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## *Jesus' Revelation of His Father*

A Narrative-Conceptual Study of the Trinity  
with Special Reference to Karl Barth

Damon W. K. So

The book explores Trinitarian dynamics in the context of Jesus' revelation of his Father in his earthly ministry, with references to key passages in Matthew's Gospel. It develops from the exegesis of these passages a non-linear concept of revelation which links Jesus' communion with his Father to his revelatory words and actions through the nuanced understanding of the Holy Spirit, with references to K. Barth, G. Lampe, J.D.G. Dunn and E. Irving.

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*Daniel R. Hardy, Senior Member of the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, formerly Van Mildert Professor of Divinity, University of Durham, and Director of the Centre of Theological Inquiry, Princeton*

'The dialogue between the Gospels' narrative proclamation about Jesus, and the Trinitarian Christology of thinkers such as Irving, Lampe and Barth, explores an important subject in an original and potentially fruitful way.'

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'Two particular features make this an excellent study. First, against some recent trends, it demonstrates clearly that biblical narratives can inform doctrinal formulation. Second, it is a most satisfying exposition of the dynamic relationships that exist among the Father, Son and Spirit in the life of Jesus, which in turn leads to a better understanding of Christology and the Trinity.'

*How Fong, Bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, formerly Director, Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia, Singapore*

Damon W. K. So studied theology at the London School of Theology, Oxford University and pursued theological research at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. He was a pastoral worker of The Chinese Church in London and his first doctorate was in Atmospheric Dynamics at Imperial College London. He is married to Yuen-Ping with two children, James and Rachel. He is currently Research Tutor at OCMS, and is also an adviser to the Oxford Chinese Christian Church.



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Theology, Philosophy and Christian Theology

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Foreword by Daniel W. Hardy

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## Foreword

Aspiring theologians, even those in established positions, so often limit themselves to cautious critical analysis of others that it is rare to find one with an important and comprehensive case to make. Damon So is such a person; and the proof lies in this book. The special value of his study lies in the ways he enlarges Karl Barth's view of revelation as the relation of Jesus and the Trinity. He does this by a variety of considerations, as to how we can discern the identity of Jesus in Scripture in relation to God, how we can find what is Jesus' relation (communion) with the Father and the Holy Spirit in salvation, and how this mirrors the Trinity of God. A further contribution of the book is its careful engagement with a variety of other people - Hans Frei, James Dunn and others - to assist in the development of his case. Altogether, this is an important study in the revelation of Jesus, his communion with the Father, the interpretation of Scripture, and the implications for the Trinity.

One of the major difficulties confronting theology today is the hiatus between biblical and doctrinal approaches, from which both are losers. So's attention to the narrative content of the Synoptic gospels alongside Barth's conceptual and interpretative categories shows how each benefits from the other. In such a way, Barth's discussions can be rooted more concretely in Scripture, and yet provide conceptual clarity for it: what emerges is a clear conception of Jesus' relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Both Jesus' words and actions are thus seen as revelation.

Another persistent issue in theology today is how the Holy Spirit is taken as seriously as it should be. So explores the Son's relation to the Father *through the Holy Spirit*, how the Holy Spirit is in Christ and his disciples, and whether the so-called Spirit- and Logos-Christologies do justice to the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. From careful Scriptural exegesis,

and in contrast to Barth's view, So finds a 'non-linear concept of revelation' by which better to convey the communion of the Father with the Son in the Spirit, how the Son fully shares the presence and spirit of his Father. The unity of Jesus with the Father is found in Jesus' life and shows 'the plural sources of divinity in the Trinity' (how Jesus and the Spirit are united, and how Jesus and his Father are united in the life, experience and ministry of Jesus).

The combination of Scriptural and doctrinal study in this book is remarkable, and the case it presents is enriching for both. It is especially illuminating for its redevelopment of the notion of revelation, and for its understanding of the Spirit as the power in which Jesus moved, and at the same time the power of his Father present in him. As So vividly suggests, 'This is the mystery of the Trinity that Jesus himself experienced, the mystery of the community and unity of the Trinity expressed in the life-act and experience of Jesus Christ.' This is a profoundly helpful study.

Daniel W. Hardy  
Cambridge,  
December 2005