The Development of Christology during the First Hundred Years

and other essays on early Christian Christology

Charles H. Talbert

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By

Charles H. Talbert

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To the memory of Theron Price,
story-teller extraordinaire

CONTENTS

Preface ix
Acknowledgments xi

PART ONE

SYNTHESIS

Chapter One The Development of Christology in the First 100 Years: A Modest Proposal 3

PART TWO

BUILDING BLOCKS

Chapter Two The Problem of Pre-Existence in Philippians 2:6–11 45

Chapter Three The Concept of Immortals in Mediterranean Antiquity 61

Chapter Four The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity 83

Chapter Five The Gospel and the Gospels 113

Chapter Six Expository Article: Luke 1:26–31 127

Chapter Seven 'And the Word Became Flesh': When? 131

Chapter Eight The Christology of the Apocalypse 143

Chapter Nine Miraculous Conceptions and Births in Mediterranean Antiquity 161

Bibliography 171
Index of Modern Authors 183
Index of Ancient Sources 187
Subject Index 203

PREFACE

This volume enters the debate about the development of Christology among Jesus' earliest followers. It critiques both the traditional evolutionary view that posited an elementary early Jewish Christology that developed in complexity as it was increasingly Hellenized on the one hand and the more recent attempt to see a full-orbed Christology both as early and as Jewish, not Hellenistic, in its categories on the other. The organization of the volume's argument is in two parts. Part One is synthesis. In the initial essay, not previously published, there is a synthesis of a career's work on early Christology. It both pulls together insights from previous work and at times fine-tunes it. It attempts to give a holistic perspective on the first 100 years of Christian reflection. Part Two consists of many of the building blocks out of which the synthesis is constructed. It presents these building blocks in a collection of eight previously published essays on Christology. Sometimes the reader will find a point more fully developed in one of these essays than is possible in the synthesis. Occasionally the reader will find a point made in a previously published essay that is either developed more fully or dropped entirely in the synthesis. This volume makes no claim to finality in the debate. It merely attempts to offer a fresh perspective from which to view christological development in the first 100 years. This in itself should hopefully advance the discussion beyond the current stalemate.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my graduate assistant, Tim Brookins, who in the late summer and fall of 2010 did the necessary editorial work to bring all of the material into conformity with SBL style. Abbreviations used throughout this volume may be found in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, edited by Patrick H. Alexander et al., and issued by Hendrickson Publishers in 1999.

Charles H. Talbert
Advent 2010

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PART ONE

SYNTHESIS

CHAPTER ONE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTOLOGY IN THE FIRST 100 YEARS: A MODEST PROPOSAL

Two perspectives on the development of Christology in the first 100 years currently strive for preeminence. On the one hand, a long-lived, widespread view of christological development understands it as a logically backward process.[1] (1) At the earliest stage in Christian thought, the *parousia* was regarded as the point when God would reveal Jesus as the Christ. (2) In a pre-Gospel period (Paul and the speeches of Acts), the *resurrection* was the chief moment associated with the divine proclamation of the identity of Jesus (Acts 2:32, 36; 13:32–33; Rom 1:3–4; Phil 2:8–9). By virtue of the resurrection Jesus became greater than he had been in the period of his ministry. (3) Mark tells the reader that at Jesus' *baptism* Jesus was declared Son of God (1:11). (4) Matthew and Luke push the question of Jesus' identity back to his miraculous *conception*. (5) In John the question is pressed back to *pre-existence* prior to creation. Christological development has been conceived in this way for a long time.

On the other hand, the major reservations about such an evolutionary view have come from those who want to see what is late in the model just described pushed much earlier. One approach, working from the titles ascribed to Jesus, associates the parousia Christology with Palestinian Jewish Christianity, the exaltation Christology with a miraculous conception with Hellenistic Jewish Christianity, and the pre-existence Christology with pre-Pauline gentile Christianity. All three types constitute the foundations of NT Christology

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[1] I am using Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 29–32, and ibid., "Part 3. The Christologies of New Testament Christians," in *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist, 1994), 103–52, as an example. The model has much earlier roots. W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 90, expressed it as Christology moving from Omega to Alpha. P. M. Casey's book title reflects his view: *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

(= pre-Pauline).[2] A second approach also wants to see the major developments of Christology as being early, not late.[3] The major developments, it is alleged, came in the first four or five years after Jesus' death.[4] A major factor in the christological developments is to be found in the experiences of Jesus' followers in connection with his resurrection and what transpired afterwards.[5] In order to counter the claim that the deity of Jesus is inherently unJewish,[6] an attempt is made to redefine Jewish monotheism so that it is understood not in Hellenistic terms (= what divinity is, i.e., divine nature) but in Jewish terms of who Yahweh is (= divine identity). This identity is viewed as a *creational* monotheism (= creator), an *eschatological* monotheism (= judge), and a *cultic* monotheism (= one to be worshipped). Since in the earliest sources (e.g., Paul) Jesus is linked to creation, future judgment, and is an object of worship, Jesus is within the divine identity. Hence earliest Christianity viewed Jesus as God.[7] Neither perspective on Christology's development, however, is able to claim consensus status.

The approach of this essay is to clarify what the cultural models were that the early followers of Jesus appropriated and how they functioned within their religious setting. From the pursuit of such a quest, an evaluation of both the evolutionary model of christological development and its current alternatives may be made.

The essay begins with four basic assumptions. First, experience precedes reflection.[8] Second, in theological reflection, soteriology is experientially prior to Christology.[9] Third, reflection is done mostly with categories furnished by what is "in the air" in the culture.[10] Fourth, Judaism in Palestine was a Hellenistic Judaism.[11] This means that Palestinian Jews would have been familiar with non-Jewish religious beliefs and practices.[12]

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[2] Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner's, 1965). Cf. also Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1969).

[3] Many of the players and some of their views are found in Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, & Gladys S. Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (JSJSup 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[4] Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 44. Before the conversion of Paul (34 C.E.) all the christological development had taken place except pre-existence Christology and the conception of the sending of the Son. With the conversion of Paul, a new period of development begins that will include what was lacking (pp. 46–47).

[5] Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[6] So Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, 176.

[7] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), ix–x; *God Crucified* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), vii–viii.

[8] Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), and *How on Earth Did Jesus Become God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), roots the origins of Christology in experience. Nils A. Dahl, *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 134, says "early Christians spoke about Jesus as they did because they had something to say

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about him and used available linguistic sources to say it." Cf. Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 320, says a main root of NT Christology was the "experience in worship of Jesus as the present Lord, who was prayed to (*Maranatha*) and confessed (*Kyrios Christos*)." If this assumption is granted, then one avoids the pitfall of believing that Christology was a matter of a logical fitting together of various myths from antiquity in order to achieve social cohesion or group advantage (as does Michael Goulder, "The Two Roots of the Christian Myth," in *The Myth of God Incarnate* [ed. John Hick; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977], 64–86).

[9] Leander E. Keck, "Toward the Renewal of New Testament Christology," in *From Jesus to John* (ed. Martinus C. de Boer; JSNTSup 84; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 323–4.

[10] James F. McGrath, *John's Apologetic Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21, says, "No one wishes to claim that the concepts used by the first Christians to express their Christology did not already have a prior history of meaning which was then inherited by the Christians who made use of these terms." Dahl, *Jesus the Christ*, 134, says, "The linguistic capacity of the early Christians was conditioned, and limited, by the linguistic tools and rules of their environments. They used the…languages of the first century…when they expressed their faith in Jesus—otherwise they could not have communicated with outsiders, or with one another." Even if there was not a single, exact analogy to the total Christian claim about Jesus, the cultural atmosphere, Jewish and Pagan, was conducive to the development of Christology (so Frances Young, "Two Roots or a Tangled Mass?" in *The Myth of God Incarnate* [ed. John Hick; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977], 117–18).

[11] Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1:104. The differentiation between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism is no longer adequate (1:105). Hengel builds on the prior work of Saul Liebermann, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942) and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950). Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Significance of Yavneh and Other Essays in Jewish Hellenism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), presupposes that ancient Judaism, in all its expressions and varieties, was a Hellenism.

[12] According to 2 Macc 6:1–3, Antiochus Epiphanes wanted to call the Jerusalem temple, the temple of Zeus. The people at Gerazim joined in calling that worship site the temple of Zeus-the-friend-of-strangers. In Antiochus' time, Jews were compelled to wear wreaths and to walk in the procession in honor of Dionysus at the god's festival (2 Macc 6:7). According to 1 Macc, some Jews took the initiative in assimilating to Greek culture (1:11–15). Many from Israel gladly adopted Antiochus' religion (1:43). There was a temple of Apollo in Gaza in the time of Alexander Jannaeus (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.364), a temple of Apollo in Ashkelon in the pre-Herodian period, the worship of Apollo was common in the Philistine cities (Raphia, Gaza, Ashkelon), various deities were worshipped in Ptolemais (Acco) and in the cities of the Decapolis. Herod built temples dedicated to Roma and Augustus in Caesarea (Josephus, *J. W.* 1.414), Samaria, and Banias. In Caesarea there was a Mithraeum from the end of the first century (A. Y. Collins, "The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, 242, n. 38.)

The essay argues three theses. First, the culture supplied early Christians with four basic models with which to begin their christological reflections.[13] Second, the development of these four models grew out of several experiential dynamics: e.g., the need for clarification, the necessity to defend soteriological non-negotiables, and the drive for synthesis. Third, the usefulness of the models may be seen better if their soteriological contributions are understood.

The aim of this exercise is to attempt to furnish readers with a fresh pair of spectacles for viewing christological developments in Christianity's first 100 years. Whether or not this attempt is deemed successful will depend on whether or not it enables one to see Christological development in ways in which one has formerly not done so.

The Four Models and Their Utility

The models

What is a model? This essay follows Ian Barbour's description. "Models summarize the structural elements of a set of myths."[14] For example, in biblical religion, the images of God as king, judge, shepherd, husband, father, etc., yield a model of God as a personal being.[15] Models are not literal pictures of reality; they are analogical, involving like and unlike dimensions of the myths.[16] Models, moreover, can be complementary, like the wave-particle duality in quantum physics.[17]

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[13] Dahl, *Jesus the Christ*, 113–36, in his essay on "Sources of Christological Language," suggests that the followers of Jesus drew on four major types of sources: eschatological figures, men of God and heroes, heavenly intermediaries, and language about God. "Most of what the early Christians said about Jesus can be subsumed under at least one of these four categories" (p. 123). This is the closest thing that I know to what I am proposing. Frances Young's essay ("Two Roots or a Tangled Mass?," 117–8) supplies a wealth of primary source data and concludes with the claim that there were four ingredients in Mediterranean culture that were already there to be crystallized into Christology: phrases like "Son of God," the apotheosis of exceptional humans, the belief that a heavenly being might descend to bring humans help, and the idea of the manifestation of the chief of the heavenly beings on earth in a truly human life (like the Samaritan Simon mentioned in Michael Goulder's essay).

[14] Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 27.

[15] Ibid., 56.

[16] Ibid., 32.

[17] Ibid., 75.

What are these models claimed to be the building blocks of early Christian christological reflection and from whence did they come?[18] There are two basic christological patterns, that involving pre-existence and that without pre-existence. Each of these has two variations. The *first pattern* (with no pre-existence) involves a human who is taken up into heaven for some purpose. One variation has the individual taken up in order to come as the End-time judge, savior, or helper. The other variation has that one taken up in order to exercise some type of sovereignty in the present. The *second pattern* involves a pre-existent being who descends from the heavenly world into the human arena and then, having accomplished the descent's intended aim, ascends back into the heavens. One variation regards the descent as an epiphany of a true deity. The other sees the descent as analogous to the inspiration/possession/indwelling of a human by a divine being. Having provided a sketch of the four models, it is now time to flesh out each of them in turn and in so doing to see how each one affects facets of early Christian christological reflection.

It is necessary to begin with the ancient Mediterranean distinction between two types of deities.[19] In the first century B.C.E., Diodorus Siculus sets out the view.

> As regards the gods, men of ancient times have handed down to later generations two different conceptions: Certain of the gods, they say, are eternal and imperishable...for each of these genesis and duration are from everlasting to everlasting. But the other gods, we are told, were terrestrial beings who attained to immortal honors and fame because of their benefactions to mankind, such as Heracles, Dionysus, Aristaeus, and the others who were like them. (6.1.2 [Oldfather, LCL])

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[18] Doing Christology from titles is a futile endeavor, even when the titles are shown to change in their meaning as the cultural context shifts (as in James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989]); hence a focus here on patterns and models. An approach through patterns and models does not look for Christian borrowing from this or that specific text or tradition but for the influence of larger structures of thought on Christian reflection, reflecting the mutual interpenetration of various religious traditions in the Mediterranean world of antiquity. Cf. Carl Holladay, "New Testament Christology: Some Considerations of Method," *NovT* 25 (1983): 257–78 (= a critique of Dunn); P. Vielhauer, "Ein Weg zur neutestamentlichen Christologie," *EvT* 28 (1965): 24–72 (= a critique of Hahn's titular approach).

[19] Charles H. Talbert, "The Concept of the Immortals in Mediterranean Antiquity," *JBL* 94 (1975): 419–36; Jerome H. Neyrey, "Without Beginning of Days or End of Life (Heb 7:3): Topos for a True Deity," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 439–55.

In another place he says about the Ethiopians,

> The Ethiopians entertain two opinions: they believe that some of them…have a nature which is eternal and imperishable, but others of them, they think, share a mortal nature and have come to receive immortal honors because of their virtue and the benefactions which they have bestowed on all mankind. (3.9.1 [Oldfather, LCL])

Cicero (*Leg.* 2.19) also says there are two kinds of gods: those who have always lived in heaven and those installed there by merit. Regarding those who became immortal, the first or second century *Library of Apollodorus* (7.7) says about Heracles that while the funeral pyre was burning a cloud enveloped him and raised him up to heaven. Thenceforth he was immortal. In 7.8 we hear "after Heracles joined the gods."[20]

Plutarch, near 100 C.E., reflects the same perspective when he praises Apollo. He says:

> My native tradition removes this god from among those deities who were changed from mortals into immortals, like Heracles and Dionysus, whose virtues enabled them to cast off mortality and suffering, but he is one of those deities who are unbegotten and eternal, if we may judge by what the most ancient and wisest men have said on such matters. (*Pel.* 16.5 [Perrin, LCL])

Philo the Jew, at the beginning of our era, knew and worked with these categories in his *Embassy to Gaius*. He says that the emperor Gaius not only desired to be looked upon as a god (§75) but also actually thought he was a god (§162). At first, Gaius likened himself to the demigods, such as Bacchus, Heracles, and the twins, Castor and Pollux (§78). Later, he invaded the worship paid to the supreme deities, Mercury, Apollo, and Mars (§93). Reflecting the latter belief, he ordered a colossal statue of himself to be erected in the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple with his name inscribed on it with the title Jupiter (§188). The distinction between eternals and immortals, then, was common knowledge in Mediterranean antiquity at the beginning of our era.

(1) Within this context, the first model to be sketched begins with the myths of the demigods/immortals. Normally such beings were the product of a union between a deity and a human (hence outstanding but

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[20] *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: The Library of Apollodorus* (trans. Michael Simpson; Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976).

still mortal). Because of their benefactions during their lifetime, they were believed to have been taken up into heaven to join the eternals/ true gods (i.e., honored with immortality). Lucian's *Parliament of the Gods* mentions Dionysus, Asclepius, and Heracles among many others. The crucial factor in such a model was the belief that they were taken up to heaven at their life's end and awarded immortality. Being taken up gave them a status that they did not have before that moment.

Evidence of the exaltation was found in such things as (a) not being able to find the bodily remains (e.g., no trace of Romulus' body could be found after his disappearance [Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.7–8]; not one bone could be found after Heracles' cremation [Diod. Sic., 38.3–5]; no trace of Empedocles' body could be found [Diog. Laert., 8.68]; Aristeas died in a fuller's shop. When his friends came to fetch the body, it had vanished [Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.4]), (b) hearing a heavenly voice or voices (a voice from heaven was heard calling Empedocles [Diog. Laert. 8.68]; in Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.30, voices were heard calling Apollonius to heaven]), (c) witnesses of the ascent (e.g., an ex-praetor, Numerius Atticus, swore he had seen Augustus ascending to heaven after the cremation like Romulus [Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.4; Dio Cass. 56.46]; After Peregrinus'death by fire, a grey-haired man claimed he saw Peregrinus flying up to heaven as a vulture [Lucian, *Peregr.* 40]), and (d) appearances to those who remained behind (e.g., a patrician, Julius Proculus, swore that he had seen Romulus after his disappearance. Romulus said to him that he would now be the Romans' propitious deity, Quirinus [Plutarch, *Rom.* 29.1]; travelers said they had met Aristeas after his body had vanished [Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.4]; Apollonius of Tyana appeared to a disciple after his disappearance [Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.31]; after Peregrinus' death by fire, a grey-haired man said he had seen Peregrinus in white raiment walking around in the Portico of the Seven Voices [Lucian, *Peregr.* 40]).

So many such demigods were believed to inhabit heaven that Seneca's *Pumpkinification of Claudius* and Lucian's *Parliament of the Gods* satirized the entire system. Nevertheless, cults of such deities were widespread and demigods like Heracles and Asclepius were believed to intervene frequently on behalf of their devotees.[21] Such mythology was sometimes used to interpret the lives of significant historical figures, like Augustus (Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.4) and Apollonius of Tyana (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.30).[22] This variation within the model of mortals taken up into heaven emphasized the function of their continuing benevolence in the present.

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[21] Although not directly relevant to this essay's argument, there were female figures who were also believed to have been granted immortality: e.g., Helen was worshipped not as a hero but as a god (Isocrates, *Hel. enc.*, 10.63); Ino, Cadmus' daughter, who was once a mortal, now has a share of honor among the gods and a new name,

Finding a structure exactly like this in ancient Judaism would be impossible given the Jewish commitment to monotheism. Perhaps the closest analogy one can find is in traditions about Elijah as one taken up into heaven who intervenes in the present on behalf of the righteous (e.g., *b. Ber.* 58a; *b. B. Qam.* 60b; *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 17b, 18b; *b. Sanh.* 98a), all the while remaining a creature. Late Jewish stories[23] say that God took him out of the world and said to him, "Be the guardian spirit of my children forever." Elijah's removal from earth marks the beginning of his activity as a helper of God's people in time of need. The Sages enjoyed his special attention as protector of the innocent, ever present to guard them against evil and to snatch them out of danger. For example, a rabbi condemned to death by the Romans is rescued, the sick are cured, the poor find assistance. The earliest extant tradition about the ascended Elijah as a helper in time of need is found in Mark 15:35–36 par. Matt 27:47.[24] In this myth, a human is taken up into heaven to perform a function in the present on behalf of God's devotees. The structural elements shared by the pagan myths of the demigods and the Jewish myth of Elijah as a guardian spirit are that a

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Leukothea (*Odyssey*, 5.333–5); Iphigeneia did not die but by the will of Artemis is Hecate (Pausanias 1.43.1, attributes this to Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*); Dionysus brought his mother, Semele, up from Hades, shared his immortality with her, and called her by a new name, Thyone (Diodorus Siculus 4.25.4). Like the male figures who were taken up to perform a present function, these female figures also intervened as helpers (e.g., Leukothea in the *Odyssey* appears to save Odysseus from drowning). Cf. Deborah Lyons, *Gender and Immortality: Heroines in Ancient Greek Myth and Cult* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). Note that the assumption is often associated with the gift of a new name.

[22] Deified emperors, like Vespasian and Titus, were depicted in the guise of Heracles (J. Rufus Fears, "Herculanensium Augustalium Aedes and the Theology of Ruler Cult," in *Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Amsterdam, July 12–17, 1998* [eds. R. F. Docter and E. M. Moormann; Amsterdam, 2000], 168).

[23] Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (8 vols.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 4:202–33; Kristen H. Lindbeck, *Elijah and the Rabbis: Story and Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[24] Joachim Jeremias, "Ἠλείας" *TDNT* 2:930. In 2 Macc 15:11–16, in a dream of Maccabeas, Jeremiah appears to Onias while praying. He gave Judas a golden sword, a gift from God, to strike down the Jews' adversaries. This may indicate that Jeremiah was regarded as a figure like Elijah who intervened in the present (cf. Matt 16:14).

human is taken up to perform benevolent acts on behalf of humans in the present. This is the first model.

It is difficult not to see early Christians' employment of this model in Christology. In Rom 1:3–4 there is a pre-Pauline oral tradition about Jesus that runs:

> the one being from the seed of David according to the flesh,
> the one appointed Son of God with power according to the Spirit
> from the resurrection of the dead.

The humanity of the one being described is established in line one. By virtue of his resurrection, line two says he is appointed to a position of power in the present. Exactly what that powerful function in the present would have looked like may be seen in 1 Cor 15:20–28. It is to subdue God's enemies, the last of which is death. It is no surprise to see Ps 110:1 cited in 1 Cor 15:25. Being at the Lord's right hand carries with it a function in the present: to subdue God's enemies[25] (cf. Eph 1:20–22; 3:17; 4:7). It seems clear that one model the earliest Christians employed in their reflections about Jesus was that of a human taken up to perform a powerful function on behalf of his devotees in the present.

We know that the similarities between the stories about Jesus and those about the demigods/immortals were recognized by early Christians. Justin Martyr (*1 Apol.* 21; cf. also *Dial.* 69) was not only aware of the myths of the demigods/immortals but also of the remarkable similarities between such figures and Jesus. Justin used the phenomenon for apologetic ends. He attributes the pagan examples to the activity of demons who were copying the true reality found in Jesus (*Dial.* 69, 70; *1 Apol.* 54, 58).[26] From Mark 15:35–36 we know that early followers of Jesus were aware of Elijah's role as a present, protective spirit. The structural similarity of these two myths yields the first model: a human taken up to perform benevolent acts in the present on behalf of humans.

Would the early Christians who employed such a model in their christological reflection have therefore regarded Jesus as divine? Consider the pre-Pauline hymn in Phil 2:6–11 where it is said that God exalted Jesus and gave him the name above all names so that every knee should bow before him. Note that this hymn is not addressed to Jesus.[27] It is rather about Jesus and celebrates Jesus' role in God's plan (i.e., Jesus as God's agent).[28] So here worship would be directed to God, not to Jesus. Note also that for one to have been given God's name does not confer deity (e.g., in 11QMelch II, 15–25, Melchizedek has God's name [Elohim] but remains a creature). The issue of Jesus' status may ultimately have depended on the Christians who employed the model. If a former pagan heard the model in terms of the myth of the demigods, then that one may have thought of Jesus as an immortal. If the auditor were Jewish, that one may have understood the exalted one as a human taken up to perform a special function for the one God, like Elijah. The model does not, in and of itself, decide the issue of Jesus' followers' view of his divine or human status.

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[25] The use of Ps 110:1 to speak of the risen Christ's present role may be found is such sources as Polycarp, *Phil.* 2:1; Mark 16:19–20; Eph 1:20; Rom 8:34.

[26] Arnobius, *Seven Books against the Heathen*, 1.41, notes the similarities between Romulus and Jesus as part of his defense of Christians from ridicule.

(2) A second model that provided categories for early Christian reflection about Jesus' identity also fits within the pattern of one taken up into heaven but belongs to the variation of such a one functioning not as present benefactor but as an actor in the End-time drama.

Ancient Judaism's faith contained the conviction that a righteous God would settle scores at the end of history (e.g., *2 Bar.* 19:3; *1 En.* 47:3). Such a conviction is expressed well by *4 Ezra* 7:70: "When the Most High made the world…, he first prepared the judgment and the things that pertain to the judgment" (RSV).

> It is *the* great event towards which the whole universe is moving and which will vindicate once and for all God's righteous purpose for…all creation. On that day all wrongs will be set right; justice will not only be done, it will also be seen to be done.[29]

This ultimate decisive event would be experienced either as judgment or salvation. Sometimes God alone was seen to be the judge and savior. There was, however, a widespread Jewish belief that acting alongside God or acting for God on the Day of Judgment would be an angelic figure. Several examples may be cited. In *1 En.* 37–71, chapter 46 presents a scene of last judgment. God is there but also with him is another individual, whose face is full of grace like that of one among the holy angels. This second figure is the one who would execute judgment on sinners. In *4 Ezra* 13 the judgment is carried out by a man (an angelic figure?), God's Son, who comes up from the heart of the sea and judges the wicked by a stream of fire from his mouth. At Qumran, 1QM XVII, 6–8 speaks of the angel Michael who will come to the aid of the saints at the End-time when evil will be defeated. In the *As. Mos.* 10:2, there is a second figure, "the messenger who is in the highest place appointed," who will exercise judgment at the last day. Although not identified by name, he is usually identified with Michael, the guardian angel of Israel (cf. Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1). This angelic figure is, moreover, sometimes identified with a human being who has been assumed into heaven until time for the deliverance/judgment. In *1 En.* 37–71, the Elect One/Son of man is said to be Enoch (71:14). So Enoch who was taken up (Gen 5:24) is said to be the one who will exercise judgment in the End-time (cf. *Jub.* 4:21–23).[30] At times, other humans are taken up and held in reserve until their return at the end of history to perform key functions in the End-time. At Qumran, for example, 11QMelch says that Melchizedek will "carry out the vengeance of God's judgments" (§13). The only way this would be possible is if Melchizedek had been taken up and held in waiting for this End-time function of judgment. Elijah who was taken up was expected to return at the end of history to play his part in the events (Sir 48:10). In some circles Elijah and Enoch or Elijah and Moses[31] were expected to return to participate in the final events (*4 Ezra* 6:26; cf. Rev 11:3–12). A variation on this theme is found in the *T. Ab.* 12–13. There Abraham was shown the judgment of individuals immediately after death. This included a wondrous man who judges the whole creation. This one is Abel, whom Cain killed. Again, this assumes that Abel has been taken up to be assigned the function of the judgment of individual souls. These examples show that 'being taken up' for the function of judgment in the future can be prior to death (Enoch), after death (Abel), or at a time unknown (Melchizedek). At least in some Jewish circles there was the belief that God would designate a righteous *human* to exercise judgment in the future. Here is the variation of one who is taken up in order to perform a future function: judgment or salvation. This common structural feature in the variety of Jewish myths yields the second model. No such future judgment scenario was to be found in a Roman milieu outside of a Jewish context because Imperial ideology operated out of a realized eschatology.[32]

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[27] Contrast Pliny's description of Christian practice in the early second century: they assembled on an appointed day before daybreak to sing a hymn *to* Christ, as *to* a god (*Ep.* 10.96).

[28] A. Y. Collins, "The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult," 240.

[29] D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 380.

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[30] John J. Collins, "Review of *Weisheit und Messias*," *JBL* 107 (1988): 138, says "There is now general consensus that this (Similitudes of Enoch) is indeed a Jewish document from about the turn of the era, and it is the earliest attestation of a preexistent Messiah in the full sense" (*1 En.* 48:2–3; 48:1–6). The model of one taken up to come as the End-time judge, then, could conceivably, but not necessarily, include pre-existence.

[31] Some Jews believed Moses, like Enoch and Elijah, was taken up. Philo (*Mos.* 2.288) comes close but stops short by including a reference to Moses' death and burial. Josephus' description (*Ant.* 4.326) seems reminiscent of the passing of the two founders of the Romans, Aeneas and Romulus, but he also stops short. He does this by saying Moses mentioned his death "for fear lest they should say that by reason of his surpassing virtue he had gone back to the Deity" (Thackeray, LCL). Josephus, then, knew of some who wanted to speak of Moses in this way. *Sifre* on Deut 34:5 says Moses was taken up as were Elijah and Enoch. Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6.15.132), reflecting Jewish beliefs, says Joshua saw Moses ascend with an angel. Jerome (*Comm. Am.*), reflecting Jewish beliefs, claims Moses ascended like Enoch and Elijah. When Moses was so regarded, however, it was to enable his eschatological, not his present, function.

Early Christians in their reflections on Jesus' role at the last judgment spoke in similar ways. In Acts 17:31, Paul's sermon at Athens concludes with these words: God "has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (NRSV). Here a righteous human has been taken up to function as the End-time judge (cf. Acts 3:19–21 where the one taken up returns as savior).[33] A similar scenario may be found in the prophetic utterance of 1 Thess 4:16–17. The 'Lord' of the End-time is Jesus who died and rose again (4:14). His coming results in salvation for his people (cf. 1 Thess 1:9–10). Perhaps the earliest evidence for this scenario is found in the prayer of 1 Cor 16:22 (Our Lord, come; cf. Rev 22:20; *Did.* 10:6).

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[32] Cf. Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

[33] The issue of the historicity of Acts is not relevant here. In antiquity, the basic issue was whether or not a speech was considered appropriate for the speaker (cf. e.g., Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.12.1–17; 3.7.1–11; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.49–54; 9.2.29–32; 11.1.32–59; Theon, *Prog.* 68, 84, 115–18; Pseudo-Hermogenes, *Prog.* 21; *Rhet. Her.* 4.49.63–53.66). Given the author of Luke-Acts' sophistication, one may surmise that the speeches in Acts 3 and 17 would have been considered appropriate to Peter's and Paul's preaching.

Perhaps the most striking early example of this model is the Gospel of Mark.[34] Here a Gospel depicts Jesus as a man anointed with the Holy Spirit and power who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil (cf. Acts 10:38), who was put to death but God raised him up (cf. Acts 10:39–40). The narrative of 16:1–8 bears three of the marks of one who was taken up. The women did not find the body of Jesus; there was a heavenly proclamation to them that Jesus had risen from the dead; and a future appearance is promised. Assuming that the Gospel ends at 16:8,[35] besides a promise of an appearance, nothing more is said about the risen Jesus' present function. The activity that is promised for the one taken up is found in Mark 13 where the exalted Jesus is described as active in the End-time (13:26–27, 33–37), and in Mark 8:38 where the same eschatological role is described. Taken as a whole, then, Mark depicts Jesus as one taken up who will return in the ultimate future for his role in the last judgment/ vindication. Here is another model reflecting the structural similarity of a number of myths in which being taken up into heaven conveys a status not previously held.[36]

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[34] Building on H. Koester's claim that there were four types of primitive gospels (sayings, miracles, revelations, passion—"One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels," in *Trajectories through Early Christianity* [eds. J. M. Robinson and H. Koester; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971], 158–204), E. Trocme contends that the Markan Evangelist synthesized various earlier types of traditions (e.g., sayings and miracles) into a reasonably coherent whole ("Is There a Markan Christology?" in *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament* [eds. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973], 3–14; Charles H. Talbert, "The Gospel and the Gospels," in *Interpreting the Gospels* (ed. James L. Mays; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 14–26, following Koester and agreeing with Trocme, argued that all of the canonical gospels are composites, synthesizing sayings, miracles, revelations, and a passion narrative in order to avoid the risk of reductionism in their view of the God present in Jesus. This composite in Mark is controlled by the model of the one taken up to come as the End-time judge/savior, in the other two Synoptics by the model of one taken up to perform a function in the present, and in the Fourth Gospel by the model of a pre-existent one's permanent indwelling of Jesus.

[35] Textual evidence supports ending at 16:8. The absence of narrative closure is explained by an ancient rhetorical practice found in Herodotus' *History*, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Thucydides' *History*, Virgil's *Aeneid,* and the Acts of the Apostles. Writings end without narrative closure, forcing the readers to achieve closure by finishing the story in consonance with its plot. Cf. Lee Magness, *Sense and Absence* (SemeiaSt; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986) for Mark; Daniel Marguerat, "The End of Acts (28:16–31) and the Rhetoric of Silence," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 74–89, for Acts.

[36] Ps 110:1 was sometimes used by early Christians to speak of the future role of the one taken up: the *Apoc. of Pet.* 6 (the purpose of Jesus' enthronement at God's right hand is that he may judge the quick and the dead); *Sib. Or.* 2.238–44 (Christ's right

Would the use of such a model have determined the views of Jesus' earliest followers about his divine or human status? At this point it is necessary to say a word about how divinity and humanity were viewed in pagan and Jewish contexts. In the Greco-Roman milieu there was believed to be a chain of being that ran: humans, heroes (the best of humans), demigods/ immortals (humans who were given immortality), eternals (e.g., Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 10, appealing to Hesiod). In the Jewish world there was believed to be one transcendent God who always was and always would be (e.g., *Apoc. Ab.*17:8–10). The issue for Jews was how this transcendent deity could be related to the world. Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 128.3) says some Jews contended that the angel who appeared to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses

> is indivisible and inseparable from the Father, just as they say that the light of the sun on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the heavens...so the Father, when He chooses, say they, causes His power to spring forth, and when He chooses, He makes it return to Himself. In this way, they teach, he made the angels. (*ANF* 1:264)[37]

Here God's agent is a *projection* of God. Other Jews, however, regarded God's agents as numerically distinct from God, creatures, and so ontologically differentiated from God, but who functioned as an extension of the divine will or purpose. The various Jewish myths sometimes depict the End-time actor as an angel (= a heavenly being but still a creature) or a human (= an earthly being taken up but still a creature). These figures are *creatures* of God. There would be nothing in the model itself that would establish the deity of Jesus who was taken up and assigned the role of End-time judge.

Would not the prayers directed to Jesus as such an End-time figure establish the fact that Jesus' earliest followers regarded him as God? In 1 Cor 16:22 prayer is directed to Jesus: "Our Lord, come." Paul in Rom 10:13 quotes Joel 2:32 and says that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. In 1 Cor 1:2 Paul describes Christians as those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such data require a context. In Dan 10:12 Gabriel tells Daniel that he, the angel, has come to

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hand session is connected exclusively with the last judgment); Hegesippus underlines Christ's future coming as the action associated with his session at God's right hand (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 2.23.13).

[37] Daniel Abrams, "The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead," *HTR* 87 (1994): 291–321, accepts Justin's claim as a true reflection of how some Jews would have thought in antiquity.

help because of Daniel's words (apparently petition for enlightenment [10:19] addressed to a heavenly creature). Daniel addresses the angel as "my lord" (10:16–17). Being petitioned and addressed as 'lord' does not mean, however, that Gabriel was deity.[38] In *T. Dan* 6:1–2 there is an exhortation to draw near to the angel who intercedes for you. The Jerusalem Talmud contains a saying that when one is in need, that one should pray to God, not to Michael or to Gabriel (*y. Ber.* 9:13a). This surely reflects a practice of praying to angelic creatures. The *Jerusalem Targum* on Exod 20:23 has God say to the people that they should not worship the likeness of the angels who serve before him. There are early Jewish warnings against the worship of angels as well (Philo, *Fug.* 212; *Somn.* 1.232, 238; Pseudo-Philo, *L.A.B.* 34.2; 13.6). Such devotion to angels in popular Judaism did not imply the deity of angels. Such worship was opposed because it was directed to creatures rather than the Creator. The call to Jesus for an early parousia, then, did not, in and of itself, mean he was regarded as God by his earliest followers.

(3) The Mediterranean distinction between true gods who are eternal and demigods who gained immortality when they were taken up again comes into play with the second cultural pattern: that of a pre-existent being who descends into this world, fulfils the descent's aim, and then ascends back into the heavens. Variation one of this second pattern yields the third cultural model: the epiphany model.[39] The term, epiphany, in the Greco-Roman world may denote both the personal appearance of a god and a display of divine power but without the personal appearance of the deity.[40] In the mythology currently under

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[38] Petr Pokorny, *The Genesis of Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987), 80.

[39] *Demigods* (e.g., the Dioscuri appear during a battle between Latins and Romans, leading the Romans to victory. They then announce the victory in Rome. Cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.12.5–10; 6.13.1–2) and *heroes* (e.g., Philostratus' *Heroicus* provides a dialogue between a vinedresser and a Phoenician merchant about Protesilaos, a Greek hero who is buried at Elaious and who appears to the vinedresser four or five times a month) could manifest themselves in epiphanies just as *eternals* could. Cf. Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean and Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, trans., *Flavius Philostratus*: *Heroikos* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 1; Atlanta: SBL, 2001). In the context of this paper's argument, it is an epiphany of an eternal that is of concern.

[40] H. S. Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See When He Saw a God? Some Reflections of Greco-Roman Epiphany,"in *Effigies Dei* (ed. Dirk van der Plas; SHR 51; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 42–55; D. Luhrmann, "Epiphaneia: Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte eines griecheschen Wortes," in *Tradition und Glaube. Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt* (eds. Gert Jeremias, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, and Harmut Stegemann;

discussion, it is the former, a personal appearance of some kind, that is the focus. Such a personal appearance could be of the deity herself or of an appropriate human form. Homer (*Od.* 17.485) says that the gods come down from heaven, putting on all manner of shapes and visit the cities. Athena, for example, can appear as Phoenix (*Il.* 17.551–55) or Laodocus (*Il.* 4.75–78); she also can appear as a bird (*Od.* 1.322); she can appear as a disembodied voice as well (*Od.* 24.530–35). In the myth that is currently under discussion, it is the personal appearance in recognizably human form that is our concern. Athena, for example, is sent by Hera to Achilles to prevent him from acting rashly in anger. She came from the sky, stood behind him, caught him by the hair, appearing to him only. Achilles turned around and knew Athena and the terrible eyes shining. Then Athena returned to Olympus (*Il.*1. 221–2). This is a direct epiphany. Heliodorus, in *Aeth.* 3.13, says that when gods descend to earth, they usually take on human shape. That they resemble us makes their theophany/epiphany more accessible. They can be known, he says, by their eyes (gods never blink) and by their movement (a smooth gliding motion and without touching the ground). At other times a direct epiphany may be in human form but not the exact appearance of the deity (e.g., Homer *Od.* 16.15–20 and 20.30–35, say Athena manifested herself in the shape of a tall, handsome, and accomplished woman). In post-Homeric times, epiphanies were taken for granted.[41] Sometimes the deity appeared in a dream (e.g., Plutarch, *Luc.* 10.2—Persephone appeared in a dream at the time of her festival; 10.3—Athena appeared to many in their sleep). Sometimes recipients of epiphanies claimed to have been awake (e.g., Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 9.7, says he saw Asclepius but not in a dream; *P. Oxy.* 1381, the mother of a sick person saw an apparition of the god, not in a dream and not in her sleep). Sometimes the deity was seen by someone who was between sleep and waking (e.g., Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.31–35).

Cicero's "Dream of Scipio" (*Resp.* 6.13.24) envisioned rulers as coming from and returning to heaven. The epiphany tradition, therefore, could be used to interpret the lives of historical figures. In 196 B.C.E.

Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 185–99, argues that ancient epiphanies never occur in the sense of a personal appearance of a deity but only as a divine manifestation of power. This has few followers. For epiphanies of God's power in the Jewish world, cf. 2 Macc 3:24–28; 5:2–4; 12:22; 14:15; 15:11–16; 15:27.

[41] Bernard C. Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies in Homer," *Numen* 30 (1983): 53–79.

the title *epiphanes* was taken by a king, Ptolemy V, to mark the sudden show of godlike power displayed in a particular crisis of his kingdom.[42] Neighboring kings copied this practice, the best known perhaps being Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian ruler at the time of the Maccabean war. An inscription of the town council of Ephesus says of Julius Caesar that he was "the god made manifest and savior of human life" (τὸν θεὸν ἐπεφάνη).[43] In Vergil's *Ecl.* 4, Augustus' birth is viewed in terms of the myth of Apollo's descent to earth for redemptive purposes: the cessation of war and the establishment of peace. Horace's *Carm.* 1.2, asks: "Whom of the gods shall the folk call to the needs of the falling empire?" (25–26) "To whom shall Jupiter assign the task of atoning for our guilt?" (19–30) Then various gods are addressed: Apollo, Mars, and finally Mercury. It is the last of these deities whose descent is described: changing his form and assuming on earth the guise of a man (41–44). It is the epiphany of Mercury that is used to interpret the career of Augustus. The petition closes: "Late mayest thou return to the skies and long mayest thou be pleased to dwell amid Quirinus' folk" (45–46 [Fairclough, LCL]).

The LXX uses the terminology of epiphany very sparingly. An example may be found in Gen 35:7 where we hear that at Bethel God "appeared" (ἐπεφάνη) to Jacob (28:12–15 says it was in a dream). Philo (*Somn.* 1.232) says that to souls still in bodies God must 'appear' in the resemblance of the angels, though without changing his nature. Josephus (*Ant.* 5.277) provides an example. Manoah's wife, when alone, "saw an apparition" (φάντασμα ἐπιφαίνεται), an angel of God who resembled a young man, beautiful and tall, who told her the good news that she would have a son (Sampson). After delivering his message, the angel went away. The language of epiphany is used by Jews mostly for demonstrations of God's power near the beginning of our era (e.g., 2 Macc 3:24–26—God caused a great epiphany [ἐπιφάνειαν], a rider on a horse and two young men confronted Heliodorus; 3 Macc 6:9—the Jews prayed for God to 'manifest' himself swiftly; 6:18—two angels descended; 6:39—so God 'manifested' his mercy).

Perhaps the closest analogy to the direct epiphany phenomenon of the Greco-Roman world that one finds in the Jewish scriptures is in the theophanies in which God appears in human form. God appears as a man/men (e.g., Gen 18:1–22) or angel/ messenger (e.g., Judg 6:11–22). These divine appearances are brief, direct, and personal. They occur in the framework of everyday life. In them, God speaks, listens, and eats. In them God's word is embodied, if only for a brief period.[44]

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[42] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 127.

[43] Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922), 344.

Philo, facing the paradox of transcendence and immanence in his view of God, found a solution in the figure of the *logos*. The *logos* functioned "as the aspect of God by which people know him."[45] This *logos* on occasion can be called 'God,' without a definite article (*Somn.* 1.227ff); he is sometimes described as if he were a being separate from God (*QG* 9.6). It is through the mediation of the second God, the *logos*, that the transcendent God is related to the world (appears/is made manifest). In *Conf.* 146–47, the one who appears in this way is alternately called Word, Archangel, the Beginning, the Name of God, the Man after God's image, and He that sees, that is Israel. In *Somn.* 1.215 and *Fug.* 108, the many named one is called high priest. In *Alleg. Interp.* 1.65, Philo says, "Now wisdom is the word of God." In *Agr.* 51, he links the word, the firstborn Son, and the angel of Yahweh. Philo, however, did not believe that the *logos* was a separate being from God. There is, then, continuity between the biblical theophanies in which God appears as a human and the Hellenistic Judaism of Philo. In Philo, of course, the one who appears is a many-named one, reflecting a synthesis of multiple Jewish traditions about a descending-ascending redeemer figure.[46] Philo's *logos* should be understood as a *projection* of God rather than as a *creature*. Because of their monotheistic beliefs, however, most ancient non-Christian Jews did not interpret a human's entire life as an epiphany/theophany of the transcendent deity.[47] The structural similarity between Greco-Roman and Jewish mythologies, however, yields the third model: the appearance of a deity in human guise.

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[44] Terence E. Fretheim, "Christology and the Old Testament," in *Who Do You Say That I Am*? (eds. Mark A. Powell and David R. Bauer; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 205–15, esp. 210–1. Cf. Esther J. Hamori, *When Gods Were Men: The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

[45] P. M. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, 84.

[46] Charles H. Talbert, "The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity," *NTS* 22 (1976), 418–39. The same tendency is found in the Wisdom of Solomon. In 9:1–2 wisdom and word are interchangeable; in 9:17 wisdom and holy spirit are; in 18:15 word and angel are.

[47] The case for the Samaritans may be different, if Michael Goulder's argument is correct that Simon Magus of Samaria was, in fact, understood as the manifestation of the high god on earth (Goulder, "Two Roots of the Christian Myth," 64–86). In the *Prayer of Joseph*, a Jewish apocryphon cited by Origen (*In Joh.* 2.31, 189–90), Jacob appears as an incarnate angel who was before creation and who descended incognito to earth. Exod 4:22 (Israel is my first-born son) is here interpreted in terms of a pre-existent being who takes human form in Jacob.

The Pastoral epistles speak about the two comings of Christ as epiphanies (e.g., Titus 2:11–13; 3:4; 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 1:10; 4:1, 8; cf. 2 Thess 2:8), translating the παραθήκη (the gospel tradition) into the current relevant epiphanic language of the reigning culture.[48] In doing so, the author was reflecting the perspective of traditional material circulating in the church. In 1 Tim 3:16, the author says: "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion." What follows is traditional material that specifies Christ as the Christian mystery.

> Who was manifested (ἐφανερώθη) in flesh,
>   Vindicated in spirit,
>   Was seen by angels,
> Was preached among the nations,
> Was believed on in the world,
>   Was received up in glory.

The thought runs A (lower world), B (upper world), B, A, A, B.[49] The overall picture is that of the descent-ascent pattern, with the descent depicted as an epiphany. Implied is pre-existence. To be sure, for the Pastorals the epiphany (descent) is not that of a docetic figure (cf. Titus 2:14; 1 Tim 2:11) but of one who died for us.[50] Not only pre-existence but also incarnation is implied. The latter means that although the epiphanic model is used, the appearance is more than a changing of form.

We know that by the early second century Justin Martyr was using the epiphany/ theophany model espoused by Philo to speak about Christ. In *Dial.* 61, he says:

> God has begotten of Himself a certain, rational power as a Beginning before all other creatures. The Holy Spirit indicates the Power by varying titles, sometimes...Son, or Wisdom, or Angel, or...Word. He even called Himself Commander-in-Chief when He appeared in human guise to Joshua (*ANF* 1:227).

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[48] Andrew Y. Lau, *Manifest in Flesh: The Epiphany Christology of the Pastoral Epistles* (WUNT 2/86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 277.

[49] Eduard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation* (eds. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder; New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 166–77, esp. 168–9.

[50] Lau, *Manifest in Flesh*, 265.

Here an early Christian is interpreting the incarnation as a theophany/epiphany of the many-named one, much like Virgil and Horace had done with reference to Augustus.

In this model, moreover, the return to the heavenly realms involves a resumption of his heavenly life (cf. John 17:5—"and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made" [RSV]; "Late mayest thou return to the skies" [Horace, *Carm.* 1.45–46].). If the model of one taken up for a function in the present implied an upgrade of status by virtue of one's being taken up, the epiphanic model implies, in the ascent, a resumption of a state and status prior to the descent/appearing.

Does such a model signal Jesus' followers' belief in his deity? A person of pagan background would certainly have understood the matter as an epiphany of God. If Titus 2:13 is translated as "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" the implication seems certain.[51] Jesus in the Pastorals is seen as the epiphany of a true deity.

In a much earlier period, would Christian affirmation of pre-existence have implied deity? For example, in 1 Cor 8:6 Paul quotes an early tradition.

> There is one God, the Father,
> from whom are all things and for whom we exist,
> And one Lord, Jesus Christ,
> through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

This affirmation is distinguished from that of others who believe in many gods and many lords (8:5). Here Jesus' pre-existence is affirmed, as is his role in creation. Several things must be noted. First, this is not addressed to Jesus. It is a statement about his place in God's order. Second, there is a distinction between 'God' and 'Lord.' Jesus belongs in the latter category, not the former.[52] That Lord and God are not synonyms is evident from passages where God is said to be the God of the Lord Jesus (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Col 1:3; Eph 1:3, 17;

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[51] Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 353.

[52] Mediteranean auditors could not avoid the association of 'lord' with Roman emperors (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.12; Suetonius, *Dom.* 13.2; Philo, *Legat.* 286, 356; Acts 25:26), with rulers in general (e.g., Judith 6:4—Nebuchadnezzar), and with angels (e.g., Dan 10:16–17—Gabriel). So, 'many lords' equals many powerful figures who rule. So here 'lord' would not, of necessity, be heard as a reference to God.

1 Pet 1:3). Third, in Jewish thought pre-existence and a role in creation did not guarantee deity (e.g., wisdom, though pre-existent and an agent of creation nevertheless had a beginning, so a creature [Prov 8:23–25]; the Magharians held that God created an angel who then created the world). One must conclude, then, that this pre-Pauline tradition, in and of itself, does not reflect early Christians' belief in Jesus as God in the Nicaean sense. At most, this tradition may assume that Jesus belongs to the category of the Wisdom of Solomon's 'wisdom/word/spirit' (chs. 7–10 = an encomium to wisdom) or to Philo's many-named descending-ascending redeemer figure (= a projection of God? cf. Col 1:19; 2:9).

(4) The fourth and final model also belongs to the pattern of descent and ascent of deity. In this trajectory the descent and ascent are not understood as an epiphany but in terms of the notions of ecstasy/inspiration/indwelling.[53] It is *not* ecstasy (displacement of the human mind, frenzied behavior, and temporary duration—like the rites of Cybele [Diodorus Siculus, 5.49.3] or Dionysus [Livy 39.13.12; 39.10.7; 39.15.9–10] from the non-Jewish world or the behavior of Saul [1 Sam 10:5–13; 19:23–24] or the Jewish Sibyl [*Sib. Or.* 2.1–5] from the Jewish world). *Nor* is it inspiration (frenzied behavior unlikely, displacement of the human mind does not occur, of occasional occurrence and temporally limited [like Homer, *Il.* 15.236–8, 262 or Dio Chrysostom, *1 Regn.* 1.56, from the non-Jewish milieu or Exod 31:1–3 or Judg 3:10 from the Jewish milieu]). It is *rather* what Kinlaw calls indwelling (no frenzy, no displacement of the human mind, no sign of the spirit's departure [like Plato, *Phaedr.* 249 C–E, or Seneca, *Ep.* 41.4–5, from the non-Jewish environment or from the Jewish world, Moses (LXX Exod 3:12; 4:12; Num 11:17, 25, 29; Deut 34:9; Josh 1:5), David (1 Sam 16:13), or the Messiah (*Pss. Sol.* 17:32, 37; 18:7–9; *1 En.* 49:1–4)]). The structural similarities yield a final model. In this model the deity descends and remains with/on/in the person permanently with no sign of a time of departure.

It is this model that characterizes the positions of the author of 1 John and his opponents. The issue that divides them is not the material nature of Jesus' body but the temporary versus the permanent nature of the Spirit's residence in Jesus. In 1 John both the author and the opponents use a possession pattern to explain the association between the Christ and Jesus. The opponents hold to a model of temporary possession; the author to a model of permanence. In 1 John 5:6–8 the issue is laid out.

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[53] For what follows in this segment, see Pamela E. Kinlaw, *The Christ Is Jesus: Metamorphosis, Possession, and Johannine Christology* (Academia Biblica 18; Atlanta: SBL, 2005).

> This is he who came by water (= the Spirit descends and remains on Jesus at his baptism, cf. John 1:33) and blood (= Jesus' death on the cross, cf. John 19:34), Jesus Christ; not with water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the witness (i.e., the Spirit was not given until *after* Jesus' glorification—John 7:39; 20:22). (RSV, with my interpretations in parentheses)

From this text one can see that the author of 1 John believes that the Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism and remained through his death.[54] The one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit did not do so until after his glorification (death and resurrection). The opponents were willing to say that the Spirit had descended on Jesus at his baptism but left him before his passion. The issue then was between a descent and ascent that involved a temporary possession and a descent and ascent that involved permanent indwelling.[55] Kinlaw also contends that the Fourth Gospel "makes sense as an extended presentation of the permanence of the union."[56] John 3:34 (it is not by measure that God gives the Spirit to Jesus) continues the emphasis of permanence that 1:33 (the one on whom you see the Spirit descend *and remain*) began. John 20:17 reinforces the depiction of a union of Spirit and Jesus through his passion when the Johannine Jesus says, "I have not yet ascended to the Father.… I am in the process of ascending" (= after his death and resurrection, preventing any possible misunderstanding of John 19:30). The Fourth Gospel and 1 John together emphasize a possession that accents permanence, with no tendency toward ecstatic behavior or displacement of the human mind. This is the fourth and final building block in terms of which the earliest Christians reflected on their experience of Jesus Christ.[57]

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[54] Francis Watson, "Is John's Christology Adoptionist?" in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology*, (eds. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 117, rightly sees that the author of 1 John rejects his opponents' docetic understanding of the crucifixion but wrongly believes 1 John's author's agreement with his opponents that it was at Jesus' baptism that the heavenly Christ descended on Jesus is adoptionistic (cf. pp. 120, 122, 123, 124). The timing of the moment of incarnation is not what does or does not make a position adoptionistic. It is rather that the incarnation is due to merit that makes a position adoptionistic.

[55] Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John* (rev. ed.; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 45–50.

[56] Kinlaw, *The Christ Is Jesus*, 171.

The Models' Utility

If Christology is experientially derivative from soteriology, then the cultural models used by Jesus' followers should point to some experiential base. The cultural models were useful because they expressed some soteriological reality experienced or anticipated by the early followers of Jesus. From the model one should be able to access the benefit Jesus provided or would provide.[58] If they expected the righteous one, Jesus, to be the norm of future judgment, then the myths of an eschatological redeemer/judge were there to speak of Jesus' *future* function. If the earliest followers of Jesus after his resurrection experienced the risen Jesus' present interventions on their behalf, then a model reflecting the structural similarities between the myth of the immortals and that of Elijah's role as guardian spirit were there to enable them to speak of Jesus' *present* function. If his followers reflected on Jesus' earthly career and what it accomplished, the pressing question must have been: Who must he have been in order to accomplish what was needed? If their answer was, Only God could have done what was needed, then the structural similarities between the myth of the eternals appearing in human form on the earth and the appearance of the many-named revealer were there yielding a model to explain their *past* experience of Jesus in the flesh. If their soteriology included body as well as spirit, then the divine presence must have been united with Jesus' human corporeality throughout, including death and resurrection. The concept of a permanent indwelling was at hand to give expression to this conviction. The four models from the culture furnished categories for the expression of soteriological realities. This was their utility.

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[57] Of course, 1 John also assumes that the Son will come at the time of the last judgment (3:2; 4:17), another model alongside the indwelling one.

[58] Leander E. Keck ("Christology of the New Testament: What, Then, Is New Testament Christology?" in *Who Do You Say That I Am?*, 193) says: "in a coherent Christology the understanding of salvation (soteriology, the work of Christ) implies the identity (the person of Christ) as its ground, and that his person, or identity, implies soteriology as its significance or work. Because each implies the other, one may enter the discourse at either point, for a full-orbed Christology embraces both." This claim is for the logical level, not the experiential.

Do these four building blocks derived from the culture of the times signal four different communities, each with its own Christology? Two arguments say NO. On the one hand, if one notes that the Romans could speak about Augustus both in terms of the myth of the demigods (so Suetonius) and that of the epiphanies of true gods (Horace and Vergil), then the same community could employ both models for the same figure without any sense of contradiction. This is similar to Acts' depiction of Peter's sermons in Acts 2 using the myth of one taken up to perform a present function and in Acts 3 employing the trajectory of one taken up to perform a function at the end of history. The Third Evangelist seems to have felt both were appropriate as speeches of Peter. On the other hand, if the models are experientially and soteriologically based, then they cannot be mutually exclusive. They are complementary models because the soteriological reality is a unity. The four models easily assimilated into one another because of this experiential underpinning. One then must conclude with Leander Keck that different Christologies do not point to different communities. Communities not only can but must affirm multiple Christologies simultaneously.[59]

Developments of the Four Models in the 1st and Early 2nd Centuries

The Synoptic Trajectory

Mark's telling of the story of Jesus was both incomplete and open to distortion.[60] First, Mark's model of one taken up in order to return as future judge did not take into account Jesus' present functions. To remedy this incompleteness, Matthew and Luke-Acts recast the story. They used the model of one taken up to perform various functions in the present as the dominant focus, while allowing the model of one taken up to come again as judge to remain. Matthew 28:18 indicates that by virtue of his being taken up he now had a new status ("All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me."). In 28:20 the risen Jesus' present function is spelled out ("I am with you always, to the close of the age." Cf. also 18:20). This recasting in order to focus on the risen Jesus' present functions by no means eliminates his expected future functions as End-time judge and savior (cf. Matt 24–25; 16:27; 13:41–43). Luke-Acts recasts the story of Jesus in a similar way. Acts 2:32–36 describes Jesus' resurrection as exaltation to God's right hand with his being made Lord and Christ, a new status granted by virtue of his being taken up (cf. Acts 13:32–37).[61] As a result of being taken up, the risen Jesus performs a number of functions in the present (giving the Spirit—Acts 2:33; healing—3:16 and 4:10; 9:34; gift of salvation—4:12; 10:43; 13:38–39; 16:31; support for a martyr—7:55–56; overpowering an enemy—9:3–6; etc.). Luke's recasting, however, did not eliminate the Markan emphasis on the function of Jesus at the Day of Judgment (e.g., Luke 9:26; 21:27; Acts 10:42; 17:31). First of all, then, Matthew and Luke-Acts merge two models for the sake of soteriological completeness.

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[59] Ibid., 335.

[60] This essay assumes with most scholars that the Synoptics do not utilize a preexistence Christology. Simon Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, And Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), has persuaded few.

Second, the effect of Matthew's and Luke-Acts' adding birth narratives had the effect of protecting a soteriological non-negotiable.[62] It was a Mediterranean conviction that those taken up and given a new status were so treated because in their lives in the human sphere they had been the source of significant benefactions. Because of such virtue, they were given a new and higher status (e.g., Diodorus Siculus [1.24.7] says Heracles was accorded divine honors for his benefactions; Plutarch [*Is. Os.* 27] says Isis and Osiris were demigods who were translated for their virtues into gods, as were Heracles and Dionysus later; in *Def. orac.* 10, Plutarch says because of great excellence, a few souls come, after being purified, to share completely in deity.). Minus a miraculous birth story, such virtue would be regarded as merit. Such a view existed in early Christianity. Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.26.1) tells of a late first century Jewish Christian, Cerinthus, who believed that

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[61] I. H. Marshall, "The Christology of Luke's Gospel and Acts," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 141, says that what the resurrection achieved in Luke-Acts was Jesus' enthronement. "It is the equivalent of being appointed Son of God *with power* in Rom. 1:4 or being *highly* exalted in Phil. 2:9–11."

[62] For what follows, cf. Charles H. Talbert, "Miraculous Conceptions and Births in Mediterranean Antiquity," in *The Historical Jesus in Context* (eds. A. J. Levine, Dale C. Allison, and John D. Crossan; Princeton Readings in Religion; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 79–86. In this segment, translations of primary sources are my own.

> Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary according to the usual manner of begetting. Because he was more righteous, more prudent, and wiser than other humans, after his baptism the Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove. Then he preached the unknown Father and performed miracles. (*ANF* 1:352)

Here the meritorious life of Jesus that was the basis for his being taken up to perform both present and future functions is due to himself alone. Mark, without a miraculous birth narrative, was subject to this type of reading. The addition of a birth narrative by Matthew and Luke indicated that any benefaction deriving from Jesus' life was due to an act of God. In so doing they followed the Mediterranean practice of using miraculous birth stories to indicate from whence an individual's unique life derived (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.77.2, says that when the vestal virgin Ilia was ravished in the grove consecrated to Mars, the ravisher [the god?] told the maiden that she would give birth to two sons whose deeds would excel all others; Arrian, *Anab.* 7.30, says of Alexander the Great, "And so not even I can suppose that a man quite beyond all other men was born without some divine influence" (Brunt, LCL); Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.4.5–9, has the narrator explain that Apollonius would excel in wisdom because he had been begotten by the deity Proteus who also excelled in wisdom). When Matthew and Luke added miraculous birth narratives to Mark, they were saying that his type of life could be produced only by God's prior gracious, creative act. The Greco-Roman conviction that a human's superiority can only be explained by a divine creative act is used to establish the prevenience of divine grace in the divine-human relation. This would have defended against the belief of some early Christians that their relation with God depended on their taking the initiative and performing notably so that God would respond approvingly (cf. Gal 2:15–16; 3:1–5). The stories of the miraculous conception of Jesus functioned to defend against a legalistic soteriology.[63]

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[63] This explanation reflects the sociological model espoused by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1967), 125: "Historically, the problem of heresy has often been the first impetus for the systematic theoretical conceptualization of symbolic universes.... As in all theorizing, new theoretical implications within the tradition itself appear in the course of this process, and the tradition itself is pushed beyond its original form in new conceptualizations.... In other words, the symbolic universe is not only legitimated but also modified by the conceptual machineries to ward off the challenge of heretical groups within a society."

The result of these two expansions of Mark by Matthew and Luke-Acts was to yield a presentation of the story of Jesus as a demigod/immortal (miraculous birth, career of benevolences, taken up and granted a new, higher status, resulting in an ongoing ministry in the present). This prevented one's understanding of Jesus as merely a hero[64] and defended against a view of Jesus' career as meritorious in a way that legitimated a legalistic soteriology. It did this without eliminating the risen Jesus' future eschatological function as judge, as in Mark.

The Johannine trajectory

The opponents combated by 1 and 2 John employed a descent-ascent pattern for their Christology. Both the opponents and the author of 1 and 2 John agreed that the divine entity descended upon/into Jesus at his baptism.[65] This was described as his 'being made manifest' (ἐφανερώθη—1:2, twice). Where they disagreed was over the issue of when the Christ left (ascended). The opponents contended that the Christ left Jesus before Jesus' death-resurrection.[66] The author of 1 and 2 John argued that the union of Christ and Jesus continued through Jesus' death and resurrection (1 John 5:6–8). The Fourth Gospel adapted this schema in two basic ways.[67] First, the Gospel of

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[64] Hans D. Betz ("Hero Worship and Christian Beliefs," in *Philostratus's Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century* C.E. (eds. J. K. B. Maclean and E. B. Aitken; Writings from the Greco-Roman World 6; Atlanta: SBL, 2004], 25–47), contends that regarding Jesus' resurrection appearances as like those of heroes was prevented by limiting the time of such appearances, assigning Jesus to the highest place at God's right hand, and the empty grave.

[65] In early Christianity such a position had advocates in both heretical and non-heretical camps. Among the latter, one finds Mark, *Hermas*, and the gospel written in Hebrew speech that the Nazarenes read (so Jerome, *On Isaiah* 11:2). Among the former, consider Cerinthus (so Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1), Theodotus (so Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.35.1–2), and the Nag Hammadi *Testim. Truth* 9.30.19–29. Cf. Charles H. Talbert, "And the Word Became Flesh: When?" in *The Future of Christology*, (eds. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 43–52.

[66] This is the same position advocated by Cerinthus. Because of Jesus' merit, after his baptism the Christ descended on Jesus in the form of a dove. Before Jesus' crucifixion the Christ departed, leaving Jesus to suffer and die. (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1).

[67] Raymond E. Brown's early stance that the Fourth Gospel preceded the Johannine Epistles was significantly modified by the later Brown in his commentary on the Epistles (*The Epistles of John* [AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982], 32–33, 69, 73). In his later period Brown had come to the position that the Gospel and the Epistles were all written at about the same time. He allows that 1 John could have been written *before* the last edition of the Fourth Gospel and thus have influenced that final edition. The final edition is the Fourth Gospel as we have it in the New Testament Canon, i.e., the

John presented the auditors with a narrative of Jesus' career that demonstrated the continuing union of Spirit and flesh that began at Jesus' baptism by John (1:32–34; 3:34). Jesus' humanity is reflected in such details as John 4:6 (Jesus was weary; 4:7—Jesus was thirsty), 11:33, 35, 38 (experience of grief over Lazarus' death), 19:28 (Jesus was thirsty), 19:34 (when pierced by a soldier's spear, Jesus bled), he died (12:23–24, 33; 19:30), and his body was buried (19:38–42). That the union continued through death and resurrection is demonstrated by 20:17 (after his death and resurrection, Jesus says he has not yet ascended to his Father and God but that he is ascending), by 20:19–23 (the risen Jesus appears and shows the disciples his hands and his side; then he bestowed the Spirit on them, something that was to occur only after his glorification, 7:39), and by 20:26–28 (Jesus tells Thomas to put his finger in Jesus' hands and his hand in Jesus' side).

Second, the Fourth Gospel employed a prologue (1:1–18) before the story proper began (at 1:19). The prologue makes clear that the one who came on Jesus at his baptism and remained through his passion was a true God. True gods were eternal. So the Logos was in beginning, was with God, and was God (1:1–2). All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made (1:3). He was no creature! He was creator! Being eternal, he possessed life in himself (1:4). Being with the Father, he can make him known (1:18).[68] Such themes found in the prologue continue thereafter. Preexistence is claimed in 8:56–58 (before Abraham was, I am). The theme of having life in himself (5:21, 25, 26, 28–29; 6:40, 50–51, 58; 10:17–18; 11:25–26) is supplemented by his being given the role of judge (5:22, 27, 29). The one who was manifest was an eternal, a true God. He was no hero; he was no demigod. The appearance of an Eternal enters into a union that continues from Jesus' baptism through his passion and resurrection. The one who ascended to his Father and God, moreover, apparently took his corporeality into heaven with him. The union,

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form that we are interpreting. Cf. Kinlaw's survey of scholars who regard 1 John as earlier than the Fourth Gospel (pp. 70–74).

[68] Justin (*Dial.* 128) describes his Christian view of Jesus' ontology over against the Jewish options of *projection* of God and *creature*. Justin advocates *begotten*. The Son, he says, is numerically distinct from the Father but not by abscission (cutting off), as if the essence of the Father were divided. Rather it is like a fire being kindled from a fire: distinct from it but leaving the original not less but the same. As God, the Word/angel can be a legitimate object of worship. The Fourth Gospel and the Revelation to John seem to be in the same camp as Justin. Because he is God, his ontology is understood differently from either a projection of God or a creation of God.

then, continues indefinitely. The Fourth Gospel's development functions defensively (the union is permanent), for clarification (the Logos/Spirit is a true deity/eternal, with life in himself), and for completeness (the word become flesh who will function as End-time judge is even now passing judgment—3:18; 8:16, 24, 26; 12:48).

The Pauline trajectory

The Pauline epistles seem to reflect an *ad hoc* use of the various models. The model of one taken into heaven to return as eschatological judge (a future function) is present from the first of Paul's letters (1 Thess 1:9–10, usually thought to reflect the Hellenistic kerygma of 'monotheism + Christology,' speaks about waiting for God's Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come; 1 Thess 4:13–17 opens with a reference to Jesus' resurrection and follows with a tradition about the Lord's descent from heaven at the parousia to reclaim the living and dead believers; 1 Thess 5:1–11 exhorts the readers to be prepared for the parousia that will come unexpectedly and hopefully bring them salvation; 1 Thess 5:23–24 offers a prayer to God for the preservation of the readers' so they will be blameless at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ). In 1 Thessalonians, the one who was taken up (raised from the dead) has a future function: judgment and salvation at the Last Day.

First Corinthians opens with references to "the revealing (ἀποκάλυψιν) of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:7, 8, the parousia). It continues with a reference to the Lord's coming to judge and to commend (4:4b–5; cf. 2 Cor 5:10). Then the one taken up is said to have a present function (5:3–5, the power of the Lord Jesus is present in the church's disciplining of a straying member; cf. 11:32; 2 Cor 13:3–4). Next the Lord Jesus Christ is depicted in an oral tradition as creator (8:6, through whom are all things and through whom we exist). Pre-existence is again encountered in 10:4 (the Rock was Christ). In another traditional fragment we hear that Christ appeared after his resurrection to Cephas, the Twelve, more than 500 at one time, to James, to all the apostles, then to Paul (15:5–8). In 15:24–28 Christ, raised and exalted, has the present function of putting all his enemies under his feet. The future function returns in 15:51–57 (the parousia of Christ gives the victory over death) and 16:22 (Our Lord, come). In 1 and 2 Corinthians, then, one finds not only the two models of one taken up either to perform present or future functions but also a pre-existence tradition that speaks both of creation and of Christ's presence with ancient Israel in the wilderness. No one model dominates. Each is used as is needed.

In Galatians we meet initial references to the one taken up who performs present functions (1:12, 16, Jesus Christ reveals his gospel to Paul; 2:20, Christ lives in Paul; 3:27, believers have put on Christ, an enabling motif). The next model assumes pre-existence (4:4–5, God sent forth his Son to redeem us). Again different models are used as the occasion arises.

In Phil 1:6, 10 the letter begins with a reference to the day of Christ (= parousia), a future function (cf. 2:16; 4:5b). In Phil 2:9–11 the one who was exalted performs a present function (to him every knee shall bow; cf. 3:21b).[69] In 3:20–21a the focus is once again on the future function of raising the dead. Once again, two models are run together as need dictates. Synthesis is the aim.

In Rom 1:3–4 we encounter Christ as one exalted to heaven from which he will exercise power in the present. In 1:5 this power is demonstrated in the gift of apostleship to Paul. In 2:16 the exalted one performs a future, eschatological judgment. In 5:9 the future function is to save believers from the wrath of God. Romans 8:10 the present function is the focus (if Christ is in you, your spirits are alive); likewise in 8:34 (the one who is at the right hand of God intercedes for us);[70] likewise in 14:9 (he is Lord of the dead and the living); likewise in 15:18 (what Christ has wrought through Paul to win obedience from the gentiles). Once again, Paul seems to synthesize the two models within the pattern of one taken up: exercising both a present and a future function.

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[69] One might wonder, why not mention Christ's pre-existence in 2:6? The evidence surveyed so far indicates that the pattern of 'one taken up' regards the exalted one's status after being taken up as higher than before, while the pattern of 'descent-ascent' sees the status of the one who has ascended as a resumption of the status that existed before the descent. Philippians 2:5–11 sees the status of the one who is exalted and given the divine name as greater than before. Hence, Phil 2:5–11 should be read in light of the model of one who was taken up to perform a present function. For other reasons, see Charles H. Talbert, "The Problem of Pre-existence in Philippians 2:6–11," *JBL* 86 (1967): 141–53, esp. 141, n. 2. One's decision on this matter, however, will not affect the overall thesis being argued in this essay.

[70] Plutarch, *Is. et Os.* 26, says that Hesiod calls the worthy and good demigods "holy deities." Plato, he says, calls this class of beings a "ministering class, midway between gods and men, in that they convey thither the prayers and petitions of men, and thence they bring hither the oracles and the gifts of good things."

To summarize this brief segment on Paul's letters, it seems that Paul is working with at least three models: the one taken up to perform a present function, the one taken up to perform a future function, and the pre-existent one who is both creator, benefactor for ancient Israel, and redeemer of those under the law.[71] Paul appears to use these models as the occasion demands with little or no effort to synthesize them at the conceptual level. If there is a coherent base that grounds Paul's use of such models, it is his comprehensive soteriology.

Miscellaneous NT examples

In this brief segment several further examples from NT authors will be surveyed to illustrate their use of one or more of the four models. Ephesians uses a single model: that of one taken up to perform functions in the present (e.g., 1:20–22, taken up and given authority; present functions—3:17, dwell in your hearts; 4:7, gives gifts). The single model used by Jude is that of the one who comes as future judge and deliverer (vv. 14–15, 21).

Three writings employ two models. James makes use of two: both that of one taken up to function as judge and savior in the End-time (5:1, 8, 9) and one taken up to perform functions in the present (5:15, healing of the sick). In 1 Peter there also are likely two models used. The dominant one is of the coming future judge and savior (1:13 read in light of 1:4–5; 4:5, 13). Pre-existence is possibly involved in 1:20. In 2 Peter there are possibly two models employed. The incarnation is described as Jesus' παρουσία (1:16 = an equivalent to ἐπιφάνειαν). If the 'Day of the Lord' (3:20; 3:12—day of God) is understood to be a reference to Jesus' coming as judge (as 3:4 would seem to indicate), then a second model is that of one taken up to come as End-time judge.

Colossians, Revelation, and Hebrews employ three models in their Christologies: a pre-existent one, an eternal who comes into the human sphere for a redemptive purpose (Col 1:16, 17; 1:9; Rev 22:13;

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[71] Romans 9:5's ambiguity excludes it as evidence in this argument. There are two possible translations: either "from them comes the Messiah. The one being over all, God, be blessed into the age, Amen" (so RSV, REB, TEV, NAB), or "from them come the Messiah, the one being over all, God, blessed into the age, Amen" (so NIV, NRSV, NJB, NASV). Arguments for the one or the other usually appeal to general usage of blessings of God or to Paul's overall Christological position.

13:8; 1:17–18;[72] Heb—1:2b, 3; 1:10; 7:3); one taken up to perform a future, eschatological function (Col 3:4; 3:24; Rev 1:18; 2:7; 19:11–21; 22:12, 20; Heb 9:28; 10:37); and one taken up to perform functions in the present (Col 3:1; 1:27; 2:10; Rev 1:12–19; chs. 2–3; 5:5, 6–10; 12:5; 20:4; 22:16; Heb 1:3–4, 5, 13; 2:9; 5:5–6; 6:20; 7:17, 25). The three writings in this segment that employ these three models, Colossians, Hebrews, Revelation, raise an interesting issue. If they all use not only the model of an eternal who comes into the human sphere for redemptive purposes (Col 1:16, 17; 1:9; Heb 1:2b, 3; 2:9; Rev 1:17–18; 13:8; 22:13) but also that of the demigods/immortals who are taken up to continue their benefactions in the present (Col 3:1; 1:27; 2:10; Heb 2:7–8; 8:1–2; 9:24; Rev 1:12–19; chs. 2–3; 5:5, 6–10; 20:4; 22:16) there is an apparent difficulty. An eternal who comes into the human sphere, does his redemptive work, and then returns to the heavens, is depicted in his ascent as resuming the position/status he had before the descent (remember John 17:5, 24). When an immortal ascends into the heavens, however, that one is granted an increase in status by virtue of the ascent. Take Hebrews as an example.[73] When Hebrews says the Son is a true deity, a pre-existent one through whom God created and sustains the world (1:2b–3; cf. 7:3) and then says the Son has 'this day' (at the time of his resurrection?) been begotten by God (1:5), the juxtaposition on a surface level is jarring to the reader. Expositors try to alleviate the perceived problem either by denying pre-existence[74] or by claiming the begetting was in a timeless eternity.[75] Neither expedient seems plausible. If, however, one regards the models as cultural means of giving expression to what Christians had experienced or looked forward to experiencing through Jesus of Nazareth,[76] then the unity of the various models should be sought at the experiential level behind the cultural imagery, as it was for Paul.[77] To have the two models with their differing plots sitting side by side was apparently no more difficult for the Christian authors than it was for the author of Genesis to have two very different cultural expressions of creation sitting beside one another in Gen 1–2 or two very different pictures of the eschatological future (millennial and non-millennial) beside one another in Revelation. After all, models possess complementarity.[78]

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[72] M. Eugene Boring ("Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse," *CBQ* 54 [1992]: 719) says: "As the agent of God, Christ came into history—we do not speculate about how—as the man Jesus."

[73] James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 257–8, succinctly makes the point.

[74] E.g., Kenneth Schenck, "Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews," *JSNT* 66 (1997): 91–117; "Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1," *JBL* 120 (2001): 469–85.

[75] E.g., Richard Bauckham, "The Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. R. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 15–36.

[76] Keck ("What Then Is NT Christology?" 193) says: "Christology is the discourse by means of which Christians account for what they have experienced, and will experience, through Jesus Christ."

Examples within the Apostolic Fathers

The Apostolic Fathers do not have the same homogeneity that the Synoptics, the Johannine epistles and Fourth Gospel, and the Pauline letters do. They are more like the miscellaneous grouping of NT writings just surveyed. If, however, this varied group of very early Christian writings were to reflect the same type of appropriation of the four models that we have previously seen in the NT groupings, then the argument for the four basic models as the building blocks for christological reflection is strengthened.

There are two writings in this collection that use only one of the four models. The *Didache* employs the model that focuses on the future coming of the Lord as judge (10:6–7; 16:1, 7–8—the Lord will come). Hermas seems to do its christological reflection in terms of the indwelling model characteristic of the Johannine trajectory in the NT (*Sim.* 9, ch. 1.1—The Holy Spirit is the Son of God; 12.2—the Son of God is older than creation and was counselor in the Father's creating; he was revealed in the last days; *Sim.* 5, ch. 6.5–7—The pre-existent Holy Spirit God made to live in flesh [Jesus]. This flesh served the Spirit well and did not defile the Spirit at all. So God chose this flesh as a partner of the Spirit and took the Son as counselor so this flesh, after faultlessly serving the Spirit, should have a place to live. *Sim.* 9, ch. 24.4—Christians will live with the Son of God because they have partaken of his Spirit.).

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[77] Keck ("Toward the Renewal of New Testament Christology," 329) is correct when he says that the developed Christologies "represent various stages in the development of perception, not the accretion of alien factors not there from the beginning." Viewed in this way, one avoids the conclusion reached by P. M. Casey: "The Holy Spirit could hardly lead the church into an evaluation of the Jesus of history which Jesus in his revelatory ministry could not hold" (p. 176). In my essay, Christology is not viewed as the exposition of Jesus' self-understanding (*his* christology) but as Jesus' followers' conceptual development regarding his identity made necessary by the soteriological benefits provided by the entire Christ event, especially Jesus' death, resurrection, gift of the Holy Spirit, and his continuing activity of benevolence on their behalf and his expected return as judge and savior.

[78] Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms*, 75–8.

Four writings work with two of the models. The first, *Barnabas*, speaks of pre-existence and Christ's role in creation (5:5; 6:12). Christ came or was revealed in the flesh (5:10–11; 6:14; 5:6). In flesh he suffered (5:13; 6:7; 7:2). He appeared to redeem us (14:5). Here is a variation of the epiphany model. In addition, *Barnabas* says Christ rose and ascended into heaven (15:9) from whence he will come as judge of the world (4:22; 7:2; 15:5; 21:4). Here *Barnabas* uses the model of one taken up to perform a future function. The second, *1 Clement*, assumes pre-existence (36:2) and speaks of Christ being sent from God (42:1) or coming (16:2, 17) to give his blood for us (21:6; 49:6). This reflects an epiphany model. In addition, the letter looks for Jesus to come quickly to pay everybody for their work (23:5; 34:3). This reflects the model of one taken up to perform a future function. The third, *2 Clement*, assumes pre-existence and incarnation (20:5—God sent forth to us the Savior; 9:5—though at first he was spirit, he became flesh; enduring suffering for us—1:2; 2:6—coming and calling us as we were perishing). Again, one meets an epiphany model. The document also looks for Jesus Christ to come as judge of the living and dead (1:1; 3:2; 6:9; 17:4). Again, one meets the model of one taken up to perform a future function. The fourth, *Diognetus*, assumes pre-existence (7:2—the one through whom God created the universe). God sent him as man to men (10:2; 9:6—revealing the Savior) so that through the uprightness of the one many sinful people would be made upright (9:5). The epiphany model surfaces again. *Diognetus* also says God will send Jesus Christ as judge (7:6). The model of one taken up to perform a future function is again operative.

Two of these writings work with three models. Ignatius is the first. The appearing/ incarnation of the pre-existent one is assumed (*Eph.*7:2—God became incarnate; 19:3—God appeared in human form; *Mag.* 6:1—Jesus Christ who from eternity was with the Father finally appeared). It was a real incarnation (*Trall.* 2:1—he died for us; 9:1–2—truly persecuted, truly crucified and died, truly raised from the dead, under Pontius Pilate). Here is an adaptation of the epiphany model. That he was conceived by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary (*Eph.* 7:2; 18:2; *Trall.* 9:1–2; *Smyrn.*) echoes the model of the demigods/immortals. That he raised himself (*Smyrn.* 2:1) and was in the flesh after the resurrection (*Smyrn.* 3:1–2) reflects use of the indwelling model within the Johannine trajectory. In Ignatius, the three models are so integrated that one can only see synthesis dominating. The incarnation of the pre-existent one is located at the moment of the miraculous conception[79] and the resurrection is of a corporeal being. Three models are synthesized into one coherent portrait of Jesus. Polycarp is the other Apostolic Father to employ three models. He seems to assume a pre-existent one who comes in the flesh and dies on the cross (*Phil.* 7:1), adapting the epiphany model. His focus, however, is on the two models involving one who has been taken up (*Phil.* 2:1; 12:2—God raised the Lord Jesus). There is both a confession that this one has a function in the present (2:1—God gave him a throne at his right hand and to him everything in heaven and on earth is subject; 12:2—also Jesus Christ now functions in the present as the eternal high priest) and that he has a future function (2:1—he will come as judge). The last two models are seamlessly combined into a synthetic whole.

Once again, it is possible to see the christological reflections of Jesus' earliest followers employing four basic models from the culture and adapting them in various ways as their circumstances dictate.[80] This freedom was possible because the models were in the service of an experienced or anticipated soteriological reality. The soteriological whole made conceptual synthesis both a possibility and an inevitability. Whether or not the Apostolic Fathers derived the models from specific earlier NT authors or appropriated them from what was "in the air" is impossible to tell. That it may have been some of one and some of the other seems reasonable.

The Models' Functions within Their Respective Worldviews

If the four models were placed within their ancient worldviews so that their soteriological functions were exposed, it would enable one to understand better why this or that pattern was able to be of service to the early Christian christological reflection. There were two basic types of worldviews: temporal and spatial.[81]

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[79] Ignatius (*Smyrn.* 1) may be the first to locate the incarnation at the time of Jesus' conception. Others followed suit: *Epistle of the Apostles*, Coptic version 7.10; Aristides, *Apology*, Greek 15.1; Justin, *1 Apol.* 21 and 33; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.16.2 and 3.19.2; Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 19 and 24.

[80] Dahl, *Jesus the Christ*, 125, says, "Individual authors exhibit individual preferences, drawing little or not at all from some of the main types of sources. They differ in their emphases and in the way they select, combine, and use the four categories."

[81] The inspiration for this segment of the essay comes from Eduard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared," although he should not be held responsible

Temporally conceived worldview

For some, the difference between "what is" and "what ought to be" was conceived in temporal terms. "What is" is what is present; "what ought to be" is what will be. This produced the notion of two ages, present and future with the notion of some transition point between them. So such folks would see themselves as living in history between two great acts of God, creation and recreation. They lived under God who had revealed the divine will to them. The meaning of their lives was tied up with the issue of how they would respond to the revealed will of God. They might disagree about the content of that will. That Sadducees found God's will only in the Pentateuch, the Pharisees in a 22- or 24-book canon, the Hellenistic Jews in a larger collection, and Essenes in a still larger collection might affect what ancient Jews thought God's will was. But they all were agreed that they knew God's will and what the basic issue of life was: Would they do God's will or would they not do it? Being realists, they knew they had not done very well on life's basic issue. Furthermore, most believed[82] that the history in which they found themselves was like a moving sidewalk carrying them to a certain destination: the shift of the ages and the last judgment, at which time they would have to render an account of their performance. Within such a framework of thought, there were two basic religious questions: (1) how can I stand before God at the judgment in light of my sin and guilt? and (2) how long do I have to get ready? It was into such a world that the earliest Jesus followers spoke their message.

Their kerygma is summarized in 1 Cor 15:3–5. It consists of a four line unit with two long lines and two short lines.

> Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures;
> He was buried;
> He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures;
> He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

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for the liberties I have taken. The two worldviews cannot be reduced to a Palestinian Jewish temporal and a Hellenistic spatial contrast. Various folks in whatever venue might think temporally, spatially, or might combine the two.

[82] Exempt the Sadducees who had no concept of life after death (Matt 22:23 par. Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27).

The two short lines are confirmation statements for the two long lines. That "he was buried" confirms the statement that "he died." That "he appeared" to witnesses confirmed that he had been raised. If someone from within the temporal worldview heard such a proclamation, what would that one have heard? Almost certainly, what was heard would have been answers to the two basic religious questions of a temporally conceived worldview. How can I stand before God at the judgment in light of my sin and guilt? The Messiah has died as a sacrifice for your sins. How long do I have to take advantage of this boon? Not long? Why? The scriptures are being fulfilled, the messiah has come, and the general resurrection has begun already. Your time has run out!

If a christological model like that of one taken up in order to return in the ultimate future as judge and savior were heard in this context, what would have been its impact? The earthly Jesus would have come calling for repentance, have been rejected by most to whom he preached and put to death, a resounding NO from humans. God, however, raised him from the dead, a resounding YES from heaven. At some time in the future the exalted one will return as judge and savior at the Last Day. How would this model (taken up to return as judge/savior) have been heard within this temporally conceived worldview? Almost certainly, this Christology would have functioned in the same way as the kerygma, as answers to the two basic questions emerging out of this worldview. How can I stand before God at the Last Day, given my sin and guilt? The answer: repent. How long do I have to get ready? The general resurrection has begun. Your time has run out! Make your decision now. The model of one taken up to return at the end of history as judge and savior would function admirably within such a temporal worldview.

Spatially conceived worldview

For those, both Jew and Gentile, who thought of "what is" as this physical order in which we find ourselves and "what ought to be" as a heavenly, spiritual realm to which one aspires, their worldview was spatially conceived. There was an upper world where the true reality was to be found and a lower realm where humans find themselves. In the heavens or in between earth and heaven are numerous spiritual beings that oppress those on earth. Such beings could be thought of in various ways: e.g., as hostile, capricious deities, or as demons, or the astral powers, or the Gnostic aeons, or simply as Fortune or Fate, etc. However they were conceived, they were believed to block access between earth and heaven and to function as a bondage under which humans must live. In such a milieu, the two basic religious questions that would emerge were: (1) how can I know the true reality? and (2) how can I escape fate? The Hellenistic Christian kerygma began with a proclamation of monotheism. There is one God (1 Cor 8:6; 1 Thess 1:9–10) and one Lord (1 Cor 8:6b). The other spiritual powers are demons (1 Cor 10:20). On the one hand, an epiphany Christology like that found in 1 Tim 3:16 with its message of the descent and ascent of a true god would surely have been heard as providing answers to the two religious questions of the culture. The descent would have answered the question of knowledge of the true God. One who is God comes from heaven to bring us knowledge of God! The ascent would have answered the other question. The one who has ascended has opened a way for others to follow. Fate is broken. A similar function would have been offered by the inspiration/possession/ indwelling christological model. Only the Son brings knowledge of God (1 John 5:20–21). On the other hand, the model of one taken up to perform a present function would have provided its answer as well. In Rom 1:3–4, the one taken up at his resurrection now functions as Son of God with power. In Phil 2:6–11, the one who humbled himself unto death was exalted. This included his being given the name above every name so that every knee should bow before him, those in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth. Those who belong to the exalted Jesus need have no fear of any heavenly power because those powers are all subject to Jesus. The different models' relevance is tied to the respective worldviews within which they function.

Conclusion

From the preceding discussion it should be obvious that the four basic models from the culture within which the earliest disciples of Jesus lived served to express the soteriological realities of early Christian experience and anticipation.[83] This is why they were employed. Two conclusions may be drawn from the preceding argument.

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[83] Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 265, says, "We see earliest Christianity searching around for the most suitable way of understanding and describing Christ, ransacking the available categories and concepts to find language which would do justice to

First, early Christologies were neither constructed out of OT texts nor out of pagan and Jewish myths. Early Christologies used OT texts and Jewish and Greco-Roman myths to give voice to what must be said about Jesus given the effects of his person on those voicing their views. The reflection of non-Jewish as well as Jewish myths in christological reflection does not mean that early Christianity was a syncretistic religion made up of pieces from hither and yon all stirred together. No, rather the earliest followers of Jesus had a distinct constitutive core, experientially grounded, that gave them the ability to sift and sort through language and concepts from their surroundings to express what the Christ-event meant to them in terms of their past, present, and future. There was no alien invasion of a pagan culture into the pure faith. Rather, there was a sovereign use of the general culture for self-understanding and evangelization insofar as it could be adapted to the constitutive, soteriological core.[84]

Second, it would be a serious mistake to conceive of the historical development so described in terms of an evolution from a "low" to a "high" Christology.[85] Christological development, as described above, has the messiness of lived life. It would also be a mistake to create a primitive devotion to Jesus as God out of early oral traditions that could or should be read in a different way. A developed view of the deity of Jesus does come later rather than earlier in the first 100 years. Moreover, since the "creating, judging, and being an object of worship" functions of deity were sometimes delegated or assumed by entities other than God, performing these functions does not guarantee assumption of deity.[86]

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the reality of Christ." Dunn's refusal to acknowledge the Christians' use of categories beyond Judaism is puzzling, to say the least (cf. pp. xxiii, 253, etc.).

[84] *Mysterium Ecclesiae* recognized that faith pronouncements depend "partly on the power of language, used at a certain…time" and usually have the limited intention "of solving certain questions or removing certain errors." (Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 147, n. 211).

[85] Dahl, *Jesus the Christ*, 126–30, offers two arguments against a diachronic argument. First, generalized theories (like Christological development is a process of Hellenization, a shift from eschatology to ontological categories, and an increasing tendency to speak about Jesus as God) do not provide criteria that are precise enough to make it possible to arrange the various models into a clear diachronic sequence. Second, sometimes the earlier source has the higher Christology (e.g., Paul, who is earlier, has a higher Christology than Luke-Acts that is at least a generation later).

[86] E.g., creating (Wisdom, Word, first angel), judging (Enoch, Melchizedek, Abel), objects of worship (various angels). That the devotion shown to Jesus by his earliest Jewish followers did not involve the creation of a separate cult but remained within

Having seen this type of development in the earliest Christian Christologies, however, it must be noted that the four models not only served to express experiential reality but also presented the communities that used them with new conceptual problems that would have to be worked out over the subsequent centuries. The first and early second centuries were but the beginning of Christological development. They furnished the raw materials, a beginning of a synthetic view of Jesus' identity, and the initial defensive maneuvers of the early followers of Jesus. Producing a finished product would remain an elusive quest for many centuries to come.

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the worship of the God of Israel (Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 151) is analogous both to certain Jews' devotion to angels within the one cultus of the God of Israel and to the later devotion shown to Christian saints within the one cultus of the triune God. Cf. C. P. Jones, *New Heroes in Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 84–92.

PART TWO

BUILDING BLOCKS

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM OF PRE-EXISTENCE IN PHILIPPIANS 2:6–11 (1967)

From the ancient church to modern times there have existed two different interpretations of Phil 2:6–11. One sees the passage as making reference in vv. 6–8 only to the human existence of Jesus.[1] The other regards vv. 6–8 as referring both to Jesus' pre-existence and to his earthly life. In spite of its obvious difficulties,[2] it is the latter view which dominates modern exegesis. R. H. Fuller summarizes consensus today when he says: "The attempts which have been made to eliminate pre-existence entirely from this passage…must be pronounced a failure…."[3] Is such confidence justified, however? The purpose of this paper will be to test the accepted exegesis of this passage, using as a criterion the principle: a proper delineation of *form* leads to a correct interpretation of *meaning*. Such a criterion seems especially appropriate in this case since we are dealing with hymnic material.[4]

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[1] See the references in J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1868), 131; Günther Bornkamm, "Zum Verständnis des Christus-Hymnus, Phil. 2:6–11," in *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum, Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Munich, 1951), 179 n. 4. Among recent interpreters we many mention Lionel Spencer Thornton, *The Dominion of Christ* (Westminster: Dacre, 1952); Lucien Cerfaux, "L'hymne au Christ-Serviteur de Dieu," in *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1954), 2:425ff.; L. D. Strecker, "The Christological Hymn in Philippians 2," *LQ* 16 (1964): 49–58; and John Harvey, "A New Look at the Christ Hymn in Phil. 2:6–11," *ExpT* 76 (1965): 337–9.

[2] The obvious difficulties of any interpretation which sees pre-existence referred to in the hymn include: (1) Incarnation is here regarded as kenosis rather than as epiphany as in most other early Christian hymns (cf. John 1:1–18; 1 Tim 3:16); (2) only here in early Christianity would there be a reference to a pre-existent reflection and decision of Christ; (3) the exegete is virtually committed to an interpretation of "emptied himself" as the giving up the form of God (divinity) for the form of a servant (humanity); (4) only with difficult can the conclusion be avoided that exaltation as Lord is a higher state than being in the form of God (divinity). To read the hymn as referring to the human existence of Jesus rather than to his pre-existence, however, enables one to avoid these problems.

[3] Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner, 1965), 235 n. 9. Ernst Kaesemann ("Kristische Analyse von Phil. 2:5–11," *ZTK* 47 [1950]: 313–60), and Oscar Cullmann (*The Christology of the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959]), are only two of the best-known scholars who interpret the hymn as referring to pre-existence.

[4] According to M. R. Cherry ("The Christology of Philippians 2:5–11" [Th.D. thesis,

The Form of Phil 2:6–11 in Modern Research

In modern research two different structural schemes compete with each other for scholarly allegiance. They are associated with the names of Lohmeyer and Jeremias. Lohmeyer sees the hymn as falling into six strophes of three lines each.[5]

(1) Ὅς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο
τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ
(2) ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν
μορφὴν δούλου λαβών,
ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος
(3) καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος
ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν
γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου
(4) διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα
τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα
(5) ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ
πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ
ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων
(6) καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται
ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
εἲς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

Though it has found acceptance in many places,[6] this delineation of the form of the hymn has come under the criticism of Jeremias.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1956], 89), the first person to isolate the passage and call it a hymn was Arthur S. Way in the first edition of his translation of the epistles (1901). Since Lohmeyer (1928), the passage has been generally taken as a non-Pauline hymn. Whether it is pre-Pauline or not is a matter of dispute. F. W. Beare, for example, argues that it is the work of a disciple of Paul (*The Epistle to the Philippians* [New York: Harper, 1959], 30).

[5] E. Lohmeyer, *Der Brief an die Philipper* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 90–92. Lohmeyer's criteria (p. 90) are the placement of the particles and the verbs. He regards the phrase "even death on a cross" as a Pauline addition.

[6] A. M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 123, says "…his analysis of the hymn into six stanzas of three lines each seems to most scholars better than Jeremias' division of it into three stanzas of four lines."

Jeremias' criticisms are basically two.[7] First, and most important, he shows that Lohmeyer's structure fails to follow the inner parallelisms of the hymn. Though Lohmeyer preserves in his arrangement the parallel between ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν and ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα (v. 9), he overlooks the parallel between γόνυ κάμψῃ (v. 10) and γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται (v. 11), placing them instead in different strophes (5 and 6) and in different lines in their respective strophes (line 2 in strophe 5; line 1 in strophe 6). He also disregards the parallelism between ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος (v. 7) and σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος (v. 7), placing them also in different strophes (2 and 3) and in different lines in their respective strophes (line 3 in strophe 2; line 1 in strophe 3). Second, Jeremias points out that Lohmeyer's structural scheme leaves all but strophes three and six dangling. The ends of strophes do not correspond to periods.

Using the inner parallelisms as the key to his scheme, Jeremias offers a suggested structure of three strophes with four lines each, each of which is a complete thought.[8]

(1) Ὅς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ
ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν
μορφὴν δούλου λαβών,
(2) ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος
καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος
ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν
γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου
(3) διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα
ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ
καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς

This structural scheme has found acceptance among a number of scholars because it does less violence to the crucial inner parallelisms of the hymn.[9]

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[7] Joachim Jeremias, "Zur Gedankenführung in den Paulinischen Briefen," in *Studia Paulina in Honorem J. de Zwaan* (eds. J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik; Haarlem: Hohn, 1953), 152–4.

[8] In Jeremias, "Zu Phil. 2:7: Ἑαυτὸν Ἐκενωσεν," *NovT* 6 (1963): 186–7, Jeremias has reiterated his argument.

[9] James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959), 50, who also in n. 3 indicates its acceptance by O. Michel and L. Cerfaux. Cerfaux

The problem with this formal analysis, however, is that, in order to arrive at this result, Jeremias is forced to excise not only θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (v. 8), but also ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων (v. 10) and εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός (v. 11). The first excision is generally accepted as legitimate on the grounds that it disrupts the structure and contains the characteristically Pauline term σταυρός. The other two excisions, however, must be rejected.[10] Both are non-Pauline expressions. If they are left in the hymn, however, Jeremias' third strophe is an impossibility.

The failure of both modern attempts to deal adequately with the form of this hymn raises the question anew.[11] Is it possible, beginning with Jeremias' correct observation that the hymn is built around various inner parallelisms in strophes, each of which forms a complete thought, to discern a structure that will avoid his excisions in vv. 9–11? It will be the purpose of the following paragraphs of this paper to show that such a formal analysis is possible.

A Proposal on the Form and Meaning of Phil 2:6–11

The place to begin our investigation of the form of Phil 2:6–11 is with the obvious parallelism between ὑπερύψωσεν and ἐχαρίσατο in v. 9 which has been recognized by both Lohmeyer and Jeremias. If we build around this parallelism and require the strophe to be a complete thought, we come out with a three-line strophe, the third line of which is a short or half line. The boundaries of the strophe are marked out

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("L'hymne au Christ-Serviteur de Dieu," 426), however, does not accept the three excisions of Jeremias. He then has three strophes with four, five, and six lines. Cf. also L. D. Strecker, "The Christological Hymn in Philippians 2," 57.

[10] Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors*, 123, speaks of Jeremias' excisions as "a procrustean procedure unlikely to commend itself to many."

[11] Georg Strecker, "Redaktion und Tradition im Christushymnus, Phil. 2:6–11," *ZNW* 55 (1964): 63–78, offers a new structure for the hymn based upon the excision of v. 8 as a Pauline addition. He then has two strophes, 6–7 and 9–11, each with six lines divided into couplets of twos. This proposal has been received favorably by A. Feuillet, "L'hymne christologique de l'Epitre aux Philippiens (2:6–11)," *RB* 72 (1965): 503. Strecker's proposal, however, raises more problems than it solves: (1) it breaks the parallelism between γόνυ κάμψῃ and γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται; (2) it breaks the unity of οὐχ and ἀλλά in vv. 6–7; (3) it destroys the parallelism between ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν and ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν; (4) his couplets are not compete thoughts, and only with difficulty can his first strophe be considered other than an awkward sentence. Linguistic argument in such a matter can only be one strand of evidence. It cannot stand alone apart from formal considerations.

by the conjunction διό which joins the two halves of the hymn and the conjunction ἵνα which joins the two sections of the last half of the hymn.

> καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν
> καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα
> τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα

The repetition of καὶ (lines 1 and 2), αὐτόν-αὐτῷ (lines 1 and 2), ὑπερ (lines 1 and 3), and ὄνομα (lines 2 and 3) reinforces our conclusion drawn on the basis of parallelism and completeness of thought. Next we may consider the clear parallelism between γόνυ κάμψῃ (v. 10) and γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται (v. 11). Again if we build around this parallelism and require the strophe to be a complete thought, we come out with a three-line strophe, this time with a short or half line beginning it.

> ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ
> πᾶν γόνυ κάμψσῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων
> καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς

Note that κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς is needed in the third line to complete its thought just as ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων is needed in line 2 to complete its thought. The repetition of πᾶν and πᾶσα in lines 2 and 3 and the use of ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ in the first line and the actual name κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς in line 3 confirm our conclusions drawn on other grounds. It is also interesting to note that the short line is placed first in this strophe for two reasons. First, by placing it first it is possible to have the strophe end with a concluding liturgical phrase: εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός (v. 11).[12] Second, it allows the two strophes to be related to one another in terms of form and key words by a type of chiasmus (aa bb cc). Not only are the two short lines placed next to one another but also they are linked by the repetition of the term ὄνομα. This means that the hymn's individual strophes are not only built around parallelism but also that the strophes are related to one another by the same type of literary device.

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[12] Cf. T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1964), 173 (bottom); Pr Man 15c; Eph 1:6a, 12b, 14b. See also the remarks of David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956), 196–8, and C. F. Kraft, "Some Further Observations Concerning the Strophic Structure of Hebrew Poetry," in *A Stubborn Faith* (ed. E. C. Hobbs; Dallas, Tex.: Southern Methodist University Press, 1956), 65.

Having seen how vv. 9–11 are constructed around inner parallelisms, we may now turn our attention to vv. 6–8. Let us begin our investigation of this part of the hymn with the parallelism between ὁμοιώματι (v. 7) and σχήματι (v. 7). If again we build around this parallelism and require that the strophe be a complete thought, we find another three-line strophe with a short line as the last.

> ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος
> καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν
> γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου.

Whereas the inner parallelisms of the last two strophes were synonymous parallelism, here we find a stair-like parallelism. Line 2 repeats line 1 and then carries it a step further. Here again we find key words tying the strophe together. Here they are ἄνθρωπος and γενόμενος. This again confirms our conclusions reached on other grounds.

The apparent difficulty over the length of the second line is not prohibitive because (1) such formulae sometimes do have long lines followed by short lines (1 Cor 15:3–5);[13] (2) the last strophe in the hymn has one line that is as long and that is longer than that of strophe two; (3) the other two structural schemes do not have lines of equal length; (4) if all the strophes are to have an equal number of lines, then the strophe built around the parallelism ὑπερύψωσιν and ἐχαρίσατο can be made into no more than a three-line strophe.

Our analysis to this point leaves us with another strophe built around the antithetical parallelism μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δούλου[14] which falls naturally into three lines, the last of which is a short line.

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[13] Eduard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared: 1 Cor. 1:3–5 and 1 Tim. 3:16," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation* (eds. William Klassen and Graydon Snyder; New York: Harper, 1962), 166–77. Also, if the evidence of Hans Kosmala ("Form and Structure in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," *VT* 16 [1996]: 152–80) be accepted, then in both Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry the length of lines varies both within strophes and from strophe to strophe within the same poem. A similar point is made about early Christian hymns by Ernst Haenchen, "Probleme des Johanneischen Prologs," *ZTK* 60 (1963): 309.

[14] That the parallelism is antithetic is indicated by the contrasts between ὑπάρχων and λαβών, θεοῦ and δούλου, οὐχ and ἀλλὰ. In spite of the common μορφῇ, then, the two parts of the strophe are antithetical in an ab ba pattern. This antithetical parallelism, however, does not settle the meaning of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and μορφὴν δούλου λαβών. At least two possibilities exist. (1) μορφῇ θεοῦ may refer to pre-existence and μορφὴν δούλου to incarnation. (2) μορφῇ θεοῦ may refer to the image of God (i.e., like Adam, possessing the role of the ruler over creation) and μορφὴν δούλου to the likeness of a servant (i.e., like the servant, accepting the role of submission to God the Creator). Neither the language itself nor the inner structure

ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν
μορφὴν δούλου λαβών.

Again the repetition of the key terms, this time μορφή and θεός, reinforces our conclusion. The contrast οὐχ-ἀλλά guarantees that line 2 is one unit.[15]

The result of this analysis of the formal structure of the hymn made upon the basis of the criteria of respect for the inner parallelisms of the passage and having strophes that are complete thoughts, and reinforced by the repetition of key terms, looks like this:[16]

(1) Ὅς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν
μορφὴν δούλου λαβών.
(2) ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος
καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν
γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου.
(3) διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα
τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα
(4) ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ
πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων
καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

A reader of the hymn would be given his clue to understand its structure by the immediate contrast between μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δούλου which tie the first strophe together and the subsequent ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων which echoes ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ. Immediately the reader would sense that he was in the presence of parallelisms of one kind or another. This would furnish the key by which the hymn could be interpreted.

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of this strophe, nor the two taken together, can decide between the two possibilities. This must be decided by the relation of this strophe to the rest of the hymn, especially strophe 2. See below for a discussion of this relation.

[15] Cf. Rom 12:19a; 12:31; Col 3:2b; 1 Thess 5:15.

[16] With the majority of scholars we regard the phrase “even death on a cross” as a Pauline addition.

One aspect of our analysis of the formal structure of the hymn remains incomplete. Earlier we showed that not only were the individual strophes of the hymn built around various parallelisms but also the last two strophes were related to one another in the same way, that is, by inverted parallelism or chiasmus. This raises the question about the relation between the first two strophes. Read in terms of the hymn set forth here, the parallelism between the first two strophes leaps out at the reader. The first lines of each strophe begin with the same preposition (ἐν). The objects of the prepositions are terms that could be read as synonyms.[17] The verbal forms of the first lines are both participles and could also be taken as synonyms.[18] The ends of the second lines are also parallel. Not only are the phrases located at the same place in each strophe but also the meanings of the two phrases are very close. Both convey the idea of subordination. Each phrase, moreover, is followed by a third line which further explains the meaning of the phrase at the end of the second line.[19] It would seem, then, that strophes 1 and 2 are related to one another by means of a simple formal parallelism just as the last two strophes are related in a chiastic way. That these first two strophes are related formally in this way raises the question of how they are related in terms of their meaning. In order to determine this, two lines of argument must be considered.

In the first place, the simple parallelism which we have seen between the first two strophes is a parallelism between the two first lines (ἐν μορφῇ ὑπάρχων and ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος), between the ends of the second lines (ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν and ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν) and the short third lines (μορφὴν δούλου λαβών and γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου). Such a parallelism is significant because it breaks any close link between ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, μορφὴν δούλου λαβών and ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος. In terms of the proposed structure, such a link is absolutely impossible. The phrase ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος is parallel to ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, μορφὴν δούλου λαβών. It is not an explanation of ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, μορφὴν δούλου λαβών. That the parallelism between the first two strophes breaks the link between μορφὴν δούλου λαβών and ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος is significant because it has been this link that has formed *the crucial point* in any argument for the pre-existence of Christ in this hymn.[20] Without this link, all *necessity* to interpret the passage in mythological terms is abolished.[21]

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[17] In the LXX μορφή ὁμοίωμα can both translate the Hebrew תמונה (cf. Job 4:16; Deut 4:12). Also, where the LXX has ὁμοίωμα in Deut 4:12, Symmachus has μορφήν (Lohmeyer, *Der Brief an die Philipper*, 91 n. 5).

[18] The verb ὑπάρχω can be used in Hellenistic Greek as a synonym for εἰμί (BAG, 845); also γίνομαι may be used as a substitute for the forms of εἰμί (159).

[19] M. R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1897), 59–60; F. W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 82, 84.

In the second place, in the last half of the hymn (vv. 9–11), the reader is given explicit guidance regarding the relation of the third and the fourth strophes. The conjunction ἵνα indicates that the hymn intends its readers to understand the exaltation as having the purpose of every knee bowing and every tongue confessing. A conjunction διό is also present to indicate the relationship between the two halves of the hymn. With regard to the first two strophes, however, there is no conjunction to indicate their intended relationship. Since the hymn does supply assistance to the reader in the form of conjunctions in the two other instances where such assistance would be required, the absence of such a term between strophes 1 and 2 must surely be meaningful. The relation between the first two strophes must be regarded by the hymn writer as sufficiently indicated by the formal parallelism between them. The most natural way for a reader to take this formal parallelism between the first two strophes, moreover, would be to regard them as parallel statements about the same reality.

That the most natural way of reading the first two strophes would at the same time be a real possibility in the NT period is seen from a comparison with other units of tradition found in the epistles which are organized around such a formal parallelism. Romans 4:25 is a good example. The balanced couplet reads:

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[20] Cf. the remarks of J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 132, and those of J. Hugh Michael, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians* (New York: Harper, 1927), 83–4. The argument for pre-existence certainly cannot be based upon the language since this is ambiguous and may be taken in different ways. The clue as to how the language should be understood is furnished by the structure of the hymn. After this article was finished, I was pleased to find this very point made by Lewis S. Mudge, "The Servant Christology in the New Testament" (Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University; 1961), 301–02.

[21] L. D. Strecker, "The Christological Hymn in Philippians 2," 57, observes that Lohmeyer's arrangement of the hymn leads the interpreter to see a reference to pre-existence, but Jeremias' arrangement removes the need for mythological interpretation entirely. Taking Jeremias' strophes individually, this is true. When they are taken together in sequence they may be read in terms of pre-existence, though with difficulty.

> ὅς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν
> καὶ ἠγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν.

The parallel structure is a clue to its meaning. The fragment does not intend to split apart the saving effects of Jesus' death and resurrection. Rather the two lines of the couplet are to be regarded as virtually synonymous.[22]

In such units of tradition when the meanings of the parallel lines are not synonymous, usually the language is clear and explicit so that the contrasting meanings are apparent to the reader (e.g., Rom 1:3–4; Col 1:15–20). In Phil 2:6–11, however, the language does not clearly and explicitly reveal a contrast in the meanings of strophes 1 and 2. Indeed, the very similarity of language in these two strophes inclines the reader to take them as parallel not only in form but also in meaning.

An examination of the language of the first two strophes in Phil 2:6–8 in light of our initial impression that the two strophes are parallel statements about the reality must now be made. Since the short third lines of the first two strophes are explanations of the statements at the ends of the second lines, the crucial phrases are the first lines and those at the ends of the second lines. We may begin with an examination of the language in the first two lines.

The first line of the second strophe reads: ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος. How should this language be understood? It has been noted that wherever Christ is designated ἄνθρωπος in Paul's letters (Rom 5:12ff; 1 Cor 15:20–40; Phil 2:7b–8), a contrast with Adam is intended.[23] It is certainly the case in Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15. Philippians 2:6–11, however, is a non-Pauline hymn. Should it be interpreted in the same way as Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15. Two observations about Rom 5:12–14 incline us to view ἄνθρωπος used of Jesus in Phil 2 as another indication of the Adam/Christ typology. First, in Romans Paul is writing to a church which is independent of his influence. Throughout Romans the apostle takes pains to speak in terms of tradition which they have in common (1:3–4; 4:25; 6:3–5; 8:28–30, for example). In 5:12–14 there is no indication that the Adam/Christ parallel was new to the Romans. Also, Mark 1:13 shows that the church at Rome knew such a typology.[24] Since the Gospel of Mark is not a Pauline document, this Adam/Christ typology must have been wider than the Pauline circle. Indeed, in Hellenistic churches which used the LXX, such a reference to Jesus as second Adam would naturally have been made with the term ἄνθρωπος. Second, Rom 5:19 may possibly contain an echo of Isa 53:11 from the Hebrew text.[25] This would point to the traditional character of the reference since Paul used the LXX. Since 5:19 is a unit, the reference to Isaiah which is tradition would have been made in the context of a contrast between the one man Adam and the one man Christ. In this case, the use of ἄνθρωπος in an Adam/Christ typology is clearly pre-Pauline. In the light of these two considerations, it seems entirely legitimate to see here in Phil 2:7b–8 the contrast between Adam and Christ indicated by the use of ἄνθρωπος for Christ.

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[22] C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper, 1957), 100; cf. also Rom 3:25–26; 2 Tim 2:11b–12a.

[23] Beare, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 84; Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, 236 n. 19. Both men are ultimately indebted to L. Bouyer, "ἉΡΠΑΓΜΟΣ," *RSR* 39 (1951–2): 381–8.

Note, however, that the phrase does *not* say that Christ, like Adam, was in God's image. Rather it says that Christ was ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων. This can be understood in terms of the Adam/Christ parallel, however, if we reflect upon Gen 5:1–3. In v. 1b the passage speaks of God's creation of Adam in his own image. In the Hebrew Bible the context makes it clear that Adam (man) is plural (men or mankind). In the LXX the Hebrew is understood in this sense, as v. 2 shows: ἄρσεν καὶ πῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς, καὶ εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς. καὶ ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῶν Ἀδάμ, ᾗ ἡμέρᾳ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς.[26] Then the passage says that Adam had a son, Seth, who was "in his own likeness" (בדמותו), "after his image" (כצלמו). Thus, the passage tells of one who is a son of Adam (plural) and is in his likeness. Though the LXX of Gen 5:1b translates בדמות by κατ' εἰκόνα and 5:3 translates בדמותו by κατὰ τὴν εἰδέαν αὐτοῦ,[27] that ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων is a perfectly legitimate translation of בדמותו in Gen 5:3 may be seen from passages like 2 Kgs 16:10 where the LXX renders את־דמות by τὸ ὁμοίωμα and 2 Chr 4:3 where ודמות is rendered by καὶ ὁμοίωμα.[28] It seems probably, therefore, that the phrase ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος is a part of the Adam/Christ typology and is intended to speak of Christ as son of Adam.

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[24] Joachim Jeremias, "Ἀδάμ," *TDNT* 1:141; C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit in the Gospel Tradition*, 50.

[25] Walther Zimmerli and Joachim Jeremias, *The Servant of God* (Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1957), 89 n. 399.

[26] All references to the LXX come from Henry Barclay Swete, *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1891–1905).

[27] The LXX translates כדמותנו by καθ' ὁμοίωσιν in Gen 1:26.

The first line of the first strophe reads: ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων. Since the phrase is formally parallel to ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, the most natural reading of the phrase would be to take it also, if possible, as a part of the Adam/Christ typology. Is such a reading of the phrase possible? Three strands of evidence indicate that it is. (1) μορφῇ in the LXX is virtually a synonym for ὁμοίωμα since the LXX translators use them both to translate תאר, תבנית and תמונה.[29] Also, where the LXX has ὁμοίωμα in Deut 4:12, Symmachus has μορφήν.[30] (2) καὶ ἡ μορφή is used in Dan 3:19 to translate the Aramaic וצלם while elsewhere ὁμοίωμα is used to translated the Hebrew צלם.[31] (3) The Peshitta renders μορφή by "demoutha."[32] Moreover, the connection of μορφῇ θεοῦ with the expression οὐχ ἁπαργμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, which almost certainly echoes Gen 3:4,[33] indicates that an Adam/Christ parallel is intended. It seems probable, therefore, that the phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων is also part of the Adam/Christ typology and is intended to speak of Christ as the second Adam who has reversed the decision of the first Adam.

The first lines of strophes 1 and 2 are both to be interpreted in terms of an Adam/Christ contrast. The two lines say that Christ is both the second Adam and the son of Adam. The LXX of Gen 5:1–3 certainly seems to have understood the creation of Adam in God's image as parallel to the birth of Seth in Adam's image. Witness the structure:

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[28] See also Isa 40:18; Ezek 1:5, 26; 2:1 (LXX). According to Edwin Hatch and Henry Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Graz Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1954), 2:993, Aquila uses ὁμοίωμα in Gen 5:1.

[29] μορφή renders תאר in Judg 8:18 (A); תבנית in Isa 44:13; תמונה in Job 4:16. ὁμοίωμα renders תאר in Judg 8:18 (B); תבנית in Deut 4:17, 18; תמונה in Deut 4:12, 15, 16.

[30] See n. 17.

[31] 1 Sam 6:5.

[32] Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors*, 43 n. 1.

[33] Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors*, 123; Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 177f. In the LXX ἴσος stands for כ (e.g., Job 5:14; 10:10). Though the LXX of Gen 3:5 reads ὡς θεοί, the Hebrew text reads כאלהים for the temptation of Even and Adam in the garden.

> ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν Ἀδάμ κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ....
> ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῶν Ἀδάμ....
> (Ἀδάμ) ἐγέννσεν κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα
> αὐτοῦ....ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Σήθ.

Moreover, early Christianity knew traditions which regarded Jesus as second Adam (Rom 5:12–21; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1–13)[34] and traditions which regarded Jesus as the son of Adam (Luke 3:23–38). That the two different views are found side by side in Luke indicates that the early Christians saw no conflict between them. It would seem, therefore, that the can be little doubt that the first two lines are paralleled in meaning as they are in form. But what of the ends of the second lines? Can the same be said for them?

The end of the second line of the first strophe reads: ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν. This phrase, attested nowhere else in Greek, is grammatically harsh.[35] It is explicable, however, if understood as an exact rendering of the Hebrew “poured out his nephesh” (הערה...נפשו) in Isa 53:12.[36] If so, then the phrase refers to the servant’s surrender of life. It is significant that this phrase (ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν) is explained by the short third line μορφὴν δούλου λαβών. Since δοῦλος and παῖς are both used in the LXX to render the עבד of Deutero-Isaiah,[37] since δουλεύειν is found in the LXX at Isa 53:11, and since Aquila reads ὁ δοῦλος instead of ὁ παῖς at Isa 52:13,[38] δοῦλος is fitting in this explanatory phrase.[39] That the early church elsewhere in the sources available to us used παῖς and υἱός is not, therefore, decisive. The phrase “he emptied himself” is, thus, most probably a reference to Jesus as the servant who surrendered his life to God.

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[34] A. Feuillet, “Le récit Lucanien de la Tentation (Lk. 4:1–13),” *Bib* 40 (1959): 617–31; J. Hastings, “Notes on Recent Exposition,” *ExpT* 14 (1902–3): 389–91.

[35] Jeremias, *Servant of God*, 97.

[36] L. S. Thornton, *The Common Life in the Body of Christ* (London: Dacre, 1950), 168 n. 6. H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Cross of the Servant,” in *The Cross in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 104–5; Jeremias, *Servant of God*, 97 n. 445; Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors*, 123. In “Zu Phil. 2:7: ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν,” *NovT* 6 (1963): 182–4, Jeremias replies to his critics.

[37] δοῦλος in Isa 49:3, 5; παῖς in 42:1; 49:6; 50:10; 52:13.

[38] R. P. Martin, *An Early Christian Confession* (London: Tyndale, 1960), 26; Cerfaux, “L’hymne au Christ-Serviteur de Dieu,” 427. Hatch and Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 1:348, indicate that Symmachus also reads δοῦλος at 52:13. It is perhaps significant that Aquila reads μορφή in Isa 52:14 (Hatch and Redpath, 2:934).

[39] The only justification for the contention of Käsemann, “Kristische Analyse von Phil. 2:5–11,” 342–44 (followed by Bornkamm, Beare, and Fuller), that δοῦλος is to be understood in the sense of becoming subject to the cosmic powers is his acceptance of Lohmeyer’s structure. Once this structure is rejected, Käsemann’s interpretation of δοῦλος must be also.

Strophe 2 has a second line which ends: ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν. Since this phrase is formally parallel to ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν of strophe 1, the most natural way to read the phrase would be to see in it also a reference to the servant's surrender of life. Is such a reading of the phrase possible? Several facts show that it is. In the LXX ταπεινόω is used for ענה. In the niphal ענה can mean "humble oneself."[40] It is the niphal participle of ענה, moreover, which is used in Isa 53:7 with just such a meaning. "He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself."[41] This is the meaning of the Hebrew, though the LXX reads differently. Again it refers to the surrender of the servant's life to God. These facts indicate that ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν can most certainly be read as parallel to ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν in meaning as well as in form. Also, ταπεινόω is used in early Christianity of Jesus in connection with Isa 53:1–12 as an illustration of his attitude (1 Clem. 16:2, 17, a passage which is almost certainly independent of Phil 2).[42] This makes it likely that ἐταπείνωσεν, just as ἐκένωσεν, is an echo of the servant of Second Isaiah. Both phrases, "he emptied himself" and "he humbled himself," are, therefore, to be read against the background of Isa 53. Both refer to the servant's surrender of life. In this regard, it is significant that the short third line of strophe 2 reads γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου. The two phrases are, therefore, synonymous in meaning as they are parallel in structure.

It would seem that the formal parallelism between the first two strophes is the clue to their meaning. Indeed, any interpretation which takes them as other than parallel in meaning as well as form flies in the face of all the clues furnished the reader by the author of the hymn and takes the less probable for the more probable explanation of the language. Parallel structure points to parallel meanings. That the parallelism between the first two strophes is intended to point to a common meaning is significant because there is no question that strophe 2 speaks of the human existence of Jesus. This would mean that strophe 1 also would be a statement not about the pre-existence of Jesus but about his earthly life. Strophe 1 says that Jesus, unlike Adam, did not grasp for equality with God but rather surrendered his life to God. Strophe 2 says that Jesus as a son of Adam surrenders his life to God. Both are concerned with the decision of Jesus to be God's servant rather than to repeat the tragedy of Adam and his sons.

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[40] For example, Exod 10:3 (BDB, 776).

[41] J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah LX–LXVI* (University Press, 1902), 142. Only in this passage is there the meaning "He humbled himself."

[42] Lohmeyer, *Der Brief an die Philipper*, 94 n. 1.

In conclusion, it may be said that the modern confidence in an interpretation of Phil 2:6–11 which sees there the pre-existence of Jesus followed by his incarnation and subsequent exaltation does not stand up under the test: a proper delineation of form leads to a correct interpretation of meaning. Analysis of the form of the hymn yields the conclusion that it means to speak only of the human existence of Jesus.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCEPT OF IMMORTALS IN MEDITERRANEAN ANTIQUITY (1975)

The concept of divinity in non-Christian antiquity near the beginning of our era was complex.[1] It was possible to speak of the two extremes, gods and men, and to mean by the former the eternals like Zeus/Jupiter in contrast to mere mortals.[2] In this case, divinity was far removed from humanity. It was also possible, however, to speak of certain men as divine. There were two separate categories of divinity into which such men might fall that are of special interest to us in this article. On the one hand, certain men were believed in their historical existence to have displayed the divine presence in some special way and were hence regarded as θεῖοι ἄνδρες.[3] Opinions have differed over exactly what constituted the divine presence.[4] Whereas some circles looked for it in a man's physical beauty or in his prophetic utterances and miraculous feats,[5] others saw it manifest in extraordinary virtue and rationality.[6] There were also divergent views about the origin or source of the divine presence. Some looked to a supernatural conception, others to the conscious cultivation of virtue by a man born as other men normally are.[7] At times these varying views, both of what constituted the divine presence and of the source of such divinity, merged into a synthetic portrayal of the θεῖος ἀνήρ.[8] If a mortal possessed in an unusual way that which was believed to constitute a sign of divine presence, however conceived, he was regarded as a divine man. On the other hand, a more select group of men were believed at the end of their careers to have been taken up into heaven, to have attained immortality, and to have received a status[9] like that of the eternal gods. Such figures were designated immortals.[10] The latter category of divinity is the primary concern of this paper.

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[1] Morton Smith, "Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretalogies, Divine Men, the Gospels and Jesus," *JBL* 90 (1971): 181–4. My paper is limited to conceptions of divinity near the beginning of our era. It focuses on the concept of the immortals because this is the concern of ancient writers like Diodorus of Sicily. It brings in the θεῖος ἀνήρ concept as an auxiliary concern because of its importance in current discussions in NT study (e.g., Paul J. Achtemeier, "Gospel Miracle Traditions and the Divine Man," *Int* 26 [1972]: 174–197).

[2] E.g., Lucian, *Jupp. conf.* 2.67. The treatise, *On How Many Heads One Should Praise a God*, by a second-century rhetorician, Alexander, begins with a reference to the philosophic view that god is unbegotten and not susceptible of destruction. Cf. Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion* (London: Oxford, 1933), 231.

[3] Hans Windisch, *Paulus und Christus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1934); Ludwig Bieler, ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ (2 vols.; Vienna: O. Höfels, 1935–1936).

[4] David Lenz Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (SBLDS 1; Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972).

[5] E.g., Plato, *Min.* 99 B–D; Dio Chrysostom, *1 Tars.* 33.4; Lucian, *Alex.* 12–13; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.38; Origen, *Cels.* 7.9.

[6] E.g. Cicero, *Fin.* 1.5.14; *Tusc.* 1.21.48; Lucretius 5.8–10, 25–50; 1.729–34; Seneca, *Prov.* 6.6; *Ep.* 73.14–16; 31.11; 41.1; Plutarch, *Alex. fort.*, 331A; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.9.22–26; Dio Chrysostom, *Virt. (Or. 69)* 1; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.180.

The Immortals

The concept of immortals must be understood within the context of a distinction between two types of divine beings, the eternals and the immortals. This typology is mentioned at least as early as Herodotus

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[7] Dio Chrysostom, *4 Regn.* 18–23, has Diogenes tell Alexander of the two criteria by which a man was regarded as divine, i.e., as a son of Zeus: (1) being conceived supernaturally; (2) being self-controlled and noble. Diogenes then says: "If, however, you are cowardly and love luxury and have a servile nature, then you are in no way related to the gods…" (cf. also 69.1). This constitutes Dio's critique of (1) in the name of (2). For another statement of the second criterion, see Lucian, *Demon.* 7.63. For the first criterion, see Lucretius, 1.729–33, who says of Empedocles: "He seems hardly to be born of mortal stock." The same thing could be said of certain rabbis. See *b. Nid.* 13a; also Jacob Neusner, *History of the Jews in Babylonia* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 3.107. According to Shirley Jackson Case (*Experience with the Supernatural in Early Christian Times* [New York: Century, 1929], 129) another, less common, explanation of a divine man's distinctiveness was reincarnation (e.g., Pindar, *Thren.* frg. 113; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 6.756–76). Justin seems to be aware of and involved in the debates over what constitutes the true θεῖος ἀνήρ (*1 Apol.* 22), when he says: "Even if he [Jesus] were only a man by common generation, he is, because of his wisdom, worthy to be called Son of God."

[8] Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* is a good example. Cf. Seneca, *Vit. beat.* 26.8–27.1; also Tiede, *Charismatic Figure*, 59.

[9] That is, he is not only immortal but also rules. Cf. Seneca, *Herc. Ot.* 1996–7, who speaks of Heracles now reigning in power.

[10] The terminology is complex. The lines between demigods, heroes, and immortals are blurred. This is true both for the classical period and the Hellenistic age. In this paper I use "immortals" of those humans who became deities by virtue of their ascent to heaven at the end of their lives, "demigods" only of those individuals who had a supernatural parentage. Not all demigods became immortals. I avoid the term "hero" in any technical sense since heroes constituted a group larger than those who became immortals. On the problem, see Erwin Rohde, *Psyche* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1925), 117–32, 141 n. 23; Arthur Darby Nock, "The Cult of Heroes," *HTR* 37 (1944): 141–74.

(*Hist.* 2.43, 145–6) who says that Heracles and Dionysus were gods that had a beginning to their existence and had not existed eternally. Herodotus' distinction between those deities that are eternal and those that are immortal but have had a beginning was recognized and commented on by Plutarch near the end of the first or the beginning of the second century C.E.[11] It was, in fact, a widespread idea by the beginning of our era. Two historians of the late first century B.C.E. reflect the belief. The *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (7.72.13) refers to demigods such as Heracles and Asclepius who are said to have ascended to heaven and to have obtained the same honors as the gods. In Diodorus Siculus the typology is clearly articulated and applied to his narrative's contents. Diodorus says:

> As regards the gods…men of ancient times have handed down to later generations two different conceptions: certain of the gods, they say, are eternal and imperishable.… But the other gods, we are told, were terrestrial beings who attained to immortal honor and fame because of their benefactions to mankind, such as Heracles, Dionysos, Aristaeus and the others who were like them. (*Libr. of Hist.* 6.1)

In another context (1.13) he comments:

> And besides these there are other gods, they say, who were terrestrial, having once been mortals, but who, by reason of their sagacity and the good services which they rendered to all men, attained immortality, some of them having even been kings in Egypt.

About the same time, the concept is developed elaborately in Philo's *Embassy* 77–114. Plutarch puts it concisely when he says that Apollo is not

> among those deities who were changed from mortals into immortals, like Heracles and Dionysos, whose virtues enabled them to cast off mortality and suffering; but he is one of those deities who are unbegotten and eternal, if we may judge by what the most ancient and wisest men have said on such matters. (*Pel.* 16)

This typology retained its force at least into the third century C.E., where it is integral to part of Origen's polemic against Celsus (*Cels.* 3.22). Mediterranean antiquity drew a distinction between two kinds of deities: eternal beings like Zeus/Jupiter and immortals like Heracles and Dionysus.

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[11] Plutarch, *Her. mal.* 13.

The distinguishing marks of the immortals were: (1) the deity had originally been mortal; and (2) at the end of his career there occurred a transformation or ascension so that he obtained the same honors as the eternals. Since the second characteristic is crucial, whenever Mediterranean peoples spoke about the immortals, constant in their description was the explicit or implicit idea that "he was taken up into heaven." Some evidence of this ascent is usually given. Either his ascent to heaven was witnessed[12] or there was no trace of his physical remains.[13] That the absence of the hero's physical remains points properly to an ascent to heaven is known because of (a) predictions/oracles during the hero's life that he would be taken up;[14] (b) a heavenly announcement at the end of his earthly career stating or implying that he had been taken up;[15] and (c) appearances of the hero to friends or disciples confirming his new status.[16] In addition, another feature frequently present in the description of the immortals is a reference to the man's being begotten by a god of a human mother (the usual procedure), or his being the child of a goddess and a human father.[17] Almost always, both the unusual circumstances concerning his birth and those relating to his passing are present. Occasionally, for whatever reason, if the reference to a supernatural begetting is missing,[18] the ascent into heaven is constant. When one spoke of an immortal in the Greco-Roman world, therefore, he meant a mortal who had become a god, and this was usually expressed in terms of an extraordinary birth (one of his parents was a deity) and an ascension into heaven (witnessed to by such circumstances as there being no remains of his body to be found).

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[12] In general, see Justin, *1 Apol.* 21; for Augustus, see Suetonius, *Aug.* 100; Dio Cassius 56.46; for Claudius, see Seneca, *Pumpkinification of Claudius*; for Alexander the Great, see Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alexander Romance*; for Peregrinus, see Lucian, *Peregr.* 39–40.

[13] For Heracles, see Diodorus Siculus 4.38.4–5; for Aristaeus, see Diodorus 4.81–82; for Romulus, see Plutarch, *Rom.* 27; for Aeneas, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.64.4–5; for Empedocles, see Diogenes Laertius 8.67–68; for Apollonius, see Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.30.

[14] So for Heracles (Diodorus Siculus 4.10.7); Peregrinus (Lucian, *Peregr.* 27); Alexander the Great (Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alexander Romance* 3.24, 30).

[15] So for Empedocles (Diogenes Laertius 8.67–68); Apollonius (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.30); Peregrinus (Lucian, *Peregr.* 39).

[16] So for Romulus (Cicero, *Resp.* 2.10; *Leg.* 1.1.3; Plutarch, *Rom.* 28; Tertullian, *Apol.* 21); Apollonius (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.31).

[17] (a) Those with a deity for a father: Heracles (Diodorus Siculus 4.9.1); Asclepius (Cicero, *Nat. d.* 3.22; Ovid, *Metam.* 2.600–610); Dionysus (Diodorus Siculus 4.2.1–4); Castor and Pollux (*Homeric Hymns* 32; Ovid, *Metam.* 6.109); Romulus (Plutarch, *Rom.* 2). (b) Those with a deity for a mother: Aeneas (Ovid, *Metam.* 14.588).

[18] E.g., in the case of Empedocles in Diogenes Laertius' account (but Lucretius [1.729–733] apparently knows of supernatural birth) and of Peregrinus (Lucian, *Peregr.*).

Originally, the concept belonged to accounts of legendary or mythical figures of the distant past. Egyptian, Greek, and Roman examples are readily available. (1) *Egyptian*: Diodorus tells us, immediately after a reference to the typology of eternals and immortals (*Libr. of Hist.* 1.13), that Osiris belongs to the second category (1.20, 23). Osiris was a king of Egypt, he says, who by reason of the magnitude of his benefactions received the gift of immortality with honor equal to that offered to the gods of heaven, the eternals. Moreover, we are told of one tradition which claimed that this Osiris was the offspring of a human daughter and Zeus. (2) *Greek*: Diodorus (*Libr. of Hist.* 4.1.5) turns to the demigods of the Greeks and presents traditions about such figures as Dionysus, Heracles, Aristaeus, and Asclepius: (a) Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Semele, daughter of Cadmus, founder of Thebes. He became, however, one of the demigods to be accepted among the Olympians.[19] (b) Heracles was the second of the demigods deemed worthy of the name Olympian by Zeus (*Libr. of Hist.* 4.15.1). He was the son of Zeus and Alcmene, a daughter of Perseus (4.9.1). Zeus determined that after his performing the twelve labors, Heracles was to be given immortality (4.9.5). When at his death men looked for his bones and found not a single one, they assumed, in accordance with the oracle about his future, that he had passed from among men into the company of the gods (4.38.4–5). Afterwards he was honored with sacrifices both as a hero and as a god (4.39.1; 5.76). Hera adopted him as her son (4.39.2). (c) Aristaeus was the son of Apollo and the woman Cyrene. After dwelling in the region of Mount Haemus, he was never seen again by men. Assuming that he had been taken into heaven, they made him the recipient of immortal honors (4.81–82). (d) Asclepius was believed to have been the son of Apollo and of either Koronis or Arsinoe.[20] By the request of Apollo, Zeus placed Asclepius among the stars.[21] (3) *Romans*: (a) Aeneas was believed to have been the son of Venus.[22] According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, he was thought to have been translated to the gods, when, after a certain battle, his body was nowhere to be found. Hence the Latins built a shrine to him with the inscription: "To the father and god of this place...."[23] (b) It was about Romulus that the Roman traditions clustered in a special way. They claimed he was the son of Mars and a virgin, either Ilia or Rhea Silvia.[24] His great achievements led to the belief that, when he disappeared during a sudden darkening of the sun amidst a descending cloud, he had been added to the number of the gods.[25] This was witnessed to by the fact that no portion of his body or fragment of his clothing remained to be seen.[26] The belief was reinforced by the claim of one of his friends, Julius Proculus, that Romulus appeared to him on the road and announced that he was to be worshipped as the god Quirinus.[27]

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[19] *Libr. Of Hist.* 4.2.1; see also Ovid, *Metam.* 3.259–73.

[20] *Libr. of Hist.* 4.71.1; cf. also *Homeric Hymn to Asclepios*; Pindar, *Pyth.*; Ovid, *Metam.* 2.600–655; Cicero, *Nat. d.* 3.22; Pausanias 2.26.4–5 (6); 3.26.4.

[21] Cicero, *Nat. d.* 3.22.57.

The concept of the immortals also made inroads into certain circles of *Judaism* and attached itself to the figure of Moses.[28] Although there is a persistent rabbinic tradition that Moses did not die but ascended to heaven,[29] the native home for the view of Moses' bodily rapture was probably Hellenistic Judaism.[30] Philo knew traditions that understood

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[22] Ovid, *Metam.* 14.588.

[23] *Ant. rom.* 1.64.4–5.

[24] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.77.2; Cicero, *Resp.* 1.41; 2.2; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.805–28; 15.862–3; Plutarch, *Rom.* 2; Lucius Annaeus Florus 1.1.

[25] Cicero, *Resp.* 2.10; 6.21; Livy 1.16; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27; Lucius Annaeus Florus 1.1.

[26] Plutarch, *Rom.* 27; Cicero, *Leg.* 1.1.3; Livy 1.16; Lucius Annaeus Florus 1.1.

[27] Plutarch, *Rom.* 28. From the way Plutarch speaks in hostility, it is clear that the tradition assumed that Romulus had ascended bodily into heaven.

[28] It helps our perspective if we note the view of Moses put forward by the Hellenistic Jewish apologist Artapanus. He says of Moses: (1) He was the teacher of Orpheus (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.4). Since Orpheus is said to have transferred the birthplace of Osiris to Thebes (Diodorus Siculus 1.23), Artapanus' claim makes Moses responsible, indirectly at least, for both Greek culture and the shape of an Egyptian cult. (2) He was called Musaeus by the Greeks (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.3). Since Musaeus was equivalent to the Egyptian Hermes-Thoth, this claim is tantamount to making Moses into one of the gods of Egypt (see Brian E. Colless, "Divine Education," *Numen* 17 [1970]: 120). (3) He was regarded by the Egyptian priests as worthy of being honored as a god. Indeed, he was called Hermes (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.6). Hellenistic Jews who went this far would have had no problems with a portrayal of Moses as an immortal.

[29] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 209–11; Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 6:161; Joachim Jeremias, "Μωϋσῆς," *TDNT* 4:854–855.

[30] Ibid., 854.

Deut 34:6 to mean that Moses was translated.[31] His account of the end of Moses' career in his *Life of Moses* (2.288) reads like a description of an immortal's ascent to heaven.[32]

> Afterwards the time came when he had to make his pilgrimage from earth to heaven, and to leave this mortal life for immortality, summoned thither by the Father who resolved his twofold nature of soul and body into a single unity, transforming his whole being into mind, pure as the sunlight. (Colson, LCL)

Philo, however, protects against such an interpretation by including a reference to Moses' death and burial (2.291).[33]

In Josephus' *Antiquitie*s the account of Moses' end seems reminiscent of the "passing" of the two founders of the Roman race, Aeneas and Romulus.[34] We are told that a cloud suddenly descended upon him and that he disappeared in a ravine (*Ant.* 4.326). This, of course, echoes the usual "death/ascension" aspect of the mythology of the immortals. Josephus apparently tried to protect against such implications of this tradition because he immediately adds: "But he has written of himself in the sacred books that he died, for fear lest they should venture to say that by reason of his surpassing virtue he had gone back to the Deity" (ibid.).[35] This reading of Josephus is reinforced by his comment in *Ant.* 3.96 that when Moses was forty days on the mountain receiving the law, some said: "He had been taken back to the divinity."[36] Josephus, therefore, knew of a Jewish tradition of the end of Moses' career that spoke of his passing in the same terms as those employed for the legendary heroes of other Mediterranean peoples. At the same time that he included the tradition shaped in this way, he explicitly rejected the interpretation of it in terms of the mythology of the immortals. Though Philo and Josephus responded negatively to the position, certain Jewish circles did portray Moses in categories taken from the Mediterranean concept of the immortals.[37]

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[31] *Sacr.* 3.8–10. Cf. Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 124; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:142.

[32] See Henry Chadwick, "St. Paul and Philo of Alexandria," *BJRL* 48 (1966): 301.

[33] Ginzberg (*Legends*, 6:152 n. 904) thinks that, when *T. Mos.* (1.15) and Ps.-Philo (*L.A.B.* 19–20d) stress that Moses was buried in a public place, it is to combat the view that he did not die but was translated to heaven.

[34] H. St. J. Thackeray, "Introduction to the *Antiquities*," in *Josephus*, vol. 1 (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press), ix.

[35] That Josephus is here taking issue with the speculation that Moses was translated, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:152, 161; Jeremias, "Μωϋσῆς," *TDNT* 4:854–855; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (Richmond: John Knox, 1970), 182.

[36] R. H. Charles (*APOT*, 2:408) interprets Josephus differently. From the existing Greek fragments he reconstructs a Jewish document, the *Assumption of Moses* which is different from the so-called Latin *Assumption* (actually the "Testament of Moses"). It is apparently the former document on which Clement of Alexandria depended in telling us that when Moses was taken up to heaven, Joshua and Caleb saw Moses double: one Moses with the angels, the other on the mountains being buried in their ravines (*Strom.* 6.15). See James D. Purvis, "Samaritan Traditions on the Death of Moses," in *Studies on the Testament of Moses* (ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr.; SBLSCS 4; Missoula, Mont.: SBL, 1973), 113–4. Charles says that Josephus was aware of these claims and reacted against them (*APOT*, 2:409). If this were, however, the view of

Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Jewish evidence points to the belief in the existence of a certain category of deity, the immortals, alongside the eternals. These mythical and legendary figures were all benefactors of mankind: good kings, healers, strong men who used their might to conquer powers hostile to other men, those who introduced certain skills or goods into civilization, and great teachers. Their extraordinary lives were usually explained by their unusual parentage;[38] their present status as divinities by their ascent to heaven.

Since this pattern had become a convention in talking about so many benefactors of mankind of the distant past, it eventually attached itself to individuals of the not-too-distant past, mainly of two types: rulers and philosophers.[39] Among the rulers it was especially Alexander the Great and Augustus who were so treated; among the philosophers Empedocles, Apollonius of Tyana, and Peregrinus. In attaching itself to clearly historical personages, the mythology affected the literary genres of history and biography. To this matter of the influence of the concept in non-Christian antiquity we now turn.

Moses' end that Josephus knew, his response is meaningless. To say that Moses died would not protect against such a double vision of his end. That Moses died and was buried would protect only against a bodily assumption into heaven.

[37] This explains the claim of Celsus that Moses attained to divine honors (Origen, *Cels.* 1.21).

[38] Since miraculous-birth traditions could belong to the tradition of a divine man as well as to the mythology of the immortals, reference to the supernatural conception of Moses does not in and of itself establish belief in Moses as an immortal. See David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956), 5–7; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1964), 81–82, for the supernatural conception of Moses in the Passover Haggadah. The reference to Moses' beauty in Josephus (*Ant.* 2.224) points to his use of a θεῖος ἀνήρ tradition of Moses' birth. Contra Davies, *Setting*, 82.

[39] Eventually reduced to ridiculous extremes, the mythology of the immortals was even applied to the relatives of emperors, e.g., Julia Drusilla, sister of Caligula (Seneca, *Pumpkinification of Claudius* 1).

The Concept of Immortals in History, Biography, and Satire

The motif was attached in the first place to rulers from the not-too-distant past. Alexander the Great is treated in this way both in history and in biography. Though there is a real question about the genre of Arrian's *Anabasis*, it most likely should be regarded as a fusion of both genres, history and biography.[40] Arrian's treatment of Alexander in the second century c.e. is rationalistic and avoids the romantic elements in his career. Reflecting his distaste for such beliefs, Arrian attempted to expose the reality of the situation. He says:

> One writer has not even shrunk from the statement that Alexander, perceiving that he could not survive, went to throw himself into the Euphrates, so that he might disappear from the world and leave behind the tradition more credible to posterity *that his birth was of the gods and that to the gods he passed*; but Roxane his wife saw that he was going out, and when she prevented him he cried aloud that she then grudged him everlasting fame as having been truly born a god (*Anab.* 7.27 [my italics])

This tells us both that such a concept existed in tradition attached to Alexander and that Arrian discounted it. Nevertheless, he is forced to conclude: "And so not even I can suppose that a man quite beyond all other men was born without some divine influence" (7.30).[41]

In the romantic biography of Pseudo-Callisthenes the motif is clear and sharp: Olympias was made pregnant by a god, Ammon of Egypt. Philip was convinced that her pregnancy was socially acceptable, even though he was away from home, because he was told in a dream that it was due to a god. At the end of the narrative, in connection with the death of Alexander, we hear that there was darkness, that a star and an eagle were seen falling from heaven, that a statue of Zeus was shaken, and that the star and eagle were seen going back to heaven carrying a brilliant star. Such a description of Alexander's ascent to heaven was regarded as the answer to his prayer to Zeus: "And if it be thy will, receive me too in heaven, as the third mortal."[42] By the beginning of our era, therefore, the mythology of the immortals with its themes of miraculous conception and ascent to heaven had become attached to the figure of Alexander the Great in both Greco-Roman history and biography.[43]

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[40] Cf. E. I. McQueen, "Quintus Curtius Rufus," in *Latin Biography* (ed. T. A. Dorey; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 20.

[41] This may very well mean that he was willing to regard Alexander as a divine man but not as an immortal. See below.

The mythology of the immortals also attaches itself to Augustus in historical and biographical writings of the empire. In Dio Cassius' *Roman History* the normal chain of social and political events in Rome's history is broken both at the birth and at the death of Augustus by the inclusion of the myth. In 45.1, in the narrative about his birth, we read of the belief that he was engendered by Apollo. The narrative of his death in 56.46 tells of Augustus' being declared immortal, with attending priests and sacred rites. Tradition also had it that Numerius Atticus, a senator and ex-praetor, swore that he had seen Augustus ascending to heaven after the manner of Romulus and Proculus. It is clear, from the way that both birth and ascension themes are related, that Dio was hostile to them. That he included them, nevertheless, testifies to their prevalence in the Augustus-tradition.[44]

This mythology also colors the Alexandrian-type biography of Augustus composed by Suetonius. As he tells it, Atia came to the temple of Apollo and fell asleep. A serpent glided up to her and went away. In the tenth month after that Augustus was born (*Aug.* 94.4). He was, therefore, regarded as the son of Apollo. Suetonius also relates the tradition about the ex-praetor, who took an oath that he had seen the form of the emperor on its way up to heaven (*Aug.*). Thus Augustus, as well as Alexander the Great, was depicted in histories and biographies in terms of the concept of the immortals.

The same mythology was also used to describe philosophers from the not-too-distant past. The Pythagorean philosopher Empedocles (484–424 B.C.E.) is depicted by Diogenes Laertius both as a teacher and as a worker of miracles like the later Apollonius of Tyana. Though there is no account of divine parentage for him, Diogenes Laertius relates a tradition about his death, taken from ancient sources, which shows that in some circles he was thought of as an immortal. According to Heraclides of Pontus, says Diogenes, after an evening meal or party with his friends, Empedocles disappeared and was nowhere to be found. One of the company claimed to have heard a voice from heaven calling the philosopher during the night. Hence it was believed that he was taken up into heaven and was now a god (Diogenes Laertius 8.68). That Diogenes then cites other explanations of Empedocles' passing which attempt to discredit the first one shows the controversy-context within which lives of philosophers circulated in antiquity (Diogenes Laertius 8.69–70). Some circles, doubtless Pythagorean, placed Empedocles among the immortals.

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[42] *Alexander Romance* 3.30. That is, Alexander asks to join the Olympians as Heracles and Dionysus did.

[43] A quite different treatment of Alexander's divinity can be found in Quintus Curtius Rufus (10.10.9–13).

[44] Even when Augustus is not spoken of in "birth/ascension" mythology, he is idealized to the extreme. See e.g., Nicolaus of Damascus' *Vit. Caes.*, where Augustus is flawless.

In Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* the mythology of the immortals is found complete. The birth-traditions relate that Apollonius' mother had a vision just before she gave birth to the child, in which a god of Egypt told her she would give birth to himself (1.4). Later the people call Apollonius a "son of Zeus" (1.6). The versions of his passing are diverse, but one clearly comes from such a mentality. The story goes that Apollonius entered the temple of Athene, whereupon a chorus of maidens was heard singing from within: "Hasten thou from earth, hasten thou to heaven, hasten"; in other words: "Do thou go upwards from earth" (8.30). Afterwards his remains could not be found. Then he is said to have appeared to a fervent disciple and through him taught men further, even though he had already passed from this earth (8.31).

When the mythology of the immortals entered into the description of the careers of clearly historical rulers and philosophers in the histories and biographies of the Greco-Roman world, it did so to speak about the significance of the individual thus depicted. It is hardly accidental that this concept was used of just those personages—rulers and philosophers—who in antiquity were often associated with communities of their creation, which constituted a cult for the divine figure.[45] The knowledge and use of the motif apparently became so widespread and so loosely applied that it became the object of satire.

Satirical treatments of the myth can be found in Seneca and Lucian. In the *Pumpkinification of Claudius*, Seneca vents his feelings about the ridiculous extremes to which the whole process had been carried. That Julia Drusilla, sister of Emperor Gaius Caligula, was deified at her death in 38 C.E. at Gaius' insistence was scandalous to Seneca (§1). There was even Livius Geminius to swear before the Senate that he had seen her going up to heaven. Then there was Claudius. In a heavenly debate over whether to grant Claudius the status of deity, Seneca has one heavenly speaker complain: "Once…it was a great thing to become a god; now you have made it a…farce.… I propose that from this day forward the godhead be given to none of those who eat the fruits of the earth, or whom mother-earth doth nourish" (§9). The same type of complaint is also voiced by Lucian.

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[45] On the founders of cities as objects of religious devotion, see Pausanias 10.4.10. Cf. C. Bradford Wells, "The Hellenistic Orient," in *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Robert C. Dentan; New Haven: Yale University, 1955), 157.

In the *Parliament of the Gods* (esp. §7–10, 14), Lucian has Momus complain to Zeus about the large number of gods that have been allowed into heaven, like Dionysus, Asclepius, and Heracles.[46] Lucian's satire is most telling in the *Passing of Peregrinus.* Here he tells the story of Peregrinus who, after his rejection by Christians for his transgressions, took up philosophy and fell to abusing everyone, especially the emperor. When one would no longer pay attention to him he proceeded to burn himself on a pyre at a festival, imitating Heracles. Before he died in the fire, however, he manufactured myths and repeated certain oracles that he was to become a guardian spirit, apparently coveting altars and expecting to be imaged in gold. He also appointed ambassadors from among his comrades to be sent out with the good tidings. Lucian claims to have been there at the spectacle, which took place outside the city. On his way back, he says that in jest he told some people a wild story.

> When the pyre was kindled and Proteus flung himself bodily in, a great earthquake first took place, accompanied by a bellowing of the ground, and then a vulture, flying out of the midst of the flames, went off to Heaven, saying, in human speech, with a loud voice: "I am through with the earth; *to Olympus I fare.*" (*Pergr.* 39 [my italics])[47]

When he got back to the city, Lucian relates, he met a grey-haired man with a dignified air who was telling that he had just beheld Proteus in white raiment walking about cheerfully in the Portico of the Seven

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[46] For a similar argument, see Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.12; *Clementine Recognitions* 10.24–25; *Clementine Homilies* 6.22.

[47] The reference to Olympus indicates that Peregrinus was yet another mortal accepted by the Olympians.

Voices. The old man also claimed to have seen the vulture flying up out of the pyre (*Peregr.*, 40). Lucian closes, expressing his fears that honors will be heaped upon Peregrinus partly because of his joke. Though the divine-parentage theme is missing, the description of Peregrinus' death indicates that Lucian is poking fun at the widespread tendency to class individuals of the immediate historical past among the immortals. Only that which has been carried to excess can be the object of this type of ridicule.

What is constitutive for the status of an immortal? The protagonist is first of all a mortal—though perhaps so extraordinary as to be regarded in some sense as divine during his lifetime, but mortal nonetheless.[48] At the end of his career, by the decree or act of some eternal, he is taken up into heaven, becomes immortal, and takes his place in the pantheon of gods.[49]

The Relation of the Immortals to θεῖοι ἄνδρες

With a sharpened awareness of what was constitutive for the mythology of the immortals in antiquity, we may now ask about its relation to the conception of divine men near the beginning of our era. On the one hand, it is important to reiterate that we are dealing with two different ideas.[50] Not every θεῖος ἀνήρ was believed to have become an immortal. Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* for example, describes Pythagoras as a divine man but not as an immortal.

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[48] The miraculous-birth traditions, when present, speak of the special character of the demigod during his lifetime. At the same time, he remains mortal.

[49] This is not the same thing as one finds in Judaism in the ascensions of Enoch and Elijah. These men are taken up to heaven, but they do not become deities. (a) The closest Elijah comes to being treated as an immortal is in the *Acts Pil.* 15.1. There is a reference to 2 Kgs 2:16–18, but the reading is distinct: "And they persuaded Elisha and he went with them. And they searched for him three days and did not find him, and they knew that he had been taken up" (*New Testament Apocrypha* [ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963)], 1:464). Likewise, in the *Acts of Pilate*, the Jews search for Jesus and do not find him; the implication is: he is taken up. Still Elijah does not join the gods. (b) The closest Enoch comes to being treated as an immortal is in *2 Enoch*: (1) His ascent to heaven is in the company of the angel (36:2) or angels (55:1) of God. (2) He is taken up amidst darkness, so that those standing and talking with him do not understand what has happened until they receive a heavenly message (67:1–3). (3) When they understand that Enoch has been taken up, the people erect an altar and offer sacrifice "before the Lord's face" (68:5–7). Though the debt to the mythology of immortals is undeniable, still Enoch remains a man and does not become a god.

[50] Hans Dieter Betz (*Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament* [Berlin: Akademie, 1961]) seems to be unaware of the distinction. He treats the two concepts as though they were one. See also his article, "Jesus as Divine Man," in *Jesus and the*

There were, furthermore, attempts in some circles to keep the two conceptions separate: (1) Josephus in the *Antiquities* could use the one and repress the other. This is clearly seen in his treatment of Moses.[51] He could refer to Moses as θεῖον ἄνδρα (*Ant.* 3.180), attempting to demonstrate Moses' surpassing virtue. This conception of divinity was serviceable for the Judaism of Josephus; the myth of the immortals, as our earlier discussion has shown, was not. (2) Philo, in addition to the categories "eternals/immortals,"[52] knew of the concept θεῖος ἀνήρ. He says (*Virt.* 111) that absolute sinlessness belongs to God alone, or possibly to a divine man (θείου ἀνδρός). In his *Life of Moses* (1.158), he says that Moses was named a god (θεός) and a king of the whole nation. In himself and in his life, he displayed a godlike work (θεοειδὲς ἔργον) for all to see, a model for those willing to copy it. When Philo comes to the end of Moses' career, however, as we have already seen, he refuses to allow an interpretation of it as the ascent of an immortal. Thus both Josephus and Philo find suitable that variety of the θεῖος ἀνήρ in which divine presence is understood in terms of virtue, though neither approves of the mythology of the immortals. They deliberately keep the two conceptions separate.

On the other hand, it was inevitable that these two originally different conceptions of divinity would sometimes merge, the one complementing the other. There were certainly similarities between them. Accounts of both θεῖοι ἄνδρες and immortals, for example, sometimes appealed to a supernatural parentage as an explanation of the extraordinary life of the protagonist.[53] The actual basis for the complementary association of these two notions of divinity, however, lay in the understanding of the nature of the earthly career of the hero in the mythology of immortals. The lives of those who became immortals

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Historian (ed. F. Thomas Trotter; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968); cf. Herbert Jennings Rose, "Herakles and the Gospels," *HTR* 31 (1938): 126.

[51] Josephus also speaks of (1) Solomon as having a godlike understanding (ὡς θείαν ἔχοντι διάνοιαν, *Ant.* 8.34); (2) Isaiah as θεῖος (*Ant.* 10.35); (3) Daniel as esteemed for his divine power (θειότητος, *Ant.* 10.268).

[52] His *Embassy to Gaius* (77–114) is one of the clearest statements in antiquity of the typology of eternals and immortals.

[53] E.g., Plato is a divine man born of a woman and Apollo (Plutarch, *Symposiacs* 8.1.2; Diogenes Laertius 3.45).

were virtuous.[54] They were benefactors of men; as Diodorus puts it, terrestrial beings who attained to immortal honor and fame "because of their benefactions to mankind…" (*Libr. of Hist.* 6.1). Elsewhere he says that "by reason of their sagacity and the good services which they rendered to all men" they attained immortality (*Libr. of Hist.* 1.13). Dio Chrysostom (*2 Regn.* 78) says that Zeus honored Heracles "because of his virtue." Elsewhere he makes the same point about all of the demigods (69.1). Here is an explicit point of contact with the idea of θεῖος ἀνήρ in most of its forms.[55] Whenever the two conceptions of divinity did merge, the result was a picture of some mortal, who in his historical existence functioned as a θεῖος ἀνήρ, who was a benefactor of men, and who then at the end of his life was taken up into heaven, attaining the status of an immortal.

An example of the result of such a merger of the two conceptions of divinity is found in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*. The *Life* depicts Apollonius as a θεὸς ἀνήρ (e.g., 1.2; 2.17, 40; 5.24; 7.21, 38; 8.5, 7), whose divinity is manifest primarily in his wisdom and virtue (1.2; 7.7, [ii], [iii], [iv]; 8.7, [7]).[56] Thereby Philostratus protects the philosopher from the charge of having been a magician, as was claimed by Euphrates during his lifetime and by Moeragenes after his death.[57]

Philostratus' major source, the memoirs of Damis, ends at 8.28. He tells us that the memoirs did not deal with the manner in which Apollonius died, "*if he did actually die*" (8.29 [my italics]).[58] His caution in speaking about the end of Apollonius' career is necessitated by the fact that Philostratus adds material from another source which depicts the saint's end in terms of an immortal (8.30). This account is followed by the statement. "No one ventured to dispute that he was immortal" (ἀθάνατος). Then comes an account of an appearance to a disciple in which further teaching is given. The result of the addition of this material to Philostratus' revision of Damis' memoirs is a portrayal of Apollonius as a wise and virtuous θεῖος ἀνήρ during his earthly career and as an immortal at his end. A merger has taken place here between two originally distinct views of divinity.

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[54] Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.14; Plutarch, *Pel.* 16; Dio Chrysostom, *Rhod.* 16.

[55] Pseudo-Lucian (*Cynic* 13) says of Theseus that he was the best man of his day.

[56] See Tiede, *Charismatic Figure*, passim.

[57] See Frederick C. Conybeare, in *Philostratus: Apollonius of Tyana* (trans. Christopher P. Jones; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1:viii.

[58] Cf. Howard Clark Kee, "Aretalogy and Gospel," *JBL* 92 (1973): 410.

A less perfect synthesis of the two conceptions is found in Diogenes Laertius' treatment of the life of Empedocles. One tradition of Empedocles' end used by Diogenes, as we have already noted, portrayed it as the passing of an immortal, though he also included others that tended to discredit the first (8.67–68). It is also true that the career of Empedocles is cast, in part at least, in terms of a divine man. In 8.62 (cf. also 8.66), Empedocles says: "I go about among you an immortal god (θεὸς ἄμβροτος), no more a mortal" (οὐκέτι θνητός). He says this as people look to him for wisdom, oracles, and healing. That this line was understood in antiquity near the time of Diogenes Laertius to be the claim of a θεῖος ἀνήρ is clear from its use in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius.* In 1.1–2, Philostratus' intent is to portray Apollonius as a divine man of the same type as Pythagoras, Empedocles, and Plato.[59] In this context the line from Empedocles, also found in Diogenes Laertius, is cited. In the latter's life of Empedocles, the two conceptions of divinity, the θεῖος ἀνήρ and the immortal, exist side by side. Both were required for some people in antiquity to speak adequately of this philosopher.

A final example of such a synthesis is from Pseudo-Lucian (*Cynic* 13), where Heracles is called a divine man (θεῖον ἄνδρα) and is said rightly to be considered a god (θεόν). Only a failure to recognize the original difference between the conception of a divine man and of an immortal could cloud the distinction here.[60] The statement which follows about Heracles leaving the realm of men (ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀπῆλθεν) makes it certain that for him to be considered a god means that he is believed to have become immortal. Here again the two views of divinity merge.

THE IMMORTALS AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Having clarified a basic pattern in the understanding of divinity in the Mediterranean world near the beginning of our era, we must now explore its twofold relationship to early Christian thought.

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[59] See also 8.7.[4].

[60] This is not the same distinction as that of Cleanthes who believed that there were two Heracles, one a god, the other a hero. See Wilfred L. Knox, "The 'Divine Hero' Christology in the New Testament," *HTR* 41 (1948): 235 n. 14.

On the one hand, certain early Christians regarded the immortals as demonic imitations of Christ. Justin Martyr offers evidence for this position. He was not only aware of the traditions about the immortals but also of the remarkable similarities between such figures and Jesus Christ. Indeed, he uses these resemblances for his apologetic ends. The Christians' assertions about Jesus Christ, he argues, propose nothing new or different from that which pagans say about the immortals, e.g., Asclepius, Heracles, Dionysus, and the Dioscuri (*1 Apol.* 21). If Christians assert that Christ was born of a virgin, that he was crucified, died, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, this is nothing new or different from what pagans say about the so-called sons of Jupiter and certain emperors.[61] Granting these similarities between the Christians' savior and the pagans' immortals, why should Christian belief seem incredible to pagans?

Justin's Logos-Christology did not utilize the mythology of the immortals as its central conceptual tool. It was imperative, therefore, for him to explain the similarities between Jesus and the immortals of pagan tradition. He did this by claiming that the devil counterfeited Christian realities in the fictions circulated among the pagans (*Dial.* 69–70; *1 Apol.* 54). These pagan myths were first related through the instigation of evil demons "who strive for nothing else than to alienate men from God their creator and from Christ..." (*1 Apol.* 58). The demons did not grasp clearly the meaning of what they heard said by the prophets. Like erring men, they mimicked what was said of Christ. So, for example, when the pagans say that Dionysus was born of Jupiter's union with Semele and that after he died, he arose again and ascended into heaven, this is due to the devil's having imitated the prophecy of Jacob in Gen 49:10–11 (*Dial.* 69; cf. 52–54; *1 Apol.* 54). Or when Asclepius is presented in pagan lore as raising the dead to life and curing all diseases, this is a devilish imitation of the prophecy in Isa 35:1–7 (*Dial.* 69). It is only a short distance from this conviction that Jesus is the true reality of which the immortals are only demonic imitations to an explicit employment of the pattern as a conceptual tool in Christology.

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[61] *1 Apol.* 21; *Dial.* 69. Theophilus of Antioch (*Autol.* 1.13) uses the same technique. He says of those who deride the Christian belief in the resurrection: "...you actually believe that Heracles, who burned himself up, is alive and that Asclepios, struck by lightning, was raised" (ἐγηγέρθει).

So, on the other hand, there are indications that some early Christians did think about Christ in terms of the mythology of the immortals.

(1) Recent research has described the Christology of Hellenistic Jewish Christianity in terms of four constitutive elements:[62] (a) From the moment of his resurrection/exaltation/ascension Jesus became Lord, Christ, Son of God and now actively reigns in heaven (Acts 2:36; 13:33; Rom 1:3–4). Of the four elements, this is primary, (b) By means of traditions about his virginal conception, Jesus' earthly sonship is expressed in terms of the modified Hellenistic Jewish concept of the divine man.[63] (c) Nevertheless, Jesus is qualified for the messianic office not by mere physical descent, but by his virtuous treatment of the sick and suffering (e.g., Mark 10:46–52). (d) There is on occasion an undeveloped concept of an inactive pre-existence of the Son (cf. Mark 12:6).

Any Mediterranean person who was confronted by such a christological pattern would immediately grasp its intent. Jesus, one would assume, is being portrayed as an immortal.[64] Jesus' ascent into the heavens, like that of other immortals, is constitutive for his new status. Thereby he begins a new type of existence different from that of mortal men. Jesus' historical career radiates virtue and is beneficial to men. This uniqueness can only be explained by a supernatural conception.[65] Only the presence on occasion in Hellenistic Jewish-Christian Christology of a concept of inactive pre-existence presents a problem. The solution is found in the Romulus tradition where the same type of pre-existence is presupposed.

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[62] See Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner, 1965), 184–97. For our purposes it is not necessary to resolve the debate over whether Hellenistic Jewish Christianity is an appropriate designation for the circles from which exaltation Christology came. Cf. I. Howard Marshall, "Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity: Some Critical Comments," *NTS* 19 (1972–1973): 271–88.

[63] According to Ferdinand Hahn (*The Titles of Jesus in Christology* [London: Lutterworth, 1969], 289–90), Hellenistic Judaism took the specifically pagan edge off the θεῖος ἀνήρ concept by (1) seeing miracles as owing to the Spirit, and (2) averting all thought of deification.

[64] Knox, "'Divine Hero' Christology," 229–30, rightly thinks that Rom 1:3–4 reflects such a pattern.

[65] The pagan way of thinking did not necessarily involve moral grossness. Plutarch (*Num.* 4; *Symposiacs* 8.13) followed the Egyptians in thinking that one must not suppose that the act was accomplished through the god in person having intercourse with a mortal woman. The act was accomplished through the agency of a "spirit of god" (πνεῦμα θεοῦ).

Julius Proculus, in Plutarch's narrative, claims to have seen Romulus after the king's departure. Romulus, he reported, said to him:

> It was the pleasure of the gods, O Proculus, *from whom I came* (ἐκεῖθεν ὄντας), that I should be with mankind only a short time, and that after founding a city destined to be the greatest on earth for empire and glory, *I should dwell again in heaven* (αὖθις οἰκεῖν οὐρανόν)…And I will be your propitious deity, Quirinus.[66] (My italics)

These words appear in the context of Romulus' becoming an immortal. Here is the same type of pre-existence that one finds in Hellenistic Jewish-Christian Christology. A Mediterranean listener who heard Jesus depicted in this way would find it difficult to avoid understanding him in terms of the mythology of the immortals. Furthermore, it is likely that those who formulated this christological pattern perceived him in this way also.

Though the constitutive elements in Hellenistic Jewish-Christian Christology and in the Mediterranean mythology of the immortals are the same, the pattern, when applied to Jesus, would be different in at least two significant ways.[67] First, the Christian pattern would also speak of a parousia of Christ (1 Thess 1:9–10). This would be an inheritance from an earlier Christian tradition. Second, the context for the Christian pattern would be the exclusive claim, "There is one Lord" (1 Cor 8:6). Nevertheless, the general picture of exaltation to heaven/virtuous life/supernatural conception of the mythology of the immortals would be the beachhead in some circles on which the Christian proclamation of Jesus would make its first inroads. The Christology of Hellenistic Jewish Christianity seems clearly indebted to the concept of the immortals.

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[66] *Rom.* 28.2–3; see also Cicero, *Resp.* 1.41, citing Ennius. Philippians 2:6–11, among the christological hymns, may reflect this pattern.

[67] Fuller, *Foundations*, 197, 248, is incorrect when he claims that Hellenistic Jewish Christianity had not yet raised the ontic question of the divinity of the exalted. (1) A supernatural conception would be interpreted ontically in Mediterranean antiquity. This is the significance of the term "demigods" (ἡμίθεοι), i.e., half gods. Cf. Luke 1:35. (2) The Christian resurrection/exaltation tradition would convey ontic change. The tradition in Rom 6:9 states precisely what was understood to have happened to the immortals. Cf. Philo, *Mos.* 2.288; Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.6–8. Against Fuller, it seems that the mythology of immortals offered one way for some early Christians to deal with the ontic problem of their belief in one God and at the same time belief in Jesus as Lord. The one God was conceived as *the* eternal; Jesus as *the* immortal.

(2) Since some early Christians did conceptualize Jesus in terms drawn from the mythology of the immortals, it seems inevitable that in such circles the Jesus traditions would be affected by this mentality. Without making a judgment about their ultimate origins, one must note that certain materials have a natural *Sitz im Leben* in this christological context. In a cult celebrating Jesus as Lord/Christ/Son of God from his exaltation, an ascension-story would be a predictable form with a clear-cut function. In some circles, the ascent of an immortal was believed to have been witnessed.[68] In other circles where the ascent of the immortal was inferred, an empty-tomb tradition[69] and stories of appearances[70] would function appropriately.

(3) More significant is the influence that the mythology of the immortals had on certain of the gospels taken as wholes. This influence is seen at its fullest in Luke-Acts. Here we find a supernatural conception (Luke 1:35), followed by a virtuous life. According to Acts 2:36 (cf. also 13:33), it is by virtue of his exaltation that Jesus becomes Lord/Christ/Son of God. Luke gives a synthetic portrayal of his becoming Lord. On the one hand, his passing from mortal to immortal is attested by the absence of Jesus' physical remains (Luke 24:1–11 [12]), reinforced both by appearances to friends and disciples in which further instruction is given (Luke 24:13–49; Acts 1:1–5) and by predictions made during his life (Luke 9:22; 18:32–33—to which specific reference is made in 24:6–8). On the other hand, Jesus' ascent amidst a cloud is witnessed by the Galileans (Acts 1:9–11). There is no way a Mediterranean person could have missed this as a portrayal of Jesus in the mythology of the immortals. That Luke-Acts is so influenced

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[68] The presence of the two heavenly figures at Jesus' ascent in Acts 1:9–11 and in the *Gos. Pet.* 9:34–10:42 is similar to the descent of Heracles and Dionysus to take Alexander back to heaven with them (cf. Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alexander Romance*).

[69] Elias Bickerman ("Das leere Grab," *ZNW* 23 [1924]: 281–92), Neill Q. Hamilton ("Resurrection Tradition and the Composition of Mark," *JBL* 84 [1965]: 415–21), T. J. Weeden (*Mark-Traditions in Conflict* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971], 106–8) have all argued that the empty-tomb story is a translation narrative. If the empty-tomb story was a translation tale, then we may ask whether Paul's omission of reference to the empty tomb might be linked with his preference for another christological pattern?

[70] Arnold Ehrhardt ("The Disciples of Emmaus," *NTS* 10 [1963–1964]: 187–201) regards Luke 24:13–35 as similar to the Romulus tradition (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2.63.3). This is reinforced by the fact that Plutarch's description of Romulus' appearance (*Rom.* 28) conforms in essentials to the form of resurrection-appearances elaborated by C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-criticism of the Gospels," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 9–35.

is noteworthy because it is in this gospel that the parallels between Jesus and the ancient philosophers are the greatest.[71] If the converts in Luke's church came from the Greco-Roman world where philosophers were sometimes described as divine men who became immortals, then the Lucan picture of Jesus is intelligible.

The impact of this mentality is also evident in Matthew. Here again we meet a supernatural conception followed by a virtuous life. According to 28:18, it is because he has passed from mortal to immortal that Jesus now has a new status as Lord. The evidence of his ascent into the heavens consists of the absence of his physical remains together with the now familiar *duo*: appearances in which instruction is given (28:9–10; 28:16–20) and predictions during Jesus' earthly career (16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19). Again, the way a Hellenistic person would have interpreted this portrayal is virtually certain. That Matthew is so influenced by the mythology of the immortals is significant because it is in this gospel that the parallels between Jesus and Moses are most pronounced. Though the resemblances between the evangelist's description of Jesus and Josephus's depiction of Moses are striking, the differences between them are at the points of divine parentage and the hero's being an object of worship at the end of his career. These are just the points that some Jews made in going beyond Josephus to describe Moses as an immortal. If the Christian converts in Matthew's church came from such circles as these, then the First Gospel's portrayal of Jesus is meaningful.

In Mark there are no narratives dealing with a supernatural conception. This is not decisive, for Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Empedocles* contained no such account yet ended with an ascent-tradition. His remains were nowhere to be found. This is precisely what we find in Mark. There is an empty-tomb story which has, of late, properly been recognized as an ascent-tradition. Connected with it are the predictable corollaries: predictions during Jesus' lifetime (8:31; 9:31; 10:32–33) and a reference to an appearance (16:7).[72] A Hellenistic reader would have understood the gospel in much the same terms that he would have interpreted Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Empedocles.* Here is a θεῖος ἀνήρ about whom the claim is made that he became an immortal at the end of his career.

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[71] See Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1974), ch. 6.

[72] So, most recently, Robert H. Stein, "A Short Note on Mark 14:28 and 16:7," *NTS* 20 (1973–1974): 445–52.

It would seem, therefore, that the early Christians were aware of the Mediterranean concept of the immortals and utilized it in one way or another in their proclamation of Jesus. During the first one hundred and twenty five years of Christian history this mythology functioned initially as a significant christological category and then as an apologetic tool.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MYTH OF A DESCENDING-ASCENDING REDEEMER IN MEDITERRANEAN ANTIQUITY

(1976)

In spite of its popularity, the contention that the Christian conception of Jesus as a descending-ascending savior figure was derived from the gnostic redeemer myth faces serious problems.[1] Three are widely noted; another needs attention. (1) The sources from which our knowledge of the gnostic myth comes are late:[2] e.g., the Naassene hymn, the *Hymn of the Pearl*, the Mandean materials, the Manichean evidence, the accounts in the church fathers, and the Nag Hammadi documents. Sources from Chenoboskion like the *Paraphrase of Shem*,[3] the *Apocalypse of Adam*,[4] and the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*[5] do contain a myth of a redeemer that is only superficially christianized. Hence the gnostics may not have derived their myth from Christians. It does not follow, however, either that Christians got it from gnostics or that it is pre-Christian.[6] (2) A redeemer myth is not essential to Gnosticism.[7] Though Gnosticism may contain a redeemer myth (e.g. the Naassene hymn), it may exist without one. In Carpocrates' system, for example, Jesus' soul remembered what it had seen in its circuit with the unbegotten God.[8] The Ophites in Origen's *Against Celsus* know of no descending-ascending redeemer. They look to an earthly being who fetches gnosis from heaven.[9] In *Poimandres*, the writer is the recipient of a vision in rapture. He then teaches the way of salvation. Indeed, the proto-Gnosticism of Paul's opponents in 1 Corinthians apparently did not contain a redeemer myth.[10] Such evidence demands that a distinction be drawn between two issues: (a) whether or not there was a pre-Christian Gnosticism, and (b) whether or not there was a pre-Christian gnostic redeemer myth. Since a redeemer myth is not constitutive for Gnosticism, the existence of a pre-Christian gnosis is no guarantee for the presence of a gnostic redeemer myth.[11] (3) In the Christian sources where the gnostic myth has been assumed to be influential (e.g. the Fourth Gospel), there is no ontological identity between Christ and the believers as in Gnosticism. There is, in the Christian writings, no preexistence of the soul or redeemed redeemer.[12] Given these difficulties, why the attractiveness of the gnostic hypothesis?

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[1] The view is closely connected with the name of Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (16th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 8–9, also n. 9; *RGG* (3rd ed.), 3:847; *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner's, 1955), 2:6, 12–13, 66.

[2] Attempts to find a Gnostic ἄνθρωπος figure in Philo have failed. Cf. A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Philo's 'heavenly man,'" *NovT* 15 (1973): 301–326.

[3] Frederik Wisse, "The Redeemer Figure in the Paraphrase of Shem," *NovT* 12 (1970): 130–40.

[4] George W. MacRae, "The Coptic Gnostic Apocalypse of Adam," *HeyJ* 6 (1965): 27–35; James M. Robinson, "The Coptic Gnostic Library Today," *NTS* 14 (1968): 377.

[5] Joseph A. Gibbons, "A Commentary on the Second Logos of the Great Seth," (Ph.D. diss., Yale, 1962).

[6] One can agree with James M. Robinson, "World in Modern Theology and in New Testament Theology," in *Soli Deo Gloria* (ed. J. McDowell Richards; Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 104, that the gnostic redeemer myth is not in origin a perversion of Christology. It does not follow, however, that Christology is thereby an appropriation of the gnostic myth.

[7] Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), 116; Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (London: Mowbray, 1965), 98.

The pattern of descent-ascent in the gnostic redeemer myth "has been and remains the strongest support for the hypothesis" that

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In addition to the groups mentioned in the text, Grillmeier refers to the Nicolaitans, the Archontics, and the Antitactae.

[8] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25.1–6.

[9] *Cels.* 7.8–9.

[10] Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 138–41, seems to have the better of the argument against Ulrich Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959).

[11] Carsten Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Darstellung und Kritik ihres bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); "New Testament and Gnostic Christology," in *Religions in Antiquity* (ed. Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 227–42; H. M. Schenke, *Der Gott "Mensch" in der Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962). Since James M. Robinson's negative review of Colpe's book (*JBL* 81 [1961], 287–9), scholarly opinion has seemed to confirm Colpe's and Schenke's conclusions. Ernst Käsemann's shift is indicative ("The Problem of a New Testament Theology," *NTS* 19 [1973]: 238). Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 151, sums up the situation: "After Carsten Colpe's book…it must be considered very questionable whether in the pre-Christian period there had been a complete redeemer myth that was then merely transferred to Jesus."

[12] Wayne Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 (1972): 44, 68; Schuyler Brown, review of *Der Vater, der mich gesandt hat* by Juan Peter Miranda, *CBQ* 36 (1974): 421–2. This objection has usually been answered by saying that John was demythologizing the gnostic myth.

early Christian Christology is connected with gnostic mythology.[13] (4) Generally overlooked is the fact that myths of descending-ascending redeemers are found elsewhere in the Mediterranean world prior to and parallel with the origins of Christianity. If so, then the strongest support for the gnostic hypothesis collapses and the question deserves re-examination.

The existence of the Greco-Roman mythology is not as well known to NT scholars as that of Gnosticism but is instructive none the less. For example, in his *Metamorphoses* (7 C.E.), Ovid tells of the visit of Jupiter and Mercury in the guise of mortals, seeking a place for rest, but finding it only in the humble home of old Baucis and Philemon. The gods save the couple from the destruction of the neighborhood by water and grant them not only their prayer that they would not be separated by death but also a type of immortality by changing them into intertwining trees near the gods' temple.[14] Acts 14:8–18 shows that this myth of descending-ascending gods was known to Christians in the first century. Tacitus, in his *Histories* (published in the reign of Trajan, 98–117 C.E.), tells of the origin of the Serapis cult in Ptolemaic times. A young man of more than human size appeared to Soter and instructed him to send to Pontus and fetch his statue. The god told Ptolemy that if he did as he was directed, it "would bring prosperity to the realm" and the city would be "great and illustrious." Serapis then ascended to heaven in a blaze of fire.[15]

The descent-ascent mythology could be used by Greco-Roman authors to interpret the lives of historical figures just as gnostics employed their myth for Simon, Menander, and Christ. Vergil's *Ecl.* 4 runs:

> The last age of the Sibyl's poem is now come…Now a new offspring is *sent down from high heaven.* Do thou, chaste Lucina, favour the birth of the child under whom the iron breed will first cease and a golden race arise throughout the world. Now shall *thine own Apollo bear sway.* (Italics mine.)

Augustus' birth is here viewed in terms of the myth of Apollo's descent for redemptive purposes (i.e. cessation of war and establishment of peace). Horace's *Carm.* 1.2 (23 B.C.E.) reflects a similar tendency. The odist asks: "Whom of the gods shall the folk call to the needs of the falling empire?" (25–26). "To whom shall Jupiter assign the task of atoning for our guilt?" (29–30). Then various gods are addressed: Apollo, Mars, and finally Mercury. It is the last of these whose descent is described as changing his form, assuming on earth the guise of man (41–44). It is the epiphany of Mercury that is used to interpret the career of Augustus. The petition closes: "Late mayest thou return to the skies and long mayest thou be pleased to dwell amid Quirinus' folk" (45–46). From these few examples, we see that a Greco-Roman mythology of descending-ascending gods who appear on earth for redemptive purposes both existed early enough to be available for Christian appropriation and had, by the beginning of our era, already been used to interpret the lives of historical figures.

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[13] Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 297.

[14] *Metam.* 8.626–721.

[15] *Hist.* 4.83–84. For further examples cf. Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 85–91.

The Hellenistic-Jewish mythology of a descending-ascending redeemer is usually overlooked or denied. Thomas Fawcett is representative when he says pre-Christian Judaism did not have any one myth which would account for the primitive Christian concept of Jesus' descent from heaven.[16] Since the Jewish mythology has received inadequate attention, this paper will focus on it. The first part will attempt to establish the existence of a κατάβασις-ἀνάβασις pattern used for redemption figures in ancient Judaism; the second will argue that this Jewish myth, in its various forms, served as the source for certain early Christians' speech about Jesus.[17]

THE 'ΚΑΤΆΒΑΣΙΣ-ἈΝΆΒΑΣΙΣ' PATTERN USED FOR REDEMPTION FIGURES IN JUDAISM

The descent-ascent pattern is found connected with redemption figures in at least two streams of ancient Judaism. On the one hand, the wisdom tradition reflects such a myth. In contrast to Prov 8:22–36 where heavenly wisdom is accessible to the man who earnestly seeks it, certain writings near the beginning of our era speak of the *descent* of wisdom from the heavens with saving intent. In Sir 24 pre-existent wisdom comes down from heaven, appears on earth among men, tabernacling in Jacob as the law. Baruch 3:27–4:4 is similar. Heavenly wisdom is given by God to Israel. She appears on earth and lives among men as the law. In these two sources the wisdom myth is used to interpret the meaning of an historical entity, the law.[18] The Wisdom of Solomon refers to pre-existent wisdom's being sent from the heavens (9:10) as a savior figure both in this world (7:27; 8:10) and for the next (6:18–20; 8:13, 17). The author can actually talk about being "saved by wisdom" (9:18; cf. 10:1, 4, 6, 13, 15, etc.).[19] Both 2 Esd vv. 9–10 and *2 Bar.* 48:36 refer to the *ascent* of wisdom, departing the earth during the crisis preceding the End. *1 Enoch* 42:1–2 contains a reference both to the *descent* and the *ascent* of wisdom. She comes down from heaven but, finding no dwelling place, returns to heaven and takes her seat among the angels.[20]

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[16] *Hebrew Myth and Christian Gospel* (London: SCM, 1973), 158.

[17] I regard the issue as a purely historical question. There are no theological-confessional advantages to either position. In this regard see the relevant comments of Helmut Koester, "The Theological Aspects of Primitive Christian Heresy," in *The Future of Our Religious Past* (ed. James M. Robinson; London: SCM, 1971), 69.

How does one explain these sources' difference from Prov 8 and their similarity with one another? The usual explanation has been the hypothesis of a common myth used by all (whether from Gnosticism[21] or from the Isis cult).[22] It may just as easily be explained by the changed theological climate for understanding wisdom in Judaism,[23] a change paralleled by Greek developments described in the latter parts of Gilbert Murray's *Five Stages of Greek Religion*.[24] However one explains the phenomena, the "hypostatized wisdom of late Jewish literature . . . is an anonymous heavenly redeemer figure."[25] Its pattern (κατάβασις-ἀνάβασις), function (soteriological), and use to interpret an historical entity (the law) show the wisdom myth near the beginning of our era to be analogous to the gnostic, Greco-Roman and Christian ones.

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[18] The insights of Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Idea of God and Human Freedom* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 1–79, must be taken seriously. In the biblical tradition we are dealing not so much with the demythologizing of myth as with the interpretation of historical events and persons by means of myth.

[19] The Qumran Hodayot seem to speak of wisdom as agent of creation (Ps 1, I, 7, 14, 19) and redeemer (Ps 14, IX, 23). See Svend Holm-Nielsen, *Hodayot: Psalms from Qumran* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1960), 17–18, 146.

[20] Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner's, 1965), 74, thinks that this is the myth that underlies each successive stage of the development of the wisdom concept in Judaism.

[21] Ulrich Wilckens, "Σοφία," *TDNT* 7:508. On the problem in general, see Roland E. Murphy, "Assumptions and problems in Old Testament Wisdom Research," *CBQ* 29 (1967): 110–11.

[22] Wilfred L. Knox, "The Divine Wisdom," *JTS* 38 (1937): 230–37; James M. Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 45–49; Hans Conzelmann, "The Mother of Wisdom," in *The Future of Our Religious Past* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 230–43.

[23] Burton L. Mack, "Wisdom Myth and Mythology," *Int* 24 (1970): 46–60, especially 51–53.

[24] *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1951). Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1:212, speaks of the widespread tendency in Hellenistic times towards the irrational and the mysterious which could only be known by means of supernatural revelations.

On the other hand, Jewish angelology also employs the κατάβασις-ἀνάβασις pattern for redemption figures.[26] This is true both for the מלאך Yahweh and for the archangels. Consider first the angel of the Lord.[27] (1) The Jewish scriptures in both their Hebrew and Greek forms speak of the מלאך Yahweh who is sometimes indistinguishable from God himself.[28] So one finds the paradoxical juxtaposition of two conceptions: *(a)* the angel is sent by God (e.g. Gen 19:1, 13) and *(b)* the angel is God in action (e.g. Gen 22:11–18). Hence the angel is closely identified with God's name (e.g. Gen 16:13a; Exod 23:20–21). (2) The מלאך appears sometimes as a man or men. For example, in Gen 18:2, 22 we hear of three men who ate with Abraham (v. 8). Philo (*Abr.* 22.113) says, "though they neither ate nor drank, they gave the appearance of both eating and drinking." Philo confirms what the text (vv. 10, 13, 17, 20) affirms: the men represent the מלאך (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.197). Genesis 32:24, 25 speaks of a man, though Hos 12:5 says it was the מלאך. Judges 13:6, 8 calls the angel a man of God, but v. 16 makes it clear that he will not eat food. (3) The angel's coming and going are sometimes explicitly spoken of as a descent and an ascent. For example, Exod 3:8 has the Lord or the מלאך (v. 2) say, "I have come down,"[29] and Judg 13:20 states the "angel ascended." (4) Among the functions of the angel are redemptive activities. In Gen 19:12–22 he saves Lot; in Gen 22:11–18 he saves Isaac; in Gen 48:15–16 he is the angel “who redeemed me from all evil”; in Exod 3:2–8 he comes down to deliver the people from the hand of the Egyptians;[30] in Judg 6:11–22 he came down to send Gideon to deliver the people. If the “angel of his presence” in Isa 63:9 is the מלאך, then he is the one who “saved them, in his love and pity he redeemed them…”[31]

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[25] Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), 126.

[26] Cf. Anitra Kolenkow, "The Coming and Ascent of a Heavenly Revealer—Tobit and Mark" (working paper for Mark seminar of the annual meeting of the SBL, 1973).

[27] For a discussion of the מלאך cf. G. A. F. Knight, *A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1953) and *From Moses to Paul* (London: Lutterworth, 1949).

[28] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (2 vols; New York: Harper, 1962), 1:287.

[29] We have here a pre-Israelite tradition which has been taken over and adapted by Israel, making the *numen* the appearance of the מלאך (von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1: 286). Verses 1ab, 2–4a, 5, 7–8 are J material (J. Philip Hyatt, *Commentary on Exodus* [London: Oliphants, 1971], 48, 71). Both in J and in the present JE synthesis, the angel is indistinguishable from Yahweh (v. 2 = the angel; vv. 4, 7 = the Lord). Since the two are interchangeable, it seems legitimate to take the "coming down" of the מלאך, as well, as Yahweh.

We now turn to the archangels.[32] (1) In Tobit (second century B.C.E.) Raphael is sent to heal both Tobit and Sarah, the daughter of Raguel (3:16–17). He accompanies Tobias on his journey and keeps him safe and sound (v. 21). He gives Tobias the remedy for his father’s eye ailment and a means of ridding his bride of the demon. As a result Tobias drives the demon away (8:3) and cures his father’s blindness (9:8, 12–14, 16). Reciting Raphael’s benefits, Tobias says to his father:

> he has led me back to you safely,
> he cured my wife,
> he obtained the money for me,
> and he also healed you. (12:3)

The angel then says to father and son:

> God *sent me* to heal you and your daughter-in-law, Sarah. I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels…(12:14–15a). All these days I merely appeared to you and did not eat or drink, but you were seeing a vision. And now give thanks to God, for *I am ascending to him who sent me* (12:19–20a). (Italics mine.)

Here in a this-worldly context we meet an angelic redemption figure who descends and ascends and who, while on earth, appears to be a man.

(2) In the Hellenistic-Jewish *Joseph and Aseneth* (first century B.C.E.)[33] Aseneth is held up as the model proselyte. Her passage from idolatry is facilitated by an angel, the Prince of the heavenly hosts. Following

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[30] See above, n. 5.

[31] Knight, *Trinity*, 28, thinks it is the מלאך. Gregory Dix, “The Seven Archangels and the Seven Spirits,” *JTS* 28 (1927): 233–85, thinks the angel of the presence is one of the archangels but one superior to the others.

[32] On the archangels generally see Harold Barnes Kuhn, “The Angelology of the Non-canonical Jewish Apocalypses,” *JBL* 67 (1948): 211–9.

[33] So George Dunbar Kilpatrick, “The Last Supper,” *ExpTim* 64 (1952): 5; Joachim Jeremias, “The Last Supper,” *ExpTim* 64 (1952): 91–92; Christolph Burchard, *Untersuchungen zu Joseph und Aseneth* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 143, 146, 151. The Greek text with a French translation can be found in Marc Philonenko, *Joseph et Aseneth* (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

Aseneth's prayer there was a cleft in the heavens and a man, flashing with light, stood over her (§14). The archangel said:

> God has heard your prayer. He has looked upon your sorrow and tears, and has forgiven your sin. Be of good cheer, for your name is written in the Book of Life....From this day forth you shall eat the bread of life and drink the cup of immortality, and be anointed with the oil of joy...many shall in like manner come to Him through your example by repentance. (§15)

Aseneth then wants to feed the angel. He sends her for a honeycomb which is miraculously there, eats of it himself, and gives some to the maiden, saying: "Now you have received the food of life and your youth shall know no old age and your beauty shall never fade." In this context he also says: "You are blessed, Aseneth, for you have seen some of the secret things of God; it is of this honeycomb that the angels eat in Paradise...and whoever tastes it shall not die forever" (§16). Then, after blessing her seven maidens (§17), he goes back to heaven, with Aseneth recognizing his true identity. Here we find the descent and ascent of an archangel, who appears to Aseneth as a man, connected with her redemption from pagan idolatry and her gaining of immortality.

(3) The *Testament of Job* (early first century C.E.),[34] which probably comes from Egyptian Judaism, presents us with a descending-ascending angelic redeemer.[35] Chapters 2–5 tell the story of Job's conversion. Job is at a loss to know whether the god worshipped in the nearby temple is the one who made the heaven and earth. His conversion results from a night vision in which the angel comes to him as a voice in a great light for the purpose of the salvation of his soul (3:5b[5]). He tells Job all that the Lord commanded (4:2), including the promise of the restoration of goods lost in this life because of Satan and ultimately resurrection from the dead if Job endures (4:6–8). After sealing Job,

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[34] John J. Collins, "Structure and Meaning in the Testament of Job," in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 1974* (vol. 1; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1974), 49–50; Howard Clark Kee, "Satan, Magic, and Salvation in the Testament of Job," in ibid., 2:55.

[35] The angel came (ἐλθών, 3:5b [5]) and departed (ἀπελθόντες, v. 2). That this language is intended to convey descent-ascent is determined by the document's general thought world (heaven-earth). That this is so is supported by the interchangeable use of "came" (8:2 [3]) and "came down" (κατῆλθεν, 16:1 [3]) for another heavenly being, Satan. There is a question whether the angel is simply an anonymous archangel (so Kee) or whether the apparent identification of the angel with the Lord in lines 1–2 points to his being the מלאך. Either way, the evidence is relevant for our purposes.

the angel departs (v. 2). By the revelation our hero is set apart from the rest of deceived mankind. Chapters 2–27 show him overcoming Satan by his endurance which is based on the knowledge of the future hope, the heavenly city, imparted to him by the angel.[36] Once again, this time in an early first-century Hellenistic-Jewish source, we find a descending-ascending angelic redeemer figure.

(4) The Hellenistic-Jewish *Apocalypse of Moses* (beginning of the first century C.E.)[37] describes the account of Adam's death in terms of angelic descent and ascent. When Adam dies, the angels descend and take his soul into heaven, interceding for him before God (33:1–5). Adam is pardoned by God and washed in the lake of heaven by one of the seraphim (37:2–3). Then the archangel Michael takes Adam's soul into Paradise in the third heaven to await the last day (37:4–6). There is no doubt that in this document the descent and ascent of the angelic hosts is for the purpose of the redemption of Adam. Such joint redemptive activity of angels, seraphim, and archangels perhaps prompted rabbinic protests like that of (a) *y. Ber*. 9:1: "If trouble comes to a man, he must not invoke either Michael or Gabriel, but God, who will hear him";[38] or (b) the refrain, "I—not by means of an angel and not by means of a messenger," which is found in *Sifre* Deut 42 and 325, the *Mekilta* on Exod 12:12, in Version B of *'Avot de Rabbi Nathan* where it is said that Moses received the law not from the mouth of an angel and not from the mouth of a seraph, and in the Passover Haggadah where it is said that the Lord brought the people forth out of Egypt "not by means of an angel, and not by means of a seraph, and not by means of a messenger."[39] These protests by rabbinic Judaism confirm the fact that in some circles of ancient Jewish piety people looked to angels, archangels, and seraphim as redeemer figures.

(5) The *Testament of Abraham* (first century C.E.)[40] describes the descents and ascents of the archangel Michael, the purpose of whose

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[36] Collins, "Structure," 41.

[37] Bamberger, "Apocalypse of Moses," *IDB* 1:45; also R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2:127–29.

[38] *The Talmud of Jerusalem, Volume One: Berakoth* (trans. M. Schwab; New York: Hermon Press, 1969; repr., Williams and Norgate, 1886), 153.

[39] Judah Goldin, "Not by Means of an Angel and Not by Means of a Messenger," in *Religions in Antiquity*, 412–24. At Qumran, 11QMelch presents Melchizedek as an angelic redemption figure. *3 Macc.* 6:18–31 shows angelic deliverance did not necessarily involve worship of angels.

[40] Bamberger, "Testament of Abraham," *IDB* 1:21.

coming to Abraham is twofold. On the one hand, the archangel "told him everything which he had heard from the Most High" (9:17–18) which included the announcement of his death. On the other hand, he gave Abraham the assurance that he would go to his Master among the good (1:5–10). Hence he tries to get the patriarch "to follow him" into heaven (7:4; 8:2; 15:28–9, 19:8, 20:21). Isaac describes his dream about the deaths of his father and mother in this way:

> I saw the heaven opened and I saw a luminous man *descending* from heaven, shining more than seven suns. And this man of the sunlike form came and took the sun from my head and *went back up into the heavens* from which he had descended…And after a little time…I saw this man coming forth from heaven a second time, and he took the moon from me, from my head. I wept greatly and entreated that luminous man and said, "My lord, take not my glory from me…." He said, "Allow them to be taken up to the king on high, for he wants them there." (7:3–17)[41] (Italics mine.)

In this source we meet an archangel described as a man who descends and ascends. The purpose of his coming and going is to take Abraham and Sarah, Isaac's parents, to God, an activity that is certainly redemptive.

(6) Origen uses the *Prayer of Joseph* (first or second century C.E.)[42] to add weight to his argument that John the Baptist was an angel who assumed a body for the sake of bearing witness to Christ. This apocryphal work current among the Hebrews, he says, spoke of Jacob-Israel as the archangel of God, the chief captain among the sons of God, a ruling spirit, the firstborn of every creature, who descended to earth and tabernacled among men.[43] He fought with the angel Uriel when the latter tried to exalt himself beyond his rightful position. Once again, we find the typical pattern of angelic descent (with ascent implied), involving the taking of bodily form and the struggling with evil successfully that we have come to expect. The conclusion seems irresistible: in certain circles of ancient Jewish angelology, both B.C.E.

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[41] *The Testament of Abraham* (trans. Michael E. Stone; New York: SBL, 1972), 71.

[42] Morton Smith, "The Account of Simon Magus in Acts 8," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume, English Section* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), 2: 748, thinks first century; Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Prayer of Joseph," in *Religions in Antiquity*, 291, thinks first or second century.

[43] With Smith, I take the first person singular of κατέβην ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ κατεσκήνωσα ἐν ἀνθρώποις καὶ ὅτι ἐκλήθην ὀνόματι Ἰακώβ to refer to the angel Israel and not to Uriel. This fits with l. 29, in A. E. Brooke, *The Commentary of Origen on S. John's Gospel* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 1:97.

and in the first and second centuries C.E., there existed a mythology with a descent-ascent pattern, in which the redeemer figure descends, takes human form, and then ascends back to heaven either after or in connection with his saving activity.[44]

Though the מלאך Yahweh and archangel traditions were originally distinct, by the beginning of our era they had, in certain circles at least,[45] merged into one. Either one of the archangels could absorb the functions of the others so that he was almost the equivalent of the ancient מלאך [46] or the scriptural references to the angel of the Lord could be referred to an archangel.[47] Whether separately or in synthetic form, the two Jewish traditions of angelology provided a myth of a descending-ascending redeemer figure alongside a similar mythology of such a figure in Jewish wisdom literature.

In some Jewish circles the angel and wisdom traditions merged not only with one another but also with the concepts of the logos and the firstborn son, among others. (1) The identification of wisdom and angel is made already in *1 En.* 42:1–2 where it is said that when heavenly wisdom came down, found no dwelling place, and returned to heaven, she took her seat among the angels.[48] The same identification is found in the Wisdom of Solomon in 10:6 where wisdom is identified with the מלאך who delivered Lot on the one hand, and in the parallelism between 10:15–16 where wisdom delivers Israel from Egypt amidst wonders and signs and 18:15 where the מלאך Yahweh performs the same task on the other. (2) The merger of concepts and traditions in the Wisdom of Solomon, however, goes further than the mere equation of wisdom and angel. In 9:1–2 wisdom and logos are equated;[49] in 9:17 the parallelism seems to link wisdom and Holy Spirit; while in 18:15 logos and angel are identified. The resulting configuration yields a divine redeemer figure who is variously identified as wisdom-logos-angel-Holy Spirit. (3) Philo offers further evidence for the merger of traditions and concepts. (a) Though on occasion he represents either the logos as derived from wisdom (*Somn.* 1.108ff.) or Sophia as derivative from the logos (*Fug.* 97), in *Alleg. Interp.* 1.65 he makes the two completely identical (ἡ [σοφία] δὲ ἐστιν ὁ θεοῦ λόγος)[50] (b) He can identify πνεῦμα with wisdom (e.g. *Opif.* 135; *Gig.* 22, 27). (c) He can equate the logos and angel, either archangel (*Her.* 42, 205) or מלאך (e.g. *Cher.* 35; *QE* 2.13). (d) He sometimes links the Word, the first-born Son, and the angel of Yahweh (*Agr.* 51). At other times the Son, the logos, and the archangel are meshed.[51] For example, in *Conf.* 146–7 Philo says:

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[44] The Melchizedek Fragment in Sokolov's manuscript of the early first century *2 Enoch* (cf. W. R. Morfill and R. H. Charles, *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1896], 85–93 has usually been regarded as Christian in origin (so Charles, *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, 85; A. Rubinstein, "Observations on the Slavonic Book of Enoch," *JJS* 13 [1962]: 1–22); though it has also had defenders of its early, Jewish character (e.g. Jonas C. Greenfield, "Prolegomena" to *3 Enoch* by Hugo Odeberg [New York: KTAV, 1973], xx, xlv, n. 21). From my point of view, Rev 12 argues for a non-Christian origin for the pattern of an infant's being caught up to heaven by god to escape the chaos of the evil powers and at least a first-century date for it, as does the conjunction of names like high priest—word of God—power in Hellenistic Judaism of Philo's time. Of course, that the pattern and its ingredients existed early does not prove the fragment did or that Melchizedek was linked to them this early. In the fragment, the child born by divine conception and after his mother had died is delivered from the flood by the chief captain, Michael. He comes down, takes the child, and places him in Paradise. Again an archangel descends and ascends in connection with his redeeming activity.

[45] The מלאך remains separate in such writings as Sus 55, 59; Bel 34.

[46] Dix, "The Seven Archangels and the Seven Spirits," 243.

[47] E.g. Philo, *Somn.* 1.157, where the מלאך who appeared to Jacob in Gen 28:13 is understood as the archangel. This tendency is continued in later Christian circles, e.g., Aphrahat in his tract on fasting who refers to Exod 23:20–23 and Josh 5:14, saying the angel is Michael (cf. A. Bakker, "Christ an angel? A study of Early Christian Docetism," *ZNW* 32 [1933]: 258).

[48] Gregory Dix, "The Heavenly Wisdom and the Divine Logos in Jewish Apocalyptic," *JTS* 26 (1925): 5; Knight, *From Moses to Paul*, 100.

> But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a son of God, let him press to take his place under God's First-born, the Word, who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler (ἀρχάγγελον) as it were. And many other names are his, for he is called, "the Beginning," and the Name of God, and His Word, and the Man after His Image, and "he that sees," that is Israel. . . . For if we have not yet become fit to be thought sons of God yet we may be sons of His invisible image, the most holy Word. For the Word is the eldest-born image of God. (Colson and Whitaker, LCL)

(e) Yet another designation for the many-named logos or wisdom is high priest (e.g. *Somn.* 1.215; *Fug.* 108). In Philo, therefore, we meet a heavenly, divine figure,[52] Son-Word-Angel-Wisdom-High Priest-Man, the many-named one.[53] Here we can see clearly the merger of wisdom and angel traditions, with others also brought into the synthesis.

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[49] Cf. Sir 24:3.

[50] See the instructive discussion of Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo* (2d ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), 1:253–66.

[51] For identification of son and angel, cf. also *Pr. Jos.*; LXX of Isa 9:5–6; and Dan 3:25.

[52] E.g. *Somn.* 1.230 where the logos is θεός.

Two objections are usually raised at this point. (1) The logos figure in Philo is not personal, and (2) Philo's logos is not a redeemer. On the one hand, it is asserted that although Philo sometimes speaks of this heavenly figure in personal terms (e.g. Son, Man, Angel, High Priest), for him the logos is never truly personal. It is the Platonic world of ideas conceived of as expressing the mind of God.[54] As such it is the medium by which the world approaches God.[55] On the other hand, it is contended that the logos in Philo has only cosmological and psychological, not soteriological functions.[56]

Neither of these objections poses a serious obstacle for our thesis. The first may be countered with three observations. (a) The mythology of a heavenly, divine redeemer figure alternately described as Logos-Wisdom-Angel-Spirit existed in Alexandrian Judaism prior to Philo (e.g. Wisdom of Solomon). In this mythology the redeemer figure was personal.[57] (b) Philo's writings assume this myth and set about to interpret it. (c) His allegorical reading of the myth does take it to be the impersonal philosophical entity scholars claim. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that whereas Philo's own personal stance is a demythologized one, the materials he is reinterpreting give us an indirect witness to the existence of the myth in the Jewish community of his time.[58] While it is, therefore, correct to say that for Philo the logos is not personal, it is also accurate to note that he is allegorizing a myth of a personal being with many names.[59]

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[53] Wisdom is many-named (*Alleg. Interp.* 1.14) just as logos is.

[54] Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 415–9, 426 (cf. *Opif.* 17 and 146); James Drummond, *Philo Judaeus* (2 vols.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1988), 2:226–7, 235.

[55] Williamson, *Philo*, 418.

[56] Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, 81.

[57] Wis 9:4; 10:6; 18:15–16; 11:17; 9:1–2. This is not to deny that already in Wisdom of Solomon an allegorizing of the myth is found.

[58] Montgomery J. Shroyer, "Alexandrian Jewish Literalists," *JBL* 55 (1936): 261–84, points out that whereas most treatments of Philo aim at reconstructing a picture of liberal Judaism, Philo can also be used as a source of knowledge of conservative Judaism in Alexandria. For an example of Philo's interpretation which reduces personal beings to abstractions, see *Cher.* 1.138–40; *Somn.* 1.40–41.

[59] Aristobulus (about 170 B.C.E.), like Philo, believed that if men are to understand the real meaning of the Pentateuch they should not be victims of the mythological conceptions as were conservative Jews. Rather they should employ allegorical interpretation of the myth (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 8.10.2). In Aristobulus, logos is already

The second objection is also cancelled by three facts. (a) The basic orientation of Philo's exegesis is soteriological. His concern is with the question, "How can man know God?" (b) The logos with many names is, in Philo, a "mediating figure which comes forth from God and establishes a link between the remotely transcendent God and the world or man, and yet which also represents man to God as a high priest (*Gig.* 52) and advocate" (*Mos.* 2.133; *Her.* 42).[60] That is, this figure is both revealer and intercessor. This, in Philo's context, is definitely soteriological. (c) Though Philo's allegorical interpretation does not treat the many-named logos as a personal redeemer, the myth on which he is working most definitely does (e.g. Wisdom of Solomon). Again, Philo is an indirect witness to the myth of a heavenly, divine redeemer figure in Egyptian Judaism, a myth in which wisdom and angel streams of thought had merged and drawn into their orbit other concepts such as Son of God, Word of God, Man in God's image, and High Priest.[61]

(4) Still further evidence comes from a collection of fragments contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions and Canons* and published by Bousset in 1915 because he believed they reflected Jewish liturgy.[62] E. R. Goodenough accepted Bousset's thesis and regarded the fragments as reflecting the same type of syncretistic Judaism as that found in Philo.[63] Though they cannot be dated with any certainty prior to the second century C.E., they confirm the existence of an ongoing Jewish tradition in which the wisdom and angel conceptions have merged with one another and with others such as Son, Word and High Priest. Fragment 7 (equals *Apos. Con.* 8.12.6–27) is especially clear about the many-named heavenly, divine figure. In 7.7 we hear that God has begotten his only Son before all ages, that is, God the Logos, the living Sophia, the firstborn of every creature, the angel of the Great Counsel,

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identified with wisdom and regarded as a savior figure that imparts knowledge of truth (*Praep. ev.* 13.12.13–16). Philo stood almost at the end of a long tradition of allegorization (R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* [Richmond: John Knox, 1959], 41–45), one which had its Greco-Roman equivalent (Sidney G. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews* [Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1965], 13–18).

[60] Richard A. Baer, Jr., *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 4–5.

[61] Kleinknecht, "Λόγος," *TDNT* 4:89.

[62] "Eine jüdische Gebetssammlung im siebenten Buch der apostolischen Konstitutionen," *Nachrichten von der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (1915): 435–85.

[63] Erwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1969), 306–57.

God's High Priest. Good enough also proposed that three more fragments besides those of Bousset be considered Jewish in origin.[64] If the first (Fragment 14 equals *Apos. Con.* 7.26.1–3) is accepted, then the Son who created the world (cf. Fragment 7) is also the one through whom men gain knowledge and immortality. The many-named one is a redeemer.

This syncretistic practice of Hellenistic Judaism is a part of the tendency of the larger culture of the time to think in terms of one heavenly reality which could be addressed or described by many names. (a) Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* begins: "Thou, O Zeus, are praised above all gods: Many are thy names and thine is all power forever." (b) A third-century B.C.E. inscription by Artemidorus of Perga who settled on the island of Thera speaks of "this Hecate, of many names."[65] (c) Plutarch makes the same point in his *On Isis and Osiris*, especially 67, 70, 78. The one logos which orders all things is given different modes of address among different peoples. (d) Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.84, says the god Serapis was identified by some as Asclepius, by others as Osiris, by still others as Jupiter, but by most with Pluto. (e) Diogenes Laertius says that Stoics hold: "God is one and the same with Reason, Fate, and Zeus; he is also called by many other names" (7.135). (f) No passage is clearer than that in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* where Lucius cries out to Isis:

> O blessed queen of heaven, whether thou be the Dame Ceres…or the celestial Venus…or…the sister of the god Phoebus…or…Proserpine…by whatsoever name or fashion or shape it is lawful to call upon Thee, I pray Thee…

Lucius' cry to the goddess is heard. Isis replies:

> For the Phrygians…call me the Mother of the gods at Pessinus; the Athenians…Cecropian Minerva; the Cyprians…Paphian Venus; the Cretans…Dietynnian Diana; the Sicilians…infernal Proserpine; the Eleusians…Ceres; some Juno, others Bellona, others Hecate, other Rhamnusia…and the Egyptians…do call me by my true name, Queen Isis.[66]

It is inevitable that certain Jewish circles, living in this type of world, would conceive of one heavenly redeemer figure who descended and ascended with a redemptive function and who could be addressed or spoken of with many names—e.g. Word, Wisdom, Angel, Son, Man, High Priest. At the same time, it is also true that other circles of Jewish life continued to maintain the traditions separately (e.g. either angel or wisdom) or in varying stages of merger (e.g. wisdom-word merged, but separate from angel, as in Sirach; or angel-son-spirit merged, as in the *Prayer of Joseph*, but separate from logos and wisdom). The conclusion seems irresistible. A myth of a heavenly redeemer who descended and ascended in the course of his/her saving work existed in pre-Christian Judaism and alongside first- and second-century Christianity. It existed in a multiplicity of forms, with the different varieties depending on the degree of syncretism existing at a given time and place. In its extreme form the diverse traditions had run together so that the communities conceived of one redeemer who was many-named. Hellenistic Judaism, just as Greco-Roman paganism, Gnosticism and early Christianity, employed mythologies of descending-ascending redeemers near the beginning of our era. Having established this fact, it is now necessary to ask about the relationship between the Jewish myths and that of the Christians.

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[64] Ibid., 334–5.

[65] Nock, *Conversion*, 92.

[66] Hanson, LCL. For Isis as many-named, cf. also *P. Oxy.* 2.1380.

Early Christian Use of the Jewish 'Κατάβασις-Ἀνάβασις' Mythology

In the second part of this paper we will explore the possible use of certain forms of the Jewish redeemer mythology both by six selected non-canonical Christian authors and by three NT writers. Since Jewish and pagan mythology employed, from pre-Christian times, a *pattern* (descent-ascent) and a *function* (soteriological) analogous to that of the Christian myth of the redeemer, either could conceivably have been the source of the Christian usage. In order to determine which of these, if either, constituted the source for the Christian mythology, *terminology* must be decisive. What we will be looking for are signs of a descent-ascent pattern used for the church's savior figure in connection with a cluster of names/titles or other language characteristic of the Jewish myths in their various forms. We begin with an examination of six selected non-canonical writings.

Justin Martyr presents us with as full a Christian adaptation of the Jewish synthesis as I can find in the second century. Though Justin's Christology has usually been regarded as an appropriation of the Stoic logos thought (e.g. *1 Apol.* 46; *2 Apol.* 10), sometimes, especially in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, we find Christ spoken of in terms of the Son-Wisdom-Word-Angel vocabulary of Hellenistic Judaism. This terminology is used for the descent-ascent Christology of Justin (*Dial.* 38, 48, 56, 59, 61, 126, 128). This descending-ascending many-named one in Justin functions as a savior or revealer of God to man (e.g. §56, 128). When we find the pattern, function and terminology of Justin's Christology in the *Dialogue* corresponding to the mythology of Hellenistic Judaism, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that this Christian is using the Jewish categories.

In *Dial.* 61, for example, Justin says:

> God has begotten of Himself a certain rational Power as a Beginning before all other creatures. The Holy Spirit indicates this Power by varying titles, sometimes…*Son*, or *Wisdom*, or *Angel*, or…*Word*. He even called Himself Commander-in-Chief when He appeared in human guise to Joshua, the son of Nun. Indeed, He can justly claim to all these titles from the fact both that He performs the Father's will and that He was begotten by an act of the Father's will.[67] (Italics mine.)

The same cluster of Son-Angel-Word-Wisdom titles occurs again in *Dial.* 128–9. Elsewhere we find combinations of Son-Wisdom-Angel (*Dial.* 62; 126); Son-Word-Angel (*1 Apol.* 63); or Son-Angel-Priest-Man (*Dial.* 34). When Justin refers to Christ as Angel, sometimes it is to (1) the מלאך (e.g. *Dial.* 56, 61–62, 59, 60, 128), sometimes to (2) the מלאך bearing the name Israel (e.g. *Dial.* 75, 114, 125, 130, 134, 135),[68] sometimes to (3) Isaiah's Angel of Great Counsel (e.g. *Dial.* 126), and sometimes to (4) an archangel (e.g. *Dial.* 34).[69] He is furthermore careful to specify why Christ can be spoken of as an angel. He can be called Angel because "He delivered the messages of God, the Creator of all, to whomsoever God desires" (*Dial.* 56), "in order that by (this) expression you may recognize Him as the minister of the Father" (*Dial.* 58), "because He came to men (since by that power the Father's messages are communicated to men)" (*Dial.* 128). Justin is also careful to specify that although as the מלאך Christ appeared under the guise of incorporeal beings, in the incarnation he has become man (e.g. *1 Apol.* 63).

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[67] *Saint Justin Martyr* (trans. and ed. Thomas B. Falls; Washington, DC: Catholic University of American Press, 1948), 244.

[68] In contrast to the *Prayer of Joseph* where the angel Israel is the archangel, in Justin the angel Israel is the מלאך.

[69] Cf. *1 Apol.* 6 where Christ seems to be one of the angels (also the note in *Saint Justin Martyr*, 39 n. 2).

In his *Dialogue* the need to argue from Scripture for the Son as distinct from the Father doubtless prompted Justin to make use of the Angel-Wisdom-Word-Son category to an extent not found in his more Gentile-oriented apologies. When he needed to talk to a Hellenistic Jew, Justin employed the Hellenistic-Jewish mythology of a divine redeemer figure called by such names as Word-Wisdom-Son-Angel to speak of Jesus. When he spoke to Gentiles, he used primarily the Word-Son categories, with the Logos understood in terms of the immanent logos of the Stoics.

The Shepherd of Hermas offers another example of a second-century Christian's appropriation of one variety of the Hellenistic-Jewish mythology. Hermas is primarily concerned about the period after Christ's ascension and before the parousia. Very little is said about activities of the savior before the ascension. Whenever he does refer to such a time (e.g., *Sim.* 5.6.3–8), the pattern is pre-existence-incarnation (connected with cleansing the sins of the people)-ascent or exaltation. After his ascent the redemptive activities of the savior continue. (1) In this connection we meet a most reverend or glorious angel who is identified with Christ.[70] This angel justifies those doing penance (*Mand.* 5.7), judges souls, rewards the just, bestows grace, incorporates men into the church (*Sim.* 8.1.1–2; 8.2.1–4), and tests Christians like Hermas (*Sim.* 7.1, 2, 5). His functions make it difficult to distinguish between God and his angel. This makes it seem that we are nearer to the OT understanding of the מלאך than to any specific figure in later angelology.[71] Yet in *Sim.* 8.3.2–3 a glorious angel is identified with Michael. Here is a notorious crux. Is Christ here identified with Michael[72] or is the archangel a separate figure still?[73] Even if Michael here is to be distinguished from Christ, as seems necessary, the church's savior is elsewhere identified with the chief of the archangels. For example, Christ is the Son of God in the midst of the six glorious angels (archangels) of which he is chief (*Sim.* 9.12.8; cf. *Sim.* 5.6.4, 7). It would seem, then, that in Hermas the מלאך and the archangel traditions of Judaism have merged, with the archangel the dominant one. (2) Most instructive is Hermas' identification of the glorious angel with the Son of God and with the Holy Spirit (*Sim.* 9.1.1–3; cf. 5.6.5–7).[74] The redeemer can, in the same context, be spoken of as the "splendid man" (*Sim.* 9.12.8). In Hermas, then, the savior is described basically in terms of an angelology which has coalesced with the categories of Son and Spirit. This is virtually identical with the thought forms of the *Prayer of Joseph*. It is also similar to the position of Justin and doubtless comes from the same ultimate root, Hellenistic Judaism. Nevertheless, the differences between Justin and Hermas, make it probable that each is using a different version of the Jewish mythology.

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[70] Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), 121; Halver Moxnes, "God and His Angel in the Shepherd of Hermas," *ST* 28 (1974): 50.

[71] Moxnes, "God and His Angel in the Shepherd of Hermas," 55.

[72] So Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma* (New York: Harper, 1957), 134.

[73] So Bakker, "Christ an Angel? A Study of Early Christian Docetism," 257–8.

Sibylline Oracles 8, which probably comes from the period before 180 C.E.,[75] confronts us with the pre-existent Word (§446). In describing the Word's relation to creation (§447–55), though the term Wisdom is not used, there are echoes of Prov 8:22–36. The incarnation is then described (§456–74).

> From heaven he came…
> First…the holy, mighty form of Gabriel was displayed.
> And second the archangel addressed the maiden in speech…
> Thus speaking, God breathed grace into the sweet maiden.
> …The Word flew into her body,
> Made flesh in time…this, a great wonder to mortals,
> Is no great wonder to God the Father and to God the Son.
> Bethlehem was chosen the homeland…of the Logos.[76]

Here we have a synthesis of Angel-Word-Son with possible echoes of Wisdom. If §462 uses God synonymously with archangel, then we also have a blending of archangel and מלאך traditions. Significantly, the point at which the angelology is used is at the descent from heaven. Once again, the Jewish roots of the thought and language seem obvious.

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[74] This identification is reinforced by the fact that both the Holy Spirit and the Son are pre-existent (*Sim.* 5.6.5; 9.12.2) and associated with creation (*Sim.* 5.6.5; 9.12.2). In this connection, cf. *Vis.* 1.3.4, where it is Word and Wisdom that are involved in creation. Hermas apparently knew the synthesis Word-Wisdom-Son-Holy Spirit-Angel though he used only Angel-Son-Holy Spirit for the redeemer in his saving activity.

[75] Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 2:707.

[76] Ibid., 2:740.

Nevertheless, the differences between the form of the myth here and its form both in Justin and Hermas point to the varieties in which the Jewish mythology circulated.

In Justin, Hermas, and *Sib. Or.* 8, the angel component is central in the forms of the myth appropriated by the Christians. Other Christian authors of the second or early third century reflect the same Jewish world of thought but are reluctant to accept a form of it which includes an angel ingredient. Three examples, the Epistle of the Apostles, Tertullian, and the *Odes of Solomon*, illustrate the matter.

The *Epistle of the Apostles*[77] knows the Hellenistic Jewish synthesis of Son-Word-Wisdom-Angel but uses it in a significantly different way from that of Justin, Hermas, and *Sib. Or.* 8. In ch. 3 we are told that Jesus *is* the Son sent by God and the Word become flesh. In ch. 13, however, Jesus is not identified with but rather *puts on* the Wisdom of the Father. In ch. 14, Christ *takes the form* of the angel Gabriel and appears to Mary "in the appearance of the shape of an angel." This does not identify Christ and Gabriel.[78] It rather reflects reluctance on the part of this author to regard Jesus as an angel. Rather Christ takes the form of Gabriel in his function as messenger of God, that is, in his descent.

In the works of Tertullian we find an excellent example of the tendency to separate the Wisdom-Logos-Son-Spirit part of the myth from the angel component due to the controversy context in which the North African worked. On the one hand, Tertullian employed the familiar cluster, Wisdom-Word-Son-Spirit, to speak of Christ.[79] He also was not averse to identifying Christ with the מלאך Yahweh who met Abraham under the tree at Mamre.[80] On the other hand, he resisted any attempt to understand the incarnation, as some heretics like Apelles did, by analogy with the flesh of angels when they appear among men. Unlike the corporeality of angels, the flesh of the incarnate Word was that which could suffer and die, that is, the flesh preceded by birth.[81] The heretics, obviously drawing on an existing strand of Christology, argued: Christ bore the nature of an angel. To which Tertullian responded: It is true that Christ has been called "the Angel of Great Counsel," but that expresses his *official function as messenger rather than his nature.* He is not on this account to be regarded as an angel like Gabriel or Michael. Knowing, however, that angel terminology was indigenous to some Christology, "if such an expression is to be hazarded," Tertullian preferred to say "that the Son is actually an angel, that is, a messenger from the Father," than that "there is an angel in the Son."[82]

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[77] Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 485, locates it in Asia Minor about 160 C.E.

[78] Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 59.

[79] E.g. *Herm.* 18, in the context of his argument against Hermogenes' claim that matter was eternal. *Prax.* 7, 19, in the context of his pro-trinitarian argument. In both documents it is primarily with reference to creation, a use dictated by the context.

[80] E.g., *Marc.* 9; *Prax.* 16; *Carn. Chr.* 6.

[81] E.g., *Carn. Chr.* 6; cf. also *Marc.* 9.

It is obvious that Tertullian's distaste for angel Christology derives in large measure from its docetic implications. It leads to a denial of the real human nature of the incarnate one. His particular situation may very well be indicative of the larger scene in which angel Christology was gradually eliminated, in part, due to its potential for heretical abuse.[83] In any case, in Tertullian we can see the full-scale synthesis breaking up under the pressure of false belief with the Son-Word-Wisdom-Spirit cluster separating from the angel component.[84]

In the *Odes of Solomon*[85] the break with an angel component is complete. This early Christian hymn book speaks of a savior figure (*Odes Sol.* 12, 29, 37, 41, 42), Christ, whose activity in redemption is described in terms of a descent-ascent pattern (*Odes Sol.* 12, 22, 23). The dominant name for the Christian's redeemer is "the Word" (*Odes Sol.* 12, 16, 29, 37, 41). At points the divine Word is spoken of in language that echoes the heavenly Wisdom of Prov 8.[86] He can also be described as the Son of God (e.g. *Odes Sol.* 36, 41, 42) and as the Man or Son of Man (*Odes Sol.* 36, 41).[87] In Ode 41 we hear: "His Word is with us...The Savior who gives life...(11). The Man who humbled Himself...(12). The Son of the Most High appeared...(13). And light dawned from the Word..." (14).

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[82] *Carn. Chr.* 14. For the six possible relationships between Christ and angelology in early Christianity, of which this is one, cf. Joseph Barbel, *Christos Angelos* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1941, repr., 1964), 286.

[83] Jewish angelology was certainly docetic: e.g. Tob 12:19; Philo, *Abr.* 22.18; *2 En.* 56:2; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.197; *T. Gen.* 19:3; Pesikta 57a; Justin, *Dial.* 57. J. G. Davies, "The Origins of Docetism," StPatr 6 (1962): 13–35, rightly argues that this was one source of early Christian docetism.

[84] The pattern could be broken up even further, with Logos being used for the Son and Wisdom for the Holy Spirit, as for example in Theophilus of Antioch, *Autol.* 1.7; Irenaeus, *Epid.* 9–10.

[85] James H. Charlesworth, *John and Qumran* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972), 109, regards the Odes as contemporaneous with the Fourth Gospel, i.e. about 100 C.E. For our purposes, such an early date is not necessary.

[86] Rendel Harris and A. Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* (Manchester University Press, 1920), 2:402.

The clustering of the names Word-Son-Man for the descending-ascending redeemer is significant in two ways. On the one hand, it argues for the Jewish roots of the mythology here employed for Christ.[88] On the other hand, it reveals a form of the myth apparently devoid of an angel ingredient.

It cannot be fortuitous that these Christian authors, when speaking of the church's savior who was pre-existent, descended among men, and then ascended into the heavens, used clusters of titles such as Word-Wisdom-Son-Angel-Spirit. Such a cluster existed from pre-Christian times in certain circles of Hellenistic Judaism and was used for a heavenly redeemer figure. The conclusion must surely be that these writers of the second and third centuries derived their categories from the mythology of Hellenistic Judaism. At the very least, therefore, one must say that *a* source for early Christian redeemer mythology is Hellenistic Judaism.

Having seen that certain second- and early third-century Christian authors used the Hellenistic Jewish mythology of a many-named descending-ascending redeemer in their speech about Jesus, we may now turn to the NT, especially Paul, Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel, to see whether there exists any demonstrable link between their Christologies and the Jewish mythologies appropriated by the non-canonical writers. It will be necessary to show that these NT authors employ not only the same *pattern* but also some of the same *terminology* for their savior figure as that found in the Jewish redeemer myths.

In the seven indisputably genuine *Pauline letters* one finds implicit a pattern of pre-existence-descent (redemptive activity)-ascent (redemptive activity)-parousia. The combination of all these movements within one thought unit in the letters is, to my knowledge, not to be found. Moreover, though the ascent is implied in statements about Christ's being at the right hand of God (e.g. Rom 8:34b; 1 Cor 15:24–27) or about his future coming (e.g. 1 Thess 1:10; 4:16–17; Phil 3:20–21), the actual movement itself is rarely spoken of unless one wrongly takes all resurrection statements to be such. Only at Rom 1:3–4, where pre-existence is not assumed in the pre-Pauline fragment but is implied in the Pauline redaction, and at Phil 2:9–11, where pre-existence is usually assumed to be found in vv. 6–8, is the exaltation or ascent mentioned explicitly. In only two passages, then, is an ascent (more properly, an exaltation) joined with an implicit or explicit descent (becoming man). Furthermore, in both of these texts the descent is not explicitly for a redemptive purpose. The soteriological effects are the result of the exaltation or ascent. In these two passages, therefore, the pattern is closer to the mythology of the immortals than to any other in antiquity.[89]

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[87] James H. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 127–8, argues that the Son of Man is a christological title in the Odes. This has been challenged by Sebastian P. Brock in his review in *JBL* 93 (1974): 623–5.

[88] This contention finds support on other grounds in the arguments of James H. Charlesworth, "The Odes of Solomon—Not Gnostic," *CBQ* 31 (1969): 357–69.

Rather than focus on the ascent, Paul normally uses a pattern that combines pre-existence-descent (redemptive acts). In doing so he frequently uses formulaic material.[90] (1) In Gal 4:4–5 we find reference to the sending of the Son (ἐξαποστέλλειν) followed by a ἵνα clause that explains the saving significance of the "sending" (cf. John 3:17; 1 John 4:9). Here we find pre-existence assumed in a formula that speaks of the sending (descent) of the Son into the world for a redemptive purpose. Nothing is said about what happened afterwards to the one who was sent. (2) Romans 8:33 also uses a formula about the "sending" of the Son, using the verb πέμπειν (cf. John where the phrase "the Father who sent [ὁ πέμψας]" occurs 26 times in stereotyped fashion). Here again pre-existence is assumed and the sending is for a redemptive purpose. (3) Romans 8:32's "gave himself up (παρέδωκεν) for us all" (cf. John 3:16—διδόναι) probably belongs with the "sending" formulae which refer to the descent of the pre-existent one rather than to the passion formulae which use παρέδωκεν.

Both Kramer and Schweizer[91] argue for the roots of the "sending" formulae in Jewish Wisdom speculation. They note that (a) in the passages where pre-existence alone is spoken of (1 Cor 8:6; 10:4; Rom 10:6–7), the parallels are to wisdom; the "sending" verbs (ἐξαποστέλλειν; πέμπειν) are found in Wis 9:10 in connection with the sending of Sophia; the purpose of the sending in 9:10 is given in a final ἵνα clause; in the same context 9:17, like Gal 4:6, speaks of the sending (πέμπειν) of the Holy Spirit; (c) "sending by God" and the title "Son of God" are combined only in the realm of logos and wisdom speculation of Egyptian Judaism. (d) The "gave" formula may find its background there also (cf. Wis 9:17a—ἔδωκας σοφίαν). The argument, though very persuasive, needs modification on (c). Just as the wisdom tradition could speak of a sending of wisdom by God for a redemptive purpose, so also could the various streams of Jewish angelology. For example, the מלאך is sent by God in Gen 19:13, Exod 23:20–21, etc., and the archangel in Tob. 12:19–20. In certain places (e.g. *Prayer of Joseph*), the angel is the firstborn Son of God. It is possible, therefore, that both major streams of Jewish thought which spoke of a descending-ascending savior figure could speak of God's sending a Son for redemptive purposes. When Paul used such language of Christ, its background was apparently the wisdom tradition, doubtless merged with others, certainly the Son and quite possibly angel. In this connection it is interesting to note that Gal 4:4–5 precedes a remarkable statement in v. 14 where Christ seems to be spoken of as an angel with no hostile overtones.[92]

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[89] Cf. the Romulus tradition in Plutarch's *Lives* where the pattern is: (a) came from the gods; (b) life of virtue; (c) taken up to heaven; (d) given a new name or status with benefits resulting for the Romans, his people.

[90] For what follows, cf. Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (Naperville: Allenson, 1966), 112–22, 127–8, 183–5.

[91] Eduard Schweizer, "Zur Herkunft der Präexistenzvorstellung bei Paulus," in *Neotestamentica: Deutsche und Englische Aufsätze, 1951–1963/German and English Essays, 1951–1963* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1963), 105–9; "Aufnahme und Korrektur

2 Corinthians 8:9's descent pattern, Schweizer thinks, also derives from some form of wisdom speculation in Hellenistic Judaism, since Philo can speak of the riches of wisdom (*Post.* 151; cf. *Her.* 126, 182, 230). Hence his conclusion: regardless of whether or not the myth of wisdom literature goes back to an earlier one rooted in Gnosticism, Paul knew only the mythology of wisdom speculation.[93] To which we might add: and quite possibly, Jewish angelology.

This survey of Pauline christological mythology, furthermore, makes it appear unlikely that the second- and early third-century non-canonical Christians' use of the Hellenistic-Jewish κατάβασις-ἀνάβασις

Jüdischer Sophiatheologie im Neuen Testament," in *Neotestamentica*, 110–21; *TDNT* 8:375–6. A. Van Roon, "The Relationship between Christ and the Wisdom of God according to Paul," *NovT* 16 (1974): 207–39, argues unsuccessfully that wisdom Christology is not found in Paul.

[92] Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (Naperville: Allenson, 1970), 31.

[93] "Zur Herkunft der Präexistenzvorstellung bei Paulus," 109.

myth was mediated to them through Paul. There are enough differences to force the conclusion that the apostle and the later Christian writers reflect independent appropriations of different variations of the Jewish synthesis.

The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews follows a pattern of pre-existence-descent (redemptive activity)-ascent (redemptive activity)-parousia. Pre-existence is implied in the prologue's statement that Christ is the agent of creation (1:2). He is said to have appeared (9:11, 26) or to have come into the world (10:5). Of his life in the world, it is said that he was made like his brethren (2:17), tempted as we are (4:15), learned obedience through suffering (2:10, 5:8), suffered death (2:9), offered his body as a sacrifice (10:10), through his death destroying the Devil (2:14–15). He was exalted above the heavens (7:26), entering into heaven (9:24) or the Holy Place (9:12). He took his own blood and secured an eternal redemption (9:12, 24), making a purification for sins (1:3; 2:17; 7:27). He now lives to make intercession for us (7:25). He will appear a second time (9:28), a coming which is imminent (10:37).

Among the key titles used for this descending-ascending redeemer are certain of those associated with the mythology of Hellenistic Judaism: Son of God (1:2; 3:6; 4:14, 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:3; 11:28, etc.), high priest (2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17; 9:11; 11:21) and word of God (4:12–13). Further, in 1:3 Hebrews uses ἀπαύγασμα (reflection) of the Son. Though the term is found only here in the Bible,[94] it is used of sophia in Wis 7:26 and of logos in Philo (*Sacr.* 146). Also in 1:3 Hebrews employs 'χαρακτήρ (stamp) of his nature' for the Son, a term used by Philo of the logos (*Plant.* 18). Further, speaks of the Son as "upholding the universe by the word of his power," a concept and language found in Philo's discussion of the logos (*Plant.* 8; *Mut.* 256).[95] Considering pattern and terminology, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Hellenistic Jewish mythology of a descending-ascending redeemer who was many-named has been appropriated by the author of Hebrews for his speech about Jesus.

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[94] Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews*, 66.

[95] Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 411, says that Hebrews 1:2ff. describes Jesus in terms at least similar to those of the Alexandrian Wisdom-Logos theology. Since Williamson's thesis is that Hebrews and Philo have no direct connection, this is significant.

At the same time, there is a very definite polemic against angels in Hebrews. From 1:4 to 2:16 the author struggles to assert the superiority of the Son over angels.[96] It appears, then, that in this epistle the attempt to separate the angel component from the Son-Word-High Priest-Wisdom synthesis is sharper than in the second- and third-century non-canonical writers we examined. It is, therefore, unlikely that these later Christian authors derived their use of the Jewish mythology from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Again, though both the canonical document and the non–canonical writings have their roots, at least in part, in the Hellenistic-Jewish myth of a descending-ascending redeemer variously called by such names as Wisdom-Word-Son-Angel-High Priest-Man, etc., they seem to be independent adaptations of the common background. Further, in spite of their use of a similar Jewish mythology, Paul and the author of Hebrews obviously are drawing on forms of the myth with different configurations of components. Given the various combinations possible in the mythology, this diversity should come as no surprise.

In the Fourth Gospel we find again the familiar christological pattern of pre-existence-descent (redemptive activity)-ascent (redemptive activity)-parousia. Pre-existence is found not only in the prologue (1:1–3, 10) but also in the body of the gospel (e.g. 1:30; 3:31; 6:51; 8:58; 17:5, 24). The descent is spoken of in a number of in a number of ways. Two formulae found in Paul are also used in John: "God sent his Son, that" (3:17) and "God gave the Son, that" (3:16). Distinctively Johannine descriptions include: "I proceeded and came forth from God" (8:42); "I came from God" (17:8); "I came down from heaven" (6:38); "I am from above" (8:23). By virtue of his coming into the world Christ makes the unseen Father known (1:18), baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33; 20:22), takes away the sin of the world (1:29), gives eternal life to those who believe on him (3:16; 17:36; 5:21, 25–26; 6:51; 11:26), defeats the ruler of this world (12:31). The ascent is also referred to in various ways. Christ was going to God (13:3, 33, 36), was lifted up (double meaning, 12:32), was glorified (double meaning, 12:23; 13:31; 17:5), is going away (16:7). As a result of his ascent, the

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[96] Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 244, says that this emphasis can be explained only by assuming that the author found it necessary to combat an angel Christology. Worship of angels was a problem for early Christianity (e.g. Col 2:18; Kerygma Petrou; *Ascen. Isa.* 7:21, etc.).

Gentiles can be included (12:20–26, 32), the Spirit is given (14:16–17, 25–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–11, 13–15), Christ prepares a place for his disciples (14:3). The traditional parousia concept is found for certain in the appendix (21:22) and in vv. 28–29. It may also be seen in the farewell speech (e.g. 14:2–3), though a certain decision is impossible.

A number of lines of evidence point to the Fourth Gospel's roots in the Hellenistic Jewish κατάβασις-ἀνάβασις mythology.[97] The names or titles employed for Christ in John are those of the Jewish synthesis: e.g. Word-Son of God-Son of Man (Man?). (1) The background for logos in 1:1–18 is almost certainly the Wisdom myth assimilated with logos thought such as one finds in Hellenistic Judaism.[98] (2) The clue to the Son of God language in the gospel seems to be the two formulae already discussed in the section on Paul ("God sent the Son, that"; "God gave the Son, that") which have their background in Wisdom-logos speculation.[99] (3) The background for the Johannine Son of Man sayings constitutes the major problem. The cause of the difficulty is that in John's Son of Man sayings we find two circles of thought, a Synoptic-type Son of Man (1:51; 3:14–15; 5:27; 8:28; 12:34) overlapped by a non-synoptic Son of Man (3:13; 6:27, 53, 62; 12:23; 13:31–32) who descends and ascends.[100] Since Son of Man and Man were linguistically interchangeable,[101] the explanation for the distinctiveness of the Johannine Son of Man sayings may very well be that the apocalyptic tradition has been assimilated to the "Man" of Hellenistic Judaism, that is, to the many-named descending-ascending redeemer.[102] If so, then the use of the κατάβασις-ἀνάβασις pattern for the one savior who is variously called Word-Son of God-Son of Man is intelligible.

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[97] Wayne Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," 46, says: "It is now commonly agreed that the Jewish Wisdom myth in some form lies behind… the Johannine christology…"

[98] Eernst Haenchen, "Probleme des johanneischen Prologs," *ZTK* 60 (1963): 305–34. The parallels with Torah (cf. Kittel, "Λόγος," *TDNT* 4: 135–6) are derivative. Because the Wisdom tradition identified Wisdom and Law, eventually the characteristics of Wisdom were transferred to Torah. Cf. E. L. Copeland, "Names as Medium of Revelation-Paralleling Logos in Ante-Nicene Christianity," *ST* 27 (1973): 53, 60. T. E. Pollard's attempt to link the prologue with "knowledge" in 1QS 11.11 is farfetched (*Johannine Christology and the Early Church* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], 10–11).

[99] Schweizer, "Zur Herkunft der Präexistenzvorstellung bei Paulus," 108; Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, 113, 116.

[100] A. J. B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 153–7.

[101] C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 243.

[102] This also seems to be the position of Carsten Colpe, "New Testament and Gnostic Christology," in *Religions in Antiquity*, 235–6. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 248–9, takes the same position but maintains that the Heavenly Man of Judaism was a metaphysical

It is, moreover, possible that John reflects an anti-angel tendency. Certain passages have been so interpreted: 1:51;[103] 5:1–9;[104] the Paraclete sayings which employ the expression "Spirit of truth"—14:16; 15:26; 16:13;[105] and the Johannine version of the empty tomb where belief in the resurrection is divorced from angelic announcement (cf. Mark 16:1–8).[106] If so, then there is in the Fourth Gospel an attempt to separate the Wisdom-Logos-Son-Man synthesis from the angel component. If not, then it is still true that the Evangelist chose not to employ the total synthesis but only a part of it. In this he is a precursor of later Christian developments. Nevertheless, there is not enough similarity between John and most of the second-century Christians we have examined to posit their dependence on the Fourth Gospel.[107] Rather we must suppose that John and the non-canonical authors represent independent appropriations of the Hellenistic Jewish mythology. There are also enough differences with Hebrews and Paul in terminology

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abstraction while the Fourth Gospel speaks of a real person. Dodd's problem was that he read Philo for Philo's position rather than for the myth Philo was interpreting.

[103] Thomas Fawcett, *Hebrew Myth and Christian Gospel*, 159. Revelation 19:10 and 22:8–9 show that the Johannine circle faced the problem of angel worship.

[104] Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (Naperville: Allenson, 1953), 86. It is a dubious argument because the best text omits the angel of v. 4.

[105] George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 122, contends that John safeguarded the primacy of Jesus by his use of language about the Spirit, rejecting the pre-Johannine identification of the angel Michael with the true spirit of God. Johnston is reacting against Otto Betz, *Der Paraklet* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), who takes the fact that in heterodox Judaism (*T. Jud.* 20:5; 1QS III, 18–25; cf. Hermas, *Mand.* 3.4) we find the concept of an angelic spirit of truth who bears witness and accuses to mean that in the Fourth Gospel the Paraclete is Michael (Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 64–66). Gilles Quispel, "Qumran, John and Jewish Christianity," in *John and Qumran*, 137–55, thinks the background for the notion of two Paracletes in the Johannine circle is the Jewish Christian concept of two angels, Christ and the Holy Spirit (e.g. *Asc. Isa.*; Elkesai). If so, Johnston's contention still holds.

[106] I owe this insight to Professor Charles H. Giblin, S. J.

[107] The closest are the *Odes of Solomon* which R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (New York: Herder, 1968), 1:145, thinks are dependent on John. James H. Charlesworth, "Qumran, John and the Odes of Solomon," in *John and Qumran*, 135, contends the parallels cannot be explained by literary dependence of the Odist on John or vice versa. "The most likely explanation for the similarities…is that the Odist and John shared the same milieu…" Cf. also Charlesworth and R. Alan Culpepper, "The Odes of Solomon and the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 35 (1973): 298–322. Generally neglected are the similarities between Philo and the Odes. Cf. however J. T. Marshall, "The Odes and Philo," *Exp* Ser. 8.1 (1911), 385–98, 519–36.

and in emphasis to disallow any assertion of interdependence among them. Again, we seem to be dealing with independent appropriations of various forms of the Jewish mythology.

As a result of this survey of selected non-canonical and canonical Christian writers, it seems probable that the linguistic links between the Christian and Jewish mythologies point to the latter as the source of the former. The early Christian myth of a descending-ascending redeemer was taken over from Hellenistic Judaism.[108]

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[108] At present, the evidence seems to point in the direction of a dependence of both Christianity and Gnosticism on Judaism. Cf. for example George W. MacRae, "The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth," *NovT* 12 (1972): 86–100.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GOSPEL AND THE GOSPELS
(1979)

In literary terms what is a gospel? How are our Gospel books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—related to the gospel or oral preaching of the early church? Though final answers are lacking,[1] this century has witnessed both the rise of a critical consensus about how such questions should be answered and a challenge to that consensus that offers an alternate set of answers. This article will attempt to describe both.

The critical consensus that emerged early in this century is closely connected with the name of Rudolf Bultmann.[2] This position can be clarified if we observe how Bultmann answers two questions. In the first place, how did the gospel or oral preaching contribute to the individuality of the canonical gospels? For Bultmann the gospel was set forth in 1 Cor 15:3–5, the kerygma of the cross and resurrection. Here the apostle Paul says he is giving the preaching of the apostles (vv. 1–2, 11): "…Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,…he was buried,…he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,…he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." From this text Bultmann draws the conclusion that the gospel is the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus as a fulfillment of Scripture.

The canonical gospels, according to Bultmann, are the result of a gradual expansion of this kerygma of Jesus' death and resurrection. (a) The account of the Baptist and the proofs of fulfilled predictions were included to give fuller visualization of the kerygma and to assign it to a place in the divine plan of salvation. (b) Other material was included because the Christian sacraments had to be accounted for in the life of Jesus, the cultically worshipped Lord. (c) Miracle stories were incorporated into the scheme since Jesus' life, considered divine, served as proof of his authority. (d) Apophthegms came into the collection also as visualizations of Jesus' authority. They in turn occasioned the inclusion of other sayings. (e) The sayings of Jesus were included because, for Christian congregations, Jesus in his role as teacher was important. (f) Current exhortations and congregational regulations in force were taken up because such regulations had to be accounted for in the life of Jesus. This means that, for Bultmann, the Gospel of Mark, the earliest gospel, was simply the end product of a tradition-historical development or evolution unrelated to the generic forms which existed independently of the milieu in which the Jesus tradition moved.[3] In the critical consensus, a gospel is an expansion of the cross-resurrection kerygma. As such, it is as unique literarily as the Christian kerygma is in terms of its content.

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[1] Leander E. Keck, "Oral Traditional Literature and the Gospels: The Seminar," in *The Relationships among the Gospels* (ed. W. O. Walker, Jr.; San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press, 1978), 103–4.

[2] "Evangelien," in *RGG* 2:418–22; English translation in Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Twentieth Century Theology in the Makin*g (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 1:86–92; *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; New York: Harper & Row 1963), 373–4; *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Scribner's, 1951), 1:86.

The apocryphal gospels, moreover, are regarded within the critical consensus as deviations from the pattern of the canonical gospels.[4] After Mark had created the gospel genre by this process of assimilation, the other canonical gospels followed suit. The apocryphal gospels, however, deviated much further from the Marcan pattern than did Matthew, Luke, and John. With this view of the distinctive character of the apocryphal gospels, Bultmann had arrived at an explanation of the development of the gospel from its earliest oral form through the canonical gospel books into the period of corruption represented by the apocryphal gospels.

In the second place, we may observe how Bultmann answers a second question: What is the theological significance of the uniqueness of the canonical gospel form? The unique genre, he thinks, corresponds to and protects the unique content of the Christian gospel. John Drury writes:

> A religion which likes to think of itself as uniquely true amongst religions, and deduces that conviction from the unique status of its founder amongst the world's holy men, or projects such a status upon him, will

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[3] Norman Petersen, "So-called Gnostic Type Gospels and the Question of Gospel Genre" (paper prepared for the Task Force on the Gospel Genre, SBL, October, 1970), 40, 45, 53.

[4] Helmut Koester, "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels," in *Trajectories Through Early Christianity* (by J. M. Robinson and H. Koester; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 158f.

> naturally be enthusiastic about the discovery that the primary sources for knowing him are singular phenomena.[5]

In a period dominated by the theology of the Word in which the distinctiveness of the Christian proclamation was being asserted, the claim that the gospel form was also unique was felt to be a buttress for Christian uniqueness.

Problems with Bultmann's synthesis are sensed today at every level of his explanation. (1) No longer can one assume that there was only one form of Christian kerygma, the cross-resurrection one of 1 Cor 15:3–5. The diversity of early Christian proclamation was first brought to light by H. E. Tödt's study of the theological perspective of the Q material in which Jesus' death is not "for our sins" but is rather Israel's *No* to God's messenger; and the resurrection is God's *Yes* or validation of Jesus' message of repentance.[6] If there was originally no one form of proclamation of Jesus as Savior, then problems arise in the Bultmannian schema. How are the gospel books then to be seen as related to the different forms of proclamation?

(2) To assume that genres are formed merely as end products of an evolutionary development would run counter to the best thinking about genre by today's literary critics. A genre comes into being initially as a conscious creation of a specific time and place, prompted by a specific occasion.[7] Furthermore, to argue that the gospel genre is unique raises the question of the possibility of effective communication, since all human communication is genre bound.[8]

(3) It seems inappropriate to regard the apocryphal gospels as deviations from the model of the canonical gospels since prototypes of the varieties of apocryphal gospels can be found already in the first century, earlier in some cases than the canonical gospels. For example, Q seems to belong to the same type of sayings collection genre as does the apocryphal Coptic Gospel of Thomas. Thomas could, then,

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[5] John Drury, *Tradition and Design in Luke's Gospel* (Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox Press, 1977), 26.

[6] *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. D. M. Barton; London: SCM Press, 1965). The significance of Tödt's study for the issue of the diversity of the kerygma was recognized immediately by R. H. Fuller, *The New Testament in Current Study* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 151–3.

[7] B. E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1967), ch. 1.

[8] E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967), 76.

be regarded as a continuation of the literary form, collections of logia, which we find represented in Q. This seems much more accurate as an explanation than to regard Thomas as a departure from the form of the canonical gospel.[9]

(4) The questions of content and genre are separable. A distinctive religious content does not demand a distinctive literary genre to communicate it. Genesis 1, for example, belongs to the genre of ancient Near Eastern creation story and actually corresponds very closely in many ways to the Babylonian myth of creation. This in no way detracts, however, from its distinctive Israelite theological content. The letter form, furthermore, was a common cultural mode of expression and yet Paul could communicate his uniquely Christian gospel by means of a non-Christian genre. If one wishes to communicate a uniquely Christian message, this does not demand a distinctive literary genre as its vehicle.[10] Problems at these four levels have undermined the critical consensus at its crucial points. The Bultmannian synthesis that developed in the first part of this century to explain the emergence of our canonical gospels has crumbled. An alternative explanation has arisen to fill the void. It is to a description of this alternative that we now turn.[11]

The alternative to the critical consensus crystallized in the work of Bultmann agrees that in the NT the term "gospel" refers to oral preaching. The basic meaning of εὐαγγέλιον is the preached word, the glad tidings communicated orally.[12] The content of the preached word is the good news that the divine presence is manifest in Jesus for our salvation. To put it in Pauline terms: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:18).

Since the preaching bears witness to Christ, the writings which contain the tradition about Jesus—his words and deeds—came, at least by the end of the second century C.E. to be called gospels.[13] Again, this is common ground for Bultmann and the alternative to his thought.

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[9] Koester, "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels," 158–204.

[10] Charles Talbert, *What Is A Gospel?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 117f.

[11] The basic material from which the following description has been drawn may be found in Charles Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula: Scholars, 1974), ch. 8; and *What Is A Gospel?*

[12] Gerhard Friedrich, "Εὐαγγέλιον," TDNT 2:735; Wilhelm Schneemelcher in *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. Edgar Hennecke; trans. R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 1:71. Such sources furnish data for both camps.

[13] E.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.136.1.

Disagreement begins to emerge when we focus on the recent recognition of the different types of collections of Jesus material in early Christianity.[14] *One type* of collection consists of *miracle* matter. The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, for example, tells the story of Jesus as a boy in which Jesus is depicted as a god walking around in a little boy's body, performing one miracle after another, some of which are not particularly moral. This apocryphal gospel should not be thought of as a departure from the canonical gospel type because already in the first century we find a prototype. Although scholars disagree about the sources used by the Fourth Evangelist, there is a consensus that one source behind the Gospel of John was a Signs Source composed of seven or eight miracles and climaxed by the statement, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. . . ." (John 20:30–31). The collection of miracles seems to have been one way of speaking about Jesus in the early church. In doing so, the Christians were appropriating and using for their own purposes the genre "aretalogy," which existed independently in the Mediterranean world.

A *second type* of collection of Jesus material in the ancient church was that which grouped the *sayings* of Jesus together. The Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* is an example from the apocryphal NT. Here, after an introduction which says "These are the secret words which the living Jesus spoke," we find a series of sayings of Jesus strung together without any narrative framework. That such a collection should not be regarded as a deviation from the model of the canonical gospels is made clear by the existence of such collections of Jesus' sayings in the first century. The Q source behind Matthew and Luke, according to the two-document hypothesis, fits into this type very easily. It consists almost exclusively of sayings of Jesus without a narrative framework. In speaking of Jesus in this way, the church was appropriating the genre "words of the wise" from its Mediterranean milieu.[15]

A *third type* of collection of Jesus material found in early Christianity was one which portrayed Christ as *revealer*, as one who makes a revelation to some disciple or disciples. The *Apocryphon of John* is representative of most of the apocryphal gospels which have Gnostic links. It presents the risen Christ who appears to John to give him a mystery which he could pass on to his fellow disciples. In the first century, the Revelation to John resembles this type of collection. In the Book of Revelation the risen Lord appears to the prophet John to give him a prophecy of the last days. If, moreover, there was a pre-Marcan Christian source behind Mark 13, then even earlier we find evidence of Christian portrayal of Jesus as a revealer of the End. In depicting Jesus in this way, the early Christians were making use of the genre "apocalypse" for their own purposes.

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[14] I am indebted to the seminal work of Koester, "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels," for what follows.

[15] James M. Robinson, "On the Gattung of Q," in *Trajectories through Early Christianity*, 71–113.

A *fourth type* of collection of Jesus material found in the ancient church is a composite which includes miracles, sayings, and revelation matter, an in addition has a passion narrative. The four canonical gospels, of course, belong to this variety. Since the other kinds of collections of Jesus material have their parallels in the genres of non-Christian antiquity, it would seem probable that this Christian type would also. Exactly what the parallel is will be discussed further on in this essay.

What is the significance of the early Christians' speaking about Jesus in these different ways? The importance of these collections lies in the fact that they point to distinctive understandings of the *divine presence* made manifest in Jesus and to the views of *discipleship* associated with those particular ways of seeing God's acts in Jesus.[16] If, for example, a Christian presented Jesus in terms of a collection of miracle stories, how would he understand the nature of God's presence in Jesus? The presence of God would be regarded as manifest in an extraordinary display of power. Furthermore, a disciple's response of faith would then be understood as receiving the benefits of the power for himself and subsequently becoming a channel of this power to others. If, however, one presented Jesus in terms of a collection of sayings which gave instructions about how to live and reasons for living that way, the implicit view of God's nature would be different. Such a collection would say that God's presence is manifest in moral guidance for living. A disciple, moreover, would be understood as one who followed the moral guidance set forth. If, furthermore, one depicted Jesus as a revealer making a disclosure of divine secrets, there would be yet another view of God's presence operative. In a revelation collection, God's presence is assumed to be manifest where there is the disclosure of the secrets of one's ultimate origin or destiny. In such a structure, discipleship would mean to receive the disclosed secrets, to repent, and to be ready for the ultimate outcome of history.[17]

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[16] I am still indebted to the inspiration of Koester, though my treatment of the canonical gospels is my own.

The composite gospel with a passion narrative added would also point to a particular understanding of the divine presence and to a distinctive view of discipleship. In three of the four canonical gospels, the passion narrative has soteriological significance. Matthew, Mark, and John all view Jesus' death as in some sense connected with the forgiveness of sins: (a) Matthew 26:28 has Jesus say over the cup at the last supper, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." The words, "for the forgiveness of sins," are peculiar to Matthew and indicate something of the Evangelist's view of Jesus' death. (b) Mark 10:45 has Jesus say that the Son of man "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 15:38 speaks of the curtain of the temple being torn in two, from top to bottom, when Jesus died. This means that as a result of Jesus' death the presence of God formerly confined to the Holy of Holies and available to the high priest only one day a year is now made available to all people in all times and places. This applies even to those who crucified Jesus, like the centurion who makes the confession, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (15:39). That God gives his presence to those who rejected his Son is the equivalent to saying that God forgives sinners. (c) In John 19:14 Jesus is crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover, in the afternoon when the Passover lambs were slain (Exod 12:6). This, of course, is tied to the Fourth Evangelist's picture of Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36). In these three Gospels, then, the passion narrative functions to say that God is present where sins are forgiven and that faith is receiving God's acceptance. The dominance of the passion narrative in all three Gospels says that this understanding of the divine presence in Jesus is central and that this view of discipleship is the core of the reality. Neither Matthew, Mark, nor John, however, tells his story of Jesus as just a passion narrative and nothing more. Each one has, in addition to the passion narrative which is central, miracles, sayings, and a revelation section. This, in effect, says that God's presence in Jesus is manifest centrally in the forgiveness of sins but that it also involves power, moral guidance, and the disclosure of our ultimate destiny. These three Gospels also agree that discipleship involves not only the central experience of God's forgiveness but also the experience of power, the following of moral guidance, and the hope and readiness that a disclosure of one's ultimate destiny evokes. The apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* may have told its story of Jesus solely as a passion narrative but the canonical gospels did not. They are composites to which a passion narrative has been added or passion narratives to which three other types of material have been added. Either way, they can no more be reduced to a passion narrative than to a collection of miracles or sayings or a revelation. They are not straight-forward developments of the passion kerygma in 1 Cor 15:3–5.

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[17] These types of proclamation still exist in the church today. For example, Kathryn Kuhlman's, *I Believe in Miracle*s (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1969), is a collection of twenty-one miracle stories which are intended to evoke faith in Jesus who lives. Any presentation of Jesus as a moral teacher and example, as in liberal theology, is in direct line from the sayings gospels. Hal Lindsey in *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1970) represents a proclamation of Jesus in terms of prophecy, in this case interpreted in an eccentric way.

Only Luke fails to speak of the connection between Jesus' death and the forgiveness of our sins.[18] His passion narrative is mainly a grand rejection story, the prototype for the rejection narratives in Acts connected with Stephen and Paul. The death of Jesus is the human *No* to God's messenger and the resurrection God's *Yes* which vindicates the martyr. Forgiveness of sins is preached in his name to all the nations (Luke 24:47), but it is not an atonement-centered proclamation. In Luke-Acts forgiveness flows from the one who is exalted (Acts 2:38; 4:11; 5:31). The special emphasis in Luke-Acts is tied to its *Sitz im Leben*.[19] Confronted by an over-realized eschatology which viewed life in the Spirit as taking one out of the vicissitudes of this life, Luke designed a picture of Jesus that would show him not only in terms of power, morality, and knowledge—all of which emphasize authority over the world—but also in terms of suffering and death. He enters into his glory only *after* experiencing his suffering (Luke 24:26). The one anointed with the Spirit lived out his life within the structures of this world, as evidenced by the fact that he was rejected, he suffered, and he died. Correspondingly it is through many tribulations that the disciples must enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). For Luke, the significance of the passion narrative was that it said that when God's presence is experienced as power, morality, and knowledge of our ultimate destiny, it is experienced *within the world* and does not take us immediately out of the world. Our ultimate transcendence over the evil world comes only at our resurrection at the parousia. In this world even the Spirit-empowered ones undergo rejection, suffering, and death. It is significant, however, that Luke, just as the other three canonical Evangelists, does not tell his story of Jesus merely as a passion narrative. Rejection, suffering, and death are not the essence of the Christian's life, even though the Christian still experiences them. None of the canonical gospels is merely a dramatization of the type of kerygma in 1 Cor 15:3–5.

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[18] Charles Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostic*s (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), ch. 5.

[19] For what follows, cf. Charles Talbert, "The Redaction Critical Quest for Luke the Theologian," in *Jesus and Man's Hop*e (ed. D. G. Buttrick; Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1970), 1:171–222.

The early Christians, then, agreed that the gospel was the good news that God was present in Jesus for our salvation. It has become clear, however, that there was considerable difference among the believers about the nature of the divine presence manifest in Jesus. Consequently, the gospel was both preached and written down in different ways. There were written collections which focused on miracle, morality, and knowledge of our ultimate future, as well as the stance represented by our canonical gospels. Viewed in this light, the canonical gospels appear to be attempts to avoid the reductionism of seeing the presence of God in Jesus in only one way and attempts to set forth a comprehensive and balanced understanding of both the divine presence and the discipleship it evokes. The canonical gospels are not so much kerygma as reflections of the controversies about the legitimacy of the various forms of proclamation in the ancient church. They come into their present shape not so much as the result of a gradual attraction of Jesus tradition around the core magnet of a passion narrative but rather as the result of conscious and deliberate composition related to a clear-cut theological stance about the nature of God and the nature of discipleship.

When the four evangelists put together our canonical gospels as they did, did they have any *precedent*s either theological or literary? The alternative to Bultmann answers "yes" on both counts. Let us look first of all at the theological precedents existing in the early church before our Gospels were written. Paul's Corinthian correspondence is instructive. In the mid-fifties the apostle Paul faced two different sets of problems in the church at Corinth. First Corinthians reflects a set of difficulties related to an over-realized eschatology among some of the converts.[20] These problem children believed that with their possession of the Spirit they had already come into the fullness of the new age. They had already begun to reign (4:8). As a result, they believed they had transcended their sexuality (ch. 7; 11:2–16), they possessed knowledge (chs. 8–10), they spoke a heavenly language (chs. 12–14), and so they enjoyed in the present everything that ordinary Christians hoped for in the future. Consequently, they saw no need for a future resurrection (ch. 15). In response, Paul not only set forth an eschatological reservation (15:20–28) but also emphasized that life in the Spirit, such as the apostles lived, did not exempt them from hardships and suffering (4:9–13). Here in the mid-fifties we find the emphasis that is so prominent in Luke-Acts.

Second Corinthians 10–13 reflects a different set of difficulties created by a group of wandering Jewish Christian apostles who claimed superiority over Paul because of their miracles and revelations of the Lord and their authoritative speech.[21] To them Paul responded by affirming that he worked miracles (12:12), received revelations (12:1), and spoke with authority (10:8). It was not these evidences of power to which he attributed the most weight, however. It was his weakness to which he appealed (11:21; 11:23–29, 30; 12:9; 13:4, 9), because God's power is made perfect in weakness (12:9). Paul's weakness, as he refers to it here, is composed of his sufferings, hardships, subjection to the affairs of this age. Here we have a theological precedent for the Gospels now in our NT canon. Paul affirms miracles and revelations and authoritative speech but subordinates them all to his emphasis on suffering. Although there is no possibility of showing the direct influence of Paul on the composition of our canonical gospels, yet the precedents are there. The canonical gospels appear to have incorporated a theological stance similar to that expressed by Paul in his Corinthian correspondence.

If in the struggle over the issue of the legitimate way to preach Jesus some Christians, at least as early as Paul, had concluded that the gospel embraced power, morality, and knowledge but that the passion was central, were there any literary precedents for what the evangelists were wanting to do? The alternative to the critical consensus expressed by Bultmann looks to the biographical writings of the Greco-Roman world for such models.[22]

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[20] Anthony C. Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology at Corinth," *NTS* 24 (1978): 510–26, is representative.

[21] Dieter Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2 Korintherbrief* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 1964) is perhaps the dominant statement of this viewpoint.

The starting point is the recognition that a distinction can be drawn between *didacti*c "lives," that call for emulation of the hero or avoidance of his example, and *non-didacti*c lives, that are unconcerned with moral example. Among the didactic lives in Greco-Roman antiquity two types of subjects were sometimes founders of communities or cults: philosophers and rulers. Among the didactic lives of philosophers and rulers we can distinguish five functional types: Type A—to provide the readers a pattern to copy (e.g., Lucian's *Life of Demonax*, Plutarch's *Cleomenes*); Type B—to dispel a false image and provide a true model (e.g., Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Life of Alexander the Great*); Type C—to discredit by exposé (e.g., Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet*, Curtius' *History of Alexander*); Type D—to establish where the true tradition of the founder was to be located in the period after his demise (e.g., "Life of Epicurus" in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers.* This type of biography is not found among the "lives" of rulers of antiquity.); Type E—to validate and/or provide the hermeneutical key (e.g., Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, Philo's *Life of Moses*). Philo's *Moses* was designed to introduce his *Exposition of the Law* just as Porphyry's *Life of Plotinu*s was intended to introduce Plotinus' *Enneads.*

These five functional types of lives of philosophers and rulers are found over an extensive period of time. All have pre-Christian examples. All have examples from as late as the second, third, and sometimes fourth centuries. In other words such biographies would have been in circulation before, at the time of, and after the period of Christian origins. Of these five functional types, it is important to note the striking similarity between Type B lives and the canonical gospels. In a very real sense, all four of our canonical gospels are shaped so as to dispel a false image of the Savior and to provide a true one to follow. In NT jargon, our Gospels belong to the debates over the legitimacy of the various forms of kerygma in early Christianity, that is, to the arguments over which Jesus is the "true" Jesus and which way of life is the "true" Christian way. Like the Type B biographies, the canonical gospels often include alien traditions and try to neutralize them or reinterpret them by their inclusion in a new whole with a different thrust. Both Type B lives of philosophers and rulers and the four canonical gospels aim to dispel a false image of the hero and to provide a true one to follow.

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[22] For what follows, see Talbert, *What Is A Gospel*? ch. 4; also Charles Talbert, "Biographies of Philosophers and Rulers as Instruments of Religious Propaganda in Mediterranean Antiquity," in *ANRW* 16.1:1619–51.

It is also important to note the similarity between the Type D biographies of founders of philosophical schools and Luke-Acts.[23] Following the life of the founder of the Christian movement, Acts gives us an extensive succession narrative as part of the story of the founder's life. In this, it belongs together with those Greco-Roman biographies of philosophers which also included succession material within the life of the hero. In Luke-Acts, then, we find similarities to both Type B and Type D lives. It would seem that just as aretalogies, words of the wise, and apocalypses served to express certain understandings of the good news as it related to Jesus, so certain forms of Greco-Roman biography proved serviceable in the task of communicating an inclusive and balanced view of God's presence in Christ and of what constitutes discipleship. Again, it is no more possible to show direct influence of such biographies on the canonical gospels than it was to provide evidence for Pauline theological influence upon them. At the same time, literary as well as theological precedents or models existed in terms of which the Evangelists could express themselves in their culture. In theological terms, the canonical gospels represent attempts at an inclusive and balanced presentation of who the God who acted in Jesus was and what he calls for in us. In literary terms, the canonical gospels are biographies designed to prevent a misunderstanding of Jesus and to depict him in his true form.

It is now time to turn to some of the implications of this alternative to Bultmann's views about the growth of the gospel tradition. Three may be mentioned. In the first place, the canonical gospels warn us against the danger of reductionism, that is, reducing the presence of God to one manifestation only and reducing discipleship to one dimension only. The church by the end of the second century had restricted the "gospel" books to four. Today the church uses these four as the subject of its proclamation. Theologically, the significance of this is that to read and preach from the four Gospels is to confess as normative the inclusive picture of Jesus found therein and the inclusive understanding of the divine presence implied thereby together with the inclusive view of the discipleship that accompanies them. It was no accident that the collections of Jesus tradition included within the NT canon were not of one type of material only, whether miracle or sayings or revelation or passion narrative. The inclusiveness of the canonical gospels with the passion narrative playing a central role constitutes a continuing call to modern Christians to resist the temptation to reductionism in understanding the gospel.

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[23] For a full exploration of this matter, see Charles Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, ch. 8; *The Life of Pachomius* (trans. Apostolos N. Athanassakis; Missoula: Scholars, 1975) gives us an example of a life of a Christian saint cast into the Type D biography form.

In the second place, the canonical gospels offer us a model for dealing with error/heresy. Heresy is usually the result of Christians' absolutizing a part of the truth at the expense of the whole. The way the Four Gospels deal with such error is by "inclusive reinterpretation." They take a part or parts and include it/them within a larger whole with a distinctive point of view which causes the part(s) to be read differently.[24] This is in contrast to the procedure of neutralizing alien or differing viewpoints by their exclusion from the gospel (e.g., sayings only; miracles only; revelation only; passion only). The two methods stand out clearly in the second century. Marcion's canon was comprised of only the Gospel of Luke and ten epistles of Paul, all properly edited to rid them of Jewish corruptions. The main-line church rejected not only Marcion's canon but also his method of arriving at "the gospel." Mainline Christianity used the principle of inclusive reinterpretation. The Gospel of Luke was included in its canon as one of four gospels and Paul's ten letters were also included but along with the pastorals, Acts, and letters of other apostles. In so doing, Marcion's canon was neutralized and Luke and Paul were read in terms of the thrust of the larger whole. To listen to the canonical gospels today means to hear their call for inclusive reinterpretation as a way of dealing with heresy in the church.[25]

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[24] See Talbert, *What Is A Gospel*? ch. 5. "Inclusive reinterpretation" is more than a literary technique, though it is that. It is an attitude towards life that characterizes much of the Mediterranean world. I first became aware of it as an attitude toward life when my family and I lived in Rome for a year. (a) On our street was a furniture making shop. Whereas we had always been accustomed to discarding a broken piece of furniture, these artisans would take a small piece of a leg from a long lost chest and build a chest around it. (b) The buildings in the city of Rome often had Roman bases around which Medieval structures had been built and were now modern in the sense that a modern whole encased the earlier parts. (c) The inner columns of the cathedral in Syracuse are the columns of the earlier temple of Isis around which the Christian basilica has been constructed.

In the third place, the canonical gospels teach us something about appropriate Christian communication of the good news. Two things must be held in balance. On the one hand, there is a need for our language about Jesus to reflect accurately the many-faceted experience of the divine presence. On the other hand, there is the necessity for our proclamation about Jesus to be made through a vehicle that not only is experientially accurate but also meshes with the conventions of modern communication. If our Gospels are any indication, there is a compatibility between the use of cultural literary convention on the one hand and a distinctive theological stance on the other. When either is lost, proclamation suffers.

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[25] Inclusive reinterpretation is, of course, not the only way that heresy is dealt with in the NT. The pastoral epistles' appeal to authority, and attack on the character of the opposition seems, however, better suited to a setting in which Christian leaders are outclassed by their opponents.

CHAPTER SIX

EXPOSITORY ARTICLE: LUKE 1:26–31
(1985)

Luke 1:26–38 confronts one with the Christian confession of the miraculous conception of Jesus of Nazareth. Christological, theological, and soteriological concerns are intertwined in the narrative. Only for the sake of analysis can they be separated.

The Lukan account of Jesus' birth naturally has christological significance. Luke 1:26–31 is the first part of the narrative of the annunciation of the birth of Jesus (1:26–38) which follows the common scriptural pattern used for theophanic birth announcements: (1) God/the angel appears; (2) the immediate reaction of the person is given; (3) the name of the person is called; (4) reassurance is offered to the person; (5) announcement of the birth; (6) the name of the child is given; (7) a prediction of the child's future destiny; (8) an objection is raised; (9) a sign or reassurance is given; (10) the response to the theophany is told, for example, Gen 16, 17; Luke 1:5–23. Verses 26–31 encompass the first six components of this stereotyped form of birth announcements. Like the OT annunciations, this Lukan one functions to say that the life of the one to be born is due to divine initiative.

The pericope, 1:26–31, is part of the first major unit in the Third Gospel, 1:5–4:15, which depicts the life of Jesus prior to his public career much like the accounts of the pre-public career of a great person in biographical writing in Mediterranean antiquity. Such a convention included material on family background, perhaps a reference to a miraculous conception, along with omens and other predictions of future greatness, including childhood prodigies (e.g., Suetonius, *Aug.* 94). Just as the material in the genre of the pre-public life of a great person functions as an anticipation of the hero's destiny, so Luke 1:5–4:15 serves as a foreshadowing of the future career of Jesus.

Taking the evidence of Luke's use of a theophanic birth announcement together with his location of it within the genre of the pre-public career of a hero, one can say that the purpose of the narrative about the miraculous conception in Luke is to answer the question: How do we explain a life like that of Jesus?

All of the canonical gospels wrestle with the same issue. Mark explains Jesus' unique life as due to his being the bearer of the Spirit, the Spirit's having come upon him at his baptism (Mark 1:9–11). John's explanation is that the pre-existent Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Matthew and Luke jointly answer the question of Jesus' unique career in terms of a virginal conception. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary (Matt 1:18, 20; Luke 1:34–35). Two of the three ways of answering the christological question continue to be used in the church. They are reflected in the two main creeds used by Christians. On the one hand, the Apostles' Creed reflects the tradition of the miraculous conception.

> I believe in God the Father Almighty…
> And in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord:
> Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.

On the other hand, the Creed of Nicaea reflects the Johannine frame of mind.

> We believe in one God the Father…
> And in one Lord Jesus Christ…through whom all things were made…
> Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh.…

The intent of all three of the different early Christian interpretive schemes was the same. All aimed to say that the life of Jesus was due to God's act. How do we explain a life like that of Jesus? Luke's answer through his narrative about Jesus' miraculous conception is: God did it.

It is an aid to understanding to set this point within the picture of Jesus in Luke-Acts, viewed as a whole. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, the earthly Jesus lives and dies as a benefactor, is then taken up to live an immortal, exalted existence as heavenly Lord who from time to time intervenes on behalf of his cause and his devotees. In this christological pattern, sometimes called exaltation Christology, Jesus' continuing reign from heaven has its basis in his resurrection from the dead, his ascension, and exaltation. His remarkable life as benefactor has as its basis his miraculous conception. The miraculous conception says that Jesus' earthly life is due to God's act. Like Adam, Jesus is one whose existence results from the direct, creative intervention of God.

This Lukan account of Jesus' miraculous conception also has theological significance. If Jesus' earthly life is due to God's act, what can be said about the God who acted to create this unique life? From first to last, Luke makes it clear that God has the initiative. Mary was not out looking for God, offering her body to be used in some great redemptive enterprise. Rather "the angel Gabriel was sent from God…to a virgin" (1:26–27); "And he came to her, and said" (1:28). This initiative of God is worked out in several ways. (1) God works within a history of salvation ("a virgin betrothed to a man…of the house of David"—1:27). That is to say, God's initiative is taken in a context where, even if the people are not expecting his inbreak, there is enough knowledge of what God has done in the past that there is both the possibility of his being recognized if he acts again and the possibility that his new acts will be interpreted aright (cf. 1:68–75; 1:51–55). (2) God works through human instrumentality ("you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus"—1:31). This is not to say that committed humans work for a God who is himself unable to accomplish his purposes. It is to say that the God who acts to accomplish his objectives works in and through chosen agents. (3) God works in people and places that are not necessarily imposing ("to a city of Galilee named Nazareth"—1:26; "to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons'"—2:24). Nazareth was an insignificant village mentioned in neither the OT, the Talmud, the Midrash, nor Josephus. Nathaniel's question is, therefore, intelligible: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). That Jesus' mother offered birds for her purification indicates she was poor (Lev 12:8). Yet in Nazareth a poor virgin was told: "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you" (1:28). In various ways, Luke 1:26–31 tells us something of the God whose act resulted in the life of Jesus.

The Lukan account of Jesus' miraculous conception has, above all, soteriological significance. The public ministry of the Lukan Jesus begins at 4:16–30. There in a synagogue at Nazareth on a Sabbath day, Jesus reads from Isa 61 and says: "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." When Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach and to heal," this could be interpreted to mean that because Jesus was more righteous, more prudent, and more wise than anyone else, he was anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism to enable him to carry on God's work. It is so interpreted near Luke's time and place by the heretics Cerinthus (so Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.21.1) and Carpocrates (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25). If Jesus' earthly life could be understood in terms of merit or achievement, then so could the lives of his followers. The result would be the type of problem Paul had to face in Galatia where opponents were willing to say, "Jesus is Lord" and "we have been justified," but also insisted that their justification was "by works of the Law." In order to preclude any such legalistic possibility, it was soteriologically important for Luke to begin his account of Jesus' life with a miraculous conception. Thereby he affirmed Jesus' career as an act of God's grace that excludes all human merit.

The problem faced and the Lukan intent in responding to it surfaces in a new guise in the later christological controversies within the ancient church. When in 428 C.E. Nestorius objected to the ascription to the Virgin Mary of the traditional title θεοτόκος (God-bearer), he was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria (*Ep.* 17). The issue was the same as that faced by Luke. The intent of the θεοτόκος language was not to glorify the mother of Jesus but to guarantee that the life of Jesus was from its inception due to God's act. There was no time after conception, it affirmed, when there was any chance for the human Jesus to perform in a meritorious way and thereby deserve a divine status. He was what he was (divine) from his conception by the Holy Spirit. The terminology of θεοτόκος, therefore, aimed to defend the emphasis on divine grace in the life of Jesus and in those of his followers just as had the Lukan story of the miraculous conception of Jesus in the Third Gospel.

The Lukan narrative of the miraculous conception says that salvation comes from God, not from creatures. From the Lukan point of view, there is no possibility of human beings perfecting themselves or their world in and of themselves. Salvation comes from God whose gracious initiative brings into being a new creation, Jesus, whose disciples are begotten in the same way, by grace alone, through the spirit.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH': WHEN?
(1993)

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14a). These Johannine words offer the classic statement on the incarnation. The issue I deal with in this essay is: In the understanding of Johannine Christianity, *when* did the Word become flesh?[1] The interpretative options, insofar as I am aware, are three.

1. The common assumption has long been that in John 1:14 the Word refers to the pre-existent Logos, flesh refers to the human Jesus, and the time when the Word became flesh was at Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit.[2] This was doubtless the intent of an ancient textual variant at 1:13 ("the one who was born…of God"), witnessed to by the Old Latin and a number of early fathers.[3] It is the view assumed by a number of early Christians, for example: (a) *Ep. Apos.,* Coptic version 7.10: "I entered into her womb: I became flesh"; (b) Aristides, *Apol.,* Greek 15.1: "Now the Christians trace their origin from the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is acknowledged by the Holy Spirit to be the Son of the Most High God, who came down from heaven for the salvation of men. And being born of a pure virgin…, he assumed flesh"; (c) Justin, *1 Apol.* 21: "We say also that the Word, who is the first born of God, was produced without sexual union"; and *1 Apol.* 33: "It is wrong, therefore, to understand the Spirit and the power of God as anything else than the Word, who is also the first born of God…; and it was this which, when it came upon the virgin and overshadowed her, caused her to conceive"; (d) Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 19, which reflects the textual variant in 1:13 that reads "the one who was born…of God" and

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[1] R. E. Brown says the Gospel of John "is not specific about when the Word became flesh" (*The Epistles of John* [AB 30; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982], 576).

[2] Georg Richter, "Blut und Wasser aus der durchbohrten Seite Jesu (Joh 19:34b)," in *Studien zum Johannesevangelium* (ed. Josef Hainz; Regensburg: Pustet, 1977), 120–42.

[3] Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (ed. Francis Noel Davey; London: Faber & Faber, 1947), detached n. 2, "The Birth of Jesus Christ in the Fourth Gospel," 163–6. Matthew Vellanickal wrongly prefers the singular reading (*The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings* [Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977], 105–32).

is taken to refer to Jesus' miraculous conception; and *Carn. Chr.* 24, where the same textual variant of 1:13 is used with the same import as in 19; (e) Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.16.2, where John 1:14 is interpreted in light of Matthew 1:18; and *Haer.* 3.19.2, citing the textual variant of 1:13, "the one who was born…of God"; (f) given this larger context, Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 1, probably is reflecting the same point of view in his words, "God's Son by the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin." If so, then this view of the time of the incarnation goes back at least to the early second century.

2. An alternate interpretation of John 1:14 understands the Word to refer to the pre-existent Logos, the flesh to refer to Jesus, and the time of incarnation to be at Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist.[4] Such a reading may have been behind the Alogi's ascription of the Fourth Gospel to Cerinthus (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 51.2–3) and assumed by Theodotus in the late-second century when he claimed that Jesus was a man upon whom Christ descended at his baptism, because of his righteousness, at which point he was made God (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.23).

3. Yet another alternative reading of John 1:14 takes the Word to refer to the glorified Jesus, the flesh to refer to Jesus' disciples, and the time of incarnation to be after Jesus' glorification at the point of his indwelling his disciples.[5] To my knowledge, this suggestion has been made by only one person in the modern period and has received little or no support.

In terms of canonical criticism,[6] the first option is clearly the correct reading. Within the canon, John is to be read in light of the Synoptic Gospels with birth narratives, as the early church did. In terms of the Johannine literature detached from its canonical context, however, the second reading seems compelling for four reasons.

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[4] Ernest Cadman Colwell and Eric Lane Titus, *The Gospel of the Spirit: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper, 1953) chap. 5.

[5] Paul Sevier Minear, "The Idea of Incarnation in First John," *Int* 24 (1970): 291–302; "'We don't know where…' John 20:2," *Int* 30 (1976): 125–39. John Carney Meagher argues that 1:14 originally referred to the Spirit instead of the Word and that it refers not to the incarnation but to the Spirit's indwelling of the disciples after Easter ("John 1:14 and the New Temple," *JBL* 88 [1969]: 57–68).

[6] I use the term in the sense employed by Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). Cf. p. 162: "Linkage is not derived from any individual author's intentionality, nor from a subsequent redactional editing of the collection. Rather, it stems from the result of the canonical collection which has effected a new and larger context for originally independent material."

1. A reader-response approach to the problem asks, How would people exposed to the myth of the many-named redeemer of Hellenistic Judaism have heard the Fourth Gospel’s narrative? Would they have heard 1:14 (“the Word became flesh”) as synonymous with or different from 1:32–34 (“the Spirit descended and remained on him”) and 3:34 (“it is not by measure that God has given the Spirit to him”)? Would they have understood the Word’s becoming flesh as one event and the Spirit’s descent and remaining on him as another? Or would they have assumed these to be variant descriptions of one event? Assistance in answering this query comes from a knowledge of ancient Mediterranean ways of thinking.[7]

There was in ancient Hellenistic Judaism a merger of traditions treating a descending-ascending redeemer figure:

(a) An identification of Wisdom and Angel is found in *1 En.* 42:1–2, where it is said that when heavenly Wisdom came down, found no dwelling place, and returned to heaven, she took her seat among the angels. The same identification is found in Wis 10:6, where Wisdom is identified with the מלאך יהוה who delivered Lot; and in the parallelism between 10:15–16, where Wisdom delivers Israel from Egypt amidst wonders and signs, and 18:15, where the מלאך performs the same task.

(b) The merger of concepts and traditions in the Wisdom of Solomon goes further than the mere equation of Wisdom and Angel, however. In 9:1–2, Wisdom and Word/Logos are equated (cf. Sir 24:3); in 9:17 the parallelism links Wisdom and Holy Spirit; in 18:15 Logos and Angel are identified. The resulting configuration yields a divine redeemer figure who is variously identified as Wisdom-Word-Angel-Holy Spirit.

(c) Philo offers further evidence for the merger of traditions and concepts. Although on occasion he represents either the Word as derived from Wisdom (*Somn.* 1.108–9) or Sophia as derivative from the Logos (*Fug.* 97), in *Alleg. Interp.* 1.65, he makes the two completely identical: “Now Wisdom is the Word of God.” He can also identify Spirit with Wisdom (*Opif.* 135; *Gig.* 22, 27). He can, moreover, equate the Logos and Angel, either archangel (*Her.* 42, 205) or the מלאך (*Cher.* 35; *QE* 2.13). He sometimes links the Word, the firstborn Son, and the Angel of Yahweh (*Agr.* 51). At still other times, the Son, the Logos, and the archangel are meshed. For example, in *Conf.* 146–7, Philo says:

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[7] For what follows, see Charles H. Talbert, “The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity,” *NTS* 22 (1976): 418–39.

> But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a son of God, let him press to take his place under God's first born, the Word, who holds the eldership among the angels, their archangel as it were. And many other names are his, for he is called "the Beginning," and the Name of God, and his Word, and the Man after his image, and "He that sees," that is Israel. . . . For if we have not yet become fit to be thought sons of God yet we may be sons of his invisible image, the most holy Word. For the Word is the eldest-born image of God.

Yet another designation for the many-named Logos or Wisdom is "High Priest" (*Somn.* 1.215; *Fug.* 108). In Philo, therefore, one meets a heavenly, divine figure (in *Somn.* 1.230, the Logos is θεός), Son-Angel-Word-Wisdom-Spirit-High Priest-Man, the many-named one.

This syncretistic practice of Hellenistic Judaism is part of a tendency of the larger culture to think in terms of one heavenly reality which could be addressed or described by many names: (1) Cleanthes's *Hymn to Zeus* begins: "Thou, O Zeus, are praised above all gods: Many are thy names and thine is all power for ever." (2) A third-century B.C.E. inscription by Artemidorus of Perga who settled on the island of Thera speaks of "this Hecate, of many names." (3) Plutarch makes the same point in his *Isis and Osiris,* especially at §67, 70, 78. The one Logos which orders all things is given different modes of address among different peoples. (4) Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.84) says the god Serapis was identified by some as Asclepios, by others as Osiris, by still others as Jupiter, but by most as Pluto. (5) Diogenes Laertius (7.135) says that the Stoics hold that "God is one and the same with Reason, Fate, and Zeus; he is also called by many other names." (6) No passage is clearer than Apuleius, *Metam.* 11, where Lucius cries out to Isis:

> O blessed queen of heaven, whether thou be the Dame Ceres . . . or the celestial Venus . . . or . . . the sister of the god Phoebus . . . or . . . Proserpine . . . by whatever name or fashion or shape it is lawful to call upon thee, I pray thee . . .

Lucius's cry to the goddess is heard. Isis replies:

> For the Phrygians . . . call me the Mother of the gods at Pessinus; the Athenians . . . Cecropian Minerva; the Cyprians . . . Papian Venus; the Cretans . . . Dietynnian Diana; the Sicilians . . . infernal Proserpine; the Eleusinians . . . Ceres; some Juno, others Bellona, others Hecate, others

> Rhamnusia…and the Egyptians…do call me by my true name, Queen Isis.

It is likely that certain Jewish circles, living in this type of world, would conceive of one heavenly redeemer figure who descended and ascended with a redemptive function and who could be addressed or spoken of with many names, for example, Word, Wisdom, Angel, Son, Man, Holy Spirit, High Priest.

It is also likely that, if and when any such Jews were converted to Christianity, they would think of Christ in similar ways. To such Hellenistic Jews or Hellenistic Jewish-Christian converts who heard the Fourth Gospel read, John 1:14 ("the Word became flesh") and 1:33 ("the Spirit descended and remained on him") would sound like variant expressions of the same event. For converts who had come out of a Hellenistic Judaism that used Wisdom, Word, Son, and Holy Spirit interchangeably, "the Word became flesh" would equal "the Spirit descended and remained on Jesus." If so, then in Johannine Christianity the incarnation must have been assumed to have taken place in connection with the water of John's baptism.

2. Does the rest of the Fourth Gospel support or subvert this view of the time of the incarnation in John? Passages from four chapters need attention; the first three, John 1:45, 6:42, and 7:41–42, 50–52, form a group. John 1:45 has Philip describe him as "Jesus of Nazareth [cf. Mark 1:9; 16:6], the son of Joseph." John 6:42 has the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum say, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from Heaven'?" John 7:41–42 has some say, "This is the Christ," and others respond, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" In 7:50–52 a similar exchange takes place. Nicodemus asks, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" The other Pharisees reply, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that the prophet is not to rise from Galilee." In each of these texts, the *public* perception of Jesus is that he is from Galilee and is the son of Joseph. This raises the question of whether or not the Johannine community even knew the facts about the Davidic lineage of Jesus and the birth in Bethlehem. John 4:44, which contrary to Mark 6:4 regards Judea as Jesus' homeland, would seem to indicate that Johannine readers were expected to know of Jesus' Judean roots.

If so, did the Evangelist assume his readers knew the tradition of Jesus' Davidic descent but without any connection to a Supernatural conception (as in the tradition cited in Rom 1:3–4; 2 Tim 2:8; Mark 10:47–48; 12:35–37; Rev 3:7; 5:5; 12:5; cf. Ps 2:9; 22:16)? Either way, there would seem to be nothing in these three texts that might change a reader's mind about impressions gained from 1:14 and 1:33.

The fourth passage, John 8:41, however, has the Jews say to Jesus, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." This has sometimes been taken to be a reference to irregularities surrounding Jesus' birth, as in Matt 1:18–25, and therefore an indication that John assumed a miraculous conception (so Origen, *Cels.* 1.28; the *Acts Pil.* 2.3–4). Closer examination is required for certainty.

John 8:41–50 belongs to a block of dialogue, 8:12–59, set at Tabernacles. It is one of five smaller thought units with similar patterns: a provocative statement by Jesus, followed by a Jewish response, to which Jesus gives a retort (vv. 12–20, 21–30, 31–40, 41–50, 51–59). Verses 41–50 constitute the fourth unit. It begins with Jesus' provocative statement, "You do what your father did" (v. 41a). The Jews' first response is, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God" (v. 41b). The context here, then, is focused not on Jesus' person but on the issue of Jewish faithfulness/unfaithfulness to God. For that reason, this may be a Jewish claim of faithfulness to God instead of an attack on Jesus.[8] This reading is supported by the fact that in LXX Hos 1:2, 2:4 ("children of fornication") and 4:15, the expression is used of Israel's faithlessness to God. *Numbers Rabbah* 2, moreover, says, "In the days of Hosea [the Israelites] angered God. They began to horrify God 'for they were children of whores.'" Read in this light, in 8:41 the Jews would be saying, "We are not like the Israelites of Hosea's time. We are not unfaithful to God, that is, children of fornication."

The remainder of the thought unit bears out this interpretation. Jesus' retort is in two parts, vv. 42–43 and 44–47, each with four similar components.

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[8] Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 2:207.

Vv. 42–43	Vv. 44–47
If God were your Father you would love me.	1. You are of your father, the devil. 2. Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me.
Why do you not understand what I say?	3. Why do you not believe me?
Because you cannot bear to hear my word.	4. Because you are not of God.

That is, people act like their parents. The Jews are of their father, the devil, who is a liar and the father of lies, as well as a murderer. This is evidenced by the facts that they seek to kill Jesus and they do not recognize the truth he gives them.

If a correct reading of 8:41 takes the phrase “we were not born of fornication” as a part of a controversy over Jewish faithfulness/faithlessness instead of a debate about Christology, then there is nothing here to compel the hearers of the Fourth Gospel to rethink the impression they gained from John 1. To my knowledge, then, there is nothing in the Fourth Gospel to lead a hearer to infer that the incarnation took place in connection with a miraculous conception as opposed to a moment in connection with the water of John’s baptism.

3. Is there perhaps something in 1 John either to reinforce or to reject the proposed reading? One passage seems especially relevant. First John 5:4b–12 is a thought unit with a christological focus. Its theme is the christological faith of the Johannine community that enables victory over the world. This section falls into two parts, 5:4b–8 and 5:9–12, each of which is built around a thesis (vv. 4b–5, v. 9a) and an explanation (vv. 6–8, 9b–12). The first part, 5:4b–8, begins with a thesis. The christological faith of the Johannine community enables the victory over the world: “and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (v. 4b). Christians overcome the world by their faith in the one who himself overcame the world (cf. John 16:33).

An explanation follows in vv. 6–8 to make explicit what is involved in confessing Jesus as the Son of God. There are two parts to the explanation. The first is relevant to our concerns: “This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only but with the water and the blood” (v. 6). The sentence implies that the author’s opponents believed that he came “by water only” but that the proper community confession held that he came “by water *and* blood”[9] (italics added). The focus here is on the historical reality of the Son of God, not his continuing presence in the church. The reference, therefore, is not to the sacraments but most likely to (1) the water of John's baptism at which time the Spirit descended and remained upon Jesus; and (2) the blood of Jesus' death. The progressives focus exclusively on the water; the author of 1 John insists on both water and blood.[10]

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[9] For a survey of options, see Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 575–8.

The closest parallels to what is described here as the position of the progressives are found among those gnostics who contended that at his baptism the heavenly Christ descended upon the human Jesus but that the Christ departed from the human Jesus before the crucifixion (e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1 [so Cerinthus]; 1.30.12–13 [so the Sethian-Ophites]; 1.24.3–6 [so Basilides]; *Treat. Seth* 7.51.20–52.3). The author of 1 John, with his emphasis on both the water and the blood, wanted to ensure that the coming of the Son of God in the flesh continued through his death. If so, then the author of 1 John agrees in his assumptions with the progressives about the water; his disagreement is about the blood. Both orthodox and progressive Johannine Christians alike assumed that the coming of the Son of God was in the water (i.e., in connection with the water of John's baptism). If this is a correct reading of 1 John 5:6–8, then the assumptions of the author of 1 John confirm the argument offered above regarding the time of the incarnation in the Fourth Gospel. The Son of God came in the flesh in connection with the water of John's baptism.

4. Is there any evidence from the larger Christian world that might support or subvert the thesis argued to this point—that the point of entry of the divine into a permanent union with the human Jesus came in connection with John the Baptist's baptism? Two gospels, one noncanonical and the other canonical, offer partial parallels to the reading that has been proposed for the Fourth gospel. First, Jerome, *On Isaiah* 11:2, refers to the gospel written in Hebrew speech, which the Nazarenes read.

> There shall descend upon him the whole fount of the Holy Spirit…In the Gospel I mentioned above, I find this written: And it came to pass when the Lord was come up out of the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said unto him: My son, in all the prophets was I waiting for thee that thou shouldst come, and

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[10] Martinus C. de Boer, "Jesus the Baptizer: 1 John 5:5–8 and the Gospel of John," *JBL* 107 (1988): 87–106.

> I might rest in thee. For thou art ever my rest, thou art my first begotten son, that reignest forever.[11]

Here the divine reality is called the Holy Spirit, not the Word as in the Fourth Gospel. Pre-existence of the divine entity is assumed, as is also its activity prior to the descent upon Jesus. The time of the descent upon Jesus is in connection with the water of John's baptism. That a permanent union of the two, Spirit and Jesus, is assumed is indicated by the expressions “rest upon him,” and “thou art ever my rest.” On the surface, the terminology is different from John 1:14 but similar to John 1:33–34. Closer attention to the language, however, reveals that it echoes the language used for Wisdom in Sir 24:7 (Wisdom says, “Among all these I sought a resting place”) and in Wis 1:4–7 and 7:24–27 (“In every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God”). Here Holy Spirit and Wisdom are merged. The structure of thought between John and the Gospel of the Hebrews is remarkably alike. In connection with the water of John's baptism, the pre-existent divine entity (Holy Spirit/Wisdom) united permanently with Jesus.

Second, in its view that the Word becoming flesh is synonymous with the Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus in the water of John’s baptism, the Fourth Gospel also has points of similarity with Mark. In Mark, as in the Gospel of the Hebrews, the divine entity that descends is called the Spirit; his pre-existence is assumed, as is also his activity prior to the descent into Jesus (e.g., Mark 12:36; cf. 7:6); the descent into Jesus *(*εἰς, not ἐπί as in Matt 3:16 and Luke 3:22) comes in connection with Jesus’ baptism. Again, although the terminology varies, the structure of thought is very much the same.

Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, for whom “Holy Spirit” and “Son of God” were interchangeable terms (e.g., Hermas, *Sim.* 9.1; the angel tells Hermas that “the Holy Spirit…is the Son of God”) would hear Mark and the *Gospel of the Hebrews* as claiming much the same thing as the Fourth Gospel (Hermas, *Sim.* 5.6.5, says that the Holy Spirit, the pre-existent agent of creation, was made to dwell [κατῴκισεν] in the flesh [εἰς σάρκα] which he [God] willed. The context makes it clear that this is understood as what we would call the incarnation). The Gospel of John, Mark’s Gospel, and the *Gospel of the Hebrews* all locate the decisive union of the divine with the flesh in connection with the water of John's baptism.

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[11] Montague Rhodes James, trans., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 5.

To say that Mark and the *Gospel of the Hebrews* think in terms of adoptionism, whereas John thinks in terms of incarnation,[12] confuses the issue. The later distinction between adoptionism and incarnationism assumes that the latter involves a descent of the divine into human life at the point of the miraculous conception in order to exclude any possibility of human merit, whereas the former involves an ascent of the human into the divine life at the point of Jesus' baptism or resurrection on the basis of human merit. What we have here at this early period, if the proposed reading is accepted, is the assumption that the divine descends into a permanent union with human life in connection with the water of John's baptism, as an act of sheer grace. What sets John off from the other two gospels, which share this conviction, is his community's *explicit* insistence on the continuing union of the divine and human in Jesus on into the period after his death, resurrection, and ascension, as opposed to the other two gospels' *implicit* assumption of it. The Fourth Gospel's explicitness was most likely due to the specific challenge of the progressives in the Johannine community who denied a coming in the flesh that continued to and through the passion events.[13]

The canonical gospels with birth narratives represent a response to an entirely different theological issue: namely, the claim that the divine's entry into human life came in response to the meritorious life lived by the human Jesus up to the point of his baptism. In order to preclude any possibility of merit in the case of Jesus, as well as his later followers, the entry of the divine into human life was located, by Matthew and Luke, at the moment of conception—before there was any chance of human meritorious behavior.

The development found in the two gospels with birth narratives became the controlling context for reading both John and Mark, first in the fourfold gospel and then in the NT canon. Read in a canonical context, as opposed to being read in isolation from the other Gospels, the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on incarnation (the descent of the divine into human life that continued through passion, resurrection, ascension) became dominant, but its assumptions about the time of the event were subordinated to the miraculous conception tradition of Matthew and Luke. The result is that the incarnation is understood to have taken place at the miraculous conception. By early in the second century this had already become a widespread reading of John 1:14, a reading that ultimately was to win out in mainline Christian circles.

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[12] As Colwell and Titus do (*Gospel of the Spirit*, 110–11).

[13] Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), *passim*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE APOCALYPSE

(1999)

It is true that the Revelation to John does not present a complete[1] and ordered[2] account of the nature and work of Christ. It is also true that there are relatively few major studies of the Christology of the Apocalypse.[3] The former should not preclude our pursuit of the seer's distinctive picture of Christ; the latter should encourage it. The purpose of this chapter is to attempt to describe John's portrait of Christ and to discern how it would have been heard by ancient auditors. The argument will follow a progression from *names* to *titles* to *functions* to *faces* to *contexts*.

Names

The one about whom we are writing is spoken of by John the seer using the name Jesus (1:9; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10; 20:4; 22:16; 22:20; 22:21) or Jesus Christ (1:1, 2, 5), with Christ functioning in these references without an article as a second name rather than as a title.

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[1] Donald Guthrie, "The Christology of Revelation," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ* (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 397.

[2] D. M. Beck, "The Christology of the Apocalypse of John," in *NTS* (ed. E. P. Booth; Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1942), 275.

[3] Chief among the studies are Donald E. Cook, "The Christology of the Apocalypse" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1962), summarized in "Christology of the Apocalypse," *The Outlook* 16 (1967): 3–9; J. Comblin, *Le Christ dans l'Apocalypse*, Biblique de theologie, Theologie biblique 3, 6 (Paris: Descleé de Brouwer, 1965); Traugott Holtz, *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes* (2d ed.; Texte und Untersuchungen 85; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1971); Hans-Ruedi Weber, *The Way of the Lamb: Christ in the Apocalypse* (Geneva: WCC, 1988). Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), offers two insightful chapters: chapter 3, "The Lamb on the Throne," and chapter 4, "The Victory of the Lamb and His Followers." See also Loren Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2/70; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

TITLES

Numerous titles are given to this one in Revelation.[4] A list includes at least the following:

- *Lord* (11:8; 14:13?; 22:20, 21). This traditional Christian title for Jesus (Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11; Acts 2:36) was used in Israel's Scriptures for God (Isa 45:3 LXX).[5]
- *The Christ/Messiah* (11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6). Again, this is a traditional Christian title for Jesus (Mark 8:29; John 20:31; Acts 2:36). It was used in the Scriptures of Israel for a coming anointed ruler of God's people (Dan 9:25–26).
- *The Son of God* (2:18). Once again, this is a traditional Christian title for Jesus (John 20:31; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:13). Evidence at Qumran suggests that "Son of God" was occasionally used as a messianic title in at least some circles of ancient Judaism (4QFlor 10–14).
- *The faithful witness/martyr* (1:5; 3:14; 19:11). The idea behind the title is found in Christian sources in 1 Tim 6:13. References to one who is a "faithful witness" in the LXX are to humans in a court setting (Prov 14:5, 25) and to God in a similar milieu (Jer. 49:5). Obviously, the Christian title emerged from Jesus' behavior in a situation where martyrdom was a possibility and in which he remained faithful to God in spite of the consequences. This was how, according to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.2.3, the Christian martyrs in Gaul took it. They refused to be called martyrs, yielding that title to Christ alone, "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead."[6]
- *The firstborn of the dead* (1:5). The title has common Christian roots (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:20; Col 1:18; Heb 12:23).

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[4] Comblin, *Le Christ dans l'Apocalypse*, focuses on titles: Lamb, the coming one (Son of man, Word of God, ruler, Wisdom), witness, Christ, the living one.

[5] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," *NTS* 20 (1974): 386–91, points out the absolute use of Mara for God in the Qumran *Targum of Job*.

[6] M. G. Reddish, "Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 33 (1988): 85–95, contends that Revelation depicts Christ as the supreme martyr who conquers through his martyrdom as an encouragement to the readers to imitate Jesus. "His followers are to follow in his path, being willing to suffer and die on account of their witness. Jesus, the faithful witness, is their example" (91).

- *The ruler of the kings of the earth* (1:5; 3:14?; 19:16). Third Maccabees 5:35 and *1 En.* 9:4 show that this was a traditional title for God in ancient Judaism. Such a title is sometimes taken to be a counter to the claims of the Roman emperors.[7]
- *The first and the last* (1:17; 2:8; 22:13). Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12–13 use this expression of God.
- *The living one* (1:18; 2:8). In Rev 4:9–10; 7:2; 10:6; 15:7, God is spoken of in these terms. The roots of this type of language for God are in the Scriptures of Israel (Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; Isa 37:4).
- *The holy one* (3:7). God is spoken of in these terms in Israel's Scriptures (Isa 1:4; 5:24; Hab 1:2), in post-biblical Judaism *(1 En.* 1:2), and in Rev 6:10. In Mark 1:24 such language is used for Jesus.
- *The true one* (3:7; 19:11). Again, this language is used for God in Israel's Scriptures (Exod 34:6; Isa 65:16) and in Rev 6:10. In John 14:6 it is used for Jesus.
- *The one who has the key of David* (3:7). Just as Eliakim carried the keys of the house of David in the court of Hezekiah, that is, controlled entry into the king's house (Isa 22:22), so does Christ in the kingdom of God.
- *The Amen* (3:14). The background of this title is doubtless in the thought expressed in 2 Cor 1:20. For Christ to be the Amen is for God's promises to be fulfilled in him.
- *The* ἀρχή *(origin) of God's creation* (3:14). The meaning of *ἀρχή* is problematic. Three serious possibilities exist: (1) the first created (as in Job 40:19; Prov 8:22; and Justin, *1 Apol.* 1.21); (2) the first cause or creator (as in Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.190);[8] and (3) ruler (as in Neh 9:17). Of the three possible meanings, the first is problematic because in Revelation, Christ is not a creature (1:17; 2:8; 22:13; also, worship of him is regarded as legitimate, something that is due God only—19:10; 22:8–9). The second is problematic because in Revelation, God is called the Creator (4:11; 21:5). The third is the

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[7] Ernest P. Janzen, "The Jesus of the Apocalypse Wears the Emperor's Clothes," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers* (ed. E. H. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 637–61. After all the literary and numismatic evidence is sifted, it is astonishing how few parallels emerge between the way in which Jesus is depicted in the Revelation and the symbols associated with the imperial household.

[8] BAGD, 112, prefer "first cause" but grant that "first created" is linguistically possible as well.

best option, for two reasons. First, ruling is the predominant role of Christ in the Apocalypse (12:5; 19:15; 20:4). Second, the progression of thought in 3:14 is from faithful martyr to ruler, as it is in Rev 5:6–14. Hence, in 3:14 ἀρχή should probably be translated "ruler of God's creation."

- *The beginning and the end* (22:13). The label is used for God in Josephus, *Ant.* 8.280, and in Rev 21:6. Implied is pre-existence.
- *The Alpha and the Omega* (22:13). In Rev 1:8 and 21:6, the title is used for God. Again, pre-existence is implied.
- *The Lion of the tribe of Judah* (5:5). The roots of the title are doubtless in Gen 49:9 and were developed in 2 Esd 12:31–32. It is, of course, a reference to the Davidic messiah.
- *The Root of David* (5:5). Again, the origins are in Israel's Scriptures (Isa 11:10; Sir 47:22). The language is known at Qumran (4QapGen av). Such usage was taken over by early Christians (Rom 15:12). The title refers to the Davidic messiah.
- *The Lamb* (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 23:1, 3). This is the dominant title used for Jesus in Revelation. The Lamb is redeemer (5:6, 9–10; 13:8), who sets in motion God's will on the earth (5:6–7; 6:1). At the end of history, he defeats God's enemies (17:14). In the new age beyond the resurrection, he is the bridegroom of the church (19:7, 9; 21:9), the temple of the heavenly city (21:22) and its light (21:23). Both within history (7:17) and in the new creation (22:1, 3), he sits on the throne of God. The roots of this title are complicated. On the one hand, the redeemer role of the Lamb most likely reflects the Passover lamb. The links are numerous: Both are said to be slain (Exod 12:6; Rev 5:6, 9, 12); reference is made to the blood of each (Exod 12:7, 13, 22; Rev 5:9); both result in a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6; Rev 5:10); both are connected with the Song of Moses (Exod 15:1–18; Rev. 15:3); both involve exodus typology (locusts—Exod 10:12–15, Rev 9:1–11; hail—Exod 9:22–23, Rev 8:7; darkness—Exod 10:21–23, Rev 8:12). Also, the Passover lamb is called an ἀρήν (in Revelation, the diminutive ἀρνίον*)*, not ἀμνός (as in Isa 53:7). On the other hand, the conquering Lamb most likely reflects the apocalyptic lamb/ram of *1 En.* 89–90 (ἀρήν) and *T. Jos.* 19:8. These two roots do not exhaust all the dimensions of the Lamb in the Apocalypse of John, but they furnish categories for the two most important functions of the Lamb. Because of its frequency, the

title "Lamb" is often taken to be the centerpiece of John the seer's Christology.[9]

- *The Word of God* (19:13; however, in 1:2, 9; 6:9; 20:4, the "word of God" is not likely a title of Jesus but rather a reference to the prophetic word). The roots of the conquering, judging Word of God are probably in Wis 18:15–16, where the word is an extension of God, whose functions are described in terms of the angel of the Lord. This is a bit different from the use of the Word in John 1, where the Word is Creator and Incarnate One.
- *The bright morning star* (22:16). Numbers 24:17 is likely the source of the star imagery for the Messiah. In the early second century C.E., Bar Kokhba (son of a star) used "star" as a messianic title.
- *The one who has the sharp, two-edged sword* (1:16; 2:12; 19:15). The closest thing to this title is the description of the word of God who leaps from God's throne with a two-edged sword in Wis 18:15–16. It is an image of conquest and judgment.

From this list of titles used for Jesus in Revelation, one can draw several conclusions. First, these titles are sometimes carryovers of earlier titles (for example, Lord, Christ, Son of God) but sometimes are created by the author of Revelation from descriptions of God (for example, living one, true one) or of other figures (for example, Lamb, bright morning star) in ancient Judaism.[10] Second, of the titles applied to Christ in Revelation, some are taken from language by which God is referred to in Israel's Scriptures and in post-biblical Judaism (for example, Lord, ruler of kings of the earth); some are taken from language used by Scripture and later tradition to describe the messiah or some other vice-regent of God (for example, Lion of tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the one who has the key of David); some are used to refer to one who is faithful to God in whatever circumstances (for example, the faithful witness/martyr). Third, while some titles are used for a specific trait or function of Christ (for example, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega), others encompass multiple functions (for example, Lamb). Finally, it becomes clear from working with the titles of Jesus in Revelation that from these data alone one will not be able to answer the questions with which we began. This recognition leads us to the next logical step: functions of Christ in the Apocalypse.

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[9] Robert H. Mounce, "The Christology of the Apocalypse," *Foundations* 11 (1969): 42–51, says: "In Revelation Jesus is supremely the Lamb" (42); see also Norman Hillyer, "The Lamb in the Apocalypse," *EvQ* 39 (1967): 228–36.

[10] If this practice of creating titles out of functional descriptions of figures is to be taken as characteristic of early Christians generally, one can see how "one like a son of man" in apocalyptic could become, in messianist writings, a title, "the Son of man."

Functions

The Revelation to John portrays Christ as carrying out a number of functions, among which are:

- *Revealer.* The Apocalypse opens with Christ depicted as a revealer (1:1, 12–20; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). The document ends on the same note (22:16).
- *Redeemer.* In Revelation, Christ is also described as a redeemer. He has freed us from our sins by his blood (1:5–6; 5:9; 14:4). He has made us a kingdom of priests (1:5–6; 5:10; 20:6). We are enabled to conquer by the blood of the Lamb (12:11; 15:3). He is mediator of salvation (3:7). Before the foundation of the world our names were written in the Lamb's book of life (13:8).
- *Ruler.* John the seer also portrays Christ as a heavenly ruler, God's vice-regent. He is the one who is to rule all nations (2:27; 12:5; 19:15). Within history, he sits on his Father's throne (3:21; 12:5). He receives worship (5:14; 7:10). He sets in motion God's will on the earth (5:5, 7; 6:1–8:1). At the end of history, he is returning Lord (1:7; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20). He defeats God's enemies (19:11–21) and executes wrath or judges (6:16–17; 19:11, 15). During the millennium, he reigns for one thousand years (20:4). In the new heavens and earth, he sits on the Father's throne (7:17; 22:1, 3). He is the bridegroom of the church (19:7; 21:9), the temple of the heavenly city (21:22) and its light (21:23).

From this survey of the functions of Christ in the Apocalypse, it is clear that the focus is on the exalted Christ. What attention is paid to Jesus' death is used to establish his credentials for his exalted reign. Such observations lead naturally into a discussion of the faces of Christ in Revelation.

Faces

John the seer presents Christ with two faces: human and heavenly.[11] We begin with the human face of Jesus. Christ in his human history was Jewish (12:1). He was descended from the tribe of Judah, of the family of David (5:5; 22:16). His birth took place in hostile circumstances (12:1–5). A number of sayings of the earthly Jesus are echoed in the sayings of the risen Lord (Rev 1:3; compare Luke 11:28; Rev 1:7; compare Matt 24:30; Rev 3:2–3; compare Matt 24:42–44; Rev 3:5; compare Matt 10:32; Rev 3:20; compare Luke 12:36–37; Rev 3:21; compare Luke 22:28–30; Rev 13:10; compare Matt 26:52).[12] He had apostles who function as the foundations of the church (21:14). His death (1:5, 18; 5:6, 9) was in Jerusalem by crucifixion (11:8). He was raised from the dead (1:5, 18).

The heavenly face of Christ, however, is Revelation's focus. For one thing, his pre-existence is assumed. The titles "the beginning and the end" (22:13) and "the Alpha and the Omega" (22:13) attest it. Note, these are titles used for God (1:8; 21:6, Alpha and Omega; 21:6, beginning and end). In 13:8 the reference to the writing of the names of the elect in the Lamb's book of life "before the foundation of the world" confirms it.

In addition, his heavenly nature is affirmed. First, throughout Revelation many of the titles applied to Christ are those used elsewhere for God. For example, besides those just mentioned above, see (1) Lord—for Christ in Rev 11:8; 22:20–21; for God in Isa 45:3; Rev 11:17; (2) ruler of the kings of the earth—for Christ in Rev 1:5; 17:14; 19:16; for God in 3 Macc 5:35; *1 En.* 9:4; (3) the holy one—for Christ in Rev 3:7; for God in *1 En.* 1:2; Isa 1:4; 5:24; Rev 6:10; (4) the true one—for Christ in Rev 3:7; 19:11; for God in Exod 34:6; Rev 6:10. Second, he sits on the throne of God (3:21; 7:17; 22:1, 3). Third, above all, he is a legitimate object of worship (5:14; 7:10; 22:3).[13] In Revelation angels, as creatures, resist worship (19:10; 22:8–9), knowing that worship belongs to God alone.[14] Fourth, mention of God and Christ together is sometimes followed by a singular verb (11:15) or by singular pronouns (6:17; 22:3–4).

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[11] The categories are taken from Weber's *Way of the Lamb*.

[12] Louis A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1965).

[13] Richard Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity," *NTS* 27 (1980–1981): 322–41; R. T. France, "The Worship of Jesus: A Neglected Factor in Christological Debate," in *Christ the Lord* (ed. H. H. Rowden; Downer's Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1982), 17–36.

These data confirm that in Revelation, Christ is portrayed with two faces: human and heavenly. How the two faces are related does not seem to be a matter of concern for John the seer, as it is in the Johannine epistles and the fourth Gospel.[15] Eugene Boring puts it precisely: "As the agent of God, Christ came into history—we do not speculate about how—as the man Jesus."[16] Having paid attention to names, titles, functions, and faces of Christ in Revelation, it remains to ask about the contexts in which one would hear these data.

Contexts

The contexts are two. On the one hand, we must set the names, titles, functions, and faces of Christ in the context of the story assumed by the Revelation to John. Such an approach has been taken in the study of Pauline theology of late.[17] It has also been used in the study of the Christology of the Apocalypse.[18] Boring asks: What is the narrative presupposed by Revelation? His answer is that it is a drama involving three acts: the past activity of Christ, the present activity, and the future activity.[19] A sketch of his proposal looks like this:

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[14] Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "An Angelic Refusal of Worship: The Tradition and Its Function in the Apocalypse of John," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers* (ed. E. H. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 679–96.

[15] On the issue of the incarnation in the Johannine epistles and Fourth Gospel, see Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 44–47, 66–79; and idem, "And the Word Became Flesh: When?" in *The Future of Christology* (eds. A. J. Malherbe and W. A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 43–52. Guthrie, "Christology of Revelation," 403, says rightly that the Apocalypse presents little evidence for an incarnational Christology.

[16] M. Eugene Boring, "Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 719.

[17] Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Narrative Thought World* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

[18] Boring, "Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse," 702–23.

[19] This is a bit different from the approach of Holtz, *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes*. Holtz organizes his book around the present of Christ and the future of Christ. These are merely logical categories; they do not arise out of a presupposed narrative.

1. The past activity of Christ
    a. Protological acts at or before creation (1:17–18; 13:8)
    b. Acts of the historical Jesus (12:1–5, birth; 21:4, apostles; 1:3; 2:7; 3:3 and 16:15; 13:11; 18:24; 19:7, sayings of the earthly Jesus; 1:18, death/resurrection)
2. The present activity of Christ (that is, from the resurrection of Jesus to his parousia)
    a. Exalted ruler of the universe who is worshiped in heaven and who shares the throne of God (3:21; 5:7–14; 7:9–17)
    b. Lord of potentially hostile powers (1:16; 2:1)
    c. The one in charge of death (1:18)
    d. The one whose shed blood is effective in the present (12:11)
    e. The one who is present and speaks in the churches (1:1, 13; 2:1, 7, 24; 3:20; 4:1; 16:15; 22:6, 20)
3. The future activity of Christ: the coming one (19:11–21; 22:7, 20)

In the setting in which Revelation would have been heard, the auditors would have known this story. As the plot of the Apocalypse unfolded, the auditors would have been able unconsciously to sort out and fit the various names, titles, functions, and faces of Christ into the underlying narrative. This would have given coherence to the various pieces of John the seer's Christology. The diverse components would make sense in the context of Revelation's story of salvation, past, present, and future.

Nevertheless, the picture of Christ that results from reading Revelation in terms of its presupposed narrative must be set in the context of ancient Mediterranean assumptions and beliefs. How would ancient auditors have heard it? First, what is the picture? John assumes a preexistent, heavenly being who enters the human world as Jesus or Jesus Christ, who dies as a faithful martyr and is raised/exalted to share God's throne and to act as God's vice-regent in history, at the end of history, and beyond history, when he will dwell forever with God's people.

How would this portrait of Christ have been heard by ancient Mediterranean auditors of the Revelation to John? The thesis of this chapter is that the thought world of the Christology of Revelation is to be found in reflections about the divine throne in ancient Judaism, especially among those that mention a figure apart from the throne who is said to be in human or angelic form.

Numerous references to the divine throne in ancient Jewish sources do not involve any such second figure. Without trying to be exhaustive, one may mention 1 Kgs 22:19; Isa 6:1–6;[20] *1 En.* 14; *2 En.* 20–21; *T. Levi* 2–3, *5; L.A.B.* 25; 4Q405, especially fragments 20, 21, 22; 4Q385 4; and 4Q286.

In some references to the throne of God in heaven, however, a second figure is implicitly or explicitly present. Again, without trying to be exhaustive, we may mention the following:

1. In Ezek 1:26–28 is a vision of the throne of glory with the likeness of the form of a man above it. In 8:2 the prophet sees the likeness of a man who delivers a revelation to Ezekiel. The description of this figure makes clear that he is the one spoken of in 1:26–28 (for example, "loins like fire"). The separation of the divine glory in chapter 8 from the throne chariot in ch. 1 enables it to function as a quasi-angelic mediator.[21]

2. Daniel 7:9–10, 13–14 MT[22] tells of one that was "Ancient of Days" (an old man) taking his seat on a fiery throne and then having one like a son of man (an angelic figure) presented to him. To this one like a son of man everlasting dominion was given. In Dan 10:5, the seer has a vision of an angelic being who is described in verse 16 as "like a son of man." This one gives Daniel a revelation. There is reason to think that this is the same figure mentioned in ch. 7 and possibly 8:13.[23]

3. Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagogē* contains a section in which Moses has a dream that his father-in-law interprets. Moses sees a throne on which is seated a man with a scepter. He beckons Moses to stand before the throne. Then "he handed o'er the scepter and he bade

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[20] Of course, the *Targum on Isaiah* has the prophet say in 6:5 that he had seen "the glory of the Shekinah of the King of the ages" and in 6:1 that he saw "the glory of the Lord." Some Jews took "the glory" as a reference to a second figure (John 12:41).

[21] Christopher Rowland, "The Vision of the Risen Christ in Revelation 1:13ff: The Debt of an Early Christology to an Aspect of Jewish Angelology," *JTS* 31 (1980): 1–11.

[22] The LXX tradition tends to coalesce the figures of Dan 7:9 and 7:13: "He came as Son of Man and was presented as Ancient of Days." Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology*, 213–18, says this is most likely not an error but a translation interpretation. His view is supported by the same tendency elsewhere in the LXX. Ecclesiastes 5:6 LXX has "do not say in the presence of God" whereas the MT has "do not say before the angel." Isaiah 63:9 LXX has "not a messenger nor an angel but He himself saved them" whereas the MT has "the angel of his presence saved them."

[23] Christopher Rowland, "A Man Clothed in Linen: Daniel 10:6ff. and Jewish Angelology," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 99–110.

me mount the throne, and gave to me the crown; then he withdrew from off the throne" (74–76).[24] Here the second figure is not an angelic being but a human who is set on God's throne.

4. The Wisdom of Solomon 9 speaks of wisdom (also called "word," v. 1, and "holy spirit," v. 17) as a divine agent. Petition is made to God: "Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her" (v. 10). Wisdom of Solomon 18 narrates the events of the exodus. Regarding the slaying of the firstborn in Egypt, verse 15 says: "Your all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior carrying the sharp sword of your authentic command, and stood and filled all things with death, and touched heaven while standing on the earth." Here the divine agent is God's word, depicted as the angel of death.

5. The *Testament of Moses* 10 describes the end of history and the judgment meted out on the wicked. It is described in three stages. First we are told, "Then his kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation" (v. 1). This presumably refers to God's kingdom. Second we read:

> Then will be filled the hands of the messenger,
> who is in the highest place appointed. (v. 2)
> For the Heavenly One will arise from his kingly throne.
> Yea, he will go forth from his holy habitation
> with indignation and wrath on behalf of his sons. (v. 3)

This may be taken in one of two ways. Either the entire segment refers to the angel of judgment or v. 2 refers to the angel and v. 3 to God himself. Third, v. 7 says that "God Most High will surge forth, the Eternal One alone. In full view he will come to work vengeance on the nations." Regardless of how one takes vv. 2 and 3, the chapter as a whole speaks about God and his angel intervening for judgment. They are spoken of in such a way that they seem virtually interchangeable.

6. *1 Enoch* 37–71 has a number of throne visions, some of which involve a second figure variously described as the Elect One, the Son of man, and the Messiah (48:10). *1 Enoch* 45:3 says that the Elect One sits on the seat of glory at judgment time, while *1 En. 51:3* says that

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[24] Pieter W. van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," *JJS* 34 (1983): 21–29. The translation is from James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:812.

in those days (the last days) the Elect One will sit on God's throne. *1 Enoch* 55:4 has the Lord say: "See my Elect One, how he sits in the throne of glory and judges." In *1 En.* 61:8, God places the Elect One on the throne of glory to carry out judgment. In *1 En.* 69:29, the Son of man has appeared and has seated himself on the throne of his glory and is ready to judge. In ch. 70, Enoch is taken up into the presence of the Son of man and the Lord. The correct reading of the text in ch. 71 seems to have Enoch become the Son of man. This Elect One or Son of man in *1 En.* 37–71 is pre-existent (48:2–3, 6; 62:7). He is worshiped (62:9). He will dwell with the righteous in a transformed earth (45:4–5; 62:15). Here, the traditions of an angelic and a human figure merge, with the human figure being identified with the heavenly one.

7. The Magharians were a pre-Christian ascetic Jewish group whose views influenced those of the Christian heretic Arius. They held that God created an angel who then created the world; that this angel revealed the law; that he is the subject of all anthropomorphic expressions about God in Israel's Scriptures, including those about the throne of glory; and that he was sent down in the form of man to represent God.[25]

8. The *Apoc. Ab.* 9–19 contains a vision of the throne of glory in ch. 18. The context involves the eternal God saying to Abraham, "I am your protector" (9:4). Then God sends the angel Yaoel (a variant of Yahweh) in the likeness of a man, through the mediation of the ineffable name, to care for Abraham (10:3); that is, God's name is in Yaoel (10:8). This angel's hair is white like snow (11:2). Yaoel shows Abraham how to offer a sacrifice to God. In 17:2 the angel kneels down and worships with Abraham; in 17:7 he recites the song with Abraham. It is a song of praise to the "Eternal One, Mighty One, Holy El…, self-originate, incorruptible…, unbegotten…, without mother, without father, ungenerated…most glorious EL…, Yaoel, you are he my soul has loved, my protector." In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, then, the angel has God's name (Yahweh) and God's appearance (like sapphire—Ezek 1:26; white hair—Dan 7:9) and performs God's functions (protection). Moreover, God is praised in terms of the name Yaoel. Most interesting is the end of the song. Abraham sings: "Accept the

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[25] Harry A. Wolfson, "The Pre-existent Angel of the Magharians and al-Nahawandi," *JQR* 51 (1960–1961): 89–106; Norman Golb, "Who Were the Magariya?" *JAOS* 80 (1960): 347–59.

sacrifice which you yourself made to yourself through me as I searched for you" (17:20). It is as though Yaoel's part in offering the sacrifice to God is God's offering it to himself, through Abraham. The angel and God are virtually interchangeable.[26]

9. *Third Enoch* brings our cursory survey to an end. In this Hekalot document[27] one encounters Metatron, the prince of the divine presence (1:4, 9; 3:1). He is more exalted than all the angels (4:1), being the prince and ruler over angels in heavenly places (4:9; 16:1). He serves the throne of glory (7:1; 15:1). He sits[28] on a second throne, like the throne of glory (10:1; 16:1). Whatever he says to anyone in God's name, that one must do (10:5). Anyone who has anything to say to God must go before Metatron and speak to him (10:4). He wears a crown and is called by God "the Lesser Yahweh" (12:5).[29] Nevertheless, he is not equal to God (ch. 16).[30] He is, however, identified with Enoch, who was appointed as a prince and ruler among the ministering angels (ch. 4).

Sources such as those just mentioned have been the object of serious study in recent years.[31] Opinions still vary widely. The views expressed here represent my path through the thicket. The nine sources mentioned above cover a time period from the second century B.C.E. to the third century C.E. or later. Some seem to be interrelated: for example, Ezekiel, Daniel, *1 Enoch, 3 Enoch.* Some seem to reflect independent strands of Jewish life: Ezekiel the Tragedian, the *Testament of Moses*, the Magharians, the Wisdom of Solomon. Essentially, the literature presents two views. On the one hand, some sources seem to reflect the old מלאך יהוה tradition, where the second figure is but an extension of God. On the other hand, others seem to think of a distinct second figure, either heavenly (for example, *1 Enoch*, Magharians, *3 Enoch)* or earthly (for example, *1 Enoch*, Ezekiel the Tragedian). Variety reigns. Nevertheless, in all the sources discussed above, God's actions are associated with a second figure.

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[26] C. R. A. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition," *JJS* 43 (1992): 1–31.

[27] For a discussion of all the Hekalot materials, including *3 Enoch* (*Sefer Hekalot*), see part 2 of Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGJU 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980). For the texts of the Hekalot writings, see Peter Schafer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981); and idem, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984).

[28] *b. Hag.* 15a says that no one is allowed to sit in heaven except God.

[29] *b. Sanh.* 38b has Rab Idit apply the name Yahweh to Metatron, whose name is like his master's.

[30] The similarities between Metatron and Jesus are so great that Almo Murtonen, "The Figure of Metatron," *VT* 3 (1953): 409–14, argues wrongly that Jesus was the prototype for Metatron.

[31] Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma* (trans. S. G. F. Brandon; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957; German original, 1941), argued that angel Christology was the oldest Christology of the church, developing from the Son of Man figure of *1 Enoch*. A critique of his thesis was offered immediately by W. Michaelis, *Zur Engelchristologie im Urchristentum: Abbau der Konstruktion Martin Werners* (Basel: Heinrich Majer, 1942). J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1941; repr., 1964), focused on the patristic evidence and concluded that some of the fathers interpreted Christ in terms of the מלאך יהוה of the OT. Until recently, research stood with the assertion that there was an angel Christology in the fathers but not in the NT. A series of studies has, of late, revised the earlier consensus: Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* (WUNT 1/36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985); Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (SJLA 25; Leiden: Brill, 1978); Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982); Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second*

Scholarly resistance to such evidence comes from a recognition of the monotheistic character of ancient Judaism.[32] Monotheism, so the argument goes, was part of Jewish self-perception. Israel's Scriptures affirmed it: for example, Deut 6:4; Isa 45:20–25. Philo (*Decal.* 65) says:

> Let us, then, engrave deep in our hearts this as the first and most sacred of commandments, to acknowledge and honor one God who is above all, and let the idea that gods are many never even reach the ears of the man whose rule of life is to seek for truth in purity and goodness.

Josephus *(Ant.* 5.112) claims "to recognize God as one is common to all the Hebrews." Jesus in Mark 12:29–30 reflects the same perspective.

God (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1992). These volumes suffered from the excesses of attempting to establish a new position. They were critiqued by the like of James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) and Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). As the result of an ongoing dialogue, however, one finds an emerging consensus that some type of angel Christology was traditional in the first century. See Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology*, who concludes: Why use angelic language for Christ in Revelation? It was a retention of tradition (p. 272). Alan F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and Their Environment," *ANRW* 23.2:1371, says: "It is probable that Jesus' identity was very early associated with the angel of YHWH who is superior to all angels in that he represents God's name on earth." Nils A. Dahl, "Sources of Christological Language," in *Jesus the Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 113–36, especially 120–1, concludes that "there seems to be increasing agreement that angelology is one source of Christological language." Werner, in essentials, has been vindicated.

[32] Rowland, "Man Clothed in Linen," proposes the term *angelomorphic* in order to avoid categorizing Christ as a creature instead of deity, in contrast to *angelic*, implying creatureliness.

Outsiders so viewed the Jewish people (so Celsus in Origen, *Cels.* 1.23–24).

If the sources understand the second figure as the מלאך יהוה, however, there is no violation of monotheism. In numerous passages in Israel's Scriptures appears an angel figure who is regarded as an extension of God (Gen. 16:7, 9, 10, 11; 19:1, 15, 16; 21:17; 22:11, 15; 24:40; 31:11; 48:15–16 [the God, the angel]; Exod 3:2–6; 4:24; 14:19; 23:20–21, 23 [angel in whom God's name dwells]; 32:34; 33:2; Num 20:16; Judg 2:1, 4; 5:23; 6:11–12; 13:3, 9, 13; Zech. 12:8). How ancient Jews probably viewed this figure is reflected in Justin's *Dial.* 128.3. Justin says some Jews[33] contend that the angel who appeared to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses

> is indivisible and inseparable from the Father, just as they say that the light of the sun on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the heavens…so the Father, when He chooses, say they, causes His power to spring forth, and when He chooses, He makes it return to Himself. In this way, they teach, He made the angels.[34]

Such an understanding of the ontology of the angel avoids any threat to Jewish monotheism.

At the same time, certain Jews, like the Magharians, regarded the second figure as a creation of God (an angelic creature) who then created all of the rest of the creation. In the case of Enoch and Moses, a human figure from the legendary past (a creature) is regarded as elevated to the position of sharing God's throne. In the case of *1 Enoch*, Enoch is transformed into the Son of Man (a heavenly pre-existent being); in *3 Enoch*, Enoch becomes an angelic figure;[35] in Ezekiel the Tragedian, Moses is granted a seat on the throne of glory, which is vacated by God. Recognition of the diversity of ancient Judaism allows for such stances, which are so different from later rabbinic orthodoxy.[36] The tendency to speak of a second figure, God's vice-regent, could reflect the monotheism of the מלאך יהוה tradition or a position against which the rabbis would later polemicize.[37] The position against which the rabbis contended was one that assumed a second figure who was numerically distinct from God, who was a creature and so ontologically differentiated from God, but who functioned as an extension of the divine will or purpose.

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[33] Daniel Abrams, "The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead," *HTR* 87 (1994): 291–321, accepts Justin's claim as a true reflection of how some Jews would have thought in antiquity.

[34] Translation from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:264.

[35] A human's becoming an angelic deliverer or judge is found elsewhere in ancient Jewish sources: (1) Melchizedek in 11QMelch—Was he taken up without dying?—as well as Melchizedek in *2 En.* 91 and following. (2) Abel in the *T. Abr.* 12–13—Was he taken up after death? (3) Joshua in the *Sib. Or.* 5.256–9—Was he taken up after death? (Is this a Jewish reference to Joshua or a Christian reference to Jesus?) The phenomenon was not without analogies in pagan circles. Compare Romulus's being taken up and becoming the god Quirinus (Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.2–3; Cicero, *Resp.* 1.41).

Messianists such as Justin represented yet a third view of the ontology of the second figure in ancient Judaism. In his *Dial.* 128 he clarifies his understanding of the ontology of the מלאך Yahweh/Christ. Rather than being a projection of God, the Word/Angel is numerically distinct from the Father. Yet, he was not begotten from the Father by abscission (cutting off), as if the essence of the Father were divided. Rather, it is like a fire being kindled from a fire: distinct from it but leaving the original not less but the same. The Word/Angel can be a legitimate object of worship because he is God. His ontology is understood differently from either Jewish option presented above because, on the one hand, he is not a projection of the Father and, on the other, he is not a creature created by the Father.

If ancient auditors heard the Revelation to John read, how would they have understood John's Christology? The Revelation talks about an eternal, pre-existent figure who becomes identified with Jesus in history; is born from the Jewish people; dies a martyr's death; is exalted to the throne of God, where he is a legitimate object of worship; and acts as God's vice-regent in history, at history's end, and in the new world where he dwells forever with his people.[38] A person who was aware of the tradition of second figures associated with God in dealings with humans would have felt no significant discontinuity. The idea of a human becoming identified with a heavenly being would have been familiar. The notion of such a one sharing the throne of God would have been known. The expectation that such a one would carry out the last judgment would have been traditional. That this one would dwell with God's righteous ones beyond the resurrection would have been expected. Of all the particular sources of the idea of a second figure associated with the throne of God, *1 En.* 37–71[39] is the closest to Revelation. Here, the pre-existence of the Elect One/Son of man/Messiah is assumed; a human, Enoch, is identified with this heavenly one; he sits on the throne of glory; he functions for God at the last judgment; he dwells with God's people forever thereafter. An auditor would have sensed that Revelation was speaking about Christ in these terms.[40]

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[36] Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies," *JJS* 42 (1991): 1–15. Hayman contends that there is always a prominent number two in the heavenly hierarchy to whom Israel relates. This pattern is inherited from biblical times. So until Christians tried to fit the Holy Spirit into the picture, they did not deviate as far as one might think from a well-established pattern in Judaism.

[37] Judah Goldin, "Not by Means of an Angel and Not by Means of a Messenger," in *Religions in Antiquity* (ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 412–24, points out how the rabbis objected to some concepts of divine mediators and to the redemptive role of angels.

[38] This type of approach works on an entirely different level from those studies of Revelation that inquire of three passages in the Apocalypse as to whether or not Jesus is portrayed as an angel in them: Revelation 1:12–20, where Christ is portrayed in terms derived from Dan 10 and other apocalyptic visions (probably depicted in terms of a vision of an angel); 10:1–3 (probably not a reference to Christ); and 14:14 (probably not a reference to Christ).

Of course, the Christian depiction of Christ in Revelation does not fit the cultural pattern perfectly. In the Apocalypse, Christ dies before he is taken up. His death has soteriological significance, both for him and for others. The facts of the Christian story obviously call for adjustments to the pattern. The pattern, however, functions as one way in which early Christians could speak about the significance of Jesus Christ. Revelation does not call Jesus an angel, but it does talk about him in ways that echo the larger tradition. By speaking of Jesus Christ as eternal (the first and last) and by depicting him as a legitimate object of worship, the author of the Apocalypse clearly locates him on the side of Deity rather than on the side of creatures. When Revelation's story of Jesus is read against the background of Justin's statement of his understanding of the ontology of the Word/Angel, it makes good "Christian" sense. If some Jews regarded the מלאך יהוה as 'projected,' and others viewed angels as 'made,' early Messianists like Justin (and John the seer?) believed the second figure to be 'begotten.' If the *pattern* of John the seer's Christology is that of the Jewish myth of a second figure associated with the throne, the *ontology* seems to be that verbalized by Justin. It is in these terms, I propose, that ancient auditors would have heard the christological data in Revelation.

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[39] A consensus seems to have formed for a dating of the *Similitudes* in the first part of the first century C.E. Compare David Winston Suter, "Weighed in the Balance: The Similitudes of Enoch in Recent Discussion," *RelSRev* 7 (1981): 217–21 (*1 Enoch* 37–71 is first-century Jewish and 71:14 identifies Enoch as "that Son of Man"); Craig A. Evans, *Non-canonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992), 23.

[40] I do not claim that Revelation is indebted to *1 En.* 37–41; I suggest only that it reflects the type of thought of which *1 En.* 37–41 is the closest extant early example.

If the thesis proposed in this chapter is tenable, then it casts light on other issues. First, it enables us to see continuity between Revelation's Christology in the 90s and that in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the Shepherd of Hermas, and Justin Martyr in the first part of the second century.[41] Second, it encourages us to reread other NT documents with fresh eyes. Perhaps Jude 5–7 should be understood as a reference to Christ as the מלאך יהוה; perhaps the Synoptic Son of Man Christology comes out of the same context.[42] If so, then rather than angelomorphic Christology being a second-century innovation, it becomes a first-century phenomenon that carries into the second century and later. The Christology of Revelation becomes part of a trajectory whose outlines can be traced over several centuries.

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[41] Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (trans. J. A. Baker; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), chs. 4 and 5, offers a survey of second-century developments.

[42] Two articles by Barnabas Lindsars are suggestive: "Re-enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man," *NTS* 22 (1975): 52–72; "The Apocalyptic Myth and the Death of Christ," *BJRL* 57 (1975): 366–87. With a much more limited focus, see D. R. Catchpole, "The Angelic Son of Man in Luke 12:8," *NovT* 24 (1982): 255–65, who contends that the Son of man in Luke 12:8 is an angelic figure, just as in Dan 7.

CHAPTER NINE

MIRACULOUS CONCEPTIONS AND BIRTHS IN MEDITERRANEAN ANTIQUITY

(2006)

Two canonical gospels, Matthew and Luke, contain infancy narratives. Matthew's narrative compares Jesus with the traditions about Moses' early life (e.g., Magi speak of the birth of a Jewish king; the current ruler attempts to kill all the Jewish male babies; the key baby is saved so he can be the future savior of the people; there is a flight from or to Egypt; after the ruler's death there is a message to return from whence the child had fled). This typology (i.e., viewing the earlier material as the prototype or foreshadowing of the latter) functions as part of Matthew's Christology (Jesus is the new Moses of Deut 18:15–18), and it adds authority to what Jesus will say in five teaching sections (chs. 5–7; 10; 13; 18; 24–25). Luke's material about the birth and early life of Jesus functions within the ancient genre of prophecies of future greatness. Prophecies, portents, and other material foreshadow the future greatness of the child.

The two infancy narratives share a tradition that says Jesus was miraculously conceived by the Spirit. According to Matthew 1:20, the angel says to Joseph: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." Luke 1:34 has Mary ask the angel who has told her she will bear the Son of the Most High: "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answers in 1:35: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God."

The question to be asked is: How would the authorial audience have heard this material in Matthew and Luke? What cultural assumptions did auditors bring?[1]

Ancient Mediterranean peoples did tell stories of miraculous conceptions and births. There were accounts, set in the mythic past, of individuals born to a divine mother and a human father, for example, Achilles (son of the divine Thetis and the human Peleus—Homer, *Il.* 20.206–7; 24.59), Aeneas (son of Aphrodite and the mortal Anchises—Homer, *Il.* 2.819–22; 5.247–8; see also the late first-century B.C.E. through the early first-century B.C.E. Ovid, *Metam.* 14.588), and Persephone (daughter of Demeter and Iasion—Homer, *Od.* 5.116–28).

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[1] My translations that follow are made from Greek and Latin texts found in the Loeb Classical Library and Migne's *Patrologia*.

In the *Iliad* 20.199–209, Aeneas and Achilles meet in battle. As custom dictated, they taunted one another before fighting:

> Aeneas said: "Son of Peleus, do not try to frighten me with words, as if I were a child, since I too know how to taunt. We know each other's parents and lineage for we have heard the ancient stories…They say that you [Achilles] are the son of Peleus and that your mother was Thetis, a daughter of the sea. I am the son of Anchises and my mother is Aphrodite."

Those believed to be the offspring of a god and a human mother included Asclepius (son of Apollo and the mortal Coronis—so the first-century B.C.E. Diodorus Siculus 4.71.1); Hercules (son of Zeus and the human Alcmene—*Il.* 14.315–28; Diodorus Siculus 4.9.1, 3); Dionysus (son of Zeus and Semele—*Il.* 14.315–28); Perseus (son of Zeus and Danae—*Il.* 14.315–28); Aristaeus (son of Apollo and Cyrene—Diodorus Siculus 4.81.1–3); Romulus (son of Mars and the mortal Ilia, or Rhea, or Silvia—so the first-century B.C.E. Cicero, *Resp.* 1.41; 2.2; Plutarch, *Rom.* 2.3–6).

Diodorus Siculus 4.2.1–4 relates what the Greeks say about Dionysus. Cadmus was sent from Phoenicia to search for the maiden Europa. During his travels, in obedience to an oracle, he founded the city of Thebes and settled there. He married Harmonia and had a number of offspring, one of whom was Semele:

> Now with Semele, because of her beauty, Zeus had intercourse, doing it without speaking…Whereupon she asked him to treat her as he did Hera. Zeus, therefore, encountered her as a god with thunder and lightning, making himself manifest as they came together. Semele, who was pregnant, was not able to bear the god's power. So she gave birth prematurely and was herself killed by the fire.

Zeus then had Hermes take the child to the Nymphs to raise. As a result of his upbringing, Dionysus discovered wine and taught humans how to cultivate the vines.

Diodorus Siculus says: "Aristaeus was the son of Apollo and Cyrene, the daughter of Hypseus, son of Peneius" (4.81.1). According to myth, Apollo was attracted to a maiden named Cyrene. He carried her off to Libya, where he later founded a city named after her. In 4.81.2–3 Diodorus says:

> Apollo begat of Cyrene a son, Aristaeus, in that land. He gave the baby to the Nymphs to raise…The boy learned from the Nymphs how to make cheese, how to make beehives, and how to cultivate olives. He was the first to teach these things to humans…those who received the benefits gave Aristaeus honors like those given to gods, as had been done for Dionysus.

The first-century B.C.E. historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, tells of a vestal virgin, Ilia or Rhea (1.76.3–4), who went to a grove consecrated to Mars to fetch pure water for use in the sacrifices and was "ravished by someone in the sacred area" (1.77.1):

> Most relate a myth of the divinity of that place…whose appearance was much more marvelous than the size and beauty of humans. They say the ravisher…told her not to grieve. For the marriage had been with the divinity of that place. Out of her being ravished, she would give birth to two sons whose deeds would excel all others [i.e., Romulus and Remus]. (1.77.2)

Sometimes ancient authors would give two traditions: one miraculous and the other nonmiraculous. Plutarch's *Romulus* from the end of the first to the beginning of the second century C.E., offers an example. One story, according to Promathion in his history of Italy, runs:

> Tarchetius, king of the Albans…encountered a strange phantom at home. A phallus rising up out of the hearth remained for many days. An oracle of Tethys was in Tuscany. From it an interpretation of the phenomenon was brought to Tarchetius. A virgin should mate with the phantom. From her a son would be born who would have great valor, good fortune, and great strength. Tarchetius, therefore, told the prophecy to one of his daughters and instructed her to mate with the phantom. She resisted and sent a handmaid instead…When the handmaid bore twins by the phantom, Tarchetius gave them to Teratius to destroy. He carried them to the riverside. There a she-wolf came to them and nursed them. Birds brought bits of food to them. A cowherd found the twins and took them home with him. In this way they were saved. (2.3–6)

In 3.1–3, Plutarch says the story that has the greatest credence is the one given by Diodes of Peparethus and Fabius Pictor. It focuses on a vestal virgin, Ilia, or Rhea, or Silvia who was found to be pregnant, contrary to the law for vestals. She was saved from death by the intercession of the king's daughter, Antho. The vestal virgin gave birth to two boys, large and beautiful. Plutarch (4.2) says it was the boys' mother who claimed that Mars was the father. It was said by others, however, that the girl was deceived into doing this by Amulius, who came to her dressed in armor.

Stories of miraculous conceptions and births were also told about rulers and philosophers in historical time. Among the philosophers, Pythagoras was said to be the offspring of Apollo and the human Pythais, the most beautiful of the Samians (Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 2); Plato was believed to have been the son of Apollo and Amphictione (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.1–2; 3.45); Apollonius of Tyana was thought to be the son of Proteus, a divinity of Egypt, or Zeus (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.4.5–9; 1.6).

Diogenes Laertius, in the third century C.E. but citing early sources, says of Plato (3.1–2):

> Plato was the son of Ariston and Perictione…Speusippus in the work titled *Plato's Funeral Feast*, Clearchus in the *Encomium on Plato*, and Anaxilaides in the second book *Concerning Philosophers*, tell how at Athens there was a story…that Apollo appeared to Ariston in a dream; whereupon he did not touch Perictione until the child's birth.

The early third-century church father Origen, *Cels.* 1.37, offers a supplement to Laertius's account:

> It is not absurd to employ Greek stories to talk with Greeks, to show we Christians are not the only people who use a miraculous story like this one [i.e., about Jesus' conception]. For some (Greeks) think it proper…to relate even of recent events that Plato was the son of Amphictione, while Ariston was prevented from having sexual intercourse with his wife until she gave birth to the one sired by Apollo.

Philostratus, in his third-century C.E. *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, says of Apollonius (1.4.5–9): "To his mother, before his birth, came a divinity of Egypt, Proteus…She was not frightened but asked him: 'What will I bear?' He said: 'Me!' She asked: 'Who are you?' He said: 'Proteus, the god of Egypt.'" The narrator then explains that Proteus excelled in wisdom, knowing past and future. He promises that as the story progresses, Apollonius will be seen to excel even Proteus!

Among the rulers spoken of in terms of a miraculous conception and birth, Alexander the Great and Augustus Caesar stand out. At the end of the first or the beginning of the second century C.E., Plutarch's *Alexander* contains this account:

> Philip, after the vision [in a dream, he saw himself putting a lion-shaped seal on his wife's womb—2.4], sent Chavion of Megalopolis to Delphi. Chavion then brought Philip a word from the god [Apollo], telling him to sacrifice to Ammon and to reverence this god greatly. He also told Philip that he would lose his sight in the eye with which he had spied on the god, who in the form of a snake, had shared the bed of his wife. Also Olympias, as Eratostheues says, when Alexander was sent upon his expedition, told him alone the secret about his begetting. She challenged him to behave worthily of his origins. Others, however, say she rejected the idea and said: "Alexander must stop slandering me to Hera." (3.1–4)

In the second century C.E., Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.* 13.4.1–2, has this to say about Alexander's origins: Olympias, wife of Philip, sent a witty response to her son, Alexander, when he wrote to her: "King Alexander, son of Jupiter Hammon, to his mother Olympias, sends greeting."

Olympias responded in this manner: "Please, my son, be quiet, neither slandering nor accusing me before Juno. She will be vengeful toward me if you say in your letters that I am her husband's lover." Gellius comments that in this way Olympias urged Alexander to give up the foolish idea he had formed from his incredible success, namely, that he was the son of Jupiter (13.4.3).

In the early second-century C.E., Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.4, wrote:

> In the books of Asclepias of Mendes, Theologumena, I read: Atia came to the solemn service of Apollo in the middle of the night. Her litter was set down in the temple and she went to sleep. A snake crawled up to her, then went away. Upon awakening she purified herself as she would after sexual relations with her husband. There then appeared on her body a mark colored like a snake. She could not rid herself of it, so she stopped going to public baths. Augustus was born ten months after and therefore was thought to be the son of Apollo.

In most of these stories the liaisons between gods and humans involved sexual relations, either with the deity's identity known (as with Zeus and Semele [Diodorus Siculus 4.2.1–4] or Proteus and the mother of Apollonius of Tyana [Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.4.5–9]) or with the deity taking another form (e.g., when Zeus could not overcome Alcmene's chastity, he assumed the form of her husband [Diodorus Siculus 4.9.3], or in a number of cases the deity took the form of a snake [Plutarch, *Alex.* 3.1–4; Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.4]).

There was, however, another tradition that was averse to thinking of physical sexual contact between deity and humanity; consequently, a begetting that did not involve physical sexual contact was sought.

Aeschylus is an early example. In *Supp.* 17–19, Io is said to be impregnated by Zeus in the form of "the on-breathing of his love." *Prometheus Vinctus* 848–52 states that at Canobus near the mouth of the Nile, Io will be restored to her senses by Zeus through "the touch of his unterrifying hand." The offspring will be Epaphus (= touch-born, named from the touch [ἔφαψις] of the hand of Zeus).

Plutarch gives fullest exposition of this point of view. The first is in *Quaest. Conv.* 717D–718C. The first speaker, Florus, refers to those who attribute Plato's parentage to Apollo and claim that Ariston, Plato's father, had a vision in his sleep, which forbade him to have intercourse with his wife for ten months. The second speaker, Tyndares, replies that it is fitting to celebrate Plato with the line: "He seemed the child not of a mortal man but of a god." When, however, Plato himself speaks of the uncreated and eternal god as father and maker of the cosmos, "it happened not through semen but by another power of God (δυνάμει τοῦ θεοῦ) that God begot in matter the principle of generation, under whose influence it became receptive and was changed." So, Tyndares says he does not think it strange if "it is not by a physical approach, like a man's, but by some other kind of contact or touch that a god alters mortal nature and makes it pregnant with a more divine offspring." Tyndares continues: "The Egyptians say that Apis (= the sacred bull, the incarnation of Osiris) is begotten by the touch (ἐπαφῇ) of the moon." In *Num.* 4.1–4, Plutarch begins by speaking of the story that Numa forsook city life to live in the country because, it was said, he had a marriage with a goddess, Egeria. Such a tale, Plutarch states, is like stories from the Phrygians, Bithynians, and Arcadians. He concludes that it is not impossible to think that the Deity should be willing to consort with men of superlative goodness, wisdom, and holiness. In 4.3, however, he says: "It is difficult to believe that a god or phantom would take carnal pleasure in a human body and its beauty." In 4.4 he continues: "Nevertheless the Egyptians make a plausible distinction in such a matter. A woman can be made pregnant by a spirit (πνεῦμα) of a god, but for a human there is no physical intercourse with a god." This trajectory shows that it was possible in Mediterranean antiquity to think of a miraculous conception without understanding it in terms of sexual intercourse between a deity and a human. It would be no surprise, then, for ancient auditors to hear that Jesus' conception was via "spirit," "power," and involved "overshadowing" (touch).

There were two main reasons the ancients spoke of miraculous conceptions and divine descent. The first was an attempt to explain an individual's superiority to other mortals. Generally Mediterranean peoples looked at one's birth or parentage to explain one's character and behavior. In Plutarch's *Rom.* 7.3–4, Remus has been brought before Numitor for punishment. When Numitor sees Remus, he is "amazed at the youth's surpassing greatness of body and strength, and noting from his face the unsubdued boldness and vitality of his psyche despite the present circumstances, and hearing that his works and acts were like his appearance…he asked who he was and what were the circumstances of his birth." Birth explains later deeds and character!

If the possibility of miraculous conception or birth was believed to be true in general, then a truly superior person could only be explained by a divine origin. Several examples make the point. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.77.2, in his account of the vestal virgin Ilia's being ravished in the grove consecrated to Mars, has the ravisher say to the maiden after the event that she should not grieve because "out of her being ravished, she would give birth to two sons whose deeds would excel all others." A divine begetting results in superior deeds!

The first-century B.C.E. Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 4.9.2, says: "When Zeus had sexual relations with Alcmene he made the night three times longer than usual and by the length of time given to making the child he foreshadowed the superior nature of the one begotten."

The second-century C.E. Arrian, *Anab.* 7.30, says of Alexander the Great: "And so not even I can suppose that a man quite beyond all other men was born without some divine influence." Aulus Gellius, in *Noct. att.* 13.4.3 (second century C.E.), says that Olympias attempted to get Alexander to give up the idea he had formed from his incredible success, namely, that he was the son of Jupiter. Here great success implies a divine origin! The third-century C.E. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.4.5–9, has the narrator explain that Apollonius would excel in wisdom because he had been begotten by the deity Proteus, who also excelled in wisdom. The early third-century C.E. Church Father Origen, *Cels.* 1.37, says that Greek stories like that of Apollo's begetting Plato

> are really fables. They have been invented about a man they think has greater wisdom and power than others. Their claim, then, is that he received the beginning of his physical existence from a better, diviner sperm, something that is fitting for persons who are greater than ordinary humans.

Diogenes Laertius 3.45, quotes an epitaph: "And how, if Phoebus [Apollo] did not cause Plato to be born in Greece, did he [Plato] heal human minds with letters? For even as the divinely begotten Asclepius is a healer of the body, so Plato is of the immortal soul." One could not do what Plato did had he not been the offspring of a god! One reason the ancients used stories of miraculous conceptions and births was as an explanation of the superiority of the individual.

The second function of such stories of miraculous conceptions in antiquity was the veneration of a benefactor. For example, Cicero, *Resp.* 1.41 (first century B.C.E.), gives a quote from Ennius regarding Romulus: "O father, O sire, O one whose blood comes from gods." In 2.2 Cicero says concerning Romulus that he was one

> who was born of father Mars (we concede this to the popular tradition, preserved from ancient times, handed down by our ancestors who thought that those who merited good from the community should be regarded as descendants of the gods and endowed with divine qualities).

Here the tradition of Romulus's supernatural conception is part of the ancient Roman veneration of benefactors.

Ovid, *Metam.* 14.581–608, tells of Venus approaching Jupiter with a request on behalf of Aeneas, her son and Jupiter's grandson. Based on Aeneas's worthiness, Jupiter grants Venus's wish. So Aeneas, the legendary ancestor of the Romans, is honored by the Roman populace with temple and sacrifice. It was part of the Roman mentality to venerate benefactors by ascribing divinity to them. This often included stories of their miraculous conception and birth.

Early Christian auditors of Matthew and Luke would have assumed that the stories of Jesus' divine begetting were certainly needed to explain his marvelous life. A divine origin was appropriate for their chief benefactor and founder. This much the Greco-Roman materials make clear. These auditors, however, were heir not only to the Greco-Roman traditions but also to the Christian traditions before and contemporary with them. Two aspects of this Christian tradition call for attention.

First, the Gospel of Mark, which most scholars think was earlier than Matthew and Luke, lacks a birth narrative. It begins with John the Baptist and with Jesus as an adult. Second, some Christians believed that their relation with God depended on their taking the initiative and performing acceptably so that God would respond approvingly (e.g., Gal 2:15–16; 3:1–5). The late second-century Church Father Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26, speaks of one Cerinthus (late first century) who believed

> Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary according to the usual manner of begetting. Because he was more righteous, more prudent, and wiser than other humans, after his baptism the Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove. Then he preached the unknown Father and performed miracles.

The Gospel of Mark, without a miraculous birth narrative, was susceptible to such an interpretation of a meritorious Jesus who is rewarded by God. If Jesus is the model for Christians, then they too must be meritorious. Ever since Paul, at least, this was not what mainstream Christians believed. The relation with God was based on God's gracious initiative to which humans responded in trust and obedience (i.e., faith).

When Matthew and Luke added birth narratives with a miraculous conception as part of their rewriting of Mark, they were saying that this type of life can be produced only by God's prior gracious, creative act. If it is so for Jesus, then it is likewise true for his followers. The tradition of miraculous conceptions and births is thereby refined in its Christian-Jewish context. The Greco-Roman conviction that a human's superiority can be explained only by a divine creative act is used to establish the prevenience of divine grace in the divine-human relation. This is what an ancient auditor would have heard.

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INDEX OF MODERN AUTHORS

Abrams, Daniel 16, 157
Achtemeier, Paul J. 61
Aitken, Ellen B. 17, 29
Allison, Dale C. 27
Athanassakis, A. N. 124

Baer, Richard A., Jr. 96
Bakker, A. 93, 100
Bamberger, B. J. 91
Barbel, J. 103, 155
Barbour, Ian 6, 35
Barker, Margaret 155
Barrett, C. K. 54
Barton, D. M. 115
Bauckham, Richard 4, 34, 143, 149
Bauer, David R. 20
Beare, F. W. 46, 52, 54, 57
Beck, D. M. 143
Berger, Peter 28
Betz, Hans D. 29, 73
Betz, Otto 110
Bickermann, Elias 80
Boer, Martinus de 138
Booth, E. P. 143
Boring, M. Eugene 34, 150
Bornkamm, Günther 45, 57
Bousset, W. 96
Bouyer, L. 54
Brock, S. P. 104
Brooke, A. E. 92
Brown, Raymond E. 3, 29, 41, 131, 137
Brown, Schuyler 84
Bultmann, Rudolf 83, 113
Burchard, Christolph 89

Case, Shirley Jackson 62
Casey, P. M. 3, 4, 20, 35
Catchpole, D. R. 160
Cerfaux, Lucien 45, 47, 57
Chadwick, Henry 67
Charles, R. H. 67, 91, 93
Charlesworth, James H. 103, 104, 110, 153
Cherry, M. R. 45
Childs, Brevard S. 132
Cohen, Shaye J. D. 5
Colless, Brian E. 66
Collins, A. Y. 5, 12
Collins, John J. 13, 90, 91
Collins, Raymond F. 22
Colpe, Carsten 84, 109
Colwell, E. C. 132, 140
Comblin, J. 143, 144
Conybeare, Frederick C. 75
Conzelmann, Hans 87
Copeland, E. L. 109
Cook, Donald E. 143
Crossan, J. D. 27
Cullmann, Oscar 5, 45, 56, 110
Culpepper, R. A. 110

Dahl, Nils 4, 5, 6, 37, 41, 156
Danielou, Jean 100, 160
Daube, David 49, 68
Davies, J. G. 103
Davies, W. D. 68
Davila, James, R. 8
Deissmann, Adolf 19
Dentan, Robert 71
Dietrich, Bernard C. 18
Dix, Gregory 89, 93
Docter, R. F. 10
Dodd, C. H. 80, 109
Donaldson, J. 157
Dorey, T. A. 69
Drummond, James 95
Drury, John 115
Dunn, James D. G. 7, 34, 40, 156

Ehrhardt, Arnold 80
Evans, Craig A. 159

Falls, Thomas 99
Fawcett, Thomas 86, 110
Fears, J. Rufus 10
Feuillet, A. 48, 57
Fitzmyer, Joseph A. 144
Fossum, Jarl E. 155
Fox, Robin Lane 19
France, R. T. 149
Fretheim, Terrence E. 20
Friedrich, Gerhard 116
Friesen, Steven J. 14
Fuller, Reginald H. 4, 45, 54, 57, 78, 79, 87, 95, 115

Gaster, T. H. 49
Gathercole, Simon 26
Georgi, Dieter 122
Gibbons, Joseph 83
Giblin, Charles H. 110
Ginzberg, Louis 10, 66, 67
Golb, Norman 154
Goldin, Judah 91, 158
Goodenough, E. R. 96, 97
Goulder, Michael 5, 20
Green, Joel 143
Greenfield, Jonas C. 93
Grillmeier, Aloys 83, 102
Grobel, Kendrick 113
Gruenwald, Ithamar 155
Guthrie, Donald 143

Haenchen, Ernst 50, 109
Hahn, Ferdinand 4, 7, 78
Hamerton-Kelly, Robert G. 108
Hamilton, Neill Q. 80
Hamori, Esther J. 20
Hanson, R. P. C. 96, 97
Harris, Rendel 103
Harvey, John 45
Hastings, J. 57
Hatch, Edwin 56, 57
Hayman, Peter 158
Hengel, Martin 4, 5, 87
Hennecke, Edgar 101, 116
Higgins, A. J. B. 109
Hillyer, Norman 147
Hirsch, E. D. 115
Hobbs, E. C. 49
Holladay, Carl 7
Holm-Nielsen, Svend 87
Holtz, Traugott 143, 150
Horst, Pieter W. van der 153
Hoskyns, Edwyn C. 131
Hunter, A. M. 46, 48, 56, 57
Hurst, L. D. 24
Hurtado, Larry 4, 42, 156
Hyatt, J. Philip 88

James, M. R. 102, 139
Janzen, Ernest P. 145
Jeremias, Gert 17
Jeremias, Joachim 10, 47, 55, 57, 66, 67, 89
Johnston, George 110
Jones, C. P. 42, 75

Käsemann, Ernst 45, 57, 84
Keck, Leander E. 5, 25, 34, 35, 113
Kee, Howard Clark 75, 90
Kinlaw, Pamela E. 23, 24, 30
Kilpatrick, George D. 89
Kittel, G. 109
Klassen, William 21, 50
Kleinknecht, H. 96
Knight, G. A. F. 88, 89, 93
Knox, W. L. 3, 76, 78, 87
Koester, Helmut 15, 86, 114, 116, 117, 118
Kolenko, Anitra 88
Kosmala, Hans 50
Kraft, C. F. 49
Kramer, Werner 105
Kuhlman, Kathryn 119
Kuhn, Harold Barnes 89
Kuhn, Heinz-Wolfgang 17

Lau, Andrew Y. 21
Levine, A.-J. 27
Lewis, Gladys S. 4
Liebermann, Saul 5
Lightfoot, J. B. 45, 53
Lindars, Barnabas 15, 160
Lindbeck, Kristen H. 10
Lindsey, Hal 119
Lohmeyer, E. 46, 47, 52, 58
Longenecker, Richard N. 106
Lovering, E. H., Jr. 145, 150
Luckmann, Thomas 28
Luhrmann, Dieter 17
Lyons, Deborah 10

Mack, Burton 87
MacRae, George W. 83, 111
Maclean, Jennifer K. B. 17, 29
Magness, Lee 15
Malherbe, A. J. 29, 150
Marguerat, Daniel 15
Marshall, I. H. 27, 78
Marshall, J. T. 110
Martin, R. P. 57
McGrath, James F. 5
McQueen, E. I. 69
Meeks, Wayne A. 29, 66, 67, 84, 85, 109, 150
Michael, J. Hugh 53
Michaelis, W. 155
Michel, O. 47

Minear, Paul S. 132
Mingana, A. 103
Miranda, Juan Peter 84
Moormann, E. M. 10
Morfill, W. R. 93
Morray-Jones, C. R. A. 155
Mounce, Robert H. 147
Moxnes, H. 100
Mudge, Lewis S. 53
Murphy, Roland 87
Murray, Gilbert 87
Murtonen, Almo 155

Neusner, Jacob 62, 84, 158
Newman, Carey 4
Neyrey, Jerome H. 7
Nickelsburg, George W. E. 67
Nineham, D. E. 80
Nock, Arthur Darby 61, 67, 85, 97

Odeberg, Hugo 93

Pannenberg, Wolfhart 84, 87
Pelikan, Jaroslav 113
Perry, B. E. 115
Petersen, Norman 114
Plass, Dirk van der 17
Philonenko, Marc 89
Pokorny, Petr 17
Pollard, T. E. 109
Powell, Mark A. 20
Purvis, James D. 67

Quispel, Gilles 110

Rad, Gerhard von 88
Reddish, M. G. 144
Redpath, Henry 56, 57
Reese, James M. 87
Richards, J. McDowell 83
Richter, Georg 131
Roberts, A. 157
Robinson, H. Wheeler 57
Robinson, James M. 15, 47, 83, 84, 86, 114, 117
Rohde, Erwin 62
Roon, A. van 106
Rose, Herbert J. 74
Rowden, H. H. 149
Rowland, Christopher 152, 155, 156
Rubinstein, A. 93
Russell, D. S. 12

Schafer, Peter 155
Schenk, Kenneth 34
Schenke, H. M. 84
Schmithals, Walter 83, 84, 88
Schnackenburg, Rudolf 110, 136
Schneemelcher, Wilhelm 73, 116
Schwab, M. 91
Schweizer, Eduard 21, 37, 50, 67, 105, 109
Segal, Alan 155, 156
Sevenster, J. N. 47
Simpson, Michael 8
Shroyer, Montgomery J. 95
Skinner, J. 58
Smalley, Stephen S. 15
Smith, Jonathan Z. 92
Smith, Morton 61, 92
Snyder, Graydon 21, 50
Sowers, Sidney G. 96, 107
Stegemann, Harmut 17
Stein, Robert H. 81
Stone, Michael E. 92
Stuckenbruck, Loren 143, 150, 152, 156
Strecker, Georg 45, 48
Strecker, L. D. 48, 53
Suter, David W. 159
Swete, Henry Barclay 55

Talbert, Charles H. 7, 15, 20, 24, 27, 29, 32, 81, 116, 120, 123, 124, 125, 133, 140, 150
Thackeray, H. St. J. 67
Thiselton, A. C. 122
Thornton, Lionel Spencer 45, 57
Tiede, David L. 61, 62, 75
Titus, Eric L. 132, 140
Tödt, H. E. 115
Trocme, E. 15
Trotter, F. Thomas 74
Turner, Max 143

Unnik, W. C. van 47

Vellanickal, Matthew 131
Versnel, H. S. 17
Vielhauer, Philip 7
Vincent, M. R. 52
Vos, Louis A. 149

Walker, W. O., Jr. 113
Watson, Francis 24

Way, Arthur S. 46
Weber, Hans-Ruedi 143, 149
Wedderburn, A. J. M. 83
Weeden, T. J. 80
Wells, C. Bradford 71
Werner, Martin 100, 155
Wilckens, Ulrich 84, 87
Williamson, Ronald 95, 107
Windsch, Hans 61
Wisse, Frederick 83
Witherington, Ben, III 150
Wolfson, Harry A. 94, 154
Wright, N. T. 24

Young, Frances 5, 6

Zimmerli, Walther 55

INDEX OF ANCIENT SOURCES

I. Old Testament

Genesis
  1–2 35
  1:26 55
  3:4 56
  5:1–3 55, 56
  5:24 13
  16, 17 128
  16:7–11 157
  16:13a 88
  18:1–22 20
  18:2 88
  18:10–20 88
  18:22 88
  19:1 88
  19:12–22 89
  19:13 88, 106
  22:11–18 88
  28:12–15 19
  28:13 93
  32:24, 25 88
  35:7 19
  48:15–16 89, 157
  49:10–11 77

Exodus
  3:1–8 88
  3:2ff 89, 157
  3:8 88
  3:12 23
  4:12 23
  4:22 20
  10:3 58
  20:23 17
  23:20–21 88, 106, 157
  23:20–23 93
  31:1–3 23
  34:6 145, 149

Leviticus
  12:8 129

Numbers
  11:17 23
  11:25 23
  11:29 23

Deuteronomy
  4:12 52, 56
  4:17 56
  34:6 67
  34:9 23

Joshua
  1:5 23
  5:14 93

Judges
  3:10 23
  6:11–22 20, 89
  8:18 56
  13:6 88
  13:8 88
  13:16 88
  13:20 88

1 Samuel
  6:5 56
  10:5–13 23
  16:13 23
  19:23–24 23

2 Kings
  2:16–18 73
  16:10 55

2 Chronicles
  4:3 56

Job
  4:16 52, 56
  5:14 56
  10:10 56

Psalms
  2:9 136
  22:16 136
  110:1 11, 15

Proverbs
  8 87
  8:22 145

8:22–36 86, 101
8:23–25 23

Isaiah
9:5–6 94
35:1–7 77
40:18 56
42:1 36, 57
44:13 56
49:3 57
49:6 57
50:10 57
52:13 57
52:14 57
53 58
53:1–12 58
53:7 58
53:11 57
53:12 57
61 129
63:9 89, 152

Ezekiel
1:5 56
1:26 154
1:26–28 152

Daniel
3:25 94
10:12 16
10:13 13
10:16–17 17, 22
10:19 17
10:21 13
12:1 13

Hosea
1:2 136
2:4 136
4:15 136
12:5 88

Joel
2:32 16

II. New Testament

Matthew
1:18, 20 128
1:18–25 136
3:16 139
13:41–43 27
16:14 10
16:21 81
16:27 27
17:22–23 81
18:20 27
20:18–19 81
22:23 38
24–25 27, 161
26:28 119
27:47 10
28:9–10 81
28:16–20 81
28:18 26, 81

Mark
1:9 135
1:9–11 128
1:13 55, 57
6:4 135
7:6 36
8:31 81
8:38 15
9:31 81
10:32–33 81
10:46–52 78
10:47–48 136
12:6 78
12:18 38
12:35–37 136
12:36 139
13 15, 118
13:26–27 15
14:28 81
15:35–36 10, 11
15:38 119
15:39 119
16:1–8 15, 110
16:6 135
16:7 81, 108
16:19–20 11

Luke
1:5–23 127
1:5–4:15 127
1:26–31 129
1:26–38 128
1:27 129
1:28 129
1:31 129
1:34–35 128
1:35 79, 162

1:51–55 129
1:68–75 129
2:24 129
3:22 139
3:23ff 57
4:1ff 57
4:16–30 129
9:22 80
9:26 27
18:32–33 80
20:27 38
21:27 27
24:1–11 80
24:6–8 80
24:13–35 80
24:13–49 80
24:26 120
24:47 120

John
1 137, 147
1:1–2 30
1:1–3 108
1:1–18 30, 45, 109
1:3 30
1:10 108
1:13 131, 132
1:14 128
1:14a 131
1:18 30
1:19 30
1:29 108, 119
1:30 108
1:32–34 30, 133
1:33 135, 136
1:33–34 139
1:36 119
1:45 135
1:46 129
1:51 109, 110
3:13 109
3:14–15 109
3:16 105, 108
3:17 11, 105, 108
3:18 31
3:31 108
3:34 24, 30, 133
4:6 30
4:7 30, 33
4:44 135
5:1–9 110
5:4b–12 137
5:21 108
5:22 30
5:25–26 108
5:27 109
6:27, 53, 62 109
6:38 108
6:40 30
6:42 135
6:51 108
6:53 109
6:62 109
7:39 24
7:41–42 135
8:12–59 136
8:16 31
8:23 108
8:24 31
8:26 31
8:28 109
8:41 136
8:41–50 136
8:42 108
8:42–47 137
8:56–58 30
8:58 108
10:17–18 30
11:25–26 30
11:26 108
11:33 30
11:35 30
11:38 30
12:20–26 109
12:23 108, 109
12:23–24 30
12:31 108
12:32 108, 109
12:34 109
12:48 31
13:3, 33, 36 108
13:31 108
13:31–32 109
13:33 108
13:36 108
14:2–3 109
14:3 109
14:16 110
14:16–17 109
4:25–26 109
15:26 110
15:26–27 109
16:7–11 109
16:13–15 109
16:13 110
16:33 137
17:5 22, 34, 108
17:8 108

17:24 34
17:36 108
19:14 119
19:30 24, 30
19:34 24, 30
19:38–42 30
20:17 27
20:19–23 30
20:22 24, 108
20:26–28 30
21:22 146
20:30–31 117

Acts
1:1–5 80
1:9–11 80
2 26
2:32–36 4, 27
2:33 27
2:36 78, 80, 144
2:38 120
3 14, 26
3:16 27
3:19–21 14
4:10 27
4:11 120
4:12 27
7:55–56 27
9:3–6 27
9:34 27
10:38 15
10:39–40 15
10:42 27
10:43 27
13:32–33 3
13:32–37 27
13:33 78, 80
13:38–39 27
14:8–18 85
14:22 121
16:1–8 15, 110
16:31 27
17:31 14
25:26 22

Romans
1:3–4 4, 11, 32, 40, 54, 55, 78, 105, 136
1:4 27
1:5 32
2:16 32
3:25–26 54
4:25 54, 55
5 54
5:12ff 54, 57
5:19 55
6:3–5 55
6:9 79
8:10 32
8:28–30 55
8:32 105
8:34 11, 32
8:34b 105
9:5 33
10:6–7 106
10:13 16
12:19a 51
12:31 51, 108
14:9 32
15:18 32

1 Corinthians
1:2 16
1:7, 8 31
4:4b–5 31
4:8 122
4:9–13 122
5:3–5 31
7 122
8–10 122
8:5 22
8:6 22, 40, 79, 106
10:4 31, 106, 155
10:20 40
11:2–16 122
11:32 31
12–14 122
15 54
15:1–2 114
15:3–5 38, 50, 114, 115, 120, 121
15:5–8 31
15:11 114
15:20 144
15:20–28 11
15:20–40 54
15:24–27 105
15:25 11
15:51–57 31
16:22 14, 16, 31

2 Corinthians
1:3 22
5:10 31
5:18 116
8:9 106
10–13 122
10:8 122

11:21 122
11:23–30 122
11:31 22
12:1 122
12:9 122
12:12 122
13:3–4 31
13:4 122
13:9 122

Galatians
  1:12 32
  2:15–16 28, 169
  2:20 32
  3:1–5 28, 169
  3:27 32
  4:4–5 32, 105, 106
  4:6 106

Ephesians
  1:3 22
  1:6a 49
  1:12b 49
  1:14b 49
  1:20 11
  1:20–22 11, 33
  3:17 33
  4:7 11, 33

Philippians
  1:6 32
  2 54, 56
  2:5–11 32
  2:6–8 54
  2:6–11 11, 40, 45, 48ff
  2:7b–8 54
  2:8–9 3
  2:9–11 32, 105
  2:11 144
  3:20–21 105
  3:20–21a 32
  3:21b 32
  4:5b 32

Colossians
  1:3 22
  1:9 33, 34
  1:15–20 54
  1:16, 17 33, 34
  1:19 23
  1:27 34
  2:9 23
  2:10 34
  2:18 108

  3:1 34
  3:2b 51
  3:4 34

1 Thessalonians
  1:9–10 14, 31, 40, 79
  1:10 105
  4:13–17 31
  4:14 14
  4:16–17 14, 105
  5:1–11 31
  5:15 51
  5:23–24 31

2 Thessalonians
  2:8 21

1 Timothy
  2:11 21
  3:16 21, 40
  6:14 21

2 Timothy
  1:10 21, 40, 45, 50
  2:8 136
  2:11b–12a 54
  4:1
  4:8

Titus
  2:11–13 21
  2:13 22
  2:14 21
  3:4

Hebrews
  1:2 21
  1:2b 34
  1:2b–3 34
  1:3–5 34
  1:10 34
  2:7–8 34
  2:9 34
  2:10 107
  2:14–15 107
  2:17 107
  4:12–13 107
  4:14 107
  4:15 107
  5:5–6 34
  5:6 107
  5:8 107
  6:6 107
  6:20 34, 107

7:3 34
7:17 34, 107
7:25 107
7:26 107
7:27 107
8:1–2 34
9:11 107
9:12 107
9:24 34, 107
9:26 107
9:28 34, 107
10:5 107
10:10 107
10:37 34, 107
11:21 107
11:28 107

James
5:1 33
5:8, 9 33
5:15 33

1 Peter
1:3 23
1:4–5 33
1:13 33
1:20 33
4:5 33

2 Peter
1:16 33
3:4 33
3:12 33
3:20 331 John
1:2 29
3:2 25
4:9 105
4:17 25
5:5–8 138
5:6–8 24, 29, 138
5:20–21 40

Jude
5–7 160
14–15 33
21 33

Revelation
1:12–19 34
1:17–18 34, 151
1:18 34, 145
2–3 34
2:7 34
3:7 136, 145
5:5 146, 148, 149
5:6–10 34
11:3–12 14
12 93
12:5 34, 136, 146, 148, 155
13:8 34, 146, 148, 149, 151
19:11–21 34, 148, 151
20:4 34, 143
22:12 34
22:13 33, 34, 145, 146, 149
22:16 34, 136, 143, 148, 149
22:20 144
22:20–21 149

III. Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Qumran

Apocrypha

Baruch
3:27–4:4 87

Bel
34 93

2 Esdras
9–10 87

Judith
6:4 22

1 Maccabees
1:11–15 5

2 Maccabees
3:24–26 19
3:24–28 18, 19
5:2–4 19
6:1–3 5
6:7 5
6:18 19

6:39 19
12:22 9
14:15 9
15:11–16 10
15:27 9

3 Maccabees
6:9 19
6:18–31 91

Prayer of Manasseh
15c 49

Sirach
24 87
24:3 94, 133
24:7 139
48:10 13

Susanna
55 93
59 93

Tobit
3:16–17 89
3:21 89
8:3 89
9:8 89
9:12–14 89
9:16 89
12:14–15a 89
12:19 103
12:19–20 89, 106

Wisdom of Solomon
1:4–7 139
6:18–20 87
7–10 23
7:24–27 139
7:26 107
7:27 87
8:10 87
8:13 87
8:17 87
9:1–2 20, 94, 95, 133
9:4 95
9:10 87, 106
9:17 20, 94, 106, 133
9:18 87
10:1 87
10:4 87
10:6 95, 133
10:13 87
10:15 87
10:15–16 94, 133
11:17 95
18:15 20, 94, 133
18:15–16 95, 147

Pseudepigrapha

Apocalypse of Abraham
17:8–10 16

Apocalypse of Moses
33:1–5 91
37:4–6 91

Ascension of Isaiah
7:21 108

Assumption of Moses
10:2 13

2 Baruch
19:3 12
48:36 87

1 Enoch
37–71 12, 153, 159
42:1–2 87, 93, 133
46 12
47:3 12
48:1–6 13
48:2–3 13, 154
49:1–4 23
71:14 13, 159

2 Enoch
36:2 73
55:1 73
56:2 103
67:1–3 73
68:5–7 73

4 Ezra
6:26 14
7:70 12
13 13

Ezekiel the Tragedian
Exagoge
74–76 153

Joseph and Aseneth
14–17 90

Jubilees
4:21–23 13

L.A.B.
13.6 17
19–20d 67
34.2 17

Psalms of Solomon
17:32 23
17:37 23
18:7–9 23

Sibylline Oracles
2.1–5 23
2.238–44 15
8.446 101
8.447–55 101
8.456–74 101
8.462 101

Testament of Abraham
1:5–10 92
7:3–17 92
7:4 92
8:2 92
9:17–18 92
12–13 157
15:28–29 92
19:8 92
20:21 92

Testament of Job
2–5 90
2–27 91
3:5b 90
4:2 90
4:6–8 90
8:2 90
16:1 90

Testament of Moses
1:15 67

Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
T. Dan
6:1–2 17
T. Jud.
20:5 110

Qumran

1QH^{a}
I, 7, 14, 19 87
IX, 23 87

1QM
XVII, 6–8 13

1QS
III, 18–25 110

11QMelch
II, 15–25 12
13 13

IV. Josephus and Philo

Josephus
Ant.
1.197 88, 103
3.96 67
3.180 62, 74
4.326 13, 67
5.277 19
8.34 74
10.35 74
10.268 74
13.364 5

Philo
Abr.
22.18 103
22.113 88
Agr.
51 20, 94, 134
Alleg. Interp.
1.14 95
1.65 20, 94, 133
Cher.
1.138–40 95
35 94, 133

Conf.
  146–7 94, 134
Fug.
  97 94, 133
  108 20, 94, 134
  212 17
Gig.
  22 94, 133
  27 94, 133
  52 96
Her.
  42 94, 96, 133
  126 106
  182 106
  205 94, 133
  230 106
Legat.
  75 8
  77–114 63, 74
  78 8
  93 8
  162 8
  188 8
  286 22
  356 22
Mos.
  1.158 74
  2.133 96
  2.288 13, 79
  2.291 67
Mut.
  256 107
Opif.
  17 95
  135 94, 133
  146 95
Plant.
  18 107
Post.
  151 106
QE
  2.13 133
QG
  9.6 20
Sacr.
  3.8–10 67
  146 107
Somn.
  1.108ff 94
  1.108–9 133
  1.40–41 95
  1.157 93
  1.215 20, 94, 134
  1.227ff 20
  1.230 94, 134
  1.232 17, 19
  1.238 17, 19

V. Rabbinic Writings

Mekilta
  Exod 12:12 91

Numbers Rabbah
  2 136

Pesikta
  57a 103

Sifre
  Deut 34:5 13
  Deut 42 91
  Deut 325 91

Talmud
b. ʿAbod. Zar.
  17b, 18b 10
b. B. Qam.
  60b 10
b. Ber.
  58a 10
b. Nid.
  13a 62
b. Sanh.
  38b 155
  98a 10
y. Ber.
  9:1 91
  9:13a 17
b. Hag.
  15a 155

Targumim
Tg. Gen.
  19:3 103

VI. Early Christian Writings

Acts of Pilate
2.3–4 136
15.1 73

Apocalypse of Peter
6 15

Apostolic Constitutions
7.26.1–3 97
8.12.6–27 96

Aristides
Apology
15.1 37, 132

Arnobius
Seven Books against the Heathen
1.41 11

Barnabas
4:22 36
5:5 36
5:6 36
5:10–11 36
5:13 36
6:7 36
6:12 36
6:14 36
7:2 36
14:5 36
15:5 36
15:9 36
21:4 36

Clement of Alexandria
Strom.
1.136.1 116
6.15 67
6.15.132 13

1 Clement
16:2 36
16:17 36
21:6 36
23:5 36
34:3 36
36:2 36
42:1 36
49:6 36

2 Clement
1:1 36
1:2 36
2:6 36
3:2 36
6:9 36
9:5 36
17:4 36
20:5 36

Clementine Homilies
6.22 72

Clementine Recognitions
10.24–25 72

Cyril of Alexandria
Ep.
17 130

Didache
10:6–7 35
16:1 35
16:7–8 35

Diognetus
7:2 36
7:6 36
9:5 36
9:6 36
10:2 36

Epistle of the Apostles
3 102
13 102
14 102

Eusebius
Hist. eccl.
2.23.13 16
Praep. ev.
8.10.2 95
9.27.3 66
9.27.4 66
9.27.6 66
13.12.13–16 96

Gospel of Peter
9:34–10:42 80

Hermas
Mand.
3.4 110
5.7 100

Sim.
  5.6.3–8 100
  5.6.4 101
  5.6.5 139
  5.6.5–7 35, 101
  5.6.7 101
  7.1, 2, 5 100
  8.1.1–2 100
  8.2.1–4 100
  8.3.2–3 100
  9.1 139
  9.1.1 35
  9.1.1–3 101
  9.12.2 35, 101
  9.12.8 101
  9.24.4 36
Vis.
  1.3.4 101

Hippolytus
Haer.
  1.21.1 129
  1.25 129
  1.25.1–6 84
  7.23 132
  7.35.1–2 29

Ignatius
Eph.
  7:2 36
  18:2 36
  19:3 36
Magn.
  6:1 36
Smyrn.
  1 37, 132
  2:1 36
  3:1–2 36
Trall.
  2:1 36
  9:1–2 36

Irenaeus
Epid.
  9–10 103
Haer.
  1.24.3–6 138
  1.26.1 27, 29, 138
  1.30.12–13 138
  3.16.2 37
  3.19.2 37

Jerome
On Isaiah
  11:2 29, 138

Justin Martyr
1 Apol.
  1.21 145
  6 99
  21 11, 37, 77, 132
  22 62
  33 37, 132
  46 46
  54 11, 77
  58 11, 77
  63 99, 100
2 Apol.
  10 99
Dial.
  34 99
  38 99
  48 99
  52–54 77
  56 99
  57 103
  58 99
  59 99
  61 21, 99
  62 99
  69 11, 77
  69–70 77
  70 11
  75 99
  114 99
  125 99
  126 99
  128 30, 99, 158
  128–9 99
  128.3 16, 157
  130 99
  134 99
  135 99

Epistle of the Apostles
  7.10 37, 142

Nag Hammadi
Testim. Truth
  9.30.19–29 29
Treat. Seth
  7.51.20–52.3 138

Odes of Solomon
  12 103
  16 103
  22 103
  23 103
  29 103
  36 103, 104
  37 103

41 103, 104
42 103

Origen
Cels.
1.21 68
1.28 136
3.22 63
7.8–9 84
7.9 62
In Joh.
2.31 20
2.189–90 20

Polycarp
Phil.
2:1 11, 37
7:1 37
12:2 37

Tertullian
Apol.
21 64
Carn. Chr.
6 102
14 103
19 37, 131
24 37, 132
Marc.
9 102
Prax.
16 102

Theophilus of Antioch
Autol.
1.7 103
1.13 77

VII. Greco-Roman Writings

Aelius Aristides
Or.
48.31–35 18

Apollodorus
Library of Apollodorus
7.7 8
7.8 8

Apuleius
Metam.
11 134

Aristotle
Rhet.
2.12.1–17 14
3.7.1–11 14

Arrian
Anab.
7.27 69
7.30 28, 167

Cicero
Fin.
1.5.14 62
Leg.
1.1.3 64, 66
2.19 8
Nat d.
3.22 63, 64, 65
3.22.57 65
Resp.
1.41 66, 79, 157, 162, 168
2.2 66, 162
2.10 64, 66
6.13.24 18
6.21 66
Tusc.
1.12 72
1.14 75
1.21.48 61

Dio Cassius
45.1 70
56.46 9, 64, 70

Dio Chrysostom
1 Regn.
1.56 23
2 Regn.
69.1 62, 75
78 75
4 Regn.
18–23 62
Rhod.
16 75
1 Tars.
33.4 61

Virt. (Or. 69)
  1 61

Diodorus Siculus
Lib. Hist.
  1.13 63, 65, 75
  1.20 65
  1.23 65
  1.24.7 127
  3.9.1 8
  4.1.5 65
  4.2.1 64, 65
  4.2.1–4 162, 165
  4.9.1 64, 65, 162
  4.9.3 162
  4.9.5 65
  4.10.7 64
  4.15.1 65
  4.25.4 10
  4.38.4–5 64, 65
  4.39.1 65
  4.39.2 65
  4.71.1 65, 162
  4.81–82 64, 65
  5.49.3 23
  5.76 65
  6.1.2 7
  38.3–5 9

Diogenes Laertius
Vit. Phil.
  3.45 74, 164, 168
  7.135 97, 134
  8.62 76
  8.66 76
  8.67–68 64, 76
  8.68 9, 71
  8.69–70 71

Dionysius of Halicarnassus
Ant. rom.
  1.64.4–5 64, 66
  1.77.2 28, 66, 163, 167
  2.63.3 80
  6.12.5–10 17
  6.13.1–2 17
  7.72.13 63

Epictetus
Diatr.
  1.9.22–26 61
  4.1.12 22

Epiphanius
Pan.
  51.2–3 132

Heliodorus
Aeth.
  3.13 18

Hermogenes
Prax.
  7 102
  19 102

Herodotus
Hist.
  2.43 63
  2.145–6 63

Homer
Iliad
  1.221–2 18
  2.819–22 162
  4.75–78 18
  5.247–8 162
  15.236–8 23
  15.262 23
  17.551–55 18
  20.206–7 162
  24.59 162
Odyssey
  1.322 18
  16.15–20 18
  17.485 18
  20.30–35 18
  24.530–35 18

Homeric Hymns
  32 64

Horace
Carm.
  1.2 19, 86
  1.19–30 19
  1.25–26 19, 86
  1.29–30 19, 86
  1.41–44 19, 86
  1.45–46 19, 22, 86

Isocrates
Hel. enc.
  10.63 9

Leukothea
Odyssey
  5.333–35 10

Livy
  1.16 66
  39.10.7 23
  39.13.12 23
  39.15.9–10 23

Lucian
Alex.
  12–13 61
Demon.
  7.63 62
Deor. Conc.
  7–10 72
  14 72
Jupp. conf.
  2.67 61
Peregr.
  27 64
  39 64
  39–40 64
  40 9, 73

Lucius Annaeus Florus
  1.1 66

Lucretius
  1.729–33 62
  1.729–34 61
  5.8–10 61
  5.25–50 61

Maximus of Tyre
Or.
  9.7 18

Ovid
Metam.
  2.600–610 64
  2.600–655 65
  3.259–73 65
  6.109 64
  8.626–721 85
  14.588 64, 66, 162
  14.805–28 66
  15.862–3 66

Pausanias
  1.43.1 10

Philostratus
Vit. Apoll.
  1.1–2 76
  1.2 75
  1.4 71
  1.4.5–9 28, 164, 165, 167
  1.6 71, 164
  2.17 75
  2.40 75
  5.24 75
  7.7 75
  7.21 75
  7.38 61, 75
  8.5 75
  8.7 75
  8.28 75
  8.29 75
  8.30 9, 64, 71
  8.31 9, 64, 71

Pindar
Thren.
  frg. 113 62

Plato
Min.
  99 B–D 61
Phaedr.
  249 C–E 23

Pliny
Ep.
  10.96 12

Plutarch
Alex. fort.
  331A 61
Def. orac.
  10 16, 27
Her. mal.
  13 63
Is. Os.
  27 27
  67 97, 134
  70 97, 134
  78 97, 134
Luc.
  10.2 18
  10.3 18
Num.
  4 78
  4.1–4 166

Pel.
16 63
16.5 8
Quaest. Conv.
717D–718C 166
Rom.
2 64, 66
2.3–6 162
7.3–4 167
27 64, 66
27.7–8 9
28 64, 66, 80
28.2–3 79, 157
28.4 9
28.6–8 79
29.1 9
Symposiacs
8.1.2 74
8.13 78

Pseudo-Callisthenes
Alexander Romance
3.24 64
3.30 64

Pseudo-Hermogenes
Prog.
21 14

Pseudo-Lucian
Cynic
13 75, 76

Quintilian
Inst.
3.49–54 14
9.2.29–32 14
11.1.32–59 14

Quintus Curtius Rufus
10.10.9–13 70

Rhetorica ad Herennium
4.49.63–53.66 14

Seneca
Ep.
31.11 61
41.1 61
41.4–5 23
73.14–16 61
Herc. Ot.
1996–7 62
Prov.
6.6 61
Pumpkinification of Claudius
1 68
Vit. beat.
26.8–27.1 62

Suetonius
Aug.
94 64, 127
94.4 9, 10, 70, 165
100 64
Dom.
13.2 22

Tacitus
Hist.
4.83–84 85
4.84 97, 134

Theon
Prog.
68 14
84 14
115–18 14

Vergil
Aen.
6.756–76 62
Ecl.
4 19, 85

VIII. PAPYRI

P. Oxy.
2.1380 97
1381 18

SUBJECT INDEX

adoption 24 n. 54, 140
angelology 88, 92–93, 100–101, 103 nn. 82–83, 106
angels 13, 16–17, 19–21, 22 n. 52, 23, 30 n. 68, 41, 42 n. 86, 67 n. 36, 73 n. 49, 87–96, 98–104, 106, 108, 110, 127, 129, 133–135, 139, 147, 149, 153–155, 156 n. 31, 157–159, 161
ascending/ascent 9, 20–24, 29–30, 32 n. 69, 34, 40, 62 n. 10, 64, 67–70, 73 n. 49, 74, 78, 80–81, 84–93, 98–100, 103–109, 111, 133, 140

baptism 3, 24, 28–30, 128–129, 132, 135, 137–140, 169

Christ hymn 12, 45 nn. 2–3, 46–53, 103
Christ/Messiah 3, 16, 21–22, 24–25, 27–29, 31–32, 35 n. 77, 36–38, 41, 45 n. 2, 53–56, 77–80, 84–85, 92, 99, 100, 102–104, 106–109, 110 n. 105, 113, 116–118, 124, 128, 131–132, 135, 137–138, 143–151, 155 n. 31, 156 n. 32, 158–160, 169
creation 3–4, 12, 14, 20 n. 47, 22–23, 30 n. 68, 31, 35–36, 38, 41 n. 86, 50 n. 14, 55–56, 71, 87 n. 19, 101, 102 n. 79, 107, 115–116, 130, 139, 145–146, 151, 153, 157

descending/descent 7, 17, 19–24, 29, 31, 32 n. 69, 34, 40, 66, 78, 80 n. 68, 83–88, 90–93, 98–99, 101–109, 111, 133, 136, 139–140, 166
development ix, 3–4, 5 n. 10, 6, 26, 31, 35 n. 77, 41–42, 87, 110, 114–115, 120, 140
divine man (θειος ανηρ) 61 n. 1, 62, 68 n. 38, 73–76, 78
divinely begotten 168

eschatology 14, 41 n. 85, 120, 122
experience 4, 5 n. 8, 25, 30, 40, 120–121, 126

functions 13, 26–28, 31–34, 37, 40–41, 89, 93, 95, 99–100, 119, 127, 143, 146–148, 150–151, 154, 159, 161

Gnosticism 83–85, 87, 98, 106, 111 n. 108

healer 68, 168
Hellenistic Judaism 5, 20, 66, 78 n. 63, 93 n. 44, 97–99, 101, 104, 106–107, 109, 111, 133–135
heroes 6 n. 13, 16, 17 n. 39, 29 n. 64, 62 n. 10, 68
high priest 20, 37, 93 n. 44, 94–98, 107–108, 119, 134–135

immortals 7–8, 11–12, 16, 25, 29, 34, 36, 61 n. 1, 62–71, 73–82, 105, 128, 168
immortality 9, 10 n. 21, 16–17, 62–63, 65, 67, 75, 90, 97
incarnation 21–22, 24 n. 54, 33, 36, 37 n. 79, 45 n. 2, 50 n. 14, 59, 62 n. 7, 100–102, 131–132, 135, 137–141, 166
infancy narrative 161

judgment 4, 12–15, 16 n. 36, 25, 27, 31–32, 38–39, 80, 147, 153–154, 159

logos 20, 30–31, 77, 93–102, 103 n. 84, 106–107, 109–110, 131–134
Lord 5 n. 8, 11, 14, 16–17, 22, 27, 31–33, 35, 37, 40, 45 n. 2, 78–81, 88, 90–93, 114, 118, 122, 128–131, 138, 144, 17–149, 151, 154

mal'ak Yahweh 88, 93–94, 102, 134, 158
miraculous conception 3, 28, 37, 70, 127–130, 132, 136–137, 140–141, 161, 164, 166–169
models 4, 6–7, 25–27, 31–37, 40, 41 n. 85, 42, 123–124
monotheism 4, 10, 31, 40, 156–158

Paraclete 110
parallelism 47–54, 58, 94, 133
parousia 3, 17, 31–32, 79, 100, 104, 107, 109, 151
philosophers 68, 70–71, 75–76, 81, 123–124, 164
pre-existence 3, 4 n. 4, 7, 13 n. 30, 21–23, 31–34, 36, 45, 50 n. 14, 53,

58–59, 78–79, 100, 104–108, 139, 146, 149, 159

redeemer myth 83–84, 98, 104
resurrection 3–4, 11, 24–25, 27, 29–31, 34, 35 n. 77, 36–37, 39–40, 54, 77 n. 61, 78, 79 n. 67, 90, 105, 110, 113, 115, 121–122, 128, 140, 146, 151, 159
revealer 25, 96, 99, 117–118, 148

sayings 15 n. 34, 109–110, 114–115, 117–118, 119 n. 17, 120, 125, 149, 151
Son of God 3, 6 n. 13, 11, 35–36, 40, 78, 80, 94, 96, 100–101, 103, 106–107, 109–110, 117, 119, 134, 137–139, 144, 147, 161
Son of Man 13, 104, 109–110, 119, 144 n. 4, 147 n. 10, 152–154, 155 n. 31, 157, 159–160
Sophia 94, 96, 106–107, 133
soteriology 4, 25, 28–29, 33
Stoicism 97–98, 100, 134

titles 3, 7 n. 18, 21, 98–99, 104, 107, 109, 143–144, 147–151
typology (Adam-Christ) 54–56

Virgin Mary 36, 128, 130
virtuous life 79–81

wisdom 20–21, 23, 28, 41 n. 86, 75–76, 86–88, 93–96, 98–106, 107 n. 95, 108–110, 133–135, 139, 144 n. 4, 153, 156, 164, 166–167
worldview (temporal and spatial) 37–40