

"The Throne Room Problem: Responding to Trinitarian Claims about John 12:41"

Abstract

Some Trinitarian apologists and commentators, including Dr. James White, claim that Jesus is identified as Yahweh in John 12:41. To do so, White appeals to the throne room scene in Isaiah 6. My contention in this paper is that a careful consideration of every throne room scene in the Bible will show that there is always only one Supreme Divine Figure on the throne. This Supreme Divine Figure is defined throughout scripture as the Father. This "throne room problem" effectively refutes White's interpretation of John 12:41 and actually distinguishes Jesus from Yahweh.

Importance of Biblical Imagery

The old adage "a picture is worth a thousand words" rings true for a reason. So much can be communicated through images. But what are you to do if you lived before the modern era's ability to easily print or display images? More specifically, what would Christians expect God to do, given that Christians believe that he wants all people to know his will¹ and therefore should communicate in a way that humanity can understand and respond appropriately? The answer is multifaceted, but one significant component found in the Bible is the use of imagery. Imagery is the use of words to describe images. People throughout the Bible have visions of God, of the heavenly realm, of spiritual beings, and even of the rise and fall of empires, to name a few examples. These moments are recorded for posterity in a way that invites the audience into the vision. These moments are rare enough that careful readers of the Biblical text should be careful as they approach them.

The Specific Problem of John 12:41

The gospel of John has several notable battleground verses that Trinitarians and Unitarians debate, including a section near the end of John 12. Here is the larger section:

John 12:37-41 (ESV)

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

The key verse is verse 41, where John says "Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him." Unfortunately for the modern reader, John does not tell us explicitly which passage in Isaiah that he has just quoted is the one he primarily has in mind for Isaiah seeing "his glory." As a quick aside, all commentators, Unitarian and Trinitarian alike, agree that, in the

¹ 1 Timothy 2:4

context of John 12, the “him” of verse 41 must be Jesus. The debate relates to the nature and referent for the “glory.” Our options are found in chapter 53 (as cited in John 12:38) and chapter 6 (as cited in John 12:40). Most Unitarians, with some scholarly support from more orthodox Christians, take Isaiah 53 to be the primary referent in this passage in John.²

However, many Trinitarian apologists insist that Isaiah 53 and the subversive view of “glory” described in that passage is not the better referent of John’s words in John 12:41. Trinitarians like Dr. James White believe that John 12:41 must refer to the throne room scene in Isaiah 6 instead. White explained his view in a debate with Dr. Dale Tuggy:

“So when did Isaiah see Jesus’s glory and speak about him? Well, the default answer is that the closest referent, that being the citation of Isaiah 6, is the source. Hence, we look back at Isaiah 6, see that Isaiah saw Yahweh in his heavenly vision, and was sent by Yahweh to deliver a message of judgment upon Israel. Isaiah sees the glory of Yahweh even in the midst of judgment, just as Jesus is being glorified by the Father, and that in the midst of judgment. This is even more strongly substantiated by the textual variant in the LXX from which John is quoting, for in Isaiah 6:1 it reads, ‘and the house was full of His glory.’ So we have the same verb (εἶδον/ εἶδεν) with the same object, τὴν δόξαν, glory... So the most straightforward reading of the text would have us asking Isaiah, ‘whose glory did you see?’ And he would respond, ‘Yahweh’s.’ And asking John, ‘whose glory did Isaiah see?’ And he responds ‘Jesus’s.’ If Isaiah saw Jesus in the heavenly temple seated upon the throne, well, the debate is over.”³

For now, I want to assume, with Dr. White, that the debate is over about the referent in John 12:41. I will assume that the only possible referent for the “glory” in John 12:41 is the temple vision found in Isaiah 6.

The Throne Room Problem Defined

Assuming that Dr. White and others are correct, that the only way to understand John 12:41 is to have Jesus on the throne of Yahweh in Isaiah 6, how would we expect the Bible to describe the scene? In my attempt to be generous to the Trinitarian interlocutors, I believe we have two choices (and in additional generosity, I would say that they are not mutually exclusive — that is, if we find some of one type and another of the other type, then that is acceptable as well):

² See Dr. Dustin Smith’s podcast for a Unitarian example: Dustin Smith, “233: Did Isaiah See Jesus According to John 12?”, July 14, 2022, audio podcast, <https://biblicalunitarianpodcast.podbean.com/e/233-did-isaiah-see-jesus-according-to-john-12/> See Dr. Andrew Perriman’s article here for a Trinitarian example: Andrew Perriman, “Does John Think Isaiah Saw the Glory of the Exalted Jesus in the Temple?”, accessed July 30, 2024, <https://www.postost.net/2024/03/does-john-think-isaiah-saw-glory-exalted-christ-temple>

³ Dr. Dale Tuggy vs. Dr. James White, “Is Jesus Yahweh?” Filmed March 9, 2024 in Houston, TX, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky2SaHscSlo>, accessed July 30, 2024. See also James White, *The Forgotten Trinity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2019), 138.

- Scenes that have one primary divine figure with clear context clues that indicate which person of the Trinity is being identified (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) OR where just Yahweh (as the Trinity) is identified
- Scenes that have all three persons of the Trinity enumerated in a way that identifies them as coequal

So, for example, in the cross-referencing of John 12:41 with Isaiah 6, we find that Dr. White's interpretation that Isaiah saw Jesus's glory in that vision would fit criteria one above. The question that we will unpack in the remainder of this paper is this: are these two patterns aligned with the Biblical pattern or is there another pattern that emerges?

The Biblical Data

Here is a list of most of the throne room scenes or references in the Bible:

- Micaiah's vision in 1 Kings 22:19 and 2 Chronicles 18:18
- Isaiah 6
- Ezekiel 1:26-28
- Daniel 7:9-14
- Zechariah 3
- Psalm 11:4
- Psalm 47:8
- Psalm 103:19
- Psalm 110:1
- Matthew 23:22
- Mark 16:19
- Acts 2:33
- Acts 7:49-56
- Romans 8:34
- Colossians 3:1
- Hebrews 8:1
- Hebrews 10:12
- Hebrews 12:2
- 1 Peter 3:22
- Revelation 3:21
- Revelation 4
- Revelation 5
- Revelation 7:9-17
- Revelation 8:2-5
- Revelation 11:19
- Revelation 19:1-10
- Revelation 21:5-11

We will begin in the Old Testament. Trinitarians are divided as to what evidence we should expect in the text. Some Trinitarians, like White, would not be concerned with zero evidence of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Others would look for evidence anyways. Our first example is Micaiah's vision of the throne room:

1 Kings 22:19-23 (ESV)

And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left;

and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you."

Micaiah saw Yahweh sitting on his throne — notice the first person singular pronoun "his," which is a translation from the singular pronominal suffix in Hebrew. Throughout this vision, Yahweh appears as one unified person, not a multitude of persons. Also notice that many other divine characters are mentioned, including other spirits, but there is only one Supreme Divine Figure, Yahweh. Next, we will consider the vision from Isaiah 6 that John cites in John 12:

Isaiah 6:1-3 (ESV)

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

Notice here that, again, there is only one Supreme Divine Figure. There are other figures present, notably seraphim and the prophet Isaiah. Again, all of the pronouns and verbs are singular in agreement with the one Supreme Divine Figure, alternately called *adonai* and Yahweh. Next, here is the first throne room scene in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 1:26-28 (ESV)

And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Again, here we have one Supreme Divine Figure, as noted by the singular verbs, nouns, and pronominal suffices (which come into English as pronouns). Especially notice the end of verse 28, where the ESV translates the Hebrew into English as "the voice of one speaking." This highlights that all of these parts of speech are singular. Yahweh spoke with one voice and is described as a singular person. Next, here is Daniel's vision in Daniel 7:

Daniel 7:9-14 (ESV)

"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.

A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

"I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.

As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Again, there is one Supreme Divine Figure represented in this passage as sitting on the throne: the Ancient of Days. What is unique about this particular account is that there are two "divine" figures, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. In addition, this "Son of Man" gains notoriety in the New Testament accounts, even forming a prominent role in the charge of blasphemy at Jesus' trial.⁴ Jesus, on some level, identified with the "Son of Man" in Daniel 7, something on which all commentators agree. Trinitarians often point out that this "Son of Man" figure is a "divine" one. As famous scholar Robert Mounce argues:

According to the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 6.5) a judge is to tear his garments if he hears blasphemy. The high priest would not consider Jesus' messianic claim to be blasphemous but would understand his statements about sitting on God's right hand and returning in clouds of heaven as tantamount to an assertion of deity.⁵

But what's important to note is that, in the original context, this "Son of Man" figure was neither technically divine in the highest sense nor a singular person! John Goldingay, among others, point out that the explanation of the vision, given in context, declares the Son of Man to be a group of beings, the "holy ones on high" (see verses 18, 22, and 27), possibly a reference to the nation of Israel or to celestial beings.⁶ Even if we do substitute Jesus in for "Son of Man" into the original context of Daniel 7, this represents Jesus as a lesser divine person appearing before a singular Supreme Divine Figure, the Ancient of Days. This surprisingly does not fit Dr. White's assumptions about throne room scenes. We don't find three divine figures on the

⁴ See Matthew 26:57-68, specifically Jesus's response in verse 64.

⁵ Robert Mounce, *Understanding the Bible Commentary: Matthew*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985).

⁶ For a detailed analysis of options, see John Goldingay, *Word Biblical Commentary: Daniel*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

throne, just one on the throne and another in the room who is clearly subordinate to the other. We leave the Old Testament with scant evidence of any Trinitarian friendly throne room scenes.⁷

There is only one text from the time of Jesus's ministry before his exaltation. It is found in Matthew:

Matthew 23:22 (ESV)

And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

Here, Jesus is speaking. Jesus references the "throne of God" as if God is a separate person from him — notice again the use of the singular pronoun "him." This pronoun "him" in the Greek is the definite article *ho*. Another translation of this word would be "throne of God and by the one who sits upon it."⁸ Even Trinitarians should concede that "God" here is the Father.⁹ So, here we have, in the words of Jesus, a clear admission that the Father is the one who sits on the throne. In other words, given the context from the Old Testament throne scenes, the Father is the only Supreme Divine Figure.

We now turn to the largest set of verses on the topic, the ones that refer to Jesus and the throne after Jesus's resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. Here are some examples:

Romans 8:34 (ESV)

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Colossians 3:1 (ESV)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 8:1 (ESV)

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

Hebrews 10:12 (ESV)

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,

Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

⁷ I will let the reader observe the passages in the Psalms and Zechariah 3 to see that I am not missing anything important in the analysis. We will turn to the New Testament's use of Psalm 110:1 in a moment.

⁸ See, for instance, the NIV.

⁹ I believe that Murray Harris does so in his book *Jesus as God*, but I was unable to source the location before I submitted this paper.

1 Peter 3:22 (ESV)

who [Jesus] has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

All of these verses refer to Jesus (or Christ or Christ Jesus) at the right hand of God, at the right hand of the throne of God, or at the right hand of “the throne of Majesty in heaven.” Again, these verses all suggest the same reality from the Old Testament passages: there is one Supreme Divine Figure sitting on the throne of God: Yahweh, also known as the Father. Notice that Jesus is always pictured at the right hand of the throne, either sitting (as usually depicted) or occasionally standing. Also notice that the Holy Spirit is entirely missing from all depictions of the throne room.

Why does scripture again and again refer to Jesus sitting at the right hand of God? This is a reference to Psalm 110:

Psalm 110:1 (ESV)

A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

According to King David, Yahweh will ask David's Lord to sit at Yahweh's right hand. Jesus asks questions about this verse to the Pharisees in Matthew 22:41-46. While it is unclear in that passage that Jesus is self-identifying as the Messiah, the Lord over David, plenty of New Testament passages (including those listed above) identify Jesus as the Lord over David, who is also the “son of David” in Matthew 22. Of particular interest in Psalm 110:1 is the use of Yahweh alongside another word for “Lord.” Although several Trinitarian scholars have incorrectly identified the Hebrew word for “Lord” there as *adonai*, a word used for God in the Old Testament, the correct Hebrew word is *adoni*. *Adoni* never refers to God and instead generally refers to human lords. Nancy DeClaisse-Walford agrees that *adoni* is “a term used commonly in the Hebrew Bible to address a human who is superior in some way to oneself.”¹⁰ Leslie C. Allen points out that sitting on the right hand side of the throne of God would be a position of honor given to the Israelite king.¹¹ So, the framework supplied by both the throne room visions of the Old Testament and the language of Psalm 110:1 indicates that there is one Supreme Divine Figure on the throne (Yahweh, identified in the New Testament as the Father alone) and then an exalted human lord that is at the right hand of the throne, generally in a seated position.

¹⁰ Nancy DeClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, & Beth LaNeel Tanner, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 835.

¹¹ Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 101-150*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002).

This brings us to two longer sections in the sermons of Acts that are important: Acts 2 and Acts 7.

Acts 2:22-24, 29-36 (ESV)

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know--

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,

he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand,

until I make your enemies your footstool.'"

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Peter begins his sermon by declaring that Jesus is a man who was empowered by God (the Father). The Father raised Jesus from the dead. Peter then contextualizes these historical facts with scripture from King David and then compares Jesus's fate with David's. David is still awaiting resurrection but Jesus has already been raised. Near the end of his sermon, Peter cites Psalm 110:1 and says that Jesus is the *adoni* Lord that Yahweh raised from the dead and exalted. This identifies Yahweh as the Father and Jesus definitively as the Messiah of Israel. Verse 36 makes this subordination clear — God (Yahweh, the Father) made Jesus both "Lord and Christ." Jesus, in other words, is an exalted man who had to be exalted and glorified to attain his current position — this is not a return to a prior state of Trinitarian glory. Again, this fits the pattern we have observed to this point.

The final pre-Revelation passage is found in Acts 7:

Acts 7:47-50, 55-56 (ESV)

But it was Solomon who built a house for him.

Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

"'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?

Did not my hand make all these things?'

But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At the end of Stephen's sermon, he talks about the temple of God. Stephen argues that heaven is God's throne and the earth is his footstool. This is a quotation of Isaiah 66, where Yahweh is speaking. Stephen is given a personal vision of the heavenly throne room, and he sees the glory of God (the Father) and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Interestingly, Stephen uses the title "Son of Man" to identify Jesus and the title "God" to identify the Father. In some ways, we could liken the language of this scene to the language of the throne room scene in Daniel 7, where the Supreme Divine Figure (the Ancient of Days) is approached by the Son of Man. In any case, again we find the Father seated on the throne with Jesus, as the Israelite Messiah, on the right hand of the throne.

The final set of texts also includes a number of visions from the book of Revelation. Here are some major examples:

Revelation 7:9-12 (ESV)

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Revelation 19:1-10 (ESV)

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"-- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God."

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Revelation 21:5-8 (ESV)

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

In Revelation 7, the person sitting on the throne is identified as God, and the Lamb (Jesus) is referred to separately.¹² In Revelation 19, the being identified as God is also the Lord our God and the Almighty. Notice also in Revelation 19 that the Lamb is separate from the Supreme Divine Figure on the throne in Revelation 19.¹³ In Revelation 21, again, there is a singular Supreme Divine Figure sitting on the throne who is identified as God. In every case, there is one person sitting on the throne, and that person is identified as God, also known as Yahweh, also known as the Almighty, also defined in the beginning of Revelation 1 as the one who is and was and is to come (see Revelation 1:4,8).

This leads us to the final set of passages in Revelation: Revelation 4 and 5. These chapters are always of interest in debates between Trinitarians and Unitarians. We will now examine these passages in light of the throne room patterns we have observed to this point.

Revelation 4:1-11 (ESV)

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

¹² See also Revelation 8 for a similar scene.

¹³ Also notice that the idea of worshipping God is separated entirely from the person of Jesus.

the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Revelation 4 pictures the throne room with one Supreme Divine Figure seated on the throne. Although some Trinitarians might be tempted to say that this is the Trinity, verse 8 defines this person as the "Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come." In Revelation 1, this person is identified definitively as the Father. So, in Revelation 4, the scene is depicting the Father on the throne. The Father is the only Supreme Divine Figure on the throne. Also notice in verse 11 that the Father is credited with creating all things. Compare this passage with Revelation 5:

Revelation 5:6-14 (ESV)

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Notice that the Lamb is not seated on the throne. The slain lamb approaches the throne, takes the scroll from the one seated on the throne (the Father), and then receives worship. Unlike the worship of the Father in chapter four, which centers on the creation of everything, the Lamb is worshipped for opening the scroll and for ransoming people *for* God from all over the world. In verse 13, again the creatures emphasize that there is a difference between the one who sits on the throne (the Father) and the Lamb (Jesus). Both figures are worshipped, but for explicitly different reasons.

Finally, some Trinitarians may argue that the Father and Son both receive worship so they are both divine or since Jesus is located close to the throne, so he must be divine in a

larger sense, but that does not make sense of what Jesus himself says in the book of Revelation:

Revelation 3:21 (ESV)

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

If we conquer, then we will be exalted, too. Jesus's exaltation to the right hand of the Father, then, proves his humanity and not any sense of deity.

Returning to John 12:41

Every throne room scene in the Bible has one Supreme Divine Figure. When the whole Bible is considered, from cover to cover, the clear pattern emerges: that Supreme Divine Figure, called Yahweh in the Old Testament, Almighty God, and the one who is, was and is to come, can only be the Father. With this information in hand, let's return to John 12:

John 12:37-41 (ESV)

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

If the "glory" referred to here is the glory in Isaiah 6, then this is not a Trinitarian proof text, it is a modalist proof text, because the figure on the throne in Isaiah 6 must be the Father alone. So, Dr. White and other Trinitarian apologists should be careful to cross apply verses like these. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that the "glory" being referenced here is the glory of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, I laid out two Trinitarian options for solving the "throne room problem:" either finding examples where different members of the Trinity sat on the throne as a single person or where the singular person on the throne could be defined as the Trinity (option one) or a place where all three figures were present in the throne room (option two). There are no scenes in the Bible where all three figures are present. Every throne room scene either has one Supreme Divine Figure alone (as we saw, this would have to be the Father in every instance) or has one Supreme Divine Figure (the Father) with the Son (Jesus) either sitting or standing at the right hand of the throne. There is never an example of the Trinity on the throne. Jesus also never sits on the throne proper. The Holy Spirit never makes an appearance in any throne room scene.

Dr. White claimed that the apostle John believed that Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus sitting on the throne of Yahweh in Isaiah 6 (John 12:41). Such a claim is remarkable given the

pattern of throne room scenes found in the Bible. Dr. White should not make claims that are not backed up by a careful consideration of the entirety of scripture. I urge him and other Trinitarian apologists to reconsider their sloppy exegesis of John 12:41 or find another solution to the “throne room problem.”

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