CHAPTER 1

Christological Origins

An Introduction to a New Emerging Consensus

It is an exciting time to be studying NT Christology. There are few subjects in biblical studies where it is possible to say that there is a clear and steady movement towards a consensus. But it is hard to disagree with Cambridge scholar Andrew Chester who, in a recent critical review of the field, describes a newly emerging consensus about the early date and character of a belief in Jesus' divinity.[1] In this chapter I describe that "emerging consensus."

1: An Early Divine Christology

In the modern period, specialists have disagreed widely on the conceptual shape and historical origins of Christology (and many have insisted on a plurality of NT Christolog*ies*). In particular, there has been a long-running debate about the phenomenon that scholars traditionally call a "high Christology" (the belief that Jesus was somehow divine and was treated as such by his followers). Most have thought that a high Christology was reached only after significant theological development of thought and, therefore, in a different time, place, and circumstances to those of Jesus himself and his earliest Jerusalem-based followers. On this view, during his ministry in Galilee and Judea the disciples must have had either no Christology—no very strong beliefs specifically about Jesus—or a "low" one in which Jesus is simply a created being (a prophet, or even the long-awaited Jewish messiah). In other words, if the historical Jesus had *any* sense of his own special vocation he only believed he was a specially chosen *human being,* and as

1. See Chester, "High Christology," 38, 50.

such was, like all human beings, subordinate to God his Creator and Lord. There is now, however, a newly emerging consensus that a "high Christology" goes back to the earliest period of the church and that it was adopted by the Jerusalem-based disciples in the early years, or even the first months, of the movement after Jesus' death.

This new consensus has been achieved in particular by the endeavors of the late Martin Hengel (of Tübingen), Larry W. Hurtado, Richard Bauckham, and others who have developed the arguments they have put forward. Hengel argued that a fully high Christology must have been formed within eighteen years of Christ's death and, in all probability, within four or five years.[2] With three monographs and other supporting articles Hurtado has pushed back the origins of the Christian transformation of Jewish monotheism much further; to perhaps even the first months of the new movement.[3] At the very earliest phase of the post-Easter church Jesus' followers worshipped their master in ways that, as good orthodox Jews, they had previously reserved exclusively for the one God of Israel. That early high Christology is present throughout the NT, finding particularly clear expression (in different but mutually illuminating ways) in Paul's letters, the Johannine corpus, Hebrews, and Revelation.

In its early stages, Hurtado's project was spurred on by an article by Richard Bauckham, who showed that in some texts the worship of Jesus sets him apart as a uniquely divine being over against the angels who are not to be worshipped.[4] In recent years Bauckham has played tag-team with Hurtado, complementing Hurtado's arguments for a "binitarian" or dyadic shape to the church's earliest Christology, but also stressing the considerable evidence that for the NT authors Jesus is firmly included within the *identity* of the one Jewish God.[5] Bauckham has promised a two-volume study of early Christology so we await a full statement of his views, which differ from Hurtado's on some points. Aside from their differences, between them

2. See Hengel, *Son of God* (1976); *Between Jesus and Paul* (1983); *Studies in Early Christology* (1995); *Studien zur Christologie* (2006), and the treatment of Hengel's contribution in Chester, "High Christology," 24–26; Deines, "Christology," and Frey, "Eine neue religionsgeschichtliche Perspektive."

3. Hurtado's principal publications are: *One God, One Lord* (1988, 2nd ed. 1998); *Lord Jesus Christ* (2003); *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* (2005). See also his *God in New Testament Theology* (2010).

4. Bauckham, "Worship of Jesus" (1983).

5. Bauckham's principal publications are: *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (1998) and *Jesus and the God of Israel: "God Crucified" and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (2008) (that includes a reprint of *God Crucified*). For the agreements and some points of disagreement between Bauckham and Hurtado now see Bauckham, "Devotion to Jesus Christ" (2014).

Hurtado and Bauckham are bringing about a sea change in the study of Christology. An increasing number of New Testament scholars now accept their principal findings.[6] Even those who take issue with important aspects of their work now accept their main contention: a high Christology was a very early phenomenon and not one brought about by a Hellenization of Christian theology.[7]

Some scholars still seem committed to views that Hurtado, Bauckham, and others have shown to be inadequate.[8] And amongst those who are now indebted to the Hurtado-Bauckham early dating and divine identity "emerging consensus" there remain points where agreement is lacking. Disagreements arise, in particular, around the issue of the *origins* of an early high Christology: what caused the post-Easter church to Worship Hurtado argues the new Christian form of monotheism was a response to powerful revelatory experiences, such as visions in the context of worship. Bauckham stresses, on the other hand, the importance of early Christian interpretation of (Israel's) Scriptures and has insisted that beliefs about Jesus came first, and then the worship of Jesus was a necessary outworking of those beliefs. And whilst there is not yet agreement on the *origins* of an early Christology, others have also raised important questions about the conceptual *shape* of the Christology that Hurtado and Bauckham describe.

In large part, this four-volume book is intended to be an argument *in support of* much of the Hurtado and Bauckham paradigm; addressing the

6. The following are notable publications that reflect the approach taken by Hengel, Hurtado, and Bauckham: Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation* (2007), esp. 80–120; "High Christology," (2011), esp. 33–40; Fee, *Pauline Christology* (2007); Gathercole, *Preexistent Son* (2006); "Paul's Christology" (2011); Vollenweider, "Jesus als Träger des Gottesnamens im Neuen Testament" (2008); "Christozentrisch oder theozentrisch?" (2011); McDonough, *Christ as Creator* (2009); Schröter, "Trinitarian Belief," (2013); Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology* (2012). Frey, "Eine neue religionsgeschichtliche Perspektive" (2013) summarizes and strongly endorses Hurtado's thesis, adding a commentary with an emphasis on the history of modern German scholarship. N. T. Wright—e.g., *Paul* (2005) 73, 86–96, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2013) 619–773, esp. 647–56—can be included here, although in important ways his perspective challenges some aspects of the approach taken by Hurtado and Bauckham.

7. In this category there belongs, for example, Daniel Boyarin—esp. his *Jewish Gospels* (2012) and see also his earlier *Border Lines* (2004) and "Enoch, Ezra" (2013). Even Bart Ehrman, in his recent popular-level book, shifts from his earlier view to accepting that a divine Christology appears early on in the Christian movement (Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*), though in many other respects his discussion is rather out of touch with the work of the emerging consensus.

8. For recent examples of the old paradigm see, e.g., Reumann, *Philippians,* 359, on the "name" in Phil 2:9–10 and the continued voice given to the work of P. M. Casey in Crossley, *Reading the New Testament* (2010). For all its considerable strengths, Litwa's *Iesus Deus* (2014) sometimes passes by the main findings of the emerging consensus.

objections and the doubts of its detractors. Equally, my own work has led me to a new paradigm that explains the central findings of Hurtado's work—the *early* dating of a "high Christology"—with some significant modifications to the Hurtado-Bauckham perspective, especially on the question of the *shape* of the earliest Christology. To set the scene for my own proposals, this first chapter offers an introduction to the study of Christology by laying out essential, defining components of the emerging consensus view. In chapter 2 I consider some arguments against the emerging consensus that are easily answered and provide fresh evidence to support the case from 1 Cor 8:6. In Part 2—chapters 3 and 4—I consider some outstanding, unanswered problems and objections to the new view. Part 3—comprising chapters 5 to 7—offers a fresh examination of Jewish traditions that some have turned to for help in explaining the historical origins of Christ devotion, and Part 4 (Volume 2) will return to a fresh examination of some NT texts in the light of Part 2. The new paradigm will be fully laid out in Parts 5 and 6 in Volumes 3 and 4.

There are, of course, other subjects that properly belong in a comprehensive study of NT Christology. Ideally, we should consider the evidence for a trinitarian shape of some NT texts.[9] But space constrains us. As my argument progresses, I will however, say quite a bit about two other topics that are tightly connected to Christology: anthropology and soteriology. Neither of these will be treated thoroughly or systematically, but I hope that by the end of the presentation of the new paradigm readers will have a better sense of the ways that the earliest Christians' beliefs about Jesus were inextricable from a revolution in their understanding of themselves. For Jews who believed in Jesus and for whom there had already been an expectation that God would act decisively in history, there was also a revolution in the understanding of what salvation really meant. In other words, to understand Jesus' *person* (as both a divine and a human being) we have to say some things about the peculiar nature of his *work* and, also, about the fresh light he shed on God's original purposes for humanity.

I: Paul and an Early High Christology in Twentieth-Century Scholarship

There is a fascinating, if complex, modern history of the study of early, New Testament-era Christology. To simplify matters, we can orient ourselves to

9. On which see the important discussions in Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 63–74, and Watson, "Triune Divine Identity."

the history of debate by focusing on Paul and Pauline Christology, which provides the earliest easily datable evidence.

Throughout the Pauline letters there are passages that connect the risen Lord closely to the one God of biblical faith, ascribing to Jesus language and prerogatives that put him way above ordinary human beings. There is also evidence of prayer, acclamation, and praise directed to Christ that suggests Paul and other Christians treated him as a divine being. In the past, two different strategies have been adopted to explain remarkably exalted, transcendent language for the risen Jesus and a pattern of early Christian "Christ devotion." Older scholarship, exemplified by the classic study of W. Bousset (*Kyrios Christos*, 1913), reckoned that for Paul Jesus had become a "divine" being under the influence of Greco-Roman religion, where a variety of beings were accorded a divine (or semidivine) identity. In other words, for Paul (and other "Hellenistic" Christians) "the placing of Jesus in the center of the cultus of a believing community . . . is conceivable only in an environment in which Old Testament monotheism no longer ruled unconditionally and with absolute security."[10] Any passages in the Gospels that seemed also to portray Jesus as a "divine" being were also explained with recourse to the influence of Hellenistic religion.[11]

The Hellenization explanation of the origins of high Christology does not fit well with the fact that Paul's thought is biblical and Jewish through and through. Paul has an avowed continued commitment to the biblical belief in one God (Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4; Eph 4:6) and the rejection of idolatry (Rom 1:21–23; 1 Cor 10:7, 14; 12:2; 1 Thess 1:9–10). This has led some to the conclusion that for Paul Jesus Christ is not really "divine" in the Jewish sense; that the risen Jesus is close to the one God, that he can take over divine *functions* without being divine *in nature*; he functions as a mediator between God and his people, but was not included within the identity of the one God. In recent decades, this approach to Paul (and other portions of the NT, too) has been associated in particular with the work of James D. G. Dunn.

In his 1980 classic study of Christology, *Christology in the Making*, Dunn made a subtle, hard-to-describe argument for an unconventional understanding of the shape of Pauline Christology. He claimed that Pauline language that has traditionally been taken to ascribe preexistence and incarnation to Jesus is really traditional Jewish language for Wisdom, that had already functioned as no more than a (literary, poetic) personification of one of God's own attributes in some Jewish texts. He then judged that

10. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 147. Bousset's major study of Pauline Christology (*Kyrios Christos)* was originally published in German (in 1913) and then appeared in an English translation in 1971. I refer in this study to the English translation.

11. See, e.g., Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 69–118.

what might seem to us to be statements about Christ as a distinct "divine" person are really statements about Christ *as Wisdom.* This means that such statements do not, for Paul, threaten Jewish monotheism, since talk of divine Wisdom is really simply talk of the wisdom of God in the same way that the OT talks of the spirit of God. Pauline statements that seem to ascribe preexistence and divinity to Jesus are really talking about Wisdom, with Christ identified secondarily with Wisdom. With John's Gospel incarnational Christology appears at the climax of a long process of developing ideas about Jesus within the new movement and Dunn insists that in John "Christ was the incarnate Logos, a self-manifestation of God, the one God insofar as he could make himself known in human flesh—not the incarnation of a divine power other than God . . . ."[12] For John's Gospel, that is, Jesus is not a distinct divine person (as if the Son existed in an eternal relationship with the Father). There is, therefore, no belief in Paul in a personal preexistence for Christ and no belief in the Incarnation in the classic sense that that doctrine came to be described in later Christian orthodox theology.

The new emerging consensus agrees with Dunn that Paul (and the Synoptics) belong firmly within a Jewish religious context and that NT Christology cannot be explained, as Bousset argued, with recourse to the influence of a Greco-Roman model. *But, against Dunn, the emerging consensus argues both that Jesus was fully and firmly included, as a divine being, within a monotheistic theological framework, and that a high Christology is very early.* It is already present throughout the Pauline material and goes back to the early years or months of the post-Easter Jerusalem-based church.

To explain how the emerging consensus has moved so decisively beyond the paradigm offered by Dunn we need to consider the two focal points of its argument. First, it is argued that Paul and the earliest Christians adopted a scriptural hermeneutic to express their belief that Jesus belonged firmly within the parameters of the identity of the one God—what Bauckham and others have called "Christological monotheism." Secondly, following in particular the work of Hurtado, the earliest Christians gave to Jesus cultic devotion in a way that must mean that *as biblically faithful first-century Jews* they believed he was a fully divine being.

II: "Christological Monotheism"

There is a passage in Paul's letters that seems to offer an interpretative key to all his other Christological statements. It places Jesus squarely within the identity of the one God of Israel. And it does so in a way that assumes Paul's

12. Dunn, *Christology* (2nd ed., 1989), xxx.

readers will need no further explanation because he is appealing to an established, widely accepted credal statement.

In 1 Corinthians 8 Paul takes up the issue of believers in the Corinthian church eating food that has been offered to an idol in a pagan temple. For Jews with a pious scruple against participation in idolatry, participation in a meal that appears to endorse the worship of other deities—at a dinner party or at a restaurant attached to a temple, for example—would be unthinkable. On the other hand, there seem to be Christians in Corinth who take the view that because other gods do not in fact exist, they are now free to eat meat that has previously been offered to an idol, without being harmed. Over the course of three chapters Paul steers a careful, middle course between competing, polarized views on this pressing practical question.

The details of the full argument need not concern us here. It is Paul's opening, ground-rule setting, theological statement that has become a key text for the emerging consensus. In 1 Cor 8:3–6 he says,

> ***3*** *ei de tis agapa ton theon, houtos egnōstai hyp' autou.* ***4*** *Peri tēs brōseōs oun tōn eidōlothytōn, oidamen hoti ouden eidōlon en kosmō kai hoti oudeis theos ei mē heis.* ***5*** *kai gar eiper eisin legomenoi theoi eite en ouranō eite epi gēs, hōsper eisin theoi polloi kai kyrioi polloi,* ***6*** *all'*
>
> *(a) hēmin heis theos ho patēr*
>
> *(b) ex hou ta panta (c) kai hēmeis eis auton,*
>
> *(d) kai heis Kyrios Iēsous Christos*
>
> *(e) di' hou ta panta (f) kai hēmeis di' autou.*
>
> . . . **3** and if anyone loves God, he is known by him. **4** Concerning, therefore, the food of idols, we know that no idol in the world really exists and that there is no god except one. **5** For, even if there are many so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as there are in fact many gods and many lords—**6** but,
>
> (a) for us, there is one God, the Father,
>
> (b) from whom are all things (c) and to/for whom we live,
>
> (d) and one Lord, Jesus Christ,
>
> (e) through whom are all things (f) and through whom we live.

The whole of this passage, beginning with the love of God in verse 3, evokes the Jewish monotheistic confession laid out in the opening line of the daily prayer known as the Shema:

> Hear, O Israel, the LORD/*Yhwh* our God, the LORD/*Yhwh* is One.

The first verse of the Shema is written in Hebrew and Greek:

> Deut 6:4 (Heb.): *Shema Yisrael Yhwh elohenu Yhwh ehad.*
>
> Deut 6:4 (LXX): *Akoue, Israēl; Kyrios ho theos hēmōn Kyrios heis estin.*

Paul does far more than evoke the Shema. As my underlining of shared vocabulary shows, 1 Cor 8:6 is a reworking of the Shema in which the identity of the one God is split in two, through the glossing of the word *theos* ("God") with "the Father" and *Kyrios* ("Lord") with "Jesus Christ." Paul still believes there is one God (v. 4)—he has not become a ditheist—but given the way the Shema has been opened up and reinterpreted, the one God is now mysteriously two.[13]

This is such a remarkable passage because the Greek word *kyrios,* whose basic meaning is "Lord" (or sometimes "master"), is used in this instance as the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *adonay*, which, in turn, substitutes for the name of God written as the untranslatable Hebrew Tetragrammaton (four-letter word) *Yhwh.* Any Greek-speaking Jew who hears a Christian say what 1 Cor 8:6 says is bound to hear those words as a claim that *Yhwh* is now somehow identified with Jesus Christ.

Surprising though this may seem, it is in keeping with the many instances in which Paul cites, or alludes to, a scriptural text in which *kyrios* is the word used for the name of God so that Jesus Christ is effectively identified with *Yhwh-Kyrios*. To take, as an example, one well-known case, in Rom 10:9–13 Paul interprets the words of Joel 2:32—"all who call on the name of the Lord (Gk. *Kyrios*, Heb. *Yhwh*) will be saved"—to mean that believers who call on Jesus' name are in fact, by so doing, calling on the name *Yhwh-Kyrios* (cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22).[14] There is ongoing discussion

13. See Wright, *Climax*, 120–36; *Paul,* 662–66; Hurtado, *One God,* 97–98; *Lord Jesus Christ,* 114; *How on Earth?,* 48–49; Bauckham, *God Crucified,* 36–40*; God of Israel,* 100–104, 141, 210–18; Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 89–94.

14. The other "Yahweh" texts now marshalled as evidence for Paul's identification of Christ with Israel's one God are: Rom 14:11 (Isa 45:23); 1 Cor 1:31 (Jer 9:23–24); 1 Cor 2:16 (Isa 40:13); 1 Cor 10:21–22 (Mal 1:7, 12; Deut 32:21); 1 Cor 10:26 (Ps 24:1 [LXX 23:1]); 2 Cor 3:16 (Exod 34:34); 10:17 (Jer 9:23–24); Phil 2:10–11 (Isa 45:23); 1 Thess 3:13 (Zech 14:5); 1 Thess 4:6 (Ps 94:1–2). Discussion of these texts can be found

about which of all the possible texts that might witness to this scriptural hermeneutic actually contain an identification of Jesus with *Yhwh,* since in quite a few cases an OT text that refers to *Yhwh-Kyrios* is cited without any Christological interpretation (e.g., Rom 4:7–8; 9:27–29; 10:16; 11:3, 34; 15:11; 1 Cor 3:20; 2 Cor 6:18).[15] Discussion of the extent and precise meaning of texts that have a Christological interpretation will no doubt continue. But given the presence of so many examples, we can conclude with Chester that: "cumulatively they certainly represent a clear emerging pattern."[16] And the existence of the other non-Christological *Yhwh-Kyrios* texts shows that for Paul Jesus is not simply equated with *Yhwh* without remainder; rather, Jesus is somehow a unique manifestation of *Yhwh* (Israel's one god).[17]

That Paul (and his Jewish-Christian predecessors) adopted a self-conscious identification of Jesus with the four-lettered, ineffable name of God is also the natural conclusion of the climax to the hymn about Christ in Phil 2 (discussed below and in chapter 8). There, honoring Christ Jesus' humble, obedient service unto death, God "highly exalted him and gave him the name above all names" so that, in language echoing the words describing the nations' submission to *Yhwh* in Isa 45:21–25, "at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (vv. 9–11). *For a biblically literate and faithful Jew, the name given here to Christ must somehow refer to God's own name, Yhwh.* The name above all names must have in mind the name of Israel's god (*Yhwh*) that is in view throughout the passage from Isaiah to which Phil 2:9–11 alludes (see "*Yhwh-Kyrios*" in Isa 45:18–19, 21, 24–25).[18] The passage is famous as an uncompromising

in Capes, *Yahweh Texts*; Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 111–18; Bauckham, *God of Israel,* 186–91; Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 20–25, 43–50, 56–69, 89–94, 123–24, 127–34, 177–80, 189, 257–58, 264–66, 352–59, 396–98, 408–10, 563–71, 631–38. See also the use of Ps 34:8 [33:9 LXX] in 1 Pet 2:3, Isa 8:13 in 1 Pet 3:15, and Ps 102:25–27 in Heb 1:10–12.

15. For Paul citing an OT passage where *Kyrios is* used as a translation substitution for the divine name (as in the Septuagint) see: Rom 4:7–8 (Ps 32:1–2 [LXX 31:1–2]); 9:28–29 (Isa 1:9); 10:16 (Isa 53:1); 11:34 (Isa 40:13); 15:11 (Ps 117:1 [LXX 116:1]); 1 Cor 3:20 (Ps 94:11 [93:11]); 2 Cor 6:17–18 (Isa 52:11; 2 Sam 7:14). For a fuller list of *Yhwh* texts that have God as referent see Bauckham, *God of Israel,* 189–90.

16. Chester, *Messiah,* 106.

17. See Bauckham, *God of Israel*, 186–94, cf. N. T. Wright, *Fresh Perspectives*, 73, 92. It is not clear to me why Fee rejects the identification of Jesus Christ with *Yhwh* that is the unavoidable implication of 1 Cor 8:6 and other *Yhwh-Kyrios* texts (Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 564–71).

18. Most now think that Jesus is "given" the name *Yhwh* in Phil 2:9 (see, e.g., Bauckham, *God of Israel*, 24–25, and Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 112; *How on Earth?,* 50, 94–95). This is problematic and in chapter 8 I will suggest an alternative reading that nevertheless incorporates the key insight that in vv. 9–11 Jesus is identified, as *Kyrios*, with *Yhwh.*

statement of the exclusivist claims for *Yhwh*'s identity as Creator and Lord of history. And yet now, in a quite extraordinary way, language that in Isaiah describes the categorically unique identity of *Yhwh-Kyrios* is used for the position and identity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Returning to 1 Cor 8:6, the inclusion of "Jesus Christ" within the identity of the one God—as defined by the Shema—is not simply a matter of Christ's *exaltation* to a position at God's right hand. The "high Christology" of 1 Cor 8:6 is not just a claim for Jesus' *postresurrection* identity. In addition to the "binitarian" glosses on the words "God" and "Lord," Paul ascribes to the Lord Jesus Christ a role in creation. God the Father is the one who initiates creation—"*from* whom are all things and for whom we live" (v. 6b–c). But to the Lord Jesus Christ is also ascribed creative agency when Paul says that he is the one "*through* whom *are all things* and *through whom* we live" (v. 6e–f).[19] Similar language to describe the Son (who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation) as creative agent is used in the Christ hymn in Col 1:15–17.

In an influential study of 1 Cor 8:6, Phil 2:6–11, and Col 1:15–20, N. T. Wright coined the expression "Christological monotheism" to describe the way these passages contain "an explicitly monotheistic statement, of the Jewish variety (i.e. creational/covenantal monotheism, as opposed to pantheism or Deism), in which we find Christ set within the monotheistic statement itself."[20] In his work, Hurtado has talked of a "binitarian mutation" of Jewish monotheism, though his analysis of 1 Cor 8:6 and related material is on the same lines as that offered by Wright.[21] Perhaps because of the negative connotations of the English word "mutation" and the questions begged by the theological neologism "binitarian," others have taken up Wright's "Christological monotheism" as a more appealing rallying cry for this new understanding of Pauline Christology.[22] For reasons that I will come to in Parts 5 and 6, I find "Christological monotheism" a less-than-perfect label for the phenomenon that Wright and others have identified. So, until I explain my preferred expression ("Jesus monotheism") I will place the expression "Christological monotheism" in scare quotes.

19. See esp. Bauckham, *God of Israel*, 102, 104, 213–18 on the wider Jewish and Hellenistic parallels and the use of similar language for God himself in Rom 11:36.

20. Wright, *Climax,* 114, cf. 99, 114, 116, 129, 132, 136.

21. Hurtado *One God*, 97–98; *Lord Jesus Christ*, 114; *How on Earth?*, 48–49.

22. See, for example, Bauckham's use of the expression in *Jesus* (18–19, 28, 30, 38–40, 101). In his most recent work Hurtado prefers the word "dyadic" to "binitarian" (see Hurtado, "Revelatory Religious Experience"; "Ancient Jewish Monotheism," 384) and sometimes prefers to talk of a "variant form" rather than a "mutation" of monotheism (*Lord Jesus Christ,* 50, n. 70).

This understanding of the "Christological monotheism" of 1 Cor 8:6 (and closely related passages) now provides an economical explanation of other prominent features of Paul's letters and other parts of the NT. Bauckham has argued that it is not just identification with the divine name that gives to Jesus a divine identity. Israel's one God has a personal identity (like a human identity) defined by various relationships that should then govern our understanding of NT statements about Jesus. In particular, the one God of Israel rules over all creation and is Lord of all human history, and as such appears on a high and lofty throne above the rest of reality. No other being (like an angel, for example) ever has such a sovereign position, so statements that put Jesus Christ at God's right hand, on God's throne, or that refer to him being over "all things (*ta panta*)" also intend his inclusion *within the unique divine identity*.[23]

The *enthronement* of Christ, with a particular debt to a Christological interpretation of Psalm 110:1—"The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand," the most cited OT text in the NT—brings Hebrews and Revelation into the discussion of early "Christological monotheism" (e.g., Heb 1:3, 13; Rev 4–5; 7:15–17; 22:3). The Christology of Hebrews and Revelation, though later than the Pauline material, is very much in keeping with what is already present in Paul. Here we also find Jesus' inclusion in the divine identity expressed through his inclusion in the creative work of God (Heb 1:2–3, 10–12, cf. Rev 3:14). Christ is also eternal—the *alpha* and *omega*, first and last—in the way that Israel's one God, alone, is eternal (Rev 1:17; 22:13, cf. 1:8; 21:6; Isa 44:6; 48:12; and Heb 1:8). Bauckham has also endorsed the minority view of the likes of Christopher Rowland that the name given to the eternal Son in Heb 1:4 is not, as most have supposed, the expression "Son," but the divine name, *Yhwh*.[24] In the same vein, David Lincicum has now added further support to a divine identity understanding of Revelation's Christology by arguing that the title "alpha and omega" for Jesus (in Rev 22:13) is partly indebted to a creative interpretation of the Greek letters Iota Alpha Omega, which were sometimes used in Greek biblical manuscripts as a translation of the Hebrew *Yhwh*.[25] In any case, in Rev 22:3–4 God and the Lamb share the same divine name. So, in their own ways Hebrews (1:3–4,

23. For Israel's God as ruler over all things, see the texts in Bauckham, *God of Israel,* 23 n. 44. For Christ over all things, see: 1 Cor 15:27–28; Eph 1:22; Phil 3:21; Heb 1:2; 2:8. For Christ's creative work in sustaining "all things," see John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 1:10; Col 1:16–17, 20; Heb 1:3.

24. Bauckham, *God Crucified,* 34; *God of Israel,* 25, 200, 239. See already Rowland, *Open Heaven,* 113.

25. Lincicum, "Alpha and Omega."

13; 2:5–9) and Revelation (esp. 5:9–14) echo the *exaltation* of Christ over all creation that is the climactic moment of the Christ hymn of Phil 2:6–11.

Time and again we find divine *action* or *functions* ascribed to Christ in a way that now makes sense if Christ belongs within the divine identity and if he fully participates in the divine nature. For example, sometimes God is said to transform believers (1 Cor 15:38; 2 Cor 5:1; Rom 8:11), but in Phil 3:20–21 this is Christ's responsibility. In biblical and Jewish literature God sits in (heavenly) *judgment* (e.g., Dan 7:9–11, cf. Rom 14:10), but in 2 Cor 5:10–11 all must appear before the judgment seat *of Christ*.[26]

In 1 Cor 8:6 God is the Father, and although the Lord Jesus Christ is not called "the Son," his identity as God's (preexistent, eternal) Son seems to be assumed (cf. 1 Cor 1:9; 15:28). At any rate, the one-God-the-Father and one-Lord-Jesus-Christ of the "Christological monotheism" in 1 Cor 8 now explains the way Paul regularly describes the divine subject in similar language, without explanation or apology, and often quite casually in greetings and final blessings. In 1 Thess 3:11 he can pray, for example, "May our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you" (cf., e.g., Rom 1:7; 15:6; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2–3; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2–3; 6:23). Paul's divine identity Christology needs no explanation: his readers, including and especially those from a Jewish background, apparently understood and did not question it.

Furthermore, the way Paul spoke (and wrote) so freely of Christ's inclusion in the divine identity led to language that at first seems clumsy, but on fuller reflection is probably designed to express a profound theological mystery. So, for example, the prayer in 1 Thess 3:11—in what is probably Paul's first letter—nicely illustrates the conscious ambiguity of a God who is *one,* yet now, for Paul and his fellow Christians, mysteriously *two*. Ordinarily, grammar would dictate that *two* subjects (God, who is the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ) require a verb in the plural. But in the Greek of 1 Thess 3:11 the verb "direct" (*kateuthynai*) is a singular: *two* persons grammatically expressed as *one* acting subject. Two in one. English translations cannot convey the arresting use of such odd grammar, but it would not be missed by first-century Greek speakers. Again, a similar phenomenon occurs in the book of Revelation where, as Bauckham has noted, "mention of God and Christ is followed by a singular verb (11:15) or singular pronouns (22:3–4; and 6:17)."[27] To these texts we might add that a similar strategy may

26. For this sharing of divine attributes and prerogatives in Paul see Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 576–85.

27. Bauckham, *God of Israel*, 142. Bauckham's inclusion of 6:17 here assumes the variant reading *autou* is the original. Those manuscripts at 6:17 that have a plural pronoun (*autōn*) instead of the singular (*autou*) are best explained as a correction to the

be at play in Col 1:20, where there is perhaps deliberate ambiguity between God and the beloved Son in the phrase "reconciling all things to *him*."[28]

III: Cultic Devotion

Twentieth-century study of the New Testament has long recognized that the Christology of the early church was not just a matter of propositional truth claims. Christ is also the focus of worship and prayer. There was a cult of Christ.[29] In the early second century, the Roman magistrate Pliny the Younger described in a letter to the Emperor Trajan the practice of Christians chanting hymns "to Christ as to a god" (*Epistles* 10.96.7) and the New Testament itself provides first-century evidence of this practice. For Wilhelm Bousset and the generations of scholars in the twentieth century influenced by his approach to the history of religions, the Christ cult could only be understood as a development arising from a shift from a Jewish to a Greco-Roman context where the worship of Jesus as a divine Lord (*kyrios*) came about under the influence of the cult of divine heroes and deities. And this must have happened some time after the early years of the Aramaic-speaking, Palestinian-based, "primitive community" phase of the new movement.[30]

Building on the work of Martin Hengel, Hurtado and Bauckham have successfully argued that Christ devotion in fact goes back to the earliest period of the (post-Easter) Christian community, perhaps even to its earliest months, and that it is a phenomenon attested across the whole of the NT, with no evidence of any early Christians objecting to the practice.[31]

more difficult, original text that deliberately used odd Greek to make the point that the one God is now one God in two persons.

28. Commentators usually argue for one or the other, but the passages in 1 Thessalonians and Revelation suggest deliberate ambiguity. Jesus' words in Matt 28:19 may also intend a similar ambiguity. Are believers are to be baptized into the one "name" (as the singular Greek *to onoma* implies: "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit") or, into three names (as the Greek of what follows is naturally read: "*The* Father, *the* Son, and *the* Holy Spirit")?

29. See, e.g., Bousset, *Kyrios Christos,* 129–38, for cultic devotion to Jesus attested in, but also antedating, Paul.

30. See discussion of Bousset's paradigm and its influence in Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 13–25. Bousset's paradigm now finds expression, with more cautious claims about historical *origins*, in Litwa, *Iesus Deus* (2014).

31. See Hengel, *Between*, 79–96; *Studies*, 227–92; *Studien*, 185–258. For Hurtado's view that it probably goes back to the earliest months of the post-Easter church, see *Lord Jesus Christ*, 118, 136. For Bauckham on worship directed to Christ, see his *God of Israel,* 127–81.

Hurtado categorizes six kinds of evidence for this Christ devotion. And in view of other contributions to the emerging consensus we can add here a seventh. The relevant evidence both illustrates early Christian *practice* and also the pattern of *belief* that Bauckham has emphasized.[32]

First, then, there is a "well established pattern of prayer in which Jesus features prominently, either as a recipient or as a unique agent through whom prayer is offered."[33] Paul in his letters pens "prayer-wish passages" in which God and Jesus are together invoked, as in the passage from 1 Thessalonians that we discussed in the previous section (1 Thess 3:11–13, cf. 2 Thess 2:16–17; 2 Thess 3:5).[34] In a similar vein, many of his letters conclude with a prayerful benediction invoking God and Christ together (Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:16–18; Eph 6:23–24; Phil 4:20–23; 1 Thess 5:23–28). These formulaic, matter-of-course prayers probably reflect well-known patterns of corporate prayer (or "liturgical" practice), though on other occasions we encounter spontaneous, individual, and very personal prayers (2 Cor 12:8–9; Acts 7:59–60, cf. Acts 1:24; 13:2).

Secondly, there is invocation and confession of the kind found in Paul's exclamation in Aramaic in 1 Cor 16:22–23: "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. *Marana tha!* ("Our Lord, come!"). The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you." This is an example of Paul himself "calling on the (name of) the Lord (Jesus)," which other texts, along with the context in 1 Cor 16:22–23, show was a basic, constitutive practice of the Spirit-filled Christian life, defining Jesus' followers over against others (non-Christian Jews and pagans) (see Rom 10:9–13; 1 Cor 1:2, 13, 15; 12:3; 2 Cor 12:8; Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim 2:22; Rev 22:20). As an invocation for the Lord Jesus to come—whether now or in the eschatological future is a matter of interpretation—this confession and calling on Jesus as Lord anticipates a universal confession, by "every tongue," in the eschatological future (Phil 2:11). In the present, it is reflected in texts that speak of a proclamation "in his name" of a "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 24:47, cf. Acts 2:38; 10:43). Several of the texts show that an invocation of the name of the Lord Jesus was an established feature of early Christian ritual and spirituality (1 Cor 1:2, 13, 15; 12:3; 16:22–23; Acts 22:16) that reflected the older, biblical practice of "calling on the name of *Yhwh-Kyrios*" (e.g., Gen 4:26; 12:8; 1 Sam 12:17–18):

32. For fuller discussion see, Hurtado, *One God*, 83–124; "Binitarian Shape"; *Lord Jesus Christ*, 134–53; Bauckham, *God of Israel*, 127–51; Fee, *Pauline Christology,* esp. 488–95, cf. 122–23, 170, 196–98, 362, 409, 412–13, 574–76.

33. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 140.

34. See especially now Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 51–55; 65–68; 73–77; 465–66; 493–95, 574–76.

it reveals both the character of early Christian devotional practice and of the Christological interpretation of scriptural *Yhwh* texts.

The 1 Cor 8:4–6 redefinition of the Shema should be included here as evidence for a distinctive (Jewish) Christian confession of Jesus as Lord. The way the redefinition of the Shema is used by Paul—at the beginning of his argument over food offered to idols—suggests early Christians used the words of 1 Cor 8:6 in their own version of the daily meditation on God's oneness (that priests proclaimed in the daily Temple service and ordinary Jews prayed in the morning and evening).[35] Omitting the word "But" (Gk. "*all*") with which the verse now starts in the traditional division of the text, verse 6 contains a tightly constructed formula in two balanced thirteen-word halves. Some of the terminology in the confession is uncharacteristic of Paul's own writing and this is consistent with other evidence, to which we shall come in the next chapter, that the confession goes back to the earliest Aramaic- and Hebrew-speaking group of believers.

Hurtado's third and fourth categories are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both, in their own way, are rituals focused on Jesus as Lord and can be compared with pagan rites dedicated to a deity. Baptism involved invocation of Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48, cf. 1 Cor 6:11; Jas 2:7) and a Christ-focused dying with Christ and being clothed with him (Rom 6:4; Gal 3:27). The regular meal in memory of Jesus is the "Lord's Supper" (*kyriakon deipnon*) (1 Cor 11:20), focused on the "cup" and "table of the Lord" Jesus (1 Cor 11:27; 10:21), which Paul himself compares with pagan cult meals and the eating of sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple (1 Cor 10:14–22). "This is not merely a memorial feast for a dead hero. Jesus is perceived as the living and powerful *Kyrios* who owns the meal and presides at it, and with whom believers have fellowship as with a god."[36]

Hurtado's fifth category is the "hymns" that celebrate Christ's identity and work. Singing "psalms (*psalmois*), hymns (*hymnois*), and spiritual songs (*ōdais*)" (Col 3:16–17; Eph 5:18–20, cf. 1 Cor 14:26) was a feature of early Christian gatherings. Newly created hymnic material in Phil 2:6–11, Col 1:15–20, John 1:1–18, Eph 5:14, and 1 Tim 3:16 is generally reckoned to reflect the Christ-focused content of that verbal praise. In these passages the hymn is *about* Christ, just as biblical psalms are also often *about* Yhwh/God.

There is also evidence that the earliest Christians directed hymns and praise *to* Christ. The prose hymn in Phil 2:6–11 is *about* Christ, but it is "difficult to make sense" of the hymn's climax "except on the basis that it

35. For the recitation of the Shema in first-century Temple liturgy, synagogue services, and daily prayer see Waaler, *The Shema,* 123–205.

36. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 146, cf. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 491–92; Dunn, *Worship*, 50–51.

is assumed and expected that Christ will be acclaimed and worshipped in the same way as God (and that this will itself be to the glory of God)."[37] When Acts 13:2 says "*While they were worshipping the Lord* (*Kyrios*) and fasting, the Holy Spirit said . . . ," the Lukan pattern of freely using *Kyrios* for the risen Christ (e.g., Luke 24:34; Acts 1:6; 7:59–60) means Luke thinks the Christians in Antioch were "worshipping *Jesus*" in a way that must have included corporate singing (cf. 2:47; 10:46; 16:25). The same goes for the injunction to address "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody *to the Lord* with your heart . . ." (Eph 5:19, cf. Col 3:16). Indeed, Christ-*directed* praise is explicit in the doxologies in 2 Tim 4:18; 2 Pet 3:18; Rev 1:5–6 (cf. Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 4:11), in the words of thanks to "Christ Jesus our Lord" in 1 Tim 1:12, and in the climactic scene of future universal prostration and confession *to* Christ—in the hymn *about* him—in Phil 2:10–11. In Revelation 5:9–14, the future worshipful recognition of Christ's divine sovereignty is already a reality in heaven in the praise offered by every creature in heaven, on the earth, and in the world below to both the "one who sits on the throne *and to the lamb*" (that in turn parallels the worship given to God in 4:8–11 and that anticipates the worship of both God and the Lamb in 7:9–17 and 14:4).

It is true that we do not have the actual words of hymns directed *to* Christ that all these passages surely envisage. Paul only records hymns *about* Christ. But then this is not surprising. The literary context of Paul's letters suits hymnic material in the *third* person ("*he* humbled himself . . ."; "*who* is/*who* being . . ."), not the *second* person or vocative ("You are . . ."; "O Lord Jesus"), since Paul is already writing in the *second* person to a particular community of believers. A change of address to include hymnic material directly to Christ ("You, O Lord, are . . .") would be odd. Paul and his fellow Christians prayed both *for* Christ or *about* Christ (in "wish-prayers" and benedictions) and to Christ (e.g., Acts 7:59–60; 2 Cor 12:8–9), so we are not surprised to find the kind of circumstantial evidence just noted that they sang songs both *to* Christ and *about* him.

Psalms in the Greek Bible are regularly labeled with the same terms used to describe Christian corporate worship in Col 3:16–17 and Eph 5:18–20.[38] And because, as we have seen, early Christians were in the habit of applying biblical *Yhwh-Kyrios* texts to Jesus, it is likely that biblical psalms were sung and applied to Christ in the same way. This practice is reflected in the catena of biblical texts applied to Christ in Heb 1:5–13, where Christ is the "Son" (of

37. Chester, "High Christology," 39.

38. For the *psalmos* and *ōdē* see, e.g., LXX Pss 4:1; 17:1; 29:1; 41:9; for the *hymnos* see, e.g., LXX Pss 6:1; 53:1; 60:1.

Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14), the "firstborn" (who fulfills the word of LXX Deut 32:43), "God" (as in Ps 45:6–7), and the "*Kyrios*" (of Ps 102:25–27).[39]

Hurtado's last category is prophecy, which serves and is directed by God, the Spirit, and *the Lord (Jesus)* in the Pauline churches (1 Cor 12:4–6). So, as Hurtado points out, "[g]iven the negative stance of biblical tradition against prophecy in the name of any other deity (e.g., Deut. 13:1–5), and the lack of any parallels of prophetic oracles delivered in first-century Jewish group worship in the name of any figure other than God, this attribution of prophecy to the exalted Jesus is simply extraordinary."[40]

To these six categories we should make explicit a seventh; the offering of the physical gesture of *proskynesis* (prostration) to Christ.[41] In the Bible and in the wider ancient world, *verbal* acclamation and praise of a deity or of divine ruler (in the Greek and Roman worlds where kings and emperors were worshipped) could be accompanied by the physical gesture of prostration. The precise interpretation of this gesture varies according to context. In some circumstances *proskynesis* merely honors a superior or one from whom a kindness is sought (as is the case in Gen 23:12; 33:3–7; 2 Sam 18:21; Matt 18:26). But in most cases in the Old and New Testaments *proskynesis* is reserved for the one God and there are clearly statements, from the Decalogue onwards, prohibiting it being given to another deity (Exod 20:5 = Deut 5:9, cf., e.g., Exod 23:24; 34:14; Lev 26:1; Matt 4:9–10). After the deification of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), *proskynesis* was often a key feature of the cult of the ruler/Ruler Cult in the Greek and Roman worlds. So, in the first century, when Roman emperors were regularly accorded the same honors as the gods, the action was charged with political and religious sensitivities, especially for Jews who refused to offer *proskynesis* to the emperor Gaius Caligula (Philo *Embassy* 116–18, cf. Esth 3:1–6; LXX Add Esth 13:12–14). In Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature there is also a topos in which prostration before an angel is prohibited to make clear that the angel is not God, since such a gesture should only be done before God himself (e.g., *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:14–15, cf. Tob 12:15–22).[42]

Against this background, prostration to Jesus seems to be another key element of the Christ-devotion pattern. In Phil 2:10, the future recognition and acclamation of Jesus will be accompanied by a bending of the knee. The author of Luke-Acts is at pains to stress that even though they are agents of divine power, the early Christians rejected an obsequious or reverential

39. On which see Bauckham, *God of Israel*, 233–53.

40. Cf. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 151.

41. Discussed in Hurtado, *How on Earth?,* 139–51.

42. See Bauckham, "Worship of Jesus"; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 75–103.

proskynesis that would have implied they were worthy of receiving the kind of honors given to a god (Acts 10:25–26, cf. 14:8–18). But Jesus himself happily receives *proskynesis* as he ascends to heaven at the end of Luke's Gospel (Luke 24:50–53). In Revelation prostration before an angel is specifically prohibited (Rev 19:10; 22:8–9). But the wicked are depicted giving *proskynesis* to demons, to the beast, to the dragon, and to the image of the beast (Rev 9:20; 13:4, 8, 12; 14:9, 11; 16:2), whilst in heaven there is a right and proper angelic *proskynesis* that accompanies the songs of praise offered to the enthroned Lamb (Rev 5:14, cf. Phil 2:10). Similarly, Hebrews proclaims the divine identity of Jesus the Son with the claim that he is worthy of *proskynesis* from the angels (Heb 1:6).

In none of the Gospels is there a fully conscious, corporate, worshipful prostration before Jesus until after his resurrection (see Matt 28:9, 17, and Luke 24:53). However, in John and Matthew there are cases where Jesus receives *proskynesis* during his earthly life (Matt 2:2, 8, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; John 9:38) and in Mark the pagan soldiers mockingly treat Jesus as a divine ruler by rendering to him *proskynesis* (and royal acclamation) (Mark 15:19).[43] In these cases, especially the passages in Matthew where the Old Testament suggests a divine epiphany, the Gospel writers have likely included the language of prostration to suggest that, although Jesus was not yet fully recognized for who he was, at various times and places the veil was lifted and people (and demons in Mark 5:6) gave to Jesus an honor that, with hindsight, they would have realized was entirely fitting for the one who was "God with us."[44]

Together these seven phenomena constitute a constellation or *pattern* of devotional actions that amounts to a "worship" appropriate to one who is included within the identity of the one God of the Hebrew Scriptures. (In Part 6 I will return to this pattern of cultic devotion and propose that we add an eighth item to the inventory. But this list of seven will do for now.) Indeed, frequently Jesus is accorded reverence that in Jewish tradition is reserved for God. Such reverence is specifically *denied* to other figures (mediatorial beings such as angels or exalted patriarchs), but is now given to Jesus. Along the way, the devotional pattern means the treatment of Jesus in the first century was in various ways *analogous* to the treatment of gods and divine beings in the Greco-Roman world. But the fact that, as we have seen, the Lord Jesus Christ is firmly included within the identity of the one

43. Compare the *proskynesis* to Jesus by the demonized m an in Gentile territory in Mark 5:6 that for Mark probably signals a worshipful recognition of Jesus at least in the terms that would be normal outside of Jewish territory.

44. Compare the discussion in Bauckham, *God of Israel,* 130–31, 179–80, 204.

God of Israelite faith means that the devotion to him cannot be denied the full significance it would have in the Jewish context.

IV: Conclusion: Consensus on the Shape and Date of an Early High Christology

Together, the arguments for a "Christological monotheism" and the worship of Jesus create a weighty and solid case for a high Christology of divine identity in the early years—and in the thoroughly Jewish context—of the Christian movement. In all this, practice is inseparable from belief. Christ devotion necessarily entails a binitarian (or "dyadic") shape to Jewish monotheism and "Christological monotheism" inevitably required a Christ devotion (that was, at the same time a one-God-of-Israel devotion). I agree with Bauckham that in terms of the *origins* of the early church's Christology, belief preceded practice: his earliest followers worshipped Jesus in recognition of Jesus' inclusion in the identity of the one God. So, in this study I will often refer to "Christological monotheism" assuming that readers know that that theology necessarily entailed a particular and novel transformation of existing biblical patterns of worship.[45]

The peculiar beliefs about Jesus and his inclusion within the identity of the one God are reflected in the *form* that Christ devotion took. For a (non-Christian) Jew the early Christians treat Jesus the way Israelites were expected to treat the one God himself.[46] Before long the earliest believers were rubbing shoulders with, and evangelizing, non-Jews. In many and various ways (that I will not review at this juncture, but will grapple with in later chapters) what the early Christians did to Jesus meant that non-Jews in the wider pagan environment would justifiably conclude that Jesus was being treated as a god or a divine ruler (like the Roman emperor). For example, calling Jesus the Son of God and announcing his arrival (including his birth) as "good news" would evoke the language of the cult of the

45. For Bauckham's subordination of the *practice* to the *belief* see *God Crucified,* 13–16 (= *God of Israel,* 11–13). I agree with Bauckham in so far as practice followed belief *at the origins* of "Christological monotheism." However, it was probably also the case that sometimes some new converts first had a powerful encounter with God in the context of an early Christian community at worship and prayer that then led to a new confession of faith. Sometimes people (then and now) have an encounter that produces new behavior before it brings about clearly articulated new beliefs.

46. This, of course, has to be qualified in some important respects. For example, Jesus is not worshipped as one who now resides in the Jerusalem Temple and he does not receive animal sacrifices on a physical altar (though he does receive metaphorical sacrifices in Rev 14:4).

(divine) emperor.[47] *But the early Christians were not ditheists.* The worship of Jesus was not expressed through the setting up of a new temple shrine to him. Jesus is not *added* to an existing pantheon. The birth of Christianity was not marked by the worship of a new Mediterranean god, but by the belief that the one unique God—*Yhwh-Kyrios*—had climatically, at the end of Israel's history, appeared in fully human and a highly personal form. The NT texts adopt various strategies to ensure that the grammar of their devotion remained firmly within the boundaries of a belief in one God.

By the same token, this distinctive "binitarian" worship of one God without two cults is mirrored in the distinctive *language* of NT Christology. The twoness of the one God's identity is expressed through the intimate, relational language of the Father and the Son, not through wholly separate names of discrete, potentially competing, divine entities (e.g., Zeus and Apollo). Glory given in worship to Jesus Christ the Lord goes through Jesus to God the Father (Phil 2:11; 1 Pet 4:11). The Son is the visible image and form of a Father who is invisible (explicitly in Col 1:13–15 and implicitly in Phil 2:6; Heb 1:3; Rev 1:13–16; 4–5) and as such the Son shares and manifests God the Father's glory (Heb 1:3, cf. Phil 3:21; 2 Cor 3:12–4:4; Col 1:19). Both are responsible for creation, but everything comes *from* the Father, *through* the Son (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; John 1:3). Scriptural texts that employ more than one word to refer to Israel's God in a way that seems, on the face of it, to entail an unnecessary redundancy are taken to refer to the two divine entities Jesus Christ the Son and his Father. For example, in the reworking of the first line of the Shema in 1 Cor 8:6 the two words that denote Israel's deity—"God" and "Lord" ("Hear, O Israel the *Lord* your *God*, the *Lord* is one")—are each taken to refer to different entities, or persons, within the divine identity ("*God* the Father" and the "*Lord* Jesus Christ"). Hurtado has pointed out that a similar creative interpretation of two referents for God in Isa 45:23 ("God" and "to me") may have precipitated a "Christological midrash" on that *Yhwh-Kyrios* text in Phil 2:9–11.[48] Later Christian and rabbinic texts, and material in Philo of Alexandria, suggest that this method of scriptural interpretation was already being used in some Jewish circles to explore the ways in which the one God could be manifest in two discrete entities or forms.[49] A similar creative scriptural hermeneutic

47. For recent explorations of the way some passages would be read or heard in a Greco-Roman context see esp. Peppard, *Son of God* (2012), and Litwa, *Iesus Deus* (2014).

48. Hurtado, *How on Earth?,* 92.

49. Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho* says that Gen 19:24 ("And *the LORD* rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire *from the LORD* out of heaven") refers to two separate divine beings (*Dial.* 56). This interpretation of Gen 19:24 is

is used in the way that, as we have seen, God and Christ appear together as the subject of a singular verb (Rev 11:15), as the antecedent to a singular pronoun (Rev 22:3–4; 6:17), with each described as joint occupants of a singular throne (e.g., Rev 22:1, 3).

Whilst Hurtado's work has shown that what Christians did to Jesus is in many ways equivalent to both the pagan treatment of their gods and also Israel's own worship of the one God *in the cultic context*, recent voices in the ongoing debate have helpfully stressed that Christ devotion extends beyond the kind of cultic categories identified by Hurtado that we have just reviewed. For example, in his discussion of *Pauline Christology* (2007) Gordon Fee points out that there is not just a "cultic" devotion to Christ in Paul; there is also a total life commitment that is thoroughly *personal*.[50] For Paul "to live is Christ; to die is gain" (Phil 1:20) and the ideal life is lived in undivided devotion to the Lord (1 Cor 7:35, cf. vv. 32–34), straining forward towards the time of permanent communion with him (1 Thess 5:9–10; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23). Everything else is rubbish compared with a personal, individual, "gaining Christ, and being found in him" (Phil 3:8–9).

Some of this has precedent in the piety of OT psalmody where the psalmist longs for God (e.g., Pss 42:2; 63:1; 84:2). But the Christ devotion attested in the NT is essentially more quotidian, personal, and all-life encompassing than the *event*-focus of the Jewish cult and its daily, weekly, and annual festivals and liturgies. For "Paul's radically changed world view, everything is done in relation to Christ. The church exists 'in Christ,' and everything that believers are and do is 'for Christ,' 'by Christ,' 'through Christ,' and 'for Christ's sake.'"[51] Christ devotion was *process*, not just *event*.

Chris Tilling has now strengthened this wider perspective on Pauline Christology through a careful monograph-length comparison of the relationship in biblical and contemporary Jewish literature between Christ and the believer (along with the rest of reality), on the one hand, and the relationship between God and his people (along with the rest of reality), on the other hand.[52] Tilling helpfully shows that there is need to move beyond the focus on *cultic* devotion in Hurtado's work and to pay attention to all

reflected in talmudic debates about the Two Powers in heaven heresy (on which see Segal, *Two Powers,* 118–19, 130–31, 159–62, 221–22). In turn, writing in the first century, Philo of Alexandria says that Gen 31:13 (LXX) ("I am the God who appeared to you in the place of God") refers to two Gods (*On Dreams* 1:227–29). (The Hebrew Massoretic text lacks "in the place of God"). See Segal, *Two Powers,* 159–62.

50. The point was made also by Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 153, 157, 159–60.

51. Fee, *Pauline Christology,* 489, cf. 412–13, 488–90.

52. Tilling, *Christology*, (2012). See also Tilling, "Misreading" and Bauckham's observations in his most recent article ("Devotion to Jesus Christ," 191–92, 199–200).

the ways in which the early Christian understanding of the "Christ relation" (as he calls it) mirrors the biblical and Jewish "God relation." Together with Fee's comments, Tilling's contribution anticipates a defining element of the new paradigm that I will present in Parts 5 and 6.

2: The Origins of Christ Devotion and "Christological Monotheism"

At the heart of the new emerging consensus there is a confident claim that a high Christology appeared at the very start of the life of the new movement (after Jesus' death). Though there are voices of discontent and various objections raised in some quarters (which I will review in chapter 2), it is hard to gainsay the coherent pattern of Christ devotion that Hurtado and Bauckham have demonstrated. In turn, the nature of the pattern has implications for its origins. Because key passages in Paul, to one degree or another, reflect traditional pre-Pauline liturgical language (1 Cor 8:6, cf. Phil 2:6–11), which in one case apparently goes back to the Aramaic-speaking church (in the case of the "*marana tha*" in 1 Cor 16:22), overwhelmingly the evidence points to a very early origin.[53] We do not have to wait until John's Gospel or texts that may have been written late in the first century (such as Revelation and Hebrews) to find a high Christology.

It is true that there is no evidence of an organized pattern of devotion during Jesus' lifetime. Yet, there is no extant evidence for any form of (post-Easter) Christianity that rejected or opposed the behavior that evidently became the norm. Neither is there clear, indisputable evidence of stages of development towards "Christological monotheism." So it is likely that a high Christology was precipitated by "a veritable explosion in devotional innovation as well as in christological beliefs in the very few earliest years (perhaps even the earliest months)" impacting the whole church in its early Aramaic (and Greek-speaking) Palestinian environment.[54] And, we might

53. For some, e.g., M. Hengel, the Christ hymn in Phil 2:6–11 has been the primary evidence for an early, pre-Pauline high Christology of preexistence and incarnation (see his *Studies,* 278, 288–89, 379–83). However, placing so much weight on Phil 2 assumes the hymn is pre-Pauline and that it does not fit well in its current context in Philippians (so too Hurtado, *How on Earth?,* 104–7). It is questionable whether it is pre-Pauline and in recent years commentators have increasingly recognized the many ways that Phil 2:6–11 is carefully integrated into the rest of the letter. (I will argue in later chapters that its Christology is a particularly appropriate one for the Philippian context). So it is better to allow the breadth of evidence, including now especially the confession in 1 Cor 8:6, to bear the burden of the case for early origins.

54. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 136. Later Hurtado suggests the "first few weeks" of the church's new life for the origins of binitarian monotheism (*How on Earth?,* 203).

add, there is no obvious external stimulus or change of circumstances that would plausibly explain a shift from seeing Christ as a messiah and prophet to the worship of him in a way that implied his divine identity. For example, an influx of Greek-speaking Jews into the nascent Palestinian movement (see Acts 6) does not readily account for a significant change in the way Jesus is treated. There is no evidence that, by comparison to their Aramaic and Hebrew speaking compatriots, Greek-speaking Jews had significantly different views about the identity of God and the way that he alone should be worshipped that would explain the birth of Christ devotion.

So, in his recent review of the current debate Chester concludes that there is now a growing "scholarly consensus . . . that . . . a Christology that portrays Christ as divine emerges very early, in distinctively Jewish terminology and within a Jewish context."[55] However, beyond basic agreement that there was a "binitarian" high Christology at the beginnings of the life of the church, consensus starts to disappear. Serious problems and questions arise, particularly when we consider the issue of origins: where did it all come from, when exactly, and why? We will consider some of these problems in chapters 3 and 4. On such questions there are some key judgments where Hurtado and Bauckham are in agreement, and Hurtado has made some specific proposals to explain *why* an early high Christology came about.

I: A Lack of Precedent in Jewish Monotheism

In recent decades, a number of other scholars have stressed the continuities between early Christian beliefs about Jesus and pre-Christian Jewish ideas surrounding various divine mediator figures (angels, Wisdom, the Logos, and exalted patriarchs, for example). Some have argued that much of what we find in "Christological monotheism" is anticipated in Jewish traditions surrounding these divine mediators. Worship of Jesus and his inclusion in the divine identity could then be understood, in part, as a case of Jesus being judged the fulfillment of existing hopes for a unique divine mediator.[56]

However, both Hurtado and Bauckham—each in their own way—stress the lack of precedent or real analogy for a high Christology in first-century Judaism. Hurtado insists that there is no evidence of Jewish worship of a figure other than the one God that could provide a precedent for the worship of Jesus alongside and in addition to the worship of the one God

55. Chester, "High Christology," 38.

56. Scholars who have stressed continuity (without necessarily signing up to all the conclusions of the emerging consensus) include C. Rowland, J. Fossum, W. Horbury, A. Chester, A. Y. Collins, S. Vollenweider and D. Boyarin.

of Israelite faith. There are passages in various texts that describe angelic and/or human reverence towards various human beings (the Enochic Son of Man-Messiah in *1 En.* 37–71, the high priest in Ben Sira/Sirach 50 and Adam in the *Life of Adam and Eve* 12–16, for example), which some of us (myself included) have adduced as evidence for a partial precedent for a worship of Jesus. However, Hurtado dismisses the possibility that these texts provide such a precedent. There may be some *literary* scenes that "are interesting as illustrating the speculative directions and forms that ancient Jewish thought could take toward exalted symbolic figures."[57] However, none of these provide evidence of Jews worshipping "a second figure alongside . . . in addition to their God" that can be shown to reflect concrete behavior in a way that explains the "full *pattern of religious behavior* practiced in early Christian groups."[58]

Similarly, for Bauckham, Jewish monotheism entails a clear line of absolute distinction between the one God and all other reality. Jewish monotheism is "strict" and "exclusive," with God wholly separate as Creator from his creatures over whom he is sovereign. Because his identity as Creator and Ruler of all things defines his identity—*who* he is—he does not *share* his role as Creator and Ruler with another. And because worship is what you do to recognize the identity of this God, it is unthinkable, from theological first principles, that biblically faithful Jews could ever have worshipped anyone, or anything, other than God. So, along with Hurtado, Bauckham thinks there is no real evidence for a worship other than the worship of God himself that anticipates the worship given to Jesus.

II: Hurtado's Explanation of Christological Origins

So what caused the apparently unprecedented variant form of Jewish monotheism that we call "Christological monotheism"? Hurtado argues that there are *four* explanatory factors and forces.[59] First, there is *Jewish monotheism* itself. Although its exclusive worship of God did not *cause* or stimulate the worship of Jesus, it did impose a *constraint* on Christ devotion that led to a distinctive pattern of including Jesus in the worship of the one God. Christians did not create an additional, separate Jesus cult and add it to

57. Hurtado, "Binitarian Shape," 194 (see 193–94 generally for comments on *L.A.E.* 13–14, *1 En.* 37–71, and obeisance to Moses in *Ezekiel the Tragedian* 68–82, and *How on Earth?,* 126).

58. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 39–40 (see generally 38–42, 137).

59. Ibid., 27–78.

the existing worship of the one God. That would have entailed, in effect, a ditheism (rather than a "binitarianism").

Secondly, there was (the historical person) Jesus of Nazareth. Hurtado shares the view of the overwhelming majority of modern scholars that Jesus did not think of, or present, himself in divine terms. And he certainly did not endorse or demand the kind of worship of him that went with the early church's "binitarian" modification of Jewish monotheism. But the historical Jesus caused a polarization between supporters and opponents that can best be explained by both his teaching and messianic self-claims. So Jesus' ministry is an important presupposition of the later worship of him.

A satisfactory account of the *shape* and *origins* of early (high) Christology can remain quite agnostic as to both Jesus' precise "aims or purposes" and the contents of his message, "in particular what specific claims he may have made for himself."[60] Jesus' ministry is obviously a presupposition of Christ devotion, but the "particularizing focus on Jesus" in evidence across the NT does not "account for the binitarian devotional pattern we see so quickly in evidence."[61] So whilst a factor, Jesus' historical life was not sufficient, of itself, to explain Christ devotion.

Thirdly, Hurtado theorizes that the decisive factor that caused the binitarian mutation in monotheism and worship of Jesus was powerful revelatory experiences that led his followers to conclude that the risen and exalted Jesus should now be worshipped:[62]

> Within the early Christian circles of the first few years (perhaps even the first few weeks), individuals had powerful revelatory experiences that they understood to be encounters with the glorified Jesus. Some also had experiences that they took to be visions of the exalted Jesus in heavenly glory, being reverenced in cultic actions by the transcendent beings traditionally identified as charged with fulfilling the heavenly liturgy (e.g., angels, the "living creatures," and so on). Some received prophetic inspirations to announce the exaltation of Jesus to God's right hand and to summon the elect in God's name to register in cultic actions their acceptance of God's will that Jesus be reverenced. Through such revelatory experiences, Christological convictions and corresponding cultic practices were born that

60. Ibid., 55 (see further 53–63 and *How on Earth?,* 134–51).

61. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 64.

62. Hurtado, *One God,* 114–23; *Lord Jesus Christ*, 64–74; *How on Earth?,* 179–204; "Origins," 10–16; "Resurrection-Faith," 128–130 and "Revelatory." At this point Hurtado's work is anticipated by older German scholarship: see, e.g., Bousset, *Kyrios Christos,* 50–51.

> amounted to a unique "mutation" in what was acceptable Jewish monotheistic devotional practice of the Greco-Roman period.[63]

Powerful visionary experiences of the exalted Jesus included God's direction to worship Jesus. These combined with Spirit-inspired songs, prophetic oracles, and "charismatic exegesis" of the Old Testament to create the kind of Christological material that is now reflected in the New Testament and in subsequent Christian literature. This whole process is reflected in accounts of visionary experiences that describe or assume the place of Jesus in the heavenly realm (e.g., Acts 7:54–60; 2 Cor 12:1–4; Gal 1:13–17; Rev 4–5).

Here Hurtado joins the chorus of a growing number of scholars who have recently insisted that in explaining various features of earliest Christianity we should pay more attention to the role of visions, dreams, and other forms of religious experience than NT scholarship has traditionally allowed. Although most have not taken up this part of Hurtado's work on Christology, it has at least won the support of A. Chester, who also claims it offers the best explanation of the origins of an early divine Christology.[64]

Fourthly, Hurtado reminds us that an early high Christology has its origins in a wider Roman-era religious environment.[65] Early Christian binitarian monotheism, like Jewish monotheism itself, stands *over against* Roman religious practices and so it is likely, for example, that in the Christian literature of the late first century onwards, "son of God" language for Jesus reflected a reaction to the use of the same language for the Roman emperor.

There are also important points of more open cultural and religious engagement with the Greco-Roman world. For example, the Gospels are a striking innovation in the Jewish environment. They are quite unlike any texts in the rabbinic corpus, which sometimes included short stories from the lives of rabbis, without ever connecting those short stories into a coherent account of a life that might then be held up as authoritative or paradigmatic. Rabbinic tales of famous rabbis are used to point to true fulfillment and interpretation of Torah, not to attract the readers' attention to those rabbis themselves. The central focus throughout the Gospels on Jesus himself means they are generically most like the biographies of the Greco-Roman world and this in turn reflects the way the Gospels function as an expression of early Christian devotion to Jesus.[66]

63. Hurtado, *How on Earth?,* 203.

64. See Chester, *Messiah*, 99–105; "Christ of Paul," 120–21; "High Christology," 47–50, cf. also Eskola, *Messiah*, 182–202 and Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God,* 171–246.

65. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 74–77.

66. Ibid., 75, 274–77, 313, with reference to wider scholarly discussion of the genre of the Gospels, especially the important contribution made by R. A. Burridge,

III: Bauckham's Explanation of Christological Origins

Bauckham has promised a two-volume work on Christology and so far has only laid down a few key judgments that would contribute to a full explanation of the origins of Christological monotheism. Some of these, especially the judgments that are distinctively his own, will be highlighted in the following chapters.

At the outset, however, it is worth highlighting a major difference between Hurtado and Bauckham. Bauckham is apparently unconvinced by the proposal that powerful religious experiences were a factor leading to "Christological monotheism." Instead, he seems to think that the actual life of Jesus was more important than Hurtado allows. He has boldly argued in several separate studies that all four canonical gospels should be treated as reliable historical eyewitness testimony to the life of Jesus.[67] In these, he has mounted a full-frontal assault on the form-critical paradigm that has dominated Gospel studies in the last hundred years, with its view that the Gospels are in large measure the creation of the early church and a reflection of the various stages of the church's life and development. Bauckham thinks that pretty much everything in the Gospels (especially in the Synoptics, but also, with qualification, in John's Gospel) is historically reliable testimony.[68]

For many modern Gospel interpreters the Synoptics have a low Christology. Indeed, for Hurtado the Synoptic Gospels are clear that Jesus did not claim a divine identity during his earthly life (even though the Gospels are, in their own way, a testimony to the wider pattern of Christ devotion). However, Bauckham argues from a range of passages in the Synoptics that the older, traditional (precritical) view that the Synoptics have a Christology no different to the one in John is a more faithful interpretation of the evidence. Furthermore, whilst some modern scholars have seen a high Christology in some Synoptic passages and have usually judged the "divine" elements of Jesus' biography to be the product of a Hellenization of the early Christian movement, for Bauckham the Gospels represent the historical realities of Jesus' very *Jewish* life.

He has not yet explained how the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' life account for the precise shape of "Christological monotheism." That is, he has not yet explained in detail how the life of Jesus as told by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John produces the kind of statements we find in 1 Cor 8:6 and

"Gospel Genre."

67. See esp. Bauckham (ed.), *Gospels for All Christians,* (1998) and his essay therein ("For Whom?"), and *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses,* (2006), *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple,* (2007).

68. See also his short sketch of Jesus' life in *Jesus: A Very Short Introduction* (2011).

Phil 2 and the distinctive pattern of worship of Jesus that we see throughout the NT. The route from the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus (taken as historically reliable throughout) to "Christological monotheism" and Christ devotion may seem to some readers utterly straightforward. However, in chapters 3 and 4 I will pose some historical and theological questions of Bauckham's model of Christological origins. In the end, the new paradigm that I will outline in volumes 3 and 4 will find some common cause with Bauckham's approach to the Gospels as historically accurate accounts of Jesus' life, though along the way I will make interpretative and historical judgments that part company with him.