Landas 34:1 (2020) 29–73

JESUS CHRIST
Partial or Fullness of Truth?

Lancy Monteiro, S.J.

The presence of and encounter with the world religions have given rise to a view that Jesus Christ is only a partial revelation of God rather than its fullness, and that revelation across the religions altogether make up the fullness of God's revelation. Simply put, truths found in all religions make up the Truth. Paul Knitter is one such Christian theologian who holds such a view, which is obviously contrary to Christian faith. This essay argues that Jesus is the Truth or the fullness of God's revelation from the standpoint of the New Testament. At the same time, an attempt is also made to uphold Knitter's idea, namely, that there are "truths" in religions.

The presence of metacosmic religions in the world has been a persistent challenge for the Church's mission of proclaiming the Truth, Jesus Christ. Having encountered the phenomena of religions, some theologians of religions are of the view that the Divine Mystery is inexhaustible and that every religion, whether gnostic or agapeic, is a partial knowledge of the same inexhaustible Divine Mystery.[1] Paul

[1]Dupuis, too, holds that Jesus's human existence and his human consciousness (or his historical particularity) impose limits and, therefore, that revelation in him cannot be full and complete. A finite/limited reality cannot reveal fully the Absolute/Divine reality-in-itself. Jesus's revelation of God in his humanity, therefore, is incomplete:

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Knitter is one such theologian of religious pluralism who submits to and propounds such a view. For him, Jesus was not and cannot be the fullness of the Truth simply because the Divine Mystery is inexhaustible. Consequently, God's revelation in him was partial and never full. This is because of the following: 1) Jesus never claimed to be God; instead, he proclaimed God and God's kingdom. They were the controlling horizon of his mission and ministry and the vision and inspiration behind whatever he said and did from the beginning until the end. He was ultimate not to himself but to God and God's kingdom. He was not the fullness of God and God's kingdom. 2) The Divine Mystery ever remains the Absolute and can never be exhausted in its manifestation in the particular/finite. In its finite manifestation, it is always multifaceted. Hence, the Truth in a limited or partial way is

> God remains beyond the man Jesus as the ultimate source of … revelation.… Jesus' revelation of God is a human transposition of God's mystery.… The personal identity of Jesus as Son of God in his human existence notwithstanding, a distance continues to exist between God (the Father), the ultimate source, and he who is God's human icon. Jesus is no substitute for God. (J. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* [Marykoll, NY: Orbis, 2001], 298)

For Dupuis, the mystery of God ever exceeds the humanity of Jesus; therefore, it can never be exhausted by anything particular. Cf. M. Yenson, "Jacques Dupuis and Chalcedon," *Theological Studies* 80:2 (2019): 273. Nevertheless, Dupuis defines the fullness of revelation in Jesus as the best possible revelation that has occurred and is available in human history in terms of its intensity, which cannot be superseded by any other revelation of God. It is not absolute revelation, however, for only the Divine reality-in-itself and not any finite reality can be absolute. For some, Jesus is God but they deny the inverse statement that God is Jesus Christ since it is only the Son who incarnated and not the Father and the Spirit; the whole Trinity did not incarnate. Hence, God cannot be identified with Jesus fully and the latter cannot be the fullness of revelation. Others ask how, if in Jesus the fullness of God dwells, can God still be omnipresent while incarnated. Similarly, if God is omnipresent and also present in the immanent trinity while incarnated, can God's incarnation not manifest the fullness of divinity? Cf. J. Cassidy, "Review of Karl Barth and the Incarnation, by Darren O. Sumner," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 79:2 (2017): 378–379.

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found in all religions. All religions, therefore, are fragments and limited expressions of the one Truth. Any one religion's truth is not the entire Truth or the fullness of Truth. The historical consciousness of our times only affirms this fact. 3) For Knitter, all this means that Jesus is not the fullness of God's revelation but the partial, indefinite, and surpassable revelation. Hence, all of Jesus is God, but Jesus is not all of God—Jesus is *totus Deus*, not *totum Dei*. *Deus semper Major*. We may have met God in Jesus but it does not mean that we have the fullness of God in him. He does not exhaust God. Knitter's definition of Jesus is that he is *truly* but not *solely* divine and the savior because, as mentioned, God is more than Jesus. For as long as God remains God, no one can have the final word on such a God. Jesus as the fullness of God's revelation, found in the New Testament Christologies, is the product of particular times, i.e., of the presence of classicist culture, the disciples' Jewish eschatological-apocalyptic mentality, and a technique of survival (or of carving out a new identity). 4) From a Christian viewpoint, insofar as the Holy Spirit and the Logos are present and active in the world, more of God can always be revealed. The Word revealed in Jesus Christ has been, is, and will be revealing in salvation history. Therefore, for Knitter, the Word revealed in Jesus is partial and, therefore, Jesus along with other revealed words makes the fullness of the Word.[2]

Obviously, Knitter's elaboration of Jesus Christ is in dissonance with the New Testament revelation. While it is to be affirmed that Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation, the presence of revelation in religions cannot simply be ruled out. Certainly, from the Christian standpoint, we cannot tread Knitter's path. Jesus cannot be a fragment of God's revelation. In disagreement with Knitter's view, this essay argues that a distinction between "Truth" and "truths" can uphold both the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ and truths in other religions. By "Truth," I mean here the very manifestation of God's being/self in the person of Jesus of Nazareth—God enfleshed, Emmanuel,

[2]P. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," in J. Hick & P. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 178–200.

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God to humans as humans. "Truths" refer to everything that leads to humankind's knowledge about God/the Absolute/transcendence gained either naturally or supernaturally and to the elements that aid meaningful human/religious existence. The former is an explicit and direct presentation of God-in-God's self (1 Jn. 1:1) while the latter is our knowledge of God which is other than God's being revealed in Jesus and comes by way of human effort or through revelation that is of aid to humans for their human/religious existence. One is revelation of the very Godself which is qualitatively different and the other is revelation about God (God's nature, qualities, presence, etc.) and humans (their nature, origin, existence, destiny, etc.) through other diverse means. Besides knowledge about God, the latter may also include elements that aid human-religious existence. "Truths," therefore, preclude revelation of God's self. "Truths" do not add to or complement the "Truth" in any way.

This essay, therefore, is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the New Testament titles of Jesus and tries to show that they refer essentially to Yahweh himself or to Jesus's belonging to the same sphere as that of God. Hence, when they are used for Jesus, they refer to him as God. The later creed and trinitarian doctrines articulate the same with expressions such as "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten and not made, of the same substance of the Father," eternal generation, consubstantiality, perfect union of two natures, and so on. Consequently, God's revelation in Jesus cannot be anything other than the revelation of God's self; Jesus, therefore, is the fullness of God's revelation. In the second section, I wish to discuss the distinction between the "Truth" and "truths," the presence of "truths," their origin, and their relation to Christocentrism.

I. Revelation of the Truth

The specificity of Jesus lies in the fact that he is God. He is the manifestation of the very Godself, God's very self-communication, the very being of God, God in human flesh, the epiphany of God, the perfect visible expression of the reality of God. That is the Truth. The

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New Testament affirms this by describing him as the Logos (Jn. 1:1), pre-existing/begotten Son of God (Heb. 1:2, 5, 8; Phil. 2:6; Mk. 1:1; Lk. 1:35; 22:70; Jn. 3:16, 18; 5:25; 20:31; 1 Jn. 4:19; Rom. 8:3), man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47), Christ/Messiah, and Lord. In him, the fullness of God dwelt (Col. 1:19; 2:9) and the invisible had become visible (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4). Apart from John's Gospel, the Letter to the Hebrews is the most explicit declaration of the Son's ontological relation and resemblance to the Father in calling him the very imprint of God's glory/nature (Heb. 1:3); indeed, the intent of Heb. 1:3 is that "since the Son bears the 'impression' of his Father, he accurately represents his very being."[3] He radiates and reflects the Father's glory. The epistle also attributes the quality of eternity (which belongs to God alone) to Jesus with the words "forever and ever" (Heb. 1:8): "God's eternity is most often used to make a distinction between God and all creation. Apparently, the author applies this criterion to Jesus in this verse to show that he is God."[4] The New Testament in general ascribes to him pre-existent (Jn. 1:1–3; Phil. 2:6) and post-resurrection stages, which belong to God alone. As John tells us, Jesus himself was aware/conscious of his own identity as God: He and the Father are one (Jn. 17:11); to have seen him is to have seen the Father (Jn. 14:9); he is in the Father and the Father is in him (Jn. 14:11; 17:21); before Abraham he was (Jn. 8:58).

> Throughout the Old Testament, when God's presence is represented as dwelling with His people, there is always a manifestation of that shekinah glory—the pillar of cloud, the pillar of fire, the bright light that filled the Tabernacle and the Temple. But the Son is the very radiance of the glory of God (Heb. 1:3), the image of God in whose face the glory of God shines in fullness (2 Cor. 4:4, 6). He is the exalted Lord seated on the throne of heaven, the train of whose robe fills the heavenly temple, of whom the angels declare, "The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:1–8; cf. Jn 12:37–41). Before the world was, the

[3]S. Mackie, "Confession of the Son of God in the Exordium of Hebrews," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30:4 (2008): 444.

[4]V. Rhee, "Christology in Hebrews 1:5–14: The Three Stages of Christ's Existence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59:4 (2016): 725.

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> Word that became flesh and dwelt among us was eternally existing in the very nature, essence, and glory of God.[5]

Jesus's genealogy (because the Son of God was to come from the Davidic descent[6]), his hometown of Bethlehem (city of David), the annunciation account, Mary's virginity, Jesus's virginal birth (in Matthew and Luke), his miracles, the voice from heaven, etc. are credentials that underscore emphatically that Jesus was God. The Gospel of Matthew even uses earth quaking, rocks splitting, tombs opening, and the raising of many who had died (27:51–52) to affirm the same since these phenomena are reminiscent of Old Testament theophanies of the divine warrior (Ps. 18:7; 46:3; Nah. 1:5–6):

> At the moment of Jesus' death, Matthew describes a series of portents, some of which draw on the theophany of the divine warrior. Matthew has the centurion and his soldiers make their declaration only when they see these portents. Their declaration is a response to the earthquake and the other happenings (27:54). Among them, Matthew highlights the earthquake; it is therefore reasonable to infer that he intends to portray the guards and centurion as responding to the theophany of the divine warrior in Jesus crucified. This lends support to the suggestion that the declaration of 27:54 portrays Jesus as the divine warrior.[7]

Similarly, walking on water and the stilling of the stormy sea also echo the divine warrior tradition of Israel (Job 26:11–12; Ps. 65:7; 89:9–10). "Therefore, in Matt 14:33, the disciples make their confession that Jesus is the son of God in recognition that Jesus is God the divine warrior who conquers the forces of chaos."[8] More importantly, however, is the evangelists' use of titles such as Son of God and

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[5]M. Riccardi, "Veiled in Flesh the Godhead See: A Study of the Kenosis of Christ," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 30:1 (2019): 122.

[6]Jesus was of Davidic descent because, as prophesied, the Son of God was to come from the line of David's descendants. Davidic heritage was a prerequisite to his Messianic status.

[7]A. Angel, "'Crucifixus Vincens': The 'Son of God' as Divine Warrior in Matthew," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73:2 (2011): 314.

[8]Angel, "'Crucifixus Vincens': The 'Son of God' as Divine Warrior in Matthew," 310.

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Messiah. Obviously, these titles—although belonging to the Jewish religious world and used by Jewish disciples—conveyed best the experience of the apostles and preserve a credible memory of Jesus in the Church. In the following section, I wish to elaborate further on how certain titles attributed to Jesus conveyed that he was God.

Jesus's Titles. Paul and other New Testament writers rarely use the term "God" for Jesus. Instead, Jesus is addressed as "Lord" (not ὸ θεός but κύριος), Son of God, Messiah, Son of David, Son of the Most High, prophet, and so on. More clearly for Paul, it is "one God, the Father" and "one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:6). This is not because Jesus was attributed less divinity or subordinated to God; for the early Christian community, Jesus as God was not simply identical with the Father[9] since he was not the Father but was of the same realm and substance of the Father, an idea which the later trinitarian doctrine substantiated with the term "consubstantiality." Here, I wish to pick five New Testament titles of Jesus—Logos, the "I am" sayings, Son of God, Christ/Messiah, and Lord—and attempt to show that in their use the evangelists were clearly saying that Jesus was God (the Truth) and thereby affirm that his historical existence was the fullness of God's revelation.

Logos. While the synoptic Gospels predominantly use the titles "Son of God" and "Messiah" to communicate the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, John's Gospel emphatically uses the term "Logos/Word," among other titles, at the beginning of the gospel to communicate that Jesus was God. In no unequivocal terms, it is stated that "in the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God and the same Word became flesh" (Jn. 1:1). However, the term is introduced without any definition or explanation; hence, we have no clue as regards what the evangelist really meant by it. The Greek term "logos," from the verb *legō*,[10] meant speech, word, language,

[9]Cf. R. Bauckham, "Markan Christology according to Richard Hays: Some Addenda," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 11:1 (2017): 24–25.

[10]"The three basic meanings of the verb are: first, objective meaning: the rational ground or basis for something; second, subjective meaning: the power

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argument, reason, explanation, order, and measure, depending on the context.[11] Its use as a metaphysical principle extends back into the pre-Socratic past and survives in the fragments of Heraclitus (535–480 BCE).[12] Logos, for Heraclitus, was a rational order and the universal principle that animated and ruled the world.[13] It is "the principle through which the universe was formed and is sustained, [that] maintains order in a universe essentially in flux … [and] is also common to all human beings, unifying the species with the rest of the universe."[14] It was also refined and expanded by Greek and Roman Stoicism to account for

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or faculty of reasoning or thought; and third, impressive meaning: thought or reason as expressed in speech or in writing" (J. Thomaskutty, *The Gospel of John: A Universalistic Reading* [New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2020], 40). The author emphasizes the meaning of the term as dialogue; therefore, it refers to the Logos as the internal dialogue of God. Accordingly, John used the term to refer to God's dialogue with the world in Jesus. Jesus is God's dialogue with the world in flesh.

[11]Cf. R. Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," *Pro Ecclesia* 5:2 (1996): 185–186.

[12]Cf. L. Eveleth, "Clement of Alexandria and the Logos," *American Theological Inquiry* 6:2 (2013): 40.

[13]Cf. L. Bausch, "Śakti and Logos: Material Manifestations of the Divine," *Religion East & West* 8 (2008): 99.

[14]C. De Wet, "Mystical Expressions and the Logos in the Writings of St. John of the Cross," *Neotestamentica* 42:1 (2008): 39. According to Heraclitus, fire is the fundamental, unchanging substance that underlies the world.

> But if fire is the stuff from which all things are made, how is it that the world appears quite different from fire? Because, responded Heraclitus, the world is in constant flux. Fire transforms itself by a process of thickening, or quenching, into water, then earth, then back to fire. This process is perpetual and universal. We live in a River of Time and a River of Space. Nor are these changes merely accidental or random; they occur systematically and according to law. The term used by Heraclitus for the law governing this process is λόγος: reason or intelligence. (Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 186)

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the reasonability of the cosmos. For the Stoics (4 BCE), too, logos was reason, a rational, ordering principle always embodied in matter, the rational principle/element by which the universe was governed.

> While logos permeated and ordered all of nature, it was present in different parts of nature in different ways. Only in human beings was logos present as part of their very nature. In other words, only human beings were rational. For the Stoics, human rationality (logos) was intimately connected with and reflected the rationality of the universe as a whole.[15]

The Stoics

> discerned between different types of *logoi*, namely: (a) the *Logos spermatikos*, indicating a germinal indwelling of the Logos within all human beings; (b) the *Logos endiathetos*, an unspoken thought in the mind of God "having potential for articulation" and (c) the *Logos prophorikos* [which] is then the expression of the latter mentioned divine thought. Especially with the Stoics, the Logos is already associated with the notion of expression.[16]

For the Stoics, therefore, logos was not merely a rational principle of order that pervaded and controlled the whole universe through seminal reasons (*logoi spermatikoi*) but was God's thought/reason and its expression. As the divine Reason, it pervaded and controlled all things in such a way as to produce beauty, harmony, and unity of the whole, and the knowledge of which delivered the soul from the ruinous ignorance[17] of Greek philosophy. In Stoic thinking in general, logos referred to "the governing faculty of a human being and *the pervasive, divine force that created the material world* and subsequently imposed order

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Cf. V. Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 19:2 (2009): 196.

[15]Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", 196.

[16]De Wet, "Mystical Expressions and the Logos in the Writings of St. John of the Cross," 39–40. The λόγος σπερματικός is the structural law which determines each element of nature. It is the σπέρμα (seed) which has within itself the principle of its own development.

[17]Cf. E. Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112:3 (1993): 448–449.

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on it … a cosmic and pervasive, semi-divine force or being at work in the universe."[18] In the Stoic perspective, moreover, logos, God, and nature were, in reality, one.

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 25 BCE–50 CE) was another person who employed the term "logos" abundantly in his writings. Borrowing from Greek philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics), he attempted to synthesize the term with Hebrew monotheism. God, for Philo, was infinite, unknowable, and distinct from the world, and related to the material world only through intermediaries.

> These mediating agents are summed up in the λόγος, the highest created being next to God. For Philo, as for Heraclitus, the λόγος is that cosmic law which binds the universe together in a harmonious unity. The λόγος is the reason or God's mind; and yet it is a being distinct from God, God's "first begotten Son." It is the image (εικσν) or copy of God; the mediator between God and the material world; a second God (θεός but not ὸ θεός); the agent of creation and the instrument of providence. At the same time, the λόγος is conceived as pluralizing itself into myriads of subordinate λόγοι, similar to the λόγοι σπερματικοί of the Stoics.[19]

Philo's logos has also been interpreted as the God-immanent that holds together and administers the entire chain of creation. Human reason, a copy/fragment of the logos through its rational activities, is so closely a part of the rule of the logos in the universe. From Philo's viewpoint, in sum, the logos is "the mind of God containing the ideal archetypes of the cosmos, the creative instrument of God, the bond and preserver of all existing things, the mediator between the creator and creature, etc." which is "the Beginning, the Name of God, the Image of God."[20] For Philo, then, the logos clearly is the mediator through which God creates the cosmos and the link/mediating figure between God and the cosmos since God does not interact directly with the cosmos but through the operation of the logos (the same is

[18]J. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," *Vigiliae Christianae* 66:4 (2012): 344 (emphasis added).

[19]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 187.

[20]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 448–449.

https://publications.lst.edu/

expressed by Clement of Alexandria). The logos is the agent of creation and the agent through whom humans understand God.[21]

There are also modern views (Rudolf Bultmann, Raymond Brown) that hold that John's logos has more to do with the personification of the σοφία of Old Testament wisdom literature, which is equated with God (Prov. 1:20–33; 3:13–18; 4:5–9; 8:1–9:5; 31:11–31; Sir. 24; 51; Wis. 7–9; as well as Job 28 and possibly the Song of Songs). The verses, such as "At God's word were his works brought into being" (Wis. 42:15), "For he spoke, and it came to be" (Ps. 33:9), and "He sent forth the word to heal them, snatched them from the grave" (Ps. 107:1–20), are only a few of the references to the presence and power of God's σοφία. It is argued that the late Jewish σοφία "is personified and represented as the first of God's creations and the attendant craftsman in all subsequent creation, a pure emanation of the glory of the almighty, a reflection of eternal light, an image of God's goodness.…"[22] It has been seen as the hypostatization and personification of the "eternal, creative, sustaining, healing, redemptive, prophetic" word of God, God's first creation (*dābār*). John was probably referring to this Old Testament personification of σοφία than to the Greek logos. However, some hold that the Old Testament wisdom literature itself is influenced by the Greek "logos" and, hence, that the σοφία of the Old Testament is actually Greek. As per wisdom theology, God projected logos (thoughts & words) onto a formless, unreal matter and made it a real, rational universe.

The logos is also seen as "the Torah in which the Law is portrayed as interchangeable with 'the word of the Lord,' and preexistent, eternal, etc."[23] as the "divine hypostasis/substance," as in the *targums* of the Old Testament, as the intermediary between the material and spiritual

[21]Cf. J. Kavunkal, "The Logos as the Basis of Biblical Universalism," in T. Karimundackal, ed., *Logos Proclaiming and Witnessing to God's Word* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2021), 193.

[22]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 448–449.

[23]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 448–449.

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realms (found in Gnostic sources such as the Hermetic literature from Egypt, especially the *Poimandres*) and as related to the descent and ascent of the redeemer (found in pre-Christian Hellenistic-Gnostic redeemer myths and probably modified by John).

Is John's "Logos" the same as Heraclitus's and the Stoics' rational principle of order that pervaded and controlled the whole universe? Is it the same as the Greek philosophical link that overcomes the distance between the spiritual and material worlds? Is it the hypostatization/personification of wisdom from the Old Testament literature? Opinions vary. Philo's logos may find resonance with John's Logos; according to some, Philo's interpretation of the logos, despite the influence of the philosophy of the Stoics and Plato, is Biblical and that the logos that emerges from the divine is fundamentally associated with God and is God.[24] It is also held that it was Philo who provided a theistic understanding of the Greek philosophical logos. The transcendent God, a pure being without quality, relates to the material world through the intermediary agent present everywhere in creation called the Logos.[25] Philo provided the link between God and the world by interpreting Plato's world of eternal ideas/forms (the intelligible world that is different from the sensible world, which is but a copy of the former) as God's thoughts and that "first among the ideas is the Logos, whom Philo called the firstborn Son of the uncreated Father."[26] Hence, since the experience of Jesus's disciples was that he was God's Son, "it could not have been problematic for the early church to effect the transition from Philo's depiction of the Logos as the 'firstborn of God' to the Christian doctrine that the Logos, identified with Jesus Christ, is the 'only begotten Son of God' (i.e., the Father)."[27]

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[24]Cf. J. Hoblík, "The Holy Logos in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria," *Communio Viatorum* 56:3 (2014): 248–249, 253.

[25]Cf. Bausch, "Śakti and Logos," 99.

[26]V. de Beer, "The Cosmic Role of the Logos, as Conceived from Heraclitus until Eriugena," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 59:1/4 (2014): 20.

[27]de Beer, "The Cosmic Role of the Logos," 20.

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The Church Fathers' interpretations of the logos, too, seem to take a cue from Greek philosophy, although these, of course, are aimed at affirming the fact that Jesus was God. According to them, the logos is the Father's immanent reason, eternal like him and coequal with him, and is his outgoing, active, and creative Word.[28] The early Christian philosopher Athenagoras, in his apology identifying the Son with the logos, affirms that God, the eternal mind, had the Logos/Son from eternity with him;[29] the logos, therefore, is God from eternity. In whichever way they made the presence of the logos intelligible (in explaining creation/rationality), the Fathers in general always had in mind that the logos was God and were merely defending that proposition.

> Logos, then, is the Word of a transcendent God differentiated in creation. The principle of God's discursive presence is embodied in Jesus Christ, who is seen theologically as the second person of the Trinity.… In Christianity, the logos principle is understood as reason and the indwelling of Jesus, which is also the wisdom that leads to salvation.[30]

The identification of the logos with God is expressed by the Fathers (Athenagoras, Theophilus, Justin) in terms such as rational mind, rational word, and the relation between them. Just as the rational mind expresses itself in the rational word, the Father expresses himself in the Logos (begets the Son). Just as the rational word is present in the rational mind, likewise is the Son in the Father. The relationship between the Father and the Son is similar to the relationship between the mind and the word. "The λόγος, as God's 'Word,' is in a sense God's 'Son,' and the 'begetting' of the λόγος is accomplished when God 'speaks' him and 'sends' him forth."[31] Tatian and Theophilus, borrowing from the Stoic distinction between the inner (λόγος ενδιατητετος, mind/thought) and outer (λόγος προπηορικος, word borne forth/spoken) word, affirm the same: the logos is forever within the mind of God.

[28]Cf. Bausch, "Śakti and Logos," 100.

[29]Cf. de Beer, "The Cosmic Role of the Logos," 24.

[30]Bausch, "Śakti and Logos," 101–102.

[31]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 191.

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He is God's own word from the beginning. He is the eternal thought of God. He was before anything came to be.[32]

For Justin, the Old Testament theophanies are the logos because the Father who does not speak has the logos as his voice in creation. The logos is the Power of the ineffable (ἀρρητος) Father.[33] In other words, Justin's identification of the logos with Yahweh, in spite of the distinction which the doctrine of the Trinity elaborated later on, affirms that the logos belongs to the same realm as that of Yahweh and is God. For Irenaeus, God is the creator proper and the logos is the mediating agent through whom God creates. This, however, does not mean that the logos is of lesser power and divinity. God creates with God's own logos and does not need any other instruments.[34] Since the logos is very much part of God's creative function, the logos is God. Only God creates and the logos is involved in God's act of creation; hence, the logos shares the same status as that of God.

Irenaeus also affirms, as is revealed in the Gospel of John, that the logos reveals God the Father. Obviously, the logos in person cannot reveal other than what the logos is in its very nature, namely, God. For Clement of Alexandria, the logos is

> in a timeless realm, in the absence of a cosmos. Logos refers to ideas and plans for creating the cosmos and its human inhabitants in the mind of God. Because God is One and utterly Simple, he is not separated from his own ideas and plans; thus the *Logos* is God, because God cannot be said to have parts.[35]

If the logos is God and if Jesus is that logos, then he is the revelation of God.

> The Word is what God wishes us to know about Himself; it is God speaking about Himself. Christ is all that we can bear to know about

[32]Cf. Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 192.

[33]Cf. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 346–347.

[34]Cf. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 361.

[35]Eveleth, "Clement of Alexandria and the Logos," 40.

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> God.… God has communicated something of Himself as recorded in Scripture. Christ is the completeness of truth for human understanding.[36]

While the just-mentioned interpretations of the Fathers exhibit the influence of Greek philosophy and stress Jesus's status as that of God, John further highlights the uniqueness of the pre-existence and incarnation of the logos:

> It is important to note that the use of logos in the hymn in John's prologue moves beyond Hellenistic Jewish speculations about logos/wisdom in that it identifies this logos with Jesus of Nazareth. Neither Jewish wisdom literature nor the kind of Hellenistic Jewish speculation represented by Philo ever sought to identify either wisdom or logos with a specific human being. The hymn in the prologue is the clearest example in first-century Christian literature of both an incarnational and a pre-existent Christology. It affirms both that the logos has become flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and that Jesus of Nazareth existed before the incarnation, indeed before the creation of the world, as God's divine logos.[37]

"The prologue, after introducing the Logos without definition or explanation of its origin, asserts that from the very beginning of its independent, autonomous being—even before it served as the agent of creation—the Logos was προς τον θεόν."[38] Similarly, not only was the logos pre-existent; it was also of the same substance as the Father and, therefore, was God: "The Logos, even before it serves as the divine agent of creation [through him everything came to being], is initially προς τον θεόν, its participation in the divine essence, resulting in its identity as θεός.…"[39] Furthermore, the same pre-existent logos who was God unites itself with human flesh in the mystery of the Incarnation: "For, in contrast to its primordial movement προς τον

[36]Eveleth, "Clement of Alexandria and the Logos," 41.

[37]Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", 198.

[38]H. Waetjen, "Logos προς τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63:2 (2001): 268.

[39]Waetjen, "Logos προς τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 270.

https://publications.lst.edu/

θεόν … which united it with its Originator and resulted in its identity as θεός, the Logos has now united with flesh."[40] The logos has become human in flesh and blood, and, consequently, also with the frailty, limitations, and temporality of humans. "Through enfleshment … God can now be seen, not in metaphysical visions which autonomous reason contemplates, but in the total physical life of a human being."[41] The logos of the prologue unites itself with a human being and the glory of the Lord, which filled the tabernacle of the tent of meeting (Ex. 40:34–38), is visible in Jesus who claimed to be the temple (Jn. 2:19–21). Hence, the logos is identical with God and not the second in order.

Thus far, we have tried to show that John's Logos referred to God by delving into views expressed about the Greek λόγος and the Hebrew *σοφία*. Miller, however, has a unique viewpoint. For him, the meaning of John's Logos is from neither Greek philosophy nor some other outside source but the gospel itself since the word "word" (words) is a pervasive theme in it. Jesus is predominantly discoursing and addressing; "words" dominate the gospel, revealing Christ, the saving Truth. In fact, λόγος and ῥήμα are used interchangeably in Johannine literature:

> Here, we suggest, is the origin of the Johannine Logos, here in these numerous occurrences of λόγος and ῥήμα, which may be read at one level as meaning "word," but may transparently point at the same time to a "Word," the saving truth, and thus involve an implicit christological significance. Here, that is, we are on our way to a christological title.[42]

The Logos/Word, a full-blown Christological title in the prologue and found in the first epistle of John, is the summary in one word of the significance of "word/words" in the gospel and in the epistles. To put

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[40]Waetjen, "Logos ρος τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 278.

[41]Waetjen, "Logos ρος τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 278.

[42]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 452.

https://publications.lst.edu/

it another way, it is the title of Johannine literature that sums up the content, especially the theme "word/words." It is present implicitly in the gospel proper. Hence, to trace the term's meaning, albeit Greek in its origin, it is not necessary to look beyond the gospel itself. It is to be found properly in Johannine literature itself and not in any other outside sources, even though the latter might have aided, abetted, and reinforced the term in the process of the community's Christological reflection due to its awareness of the role played by the word "Logos" (or its equivalent) in other traditions. In other words, Miller argues that the meaning of the term "Logos" is rooted in the community's reflection on the words of the historical Jesus and only then was he given the title, first in the epistle and then incorporated in the prologue. Just as the Jewish tradition conceived the historically creative and active word of God/wisdom as permanently fixed in the heavens (Ps. 119:89), so too did the Johannine community, after Christological reflection over a period of time, conceive the historical existence of Jesus to be one with the pre-existent Word.[43] Miller argues that the "Word" refers to the objective, historical, and empirical embodiment and expression of the eternal Truth in the teaching and activity of Jesus himself.

> It is personified, hypostatized, and historicized throughout, and, it is specifically identified as preexistent, identified as God, identified as the creator, identified as the source of spiritual life and light, identified as the object of salvific belief, and identified with the person of Jesus Christ.[44]

There are voices similar to that of Miller. The Logos of Christianity (Jesus, the Word of God) greatly differs from the Hellenistic logos speculation:

> The Greek concept of λόγος was a reflection of human *ratio*, which could be rediscovered in both nature and God. The movement was from the human to the divine. The New Testament concept of λόγος moves in the opposite direction, from the divine to the human. Further, the λόγος as found in Philo and the Stoics is not historically unique, but part of a never-ending, metaphysical unfolding of being that cannot

[43]Cf. Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 456.

[44]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 455.

https://publications.lst.edu/

> be fixed in time. The New Testament begins with the resolve of a personal God to intervene in human history at a particular time and place. And in fact, the particularity of the λόγος is fundamental for New Testament Christology.[45]

As already seen, the origin of the New Testament Logos is attributed to the σοφία of late Jewish religious literature or to Greek philosophy. For Norris, as is for Miller, John's Logos is neither Greek philosophical interpretation nor the exalted σοφία of late Jewish Wisdom speculation:

> But regardless of the origin of the Johannine λόγος, there was little chance the Evangelist would have been philosophically misinterpreted. The λόγος of the Fourth Gospel is clearly the incarnate Word, Jesus of Nazareth, the Word made flesh; an idea totally foreign to either the exalted σοφία of late Jewish Wisdom speculation, or the metaphysical concept of λόγος found in Hellenistic and Stoic philosophy. Johannine use of the term λόγος emerges from deep theological reflection on the life of Jesus as the central revelation of God. The Evangelist speaks not of some philosophical abstraction, but of the λόγος incarnate in human form, who is the λόγος for precisely that reason.[46]

This means that "through the incarnation, the Word fully took on the human condition, and came to be present, dwell, or live among us, so that 'we' … could through faith contemplate his divine glory, or the visible manifestation in him of God's presence and power."[47] Jesus is the logos's enfleshed presence in the world; the logos is synonymous with Jesus.

> In its incarnation the Logos has not ceased to be itself; its union with flesh and blood in Jesus of Nazareth is so complete, so perfect, that that human being can claim to be all that the Logos is. Accordingly, Jesus will assert: "Before Abraham happened, I am."[48]

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[45]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 187.

[46]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 189.

[47]G. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ* (London: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10.

[48]Waetjen, "Logos προς τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 283.

https://publications.lst.edu/

Hence, Jesus's descent in John is diverse.

> While other proto-orthodox authors (especially Paul and Matthew) were concerned with Jesus' lineal descent from the "seed" of David or gentile Christians' relationship to the "seed" of Abraham, for John it is God's own σπέρμα that issues forth. The seed of David is mentioned in John only by a crowd questioning Jesus' origins (7:42), and descent from Abraham is never claimed as positive during the debate over lineage (8:31–59). For John, as for many proto-heterodox Christians in the second century, earthly lineage was trumped by divine begetting.[49]

The identification of the logos with Jesus was the outcome of eventual theological reflection unlike the title "Lord" which had its origin in very early Christian worship itself.[50] John's description of Jesus as the Logos, therefore, is neither accidental nor concocted; it was the fruit of inspiration by the Holy Spirit and of theological reflection and was meant to express that Jesus was God. This can be corroborated from the fact that the commencement of John's Gospel has a resemblance with the commencement of the book of Genesis in that both start off with "In the beginning.…"

> John emphasizes more strongly than other New Testament writers the cosmic dimensions of the Word, and specifically the participation of the pre-existent Christ in the creation of the world. It is significant that the Gospel of John begins with the same words found in the first book of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Greek text of Genesis opens with the words εν αρχή, as does the Gospel of John. In Genesis 1:1 we read: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In John we read: "In the beginning was the Word … all things were made through him." The evangelist offers a new Genesis account, a new creation story, one centered in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate λόγος of God.[51]

In Genesis, God speaks and creates both light and all living creatures; in John, the Logos is the purveyor of light and life. In

[49]M. Peppard, "Adopted and Begotten Sons of God: Paul and John on Divine Sonship," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73:1 (2011): 104.

[50]Cf. Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 187–188.

[51]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 189–190.

https://publications.lst.edu/

other words, "the realities of the God of Israel are fully present in the Logos."[52] This is to say that the Logos existed with and as God before time. If the Logos is described as someone who was part and parcel of the whole process of creation and through whom creation came into being, and if Jesus is the manifestation of the same Logos that existed from the beginning, then Jesus cannot but be God. This precreational rhetoric, reminiscent of the book of Genesis, is also found in the letter to the Hebrews (1:2, 10): "Jesus as Son is creator and heir of all things."[53] God brings everything into being and the Logos is very much part of it.[54] The very fact that Jesus enjoys his status as creator means that his status is no less than that of God.

The identity of Jesus as the Logos/Word is what distinguishes him from the Old Testament prophets. He was not a prophet in the Old Testament sense of the term because he did not receive and transmit the word of God or speak the word of God but was the Word of God. If he received the words and spoke as the Old Testament prophets did, then that would imply that Jesus was not in fact God or the Word of God. Hence, he says "it was said, but I say unto you" with the authority of God's own self. He was not a prophet like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, John the Baptist, etc. who brought revelation of God's word; he was God's revelation himself, the Word[55] who spoke through the words of the prophets even before becoming flesh.[56]

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[52]C. Skinner, "'Son of God' or 'God's Chosen One' (John 1:34)? A Narrative-Critical Solution to a Text-Critical Problem," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 25:3 (2015): 346.

[53]Cf. R. Hall, "Pre-Existence, Naming, and Investiture in the Similitudes of Enoch and in Hebrews," *Religion & Theology* 18:3–4 (2011): 312.

[54]Cf. Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", 198.

[55]Cf. D. Boerman, "The Self-Revelation of God in Jesus," *Calvin Theological Journal* 52:1 (2017): 12–13.

[56]Justin Martyr said: "But when you hear the utterances of the prophets spoken as it were personally, you must not suppose that they are spoken by the inspired

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In conclusion, opinions concerning the origin and meaning of John's "Logos" are diverse. There are arguments to suggest that it has a Greek philosophical meaning and is also the fruit of deep theological/Christological reflection. As discussed above, however, with all its specific natures (rational order, universal-metaphysical principle, reason/mind, word/speech, God, oneness with God, pre-existence) and functions (creation, permeation, pervasion, sustenance, ordering, control, mediation), the predominant feature of the Logos, irrespective of whether it is from Greek philosophy or from deep theological reflection, is that it is transcendent-immanent, eternal-temporal, heavenly-earthly. If it is the embodiment of the rational metaphysical principle in the manner of Greek philosophy (non-matter present in matter), then John has used it to attribute its transcendent-immanent character to Jesus. Similarly, if it is the result of theological/Christological reflection, it cannot but be an affirmation of the full presence of the eternal Truth in Jesus. In him, the abstract/conceptual/invisible became fully concrete/real/visible. This was true of his disciples' experience. More specifically, God the Son, who was with God and was God and in and through whom everything came into being, was fully present in Jesus's historical existence. In other words, the eternal Logos was fully manifested in the temporal existence of Jesus. Consequently, we may say that John's Logos is nothing but Jesus's title to express the revelation of God's being in him.

Son of God. The plural in Gen. 1:26 ("Let us make…") clearly suggests the "pre-existence" of the Son. In the New Testament, on the occasion of his baptism, transfiguration, and death (through the centurion's confession), Jesus's identity as the "Son of God" was

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themselves, but by the Divine Word who moves them." Origen also makes a similar claim:

> And by the words of Christ we do not mean those only which He spoke when He became man and tabernacled in the flesh; for before that time, Christ, the Word of God, was in Moses and the prophets. For without the Word of God, how could they have been able to prophesy of Christ? (cited in Boerman, "The Self-Revelation of God in Jesus," 15–16)

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explicitly revealed. The demons refer to him as the "Son of the Most High God." The high priest addresses him as the "Son of the Blessed One." The disciples make their confession of him as the "Son of the living God." Paul even adds his resurrection to confirm the same: "He descended from David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:3–4). "This suggests that the idea that Jesus had been raised from the dead and exalted into heaven was closely associated with the idea that he was 'Son of God' in a divine sense."[57] The "Son of God" is not simply the son of some god or gods or of some human being; it is an unequivocal portrayal of Jesus as God or of having his origin in God.

"In the OT and Second Temple literature, 'Son of God' (υἱος θεού) or simply 'Son' and 'sons' (υἱός /υἱοί) typically refer to Adam (Luke 3:38); God's angels; God's chosen people Israel; God's chosen leaders; and God's chosen king from the line of David."[58] Hence, Israel as a whole was God's son (Ex. 4:22–23; Jer. 31:8) and David especially so (Ps. 2:7; 89:26–27; 2 Sam. 7:12–14). The Roman rulers were called gods and their sons "sons of god," too, although the title "Son of God" in the Old Testament and in Jewish literature designated

> supernatural agents such as angels, the divine council, the heavenly hosts, and perhaps fallen angels … kings and rulers, charismatic individuals, and even Israel as the people of God, in a specific sense, it came to define the messianic son of David, one adopted in a particular way by Yahweh and deemed the "anointed one," or messiah.[59]

[57]A. Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans," *Harvard Theological Review* 93:2 (2000): 97.

[58]H. Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:3 (2007): 545.

[59]J. Horrell, "Translating 'Son of God' for Muslim Contexts, Part 1: Tensions and the Witness of Scripture," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 172:687 (2015): 273. The use of the expression "one adopted" in the quote does not have the tones of the heresy of adoption.

https://publications.lst.edu/

Moreover, "the fundamental and central concept of Israelite royal ideology was that the king of Israel was a superhuman, divine being"[60] as in Psalm 2:7. Israel's king was Yahweh's son in some sense.

In the New Testament, however, the term used for Jesus by the evangelists does not have the same Old Testament meanings even though there can be certain resonances in some places. Indeed, the meaning even differs from other uses in the New Testament, namely from Adam as "son of God" (Lk. 3:38) and believers themselves as "sons" because they are born of God (Jn. 1:12–13) or adopted into filial relationship with God (Eph. 1:5).[61] Jesus, in the strictest sense, is "Son" but not in these aforementioned senses. Jesus as "Son" properly refers to his divine status as the pre-existent eternal Son of the Father (Jn. 1:14; 11:27). This is also said in the precreation rhetorolect found in Colossians 1:15–17. Jesus, who manifested God in the world, lived previously as God in the eternal realm:[62] "The point of the precreation discourse overall … is not merely to offer [a] Christological description, but to state that the son stands from before creation as the supreme manifestation of God."[63] He shares the entire life of God. Paul's text actually picks up the Genesis account of creation and recontextualizes it by focusing on the Son rather than on God as in Genesis. Through intertexture, the

> readers/hearers are immediately persuaded to recall and imagine what they already know about God as the precreational divine existence and active creator of "all things" (τα πάντα, 1:16, 17), and now to add to that knowledge by visualizing and understanding that the [Son] was already

[60]A. Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," *Harvard Theological Review* 92:4 (1999): 394.

[61]Cf. Horrell, "Translating 'Son of God' for Muslim Contexts," 273–274.

[62]Cf. R. Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning: Precreation Discourse in Colossians," *Religion & Theology* 18:3–4 (2011): 290–293.

[63]Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning," 293.

https://publications.lst.edu/

> present with God prior to creation, is preeminent over creation, was himself engaged in creative activity, and sustains the creation.[64]

The Son, therefore, was present at creation, participated with God in creative acts, and was God's agent in the world. This is further affirmed in the same text, which describes Jesus as the "image of the invisible God" (occurs also in 2 Cor. 4:4) to mean that he is of the same likeness, form, nature, and a representative, of God. What is

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[64]Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning," 295.

> In Sociorhetorical Interpretation the term "intertexture" refers to the features in texts that reflect, drawn on, and are blended from the entire world of ideas and *topoi*, thereby producing rhetorolects, rhetography and rhetology. The study of intertexture consequently involves identifying, analyzing and explaining the connections between a text and the "phenomena in the world" outside it. This task looks at the ways in which a text being read and interpreted uses materials from other texts, and also the ways in which it blends cultural, social, historical, and ideological notions recognizable in various ways by its audiences in order to convey particular meaning. Examination of intertextures in the precreation rhetorolects in Col sheds some very interesting light through the way it helps us move beyond issues of structure and basic statements about preexistence theology toward seeing how Early Christians learned to convey their understandings so that they could be grasped by their contemporaries in other locations. (pp. 294–295)

> [In Colossians,] the intertextures of the precreation rhetorolect, that is, the ideas that have been drawn from the textual and cultural world of knowledge which the recipients would recognize, become blended together to create a new space where the Colossians can envision themselves as being free from the authority of the various powers. Rather than cosmic or human authorities, it is the precreational son/Christ, the true divine creator and sustainer, who is the power in whom the recipients must trust. No other being in the purview of Christians in Asia Minor, whether cosmic being or imperial, provides a true manifestation of God. (p. 307)

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seen in the Son is God, the Father. "The 'image of God' is the one who makes God seen or known, offering a representation of God in human imaginations."[65] The term "bodily" in 2:9 of the same epistle refers to corporeal reality and "it is in Christ, in bodily form, that the eternal God is recognized and encountered."[66]

For some interpreters, the title "Son of God" and the divine status attached to it spring from Jesus's claim to "sit at the right hand of God" (Mk. 14:62). According to them, Jesus in the claim tells of a transcendent future about himself in which he has raised himself to the status of God. To the high priest's question in the text, "Are you the Messiah, Son of the Blessed One?", Jesus not only answers in the affirmative but also says that "he will see him coming seated at the right hand of God." According to J. Marcus, the title "Son of God" may have referred to an earthly king in the line of David and may not have infuriated the authorities. However, what may have infuriated the high priest and prompted him to utter that Jesus was blaspheming was the latter's claim to sit at the right hand of God since it was a claim about participation in God's cosmic lordship and equality with God:

> It is this participatory understanding of sonship that gives rise to the charge of blasphemy.… The Markan Jesus implies in 14:62 that he will sit at God's right hand and come with the clouds of heaven, and that this description of a transcendent future indicates part of his understanding of the title he has just accepted, "Son of God." An approach to equality with God, then, is suggested, and this approach leads naturally to a charge of blasphemy on the part of his opponents.… The charge of blasphemy is plausible when "Son of God" is understood as participation in God's lordship, for some Jewish sources imply that claiming a heavenly enthronement for someone other than God could be considered blasphemous.… The exaltation of a human being to God's right hand suggests an approach to equality with God that infringes the incommensurateness and unity of God.[67]

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[65]Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning," 297.

[66]Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning," 305.

[67]J. Marcus, "Mark 14:61: 'Are you the Messiah-Son-of-God?'", *Novum Testamentum* 31 (1989): 139–141.

https://publications.lst.edu/

The charge leveled by the high priest clearly alleges that Jesus has insulted God or arrogated to himself divine prerogatives. This definitely suggests that Jesus is identifying himself with God.[68]

It has also been argued that the eschatological revelation of Yahweh in the Son of Man mentioned in Daniel 7:13–14 refers to Jesus and is attested to by Mark in 8:38, 13:26, and 14:62. The repetition of words, themes, and the Old Testament concepts in all three passages work together with the rest of the story and render clearly Jesus's identity, i.e., as the Son of God.[69] The language, namely "coming with the clouds," "glory," "the subjugation and worship of the nations," "everlasting dominion," etc., draws on the Old Testament theophanic imagery and refers to Jesus as God. Jesus himself, with apocalyptic self-references (i.e., his vindication as the Son of Man after suffering and rejection), takes an active role in explicating his identity in these texts. Jesus's ascription to himself of the prerogative of divine judgment, of coming in the glory of his Father, and as the revelation of the Father already finds mention in other Old Testament texts, such as Is. 42:8 and Zech. 14:5. Hence, Jesus's reference to "coming in glory and power to gather the elect" is the coming of Yahweh himself. In the Old Testament, the elect belong to Yahweh and Jesus as the Son of Man participates in the activity and identity of Israel's God (Mk. 13:26–27). For Israel, only God liberates/saves; thus, if Jesus as Son of Man has brought about salvation, he cannot but be the filial embodiment of Yahweh. Jesus is the eschatological hope of the Jewish Scriptures, the coming of Yahweh to his people, the revelation of the Father's glory. Jesus, the glorious Son of Man, announces judgment and salvation (Mk. 13:24–30) similar to that of Yahweh of the Old Testament. Jesus's words are similar to/the same as the words of Yahweh (Mk. 13:31 // Is. 40:1–8). He commands the angels, an activity that is God's prerogative in the

[68]Cf. Angel, "'Crucifixus Vincens': The 'Son of God' as Divine Warrior in Matthew," 314–315.

[69]Cf. J. Leim, "In the Glory of His Father: Intertextuality and the Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7:2 (2013): 213–232.

https://publications.lst.edu/

Old Testament; he, therefore, is not Yahweh's agent like the angels are for gathering the elect but has Yahweh-like status and is above the angels. He claims to share in God's cosmic sovereignty by sitting on his throne, which is actually a conflation of that claim with the theophanic image of Daniel's Son of Man (exalted over his enemies, vindicated in his identity and mission). He has exalted himself to eschatological privileges or assumed them to himself, which, as already mentioned, results in the accusation of "blasphemy … for allotting to himself the prerogatives of God."[70] In Mark, the Son of Man is the Son of the Father and the fulfilment of Israel's hopes for Yahweh's eschatological coming. He is not Yahweh's agent but one who, as Son of Man, has assumed God's prerogatives for himself.

That the Son of God is Jesus himself is substantiated from Mark's references to "Son," which is actually a reference from Ps. 2:7 and the basis for the first-century messianic expectations. In Mark, Jesus is declared as "Son" by God at the baptism and the transfiguration (1:9–11; 9:2–10). Bateman believes that both references have the first-century messianic connections and are a divine declaration about Jesus from Ps. 2:7.

> In both cases, a near-exact quotation from Ps 2:7 is employed. Originally, Psalm 2 served to reinforce Yahweh's appointment of and support for a king over Israel prior to Nebuchadnezzar's dismantling of the Davidic dynasty and destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC. Perhaps it was initially used during the coronation of a royal Davidite (Ps 2:2, 6, 7). Central to the Psalm is the proclamation of Yahweh concerning his unique relationship with the king: "You are my son! This very day I have become your Father" (v. 7). In fact, verse 7 appears to echo Yahweh's covenant of promise to David. Much later, after Pompey's entrance into the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Jos. Ant. 1.152–53) and the subsequent Roman occupation of Palestine in 63 BC, Jewish hopefuls made more explicit connections between Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7 to speak of their particular hoped-for Anointed One (4Q174 3:7–13; Pss. Sol. 17:21). Thus the concept of "sonship" in Ps 2:7 appears to be a way of speaking about a hoped-for anointed one during the first century. For some, it more pointedly spoke of a royal Davidite. It seems likely that Mark

[70]Leim, "In the Glory of His Father," 229–230.

https://publications.lst.edu/

> shared a similar conceptual understanding of sonship, which compelled him to place Ps 2:7 strategically in his Gospel as an alternative way to speak of Jesus as "the Christ."[71]

The link of royal sonship is evident in Ps. 2:7. Hence, reference to Jesus as "Son" from the psalm is in keeping with first-century Jewish expectations about a messianic figure and "serves to be God's endorsement, commissioning, and empowerment of Jesus for ministry as 'the Christ'."[72]

> As son, however, he shares in God's βασιλεία, his kingly power, and becomes the instrument of its extension into every corner of the creation. Thus, Jesus is God's Son, "the Son of God," "the Christ."[73]

> In keeping with first-century Jewish expectations for an Anointed One, we can safely say [that] "Son" in Ps 2:7 was seen as another way to refer to "the Christ" or God's chosen king.[74]

I Am. That Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation can also be shown from Jesus's use of "I am" in John's Gospel. It is Yahweh's name in the Old Testament and the theophanic self-revelatory formula[75] that expresses Jesus's claims to disclose the Father totally and to being divine and fully God. The Gospel is full of these sayings that reveal Jesus's true identity[76] and point to his total oneness with Yahweh.

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[71]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 546.

[72]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 547.

[73]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 548.

[74]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 550.

[75]"I am the bread of life" (Jn. 6:35), "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12), "I am the door of the sheep" (Jn. 10:7), "I am the good shepherd" (Jn. 10:11), "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6), "I am the true vine" (Jn. 15:1).

[76]Cf. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 7–12.

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> The absolute use of "I am" as a way of speech was cryptic and mysterious to the Israelite. The name "I am" is too sacred to be pronounced (YHWH). John's attribution to Jesus of this tetragrammaton is a pointer to Jesus' divine nature: his preexistence, changelessness, and uniqueness of being.… Unlike the biblical prophets through whom special revelation was given, Jesus does not say, "The word of the Lord came to me" or "The Lord said"; rather he authoritatively declares, "I say to you" or "I am." Thus in Jesus is revealed the essential nature of life and of God (Heb 1:1–3).… The Christological term "I am" is a revelatory formula that goes back to the Old Testament narrative of Moses in the presence of Yahweh (Exod 3:14).… [The] employment of the expression "I am" (*ego eimi*) is "to identify Jesus as an historical theophany of the eternal being of God and thus to assert his full deity." This christological affirmation of Jesus's deity is found in the consequent faith that God, the Eternal and Almighty, is like Jesus Christ, that his essence is the essence of Jesus (14:9).… "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58). The syntactical change from the past tense to present tense indicates the preexistent, eternal being of Jesus. He is timeless. He never came into being and he will never cease to be. In Jesus the eternal God shows himself to all (Heb 13:8). The contrast in the tenses is between an existence initiated by birth and an absolute existence.[77]

Jesus, therefore, is clearly the historical revelation of the "I am" of the Old Testament, the very being of God himself. This gets confirmed further in the Gospel when Jesus says "he who has seen me has seen the Father" and "I and the Father are one."

Messiah/Christ. The Hebrew term "Messiah" (Greek Χριστός), meaning "anointed," was widely used to speak in the context of the anointing of kings. However, its use by Jesus himself and by the early Christian community was not simply for the anointing of Jesus as king. More specifically, as per the Jewish hopes, the term Messiah referred to Yahweh himself coming to deliver the people of Israel; hence, the title of Messiah has a connotation of God. That Jesus as Messiah was God resides in the fact

[77]A. Okorie, "The Self-Revelation of Jesus in the 'I Am' Sayings of John's Gospel," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 28:5 (2001): 487–488. The purpose of precreation discourse is to indicate realities behind and prior to what is present.

https://publications.lst.edu/

> that Jesus had an explicitly messianic self-consciousness.… More than that … the early church believed that Jesus was the Messiah only because it believed Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah. And it is an illusion for us to think that we can believe in him as the Messiah if he had no self-consciousness of being what we confess him to be.[78]

Analyzing Isaiah 11, Goswell argues that the Messiah Israel hoped for was not any human military deliverer but Yahweh himself. Yahweh himself comes to gather his remnant people on the holy mountain and establish and rule his kingdom.[79] This prophesied Messiah, as the early Christian community believed him to be, was none other than Jesus Christ, God himself.

It was part of first-century Jewish belief that when the Messiah comes there will be "through the Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, the healing of the critically wounded, and the sending of the good news to the afflicted."[80] The synoptic Gospels amply narrate Jesus's ability to realize these. He is the Holy One of God who confronts and casts out the unclean spirits (Mk. 1:23–28). He overpowers the uncontrollable (the storm at sea [Mk. 4:37], the demoniac [Mk. 5:4], the persistent hemorrhage of a woman [Mk. 5:26], and the death of Jairus's daughter [Mk. 5:35]). He had authority and power over sin, disease, death, demons, and the domain of nature; indeed, Jesus's work was very much in keeping with first-century Jewish expectations of a coming Messianic figure—Jesus was called "the Son of the Most High"; "You are the Son of God." John the Baptist probably shared that same belief; hence, while in prison, he sent his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Are you the one who is to come?", to which Jesus answered, "Go tell John what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the

[78]D. Via, "New Testament Theology: Historical Event, Literary Text, and the Locus of Revelation," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 19:4 (1992): 376–377.

[79]Cf. G. Goswell, "Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 11," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 79:1 (2017): 123–135.

[80]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 542.

https://publications.lst.edu/

poor have good news proclaimed to them" (Mt. 11:2–5). Peter seems to have known and confessed Jesus to be "the Messiah" because he was a witness to Jesus's ministry.

Lord. "Lord" is yet another title that affirms Jesus's identity as God. The early Christian community's use of this title for the risen Jesus was for communicating that he was of the same realm as that of Yahweh.

> The earliest Christian confession of faith is the New Testament affirmation κύριος ιησους: "Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). This in itself was a staggering claim. The first disciples were nearly all Jews. They would clearly have understood the word "Lord" (κύριος) as the Greek equivalent of *adonai*, the Septuagint's circumlocution for the Hebrew tetragrammaton [YHWH]. To confess Jesus as Lord was to make an implicit connection between this itinerant rabbi and the God of the covenant, the Creator of heaven and earth.[81]

Paul takes Jesus to the same realm as that of the Father in attributing this title. Although in the Jewish confession ("Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" [the Shema, Dt. 6:4–5]) the Lord and God are the same, Paul, "drawing on what he had experienced through revelation and using the classic monotheistic text of Judaism, recast his perception of God by introducing Jesus as 'Lord'." In Paul, they are split and refer to two distinct persons of the Trinity, taking Jesus to the same realm as that of the Father.

> The apostle glossed "God" with Father and "Lord" with Jesus and so putting Jesus as Lord alongside God the Father: For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and from whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist (1 Cor 8:6). Here the title "one Lord" and the explanation added to it (through whom are all things and through whom we exist) expanded the *Shema* to include Jesus Christ.[82]

In sum, Jesus's New Testament titles contain the unequivocal message that he is the very Godself and, therefore, the fullness of God's

[81]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 187.

[82]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 17.

https://publications.lst.edu/

revelation (Col. 1:19). By "Logos" it is revealed that the eternal is fully present in the temporal; by other titles it is disclosed that Jesus is God himself either through Yahweh's names or through the significance of what the titles stood for. Jesus as the revelation of God's self is what distinguishes Christianity from revelations in other religions. From a Christian scriptural and theological viewpoint, therefore, Knitter is completely erroneous in holding that Jesus of Nazareth was a partial revelation of God and that the fullness of revelation can be had only when we put together all of God's revelations in all religions since the mystery of God can never be exhausted by any one of God's revelations. Thus, Knitter's position that the mystery of God remains ever inexhaustible and that Jesus is only a partial revelation or one of the revelations of that great mystery is flawed from the Christian viewpoint. Knitter's view of Christ relativizes Jesus and contradicts the New Testament revelation and the Church's teachings on Christ in her dogmas and doctrines. In Jesus alone is God's self/Son manifested and that is the fullness of revelation. However, Knitter's contribution can still be appreciated if we distinguish between the Truth and truths, between the being of God and knowing about God, between knowledge of God in God's very self-communication and knowledge of God in concepts and by other means.

II. Revelation of Truths

Having shown from Christological titles that Jesus's identity is God and that he is the fullness of God's revelation, I wish to take forward Knitter's idea of "truths" which may aid us in better understanding the world religions. As already mentioned, for Knitter, contrary to Christian faith, the Truth in its entirety cannot be known except in truths. However, we may make a clear distinction between the "Truth" and "truths" to indicate what is specific to Christianity and to other religions. The following paragraphs are an attempt to elaborate on such.

The notion of "revelation," a foundational concept in Christian theology, is of aid to us here in distinguishing between the "Truth" and "truths." Although the term "revelation"—used in the headings

https://publications.lst.edu/

of the two parts of this essay to elaborate "Truth" and "truths"—may have elements such as something previously closed to humans that is opened up and is beneficial to their life or something mysterious that is made known in a mysterious/ordinary manner, theologically speaking "it is always knowledge which comes from outside the formal sphere of knowledge, and which [human persons] cannot gain by [themselves] but which is given to [them], which unexpectedly and suddenly has meaning in [their] life, either for salvation or for damnation."[83]

Having said that, we may say that there is a distinction between the personal revelation of God (the Truth) and revelation about God and humans (the truths), i.e., between God's self revealed in Jesus Christ and the revelation of theological truths about God/the Transcendent and humans that aid human-religious existence. In the former, God's being/self is presented to us in the person of Jesus; in the latter, certain knowledge/information of things that are true of God (and of humans)—for example, that God is creator, savior, redeemer, sustainer, sanctifier, liberator, transcendent, absolute, incomprehensible, the uncaused cause, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, the source of all being, good, true, holy, perfect, infinite/boundless, all encompassing, indestructible, etc.—is given to us either in written or oral material found in religions. In the former, God, the Truth (Jn. 14:6), discloses God's self in the mystery of incarnation/kenosis, which is different from God disclosing/mediating truths[84] about God's self (God's nature/qualities), human beings, their nature and condition, and their destiny through means such as myths, stories, theophanies, divine laws, commandments, doctrines, wisdoms, enlightenments, philosophies, sacred writings, fables, classics, events, the lives of saints/prophets and other great religious personalities, and in the experience of the sages and use of reason:

> Any theology that proposes dramatic, special events as the *only* appropriate means of mediating the divine would be a diminished version of revelation. God can certainly use "ordinary" channel[s] to

[83]J. Smith, "Emil Brunner's Theology of Revelation," *Landas* 20 (2006): 23.

[84]Cf. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 3–4.

https://publications.lst.edu/

> communicate with human beings and shed light on the human and divine mystery.[85]

One channel is God's self-communication/self-presentation in Jesus (God's manifestation of God's self)[86] and the other is a communication of knowledge about God/the Transcendent, metacosmic reality, or truths that bring meaningfulness and purposefulness to human-religious existence, or truths that are pointers to the Truth, or truths concerning a way of living and relating to other human beings and to God/the transcendent. The truths, even with their distinct contents, are related and articulate either explicitly or implicitly this one primordial Truth. Hence, Christian

> revelation is not primarily a matter of revealing truths (plural) about God or even the truth (singular) about God. It involves God disclosing the Truth or Reality that is God. Primarily, it reveals a person, or rather three divine Persons, rather than information about a person or about three Persons.[87]

In Jesus, God "reveals Himself through Himself … Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness … the personal identity of God Himself."[88]

> God himself has come to [humankind] in Christ Jesus and personally made this known to [humanity] in word and in deed. This is the meaning of revelation in Christ. God has revealed himself personally, his nature, and his will in Christ Jesus.…[89]

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[85]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 149–150, 154. The Biblical wisdom literature is just one such example of this. God can speak and trigger faith through various means.

[86]Cf. J. Roller, "Dei Verbum: A Fine Consensus on Revelation," *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 37 (2013): 51.

[87]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 7.

[88]Cf. S. Stahl, "The Concept of Revelation in the Theology of Karl Barth," *Saint Luke's Journal of Theology* 23 (1980): 116.

[89]D. McGaughey, "Revelations in Jesus Christ: An Apologetic for Today," *Restoration Quarterly* 6 (1962): 247.

https://publications.lst.edu/

> If we follow the lead [of] John's Gospel, [Jesus] is not merely the final access to the truth, but is the Truth (upper case) of God in person.[90]

Emil Brunner's words underscore better what the meaning of the Truth is:

> Jesus Christ is the revelation, the totality of revelation, for in him the Word of God is personally present, revealing the Father. Jesus Christ is not a mere genius with a wholly original thought, nor a messenger bearing to [humankind] a general truth of reason, as the liberal theologians would portray him. He is not merely a very original teacher, nor merely a perfect model and exemplar of what he taught. He is the perfect and complete revelation because he is himself divine. He alone stands on the other side of the boundary beyond which only God can stand … that which alone makes Jesus Christ the perfect revelation of God is his divinity, his identical nature with the Father, the fact that he himself is "from above," from true transcendence, who "came" and became man.[91]

"Speaking through the Son" (Heb. 1:1), the kenotic hymn (Phil. 2:6–11), the "pre-existence and enfleshment of the Word" (Jn. 1:1–18), and "coming down" (Jn. 6:38) or "becoming poor" (2 Cor. 8:9) or "emptying himself" (Phil. 2:7) communicate precisely the same thing. The Truth, therefore, is the person of Jesus in whom the relative and absolute are perfectly united. In him are present the two whole, perfect, and distinct natures (full divinity and full humanity) which are inseparably joined together. God is human and the human is God in him alone. He is God's complete, decisive, unsurpassable, perfect, full, definitive, and final[92] self-disclosure in history until the end of times

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[90]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, vi.

[91]Smith, "Emil Brunner's Theology of Revelation," 30 (Brunner paraphrased here).

[92]O'Collins notes that *Dei Verbum* uses the terms "definitive and final" in speaking not of revelation in Christ but rather of the fullness of revelation in Christ. To speak of revelation in Christ as definitive and final is to say that all God's revelations are over and done with and is incompatible with the New Testament teaching on the final revelation to come. The historical revelation in Jesus belongs to the "already" and not to the "not yet." From this viewpoint, according to O'Collins, even the document *Dominus Iesus* of the Congregation

https://publications.lst.edu/

when we meet God face-to-face. In him, the whole of the eternal Logos has become human and not, as Knitter seems to suggest, in parts or bits and pieces to be revealed in other religions to complete its fullness. The eternal Logos has never been enfleshed before the Incarnation and has not left anything behind to be enfleshed after the Incarnation. Some parts/aspects of the Logos did not remain unincarnate when the Logos incarnated. "Jesus ought to be identified with the Word in His fullness, and not merely as the enfleshed portion of His greater existence,"[93] which in his particularity/finitude may seem partial. This amounts to saying that the eternal Word is fully the enfleshed Word, the Truth. He is the Truth because "the divine nature is 'most intimately' and 'personally' united to the humanity of Christ."[94]

Although we have knowledge of God by way of the "Truth" and "truths," knowledge of God through the Incarnation—which traditional Christian theology has called knowledge through supernatural revelation—is not the same knowledge of God obtained through some other means as mentioned above. In general, the latter has been known in traditional theology as knowledge gained through general/natural revelation. Hence, knowing who God *is* is very different from having God with us (Emmanuel) and knowing God personally. It is one thing to say that God is the Truth and it is another thing to say that Jesus is that Truth. Knowledge of God in Jesus's person, the Truth, is through personal and historical presence while knowledge of God in concepts or by other means belongs only to the cognitive and other such realms. "Revelation, it was said, is not about God, but God himself. God does not reveal knowledge, or information in propositional statements; rather, God reveals [God's self] through personal encounter, which … is most clearly experienced

for the Doctrine of the Faith also diverged from the teaching of *Dei Verbum*. It "ignores the gap that remains between the historical divine revelation which took place in Jesus Christ and God's final revelation at the *eschaton*" (O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 108–109).

[93]Cassidy, "Review of Karl Barth and the Incarnation, by Darren O. Sumner," 374.

[94]Cassidy, "Review of Karl Barth and the Incarnation, by Darren O. Sumner," 379.

https://publications.lst.edu/

in confrontation with Jesus Christ."[95] The Truth, therefore, is not information/truths about God but God himself, the incarnate Son/Logos. In him alone, we have knowledge of the being of God. Only the Logos incarnate fully reveals the Father, which is very different from revealing knowledge about God through his presence in the economy of salvation, because he belongs to the very substance of the Father or to the very being of the Trinitarian God. The Logos incarnate beholds the face of God. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the absolute unique event in history. As *Dei Verbum* states, knowledge of God had through revelation in Jesus Christ is primarily personal, unlike the knowledge of God had through truths—God meets human persons in Jesus Christ as human persons, not through abstract and impersonal concepts/ideas, appearances, and visions but as a real person in flesh and blood.[96]

Having made this distinction ("Truth" vs. "truths") and from a Christian viewpoint, it will be possible to affirm, unlike with Knitter, that Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation: in Jesus alone and in no other has God's being been manifested to us. This is in spite of the fact that the "seeds of the Word," which Justin Martyr affirmed (using the Stoic notion of *logoi spermatikoi*) in his *Apology*, and the Spirit (which is the Spirit of Christ) were present in the salvation history of humankind. Their presence and action are only pointers to the Truth and do not reveal God's being as revealed in Jesus Christ. The Truth may be known implicitly and indirectly in truths, but these cannot be the explicit presentation of the Truth which has happened only in Jesus Christ. As Truth, Jesus in his own person revealed the Truth and was not a pointer to the Truth as truths are. There may be insights, intuitions, glimpses of transcendent being, and implicit knowledge of God in truths, but they are not the revelation of God's being. Did the Church Fathers see and describe these as the seminal word (*logos spermatikos*) and the Perfect Word (*ho pas logos*)? It makes sense.

[95]McGaughey, "Revelations in Jesus Christ," 248.

[96]Cf. Paul VI, *Dei Verbum*, nos. 1–4.

https://publications.lst.edu/

> Clement [of Alexandria] approached his task with an unswerving conviction that God is the ultimate source of all reality and all truths. Wherever and whenever knowledge, wisdom, or truths emerge, Clement maintained that these must have their origin in Him. Like the sower of seed in the Gospel, God "rained down the Word" on all persons.… If some of God's wisdom exists among other peoples in other places, we are morally bound to seek out those truths, precisely because they are truths which are grounded in God. No one race or people has all of God's truths, and we must bring everything to bear on our search for truth, culling whatever is useful for guarding the faith.[97]

Hence, as *Dominus Iesus* teaches, truths about God known apart from Jesus Christ do not essentially add to or change anything about the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus simply for the fact that God's being/self is not given to us in truths but only in the Truth.[98] The immanent self of the Son is fully revealed only in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, in the union of two natures. Nothing new is added or changed in the content of revelation; he is the total self-revelation of the eternal Logos. The Truth revealed in Jesus is distinct, unique, full, and directly present in flesh, which the truths are not. Jesus is not one seed among other seeds but the very source of those seeds himself, not the ray but the very source of that ray itself, the eternal Word.

The distinction should also highlight the fact that the existence of truths about God/the Transcendent in other religions need not be, from a Christian viewpoint, mere human invention, that it could be the outcome of the presence and action of the Logos and the Spirit—the two hands of the Father—in the economy of salvation. All that is "true, good, holy and of grace,"[99] "transforming human persons" is from God and cannot be human invention but received by human persons in good faith. We can have nothing to do with "true, holy, good" and any knowledge of God/Transcendence without

[97]Eveleth, "Clement of Alexandria and the Logos," 39–40.

[98]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 6.

[99]Cf. Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2; Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16; Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 92; Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, no. 9.

https://publications.lst.edu/

already being borne by God's grace.[100] All knowledge about God is the work of the Logos, as Irenaeus held;[101] no one can have knowledge about the Father except through the Logos. The Logos incarnate (the Word as such) was present in history from the very inception of creation and giving the knowledge about God through truths. God's grace predisposes one *a priori* and is the condition of the possibility to receive all that is true, good, and holy. Human persons, since their inception and because of God's grace, have looked and continue to look for the Truth, and they are provided with truths that are "rays of that Truth"[102] and "seeds of the Word."[103] Truths about God cannot exist and cannot be known unless God gratuitously reveals them. God does not abandon people to their own destinies, for God's care and guidance are universal and extend to all peoples at all times (1 Tim. 2:4). Since God is involved in human history, God will obviously provide humanity with truths in many and diverse ways (Heb. 1:1), in all kinds of common/uncommon, dramatic/ordinary, and positive/negative experiences (propositions, visions, ecstasies, dreams, mystical experiences, theophanies, new and great awareness, historical events, ordinary inner states of anxiety/sorrow and joy, current events, everyday sights) and through persons (prophets, priests, kings, sages, saints, godwomen and godmen, philosophers, wise women and wise men)[104] that are helpful for their human/religious/spiritual living and meaningful existence—for perfection, holiness, truthfulness, and goodness. Consequently, God provides humankind with resources through God's Logos and Spirit to come to the knowledge of God in

[100]Cf. K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 146.

[101]Cf. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 356.

[102]Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.

[103]Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, nos. 11, 15.

[104]They have an uncommon capacity to discern, interpret, and express truths given in revelatory experiences and play a special role in communicating them. They are specially gifted. Cf. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 72.

https://publications.lst.edu/

Jesus Christ. This is even considered to be general revelation because the divine light shines into creation through the Son who is the ground and source of all reason in creation.[105] If there are truths concerning God, such as the meaning of human/religious/spiritual existence and truths that prompt specific spiritualities, they have to be, from a Christian viewpoint, due to the presence and action of the Word and the Spirit in salvific history. The Son and the Spirit are the sources of every grain of truth found in the economy of salvation.

Truths and Christocentrism. The Biblical accounts describe that the same God who was at work in the history of God's people was also at work in the world and in the history of others. For example, the triune God was at work in bringing forth creation and in the histories of the families of Adam and Noah, the representatives of the whole of humanity. Here the triune God speaks/relates to the whole of humanity despite its sinfulness. God's covenant with Noah "discloses [God's] desire to sustain faithfully the whole world and care for the well-being of all creatures."[106] Those who originated from the sons of Noah, the representative of the human race, inherit God's blessings. God used Balaam, a diviner from Mesopotamia and who is no Israelite, to communicate oracles and blessings (Num. 22:1–24:25). The book of Jonah shows that God is also God of the Ninevites who wishes their moral conversion and is content when it happens. God reveals God's self to him in God's cosmic power. The prophet Malachi does recognize God's presence among the nations and praises their worship (Mal. 1:11). These accounts are representative of God's universal relationship with humankind, God's closeness to humanity. The Bible indeed celebrates the universal revelation of God communicated through the created world (Ps. 19:1–4). It is the book of nature alongside the sacred scripture.[107] God who is at work in the history of the people of Israel is also present in other people's histories.

[105]Cf. D. Law, "The Double Life of the Logos: The Nestorian Kenoticism of Hans Lassen Martensen," *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 17:2 (2010): 212.

[106]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 186. See also G. O'Collins, *Salvation for All* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[107]Cf. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 188.

https://publications.lst.edu/

The Old Testament also testifies to the fact that God was present and active in God's Word and God's Spirit (Gen. 1:2, 3, 26; Ps. 33:6–9; 104:30; 107:20; 139:7; Wis. 1:7; 11:24–12:1; Job 34:14–15), even though the latter were not yet recognized as persons then. They served as personified agents of God's revelation and other activities. The presence and action of the Logos and of the Spirit in the economy of salvation, therefore, are not to be doubted. All this is to say that the triune God is indubitably at work in the histories of peoples in God's Logos and in God's Spirit. God has revealed God's self as "I am" to the people of Israel and has also revealed God's self to others in God's Logos and Spirit. "The Word of God, present with [God's] handiwork from the beginning, reveals (*revelat*) the Father to all, to whom he wills, when he wills and how the Father wills."[108] John's prologue (1:l–5) celebrates the pre-existent Word and its activity in guiding and illuminating human beings in creation.[109] The Word enlightens everyone (Jn. 1:9) and the Spirit blows where it wills, revealing truths about God. For Justin, therefore, all God's interventions in the world are attributed precisely to the Logos.[110]

> The second pre-incarnational function of the Logos in Irenaeus's work [besides being mediating agent through whom God creates all things] is his role as the sole revealer of God/[the] Father. Irenaeus believes that the unique identity of the Second Person as the divine Logos gives him the ability to reveal God, both prior to and during the incarnation.[111]

Nevertheless, affirming the presence and action of the Logos and of the Spirit in the economy of salvation does not deviate from Christocentrism, for Christ is the Omega point in whom everything has to culminate; it is he who gathers all things, subjects himself to the one who put all things in subjection under him, and hands everything

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[108]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 202.

[109]Cf. Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", 199. Also cf. Waetjen, "Logos προς τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 265.

[110]Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 57.

[111]Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 355.

https://publications.lst.edu/

over to the Father so "God will be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). Prior to the Incarnation, the Logos acted in creation and in the enlightenment of human beings. He continues to enlighten even now (Jn. 1:9) after the Incarnation, in addition to its propaedeutic action, as Dupuis holds.[112] The Logos sowed, sows, and will sow seeds. The universal presence and action of the Logos and of the Spirit need not be abrogated by the event of the Incarnation. This does not mean that they bifurcate and constitute separate economies of salvation: of the eternal Logos, of the incarnate Logos, and of the Spirit. Consequently, there are no three parallel economies of salvation apart from the economy realized in Jesus Christ. The presence and actions of the Logos and of the Spirit are not parallel to the presence and action of Jesus Christ but lead everything to Christ, the Omega, in the one economy of salvation realized in him, for

> with the incarnation, all the salvific actions of the Word of God are always done in unity with the human nature that he has assumed for the salvation of all people … the action of the Spirit is not outside or parallel to the action of Christ.[113]

Moreover, there is one destiny for all humanity that is realized in Jesus Christ in his Paschal Mystery and all are associated to this mystery because of the possibilities offered by the Holy Spirit.[114] The focus of the presence and activity of the Logos and the Spirit is always Jesus Christ.[115] The Christ event ever stands at the center in the one economy of salvation. Hence, as Karl Rahner has it, God self-communicates in God's Spirit in the economy of salvation to self-communicate God's self in Jesus Christ. God's self-communication in God's Spirit seeks God's full/complete self-communication in history in God's Truth/Son (Jn. 14:6). Similarly, the *Logos asarkos* (the Word as such) is present

[112]Cf. J. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 160.

[113]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, nos. 10, 12.

[114]Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

[115]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, nos. 10–12.

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in history to lead all that it has brought/brings/will bring forth in history to *Logos ensarkos* (the Word incarnate), the summit. In the *Logos ensarkos*, all truths find fulfillment. The Logos and the Spirit can reveal truths in their pre-incarnational and post-incarnational times that may give humanity clues to its destiny accomplished by Jesus Christ's cross and resurrection. They have brought and may bring forth spiritualities for meaningful human/religious existence. Their operations in the world, whether before or after the Incarnation, are to lead everything ultimately to Christ. In other words, all truths revealed because of the presence and action of the *Logos asarkos* and of the Spirit are related to and ought to culminate in the knowledge of the Truth as per God's plan of salvation. They predispose persons and communities to receive the Truth. This is exactly what the Fathers (Justin, Irenaeus) affirmed. The Word as such, through his presence, was leading the Greeks through their philosophies and others through their religious and other traditions to his incarnate presence just as he was leading the people of God (Clement of Alexandria). The Logos is the OT theophanies and he is the voice of the Father in creation (Justin).[116] To recognize truths and, at the same time, to rule out the presence and action of the Logos and the Spirit that lead to and culminate in Christ would be to affirm the theocentrism of John Hick and Paul Knitter.

However, the Logos enfleshed in history, the Truth, and his abiding eternal presence and action in history revealing truths are not two separate persons. The same person who was/is/will be present and acting in history, revealing truths, is enfleshed in Jesus Christ, the revelation of God's self. It is the Logos enfleshed, personally present to humankind. The affirmation of the presence of the eternal Logos, therefore, does not mean that there are two Logos in salvation history, one incarnate and the other unincarnate:

> There are not two Christs here, nor are there two *logoi*. There is one Christ, the Eternal Son or the Eternal Word, whom we know to have been God who was to become manifest in the flesh.… There are not

[116]Cf. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 346–347.

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> two different *logoi* at the source of our knowledge of God, the logos *ensarkos* and the logos *asarkos*. There is one eternal Logos.[117]

It is the same one Logos that was/is present in the history of all peoples and has become flesh whom we call the Truth, the fullness of God's revelation.

Conclusion

The paradox of Christian faith is that the eternal Son, despite his being beyond space and time, is, in being in time and space, in his humanity, the full manifestation of God. In him, the eternal is made fully visible in the temporal, the immutable is fully revealed in the mutable, the creator is fully manifested in creation, the maker is tangible in the made, and the immaterial is made present in the material. In other words, the humanity of Jesus, although difficult to comprehend, reveals God fully. The faith viewpoint of the Christ event in history has been that he was God-incarnate and the fullness of revelation. Human nature is a limitation, yet in Jesus's case, it expresses, from a faith viewpoint, God in God's fullness, i.e., God's self.

Knitter's thesis of Jesus as a partial revelation of the inexhaustible Divine Mystery is a flaw from the viewpoint of the New Testament and its theology. His view that a collection of words revealed in history make up the fullness of the Word and that Jesus is only a fragment of that fullness is flawed as well. The fullness of revelation, as Jesus's titles underscore, refers to the very manifestation of God's self, to the very disclosure of God's being. More specifically, it is the eternal Son fully present in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Logos may be present revealing truths in the histories of peoples, but in that presence God's self has not been manifested. Simply put, it is not incarnate presence. God's other revelations (truths)—natural or supernatural—do not add anything to this unique revelation. In Jesus alone has the Godself been communicated. From a Christian viewpoint, the presence of truths

[117]Cassidy, "Review of Karl Barth and the Incarnation, by Darren O. Sumner," 379–380.

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cannot but be the work of the presence of the eternal Logos and of the Holy Spirit, the two hands of the Father who lead everything to Christ.

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