassionate high priest who can intercede, as high priests did, for people (2:17–18; 4:14–16; 5:1–10; 7:25).

The theme of the Son as high priest interceding for his own before God’s throne is the primary focus of the author’s exposition from chapter 2 to chapter 8. The author uses not only Psalm 8 beyond the traditional use of 8:7b but also Psalm 110 beyond Psalm 110:1 to expound his message. Thus, he cites also Ps 110:4 (“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek”).

Alongside the positive intent to offer assurance to his hearers that they have such a heavenly high priest in the heavenly sanctuary interceding for them, there is another agenda which the motif of high priest serves, namely to indicate that this situation is better than what pertained in the earthly cultic context where high priests were limited by their human failings and mortality, rendering them, the author alleges, ineffective in enabling people to relate to God. By contrast, Jesus is of a different nature, being the divine Son. He finds in Psalm 110:4 reference to a different order of being in relation to Melchisedek, whether or not the author believed that figure was angelic, thus a heavenly being comparable to that of the Son (ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ), such as we find reflected in 11QMelch or, I think less likely, was employing it purely as an image.

In examining this development from a diachronic perspective I noted that the notion that Christ intercedes for his own is already present in association with the Ps 110:1 connection in Rom 8:34 without any mention of a priestly role and that Rev 1:13 depicts the exalted in high priestly garb but without reference to an intercessory role. The author of Hebrews is emphasising the role of Jesus as interceding for help for those who were going through suffering

and tempted to give up. It was important not to read into that role the image of Jesus as advocate for forgiveness of sins as in 1 John 2:1–2.

Whether the author, himself, developed this aspect of the role of Jesus as heavenly high priest interceding for his own or it came from tradition is unclear. Supporting the latter may be the fact that he depicts Jesus as appointed to be high priest at his exaltation reflected in his understanding of Psalm 110:4 (5:5–10). The fact that he will go on to depict Jesus as coming to earth already as high priest to effect atonement (10:5) means that, as with saying about Jesus as Son, we would correspondingly have two streams of thought coming together in Hebrews: a royal messianic christological tradition which speaks of Jesus appointed Son of God/Messiah and high priest at his exaltation and another development which depicts him, like sonship in the Wisdom tradition, as high priest from the beginning or at least from his incarnation.

Clearly the author expands the notion of Jesus' high priesthood in chapters 9 and 10 where he uses it to expound the tradition of Jesus' death as salvific, noted already in 2:9, 14–15, 17 and in the opening statement 1:3. Working selectively with the Atonement Day ritual, reducing the focus to one sacrifice and one entry, the author depicts Jesus as offering himself as a sacrifice and then, *post mortem*, entering the heavenly Holiest Place to sprinkle his blood before God (9:11–12). The article on Jesus as high priest in this volume discusses in detail the various ways in which exegetes have read Hebrews in this regard. The view I put forward and defend is that while the author employs Atonement Day typology it is a misunderstanding to see him relocating the act of salvation from Jesus' death, seen as no more than one of the preparatory sacrifices on Atonement Day, to the heavenly sprinkling because the act of sprinkling achieved atonement in that ritual.

On the contrary, I have argued that the tradition of Jesus' death as atoning was so strong and reflected elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 2:9, 14–15) that the author would more likely have understood the sprinkling as the presentation before God of the completed work. I, therefore, give the aorist participle εὐράμενος in 9:12 its temporal weight, so that we should read it as saying,

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (αιωνίαν λύτρωσιν εὐράμενος). (9:11–12)

The expansion of what had been a motif associated with Jesus' role as the exalted one, connected with Ps 110, to apply now to Jesus as the high priest who took on human flesh in order to offer himself as a redeeming sacrifice is, I argued, the creative work of the author. The author has accordingly drawn on traditions, still discernible in their distinctiveness and diversity, and creatively woven them into a presentation of Jesus designed to assure his hearers that Jesus is above all powers, knows their plight and prays for them, having been on the road before them, has effected atonement and so guaranteed their path

to glory and so has done all this in a way that both fulfils the old, we must assume, that many of them knew and now appropriately sets it aside.

The paper in this volume on the old and new explores this relationship in more detail, while the final paper in addressing the ethical values in Hebrews reflects also on ethical issues raised by the author's dealing with continuity and discontinuity. My Mainz dissertation, trimmed and ready for print in 1973 with the same title and slightly cut down content, finally saw publication in 1981 as: *Sohn und Hoherpriester. Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes*, WMANT 53 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981).

John

The years after my return to congregational ministry in New Zealand, 1973–78 and then my move in 1978 to a full time teaching position as Lecturer in New Testament at the Perth Theological Hall of the Uniting Church in Australia to 1981, were not an inactive hiatus. If it was possible to subject Hebrews to such a tradition-historical analysis, why not the Gospel According to John? Thus, began my explorations of the fourth gospel, initially through spare moments made possible amid the busy tasks of ministry and part-time teaching at the Anglican College of St John the Evangelist with which Trinity College had in the interim partnered. I presented a paper with my initial findings in 1977, subsequently published as “The Central Structure of Johannine Christology,” in *Religious Studies in the Pacific*, ed. John Hinchcliff, Jack Lewis, and Kapil Tiwari (Auckland: Colloquium Publishers, 1978), 87–95. I carried over this research to my new position in Perth where I found strong encouragement from colleagues and an employment contract which fortunately emphasised research as well as teaching.

By the time I reached my first sabbatical semester in 1982, I had made significant progress. Part of that was the realisation that my first priority needed to be to analyse the text as it stands, in that sense, a synchronic approach. Only then would it be possible to engage in a tradition-historical investigation. Indeed, this was the best way to begin such an investigation anyway.

I spent nearly eight months with my young family in Munich, from September, 1982 to April, 1983, as guest of the Protestant faculty, where Ferdinand Hahn was now Professor of New Testament. Computers were soon to change our lives forever, but I was still in the previous age. My challenge was to find ways of identifying the deeper structures of the fourth gospel. Was it possible to find a common story which lay beneath the various manifestations in the text? It had already struck me that some motifs occurred frequently, and I had noted these in my 1977 paper. These included references to sending, whether as the Father sending the Son or the Son as the sent one, similarly, the

language of Father-Son, references to coming and returning and the many variations on a theme of Jesus telling what he had seen and heard. There was a common story beneath these expressions and they frequently occurred together. There was more detailed work to be done.

Accordingly, in those pre-computer times, I set about extracting these very common motifs, writing them out in Greek into long lists, to build a comprehensive database – lots of paper! On the basis of such frequently occurring and connected motifs I sought to reconstruct the logic or story which underlay and connected them. This was an attempt not at precise formulation but at recovering the underlying structure which surfaced in the text. I called it the central structure of Johannine christology.

There was also a way of subjecting the reconstruction to a reality check by identifying passages in the text where the author or usually Jesus, his main character, gave brief summaries of the message, what was to be known and believed. Such passages include:

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God. (13:3)

So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me.²⁹ And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.” (8:28–29)

Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him.²⁹ I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.” (7:28–29)

The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.²⁸ I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father. (16:27–28)

“Now they know that everything you have given me is from you;⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.” (17:7–8)

In geological terms, this is a little like having an ore body which occasionally breaks the surface revealing what lies beneath. Clearly, we are seeing here what the author portrays as the main message. A further check was to examine longer passages located at points where the author was intent on summing up the significance of what went before, such as at the end of John 3, in 3:31–36, the end of John 12 in 12:44–50, and in 8:12–19.

On the basis of such observations it seemed to me that the underlying structure at least included the following: references to God and Jesus as Father and Son; the motif of sending: the Father authorised and sent the Son; that the Son came and returned to the Father; and that the commission of the Son to make the Father known or, in many variations, to tell what he had seen and heard from the Father.

I have returned frequently to revisit the database and to re-examine and refine these findings, most recently in *Jesus in John's Gospel: Structure and Issues in Johannine Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 41–71, a revision and major expansion of my earlier book, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel. Structure and Issues*, 2nd ed., BBET 23 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992, 1st ed., 1989). The first chapter of this volume, “The Central Structure of Johannine Christology,” *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 188–216, is the initial fruit of this more detailed research, building on the 1977 conference paper and foundational for what followed in my work on John. My assessment is that it remains just as pertinent today as it was then.

In that work I drew attention also to an association of motifs frequently occurring together which dealt with the climax of Jesus' life and which had a distinctive vocabulary different from the structure identified above. This cluster of motifs comprised the following motifs: the title “Son of man”; being lifted up/exalted, used in an ironic twofold sense to refer to crucifixion and to exaltation to glory; glorification; ascending (and descending – rather than coming and going/returning); and sometimes the motif of judgement associated with “Son of Man”. I explore this cluster further in chapters 3 and 4 of this volume: “John 1:51 and Johannine Christology” and “John 3:13–15: Re-examining the Exaltation-Glorification-Ascension Nexus in John.”

I saw no need to seek to harmonise the elements of the cluster with the structure identified above. They formed a distinctive association of motifs and doubtlessly had a background in the author's tradition. They were one of the main ways in which the author interpreted the climax of Jesus' life. They, too, therefore belong to the underlying structure of his thought.

I have argued, indeed, that the last discourses show some closer merging of the Son-Father structure and the Son of Man cluster, so that motifs of glorification with the same meaning in the cluster now occur on the lips of the Son addressing the Father in John 17 (e.g., 17:1–5). The author then employs the motif of the Son's return to glory as the basis for his doing his own sending, namely the sending of the disciples and the sending of Spirit to enable them to fulfil that mission. In earlier chapters the Son of Man cluster breaks the surface more distinctively, such as in 1:51; 3:13–15; 12:23, 34; 13:31–32.

Putting both together and seeking to retain the integrity of the author's language, I sought to formulate the underlying structure of the author's christology. The focus was substance, not precise formulation, since the structure finds various expression on the surface of the text, sometimes a string on intact elements, sometimes by allusion, and as noted above, significantly in summaries which the author gives or places on the lips of Jesus and in key passages where an attempt is made to set out what the author sees as the key elements of his message about Jesus. Accordingly, I put together the following as representing the underlying deep structure beneath the author's text

*The Father
sends and authorises the Son,
who knows the Father,
comes from the Father,
makes the Father known,
brings light and life and truth,
completes his Father's work,
returns to the Father,
exalted, glorified, ascended,
sends the disciples
and sends the Spirit
to enable greater understanding,
to equip for mission,
and to build up the community of faith.*

Many statements could be expanded. For instance, “authorises the Son” reflects the notion of the Father giving all things into the Son’s hands (3:35; 13:3); “knows the Father,” “makes the Father known,” and “brings light and life and truth” bundle together the various references to hearing, seeing, being told, and telling, reporting, doing, and to the images of “light, life and truth” one could add much more: bread, water, etc. This fuller reconstruction of the central structure of Johannine christology has been widely recognised. It has formed the basis for my own research and underlies the chapters in this volume dealing with the gospel. It has, in turn, both informed detailed exegesis and raised key issues.

One of these relates to the way in which the author uses the envoy revealer motif. Clearly the message is that the Son makes the Father known, but that in itself is ambiguous. The “story” tells of the Son coming as the divine envoy with the authority usually associated with that role in their world, where, without telecommunication as we know it, the envoy had to be authorised to act on the sender’s behalf. It was inevitable, therefore, that people framed the story as one of revelation with the Son as the revealer. It is very clear, however, that despite language belonging to the depiction of an envoy, telling what he has seen and heard, the Son is not a bearer of information, so that we must conclude that the author is using the envoy motif to that extent metaphorically. The Son is the envoy in the sense of operating on God’s behalf but, even then, despite the notions of leaving and returning to the Father, the author can also speak of direct relationship between Son and Father during his ministry. I address this in chapter 5: “John 5:19–47: A Deviation from Envoy Christology.”

The offering which the Son brings is “light and life and truth,” or more simply “eternal life”. The way to receive that life is to believe in the Son. This life and this belief point to a soteriology of life in relationship, which the author then expounds as being “in” the Son and ultimately being “in” God. To enter into an open trusting relationship with the Son is to enter into such a

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