

# Deity Christology in a Jewish Context

There is a dilemma at the heart of New Testament Christology: How could deity Christology arise among pious Jews whose tradition consistently opposed the exaltation of any living human being to equality with God?

Following the execution of Jesus,<sup>1</sup> according to New Testament accounts, the disciples “saw the Lord” (1 Cor. 9:1; Acts 9:17, 27; 26:16; John 20:18, 20) and “beheld his glory” (2 Cor. 3:18; cf. Luke 9:32; John 1:14; 12:41). When taken in the context of early Judaism, these phrases are unambiguous descriptions of *YHWH/Adonai*,<sup>2</sup> revelatory visions and auditions<sup>3</sup> like those described in Exodus 33:18–19, 22 (LXX<sup>4</sup>); Numbers 12:8 (LXX); 14:22;<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 6:1, 3, 5, 8;<sup>6</sup> and Amos 9:1. When read in the flow of New Testament narratives, however, they all refer to Jesus as clearly stated in most of the texts just cited. In other words, early disciples of Jesus<sup>7</sup> talked about him in the exact same way that Jews of their time talked about YHWH. They affirmed that:

- Jesus is “Lord of all” (a confessional formula in Rom. 10:12; Acts 10:36; cf. Eph. 4:6).
- Jesus is to be invoked as the Lord who saves (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 10:9–13; Matt. 8:25; 14:30; 15:25; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 7:59; 9:14, 21; 22:16).
- Jesus is the Lord to whom unbelievers must turn as a sign of repentance (2 Cor. 3:16; Acts 9:35; 11:21b).
- Jesus is called upon and visualized as the Lord who comes to save and to judge (1 Cor. 16:22 [Aramaic *mar*];<sup>8</sup> Rev. 22:20; *Did.* 10:6, all with probable eucharistic settings).

The identification with YHWH, the Lord God of Israel, is unmistakable in these texts. In fact, the primary Christian confession was *Kyrios Iēsous*, “The Lord is Jesus” (1 Cor. 8:6; 12:3) long before the Council of Nicea (325 CE).<sup>9</sup> As Jewish biblical scholar Moshe Weinfeld has astutely concluded: “The eschatological aspirations of Judaism were adopted by the early Christians, but the object of the aspirations changed from ‘Lord God’ to ‘Lord Jesus.’”<sup>10</sup>

This early development of deity Christology is now agreed upon among most scholars of the New Testament.<sup>11</sup> The problem is explaining how this could have happened within the context of early Judaism.<sup>12</sup> Doing the work of rethinking Christian origins will require a strong sense of the urgency of this problem. Unless it is addressed, we will be forced either to abandon the Jewishness of the early disciples or to deny the historicity of their belief in a truly divine Lord.

Even given the limitations of our knowledge, limited for the most part to surviving texts, we know that early Judaism was a complex historical phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> There was such a diversity of sects, especially prior to the rise of “normative Judaism” under the leadership of the Rabbis,<sup>14</sup> that many scholars today speak of a diversity of systems or dialects within a “complex common Judaism.”<sup>15</sup> At the risk of barbarism, some scholars have even referred to a plurality of “Judaisms.”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, there were common features like adherence to the Law of Moses as a gracious gift from *HaShem* (“The Name,” a respectful substitute for the Tetragrammaton) and belief that the God who had appeared to the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel was Israel’s only Lord and savior. New forms of Judaism (of which early Christianity was just one) were free to innovate in new directions, but the initial impulse for such a movement, the downbeat as it were, must have been consistent with what we know of the early dialects of “common Judaism.”

Good historical explanations for the origin of deity Christology are hard to come by. Most Christians would not regard them as being particularly relevant to Christian faith and life. Yet the issue should not be written off as a matter of pure speculation. In the process of investigation, I reframe the way we think about early Jewish and Christian practices like liturgical performances and prayer (especially in chs. 1, 3, 6, 9).

Our main objective, however, will be to reexamine the origin and meaning of the most fundamental Christian affirmation, the Lordship of Jesus. Most readers of a book like this will have been exposed to earlier accounts of the origin of beliefs about Jesus’ divine identity. Before proceeding with my own suggestion, I shall review three of these scenarios: one that is based on the resurrection of Jesus, another that invokes outside influence from gentile polytheism, and a third that derives the divine identity of Jesus from binitarian features already present in biblical Judaism. Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each of these treatments will point the way to my own suggestion.

## A RESURRECTION SCENARIO (FROM BELOW): N. T. WRIGHT

The most familiar way to account for the deity Christology of the New Testament is to trace it back to those disciples who first experienced Jesus as risen from the dead. A leading current proponent of this view is N. T. Wright, according to whom the disciples encountered Jesus in an “empirical” way. It was not just a vision (with its psychological, spiritualist associations),<sup>17</sup> but a physical body perceived by the five senses—hence, what New Testament scholars often refer to as a Christology developed “from below.”

Jesus’ coming back to life after his death demonstrated to the disciples that he truly was the Messiah that he (supposedly) claimed to be. In fact, he was a special kind of Messiah who had been glorified and who now exercised universal dominion at the “right hand of God” (Ps. 110:1).<sup>18</sup> Such elevation and lordship placed him on the same level as God the Father in heaven and soon led to affirmations of Jesus own identity as “Lord” (YHWH). In short, the early disciples leveraged the resurrection appearances and arrived at a deity Christology using a bootstrap hermeneutic—each inferential step placing them just within reach of the next. As Wright puts it: “The creator God has raised Jesus from the dead, and he was therefore Israel’s Messiah, the world’s true Lord, and [therefore] the strange second self of Israel’s God himself.”<sup>19</sup>

Wright’s proposal is perhaps the most comprehensive scenario yet developed, encompassing everything from the historical life of Jesus to the early creedal formulas of the New Testament, all the time avoiding the kind of subjectivism that non-empirical, visionary scenarios usually imply.<sup>20</sup> In this respect, Wright has set a standard for other scholars to emulate. Moreover, each step in his reconstruction seems plausible enough, at least, provided one tacitly assumes the inevitability of the outcome. Early Christians did in fact conclude that Jesus was the “strange second self of Israel’s God.”

However, most of the inferential steps that Wright attributes to the first disciples would not have been so obvious at the time of the early disciples. Wright’s scenario entangles us in a thicket of difficult questions regarding historical plausibility:

- Would any purely empirical experience have led the disciples to infer the unaided resurrection of an individual human being (an act of God)—something for which there was no clear, pre-Christian expectation and no good parallel in the history of Judaism?<sup>21</sup>
- In contrast to theophanies, for which there were biblical precedents and expectations, would reliance on the empirical nature of an

individual “resurrection body” not immediately remove early Christian faith from its context in early Judaism?

- Beyond that, what would the occurrence of a unique, individual resurrection event have to do with pre-Christian beliefs about a coming Messiah (cf. Mark 6:14, 16 on the resurrection of John the Baptist)?<sup>22</sup>
- What precedent did the disciples have for inferring universal lordship from a physical resurrection,<sup>23</sup> or even from Jewish messiahship (cf. Ps. 89:25)?<sup>24</sup>
- Would any first-century Jew who was familiar with scriptural traditions have attributed deity to their teacher and identified him with YHWH as a “strange second self,” even if they believed that he was a Messiah,<sup>25</sup> seated at the “right hand of God”?<sup>26</sup>

I have no reason to deny that any of these inferential steps actually occurred at some point. Evidently they all did, at least, as seen in retrospect (we shall return to these points in ch. 7). However, I question whether they constitute a coherent *historical* explanation of the origin of deity Christology. Such things can be stated as brute facts based on the available texts, but historians prefer to work with plausible, contextual scenarios, in which prominent features of the text are seen to follow from sufficient (if not necessary) causes. Our second reconstruction does just that: it provides a more plausible scenario by appealing to influences on the disciples coming from outside of Judaism.

#### AN EXTERNALIST HISTORICAL SCENARIO (FROM OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL JUDAISM): MAURICE CASEY

The implausibility of a deity Christology emerging within the context of Judaism so soon after the execution of Jesus has led scholars like Maurice Casey to posit a longer-range development that makes room for polytheistic gentile influence (in the train of earlier historians of religion like Wilhelm Bousset).<sup>27</sup> The decisive impetus needed for deity Christology was not “from below” (and certainly not “from above”) but from outside the bounds of traditional Judaism.

The plausibility of this scenario is often enhanced by assuming that deity Christology did not emerge until the writing of the Gospel of John in the late first century ce.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to earlier New Testament documents, John clearly portrays Jesus as the divine Logos (Word) and a “Son of God” who enjoys some degree of parity with God the Father (John 1:1; 17:5, *passim*). In one passage of the Gospel, Jesus is actually acclaimed as “my Lord and my God” (the confession of Thomas in John 20:28).<sup>29</sup> These features are not found in

the earlier “synoptic” Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and may well have emerged decades after the life and death of the historic Jesus.

The popularity of such a gradualist scenario is also enhanced by a priori preference for progressive, evolutionary ways of thinking. In biological evolution, innovative traits often emerge through a long series of steps that have relatively simple beginnings. This reconstruction does not suffer, therefore, from the implausibility of the inferential steps that N. T. Wright’s resurrection scenario does (as outlined above). In fact, the great strength of Casey’s scenario is its attention to historical, as well as exegetical, considerations.

Nonetheless, there are a number of major problems with Casey’s externalist scenario. One problem, as pointed out by Richard Bauckham and Larry Hurtado, is that deity Christology developed much earlier than the Gospel of John. Even our earlier New Testament documents describe Jesus with “Yahweh texts”—texts that describe the coming of YHWH, the God of Israel, in the Hebrew Bible (or the LXX)<sup>30</sup>—and Aramaic formulas like *Marana tha* (“Our Lord, come!” 1 Cor. 16:22) date back to the Jerusalem church.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, binitarian formulas that exhibit just as much parity as that in the Gospel of John are present in the earliest New Testament documents (Paul, Mark, and Q<sup>32</sup>). Phenomena like these push deity Christology back into the 30s and 40s ce,<sup>33</sup> prior to the time that gentile influence would have been a significant factor, and do not allow time for a gradual process lasting many decades.<sup>34</sup>

This early date for the origin of deity Christology accentuates the dilemma of early Christology, however. We not only need to explain how deity Christology could have arisen in the context of early Judaism (without significant gentile influence), but we must explain how it could have happened in a matter of years. We need to posit a historical process that could produce such a result on a short timescale and that relies only on known features of early Judaism. Until a plausible scenario can be worked out, however, a significant number of cautious scholars will continue to favor a gradualist approach like Casey’s and will even be skeptical that any appeal to evidence for early deity Christology is confessionally motivated.<sup>35</sup> As Kevin Sullivan has aptly stated: “It seems unnecessarily implausible to suggest that Jesus was immediately incorporated into the divine identity as part of an unprecedented move in Jewish theology.”<sup>36</sup>

A more fundamental problem with scenarios like Casey’s is that they rely too much on a dynamic of “influences” to explain major developments in history. Such appeals do not explain *why* people willingly respond to some influences rather than to others (or to none). Religious people are normally subject to influences from many directions, but they do not respond positively

in every case. Even if they seek to communicate their ideas in language that others will understand, they do not select terminology that they deem incompatible with their basic values.

The question that still needs to be addressed is why the early disciples favored (and cultivated) one influence or term over against another. What were the issues *within the community* that generated the quest for helpful ideas—regardless of where those ideas came from? What are the criteria by which a community decides to borrow some ideas and reject others?<sup>37</sup> In other words, an adequate historical explanation must consider the demand-side (or the “demand system”) as well as the supply of beliefs and practices from which selection was made. Simply put, the reasons why communities select and develop traditions are never stated in the traditions themselves (the supply)—they derive from the challenges facing the community (the demand).<sup>38</sup> In the scenario to be developed in this book, major features of early Christology will be explained as attempts to resolve to problems generated by a revelatory event that echoed the visions and auditions of earlier Judaism.

Before we move on, one other possibility should be considered. Perhaps the solution to our dilemma was readymade in the binitarian pattern of prior Jewish beliefs about their Deity. If early Judaism was not strictly monotheistic and entertained various ideas about a second god alongside *HaShem*, early Christians may simply have developed a new variant of Jewish binitarianism.

#### A CONTINUING BINITARIANISM SCENARIO (FROM ABOVE):

MARGARET BARKER

All of these difficulties we have encountered can be avoided by an alternative offered by Margaret Barker. Barker argues that most all of the New Testament beliefs about Jesus as a divine figure go back to an ancient, originally Canaanite depiction of YHWH as a special “son of God,” also known as the “Great Angel,” who (along with other sons and angels) was subordinate to *El*, God Most High.<sup>39</sup> For Barker, there is no need to appeal to a postmortem resurrection or to gentile influence on the early Christians—external influences were part of Israelite religion from the outset.

Barker’s scenario has two great advantages over the more familiar explanations described above—advantages that I hope to maintain in our subsequent investigation.

First, there is no major discontinuity between biblical Judaism (at least, as Barker envisions it) and early Christian beliefs about Jesus—there is no need to postulate various inferences or stages of development or influences from outside

the Jewish tradition. Nor is there any need to bring in a miraculous event like the resurrection of Jesus to move things along. What happened, according to Barker, was simply that “the Lord continued to appear to his people,” now in the form of Jesus.<sup>40</sup>

Second, Barker gives a breathtaking explanation for the binitarian formulas in the New Testament: binitarian liturgical formulas (Rom. 1:7 and elsewhere), binitarian adaptations of a confessional formula known as the *Shema* (1 Cor. 8:6 and elsewhere),<sup>41</sup> and binitarian visions (Acts 7:55–56 and elsewhere). These formulas actually belong to traditional Judaism—they carried on the binitarian beliefs of the Old Testament<sup>42</sup> (as Barker reads it), for which YHWH was a second God alongside the Most High.<sup>43</sup> In short, Jesus was recognized as YHWH (he actually saw himself as YHWH<sup>44</sup>), the Lord God of Israel, and cultic devotion to Jesus and the application of “Yahweh texts” followed accordingly, as evidenced in the New Testament and demonstrated by other New Testament scholars. As Barker states it, “the first Christians recognized that Jesus was Yahweh, not that he was in some way equivalent, but not identical [to Yahweh].”<sup>45</sup> This scenario clearly derives New Testament Christology “from above” (i.e., from the traditional theology of Israel).<sup>46</sup>

Now for the problems: one major issue with Barker’s explanation lies in its exegetical basis in the Old Testament. As Richard Bauckham has shown in some detail, Barker’s interpretation is based on untenable readings of the *Shema* (especially Deut. 6:4) and of Moses’ song about the distribution of nations on earth (Deut. 32:8–9).<sup>47</sup> Any viable reconstruction of the origin of deity Christology surely must avoid such novel readings, if for no other reason than just to avoid the suggestion that the data are being molded to fit the theory.

Another problem is that there are only a few suggestive, potentially binitarian passages in the Hebrew/Aramaic Bible (e.g., Prov. 8 and Dan. 7), and there is no indication of any binitarian liturgical formulas or confessions like those in the New Testament. Nor is there any precedent for the identification of YHWH with a particular, historical human being. Barker’s scenario only gains credibility if one is already convinced that the Hebrew religion was originally binitarian (rather than strictly monotheistic), that the canonical Scriptures were edited in such a way as to cover up more pluralistic statements about the Deity, and that older, pluralistic views survived among the common people until the dawn of the Common Era. There may be merit to some of these historical speculations, but it is inadvisable at this stage to use them as a foundation for reconstructing Christian origins. The dilemma of early Christology—the veneration of a deceased man in terms of eschatological and doxological phrases that were otherwise directed to YHWH—is still not quite resolved.

I believe that the benefits of Barker's reconstruction can profitably be preserved, however. Continuity with Judaism still can be maintained, even if the Lord who was identified with Jesus in the New Testament was not a "second power in heaven," as Barker claims, but the one true God, the Most High God, as the *Shema* requires (beginning with Deut. 6:4).

In the following chapters, I contend that a Kyriocentric vision (or a series of visions) following the death of Jesus resulted in the one true God (YHWH) being identified with the name and the face of Jesus,<sup>48</sup> and that this Lord-Jesus identification was itself the origin of early deity Christology.<sup>49</sup> Devotion to Jesus, healing and prophesying in his name, and the use of "Yahweh texts" followed as a continuation of regular Jewish devotion to YHWH, the one true God.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the binitarian formulas and visions of the New Testament must have been secondary in the historical sense,<sup>51</sup> though no less necessary for a credible expression of the faith,<sup>52</sup> even if they did have some precedent in earlier Judaism (on the supply side). Such formulas were necessitated (on the demand side) by the synthesis of Kyriocentric visions with traditions about Jesus' prayers to his *Abba* ("Father") and his teachings about his Father in heaven.<sup>53</sup> We shall treat this matter in detail in chapter 7.

#### TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE DILEMMA— A CONJECTURE CONCERNING KYRIOCENTRIC VISIONS

My purpose in this study is not to argue all the points raised by these three scenarios (each of which will actually play a positive role in this study), but to offer an alternative reconstruction that maintains the historical continuity assayed in Barker's version, thereby avoiding the complications of deriving a deity Christology either from an anachronistic emphasis on gentile influence or from improbable inferences based on post-crucifixion encounters with Jesus.

Evidently, something did happen following the execution of Jesus that altered the disciples' understanding of who he was and revised the way that they remembered the teachings of the Old Testament. But these disciples were working-class men and women, not trained sages or professional scribes who might experiment with novel exegeses of their Scriptures. Any major shift in their thinking as Jews could only have stemmed from one source, what they believed to be a revelation of (or from) YHWH, their one and only true God—a revelation and commissioning comparable to the appearance of YHWH to Moses at the burning bush or to Samuel in the tabernacle or to Isaiah in the temple (Exod. 3:2-10; 1 Sam. 3:10-14; Isa. 6:1-13).<sup>54</sup> Subsequent narration of such a revelation would require the disciples to mine their traditions (their



prayers, binitarian templates, and known passages from the Hebrew Scriptures) and reformulate their own proclamations and prayers so as to address challenges and criticisms that would inevitably arise among their Jewish associates.<sup>55</sup>

To restate a point made earlier, I have no interest in denying that there were seemingly physical encounters with Jesus or that he was raised bodily from the dead. In order to explain the sudden origin of deity Christology, however, we must begin with a manifestation (vision, audition) of the Deity—a revelation experienced as coming from above—in the context of Jewish devotional practices, before relating it to more “empirical” traditions concerning the life and death of Jesus (from below).

Given some sort of revelation (or revelations) as the starting point, a resolution can readily be formulated as a conjecture, which is a working hypothesis.<sup>56</sup> The simplest explanation for the fact that Jesus was confessed as YHWH in the New Testament would be that *the first disciples experienced a manifestation of YHWH in a glorious anthropic (humanlike) form and that (at some point) they recognized the face and voice as those of their teacher.*<sup>57</sup> Early Christian affirmations of deity Christology can be viewed as relics of such a founding revelation (based on subsequent reenactments).

According to the proposed conjecture, the disciples did not see Jesus as YHWH (as most often stated). Instead, they saw YHWH (the Lord in embodied form) as Jesus. I shall argue (in ch. 4) that the latter proposition (in contrast to the former) fits fairly comfortably within the parameters of early Judaism. The Lord-Jesus identification was therefore based on traditions concerning theophanies (or kyriophanies) that came “from above.” In narrative terms, it was based on the continued appearance of the God of Israel “from behind,” that is, as an extension of the history of his covenant relations with Israel (in line with Barker’s continuity thesis).<sup>58</sup>

If this is so, we may take at face value the confessional formula *Kyrios Iēsous* (1 Cor. 8:6; 12:3; Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11; *passim*).<sup>59</sup> The Christian confession was not primarily that “Jesus is Lord”—a formula that by itself, as translated into English, suggests some sort of elevation from below. The confession and proclamation of the early disciples was primarily that “The Lord is Jesus.”<sup>60</sup> It is only when we turn the problem around and start from the traditions concerning the life of Jesus (as the Gospel narratives do) that we get the obverse meaning, “Jesus is Lord.”

### HOW TO TEST THE CONJECTURE

The subject at hand is a conjecture. It cannot be proved inductively by accumulating any amount of evidence. It can only be tested for across-the-board plausibility (or implausibility) against what we know about early Judaism, the New Testament, and the development of early Christianity.<sup>61</sup> At first blush, this admission might sound like a serious weakness. As indicated above, however, the standard approaches are also based on conjectures. Their only advantage, *a priori*, stems from their having been repeated in the literature to the point of serving as working assumptions by virtue of their familiarity.

It is relatively easy to support our conjecture with a heuristic argument. If the first followers of Jesus were pious Jews, then the initial impulse, the downbeat for early Christology, must have been something that was well attested in Jewish tradition and that was anticipated to recur in the near future. A postmortem encounter with a recently executed man would not fulfill this requirement, but a Kyriocentric vision would. If, therefore, the New Testament does reflect visions of YHWH like those of the prophets, we have *the advantage of the shortest line of reasoning* from biblical Judaism to the deity Christology as evidenced in the New Testament—no appeals to inferential steps, progressive stages, external influences, or revisions of Jewish monotheism, at least, not as far as the origin of deity Christology is concerned.<sup>62</sup>

In principle, it might be enough to offer an alternative scenario like this that avoids most of the difficulties of the existing reconstructions. Heuristics aside, however, it is necessary to think through the implications of the conjecture with regard to the evidence, particularly with regard to Jewish visionary practices, the continuation of these practices in the New Testament era, and the subsequent development of various Christologies in early Christianity. The value of a conjecture should lie in its fruitfulness: whether it generates meaningful exploration of the texts and shows them in a different light than standard approaches have done heretofore.

The implications of the Kyriocentric conjecture can be developed by raising questions about the context in which early Christology developed and assessing the plausibility of the conjecture thereby. These questions will be addressed in the following chapters.

The first three chapters (Part 1) establish a framework in early Judaism by placing visionary practice in the empirical context of oral performances.

In chapter 1, we examine the nature of the evidence we seek for visionary practices in early Jewish and Christian literature: were these visions experiential or were they merely literary motifs? I shall argue that they were both—mental

scripts for visionary performances that were subsequently incorporated into narratives and other literary forms.

Chapter 2 summarizes the evidence for performance of Kyriocentric visions before, during, and after the New Testament period. I shall analyze seven apocalyptic texts, six early (Tannaitic) rabbinic texts, and two Heikalot hymns, thereby embedding the New Testament era in a matrix of earlier and later material.

In chapter 3, we describe the practical contexts that were associated with the performance of Kyriocentric visions in the resulting narratives: could such practices have provided the context for Kyriocentric visions among the early followers of Jesus? I conclude that the most frequent literary context was prayer, whether laudatory or petitionary, normally performed in a corporate, liturgical setting.

The next three chapters (Part 2) deal with the central issue: is it conceivable that the anthropic form of YHWH could reveal itself as a deceased human being and what evidence is there for this kind of Kyriocentric visions in the New Testament?

Chapter 4 explores the conditions under which such a Kyriocentric vision could have been identified with a deceased human being. I shall argue that the reenactment of visionary performances could lead to such identification following the violent death of a revered teacher, concluding with a discussion of “fortuitous uniqueness” and the development of a detailed scenario based on the Kyriocentric conjecture.

In chapter 5, we shall look for traces of these Kyriocentric visions in the New Testament itself. If the traces are there in an altered form, what were the exegetical and theological pressures exerted in the process of narrativization and textualization? I shall review several texts discussed by other New Testament scholars and add a few others (six in all).

Chapter 6 turns to prayers and devotional motifs associated with Kyriocentric visions that carry over to the Lord Jesus in New Testament communities: which motifs carry over, which do not, and why not? I find that devotional motifs that were most closely associated with the primary revelation were dedicated to the Lord Jesus. Those that were reserved for God the Father appear to have been constrained by Jesus traditions, particularly those concerning institution of the Eucharist.

The last three chapters (Part 3) build on this scenario to show how both some features of New Testament Christology that were later deemed orthodox and some alternative tradition histories can be understood as consequences of the Kyriocentric visions and the Lord-Jesus identification.

In chapter 7, we ask whether the Kyriocentric scenario can account for other the prominence of features of New Testament Christology, particularly those that the standard explanations rely on: belief in the resurrection of Jesus and binitarian formulas. We also approach beliefs concerning the timing of the union of the Lord with the man Jesus and about the role of the crucifixion in God's plan. Granted that these beliefs were all based on Jewish traditions, I argue that these traditions were selected and adapted in such a way as to address acute problems raised by the Kyriocentric visions. Each of these beliefs resolved a serious problem, and each of them in turn raised new problems that led to further clarifications. This generative approach to early Christology is one of the major strengths of the Kyriocentric conjecture.

Chapter 8 shifts away from such familiar, proto-orthodox beliefs to other early christological traditions that were later judged to be unorthodox. I shall argue that the complex texture of early Kyriocentric Christology allowed for a variety of emphases and that such diverse emphases could be tolerated in the Church (during the late second, third, and fourth centuries) as long as they were not systematized to the point of negating other traditions.

In chapter 9, we conclude the investigation by asking when and why Church leaders became uneasy with the idea of the Lord God having an anthropic form. I shall summarize three early developments that moved the church from an anthropic Deity to an aniconic (apophatic) one. These movements took place over a period of three centuries and were motivated by challenges from formative Judaism, Gnosticism, and Arianism, respectively.

Evaluation of the Kyriocentric conjecture requires addressing these nine questions in some detail. So as not to raise unrealistic expectations, I will say at the outset that I am not entirely satisfied with all of the answers I have been able to develop (some anomalies are listed in the Conclusion). I believe, however, that a new approach to the problem is needed and hope that others will take up the challenge either to improve on the answers presented here or to devise further scenarios that may help to resolve the dilemma of early deity Christology. Doing justice to this question will require a creative spirit like that of the first disciples and their Jewish associates.

## Notes

1. Prior to the discussion in ch. 7, I shall use the term "execution" rather than "crucifixion." The latter is historically correct, but is also fraught with an accumulation of theological (soteriological) connotations that developed over time.

2. I shall use YHWH (the unpronounced Tetragrammaton) and *Kyrios* as transliterations of the divine names in the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament, respectively, and use "the

Lord” for English translations of these texts. For propriety, the Tetragrammaton should be read as *Adonai* in Scripture (and in prayers). According to the *Avot [Fathers] of Rabbi Nathan*, the Rabbis taught that “those who pronounce God’s name according to its proper consonants have no share in the world to come” (*Avot of Rabbi Nathan*, version A, 36). In discussing Rabbinic and Heikalot texts, however, I shall use *HaShem*, meaning “The [Divine] Name,” which stands for the Tetragrammaton.

3. Post-Enlightenment scholars are often caught in the disparity between the richness of contextually appropriate (“emic”) terms like “revelation” or “theophany” and the strictures of scholarly (“etic”) language. For the most part, I shall restrict myself to neutral, phenomenological terms like “vision,” keeping in mind that “visions” were normally accompanied (or preceded) by auditions (e.g., Job 4:12–16; 2 Cor. 12:1, 9), and “performance,” the reenactment of classic visions. “Theophanies” and “revelations” would be more “emic” terms to use because visionaries believed what they reported seeing and hearing was real, but these terms have the disadvantage of assuming an ontology that is foreign to post-Enlightenment scholarship. “Encounter” is another possible term, as argued by Philip S. Alexander, “Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries),” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 659–709 (684). To my ears, however, it still seems to carry too much ontological (and existential) weight.

4. LXX (the Roman numeral for seventy) stands for the *LXX*, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was widely used in the first century. The Hebrew texts on which it was based were different in places from the Masoretic Hebrew texts that are translated in English Bibles. Manuscripts of the *LXX* also include several “apocryphal” or “deuterocanonical” texts that are not included in the Masoretic canon. For an English translation, see Albert Pieterma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under That Title* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Abbreviated NETS.

5. The Isaiah and Amos visions were both staged in the Temple. Some Rabbinic *midrashim* (exegetical “inquiries”) insisted that *HaShem*’s self-revelations always occurred in the Temple (once it was constructed); *Sifrei* Num. 6:23; Reuven Hammer, trans., *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1995), 223. Non-Rabbinic Jewish traditions, like that in *1 Enoch* 14, located such revelations in a temple in heaven, which was accessible to righteous people like Enoch.

6. On 1 Cor. 9:1 in relation to Isa. 6:1, 8, see Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 94; Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 241. On John 12:41 (*eiden tēn doxan autou*) in relation to Isa. 6:1, 3, see Nils Alstrup Dahl, “The Johannine Church and History,” in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper, 1962), 124–42 (131–32); Anthony T. Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 104–8; Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), 49, 99; Riemer Roukema, “Jesus and the Divine Name in the Gospel of John,” in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses: Perspectives from Judaism, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity*, ed. George H. Kooten, TBN 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 207–33 (210–11). See also the parallels charted in Gary T. Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in the Literature of the Second Temple Period* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 150–57. Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce argue for dependence of John 12:41 on *Ascen. Isa.* 6–11 (which is in itself based on a performance of Isa. 6); Destro and Pesce, “The Heavenly Journey in Paul: Tradition in a Jewish Apocalyptic Literary Genre of Cultural Practice in a Hellenistic-Roman Context?” in *Paul’s Jewish Matrix*, Studies in Judaism and Christianity, ed. Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2012), 167–200 (194 n. 46 and sources cited there).

7. The earliest disciples of Jesus were not yet called “Christians” (cf. Acts 11:26) or even “Jewish Christians” or “Nazarenes.” A useful term is “Jewish believers in Jesus,” the earliest precedent for which comes from the Gospel of John (8:31); Oskar Skarsaune, “Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity: Problems of Definition, Method, and Sources,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, 3–21 (5). However, disciples were more than “believers,” and their focus was just as much on prayer and practice. Among others, Philip R. Davies has pointed out the danger in defining Jewish sects only in terms of their theological beliefs; Davies, “Sects from Texts: On the Problem of Doing a Sociology of the Qumran Literature,” in *New Directions in Qumran Studies*, Library of Second Temple Studies 52, ed. Jonathan G. Campbell, William John Lyons, and Lloyd K. Pietersen (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 69–82 (72). Moshe Idel criticizes Jewish scholars for a similar (Christian influenced!) emphasis on theology; Idel, *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles: Cherub, 2005), 19–25.

8. I cannot agree with Charles Talbert’s lumping 1 Cor. 16:22 together with texts like Acts 17:31 that portray Jesus as a man taken up into heaven who will function in the end time but is not a present benefactor; Talbert, *The Development of Christology during the First Hundred Years and Other Essays on Early Christian Christology*, NovT Sup 140 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 16. I do agree with Talbert on the diversity of models (or rather, performances and narratives) in the NT, but his inductive procedure (constructing categories of models and using them, together with their soteriological implications, to explain the origin of Christology) is radically different from the hypothetico-deductive method and demand-side hermeneutic that will be developed here.

9. Andrew Chester nicely sums up the point (with respect to 1 Cor. 8:6) in a recent review of early Christology scholarship: “Christ is given the supreme, distinctive divine name *YHWH* (denoted as *kyrios*). . . . the fact that he [Paul] uses the *Shema* shows that beyond any doubt. Thus he makes Christ fully one with God, in the strongest possible Jewish terms, sharing in the divine name as well as the divine act of creation”; Chester, “High Christology—Whence, When and Why?” *Early Christianity* 2 (2011): 22–50 (36–37).

10. Moshe Weinfeld, “The Day of the Lord: Aspirations for the Kingdom of God in the Bible and Jewish Literature,” in *Studies in Bible*, Scripta Hierosolymitana 31, ed. Sara Japhet (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 345–72 (371). The results of the present investigation imply that the “change” Weinfeld refers to was the accretion of a new name (Jesus), not a transfer of attributes from *HaShem* to Jesus as a surrogate god; cf. David Frankfurter, “Beyond ‘Jewish Christianity’: Continuing Religious Sub-Cultures of the Second and Third Centuries and Their Documents,” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, TSAJ 95, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 131–43 (139).

11. The magisterial work on this topic is Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Hurtado dates the “big bang” of deity Christology to the 30s ce; *ibid.*, 135, 136.

12. A few representative theories will be discussed below. Even if early Judaism did allow some multiplicity within the Godhead and occasionally assigned divine attributes to ideal figures like the apocalyptic Son of Man, deity was never attributed to a human being of recent historical memory and doxological formulas like “Save, Lord!” were exclusively directed to the Lord God of Israel (discussed further in ch. 6).

13. George Nickelsburg and Robert Kraft define the provenance of “early” or “postbiblical” Judaism as the period from Alexander the Great (c. 330 BCE) to Hadrian (c. 138 CE); Nickelsburg and Kraft, introduction to *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Bible and its Modern Interpreters* 2 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 1–30 (2). Other scholars would extend the period one more century in order to include the Tannaitic era and the redaction of the Mishnah (early third century).

14. The term *rabbi* could be used merely as an honorary title; see Lee I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1989), 49 n. 32. I shall use the capitalized form *Rabbis* to designate the scholarly class whose ideas

are discussed in Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud, and midrash. The term *Sages* (*Hakhamim*) is normally used for exponents of the majority opinion among the Rabbis (e.g., *t. Maksh.* 3:4) and so may not do justice to the diversity of interests in this early period.

15. E.g., Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 77, 86 (ideologies within a single complex); Daniel Boyarin, "Semantic Differences," in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 65–85 (76, 79, dialects); Stuart S. Miller, *Sages and Commoners in Late Antique 'Erez Israel: A Philological Inquiry into Local Traditions in Talmud Yerushalmi*, TSAJ 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 21–28 (complex common Judaism); Arkady Kovelman, *Between Alexandria and Jerusalem: The Dynamic of Jewish and Hellenistic Culture*, Brill Reference Library of Judaism 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), xii (stylistic systems).

16. See, for example, Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 8–11. In more recent writing, Boyarin prefers the phrase *polyform Judaism*, judging that the term *Judaisms* suggests separate social groups; Boyarin, "Beyond Judaisms: Metatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism," *JSJ* 41 (2010): 323–65 (325, 328, 360).

17. Wright allows that Paul may have *interpreted* his initiatory vision as the expected appearance of the divine Glory (Isa. 40:1), but he denies that this recognition was the "initial primary meaning of the event"; rather it was an inference based on Paul's prior conviction that Jesus had been vindicated as Messiah and "the world's true Lord" (based on Dan. 7:13; Ps. 110:1); Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 394–95, 397. Andrew Chester appropriately points out that Wright's construction of the Pauline vision in terms of messiahship is "question-begging"; Chester, "The Christ of Paul," in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, ed. William Horbury, Markus Bockmuehl, and James Carleton Paget (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 109–21 (114).

18. See also Richard Bauckham on the exaltation of Jesus and the use of Psalm 110; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 128, 138, 234–36. Similar chains of events have been posited by the late Jewish scholar Alan Segal in *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 56–57; James D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 101–3; and Larry W. Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, Library of Biblical Theology (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 62, 64.

19. N. T. Wright, "Resurrecting Old Arguments: Responding to Four Essays," *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 209–31 (230); cf. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 25, 394–98, 554, 563, 571, 577.

20. The burden of chapters 1 and 2 will be that visionary texts were actually rooted in the community-based performance of ancient vision traditions. In terms of performance theory, there is no dichotomy between empirical and spiritual as Wright appears to assume.

21. Healing prophets like Elijah and Elisha (and Jesus himself) were believed to have raised the dead, but these raisings were signs of the status of the prophets, not of the dead. Dan. 12:13 promises the resurrection of Daniel at the "end of days," but only as a member of the class of *maskilim* (cf. 12:3–4, 10). Some of the followers of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, affirmed that he had risen from the dead following his death in 1994. Messianic expectations and Christian influence may have played a role in this case, so, unlike Joel Marcus, I still do not see it as a useful parallel to New Testament affirmations about the resurrection of Jesus; Marcus, "The Once and Future Messiah in Early Christianity and Chabad," *NTS* 47 (2001): 381–401 (396–97).

22. Wright himself states that "There are no traditions about a Messiah being [martyred and] raised to life"; Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 205. New Testament scholars should pay more attention to counterexamples like the putative resurrection of John the Baptist

(Mark 6:14). As Eduard Schweizer pointed out in his commentary, “One could be fully convinced of the possibility of John’s resurrection and yet not honor him as the Messiah”; Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Atlanta: John Knox, 1970), 133. One might add that John was probably thought to be the Messiah by at least some of his followers (cf. John 1:8, 20). Another counterexample would be the expected bodily resurrection of the two witnesses in Rev. 11—there are no messianic implications here either; cf. Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 242–43. Nor did the raising of R. Kahana by R. Yohanan (*b. B. Qam.* 117b) lead to any thought about (either of them) being the Messiah. Jesus being raised from the dead might be viewed as confirming his claims (or his disciples’ hopes) about himself—whatever they were; so, for example, Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 243–44. But Jesus’ claims to messiahship were implicit at best, even as presented in the Gospels, so there is little for the historian to work with here; see, e.g., Petr Pokorny, *The Genesis of Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 84, 88 (here discussing Q); Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 286–88 (on Jesus traditions in general). The latter point will be discussed further in ch. 7. Wright’s case might be strengthened if Israel Knohl were correct in reading the “Gabriel Revelation” (*Hazon Gabriel*, an inscribed tablet from the late first century bce), lines 80–81, as saying, “In three days you [prince of princes] shall live”; Knohl, “By Three Days Live’: Messiahs, Resurrection, and Ascent to Heaven in *Hazon Gabriel*,” *JR* 88 (2008): 147–58 (155–57). However, see the critique of Knohl’s reading in John Collins, “Gabriel and David: Some Reflections on an Enigmatic Text,” in *Hazon Gabriel: New Readings*, Early Judaism and its Literature 29, ed. Matthias Henze and John J. Collins (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 99–112 (107–8).

23. As Larry Hurtado states, “Jesus’ resurrection is not really presented as an expression of Jesus’ inherent power of divinity so much as the exercise of ‘God’s’ power on Jesus’ behalf”; Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, 57.

24. The Similitudes of Enoch portray the kings of the earth as paying homage—thereby attributing suzerainty—to the Son of Man (*1 En.* 62:9). As Dale Allison points out, however, the expectation of a Messiah is rather marginal in the Similitudes as a whole (appearing only in *1 En.* 48:10; 52:4); Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 288. Relying on the Similitudes would also require addressing the problems of dating this late addition to the Enoch corpus.

25. In a footnote that concludes a lengthy chapter on the origin of Christology, Dale Allison suggests that a “very high Christology,” including deity “in a qualified sense,” was implicated in the Apostles’ recognition of his being Messiah; Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 304 n. 349. William Horbury cites *1 En.* 52:6 and *4 Ezra* (part of *2 Esdras*) 13:3–4 as evidence that divine attributes could be transferred to the Messiah or Son of Man; Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 103–4; on *4 Ezra* 13, cf. Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012), 96–99. Clearly there are important associations here, but we need to pay more attention to counterexamples in the history of Judaism. For example, Hayyim Vital dreamt that he was elevated to the presence of *HaShem* and even invited to sit at his right hand, a place that was specially prepared for him (thereby supplanting Joseph Karo); Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* (“Book of Visions”) 2.5, ET in Morris M. Faierstein, trans., *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1999), 81; cf. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1977), 144. The messianic overtones are clear, but there is not even a hint of identification with *HaShem* as in the case of Jesus. As Ada Rapoport-Albert has pointed out with regard to Hasidic masters: “The Zaddik was never deified; he never became the object of worship in his own right”; Rapoport-Albert, “God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship,” *History of Religions* 18 (1979): 296–325 (322).

26. According to Epiphanius, *Panarion* (“Medicine Chest”) 30.3.4, some Ebionites held that Christ was the “lord of all,” and yet was created by God. Arians and Eunomians also held this view.

27. Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 163–65. Wilhelm Bousset’s classic work



*Kyrios Christos* was first published in German just over a century ago (1913). His argument for a Hellenistic cult origin of the title *Kyrios* is found in ch. 3; Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 119–52.

28. For example, James Crossley states in his review of Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ* that “There is nothing like the Johannine material in the earlier documents, thereby suggesting they did not have such a ‘high’ Christology”; *JEH* 56 (2006): 118–20 (119).

29. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, 156–59.

30. The compound term *Yahweh text* goes back to David B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul’s Christology*, WUNT 47 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992). While credit goes to Capes for popularizing the phrase, the basic idea had been developed decades earlier by scholars like Lucien Cerfaux, “*Kyrios* dans les citations pauliniennes de l’Ancien Testament,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 20 (1943): 5–17; and J. C. O’Neill, “The Use of *Kyrios* in the Book of Acts,” *SJT* 8 (1955): 155–74. James D. G. Dunn has used the less succinct but more descriptive phrase “scriptural *kýrios* = Yahweh references”; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 249. I shall place *Yahweh text* in quotation marks in recognition of its use as a stock phrase in New Testament literature and the divine name being used adjectivally.

31. Matthew Black, “The Maranatha Invocation and Jude 14, 15 (I Enoch 1:9),” in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 189–96.

32. “Q” stands for *Quelle*, the German word for the hypothetical “source” of non-Markan material that is common to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Q is usually dated to the 50s CE but may have strata of various dates. Following standard introductions to the New Testament, I shall list texts in their chronological order (as far as known), rather than in their canonical order.

33. Martin Hengel opined that the entire process took less than five years; Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the History of Earliest Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983), 39–47.

34. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 136.

35. When Casey reviewed Larry Hurtado’s *Lord Jesus Christ*, he charged Hurtado with using “evangelical” categories and took the author to task for appealing to “revelatory religious experience,” rather than providing an explanatory historical account in terms of Jewish traditions; Casey, “Lord Jesus Christ: A Response to Professor Hurtado,” *JSNT* 27 (2004): 83–96 (86, 89).

36. Kevin P. Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels: A Study of the Relationship between Angels and Humans in Ancient Jewish Literature and the New Testament*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 235. Here Sullivan is responding to Richard Bauckham’s advocacy of early deity Christology, but his statement is based on a misreading of Bauckham’s idea of “incorporation” as “addition”; cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 101, 185, and most clearly on 213: “Paul is not adding to the one God of the *Shema*’ . . . He is identifying Jesus as the ‘Lord’ (*YHWH*) whom the *Shema*’ affirms to be one.”

37. Werner H. Schmidt calls for a similar explication of criteria in the case of ancient Israel’s borrowing of ideas from Canaanite cults; Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament: A History*, trans. John Sturdy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 180–81. Richard Bauckham has pointed out that Schmidt’s suggestion could be useful in explaining the development of New Testament Christology; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 75–78.

38. I am arguing for a simplified version of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, as distinct from traditional *Wirkungsgeschichte*; cf. Beate Pongratz-Leisten, “When the Gods are Speaking: Toward Defining the Interface between Polytheism and Monotheism,” in *Propheten in Mari, Assyrien und Israel*, ed. Von Matthias Köckert and Martii Nissinen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 132–68 (140–41, 160–61). The matter is stated clearly by John Ashton: “authors borrow for a reason and the reason is never to be found in the text that is borrowed”; Ashton, “The Johannine Son of Man: A New Proposal,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 508–29 (525). For a brilliant application of this “generative problematic” in the formation of the Mishnah, see Jacob Neusner, *Oral Tradition in Judaism: The*

*Case of the Mishmah* (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 764, New York: Garland, 1987), 136 (cf. 139–40): “the critical problematic at the center always exercises influence over the peripheral facts, dictating how they are chosen arranged, utilized.”

39. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

40. Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 137.

41. The standard view is that the “one Lord” in 1 Cor. 8:6 is taken from a Greek version of Deut. 6:4, which is the first verse of the *Shema*. James F. McGrath’s spirited critique falters on the dubious suggestion that Paul held Jesus as Lord only on earth; McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in its Jewish Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 41. To the contrary, Paul clearly affirmed Jesus to be “Lord over all,” Rom. 9:5; cf. 1 Cor. 15:27 (“all things in subjection”); Phil. 2:10–11 (“every knee in heaven and on earth”); Col. 1:15–20 (“all creation . . . all things in heaven and on earth . . . all things whether on earth or in heaven”). The standard view of 1 Cor. 8:6 holds up quite well in this respect.

42. In spite of the potentially anti-Judaic associations with the term *Old Testament*, it is the only phrase in common currency that includes the Hebrew Tanakh, the Aramaic Targumim, and the Greek Septuagint with its deuterocanonical additions.

43. Similar views have been argued by scholars like Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Lewis, “The Real Presence of the Son before Christ: Revisiting an Old Approach to Old Testament Christology,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 68 (2004): 105–26; Steven Richard Scott, “The Binitarian Nature of the *Book of Similitudes*,” *JSP* 18 (2008): 55–78 (based on the figure of the Son of Man in the *Similitudes of Enoch*); Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* (based on the Son of Man in Daniel 7 and the *Similitudes of Enoch*).

44. Barker locates Jesus’ recognition of his identity as the Great Angel at his baptism, during which he knew himself to be taken up into the vision and deified; Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 1996), 107–8, 110; Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: SPCK, 2007), 92–94, 96. As a parallel, she cites the “Self-Glorification Hymn” from Qumran (4Q427; personal e-mail dated 16 Feb 2009).

45. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 221.

46. There are many variations of this binitarian scenario in current scholarship, some of which have been argued particularly in response to Larry Hurtado. Hurtado had argued for the novelty of binitarian visions in the New Testament like that of the Son of Man at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56; cf. Mark 14:62) or the Lamb before the throne (Rev. 4:6–7); Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 176; Hurtado, *How On Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 199–201. William Horbury justly critiques Hurtado for treating the early Christian visions “with emphasis on their innovatory potential rather than their reflection of existing [Jewish] loyalties”; Horbury documents such loyalties by positing Jewish belief in a divine Messiah; Horbury’s review of Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, in *JTS* 56 (2005): 531–39 (538). Steven Richard Scott also makes the point that mystical visions have normally fit the parameters of their host religion; he finds precedent for binitarian visions in the *Similitudes of Enoch*; Scott, “The Binitarian Nature of the *Book of Similitudes*,” 58, 60. On the “divinity” of the expected Messiah, see the more balanced treatment of Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 20–22, 57–58, 100, 172, 204. In contrast, my own approach will be to start with the most common accounts of Jewish visions, those centered on YHWH in anthropic form, and generate the distinctive Christian beliefs from the superposition of this with the remembered portrait of Jesus as Jewish *hasid* at a secondary level (ch. 7).

47. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 95, 112–13. One can appreciate Bauckham’s basic point without insisting on all of his strictures on YHWH’s participation in the divine council and the veneration of angelic (divine) beings.

48. I adopt the term “Kyriocentric” as a way of stressing the primary interest of most texts (apocalypses and Psalms) in the presence of YHWH (*Kyrios*) while allowing for accompaniment

by any number of angels, or even an angelic Son of Man. As Charles Gieschen has stated, “Although Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature includes a visionary experience of a wide variety of subjects . . . nevertheless the visible image of YHWH especially on his throne, is often the central visionary experience in apocalyptic documents”; see Gieschen’s contribution, “‘Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism’: A Collage of Working Definitions,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 40, ed. April DeConick (2001): 278–304 (287). The use of Kyriocentric language has been critiqued by feminist theologians like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, who points out that it actively, performatively constructs an androcentric world, defined in terms of male imagery; Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 222. Even though this archaic language does not meet modern standards of inclusiveness, it still conforms to those of biblical writers, who shared a more hierarchical understanding of the world than we do (Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 17). I discuss this important matter further in the Conclusion.

49. The Lord-Jesus identification *Kyrios Iēsous* was a primary confessional formula that encapsulated the new bodily manifestation of YHWH with the face and voice of Jesus.

50. Early identifications of the anthropic form as Jesus constituted a primary “revelation” for the sectarian movement that they engendered. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, such revelations were originally rehearsals of earlier theophanies. The “primary revelations” are therefore part of an ongoing series of performances and revelations.

51. My primary-secondary distinction is similar to James M. Robinson’s between primary and secondary stages in accounts of Christ’s appearances (luminous visualizations and depictions of a physically resurrected human, respectively); Robinson, “Jesus from Easter to Valentinus (or the Apostles’ Creed),” *JBL* 101 (1982): 5–37 (12–13, 16). The main difference is that I identify the primary (luminous) appearances as kyriophanies (or Kyriocentric visions) rather than appearances of a transformed Jesus. As Andrew Chester states, “. . . the early Christians struggling to make full sense of the extraordinary nature of Christ, as this had been revealed to them, may well, within their Jewish context, have found knowledge of such [intermediary figure] traditions helpful in enabling them to articulate the significance of Christ . . .”; Chester, “High Christology,” 41–42.

52. One of the best parallels in the history of Judaism is R. Eleazar ben Yehudah ben Kalonymus of Worms (c. 1165–1230), who distinguished the Glory that appeared to Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel from the Creator of the world who has “no limit or boundary” (*Ein Sof*), while maintaining the ontological continuity of the two; see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 231. Philo of Alexandria had similarly distinguished the “Lord” who was seen by Abraham in Gen. 17:1 from the invisible Cause of all (e.g., *Change of Names* 15), but Philo was not so clear about the ontological continuity between the two (cf. *Abraham* 124). This confusion will be discussed in ch. 8 (the subordinationist, proto-Arian option).

53. Compare Arthur W. Wainwright’s discussion of the New Testament distinction between the titles “God” and “Lord” (1 Cor. 8:6; Phil. 2:11) or the titles “Father” and “Son”; Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1962), 92, 171–72. In saying that binitarian formulas were necessitated by Jesus traditions, I bypass for the time being the “modalist” option, according to which the difference between Jesus and the Father was only apparent. This particular tradition history will also be discussed in ch. 8, “The Proto-modalist Option.”

54. As explained in an earlier note, “revelation” was an appropriate term in the context of the biblical worldview. Once the main idea is established, I shall use terms like “performance” and “vision.”

55. Gershom Scholem’s classic description of the dynamics of “mystical experience” is helpful in spite of recent criticisms. According to Scholem, revelatory experiences must be communicated in terms of traditional symbols, but they can also transform the content of that tradition and give new meaning to old forms; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 7–9. Scholem cites Paul’s Damascus Road revelation as an example of such transformation; *ibid.*, 14–15. Rachel Elior puts it this way

(assuming a culture of written manuscripts): “The visionary reads and internalizes visions for the sacred literary text, inserts new imagery into the original visions, and thus transforms them into a living reality within himself”; Elior, *Jewish Mysticism: The Infinity Expression of Freedom*, trans. Yudith Nave and Arthur B. Millman (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 89. Moshe Idel has developed a similar analysis of mystical phenomena. He stresses the role of ritual and praxis, which, he states, is more inclusive and open to “unexpected experiences” than theological symbols are; Idel, *Enchanted Chains*, 35–37. As any athlete or thespian knows, performances often take on their own momentum with unpredictable results.

56. Similarly, Lawrence Hoffman explores the meaning of statutory Jewish prayers in terms of a liturgical “field of meaning,” in which the devout can “intuit a worshipful relationship with the divine.” From the perspective of the modern scholar, this liturgical field is a “hypothetical construct” or set of “nonempirically derived propositions”; Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 148–50. An analogy from modern cosmology would be reconstructing the state of the universe prior to its earliest observable feature, the cosmic microwave background. Cosmologists hypothesize cosmic inflation in order to build models that reproduce what we do observe at a later stage of development.

57. Alan Segal once stated that the manifestation was not YHWH in person, but rather the divine *Kavod* (“Glory”) in human form; Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 57, 61, 154, 157. However, these two modes of appearance are not readily differentiated within the context of pre-Christian Judaism (e.g., Exod. 16:10–11; 24:16–17; Num. 16:42–4; Isa. 40:5, 10; 60:1–2; Ezek. 1:26–8; 3:12; 11:22–3; 43:2–7; 2 Macc. 2:8; Palestinian Targumim to Exod. 24:10; 33:23; 34:5–7; Tg. 1 Kgs. 22:19; Tg. Isa. 6:1, 5); see Gerhard von Rad, “Doxa,” *TDNT* 2:232–55 (244). Elliot Wolfson has come closer to the mark in stating that “The possibility of encountering the visible form of the invisible God was appropriated by some of the earlier followers of Jesus and the Jewish mystical doctrines are [were] applied to him”; See Wolfson’s contribution, “Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism: A Collage of Working Definitions,” *SBLSP* 40, 299.

58. Dutch theologian Hendrikus Berkhof argued for a Christology “from behind,” that is, from the narrative of the people of Israel and the Holy One of Israel; Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, trans. Sierd Woudstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 28. See the helpful interpretation of Berkhof’s idea in Klaas Runia, *The Present-Day Christological Debate* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 72.

59. The normal Pauline word order places the title *Kyrios* first; Gordon Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 123–34, 399–400. The alternate word order in 2 Cor. 4:5 and Phil. 3:8 shows that the identification was reversible, but Paul’s normal usage began with his adherence to the Lord as confessed in the *Shema*; cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Rom. 10:9.

60. The *Kyrios Iēsous* (or *Kyrios Christos*) form is found at least twenty-four times in the New Testament, the earliest being 1 Cor. 8:6; 12:3, 5. The reverse order is found only four or five times (2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 3:8; Col. 2:6; 1 Pet. 2:3, and possibly Luke 2:11).

61. Karl Popper’s classic method of conjecture and refutation has long since replaced the earlier positivist ideal of “verification”; Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963). In all but the simplest, most formalized cases, however, strict refutation is no more possible than strict verification, and it is better to work with the category of plausibility. Even though predictions that are not verified or even contradicted by the evidence can be accommodated by modifications of the original conjecture, such “epicycles” make the conjecture far less plausible than desired (unless they can be independently observed and verified).

62. This part of the argument has been forcefully argued by earlier scholars, one of whom is Bert Jan Lieten Peerbolte, who once stated that “In Phil 2:11 . . . Jesus is identified as the Lord God of the Jewish bible, as YHWH”; Peerbolte, “The Name above All Names (Philippians 2:9),” in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses*, 187–206 (203). It appears that Prof. Peerbolte reversed himself in a later (otherwise most helpful) article: “But given the fact that Paul apparently

saw Christ, and not *YHWH*, as the main character of his vision, the content of what he communicates . . . differs strongly from comparable descriptions in other Jewish sources” (173); Peerbolte, “Paul’s Rapture: 2 Corinthians 12:2–4 and the Language of Mystics,” in *Experientia, Volume I: Inquiry into Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Frances Flannery, Colleen Shantz, and Rodney A. Werline (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 159–76. The point of the present essay will be to vindicate the former (2006) statement against the latter (2008).