Divine and Human Community in the Gospel of John

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Outline of lecture

The word ‘one’

Early Jewish background

The re-uniting of God’s people

The unity of God

The social Trinity

From divine community to the world

‘Oneness’ language in John

8:41: we have one father, God.

10:16b: So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

10:30: The Father and I are one.

11:50 (= 18:14): ... to have one man die for the people ...

11:52b: to gather into one (eis hen) the dispersed children of God.

17:11: so that they may be one, as we are one.

17:21a: that they may all be one.

17:22b-23b: so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one (teteleitomenoi eis hen).

‘Oneness’ + ‘In-one-another-ness’

10:30: The Father and I are one.

Parallel with 10:38: The Father is in me and I am in the Father.

17:20-23, 26: I ask not only behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me... 26I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.
Sources of ‘oneness’ language in the Hebrew Bible

Deut 6:4: YHWH our God, YHWH is one.

Ezekiel 34:23: I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David....

Ezekiel 37:16-22, 24: Mortal, take a stick and write on it, “For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it”; then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it”;

17 and join them together (el eḥād) into one stick, so that they may become one (la ḫādīm) in your hand. 18 And when your people say to you, “Will you not show us what you mean by these?” 19 say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am about to take the stick of Joseph (which is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it, and make them one stick, in order that they may be one in my hand. 20 When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, 21 then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. 22 I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms.... 24 My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd.

Micah 2:12: I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob,

I will gather the survivors of Israel together (yaḥad) [or ‘as a community’].

I will set them like sheep in a fold,

like a flock in its pasture... See also Hosea 1:11; Isaiah 45:20a.

‘One God, one people’ in first-century sources

Josephus, Ant. 4.201: [Israel was to have only one temple] for God is one and the stock of the Hebrews one.

2 Baruch 48:23-24: For we are all a people of the Name, we, who have received one Law from the One.

Philo, Spec. 4.159: ... the highest kinship, the kinship of having one citizenship and the same law and one God who has taken all members of the nation for his portion.

Philo, Spec. 1.52: For the most effectual love-charm, the chain which binds indissolubly the goodwill which makes us one (eunoias henōikēs) is to honour the one God.

Philo, Virt. 35: ...the highest and greatest source of this unanimity [of the Hebrews] is their creed (doxa) of a single God (tou henos theou), through which, as from a fountain, they feel a love (philia) for each other, uniting them in an indissoluble bond (henōttēi kai adiaλūtōi).

Ephesians 4:4-6: There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all...