

Worship and Divine Identity: Richard Bauckham's Christological Pilgrimage¹

Larry W. Hurtado (University of Edinburgh)

I consider Richard Bauckham one of the most significant contributors to the study of the New Testament and early Christianity of our time. His body of published work reflects a wide range of interests and, still more impressively, a correspondingly wide range of competence, within standard issues in NT studies and beyond, including contributions to the study of extra-canonical texts, modern theological issues, and other subjects. In this paper I focus on those features of his scholarly work that have been most influential on my own, and these are particularly his key contributions to the study of earliest reverence for Jesus. In referring to his “christological pilgrimage” I perhaps ascribe an intention and an awareness of movement and a direction of development that he may not recognize. So, consider the title of this essay more reflective of my own sense of things, perhaps more poetry than prose.² My main purpose here is to underscore and engage two main emphases in his work on the place of Jesus in earliest Christian faith and practice: His earlier, seminal focus on the significance of the worship of Jesus, and his later proposal that Jesus was included within a “divine identity.”

The Worship of Jesus

One of the most stimulating essays I have read in some forty years of post-PhD research remains Bauckham's 1981 article, “The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity.”³ Beginning in the late 1970s, inspired by and also critical of Bousset's classic work, *Kyrios*

¹ This is the pre-publication version of my essay, the published version: “Worship and Divine Identity: Richard Bauckham's Christological Pilgrimage.” In *In the Fullness of Time: Essays on Christology, Creation, and Eschatology in Honor of Richard Bauckham*, eds. Daniel M. Gurner, Grant Macaskill, Jonathan T. Pennington (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), pp. 82-96. ISBN: 978-0-8026-7337-8.

² My title draws upon an earlier use of a similar expression: Norman Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974). But I intend no particular association or linkage of Bauckham and Perrin.

³ Richard J. Bauckham, “The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity,” *NTS* 27 (1981): 322-41.

Christos, I set out to attempt my own thorough study of earliest beliefs about Jesus.⁴ At some point shortly after it appeared I came across Bauckham's article, as I was formulating plans for a project to be undertaken in my first research leave in the 1983-84 academic year. My recollection is that, together with a couple of other stimulating studies that I read in that period (particularly, Alan Segal's landmark analysis of "Two Powers" controversies in rabbinic texts, and key publications by Martin Hengel), Bauckham's article was important in developing my project for that research leave.⁵

My project involved exploring the Jewish context of earliest Christianity, particularly for any analogies and/or resources to help us understand historically the remarkable treatment of Jesus as worthy of worship. Bauckham's article underscored how remarkable it was for Jesus to be treated as a co-recipient of worship, particularly in texts such as Revelation, and so I sought to probe questions about how early this cultic devotion to Jesus began and what historical factors might have helped to prompt and shape it. The results of that research leave appeared in my 1988 book, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*.⁶ From that book onward I have continued to emphasize the history-of-religion significance of the early eruption of cultic "Jesus-devotion" as perhaps the most significant development in earliest circles of the post-Easter Jesus-movement, and I freely

⁴ Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ From the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (trans. J.E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970, translated from the German fifth edition, 1921; the first edition, 1913). In a 1979 article I lodged some criticisms that demanded a fresh analysis: Larry W. Hurtado, "New Testament Christology: A Critique of Bousset's Influence." *TS* 40 (1979): 306-17. See now my Introduction to the reprint of the English translation: *Kyrios Christos* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), v-xx; and my article, "Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*: An Appreciative and Critical Assessment," *Early Christianity* 6 (2015): 1-13.

⁵ Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven. Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA, 25; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977; reprinted Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013); Martin Hengel, "Christologie und neutestamentliche Chronologie: Zu einer Aporie in der Geschichte des Urchristentums," in *Neues Testament und Geschichte: Historisches Geschehen und Deutung im Neuen Testament*, *Festschrift Oscar Cullmann*, eds. H. Baltensweiler & B. Reicke (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1972), 43-67; English translation: "Christology and New Testament Chronology." In *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: SCM, 1983), 30-47; *id.*, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (ET, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976; German 1975).

⁶ Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SCM, 1988; reprint Edinburgh/London: T&T Clark, 1998). A third reprint edition is to appear in 2015 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark), with an extensive Epilogue reviewing scholarly discussion of the key issues raised in the book since the 1998 edition.

acknowledge Bauckham's article as a key contribution to my thinking at the early stage of my own work on this topic. Over the years since *One God, One Lord*, I followed up with a number of other publications on the subject of early Jesus-devotion, culminating in my large 2003 work, *Lord Jesus Christ*.⁷ But *One God, One Lord* remains foundational for all of my subsequent work, and Bauckham's 1981 article was a crucial factor shaping the research that led to that book.

In that 1981 article, which focused on the remarkable reverence accorded to Jesus in Revelation (especially 5:1-14), Bauckham incisively and insightfully underscored the importance of this precisely in the context of the emphasis in Revelation on refusing worship to any recipient other than the one God. Bauckham pointed to the two striking instances where the seer's misguided attempts to offer worship to the angel-interpreter are forbidden by the angel (Rev 19:10; 22:8-9), pointing out that this sort of prohibition was also a motif/feature of some other texts of roughly the same period (e.g., *Asc. Isa.* 8:5; Tob 12:18). Bauckham then cogently underscored the significance of the depiction of heavenly (ideal) worship in Revelation 5:1-14, where "the Lamb" is included as co-recipient with God ("the one seated on the throne"). In short, precisely in Revelation, with its emphatic affirmation of the cultic exclusivity that included refusing worship even to ranking members of God's own angelic retinue, it is remarkable that we see the exalted Jesus treated as the rightful co-recipient of heavenly praise and worship.

In several subsequent publications, Bauckham further emphasized the significance of Jesus' place in earliest Christian worship and prayer-practice. These include his entry on the subject in the Anchor Bible Dictionary, the expanded version of his 1981 journal article in his book, *The Climax of Prophecy*, his discussion of the worship of Jesus in a multi-author volume on Philippians 2:6-11, his contribution to the St. Andrews conference volume, *The*

⁷ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003).

Roots of Christological Monotheism, and some parts of a 2008 collection of several previous publications and conference papers, *Jesus and the God of Israel*.⁸ Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that Bauckham's emphasis on the significance of the worship of Jesus was perhaps the most influential factor that occasioned and framed the focus of that St. Andrews conference in 1998.

Moreover, the influence of Bauckham's seminal article is also reflected in Loren Stuckenbruck's 1993 PhD thesis (subsequently published) which included a programmatic study of "angelic-refusal" tradition in Jewish texts (references to angels refusing worship as in the passages in Revelation cited already), along with other data about the veneration of angels. Stuckenbruck basically confirmed Bauckham's point about the significance of the depiction of Jesus as co-recipient of heavenly worship in Revelation.⁹

In my view, the point made first by Bauckham and then confirmed by Stuckenbruck is highly important. That the exalted Jesus so quickly and readily was given cultic reverence is remarkable (more remarkable than recognized by many NT scholars), and is a (perhaps the) key indicator of the distinctive nature of the young Jesus-movement, especially in the context of the second-temple Jewish matrix in which it first appeared.¹⁰ This cultic reverence of

⁸ Richard J. Bauckham, "Jesus, Worship of," *ABD* 3: 812-19; *id.*, "The Worship of Jesus," in *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 118-49; *id.*, "The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:9-11," in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998), 128-39; *id.*, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (London: Paternoster Press, 1998); *id.*, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers From the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43-69; *id.* *Jesus and the God of Israel: 'God Crucified' and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

⁹ Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "'Do Not Worship Me, Worship God': The Problem of Angel Veneration in Early Judaism and Aspects of Angelomorphic Christology in the Apocalypse of John" (PhD., Princeton Seminary, 1993), thereafter published: *Angel Veneration and Christology*, WUNT 2/70 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Siebeck], 1995). Stuckenbruck proposed, however, that what he called "venerative language" about angels (referring to/describing angels in exalted terms) may have been a partial precedent for the full cultic veneration of Jesus in earliest Christian circles.

¹⁰ In this, I echo the judgements of earlier scholars, e.g., Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity* (ET, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959; German orig. ed., 1917), 1:37, who described prayer and cultic reverence to the exalted Jesus as "the most significant step of all in the history of the origins of Christianity . . ." My own contribution has included an emphasis on the constellation of the specific actions that comprised the novel

Jesus did not displace or minimize the worship of God; instead, it formed a key part of what I have referred to as a “binitarian” or “dyadic” pattern of worship in early Christian circles, in which Jesus was revered along with God.¹¹

This emphasis on cultic reverence offered to Jesus has drawn the attention of other scholars as well. Casey and Dunn, for example, queried whether it is accurate to posit that the “worship” of Jesus is reflected in Paul’s epistles (though they each grant that it is reflected in later NT writings).¹² But it seems to me that they both fail to engage adequately the specifics of the devotional practices reflected in Paul’s letters (and so fail to recognize the significance of these practices). Moreover, they also both seem to presume that for Jesus to have been given worship in any robust sense would have required him to be treated almost as a separate deity in his own right.¹³ So, lacking evidence of the latter, they judge that Jesus was not worshipped. But I underscore the point that the worship of Jesus in earliest Christian circles did not comprise a new cultus to an additional or separate deity. The pattern of earliest Christian worship was not di-theistic (two deities). Instead, it amounted to a distinctive “mutation” in the ancient Jewish devotional/worship pattern, in which the (“monotheistic”) worship of the one God also required reverencing Jesus, and so Jesus was

“mutation” in second-temple Jewish worship practice that took place so remarkably early in circles of Jewish believers. See, e.g., Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 100-14.

¹¹ See, e.g., Larry W. Hurtado, “The Binitarian Shape of Early Christian Worship,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers From the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, eds. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 187-213, republished in my book, *At the Origins of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 63-97. More recently, I have shifted to the term “dyadic,” to counter misunderstanding of my use of “binitarian,” e.g., in my book, *God in New Testament Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010).

¹² P. Maurice Casey, “Monotheism, Worship and Christological Developments in the Pauline Churches,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers From the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, edited by Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 214-33; James D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (London/Louisville: SPCK/Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

¹³ A similar critique applies to the curious line of argument by Dunn’s former PhD student, James F. McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in Its Jewish Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009). Cf. my online review: <https://larryhurtado.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/mcgrath-reveiw-essay1.pdf>.

reverenced as sharing the glory of the one God.¹⁴ Consequently, the objections of Casey and Dunn seem to me misdirected and ineffective.¹⁵ In any case, Bauckham's early emphasis on the significance of the worship of Jesus, an emphasis that I have echoed and tried to reinforce, has now become a more salient topic in the field of Christian Origins, and Bauckham deserves credit in helping to make this so.¹⁶

Divine Identity and the Worship of Jesus

I turn now to another (and subsequent) emphasis in Bauckham's work on early Christology. This is his contention that the risen Jesus was perceived in earliest Christian circles as included within what Bauckham terms "the divine identity," and that this in turn explains why Jesus was worshipped. This contention appeared somewhat later in Bauckham's work, first coming to my attention in his Didsbury Lectures, *God Crucified*, published in 1998; and he then also presented his arguments in his contribution to the St. Andrews conference volume.¹⁷ In order to ensure engagement with his most recently available thoughts, I focus my discussion here on his 2008 book, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, in which he presents expanded and reworked versions of a number of earlier essays and develops this emphasis further.¹⁸

Foundational for Bauckham's case is his observation that in second-temple Jewish tradition *YHWH* was distinguished from all other heavenly/divine beings and treated as *sui*

¹⁴ In *One God, One Lord*, the chapter on earliest Christian devotion to Jesus was titled, "The Early Christian Mutation" (93-124). On Jesus and the glory of God, see esp. Carey C. Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology. Tradition and Rhetoric* (NovTSup 69; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

¹⁵ See my online review of Dunn's book: <https://larryhurtado.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/dunn-was-jesus-worshipped-review.pdf>.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Andrew Chester, "High Christology--Whence, When and Why?" *EC* 2 (2011): 22-50, who judged that, "The clear (though not unanimous) scholarly consensus is that, despite all the problems it creates for our understanding of early Christianity, a Christology that portrays Christ as divine emerges very early, in distinctively Jewish terminology and within a Jewish context" (38), and that "Hurtado makes a sustained, cumulative case for there being some kind of cult of Christ in Christian circles in Palestine as well as in the Pauline communities" (39).

¹⁷ Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998); *id.*, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus."

¹⁸ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), esp. 182-232.

generis.¹⁹ This ancient Jewish conviction, Bauckham contends, involved both a rhetoric in which *YHWH* was portrayed as unique, and also a corresponding cultic practice of exclusivity, restricting worship to *YHWH* and refusing cult to the many other deities of the ancient world.²⁰ That is, *YHWH* had a distinctive identity, not as one among a species/class of comparable beings but as distinct from all else. This included other heavenly/spirit/divine beings, not simply the deities of other nations. More specifically, Bauckham posits, the biblical God was distinguished and identified as having created everything else (including all other heavenly/spirit beings), and as the universal sovereign ruler.

Bauckham submits that, although it is not used in ancient sources, the expression “divine identity” more adequately captures the particular nature of ancient Jewish God-discourse than do terms such as divine “nature,” used later in Christian doctrinal controversies. That is, in ancient Jewish thought what distinguished *YHWH*, what *identified* *YHWH*, was not speculation about his “nature” (Greek: *physis*) but these key ascriptions of unique roles and status in relationship to all other things.

Bauckham further contends that already in earliest Christian texts Jesus was included within this “divine identity,” specifically by being uniquely involved in the crucial actions and attributes that comprise the notion of God’s “divine identity.”²¹ For example, already in Paul’s letters, Jesus is posited as having uniquely participated in the creation of all things, as the one “through whom all things” are (1 Cor 8:6). Also, various NT texts reflect the conviction that Jesus now shares in God’s rule over all things (as in 1 Corinthians 15:27; Philippians 2:9-11; and John 5:22-23). In particular, Jesus is portrayed as exalted above all other heavenly beings, whether hostile or friendly to God, all of them, including angels, now

¹⁹ In these paragraphs I draw particularly on Bauckham’s discussion in *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 182-84.

²⁰ On the rhetoric of ancient “monotheism,” see now Darina Staudt, *Der eine und einzige Gott: Monotheistische Formeln im Urchristentum und ihre Vorgeschichte bei Griechen und Juden* (NTOA 80; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

²¹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 184-85.

made subject to him (e.g., Heb 1:1-4). Moreover, of course, Jesus is posited in numerous NT texts as the unique eschatological redeemer who executes the divine purposes of salvation.

The first thing I want to say about Bauckham's proposal of "divine identity" is that I affirm it as helpful for capturing and characterizing key aspects of the ways that the biblical deity was distinguished and identified in ancient Jewish discourse. As a small initial quibble, in an essay that forms part of the *Jesus and the God of Israel* volume, Bauckham also refers to the biblical God as identifiable with reference to "his covenant relationship with Israel"; but then, curiously, in the ensuing discussion he does not seem to make much of this, focusing instead on the two other roles of universal creator and universal sovereign.²² But I should think that this emphasis on *YHWH* as the protector and redeemer (and judge!) of the people of Israel is sufficiently important in ancient Jewish God-discourse to include it as well.²³

Nevertheless, I do think that Bauckham's proposal that Jewish God-discourse affirmed a unique "identity" for *YHWH* is valid and helpful. It is a cogent attempt to capture the conceptual categories at work in ancient Jewish and earliest Christian texts, and avoid thereby the anachronism of reading these texts through the lens of later doctrinal developments. I think that he is correct that the way God was distinguished in ancient Jewish discourse was more to do with what we might term "functional" categories, God defined with reference to God's attributes, actions and purposes. But in what follows I want to offer three questions that are intended to engage Bauckham's proposals about "divine identity," with a view to promoting further constructive discussion. Then, I will offer a suggestion about possibly developing the discussion of "divine identity" further.

²² Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 183.

²³ I use the expressions "God-discourse" and "discourse" about God with no technical nuances such as invoked by some modern philosophers. I simply mean to designate the statements made about God in NT writings.

My first question is why Bauckham seems to regard his emphasis on “divine identity” as incompatible with the proposal that several scholars (including myself) have made that in second-temple Jewish tradition we have various expressions of what can be called a “chief-agent” idea, and that this may have provided earliest (Jewish) Christian circles with a basic and initial category by which to accommodate Jesus conceptually in a unique relationship with God and as superior to all other beings. Granted, Bauckham rejects this proposal because, he contends, this chief-agent category was not really as much a part of ancient Jewish tradition as its proponents (myself prominently) have claimed.²⁴ I do not have the time here to make the case, and I will simply point to the extended analysis of the evidence that I offered in my 1988 book, *One God, One Lord*. In spite of Bauckham’s contention otherwise, I remain persuaded that the varying figures in question and the varying roles that they play do cohere sufficiently to allow us to conclude that second-temple Jews did often think of God as having one or another particular figure distinguished from all the rest of the divine retinue and functioning as the unique agent of God’s purposes, a kind of *vizier* or field-marshal.

Bauckham grants something close to this with reference to the portrayal of Wisdom in Proverbs and Wisdom of Solomon, and with reference to Philo’s representation of the divine Logos, and in the references to figures in a few other Jewish texts.²⁵ But Bauckham insists (and on this matter, rightly as I see it) that in the portrayal of Wisdom as God’s chief agent is a literary personification of God’s own wisdom, not really a separate being. As for Philo’s Logos, this seems essentially to be Philo’s way of picturing how God can be both fully

²⁴ See, e.g., Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 221-32. More recently, note his comments in Richard Bauckham, “Devotion to Jesus Christ in Earliest Christianity: An Appraisal and Discussion of the Work of Larry Hurtado,” in *Mark, Manuscripts, and Monotheism: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado*, eds. Chris Keith and Dieter T. Roth (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 182-86 (176-200).

²⁵ E.g., he also finds “the idea of a single viceregent of God” in the archangel in *Joseph and Asenath* (14:8-9), the Spirit of truth/Prince of light/Michael in some Qumran texts (e.g., 1QS 3:15-4:1), Bauckham, “*Jesus and the God of Israel*,” 160.

transcendent and also really acting and revealed (in a measure) within creation and to human understanding. So for Philo the Logos also is not really a separate being.

But I think that Bauckham errs then in claiming that none of this is of any relevance as evidence for the chief-agent category. To put the matter briefly, it seems to me that these texts reflect and draw upon a notion that God has a chief agent, as a way of depicting figuratively (in these instances) the meaning or function of personified divine Wisdom and divine Logos in relation to God. That personified Wisdom and the Logos are literary and figurative entities does not invalidate the claim that the texts are evidence and expressions of an ancient Jewish chief-agent notion. Indeed, if anything, it seems to me the opposite is the case. As I see matters, the literary and conceptual personifications presuppose and reflect the basic idea in question.

Space does not permit us to consider other evidence, and my purpose here is not really to argue the matter at length. Instead, on the working premise that there was a chief-agent category in ancient Jewish tradition, I want to urge that this is fully compatible with Bauckham's emphasis on "divine identity." To be sure, in earliest Christian texts Jesus is uniquely associated with God in creation, sovereign rule, and redemption, and in this sense I agree that we can say that Jesus is included within "divine identity." But Jesus' particular role in this divine identity is not simply as God's general partner; instead, Jesus' status/role is always defined with reference to God, more specifically as the unique agent of God. So, for example, Jesus is the one *through whom* all things were made (by God), and the one *through whom* the world is redeemed (for God, e.g., 2 Cor 5:19; Rev 1:5-6). Jesus is the "Son of God," "the Image of God," "the Word of God," shares "the 'form' of God," and has been appointed ruler *on God's behalf* (e.g., 1 Cor 15:20-28). In short, it seems to me that Jesus is included within the "divine identity" specifically as God's unique chief-agent! So, I repeat,

why must we choose between “divine identity” and “chief-agent” categories, when they seem to me to complement each other, and they both seem to be reflected in the relevant texts?

Certainly, the depiction of Jesus in relation to God seems to exceed any prior example of “principal-agent” figures. For example, personified Wisdom cooperates in creation (e.g., Prov 8:22-31), but has no stated role in redemption. In a Qumran text (11QMelchizedek) the mysterious Melchizedek figure seems to be God’s field-marshal in the eschatological battle, but has no stated role in creation or general governance of the world. Similarly, the mysterious “Chosen One” of the Similitudes of *I Enoch*, though designated from the beginning of creation, functions solely as the eschatological agent of divine judgement and salvation (e.g., *I Enoch* 48:1-7). But NT texts posit Jesus as chief-agent in all of God’s major defining actions and purposes. We could say, thus, that in the NT Jesus is *the* chief-agent *par excellence*.

Moreover, and still more crucially, in distinction from all other examples of chief-agent figures, Jesus is accorded a programmatic place in earliest Christian devotional practice. So, as I have proposed a number of times, on the one hand, the Jewish chief-agent tradition provided earliest Jewish believers with a basic conceptual category in which to accommodate the exalted Jesus alongside God. On the other hand, the early Christian appropriation of the chief-agent notion also involved a distinctive and astonishing “mutation” in which Jesus is treated as rightful recipient of cultic devotion.

My second question (the answer to which is not dependent on the previous one) is whether Bauckham gives an adequate explanation for *how* and *why* Jesus was (in Bauckham’s terms) included within the “divine identity” so rapidly and so early in the “post-Easter” period. By all accounts, including Bauckham’s own, this was a remarkable and unparalleled development. Bauckham refers to the early and novel uses of certain biblical

texts, particularly Psalm 110, as being involved.²⁶ This is, of course, rather clear and is a point made by a number of other scholars as well.²⁷ Also, there are the fascinating instances where biblical texts that originally referred to *YHWH* were applied to Jesus (e.g., Rom 10:13), as analysed cogently by Capes.²⁸ But is it sufficient to point to the innovative uses of these biblical passages in earliest Christian circles; or is it not also necessary to ask what in turn prompted, drove and shaped this remarkably creative selection and interpretative activity? The very extent and nature of the exegetical novelty involved surely suggests something particular to these early Christian circles as the impetus.

To my mind, the most likely answer to why certain texts were so central and why they were so distinctively interpreted is that among these earliest believers there were powerful experiences of revelatory force that conveyed certain new convictions about Jesus' exalted status. On the basis of these convictions early (Jewish) believers then energetically searched their scriptures for further understanding.²⁹ I do not see, for example, any indication that the familiar exegetical processes operative in ancient Jewish tradition would ever have produced by themselves the notion that Psalm 110:1 depicted the heavenly exaltation of Jesus (or any other figure), or (still more so) that Isaiah 45:22-25 actually refers to two figures, and depicts the universal acclamation of Jesus as Lord "to the glory of God the Father."³⁰ Instead, I suggest that earliest believers came to these and other biblical texts on the basis of the astonishing conviction that God had exalted Jesus to heavenly glory and now demanded that

²⁶ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 173-76.

²⁷ E.g., David M. Hay, *Glory At the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973); William R. G. Loader, "Christ At the Right Hand--Ps. CX.1 in the New Testament," *NTS* 24 (1978): 199-217; Martin Hengel, "'Sit At My Right Hand!' The Enthronement of Christ at the Right Hand of God and Psalm 110:1," in *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 119-225.

²⁸ David B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology* (WUNT 2/47; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992).

²⁹ I develop this claim in Larry W. Hurtado, "Two Case Studies in Earliest Christological Readings of Biblical Texts," in *All That the Prophets Have Declared: The Appropriation of Scripture in the Emergence of Christianity*, ed. Matthew Malcolm (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2015), 3-23.

³⁰ Indeed, Psalm 110 is scarcely cited or alluded to in second-temple Jewish texts outside the NT, and the same goes for Isaiah 45:22-25.

he be revered, this conviction erupting from religious experiences that struck believers with revelatory effect.

From Bauckham's discussion, one could get an impression of a much more sober and perhaps even sedate exegetical activity.³¹ At least there is no indication of anything much different from other Jewish reading approaches of the time. Whereas, it seems to me that we must imagine what I have called a kind of "charismatic exegesis" (to borrow a term from David Aune), the biblical texts searched *on the basis of a guiding conviction that arose, not simply from the texts but from revelatory experiences*.³² To be sure, these revelatory experiences could well have included sudden new insights into biblical texts that presented themselves with the force of revelation. My point is that early believers did not likely derive their distinctive use of certain biblical texts simply by poring over them and applying scribal methods of exegesis of the time.³³ Perhaps the novel exegesis of biblical texts evident in Qumran writings, which likewise is widely thought to have been prompted and guided by revelatory (or "mystical") experiences (maybe including experiences of the Teacher of Righteousness) may give us something of a phenomenological analogy.³⁴

My final question is whether Bauckham is correct to contend (as he now seems to do) that the inclusion of Jesus as co-recipient (with God) of cultic worship is adequately understood historically as a "corollary" of Jesus' inclusion in the "divine identity."³⁵ Stated as such, the move to treat Jesus as worthy of cultic worship could be taken as essentially

³¹ See, e.g., Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 33-51.

³² David E. Aune, "Charismatic Exegesis in Early Judaism and Early Christianity," in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 126-50.

³³ James L. Kugel, "Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 121-41 (with bibliography).

³⁴ Note, e.g., the remarkable identification of a mysterious "Melchizedek" figure as the "Elohim" of Psalms 82:1 in the Qumran text *11QMelchizedek*. Jonathan G. Campbell, *The Exegetical Texts* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), gives an introduction to scriptural interpretation in the Qumran texts. On the religious ethos of the Qumran sectaries, see, e.g., James R. Davila, "Exploring the Mystical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 433-54.

³⁵ Cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 153-81.

developing via a theological inference. That is, if I understand Bauckham correctly, he seems to pose a kind of syllogistic logic operative in earliest Jewish circles of believers that may be summarized in the following propositions: (1) God is worshipped because God is the universal creator and sovereign, i.e., on account of God's "divine identity"; (2) Jesus is included in this "divine identity"; and so (3) Jesus can/should be worshipped too.

I have some serious hesitations about this proposal for several reasons. My first reason is that I really do not see clear NT evidence that the worship of Jesus emerged as a "corollary" of Jesus being included in the "divine identity." That is, I see no NT text indicating that the worship of Jesus emerged as a legitimate thing to do as the result of a process of formulating devotional implications of Jesus' exaltation. Instead, it seems to me that the closest that we get to an explanation or justification for worshipping Jesus is the claim that God has exalted him to share in divine glory and now *requires Jesus to be worshipped*. As I read Philippians 2:9-11, for example, God has highly exalted Jesus and has given him the superlative name, with the clear divine intention that Jesus should now be revered as "*Kyrios*," thereby glorifying God (as reflected in the $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ in v. 10). In Revelation 5:1-13, "the Lamb" is conferred with the sealed book by God, signalling divine approval, and the acclamation given to him by all the heavenly court is in gratitude for his sacrificial redemptive work (esp. vv. 9-10). In John 5:22-23, likewise, it is God ("the Father") who now requires that Jesus ("the Son") be given the same honor that is due to God.³⁶

Moreover, I cannot easily see that Jewish believers would have amended so readily and programmatically their devotional practice in the "dyadic" direction of including Jesus as a second, distinguishable recipient by some sort of theological inference or logic. To my

³⁶ I think it also relevant that Heb 1:6 portrays God as requiring the angelic host to worship "the firstborn."

mind, Jewish concerns to avoid compromising the uniqueness of the one God were simply too strong to make this credible.

I also do not see evidence in the ancient Jewish sources that there was the sort of logic that seems to be presumed in Bauckham's proposal. Bauckham has argued for an analogy that "proves the rule" in the references to the obeisance/reverence given to the "Chosen One" in the Similitudes of *1 Enoch* (esp. 48:5; 62:6, 9), but I do not find his reading of these texts persuasive.³⁷ In *1 Enoch* 62:6, 9, those reverencing the Chosen One are the "mighty kings" who are to be conquered, and so their action simply seems to me the obeisance typically offered by the vanquished to the victor. This is hardly a cultic setting or action, and hardly indicative of any real collective worship practices by the elect, whether in heaven or on earth. As for *1 Enoch* 48:5, I submit that the immediate context makes it clear that the worship there is actually focused on God, and the "Chosen One" functions simply the earthly figure before whom, and under whose auspices, worship is offered to God.

In sum, it seems to me that the inclusion of the risen/exalted Jesus in the devotional practice of early Jewish believers really was novel, and so I contend that it could have emerged in Jewish circles only on the strong and novel conviction that *God now required it*. I repeat that I cannot see that the inclusion of Jesus as co-recipient of their worship was a kind of liturgical experiment, or an innovation ventured on the basis of an established theological syllogism. I hope that I do not distort what Bauckham means, and I welcome his correction if I have. But it seems to me that his relegation of the worship of Jesus to the status of a "corollary" of his "divine identity" category involves radically under-estimating the strength of devout Jewish concerns about worship (an apparent shift from the emphasis in Bauckham's earlier works). I think that it also fails to do justice to the momentous

³⁷ Cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 169-72.

development represented by the eruption of the “dyadic” devotional pattern that so quickly characterized earliest Christian circles.

But, in addition to posing these questions about Bauckham’s treatment of Jesus being included in the “divine identity,” I also want to offer a suggestion. As I have proposed in an earlier publication, not only is Jesus’s significance typically defined in the NT with reference to God, God is also identified with reference to Jesus.³⁸ To cite here a few sentences from that earlier publication,

the glory of “God” and the triumph of “God’s” purposes are so closely linked [in the NT] with Jesus as to make Jesus essential to them. That is, arguably, “God” is thereby redefined in a significant degree with reference to Jesus.³⁹

Both in the way that God is referred to, and in the way that God is to be worshipped, the NT makes Jesus so central that we can say that God is “inseparably connected to Jesus, and theological reflection on ‘God’ must now reflect the prominence and eschatological centrality of Jesus.”⁴⁰ Illustrative of this, compare the references to “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (e.g., Exod 3:6, 15) and “the God of Israel” (Josh 24:2) with Paul’s references to “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (e.g., Rom 15:6).

So, in addition to saying (with Bauckham) that Jesus is included within the “divine identity,” we should perhaps also say that in the NT the “divine identity” is adjusted with reference to Jesus. Bauckham has himself made a somewhat similar point:

For the early Christians, the inclusion of the exalted Jesus in the divine identity meant that the Jesus who lived a truly and fully human life from conception to death, the man who suffered rejection and shameful death, also belonged to the unique divine identity. What did this say about the divine identity? The profoundest points of New Testament Christology occur when the inclusion of

³⁸ Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, esp. 65-71.

³⁹ Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, 69.

⁴⁰ Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, 71.

the exalted Christ in the divine identity entails the inclusion of the crucified Christ in the divine identity, and the christological pattern of humiliation and exaltation is recognized as revelatory of God, indeed as the definitive revelation of who God is.⁴¹

Bauckham's comments take us further in a more reflective theological direction than my own, perhaps more modest, point, which is simply that the NT references to God typically also refer to Jesus, and vice versa.⁴² I hasten to add that any NT redefining of God with reference to Jesus did not involve positing a deity different from the God of Israel and the OT. That would take us in the direction of Marcion.⁴³ Instead, the biblical deity, *YHWH*, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is also now known as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." But I think it is fair to say that the NT emphasis on Jesus' centrality comprises the view that any description of God apart from reference to Jesus is inadequate, and any worship of God that by-passes Jesus is also inadequate.

Conclusion

In concluding this brief (and so unavoidably somewhat cursory) engagement with a couple of Bauckham's contributions to the historical understanding of earliest christology, I want to underscore primarily their significance. It is only a minority of scholars whose work singles them out as prominently associated (and credited) with certain ideas and particular contributions to scholarly study, and Bauckham is certainly one of those. His insightful study of the worship of Jesus in Revelation has been confirmed by others, and has had continuing positive effects in the subsequent highlighting of the historical importance of the inclusion of Jesus along with God as co-recipient of worship. His subsequent emphasis on the inclusion

⁴¹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 33. I thank my PhD student, Joshua Coutts, for reminding me of this passage in Bauckham's book.

⁴² I sense also in Bauckham's comments his continuing resonance, and evident sympathy with, Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 1974).

⁴³ See now Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (WUNT, 250; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

of Jesus in the “divine identity” has likewise proven stimulating, and in my view can be a helpful way of capturing succinctly central features of early christological discourse. As will be clear in the preceding comments, I also think that there is room for further discussion and development in this proposal, and I look forward to Bauckham’s further participation in this intriguing matter.