Monogenēs and the Social Trinity:
A Test Case for Using Lexical Semantics in
Systematic Theology

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Since the work of James Barr's *Semantics of Biblical Language*, it has become widely acknowledged that theological interests have often played a significant role in ascribing meaning to biblical words. However, despite Barr's bringing to light the logical and linguistic shortcomings of theological lexicography, these interests continue to persist in theological scholarship today.[1] Observe how, in the following example, one theologian acknowledges the root fallacy and then purposefully commits it in order to advance a theological point:

> Most scholars today agree that the best way to decipher the meaning of a word is by looking at how it is used, rather than looking at its etymology, or origin. Still, the origin of *ekklēsia* is interesting. It is formed from two Greek words, *ek*, "out," and *kaleō*, "to call." Thus, the *ekklēsia* are "the called-out ones." . . . an *ekklēsia* was regarded as just an assembly of people. Still, it is worth noting that the element of being called out lies in the background of the biblical word for the church.[2]

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1. I am referring here to James Barr's critique of Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* project. See Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 206–52.

2. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 26. The Hammett example is not provided as a representative error of systematic theologians, but because it is a clear example of a scholar committing the root fallacy self-consciously. This same logical error can be found elsewhere in New Testament scholarship in cases in which a scholar's work is exegetically, rather than theologically, based. See, e.g., Wright, *Paul*, 6, who also commits the root fallacy in analyzing ἐκκλησία (assembly, church). Vanhoozer, a systematic theologian, warns

Such etymological leveraging of biblical words could prompt the question of whether theologians should avoid theologizing from the basis of individual words altogether. I think the answer is no, but such theologizing should not entail bypassing the critiques of theological lexicography. Instead, when investigating the theological significance of individual words, both biblical and theological scholars should work with a model of lexical semantics that situates the investigation within modern linguistic theory. This is important because the study of words assumes a linguistic theory regardless of whether or not this theory is conscious to the scholar. Accordingly, theologians have a responsibility to be linguistically informed before they expound on the New Testament lexicon. In like manner, theologians, both biblical and systematic, have a responsibility to refrain from blindly adopting exegetical support simply because what they find affirms their argument or supports a certain theological or institutional doctrine.

In this essay I will address the issue that, since the publication of Barr's book, certain arguments for the meaning of biblical words have slipped into general acceptance while being, in reality, wolves in sheep's clothing—that is, theological positions dressed up in linguistic terminology. In particular, in this paper I will focus on a widely accepted root fallacy committed with the word μονογενής. A particular understanding of μονογενής in the Fourth Gospel has been routinely leveraged in biblical and

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against this temptation for biblical theologians: "Biblical theology should not treat biblical words out of their literary context, but rather describe how they are used in the context of the literary whole of which they are a part" ("Exegesis and Hermeneutics," 58). Moisés Silva identifies ἐκκλησία (assembly, church) as one of the common Greek words that ministers who have a lack of familiarity with biblical languages use to make a theological point in their sermons (*Biblical Words*, 45). See also Baxter, "In the Original Text," who, in his unpublished MA thesis, explores numerous instances of theologically motivated fallacies in Old Testament and New Testament commentaries that were published since Barr's famous critique. Cf. Baxter, "Hebrew and Greek Word-Study Fallacies," 3–32; Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 27–64; Porter, "Lexicons (Theological)," 195–96; Fewster, *Creation Language*, 27–30.

systematic theology to legitimate the theological assertion that Jesus is God's unique Son *because he is divine*. Although I would affirm the Christological doctrine espoused by this view, I will seek to demonstrate that the linguistic argument for this understanding of μονογενής is fallacious.

In the second part of this paper I will be primarily constructive rather than critical. I will contend that there stands to be great gains in Christian theology if exegesis and theology are afforded their distinctive voices, neither one trying to force the other into submission. Thus, I will put forth an interdisciplinary argument; after marshaling the insights of modern linguistics with some additional help from social-scientific criticism to assign μονογενής a contextualized meaning in the Johannine literature, I will present the program of the social model of the Trinity (hereafter, social Trinity) as formulated by certain systematic theologians so as to bring into productive dialogue the different ways these two disciplines speak about the relationship between Jesus the Son and God the Father. Last, I will argue that the social program derived from the social Trinity can be more biblically grounded, with further implications inferred through the particular father-son relationship indicated by the term μονογενής.

Monogenēs in New Testament Scholarship

The term μονογενής has generated much scholarly conversation over the last century, and one notable aspect of this particular conversation is that it has taken place across the disciplinary divide of biblical and theological studies. The reason for this "reaching across the aisle" was due to the problem of deciding on the best translation for μονογενής in English Bibles. Dale Moody addressed this issue in his 1953 article that defended the RSV's translation of μονογενής in John 3:16 as "only" against the KJV's "only begotten" because it "corrected an error repeated for fifteen centuries, and by making this correction they have

rendered a translation that gives emphasis to the uniqueness and deity of Jesus Christ."[3]

Moody goes on to make the interesting claim that "the removal of the term 'only begotten' was prompted, not by theological interests, but by the plain demands of linguistic study."[4] He defends this claim by making reference to various linguistic resources used in biblical studies from the late nineteenth century onward, such as Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (1886), Ferdinand Kattenbusch's article in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (1908), Walter Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (1949–1952), Moulton and Milligan's *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (1930), Liddel and Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon* (1940), Friedrich Büschel's article in Kittel's *Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (1932), and especially Francis Marion Warden's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Monogenēs in the Johannine Literature" (1938), which was completed at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Moody considered Warden's study the most comprehensive up to that time, and he endorsed his conclusion that "*monogenēs* means 'uniqueness of being, rather than any remarkableness of manner of coming into being, or yet uniqueness resulting from any manner of coming into being.'"[5] In some form or another, these works concur that

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3. Moody, "God's Only Son," 213. Other notable works that have taken this view include: Winter, "ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΣ ΠΑΡΑ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ," 335–63; Kruijf, "Glory of the Only Son," 11–23; Pendrick, "*Monogenēs*," 587–600. Those who have argued that μονογενής denotes derivation of birth include: Büschel, "μονογενής," 737–41; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 96; Bulman, "Only Begotten Son," 56–79, who, in addition to appealing to etymology, builds his argument on the patristic usage of the term to defend the Westminster Confession; Dahms, "Johannine Use of Monogenēs Reconsidered," 222–32, who argues that material found in Tobit, Philo, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian refute the rendering of μονογενής as "unique."

4. Moody, "God's Only Son," 213.

5. Ibid., 214, quoting Warden, "'Monogenēs' in the Johannine Literature," 35–36. The years listed for the books to which Moody refers are the publication years of the editions that Moody used, which would have been the most recent editions at the time. One can see that in Warden's definition there is theological motivation in assigning a meaning to the term; the

μονογενής denotes "uniqueness," but Moody construed his sources in such a way to support the claim that the data adds up to mean "uniqueness of being" as it pertains to Jesus' deity in Johannine literature. Thus, for Moody, μονογενής has a semantic value that signifies Jesus' divinity.[6]

Understanding the meaning of μονογενής as "unique" has become the general consensus and has even been "canonized," so to speak, in D. A. Carson's *Exegetical Fallacies* as the correction of the long enduring root fallacy committed in the KJV. The rationale is worth reproducing here:

> The word μονογενής (*monogenēs*) is often thought to spring from μόνος (*monos*, only) plus γεννάω (*gennaō*, to beget); and hence its meaning is "only begotten." Even at the etymological level, the γεν (*gen*)-root is tricky: μονογενής (*monogenēs*) could as easily spring from μόνος (*monos*, only) plus γένος (*genos*, kind or race) to mean "only one of its kind," "unique," or the like. If we press on to consider usage, we discover that the Septuagint renders יָחִיד (*yāḥîd*) as "alone" or "only" . . . without even a hint of begetting. . . . In Hebrews 11:17 Isaac is said to be Abraham's μονογενής (*monogenēs*)—which clearly cannot mean "only-begotten son," since Abraham also sired Ishmael and a fresh packet of progeny by Keturah (Gen. 25:1–2). Isaac is, however, Abraham's *unique* son, his special and well-beloved son.[7]

definition given prohibits certain theological views about the nature of Christ's eternality. Therefore, to claim that this conclusion is purely driven by linguistics is to fail to acknowledge the theological agenda motivating the study.

6.   Moody, "God's Only Son," 217–18.

7.   Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 30–31. In his commentary on John's Gospel, Carson makes no mention of the term "unique," but instead explains that the NIV is more accurate in rendering μονογενής as "one and only" (or the "*one and only, best-loved* son" as Carson states) than those who have tried to revive the older rendering "only begotten" (*Gospel According to John*, 128). Carson and others add the more descriptive "best-loved" modifier on account of the LXX's rendering the Hebrew term יָחִיד as ἀγαπητός in certain instances as well as μονογενής in others. Since יָחִיד is translated in the LXX as ἀγαπητός *and* μονογενής, some commentators have come to the conclusion that ἀγαπητός and μονογενής are semantically related, if not synonymous. This argument, however, runs into trouble when one considers all the contextual factors—including theological and historical commitments—that went into rendering

There are several logical problems created by this explanation. The first problem involves the examples that Carson gives to explain why μονογενής means "unique." Carson, like several others before him, restricts instances of μονογενής to translation Greek; all of his examples come from the Septuagint. This seems to bypass the reality that languages are not coterminous between their respective cultures; the cultural environment(s) in which the Septuagint was produced does not correspond one to one with the culture in which the Hebrew Scriptures were composed, despite the degree to which the cultures would have been similar. Moreover, if we accept that certain lexical items have a referential meaning that points to certain objects or properties outside of language itself, then "we are not committed to the assumption that all the objects denoted by a particular term form a 'natural class.'"[8] In other words, "the reference of a lexical item need not be precise and fully determined, in the sense that it is always clear whether a particular object or property falls within the scope of a particular lexical item."[9] However, it is more appropriate to explore their application—that is, how "items of different languages can be

יָחִיד into Greek when the LXX translators were interpreting the relationship between Abraham and Isaac. That a word in Hebrew was rendered multiple ways in Greek translation does not mean that the Greek words are synonymous. Since Carson has rendered μονογενής as both "one and only" and "best-loved," he has accounted for the different ways in which the LXX treated the word יָחִיד, but he could be accused of committing the illegitimate identity transfer fallacy in the process. See also Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 41, who actually translates μονογενής in John as "best-loved" *because* יָחִיד was translated as ἀγαπητός and μονογενής in the LXX, the logic of which is strange because this in effect is a translation of the Hebrew term into English rather than the Greek term. For other commentators who allow the discussion of the translation of יָחִיד to inform their decision on the meaning of μονογενής, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 14; Köstenberger, *John*, 43–44; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:414, though Keener is more careful to suggest that "[b]ecause μονογενής often translates יחיד, and יחיד could also be rendered ἀγαπητός . . . it was natural that μονογενής should eventually adopt nuances of ἀγαπητός in biblically saturated Jewish Greek" (1:414). Nevertheless, Keener's explanation, though not committing the same logical fallacies as others, is still speculative.

8. Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, 426.
9. Ibid.

put into correspondence with one another on the basis of the identification of common features and situations in the cultures in which they operate"—because the notion of applicability ultimately rests upon the intuitions of those doing the translating.[10] Thus, it is not very helpful to discuss the similarity between μονογενής and יָחִיד in relation to their ostensive definitions within their respective languages.

Second, the examples that Carson gives do not all pertain to familial relationships, which is clearly the sense in view in John's prologue and in John 3:16, which Carson cites. To use examples from various contexts to clarify the meaning of μονογενής imposes a highly general meaning on the term without letting context constrain the word's meaning in each instance of its use. To be sure, it is true that all instances of μονογενής denote a common, highly abstract meaning, but this meaning is always modulated by context, which I will discuss more below. And as is evident even in Carson's brief explanation, μονογενής was used in multiple contexts, so one should not preclude the possibility of semantic variation for this term.

Third, the reference to Isaac as a μονογενής does not, as Carson claims, preclude the meaning of "only begotten." While Isaac was not Abraham's only child, he was the only child born *to Sarah*, the only child according to the promise. We need not be extremely rigid or prescriptive in our linguistic sensibilities here.[11] Last, it seems that for Carson the meaning of μονογενής is still to be determined by, or at least heavily based on, the two roots μόνος and γένος. This is ironic, since Carson uses μονογενής to exemplify the root fallacy, though the root fallacy he refers to is the falsely attributed root γεννάω.[12]

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10.   Ibid., 433–34.

11.   See McHugh, *John 1–4*, 99.

12.   Beginning with Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 416–17, it has been argued that the root of μονογενής could not have been from μόνος and γεννάω because the double nu would be expected. Reconstructed forms such as μονογέννητος and μονογένητος are not found anywhere in extant documents from the first four centuries CE, which allows for the possibility that μονογενής could have been an appropriate term to refer to an only child. See also McHugh, *John 1–4*, 100.

Scholars have continued to rely on Warden's doctoral dissertation, even if indirectly, to make the theological case that μονογενής refers to Jesus' divinity. For example, Köstenberger and Swain comment that the first mention of Jesus' sonship in the Fourth Gospel designates "Jesus as God's 'one-of-a-kind Son' (*monogenēs*; 3:16, 18; cf. 1:14, 18)" and state that this "precise term is unique to the Fourth Gospel . . . and stresses his unique relationship with [the Father] . . . It is likely that 'one of a kind' in John's context refers to Jesus' uniqueness in that 'he is *both* the *human* Son of Joseph *and* the *divine* Son of God.'"[13] This assertion, however, is misleading for a couple of reasons. First, John's Gospel is not the only book in the New Testament to use the word μονογενής; it also occurs in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Heb 11:17; and 1 John 4:9 (9 times in the New Testament in total). To be precise, John is the only New Testament writer to refer to Jesus with the term μονογενής. But still, Köstenberger and Swain seem to misconstrue the data by suggesting that there is some special meaning attached to μονογενής in John's use of it simply because he is the only New Testament writer to describe Jesus with this term; in other words, μονογενής has a unique meaning in John, a one-of-a-kind meaning, as it were. Second, there is not enough consideration given to the linguistic grounds for the claim that μονογενής can be infused with the theological meaning that Jesus is the son of Joseph *and* the Son of God. Contextually, this does not make sense, because Joseph is nowhere mentioned in John's prologue or in any immediate co-text with the term μονογενής.[14] It would seem that theological rather than linguistic considerations are the primary driving force behind this interpretation.

The word μονογενής occurs frequently outside the New Testament. As noted above, there are many occurrences in the Septuagint, and it also appears in the work of other writers, from Plato to Josephus to Eusebius. It can be generally observed that

13.   Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit*, 76–77, who quote from Walker, "John 1.43–51," 41 n. 37. Köstenberger also quotes this view in his commentary on John (*John*, 44).

14.   Joseph is mentioned as the father of Jesus in John 1:45 and 6:24.

when the term is used in the context of familial relations, it refers to an only child.[15] An instance in Tob 3:15 all but defines the term in its familial usage: "I am my father's only child [μονογενές]; he does not have another child to be his heir." However, the word can take on other connotations in different contexts. For instance, in 1 Clement 25:2 the phoenix is described as a μονογενές ὑπάρχον, being "unique" or "alone in its kind." Therefore, at an abstract level μονογενής signifies a kind of singularity, but it does not necessarily signify "uniqueness of being" when it is used within the context of familial relationships. In certain contexts, however, singularity can certainly signify uniqueness, as with the phoenix, and this usage of μονογενής is evidenced more than once in antiquity.[16]

With this selective discussion of how μονογενής is discussed in New Testament scholarship, I have tried to show that there is a fundamental problem with matching a theological position with a word's assigned dictionary meaning. This approach forfeits any claim to be linguistically informed in any critical sense because it does not acknowledge that the meanings that words contribute in texts are inextricably connected to their function in use. Neither is such an approach equipped with a sufficient theory of language that takes into account analogous meanings of words—that is, how a common usage of a word can be used to convey meaning in another contextual field. It is reasonable to expect that a linguistic theory furnished with the descriptive tools to deal with analogous meanings of words will be needed to analyze a document that is as rich in symbolism and metaphor as the Fourth Gospel, and this applies especially to the use of μονογενής in this book because, as is universally agreed, this term connotes theological meaning but not in the way that is

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15.   See Judg 11:34 (LXX [A]); Tobit 3:15; 6:11; *Psalms of Solomon* 18:4; Luke 8:42; 9:38; Heb 11:17; Herodotus 7.221; Hesiod, *Theo*. 426; *Op*. 376. Keener notes that "only child" was the most common meaning for μονογενής (*Gospel of John*, 1:14).

16.   See Wis 7:22, where μονογενής collocates with many other adjectives that describe the spirit of wisdom: νοερόν (understanding), ἅγιον (holy), πολυμερές (multifaceted), among others. For other examples, see Büschel, "μονογενής," 738 n. 5.

typically asserted. Previous studies have attempted to try to make the meaning of the word conform to theological presuppositions rather than allowing the context to shape how the word is understood. A model of lexical semantics would reverse this orientation, and so it is to a linguistic theory of lexical semantics that I now turn.

A Theory of Lexical Semantics

Here I will briefly articulate a theory of lexical semantics that is both *functional* and *minimalist* in orientation. Specifically, I will make use of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), with an incorporation of the work of Charles Ruhl (a formalist), who is known for his theory of lexical monosemy.[17] In the next section this theory will be applied to John's use of μονογενής and the meaning that can and cannot be attributed to it.

Functional linguistic models understand meaning to come from particular instances of language use, where extra-linguistic factors constrain the meanings of a particular utterance; a text means what it means because of the context in which it is written or spoken, and this meaning-making process informs how we can talk about the meaning of individual words.[18] The process of using language is also understood as a semiotic process, "a process of making meanings by choosing,"[19] which is built on the longstanding linguistics mantra that "meaning implies choice."[20] Also, lexical analysis is approached in linguistics through either a maximalist or a minimalist orientation to meaning. Maximalists "attempt to deduce as much as possible from the literal meanings of verbal expressions and tend to assume richness and ambiguity in the meanings of words," whereas minimalists "attribute more importance to the pragmatic rules of reinterpretation as opposed to literal meanings and tend to accept only

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17.   See Ruhl, *On Monosemy*.
18.   See Leckie-Tarry, *Language and Context*, 12; Kress and Hodge, *Language as Ideology*, 13.
19.   Eggins, *Introduction*, 3.
20.   See Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, 415–16.

minimal meanings and unambiguous words."[21] Minimalists allow for the co-textual and contextual environments to shape the particular meanings words contribute to a particular text; it is not the inherent meanings of words themselves that are primarily responsible for making meaning. Because of this, the minimalist view is more compatible with a functional view of linguistics.

As indicated above, a problem with much of the scholarship on μονογενής is that scholars have attributed to this word a single, fixed meaning and have supposed that this meaning contributes maximally to the text, so much so that the notion that Jesus is divine is communicated by means of the word itself. However, this understanding of μονογενής fails to acknowledge that words have semantic variation, not necessarily because words inherently have multiple meanings, but because they have the characteristic of modularity where single, basic meanings of lexemes can be "modulated" by means of how they are contextualized and routinely used in a language community.[22] Consider, for example, the word "take" as Ruhl has used it to illustrate the point that words have ranges of interpretations that are instigated by their context:

    (1) The thief took the jewels.
    (2) The thief took his own jewels.
    (3) The jeweler took his jewels.
    (4) The jeweler took his hat.
    (5) John took his hat
    (6) The king took the jewels[23]

These different uses of "take" demonstrate that a single lexeme has the semantic variability to be interpreted in numerous ways. In the first sentence "take" would be expected to mean "steal," though there is not enough context to warrant a definitive interpretive conclusion. The sense of "steal" in "take" becomes less likely with the other sentences, though this interpretation is not completely ruled out. There are multiple kinds of taking that are possibilities, and stealing is only one of them.

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21.   Posner, "Semantics and Pragmatics," 100.
22.   Ruhl, *On Monosemy*, 6.
23.   Ibid.

According to Ruhl, there are four pragmatic reasons why the "stealing" interpretation of "take" is appropriately inferred from the first sentence and not the others; these reasons are:

> (1) that the thief is so described at least in part because of what he is doing in this sentence;
> (2) that the jewels do not belong to the thief;
> (3) that jewels are something very likely to be stolen;
> (4) that the thief is acting in the stealthy way that we know thieves act.[24]

Thus, the lexical meaning of "take" on its own is not enough to determine its meaning in the sentence. For a monosemic position such as the one taken by Ruhl, most words in a language have a single meaning, but this meaning is highly abstract and therefore removed from the particular details of any use.[25] Pragmatic and contextual elements are necessary to understand how a word's meaning contributes to the meaning of a particular utterance. Therefore, since context constrains and shapes the meaning of words in a text, this implies that interpretative judgments should not be so heavily placed on the meanings of words alone.

In addition to being concerned with the individual meanings of words, a theory of lexical semantics is also concerned with how words are used to make meaning. According to a functionalist view of linguistics, there are certain patterns of language characteristic of communities that contribute to how the

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24.   Ibid.

25.   Ibid., ix. Ruhl admits that not all words are monosemic in English, but he argues that the standard expectation should be that words have a single abstract meaning (*On Monosemy*, xi). This is termed the monosemic bias principle. To substantiate this claim Ruhl makes use of what he calls the comprehensiveness principle, which states that "the measure of a word's semantic contribution is not accuracy (in a single context) but comprehensiveness (in all contexts)" ("Data, Comprehensiveness, Monosemy," 172). Thus, the meaning of a word is determined by taking all the instances in which that word is used in a corpus and then distilling the commonality that they all (or the vast majority) share.

meanings of words modulate in context.[26] Jay Lemke, a systemic-functional linguist, explains that "lexical choices are always made against the background of their history of use in the community[;] they carry the 'freight' of their associations with them."[27] This acknowledges that when words are commonly contextualized in a particular way, their meanings can often be expected to remain stable. So with the example of "take" above, when a text is situated within a context pertaining to criminal activity, or robbery more specifically, the word "take" can be expected to assume its sense of "steal."

It is important, then, to differentiate the ways words can mean or have meaning. Lemke divides word meaning into three categories: *lexical*, *use*, and *thematic* meaning. *Lexical* meaning refers to the meaning potential of a word in a network of lexico-grammatical options; it also addresses its inherent meaning—the

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26.   Here I am consciously integrating a view of lexical monosemy with a functional view of language. This shifts the focus of monosemy from Ruhl's formalist paradigm of linguistics to a functionalist paradigm. This does not necessarily shift the theory of monosemy as much as it shifts the goal that using this theory attempts to achieve. I admit that to claim that words have a highly abstract, fixed meaning entails some formalist commitments to linguistics. Indeed, as Ruhl states, "the most functional linguistic ability is based on a high degree of formal autonomy" (*On Monosemy*, ix). However, not everyone with a functionalist view of language would be willing to concede this much. For a study that adapts Ruhl's monosemy for a functional model of New Testament Greek see Fewster, *Creation Language*; Fewster, "Towards a Model of Functional Monosemy," 251–76; Porter, "θαυμάζω," 75–79.

27.   Lemke, "Interpersonal Meaning," 85. I make use of Lemke's work in this article because his model of lexical semantics is situated within a well-developed linguistic model that takes into account how texts (and even words) take on meaning against the wider backdrop of their cultural context. Lemke's model is systemic-functional, but with a particular orientation to intertextuality, which draws especially on the Bakhtinian concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism. Scholars have begun to use Lemke's work productively in New Testament studies to understand how the use and reuse of thematic patterns of a community's texts create and negotiate meanings, and according to Lemke's model, this exercise can also be carried out with the thematic uses of single words. For works making use of Lemke's model in New Testament studies, see Xue, *Paul's Viewpoint on God*; Xue, "Intertextual Discourse Analysis," 277–308; Xue, "Analysis of James 2:14–26"; Dawson, "Books of Acts and *Jubilees* in Dialogue," 9–40.

meaning of a word in isolation, a decontextualized, dictionary-form kind of meaning.[28] *Use* meaning corresponds to the contextualized meaning made with a word in a text; it takes pragmatics into account.[29] *Thematic* meaning is situated between these other two kinds of meaning; it refers to meanings that words routinely assume in certain contexts. When writers undergo the process of selecting words, they do not choose words out of their neutral "dictionary" meaning, because the meanings of words "depend *entirely* on a process of abstractions from the various discourses in which they commonly occur."[30] Thus, it is with the conscious understanding of the thematic meaning of words that writers employ them in their texts. As a result, when we seek to ascertain the meaning of a word in Greek, our goals do not point us to the *lexical* meaning of a word, but to its *thematic* meaning for the purpose of interpreting its *use* meaning.

Monogenēs in Johannine Use and Its Christological Implications

According to the model of lexical semantics articulated above, the meaning of μονογενής is highly shaped by context; it is shaped by the way it frequently recurs within a community, and it is shaped by the context of situation in which it is used. Since μονογενής is frequently used in familial contexts, and since there is kinship language that collocates with μονογενής in John 1,[31] the thematic meaning of μονογενής will constrain its use meaning before other contextual factors reconfigure its meaning in any way.

The first instance of μονογενής appears in John 1:14 in a genitive form (μονογενοῦς) modifying its head term, δόξαν (glory),

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28.   Lemke, "Intertextuality and Text Semantics," 88.

29.   Ibid., 89.

30.   Ibid., 88. Lemke obtains this notion from Bakhtin. See Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, 87. See also Holquist, *Dialogism*, 49.

31.   Terms of kinship in John's prologue include: ἴδια (1:11), τέκνα (v.12), αἱμάτων and ἐγεννήθησαν (v. 13), μονογενοῦς and πατρός (v. 14), μονογενής and πατρός (v.18).

but it is further modified by the relator[32] παρὰ πατρός (from a father), which modulates μονογενοῦς to assume the nuanced meaning usually associated with kinship language. Further, an analogical usage of μονογενής is established by ὡς (as), which functions to relate the glory of Jesus to the glory that a μονογενής possesses in relationship to (παρά [from]) a father. This indicates that the *status* a μονογενής has in relationship to a father is important for this usage. Based, then, on just a few linguistic modifiers, the lexical meaning of μονογενής, which includes its monosemic, abstract meaning, is already being significantly modulated. The abstract meaning that μονογενής can be said to have as a sign is constrained by δόξαν, ὡς, and παρὰ πατρός, just in its initial usage in John's Gospel.

Since the analogous relationship of father and son is established between Jesus and God in 1:14, it is not necessary for the text to make this explicit again. Therefore, in 1:18, where μονογενής is next used to refer to Jesus, its collocation with πατρός does not need to be linguistically linked with ὡς or some other construction to indicate they are related in a particular way. The syntactical (and theological) significance of the second use of μονογενής is that it functions in 1:18 as a definer for θεός (God)—that is, θεός is modified by μονογενής in a way that serves to attribute a feature to θεός.[33] The linguistic relationships discussed here already prompt a theological conclusion: God in John 1 is identified both as separate from Jesus in some sense,

32.   A relator is a term used in SFL to refer to a type of modifier inside a word group; it is defined as "a word specified by a preposition (i.e., the object of a preposition) that modifies another element within the word group" ("OpenText.org Annotation Model," [n.d.]). In this case πατρός, which is specified by παρά, modifies, and thereby constrains the contextualized meaning of, μονογενοῦς.

33.   The discussion here draws on the annotation model described in "OpenText.org Annotation Model," [n.d.]. The textual variant ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός (the only son) is attested in a large number of manuscripts. This reading is certainly easier, but P[66] and P[75], which both read θεός, gives the base text of the NA28 much external support. The manuscripts that read υἱός (son) can be explained through scribal assimilation with 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9 (see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 169). Thus, θεός (God), being the harder reading, is more probable in consideration of the weighing of internal criteria.

but also *as* Jesus, where both μονογενής and πατρός become co-represented in θεός. This linguistic move is accomplished with kinship language, and there stands to be further theological significance gleaned from the familial relationship. An important question to consider is how this relationship would have made sense to a first-century audience. Is the notion of unity/oneness in the Binitarian Father-Son relationship that John depicts counterintuitive to a first-century audience, or could the kinship language have made this Binitarian relationship seem agreeable to common sense?

As Adesola Akala has pointed out, family and birth are universal experiences, so the terms τέκνον (child), αἷμα (blood), σάρξ, θέλημα ἀνήρ (will of man), and γεννάω (I beget), which occur in John 1:12–13, would have been recognizable as common stock for kinship language to first-century readers.[34] Because the prologue of John depicts the relationship between Jesus and God as a father-son relationship, it logically follows that this would be accompanied by the specific cultural concepts that such a familial relationship entails. The last thirty years have seen a substantial increase in the study of the ancient Mediterranean family structure, which allows much to be said on this topic.[35] The logical place to begin is with the understanding in the first-century Mediterranean world that the household, not the individual, was the basic unit of society.[36] Because individuals based their sense of identity in the group(s) they belonged to, the collectivistic personality was primed still to recognize a single entity as God even if God was articulated as a plurality, and especially since the plurality that God was

34. Akala, *Son-Father Relationship*, 135.

35. For a list of the initial decade of these publications see Yarbrough, "Parents and Children," 126–27. See also Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, 38–51; Malina, *New Testament World*, 134–60; deSilva, *Honor*, 157–239; and for the Gospel of John in particular, see Van der Watt, *Family of the King*; Campbell, *Kinship Relations*; Tilborg, *Imaginative Love in John*.

36. Stambauch and Balch, *Social World*, 123. This notion is not novel, but is a typical feature of collectivistic societies where individuals are group-embedded and group-oriented persons (Malina, *New Testament World*, 62).

described as was the basic unit of society—the family.[37] There is nothing consciously contradictory to the first-century mind in describing the Father and Son as θεός (God); rather θεός (God) is being re-conceptualized as a familial relationship.

Being born into a first-century family meant becoming a part of everything in which a family was involved. This meant that children had a role to play in the social game of maintaining the honor of one's family.[38] It was the gift of birth in particular that imparted a responsibility (it was an unrepayable debt)[39] to children to reciprocate gratitude to their parents through responsive and obedient behavior, which in turn reflected the honor of the family.[40] David deSilva explains the concept of kinship further by pointing out that Greek and Jewish writers stressed the likeness of parents and children and that this likeness extended "beyond physical appearance to emotions, predispositions and moral character . . . one's behavior reflects on one's parentage."[41] Thus, when John writes that people have seen the glory of Jesus (1:14), by extension this implies that the glory of God has been seen, because a son has the likeness of his father. To describe Jesus, then, as the Son places upon him the responsibility of a subordinate role that involves obeying his Father because he publicly reflects God's own nature and character. Further, because Jesus is the only Son, the μονογενής, he is the only one who can represent his Father, protect his family's honor, and even perhaps increase it. As a μονογενής Jesus fulfills his role as a responsive and obedient Son by reflecting the love God has for the world (cf. John 3:16). The significance of this is expressed in the statement in John's prologue that Jesus gives the right to become children of God to those who receive him (1:13). Such a statement is unmistakably soteriological, but if the cultural implications, including all that entails being a child in a

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37.   For an explanation of the distinctions between the individualistic personality of the modern Western culture and the collectivistic personality of first-century Mediterranean culture, see Malina, *New Testament World*, 60–67.

38.   See deSilva, *Honor*, 186–88.

39.   Ibid., 186.

40.   Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 167.

41.   deSilva, *Honor*, 187.

new family, are fully appreciated, then ecclesiological implications begin to make themselves apparent. This theological construct arising out of the first-century cultural understanding of familial relationships can serve as a point of contact with the concept of the social Trinity that systematic theologians have developed to define what a Trinitarian community looks like.

The Social Trinity and Our Social Program

Richard Bauckham has rightly commented that the Fourth Gospel "has exercised a strong and appropriate influence on trinitarian theology down the centuries," but "although this Gospel has much to say about the Holy Spirit or the Paraclete and leaves us in no doubt that the Spirit in its own way belongs to the identity of the one God," there are several passages in the Fourth Gospel that are "binitarian rather than trinitarian."[42] The terminology of "Binitarian" and "Trinitarian" is not used in the Fourth Gospel itself, but Bauckham uses it here to indicate that there are passages that focus strictly on the Father-Son relationship, and these passages are important both in their own right and on account of their contribution to a comprehensive understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Because the doctrine of the Trinity is so central to Christian theology, it is understandable that Western Christian theologians do not customarily theologize about the Father and the Son without including the Holy Spirit at least in passing (even though the Holy Spirit usually gets the least amount of treatment of the three) lest one's work be deemed incomplete at best or unorthodox at worst. Thus far, however, I have isolated the Father-Son relationship to say something specifically about its social significance within a first-century context, which does not give room for identifying a role for the Holy Spirit. To continue in this direction, in what follows I will push for greater clarity between the Father-Son relationship in Johannine theology through dialogue with the model of the social Trinity.

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42. Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 36.

Since the Second World War, there have been many theologians who have worked on certain aspects of Trinitarian theology that collectively constitute the so-called doctrine of the social Trinity. The earliest major figures associated with this doctrine are Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg.[43] The work of these two theologians has exercised considerable influence in moving the theological conversation of the Trinity away from the classical formulations that described the immanent Trinity as eternally fixed before Jesus entered history through the incarnation.[44] In place of this, Moltmann and Pannenberg speak about the history of God—that is, they seek to reconceive the doctrine of the Trinity by considering how the three persons have acted in history.[45] Though they share a similar approach, Moltmann and Pannenberg come to both parallel and diverging conclusions.

A distinguishable feature of Moltmann's theology is his opposition to the "monarchical" doctrine of God, which he believes would "reduce the real subjectivity of the three persons . . . [because] in himself God is not rule but a fellowship of love; [and] in his relationship with the world it is not so much lordship as loving fellowship that he seeks."[46] Accordingly, God's mutual indwelling (*perichoresis*) is a unity characterized preeminently by love, which "can open itself to and include the world within itself."[47] For Moltmann the history of Christ's suffering on the cross creates the basis for the social Trinity; when the Son and the Father experienced their separation in unity, this was an event that God experienced in history and also in his own divine

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43.   Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God*; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*. For works by other important theologians that have contributed to the doctrine of the social Trinity, see Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*; LaCugna, *God for Us*; Volf, *After Our Likeness*. An overview of these theologians along with Moltmann and Pannenberg (Volf, though, is excluded) and their contributions are discussed in Grenz, *Social God*, 41–57.

44.   Grenz, *Social God*, 41.

45.   Ibid.

46.   Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 17.

47.   Ibid.

life.[48] The separation that the Father and the Son experienced, however, was part of a process where both entered into a new relationship with the Spirit; the Spirit united the Father and Son in their love as the Father lost his own Son and as the Son surrendered himself to become a forsaken being with humanity so that humanity might be saved to future life.[49] The Trinity, then, is not a "self-contained group in heaven, but an eschatological process open for men on earth, which stems from the cross of Christ."[50] The relationship shared between the persons of the Trinity is thus defined through mutual love and a love that also extends to others. In such a description of God in history it becomes easier to argue for an egalitarian view of the Trinity because the acts of God do not reflect a hierarchical relationship.[51]

Pannenberg is often mentioned together with Moltmann due to their many similarities, but where they differ in describing the Trinity there is significance for the present discussion. Pannenberg holds to the definition of theology as what becomes implicit to humans through God's self-disclosure.[52] Thus, Pannenberg's doctrine of God is derived from God's actions in history, principally through the revelation of Jesus, whose message was carried on through history, beginning with the apostles' witness.[53] This message, as Pannenberg describes it, was about the rulership of God, and because God is designated as ruler, the person of Christ as Son is differentiated from the person of the Father according to God's role as ruler.[54] Self-differentiation becomes a central element for understanding the Trinity because as the persons of the Trinity differentiate them-selves from one another, they define their distinctive identities. Consequently, this means that the identity of the Father *depends*

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48. Grenz, *Social God*, 41.
49. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 294–95.
50. Grenz, *Social God*, 42.
51. See Volf, "Trinity Is Our Social Program," 407.
52. Grenz, *Social God*, 47.
53. Ibid.
54. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:304.

on the Son, and vice versa.[55] This self-differentiation only happened in history when God the Father differentiated himself from the Son by sending him into the world in the incarnation. Thus, the identity of the Trinity is bound to how the Trinity self-differentiated its relationships in history, and these relationships are defined in part by hierarchical characteristics.

Because in Pannenberg's thought the message of Jesus was to proclaim the rulership of God, and this being tied to God's act of self-differentiation in history, the concept of God's rulership over the world is linked to his deity.[56] This idea is summed up in Pannenberg's phrase "God's being is his rule,"[57] but Stanley Grenz's summary is more descriptive: "Pannenberg concludes that the Father's kingdom, and with it his own deity, is onto-logically dependent on the activity of the Son in the world."[58] The importance of God's rulership in Pannenberg's theology reveals a point of contention with Moltmann's theology, which emphasizes God's love over his rule, and this disagreement is not simplified by the fact that both theologians make their claims based on their observations of God's action in history. I will have more to say about this contention below, but it first needs to be shown how the theology of these two theological giants reflects the theology of the Fourth Evangelist and how this has been worked out for the "social program" of the social Trinity.

There are two elements (which are common elements held by all the major theologians who advance the doctrine of the social Trinity) that I wish to highlight for further discussion. The first is

55.   Pannenberg's explanation for how the Spirit differentiates itself is similar to his discussion of how this occurs between the Father and Son. He writes, "As Jesus glorifies the Father and not himself, and precisely in so doing shows himself to be the Son of the Father, so the Spirit glorifies not himself but the Son, and in him the Father. Precisely by not speaking of himself (John 16:13) but bearing witness to Jesus (15:26) and reminding us of his teaching (14:26), he shows himself to be the Spirit of truth (16:13). Distinct from the Father and the Son, he thus belongs to both" (*Systematic Theology*, 1:315).

56.   Grenz, *Social God*, 48.

57.   Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 55–56.

58.   Grenz, *Social God*, 49. Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:311–13.

the concept of *perichoresis*, the notion of mutual indwelling, which is the kind of relationship that the Trinity shares within itself and that constitutes God's unity.[59] The second is the belief that the intra-Trinitarian relationship corresponds to the kinds of relationships that people have, whether this occurs in the Church, politics, or elsewhere, which reflect the sociality of God.[60] Bauckham has already observed that these concepts reflect the Binitarian thought present in the Fourth Gospel.[61]

The first of these elements, *perichoresis*, commonly employed now in systematic theology, was a term first used by the Greek Fathers; it is used to describe "the unmixed and undivided community of the one and the other, of the one and the many."[62] This concept is applied to multiple areas of systematic theology, including Christology, particular in regards to the relationship between Jesus' humanity and divinity, but more relevant to the present discussion is its application to the doctrine of the Trinity and ecclesiology.[63] The notion of *perichoresis* is used specifically to address the passages in the Fourth Gospel where Jesus is reported as indicating his oneness with the Father; for example, "I am in the Father; the Father is in me" (John 14:11; cf. 10:38; 17:21). The precedent for explaining the relationship of the Trinity with this term was set by Gregory of Nazianzus and then used more formally by John of Damascus.[64] This concept was later dogmatically defined by the Council of Florence (1438–1445), which promoted the ecumenical agenda of uniting the Eastern and Western Churches.[65] Thus, tradition has furnished theologians with a philosophical concept to explain the unity of

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59. Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 37.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid. Bauckham also mentions that those who espouse the doctrine of the social Trinity also "do not give priority to the one divine substance over the three Persons in God," and "understand the three Persons to be acting and relating subjects, not the three modes of being of a single personal subject" (37), and these are included in Johannine Binitarian theology.

62. Moltmann, "God in the World," 372.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., 372–73.

65. Ibid., 373.

the Trinity. The same is true of the doctrine of the Church, where *perichoresis* refers to the full community of individual persons in the presence of the Holy Spirit.[66]

The first element thus logically leads into the second, where there is understood to be a correspondence between the divine community and human community, where humans take the sociality of God as the model they reflect in the constructs of their own social relationships. Just as the persons of the Trinity cannot be said to exist prior to their relationships, so too the Church cannot exist unless there are relationships between people that define who they are with respect to one another and God. The human correspondence to the sociality of God does not stop with churches. In the attempt to try to describe the nature of all human communities, the model of God's communion has been extended to apply to politics and other social forums and institutions. However, a word of caution is needed here; it is not enough to use the community of God as a model by itself, even though a superficial interpretation of the Johannine prayer of Jesus "that they may be one as we are one" (17:22) might prompt this conclusion. Bauckham warns that this interpretation is woefully inadequate and that the theologians who describe human community in Trinitarian terms stipulate that human communities only reflect the divine community if they are formed by it.[67] Humans cannot manufacture a Trinitarian com-munity, because it is contingent upon the overflowing mutual love of the three persons that invites humans to partake within this relational experience.[68]

Another important notion that Jürgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, and other theologians stress concerning the perichoretic union is that there is no person in the Trinity that precedes the others; the Father only exists because of his relationship with the Son, and the Son likewise does not precede the Father because his identity is also contingent upon this relationship (this same logic is applied to the Holy Spirit as well). For Moltmann and

66.   Moltmann, "God in the World," 373.
67.   Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 39.
68.   Ibid.

Volf, then, *perichoresis* affirms the egalitarian view of the Trinity over the long-enduring hierarchical view because the persons of the Trinity are principally defined in terms of their mutual love.[69] This understanding has opened the door to some interesting critiques of the hierarchical view. Volf in particular has commented on what he believes to have been a prominent motivating factor of hierarchical views of the Trinity throughout history:

> Hierarchy is not necessary to guard either the divine unity or the distinctions between divine persons, and here I want to add that in a community of perfect love between persons who share all divine attributes a notion of hierarchy is unintelligible. Hierarchical constructions of the Trinitarian relations appear from this perspective as projections of the fascination with earthly hierarchies onto the heavenly community. They seem to be less inspired by a vision of the Triune God than driven either by a nostalgia for a "world on the wane" or by fears of chaos that may invade human communities if hierarchies are leveled, their surface biblical justification notwithstanding.[70]

The significance of this debate for Volf revolves around how the doctrine of the Trinity shapes a social vision for the Church and for the wider society. However, I would simply counter that if the relationship between the Father and Son is *depicted* and *enacted* as a father-son relationship as it is in the Fourth Gospel, with the social hierarchy assumed therein, should not believers take their cue from what is modeled rather than starting from the position that hierarchy is unintelligible based on modern sensibilities of mutual love? Does not the relationship between a father and son evoke a loving relationship despite it also being unequal with respect to authority? It appears as if Volf has allowed his theology to be influenced from the "top down"—that is, from cultures and governments—because of a particular

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69. See Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God*; but especially Moltmann "God in the World," 373. Cf. Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 215–16; Volf, "Trinity Is Our Social Program," 407. Contra Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 88–89; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:324–25.

70. Volf, "Trinity Is Our Social Program," 407–408.

sensitivity to the abuse of power rather than from the "bottom up"—that is, from the text of Scripture that depicts Jesus actively assuming a subordinate role to the Father. Because Volf opposes the hierarchical view of the Trinity in advocating for the egalitarian view, this significantly influences "how the doctrine of the Trinity should shape social vision."[71] It is this particular assertion that I wish to use as my entry point for exploring the theological impact that the lexical study of μονογενής above has on the doctrine of the social Trinity and what further implications this study has for modeling the social program around the contextualized meaning of this Greek word.

Conclusion: The Doctrine of the Social Trinity in Light of the Lexical Semantic Consideration of Monogenēs

Because families were seen as the basic unit of society in antiquity, John's description of the Binitarian relationship as a father-son relationship implicitly creates the idea that theologians have identified with the notion of *perichoresis*. God is a mutual indwelling, and just as the persons of the Trinity are defined by the relationships they have with each other, so too were people in the ancient world defined by the collective group in which they were inextricably bound up. How much more, then, can the Father-Son relationship viewed through a first-century social lens inform theologians in their formulation of the doctrine of the social Trinity? In the descriptions of ancient households, fathers are described as having nearly limitless power over their children.[72] A hierarchy is self-evident in this unequal relation, but the Father-Son relationship in Johannine theology also entails oneness[73] between Jesus and the Father, a natural connectedness that is characteristic of a first-century

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71.   Volf, "Trinity Is Our Social Program," 408.

72.   Verner, *Household of God*, 33; Cf. Moxnes, "What Is Family," 33–35.

73.   On the notion of "oneness" and its relationship to Johannine theology, see Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 21–29, 32–36.

conception of family,[74] as well as love (John 17:23–24). It would seem that, instead of setting hierarchy and love against one another, Johannine theology actually brings these two concepts together into a proper and productive balance.

What, then, does μονογενής contribute to this discussion? The theological significance of the term is not in its designation of Jesus as God's one-of-a-kind son; rather, since μονογενής appears in a linguistic environment of collocating familial terms, it invokes the thematic meaning of an only child. Meaning is made through the analogy of God as a family unit comprising a father and his only son. This becomes significant as Jesus enacts the expected role of a child in John's Gospel, behaving obediently and reflecting the honor on his Father. Moreover, Jesus is the only one who can perform this role since he is a μονογενής . Consequently, those who publicly acknowledge (i.e., believe in) the sonship of Jesus are given the right to become sons of God. Socially, then, μονογενής establishes an analogy to understand God through the structure of a basic family unit, a plurality of persons cooperating together for the good of the whole, but which also has wider soteriological extensions. On the other hand, ontologically, the Father *depends* on the Son for his fathership and so relies on the Son to act in obedience to him because the Son is the only one who reflects the glory of the Father; this notion pairs beautifully with the character of social Trinitarian scholarship. As Moltmann states, "The 'only begotten Son' is the Father's only, own, eternal Son . . . The idea of the 'only begotten' Son invokes the category of exclusiveness; it is in this that he is delivered up and exalted: he and he alone, the one for the many."[75] Moltmann goes on to describe Jesus' identity as *progressing* from μονογενής by means of the work he accomplished as an obedient μονογενής; because Jesus accomplished what God intended for him, Jesus' work as μονογενής results in him becoming the πρωτότοκος (first-born), the "first-born among many" (Rom 8:29; cf. John 1:13) through whom God extended

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74. deSilva, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 138.
75. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 120.

his family.[76] Stating this clearly, Moltmann writes, "[Jesus Christ's] relationship to God is the relation of God's own Son to his Father. His relationship to the world is the relationship of the eldest to his brethren (Rom. 8.29) and the first-born of all creation to other created beings (Col. 1.15). There is no brotherhood of Christ without his sonship."[77] Therefore, the Church's "social program" is commissioned *through* Jesus' obedient subordination to his Father, which would seemingly need to be reflected in the Church's "social program" because believers, having been born of God (John 1:13), share a comparable relationship to God as Jesus. This seems to be a logical outworking of Moltmann's theology, but unlike Pannenberg, he moves away from God's rule for the sake of not diminishing God's love. However, as I have tried to show, this is an overreaction. If the Father-Son relationship is held up against its social backdrop, then authority and love become inseparable, as this was a universal element within the basic unit of the first-century world—the family.

Therefore, Pannenberg's emphasis on the rulership of God with its hierarchical understanding of the Trinity is favorable to Moltmann and Volf's egalitarian understanding, not because it privileges rule over love, but because the Father-Son relationship in Johannine theology articulates love (cf. John 3:16) in a way that is consonant with the unequal relationship that a father-son relationship entails. This aspect of John's Binitarian theology in turn shapes how human communities should reflect the divine community. Hierarchy is only appropriately modeled through a family-shaped matrix; unequal relationships in churches, politics, and any other social forums are inevitable, but those in power have an obligation to love those whom they lead, and those who are led have an obligation to reciprocate in kind. This is only strengthened through John's explanation that believers are all born of God, which makes believers siblings within God's family. Therefore, the identity of believers depends on the Trinity, and their "social program" is to model the Trinitarian community as obedient children.

76.   Ibid.
77.   Ibid.

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