Themes in Biblical Narrative
Jewish and Christian Traditions

Editorial Board
George H. van Kooten – Robert A. Kugler
Loren T. Stuckenbruck

Assistant Editor
Freek van der Steen

Advisory Board
Wolfgang Bienert – James Kugel
Florentino García Martínez

VOLUME 9

The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses
Perspectives from Judaism, the Pagan
Gracco-Roman World, and Early Christianity

Edited by
George H. van Kooten

BRILL
LEIDEN • BOSTON
2006
JESUS AND THE DIVINE NAME IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Riemer Roukema

The Gospel of John is an important witness to an early Christian conviction concerning the divine Name. This paper intends to underpin the hypothesis that in this Gospel Jesus is presented as the Old Testament Kyrios, YHWH. The question inextricably connected with this hypothesis is, how, then, one should establish Jesus’ relationship with his heavenly Father. We will see that, if it is true that the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as the Kyrios, this seems to imply that according to its theology there is a subtle distinction between the Kyrios and God the Father.

1. SEEING GOD

As an introduction, we will discuss some texts that deal with the impossibility or possibility of seeing God. This is not the most important theme of our investigation, but it should awaken some sensitivity to the more significant questions of Jesus’ true identity and his relationship with the Father in the Gospel of John.

John 1:18 reads: ‘No one has ever seen God’ (θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἐσόρακέν πάντως). This idea is repeated in John 5:37, where Jesus, being in Jerusalem, says about his Father: ‘You have never heard his voice or seen his form’ (οὐτί φοβήν αὐτοῦ πάντως ἀκουσάτε οὔτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἐσόρακέν). A third text expressing this view is John 6:46, where Jesus says in Galilee: ‘Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father’ (οὖχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἐσόρακέν τις εἰ μὴ ὁ ὃ παρὰ τὸν θεοῦ, οὔτε εἶδος ἐσόρακέν τὸν πατέρα). Of course, Jesus himself is meant to be the exception. That Jesus has seen the Father is implicitly said in John 1:18: ‘The only

1 Unless indicated otherwise Bible translations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Sometimes we will use the Revised Standard Version (RSV) or the New English Bible (NEB).
God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known (μονογενὴς θεός ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόσμον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγησάτο).  

These affirmations seem to contradict several Old Testament texts that deal with some way of seeing God (see also Van Ruiten, this vol., §2). For instance, Jacob says in Gen 32:31 (32:30 in translations), after his nocturnal wrestle with the mysterious man at the place he then called Peniel, ‘Face of God’: ‘For I have seen God (πρὸς πορευθηκόν) face to face, and yet my life is preserved’. In the Septuagint Peniel is translated εἰδὼς θεοῦ, and the first part of the quotation reads: εἰδὼν ὡς θεὸν πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον. For Philo it is unproblematic that Jacob was capable of seeing God; he explains that for this reason Jacob received the name of ‘Israel’, which he translates as ‘the one who sees God’ (ὁ ορῶν τοῦ θεοῦ). However, in Philo’s view this vision of God does not imply a physical or almost physical encounter, but an activity of the mind or soul (cf. Gellon, this vol., §1).

Another text that speaks about seeing God is Exod 24:9–10, which reads that Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up and ‘saw the God of Israel’ (ὁ θεὸς τῆς Λαοῦ τῆς Ἰσραήλ), i.e., YHWH. In the Septuagint this text was theologically corrected, for it reads that they saw the place where God of Israel stood (καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ εἰσῆλθεν ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ ισραὴλ). The words in the next verse (Exod 24:11), ‘they beheld God’ (εἶδαν τὸν θεὸν), are translated ‘and they appeared in the place of God’ (καὶ ἐφανε- σαν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ). Philo explains that ‘the place’ is the Logos.

We will not go into other Old Testament texts that deal with appearances of YHWH or God in which he could be seen, except for one that is referred to in the Gospel of John. In John 12:40 the evangelist quotes Isa 6:10 that speaks of the blinding of the Israelites’ eyes and the hardening of their hearts. In his comment in John 12:41 he says that ‘Isaiah said this because he saw his glory (ὁ ἰερον τῆς δόξας αὐτοῦ) and spoke about him’. This refers to Isaiah’s temple vision that is described in Isa 6, the chapter from which the prophecy in John 12:40 was quoted. In this vision Isaiah saw, according to the Masoretic text of Isa 6:1, the Lord (יְהוָה יִהוָה), which was translated εἶδον τὸν κύριον in the Septuagint. Targum Jonathan reads that the prophet saw ‘the glory of the Lord’ (יוֹנָה לֹא אֵל). In Isa 6:5, Isaiah says: ‘Woe is me! . . . my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts’ (עַל אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ). The LXX has: καὶ τὸν βασιλέα κυρίων σέβομαι εἶδον τοὺς σφαλμαῖς μου. Targum Jonathan reads ‘my eyes have seen the glory of the shekhina of the King of ages, the Lord of hosts’ (יוֹנָה לֹא אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ). For the present moment we maintain that according to the Gospel of John no one has ever seen God, whereas Isaiah has seen ‘his glory’, which is the glory of YHWH.

Yet it should also be observed that John 12:41 neither says that Isaiah saw the Κύριος, nor that he saw God, but that he saw his glory. This term deserves some special attention. The word ‘glory’ also occurs in Isa 6:1 LXX: ‘and his house was full of his glory’ (τῆς δόξας αὐτοῦ), whereas the Masoretic text reads רְשָׁעָת instead of ‘glory’. דּוּם means the skirt of his robe (and the skirt of his robe filled the temple), NEB. Several commentators correctly remark that the wording of John 12:41, ὃν εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, corresponds with the targum that also speaks, in Isa 6:5, of the glory of the shekhina of the King of ages. Perhaps John said deliberately that Isaiah did not immediately see the Κύριος, but his glory. In addition, however, another observation should be made on this aspect of the text.

For whose glory did Isaiah see, according to this Gospel? Several commentators explain that this text deals with the glory of the pre-existent Logos or Christ. Raymond E. Brown points out another

---

1. For the variants see the critical apparatus of Nestle-Aland’s 27th edition of the Novum Testamentum Graece. The translation of John 1:18 deviates from the NRSV.
2. Philo, De migratione Abraham 200–201; De mutandis nominibus 81; De somnis 1.129; numerous references are listed in F.H. Colson, Philo X (Loeb Classical Library 379), Cambridge MA: London 1962, 534.
3. See, e.g., De somnis 1.240.
4. Philo, Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum 2.39.
5. E.g., Gen 12:7; 17:1; 18:1; 35:9; 48:3; Exod 33:11; 33:18–23; Num 12:8; Judg 13:21–23; 1 Sam 3:21; 1 Kgs 3:5; 9:2; 2 Chr 1:7.
8. R. Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar
possibility, namely that Isaiah saw the future life and glory of Jesus; for this interpretation he refers to the Ascension of Isaiah, a text that, in its Christian adaptation, may stem from the second century. Probably Brown has Ascension of Isaiah 9:13 in mind, where Isaiah says: 'The Lord will indeed descend into the world in the last days, (he) who is to be called Christ after he has descended and become like you in form, and they will think that he is flesh and a man.' But Schnackenburg points to the context of John 12, where the prophecy of the blinding of the Israelites' eyes and the hardening of their hearts has been quoted just before, which implies that the interpretation of John 12:41 with regard to Jesus' earthly life is less likely. More likely is the supposition of those exegetes who maintain that John 12:41 deals with the glory of the pre-existent Christ, and that the prophecy of Isa 6:6–10 about the hardening of the Israelites' heart has to be attributed to Christ as well. For instance, Maarten Menken writes: 'In his temple vision, the prophet saw the pre-existent Jesus, and not God himself (cf. John 1:18; 6:46; 1 John 4:12); therefore it is Jesus who addresses the prophet in Isa. 6:9–10. The first text in the Fourth Gospel concerning Christ's glory is John 1:14, which reads (cf. NR SV): 'And the Logos became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father (ἐκείνου ὁ Λόγος ὑπέρβη τος θεός) ὁ Λόγος ὁ υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ λόγος ὁ ἀλήθεια, ὁ πατρός τοῦ πατρὸς, πλήρης ἀλήθειας.' This text deals with the same person as in John 12:41; Isaiah saw the δόξα of the pre-existent Christ, and the community of Johannine believers, referred to as 'we' in John 1:14, has beheld the δόξα of the incarnate Logos, who is Jesus Christ.

Other references to Christ's δόξα occur in John 17:5, 'and now, Father, glorify me in your own presence, with the δόξα which I had

über das Neue Testament!, Göttingen 1953, 347; Schnackenburg, Johanneswandel, 5–12, 520.


with you before the world was made' (cf. RSV), and John 17:24, 'Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my δόξα, which you have given me before the foundation of the world.'

It may be concluded that the Gospel of John speaks of a three-fold δόξα of Christ: (1) before the foundation of the world (John 17:5, 24); (2) in the Old Testament period (John 12:41); and (3) during the life of the Logos on earth, the Logos being incarnate in Jesus Christ (John 1:14). Moreover, concerning the hypothesis that was formulated in the first lines of this paper, we may conclude that the Logos, who figures in the Prologue as the pre-existent and incarnate Christ, corresponds with the Κύριος, YHWH, whose glory was seen by Isaiah and who is referred to in John 12:41.

2. Other indications of Correspondences between Christ and YHWH

We will now investigate if in the Fourth Gospel there are other indications that Christ, who is called the Logos and who existed prior to his earthly existence, corresponds with YHWH, the God of Israel (§2). After this survey we will go into the question whether this Gospel makes a subtle distinction between the Κύριος (or YHWH) and God the Father (§3).

2.1 Jesus' I am-sayings

First of all, Jesus' I am-sayings allude to the Old Testament name of God. Like many other exegetes, David Mark Ball associates these sayings not in the first place with Exod 3:14 LXX (ἐγώ εἰμί ὁ αὸν), but predominantly with Deutero-Isaiah (cf. also Lcnaert Peerbolte, this vol., §4 on the Deutero-Isaian background of Phil 2:9), where ὁ ἀληθεῖς, and ὁ δόξα, frequently occur as sayings of YHWH, which were translated in the Septuagint as ἐγώ εἰμί. We will look at some of the I am-sayings in the Gospel of John.

In John 6:20 Jesus says, when he walks on the water and a strong wind was blowing: ἔγος εἰμι: μη χόρησον.\(^{15}\) Ball points to several Old Testament texts where YHWH combines the very same expressions, 'I am' and 'do not be afraid' (Gen 26:24; 46:3; Jer 1:8; 1:17; 26:28 LXX = 46:28 MT; 49:11 LXX = 42:11 MT).\(^{16}\) One might add that the story that Jesus walks on the water also corresponds with YHWH trampling the waves of the sea, according to Job 9:8 and Ps 89:10.

In John 8:12 Jesus says: 'I am the light of the world'. Thus the evangelist identifies him with the Logos in the Prologue, who is called the light of men (John 1:4–9).\(^{17}\) In the Old Testament YHWH is repeatedly called the light (Exod 15:21–22; Ps 27:1; Isa 60:1; 60:19).

In John 8:18, 24, and 28 Jesus again says ἔγος εἰμι; in vv. 24 and 28 it is used without predicate. Ball interprets these texts as allusions to words of YHWH in Deuteronomy (43:10; 43:25; 52:6).\(^{18}\)

In John 8:56–58 Jesus refers to Abraham who rejoiced to see 'my day', after which he says: 'before Abraham was, I am'. The day that Abraham saw may be interpreted with regard to the three angels, one of whom was YHWH, who visited Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:1–15),\(^{19}\) but the day of Jesus has also been identified as the eschatological day of YHWH.\(^{20}\) In the commentaries Abraham’s vision of

Soteropoulos, Ο Θεούς Γιαζή, Athens 1988, interprets the same texts in order to demonstrate that essentially Jesus is YHWH.

This pronouncement has also been transmitted in the synoptic versions of Matt 14:27 and Mk 6:50. For more synoptic texts, see G. Geiger, 'Die EID EIM-Worte bei Johannese und den Synoptikern', in: A. Denaux (ed.), John and the Synoptics (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicae Lovaniensium 101), Leuven 1992, 466–72.


Ball, 'I Am’ in John’s Gospel, 87.


Jesus’ day in John 8:56 is often related to Isaiah’s temple vision of Jesus (John 12:40–41), but it must be admitted that the purport of John 8:56 is less precise.\(^{21}\) In any case, in John 8:58 Jesus clearly alludes to his pre-existence. Since ἔγος εἰμι occurred in John 8 several times already, and since these words could be interpreted as references to YHWH, it may be assumed that in John 8:58 as well the Johannine Jesus alludes to his essential nature.\(^{22}\)

John 10:11, 'I am the good shepherd', refers among other texts to Ezek 34, where YHWH is the shepherd who will take care of his people (Ezek 34:12–22; 34:31; only in 34:23 the shepherd is David). Some other texts that depict YHWH as a shepherd are Ps 23:1–4; 79:13; 80:1; Isa 40:11.\(^{23}\)

In John 18:5–6 Jesus’ twofold saying 'I am', without predicate, was so impressive that those who had come to arrest him drew back and fell to the ground. This looks like a theophany. In John 18:8 Jesus confirms his 'I am' for the third time.\(^{34}\)

Ball concludes from these and other texts in the Fourth Gospel that by the application of ἔγος εἰμι to the Johannine Jesus, an identification with the words and salvation of the God of Deutero-Isaiah, i.e. YHWH, is implied.\(^{35}\)

2.2. Other Old Testament quotations and allusions

Furthermore, in order to establish the Johannine view on Jesus’ identity, it is enlightening to pay attention to several other Old Testament quotations and allusions. We saw that John 1:14 describes the Logos, the only Son from the Father, as being ‘full of grace and truth’ (πλήρης χάριτος καὶ αληθείας). Moreover, John 1:17 says, ‘The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth (ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀληθεία) came through Jesus Christ’. Many commentators consider ‘full of grace and truth’ an echo of ἡμεῖς τὸν ζωον ἐποίησαν in Exod 34:6, where these qualities are ascribed to YHWH; in this context Moses is allowed to see YHWH at least imperfectly (Exod 33:18–34:8; cf. 34:29–35).\(^{36}\) With reference to these passages Anthony Tyrrell Hanson


\(^{23}\) Ball, 'I Am’ in John’s Gospel, 35; 99–101; 224–32.

\(^{24}\) Ball, 'I Am’ in John’s Gospel, 137–45; 201.

\(^{25}\) Ball, 'I Am’ in John’s Gospel, 258.

\(^{26}\) E.g., R. Schnackenburg, Das Johanneswinkelung 1–4 (Herders Theologischer
establishes that, ‘according to John, on those occasions in Israel’s history when God is described as being seen, it was not in fact God who was seen, but the Logos’.  

In John 1:23 John the Baptist affirms that he is ‘the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Kyrios”’. In the Hebrew version of the quoted text, Isa 40:3, we read YHWH. Menken investigated the relationship between this quotation and the text of Isaiah and referred to several commentators, like Bultmann, who interpret Kyrios in John 1:23 as a reference to Jesus. Thus John the Baptist implicitly says that Jesus represents the Old Testament Kyrios.

In this context John the Baptist also says that Jesus is ‘he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit’ (John 1:33). In the Old Testament prophecies it is YHWH who will pour out his Spirit (Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:25–27; Joel 3:1–2 [2:28–29 in translations]). Once we see the relationship between Jesus and YHWH in this Gospel, the story of the marriage at Cana (John 2:1–11) also reminds us of the marriage between YHWH and his people. Brown points here to, e.g., Isa 54:4–8 and 62:4–5. It is noteworthy that Jesus is said to have manifested his δοξα there (John 2:11). This points back to the δοξα of the Logos that ‘we’ have beheld, δοξα as of the only Son from the Father (John 1:14).

In John 3:29 John the Baptist alludes to the same image of a marriage: ‘He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice’. The friend is John the Baptist, the bridegroom is Jesus, and thus John the Baptist alludes to YHWH who married his people. For this image Barrett refers to Isa 62:4–5; Jer 2:2; 3:20; Ezek 16:8; 23:4; Hos 2:18–19/19–20 in translations.

In John 12:13 the crowd cries to Jesus when he entered Jerusalem: ‘Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, [even] the King of Israel’, which is a quotation from Ps 118:26 (117:26 LXX), to which the title ‘the King of Israel’ has been added. Andrew C. Brunson argues that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem actualizes YHWH’s return to Zion. For the title ‘the King of Israel’ he refers in the first place to Zeph 3:14–15, besides numerous other Old Testament texts. He concludes: Jesus does not only symbolize the return of Yahweh, nor as his vice-regent reign representatively. Instead, (…) Jesus enters Jerusalem as the presence of Yahweh’. He even speaks of ‘a carefully constructed theological scheme to identify Jesus with Yahweh that includes at its core a network of allusions to the coming one of Ps 118:26.

2.3. Jesus and his Father’s name

To conclude this incomplete survey of Johannine texts that point to Jesus as corresponding to YHWH, some other texts deserve to be briefly discussed.

Sometimes Jesus mentions the name (ὄνομα) of the Father, e.g., ‘I have come in my Father’s name’ (John 5:43), and ‘The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me’ (John 10:25). In John 12:28 he prays, ‘Father, glorify your name’, in John 17:5–6, ‘Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. I have made your name known to those whom you gave me out of the world’, and John 17:26, ‘I made your name known to them, and I will make it known’ (cf. also John 17:11–12). C.H. Dodd associates the glorification and revelation of the name of God with Christ’s enunciation of the divine name ἐγώ εἰμι, which he equates with ὄνομα. We should not understand that

---

31 A.C. Brunson, Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study on the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament II.158), Tübingen 2003, 179; 223–30; 277–9. He refers (p. 237), e.g., to Num 23:21; Ps 146:10; Isa 65:26; 24:23; 33:22; 43:15; 52:7; Jer 8:19; Mic 1:3; 4:7. See also, e.g., Ps 89:19; Isa 41:21; 44:6.

32 Brunson, Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John, 239.

Jesus literally revealed the pronunciation of the divine name, but we may conclude that in his teaching and by his acts he revealed the Father’s nature.

2.4. Correspondence with ‘Lord’ and ‘God’

Finally, in John 20:28 Thomas says to Jesus: ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus is often addressed in the vocative κυρέ, and in John 13:13 Jesus says to his disciples that they were right in calling him ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ ὁ κύριος. It is unmistakable, however, that the titles ‘my Lord and my God’ in John 20:28 are far more significant than the common vocative κυρέ. This use of ‘my God’ points back to John 1:1, ‘The Logos was with God and the Logos was God’. If it is correct that elsewhere in this Gospel the pre-existent Logos, who is God, corresponds with the Κύριος or YHWH, this correspondence is confirmed by the close connection of ὁ κύριός and ὁ θεός in Thomas’s confession of Jesus.

2.5. Jesus as the Κύριος in Paul

The view that in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is to be closely associated with the Old Testament Κύριος, or even identified with YHWH, is less strange than it may appear, for it also appears in the Pauline epistles, insofar that there several YHWH texts are applied to Jesus. David B. Capes wrote an interesting book on this theme. For instance, in Rom 10:13, ‘everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved’, the Lord is Jesus (Rom 10:9), but in the quoted text (Joel 3:5 LXX) Κύριος is a translation of YHWH. Another relevant text is Romans 14:11, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God; this is mainly a quotation from Isa 45:23, where the prophet speaks in

name of the Κύριος ( Isa 45:18), who is YHWH. In the context of Rom 14, however, the Κύριος is Christ (Rom 14:8–9). The same text from Isa 45:18 is alluded to in Phil 2:9–11, which says that God ‘gave him [i.e., Jesus] the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’. According to many commentators ‘the name that is above every name’ is the name of YHWH (see also Lietaert Peerbolte, this vol., §4). The distinction between Jesus the Κύριος and God the Father is noteworthy as well (cf. Lietaert Peerbolte, end of §4).

Furthermore, Paul applies the expression ‘to boast in the Κύριος’, which he quotes as Scripture, to Jesus (1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17; cf. Jer 9:22–23 LXX), and there are several other quotations in which Κύριος relates to Jesus (1 Cor 2:16; 10:26; also 2 Tim 2:19). Yet Capes notes that Paul applies other YHWH texts to ‘God’ (Rom 4:7–8; 9:27–29; 11:34; 15:9–11; 1 Cor 3:20; 2 Cor 6:18), which shows that Paul does not consistently identify Jesus with the Κύριος. In any case, one may conclude that if it is correct that in the Gospel of John Jesus is presented as the Old Testament Κύριος, this is not a new phenomenon, since it occurs already in the epistles of Paul.

3. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ΚΥΡΙΟΣ (OR YHWH) AND GOD THE FATHER

3.1. Jesus and the Father

After our excursion on Paul we return to the Gospel of John. Our survey of texts from this Gospel appears to imply that in Jesus the Old Testament Κύριος, YHWH, visited his people and the world. At the same time it seems that the Κύριος, who is also the Logos, does not completely coincide with God the Father. In the prologue ὁ θεός

---

54 Barrett, St John, 505.
55 Other texts where Jesus is called ὁ κύριός: John 4:1 (according to some important manuscripts); 6:23; 11:2; 20:2; 13, 18, and 25; 21:7.
56 In John 12:21, where Philip is addressed as κυρίε, this simply means ‘sir’.
57 Barrett, St John, 572–3.
60 Capes, Old Testament Yahweh Texts, 123–30.
63 Capes, Old Testament Yahweh Texts, 130–6.
64 Capes, Old Testament Yahweh Texts, 136–49.
3.2. Parallels to the distinction between God the Father and the Logos

The distinction within God that may apparently be perceived in the Gospel of John has some parallels that are roughly contemporaneous.

First, according to Wisdom of Solomon 18:14–15 it was God’s almighty Logos (ὁ παντοδύναμος σου λόγος) who leaped from the heavenly thrones in order to save the people of Israel from Egypt.

Secondly, Philo calls the Logos God’s πρωτόγονος, νῦν θεοῦ and ἀρχη και ὄνομα θεοῦ. He identifies him with the angel who was sent before Israel and who bears God’s name (Exod 23:20). In his comment on Jacob’s dream in Gen 31:11–13 Philo distinguishes between θεός with and without article. He explains that θεός with article is the true—which means fully transcendental—God who appeared to Jacob ‘in the place of God’ (ἔγω είμι ὁ θεος ὁ θεός σου καὶ ὁ θεός σου, Gen 31:13); the latter God, for whom the article is not used, is the Logos who is improperly (ἐκ κατοχροσόφου) called God (cf. Geljon, this vol., §1). Philo adds that ‘He that is truly God is One, but those that are improperly so called are more than one’. He also perceives

---


38 See 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:27; Isa 63:16; Mal 2:10; cf. Deut 14:1.

39 Cf. John 17:11; 17:22. The fact that Jesus and the Father are not said to be εἷς but ἐν means that they are not one person, but that they are inseparable; cf. Hoskyns, Fourth Gospel, 369–90; E. Haenchen, Johannes-Evangelium: Ein Kommentar, Tubingen 1968, 392.


---

32 De confessione linguarum 146.

33 De agricultura 51 (in Philo’s text of Exod 23:20 here even ἐν εἰς is used, for he quotes: ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν εἰς ὑμῖν, ἐπανάστασιν ζητήμων μου εἰς προσώποι προσώπων); De migrations Abrahami 174; Questiones et solutiones in Exodum 2,13.

34 Although this seems relevant for the interpretation of John 1:1 (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος) one should not make too much of it, for θεός without article is predicative and describes the nature of the Word; thus Barrett, St John, 156; B.A. Mastin, ‘A Neglected Feature of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel’, New Testament Studies 22 (1976) 32–51 at 35–7; cf. F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and F. Rehkopf, Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch, Göttingen 1990, §273.

God’s Logos in the angel addressed by Hagar when she said: ‘You are the God that looks upon me’ (σοὶ θεὸς ὃ ἐπιθύμι με, Gen 16:13). It is noteworthy that the same verse first says that Hagar ‘called the name of the Lord’ (καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Ἁγαρ τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου), which implies that Philo interprets the Lord as the Logos. This is confirmed by a remark of his on swearing oaths. He interprets Deut 6:13, which says ‘and you will swear by his name’, as a commandment to swear by the name of the Lord, who is ‘the interpreting Logos’ and who is God for the imperfect, whereas for the wise and perfect the primal Being (ὁ πρῶτος) is God.

Thirdly, the distinction between the highest and absolutely transcendent God and the Lord re-emerges in Gnosticism (cf. Lutthi-Huizien, this vol., §3). For instance, in the early second century, in a commentary on Satinorius of Antioch maintains that there was one Father unknown to all, who made angels, archangels, and powers. In Satinorius’ view, the world was made by seven of the angels, one of whom was the God of the Jews. Although Irenaeus, to whom we owe this account of Satinorius, does not say so explicitly, the God of the Jews can be no one else but YHWH. It must be admitted that in most Gnostic belief-systems there is an antagonism between the highest, fully transcendent Father and the Old Testament God, whereas in the Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, and the Gospel of John the two are closely related; it may be surmised that the former positive relationship between the highest God and YHWH has turned to antagonism in Gnosticism.

Fourthly, in a way that resembles Philo and John, Justin Martyr distinguishes between the heavenly and the Kyrios who manifested himself on earth. Although it must be admitted that Justin might be influenced by Philo and by the Fourth Gospel, his testimony is still relevant to our theme. In his first Apology Justin writes that Christ spoke to Moses from the burning bush (see also Gellon, this vol., §2). We may observe that according to Exod 3:2 LXX it was the Angel of the Lord (δὲ καὶ ἔλαχος κύριον) who appeared to Moses; whereas in Exod 3:4 this angel is twice called Kyrios. Justin interprets the words said to Moses, ‘I am the Being (ἐστὶν οὖν ὁ ὄν), the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of your fathers’ (thus his quotation from Exod 3:14–15) as said by Jesus Christ, who first was the Logos. He distinguishes this interpretation from the Jewish view, according to which it was the ineffable God who spoke to Moses. Similarly, in his Dialogue with Trypho Justin distinguishes between God who appeared as Logos or Angel or Lord to Abraham and Moses, and the other God, the Creator and Father, who dwells in the supracranial spheres.

Fifthly, in the targums YHWH or God frequently acts and communicates with men in his Word (יהוה מיב全國). This memra or Word is at least related to God’s Logos in the Wisdom of Solomon, in Philo, and in John’s Gospel.

3.3. Jesus and his Father once again

Now we return to the fundamental question: who is God the Father in the Gospel of John, if it seems that we have to distinguish him from the Kyrios, YHWH? The background of this question is that in the Old Testament YHWH is called the only and Most High God, and that the appellations YHWH and ‘God’ (יהוה אל) are often used alternately.

It seems that in the Fourth Gospel Jesus Christ in his capacity of Logos and Kyrios represents God as far as he reveals himself to mankind, and that God the Father is God in his absolute transcendence and invisibility. Yet according to this Gospel God the transcendent Father does not stay aloof from mankind. He loves the...
world and sends his only Son (John 3:16–17), and can also be wrathful at the one who does not believe in the Son (John 3:36). He seeks those who worship him in spirit and truth (John 4:23), he is working like Jesus is working (John 5:17), he raises the dead (John 5:21), and sends the Paraclete to take Jesus’ place (John 14:16, 26).

Once we have established the subtle distinction between God the Father and the Kyrios in this Gospel, it is most noteworthy that Jesus repeatedly says about his contemporaries that they do not know his Father and have never heard his voice. To some extent this is similar to the Gnostic view, which emerged in the same period as the Gospel of John, that Jesus proclaimed the knowledge of the unknown and fully transcendent God. But in order to prevent misunderstandings, we should immediately add that in the Gospel of John Jesus’ proclamation of God the Father does not imply any devaluation of the Kyrios or of the Old Testament, as we often find it in Gnostic testimonies (cf. Luttikhuizen, this vol., §3). Quite the contrary, according to John Jesus is even to be associated very closely with the Kyrios, that is YHWH; one may even daringly speak of his identification with the Kyrios, YHWH.

In the perspective of Jesus’ revelation of the unknown Father, it is remarkable that the evangelist emphasizes that it is Moses, and not God, who gave the law (John 1:17; 7:19) and that Moses and the patriarchs, and not God, gave circumcision (John 7:22). ‘The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’ (John 1:17). To his contemporaries Jesus even speaks of ‘your law’ (John 8:17; 10:34) and in their absence he speaks of ‘their law’ (John 15:25), as if he distances himself from it. But although this Gospel apparently distances itself from the law of Moses in some respect, it also emphasizes that Moses and the prophets wrote of Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:45), and contains many Old Testament quotations that testify to a positive relationship between the Jewish Scriptures and Jesus. If the foregoing argumentation is correct, we should even interpret Jesus’ saying, ‘If you believed Moses,

...you would believe me, for he wrote about me’ (John 5:46), not as a reference to some isolated prophecy, like Deut 18:15, 18, but to far more texts that speak about YHWH revealing himself to the Israelites.

**Conclusion**

In our view, this investigation shows that according to the Fourth Gospel Jesus manifested the divine name, since he himself was not only the incarnate Logos and the Son of God, but even the incarnate Kyrios or YHWH himself. In this capacity he revealed the transcendent Father who had sent him. But notwithstanding the distinction that can be perceived between God the Father and Jesus the Kyrios, their fundamental unity is essential as well. This is only one of the paradoxes that permeate the Fourth Gospel, which testifies to Jesus as the shepherd and the lamb, as the Lord and the servant, and as the Word made flesh.

---

66 John 5:37; 7:28; 8:19, 55; 14:7; 15:21; cf. 3:8–12.
68 A similar ambiguity towards the Old Testament is expressed in Rom 3:21, ‘But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets’.
69 Thus Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium* 5–12, 182.