

Many of these texts do not use the term 'messiah' as such. More often they seem to allude to other key passages in earlier prophecies within the broad stream of expectation of a new Davidic ruler (for example Isa. 11: 1-5). Nevertheless it is probably justified to speak of such expectations as 'messianic' insofar as they refer to a future eschatological royal figure, even if the term 'messiah' itself does not appear.⁴¹

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact of the very varied nature of Jewish eschatological expectations, and this variety also relates to so-called 'messianic' figures. We have already noted that anointed (that is 'messianic') figures include priests and prophets as well as kings; and it seems clear that in some strands of Judaism, the expected eschatological figure would be a priest rather than – or as well as – a king. Thus the *Testament of Levi* looks forward to the time when 'the Lord will raise up a new priest to whom all the words of the Lord will be revealed' (T. *Levi* 18: 1). Above all the Qumran scrolls have provided us with clear evidence of the expectation of a priestly Messiah by some Jews. Moreover, in a number of texts, there appears to be an expectation of *two* Messiah figures: a priestly Messiah and a royal Messiah. The classic example of this is the reference in the *Manual of Discipline* to 'the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel' (1QS 9: 11). Probably also related are the expressions 'the Messiah of Aaron and Israel' in the Damascus Document (CD 12: 23; 14: 19; 19: 10) and 'a Messiah from Aaron and Israel' (CD 20: 1). It is probable that these texts in CD also refer to two Messiahs.⁴² Further, in one of the appendices to the *Manual of Discipline*, the so-called 'Messianic Rule' (1QSa = 1Q28a), there is again reference to two Messiahs with the priestly Messiah evidently taking precedence over the royal Messiah. To add a yet further complication, the text in 1QS 9: 11 speaks of a 'prophet' coming before the two Messiahs themselves.

It is thus clear that expectations about a 'messianic' figure were very fluid at the time of the New Testament. It would probably be quite wrong to think of all Jews looking forward to the coming of 'the' Messiah as if there were a well-established fixed messianic idea. Indeed the term 'the Messiah' is not attested in any pre-Christian texts so far discovered: the term 'Messiah' is always qualified by some genitive (for example 'the Lord's Messiah', or 'the Messiah of Aaron/Israel'). Later, of course, Jewish expectation did solidify into a rather more monolithic form with the hope for a Davidic Messiah, but evidence for this is later than the time of the New Testament.

In fact, ideas of a 'priestly Messiah' are not really taken up in the New Testament at all. (In Hebrews, Jesus is seen as a priestly figure, but not clearly as 'messianic' in this respect.) Insofar as any messianic ideas are taken up and applied to Jesus they seem to be royal ideas. One of the great conundrums of the study of New Testament Christology is how and why this happened: for Jesus' whole life and work are not clearly related to ideas associated with a royal figure; and yet the term *christos*/Messiah is already attached to Jesus very firmly and very early so that it soon becomes just another proper name as in 'Jesus Christ' or 'Christ Jesus' or even 'Christ' (cf. 1 Cor. 15: 3).⁴³ Discussion of that must, however, await our analysis of the New Testament itself.

Lord

Of all the christological 'titles' used in the New Testament, the term 'Lord' (Greek *kyrios*) is one of the most common, especially in the Pauline letters. The term could, however, be used in different first-century contexts with a very wide range of meanings.

When used in the vocative to address someone ('O Lord!', Greek *kyrie*), the term need be little more than a polite form of address. It is thus similar to addressing someone in (perhaps now slightly old-fashioned) English as 'Sir!', or opening formal letters with the stereotyped 'Dear Sir', without ever suggesting or implying by the use of such an address that the person concerned has been knighted. It is thus customary in discussions of New Testament Christology to discount simple uses of the vocative *kyrie* alone as being probably irrelevant in terms of any christological significance.

The primary meaning of *kyrios* in a Greek-speaking context is that of 'master'. A 'lord' is the master of someone else, supremely a slave. To refer to someone as your *kyrios* thus implies that the person concerned is your master, your boss, one who has rights over you and to whom you owe obedience. It is thus primarily an existential term, expressing authority and subservience. To call Jesus 'Lord' therefore expresses the fact that he is primarily acknowledged as one to whom obedience is due as master.

In some contexts, further overtones of meaning may also be present. It is now widely accepted that, within the many cults which flourished in the Greco-Roman world of the first century, a number of the cult deities were called *kyrioi*, 'lords'. This usage is prominent in, for example,

the cults of Isis and Sarapis. So too a number of oriental kings were called lords. And in the developing emperor cult of the Roman Empire, which was starting in the middle of the first century and developed strongly towards the end of the century (for example under Domitian), the emperor was increasingly demanding recognition as 'Lord and God' (*dominus ac deus*).⁴⁴

It is likely that at least some Christian claims about Jesus as *kyrios* reflect this general background by claiming that, in contrast to other alleged *kyrioi*, Jesus is the one true *kyrios*. This is, for example, probably reflected in Paul's language in 1 Cor. 8: 5 where he concedes that 'there are many so-called gods and so-called lords' in the world, whilst then affirming that 'for us there is one God the Father . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 8: 6).

Some have in the past argued that it is this entirely non-Jewish Greek background which lies at the origin of claims that Jesus is *kyrios*.⁴⁵ At first sight, such a claim runs into some difficulties in seeking to explain the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 16: 22, where Paul, writing in Greek, uses an Aramaic phrase *Marranatha* (= O Lord, come!), thus suggesting that the reference to Jesus as Lord was at home in Aramaic-speaking Christianity as well as in Greek-speaking circles. Bousset and others tried to get round this by distinguishing between 'invocation' and 'acclamation': Jesus was invoked as the (coming) Lord by the very earliest communities, but it was only in the context of the pagan cults that Jesus was actually acclaimed as Lord. However, it is dubious whether such a distinction can be maintained. The fact that Jesus is invoked as (coming) Lord suggests that in some sense he is already the Lord and can be acclaimed as such.⁴⁶ Thus the text in 1 Corinthians 16: 22 must cast real doubts on the claim that the non-Jewish Hellenistic world provides the primary background for determining the meaning of Jesus' 'lordship' for Christians.

One other possibly important factor should also be mentioned here as possibly relevant in discussions of the christological significance of the term *kyrios* when applied to Jesus. It is now regarded as fairly certain that Greek-speaking Jews used the term *kyrios* as their substitute to avoid uttering the divine name Yahweh in referring to God. (Jews had for a long time taken the implications of the second command of the Decalogue not to take God's name in vain as implying that the name should never be uttered: hence they adopted a variety of strategies for avoiding mentioning the name, for example when reading the Bible aloud.)

For some time such claims were heavily disputed. It was pointed out that use of *kyrios* for the divine name was primarily witnessed in copies of the LXX, the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, which had been written by Christian scribes. Such evidence as we had from elsewhere of the work of non-Christian scribes suggests that a variety of different devices was employed, for example, the use of the Greek characters ΚΥΡΙΩΣ which is a rough visual equivalent of the divine name in Hebrew letters יהוה (YHWH), or the use of the tetragrammaton itself. Further, the use of 'the Lord' absolutely to refer to God was thought not to occur in non-Christian Jewish texts.

Much of this has been called into question in an important article of J. A. Fitzmyer.⁴⁷ Fitzmyer argues strongly that, although the extent of the data is small, there is enough evidence to suggest that non-Christian Greek-speaking Jews did use *kyrios* to refer to Yahweh, for example when reading the Bible aloud and being concerned to avoid uttering the divine name. Thus there is a small amount of evidence from Josephus (*Ant.* 13.68; 20.90) and the *Letter of Aristas* (155) of the use of *kyrios* for God in reference to the Old Testament; so too one extant fragment of Aquila's translation of the Old Testament uses an abbreviation of the genitive *kyriou* for the Hebrew tetragrammaton (at 2 Ki. 23: 24).⁴⁸ In any case it seems highly unlikely in general terms that the use of *kyrios* for Yahweh would be a wholly Christian invention.

Fitzmyer has also shown that the absolute use of the Aramaic word *Mar* to refer to God is now attested in the Qumran scrolls. Thus the Targum on Job from cave 11 at Qumran uses 'the Lord' absolutely to refer to God (24: 7 paraphrasing Job 34: 12). So too the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen) at one point refers to God as 'the Lord' (20: 12-13: 'Blessed are you, O God most High, my Lord, for all ages. For you are Lord and Master over all'.)

There is therefore probably sufficient evidence to suggest that the term Lord was used by Greek-speaking Jews to refer to Yahweh, and that the usage can be traced back to Aramaic-speaking Jews as well. In talking of Jesus as *kyrios*, Christians would have been using the same word that many Jews used to refer to God Himself.

How much can be deduced from this is, however, not at all certain. As we have seen, *kyrios* was a word with a very wide range of possible meanings and we cannot necessarily simply fasten on one possibility to determine what Christians meant in describing Jesus in this way. In the LXX, references to a human being as a *kyrios* can sometimes lie side

by side with a reference to Yahweh as *kyrios*: for example, in Genesis 18: 12, Abraham is referred to by Sarah as her *kyrios*, and in the very next verse there is a reference to Yahweh as the *kyrios*. But this does not mean anyone thought Abraham was being equated with Yahweh himself. So then the fact that Jesus was spoken of as a *kyrios* figure should not necessarily be taken as implying that Jesus was thought of necessarily as a divine figure, on a par with Yahweh. The precise nuances that New Testament writers gave to the term *kyrios* when used christologically will have to wait our discussion of the New Testament texts themselves.

Son of God

Of all the christological 'titles' used in the New Testament of Jesus, 'Son of God' has probably had the most lasting influence in Christian history in that it is this phrase which Christians have believed encapsulates the most accurate and profound truth about the identity of the person of Jesus. In this context, the phrase is usually assumed to imply Jesus' full divinity: as 'Son of God' he is one with God the Father, 'true God from true God', and the second person of a fully divine Trinity.

Yet it would probably be extremely dangerous to transfer such a meaning lock, stock and barrel into New Testament uses of the phrase. For it is arguable that the use of the term 'son of God' in the New Testament has a meaning that in no way approaches its meaning in subsequent Christian language.

The idea of divine sonship was widespread in the ancient world in non-Jewish contexts.⁴⁹ Thus Homer and Hesiod portray the Olympian gods as a family dynasty, with Zeus the son of Kronos and Rhea and himself the 'father of men and gods' (*Il.* 1.544). The heroes of Greek mythology, for example Dionysus and Heracles, were also thought of as sons of Zeus (by mortal mothers). Egyptian rulers were termed 'son of God', 'son of Helios', or 'son of Zeus', from the time of the Ptolemies onwards. Within Stoicism, all men were thought of as children of Zeus by nature, sharing the divine seed by virtue of their reason (cf. Epictetus *Diss.* 1.3.2; 13.3; 3.22.81). In other strands of thought, famous philosophers such as Plato or Pythagoras were thought of as born of a god (Apollo). But whether such ideas have relevance in Christianity's talk of Jesus as Son of God is more doubtful. Most of such talk is far more at home in a polytheistic environment, and, as we have seen,

Christianity firmly adhered to a Jewish monotheistic 'theo'-logy.⁵⁰

Yet, within Judaism too, talk of other beings as sons of God was quite frequent. However, in no case is it implied that the person referred to by such language is in any sense divine. The term is used in the Old Testament to refer at times to angelic or heavenly beings (Gen. 6: 2; Deut. 32: 8; Ps. 24: 1; 89: 7; Dan. 3: 25). It is, however, uncertain if this terminology has any relevance in New Testament Christology. The idea of Jesus as an angelic being, or at least displaying angelic-type features, may characterise some strands of New Testament Christology,⁵¹ but it is not clearly related to language of Jesus' divine sonship.

The term is also used to refer to the nation Israel itself. Thus in Exodus 4: 22, God says 'Israel is my first-born son', and Hosea has God look back to the Exodus and claim 'Out of Egypt have I called my son' (Hos. 11: 1; cf. too Deut. 32: 5-6; Jer. 31: 9, 20). So, too, the righteous Israelite can be called a 'son of God'. This comes out in a number of passages in the so-called intertestamental literature. Thus Ben Sira exhorts his readers to care for those in need by saying: 'Be like a father to orphans, and instead of a husband to their mother, and you will then be like a son of the Most High' (Sir. 4: 10 LXX; Hebrew has 'God will call you his son'). So too the individual righteous sufferer described in Wisdom 2-5 is mocked by his persecutors on the assumption that he is, or has claimed to be, God's son: 'Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life, for if the *righteous man* is God's son, he will help him ...' (Wisd. 2: 17-18, cf. too 2: 13; 5: 5; also *Jub.* 1: 24-5). Thus Judaism clearly knows of a 'son of God' who is a loyal, perhaps persecuted, member of the true people of God. The possible relevance of this to New Testament talk about Jesus as a 'son of God' should be obvious.

It is also the case that divine sonship was predicated of the Israelite king. The *locus classicus* is the promise made through Nathan to David about David's successor(s): 'I shall be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son' (2 Sam. 7: 14). So too some of the 'royal' psalms, that is psalms thought to have been originally addressed to the king, echo the same language, for example Psalm 2: 7 'You are my son, today I have begotten you' (cf. too Ps. 89: 26-7).

Further, insofar as Jewish eschatological expectations involved the coming of a future royal figure, a (Davidic) Messiah (cf. above), 'son of God' may have been a *messianic* term as well. This has, however, been disputed, with some denying that son of God was ever used as a

messianic title. Much, though, may depend on what one means by the word 'title' in this context. Certainly it is true that the phrase 'son of God' has not been found in a context where it refers clearly and unambiguously on its own to a messianic figure. Alternatively, some of the Qumran scrolls do seem to indicate a belief that divine sonship, being a 'son of God', was something that could be said of a (Davidic) messianic figure. Thus 4QFlor (= 4Q174) 1:10–11 explicitly quotes 2 Samuel 7:14, including the promise of God to be the Father of the coming figure as son, and then says 'This (refers to the) "branch of David" who will arise with the Interpreter of the law', a fairly clear reference to the Davidic Messiah. (The end of the column also appears to develop an interpretation of Psalm 2, though sadly the manuscript is mutilated and we cannot be certain if there was then a further interpretation of Psalm 2:7 in messianic terms.)⁵²

Other references are a little less clear. Thus an (unfortunately slightly uncertain) passage in the 'Rule of the Congregation' (the appendix to the *Manual of Discipline*) 1QSa (= 1Q28a) 2:11–12 may read 'when God begets the Messiah'.⁵³ So too there is another text recently published (4Q246) which starts 'He will be called son of God and they will call him Son of the Most High'. Unfortunately the text is fragmentary and so we do not have the context which would clarify the exact identity of the person being described here. The subsequent part of the text seems to refer to a messianic figure and hence a messianic interpretation is certainly possible.⁵⁴ To the data from Qumran we can also add evidence from 4 *Ezra* (admittedly slightly later than the New Testament, but presumably reflecting ideas of the time which did not necessarily suddenly sprout from nowhere after 70 CE). Here a messianic figure is referred to as 'my [= God's] son' in a number of passages (4 *Ezra* 7:28; 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9).⁵⁵

The phrase 'son of God' may not have been a fixed messianic 'title' in the sense that its usage alone would point any hearer or reader unambiguously to the idea of a messianic figure. Nevertheless, insofar as one is within a context of messianic expectations, this evidence does suggest that in some circles a messianic figure was thought of as a 'son of God'.

The term 'son of God' was thus a very wide-ranging one at the time of the New Testament. But if one thing is clear, it is that, at least within a Jewish context, the term was used not infrequently and with no overtones of divinity being ascribed to the person referred to in this way.

Son of Man

The phrase 'son of man' is one of the most widely used christological 'titles' in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels. Yet its meaning is one of the most controversial in New Testament studies today. At this point we shall consider briefly the possible background of the phrase.

The Greek phrase 'son of man' (Greek *ho huōis tou anthrōpou*) is very strange in Greek and everyone recognises that behind it must lie the Aramaic phrase *bar nash* or *bar nashā*.⁵⁶ In Aramaic the phrase usually means 'man' in the generic sense of human beings in general, or in an indefinite sense of a man, 'someone'. Sometimes it appears to have been used as the substitute for the first person singular 'I', though most are now agreed that the phrase cannot really mean 'I' on its own: the usage may simply occur in contexts where a periphrasis for 'I' was felt appropriate, perhaps by making a general statement about human beings, or about a group of human beings which included the speaker.⁵⁷

The phrase is used in this way in the Old Testament. Thus Psalm 8:4 says 'what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him'. 'Man' and 'son of man' are in parallel and clearly mean the same: 'son of man' thus means 'man in general'. Similarly when the prophet Ezekiel is addressed by God as 'son of man',⁵⁸ this means simply 'you who are a man' (in contrast to God). So too in the famous vision of Daniel 7:13, where Daniel sees a figure which he describes as 'one like a son of man', he clearly means simply that this figure looks like a human being, in contrast to the other figures he has just seen which look like various kinds of beasts (a lion, a bear, a leopard).

Nevertheless, this passage in Daniel 7, and this verse in particular, evidently caught the imagination of a number of people subsequently, both Jewish and Christian, and the figure of 'one like a son of man' seems to have taken on a life of its own, so to speak. Thus, for example, in 1 *Enoch* 46, Enoch sees a figure who is clearly described in terms of the description of the Ancient of Days of Daniel 7 and also another figure 'whose face was like that of a human being', a clear allusion to the figure of Daniel 7; and thereafter Enoch refers to this figure as 'the/that' 'son of man'. The figure clearly has a role to play in the final judgement and, in an extraordinary development at the end of this section of 1 *Enoch*, Enoch is himself apparently identified with this figure (1 *En.* 71:14). A similar development occurs in 4 *Ezra*, especially chapter 13,

where a man appears from the sea, playing an important role in the scenes of judgement described. The description of the figure is clearly heavily influenced by the description of the human figure in Daniel 7 (cf. the note that the man 'flew with the clouds of heaven' in v. 3). The man here is referred to as God's 'Son' (13: 32, 52) who is elsewhere identified as the Messiah (7: 28).

1 *Enoch* and 4 *Ezra* are both probably to be dated after the time of the New Testament.⁵⁹ How much of this development lies behind the New Testament uses of the phrase is not clear. But even if the two books in question are to be dated later rather than earlier, they may still preserve earlier traditions. This evidence may then show the existence of a developing exegetical tradition whereby the figure of the vision of Daniel 7 was interpreted in individualistic terms as a figure who would play an active role in the final judgement.⁶⁰ Clearly such a background may well be important in interpreting a significant number of the Son of Man sayings in the Gospels, where the Son of Man figure has a similar role. However, these will be discussed when we consider the evidence of the Gospels themselves.

The idea of messiahship in Judaism should probably be seen as part of a more wide-ranging set of ideas. We have already seen that ideas of a Messiah figure are integrally related to Jewish eschatological beliefs. But such ideas are also part of a broader spectrum of beliefs concerning what may be termed ideas of 'divine agency'.⁶¹ It was not only in relation to eschatological activity that Jews could conceive of an idea of God having some kind of agent alongside him to assist him in various aspects of his activity. Thus some Jews evidently conceived of a variety of figures as perhaps alongside God to assist him in various capacities. Not all these are necessarily relevant to the subject of New Testament Christology (though a number have significance in relation to other aspects of New Testament texts). However some of the language related to such ideas was taken up and applied to Jesus by early Christians. The 'figures' associated with ideas of divine agency can be divided into three groups: angels, exalted patriarchs, and attributes of God.

Angels

Language about angels (messengers) of God can be found in many of the writings of the Old Testament. Thus the narratives of the

Pentateuch frequently refer to angels as beings who act as mouthpieces for God (though it is often unclear how far the narrator really distinguished between God and the angel, since very often the one seems to slide into the other).⁶² So too the text in Exodus 23: 20-1 ('I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him') became very influential in later speculations about angels (cf. for example *Apoc. Abr.* 10: 9).

It is clear that Judaism at the time of the New Testament was developing further a rich set of ideas about the existence of angelic, heavenly beings alongside God. For example, in the book of Daniel, probably the latest of the books of the Old Testament, named angels are mentioned (for example Michael and Gabriel: cf. Dan. 8: 16; 10: 13; 12: 1); in the book of Tobit (in the so-called Apocrypha) the angel Raphael has a leading role. And the intercessory role of angels, mediating prayers of beings to God, is found not infrequently (Tob. 12: 12; *Jub.* 30: 20; *T. Dan.* 6: 2; *T. Levi* 5: 6).

The reason for such a growth in speculation and talk about angels has been much debated. In the past it has sometimes been assumed that such speculation flowered at a time when God himself was thought to be ever more transcendent and remote from the affairs of the world and of human beings. This is, however, uncertain. Hurtado has shown that such an idea is hard, if not impossible, to document. For example, he cites 2 *Bar.* 48: 1-24 as a case of a writer clearly believing in a huge retinue of angelic beings alongside God; yet God can still be addressed directly. So too in the book of Tobit, Raphael and other angels play key roles, and yet human beings can still address God directly, apparently without difficulty or embarrassment. Thus Hurtado suggests that growth in angelology may be rather to do with an attempt to show how great and powerful the God of Israel was: just as other gods were portrayed as reigning over a court, so too Israel's God could be seen in the same terms.⁶³ But in no sense was this thought of as reflecting God's alienation or remoteness from the world.

How far such ideas affected early Christians is a matter of considerable debate in contemporary study. The idea that Jesus was regarded as an angel has often been dismissed in the past very quickly, often with reference to passages such as Hebrews 1-2, where Jesus is clearly and explicitly distinguished from angels.

It is, however, now becoming clearer that the question may not be being posed in the most appropriate way if one simply asked whether Jesus was regarded as an angel.⁶⁴ Nevertheless there may well be features which are ascribed to Jesus which could be seen as characteristic of angels, even if Jesus himself is clearly distinguished from the angels. Thus aspects of Jesus could be seen as 'angelomorphic'. Above all, such features have been seen by many to be very prominent in the book of Revelation, as we shall see. Thus an 'angelomorphic' (as opposed to 'angelic') Christology may be an important, although often largely neglected, aspect of New Testament Christology.

Exalted patriarchs

The case of exalted patriarchs will not be discussed here in much detail. Several Jews evidently developed ideas about key figures of their sacred history so that such figures were thought of as present and at times active in heaven alongside God. At times the more obscure the figure concerned, the greater the scope for speculation. Thus the mysterious figure of Enoch gave rise to a vast amount of speculation. In the Old Testament, Enoch is of course famous as one of the very few figures who did not die. All we have is the cryptic note that 'Enoch walked with God, then he was no more, because God took him' (Gen. 5: 24 NRSV). However, this led to a huge flowering of Enoch literature where Enoch passes through the heavens and is shown many of the secrets of the heavens. Potentially important for New Testament Christology in particular is the way in which, in one section of *1 Enoch*, Enoch is shown the 'son of man' figure, a feature we have already touched on in considering the use of the term 'son of man'. In the much later text known as *3 Enoch*, speculation develops even further and Enoch is identified as 'Metatron', a powerful heavenly being with his own throne, and is now called 'the lesser YHWH' (3 En. 12).

Other figures given exalted roles include Abel who at one point is given the task of executing judgement (*Test. Abr.* 13). Speculation also surrounded the figure of Melchizedek, the mysterious king who appears from nowhere to meet Abraham in Genesis 14. However, in one of the Qumran scrolls (11QMelch) the figure of Melchizedek appears to have the role of administering divine judgement and is even called 'Elohim', God (11QMelch 2: 9-11 citing Ps. 82: 1-2). If the figure concerned is the same as the obscure figure mentioned in Genesis 14,

then we have another case of a revered (human) figure of the past raised to heaven and given a key role alongside God.

So too the figures of Moses and Adam gave rise to speculation in Judaism. Certainly, as we shall see, the ideas associated with a figure like Moses or Adam became important for early Christians in their talk about Jesus, though usually such ideas served as the basis for comparisons (positive or negative) rather than any strict identity: Jesus was *like* (or unlike) Moses or Adam – he was not necessarily to be equated with either figure.

In general, the fact that such speculations concerned specific individuals meant that such ideas were unlikely to influence New Testament Christology directly: without a belief in some kind of reincarnation, one could scarcely *identify* Jesus with one of the figures of the past.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the existence of the speculation is good testimony to the different 'agents' which Jews could conceive of as assisting God in a variety of ways and it helps to fill in some of the background whereby Christians could claim that Jesus too could be seen in some respects as filling the same role of a divine agent.⁶⁶

Divine attributes

The precise interpretation of divine attributes as 'beings' alongside God is rather harder to assess in Jewish thinking. What is clear is that such language was used in ways that left open the possibility that a separate being was being thought as existing alongside God. Certainly too later Christians enthusiastically appropriated some of this language and these ideas and applied them to Jesus. This was the case in particular in relation to two such 'figures': the Wisdom and the Word of God.

Wisdom

It is clear that language about God's Wisdom developed significantly towards the end of the Old Testament period and in the intertestamental period, and in this development, 'Wisdom' is sometimes talked of as if she were a person in her own right. One can see the start of such a process in a text like Job 28 but the earliest clear example is probably in Proverbs 1 and Proverbs 8. Thus in Proverbs 8: 22-31, Wisdom appears as God's companion alongside him at the creation of the world.⁶⁶ This is developed further in the Wisdom of Solomon where Wisdom is spoken of as 'the fashioner of all things' (7: 22), 'an

initiate in the knowledge of God, and an associate in his works' (8:4), one 'who sits by (God's) throne' (9:4) and who has been active in the great events of Israel's sacred history (10:1-12:27). In further developments, Wisdom is identified with the Law. Already in Proverbs 1, Wisdom's call is linked to the Law of God and appeals to the commandments (Prov 1:7, 29); and in Sirach 24, the equation between Wisdom and the Law is made explicit: 'all this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the Law which Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob' (Sir 24:23).

That such language, implying some kind of idea of Wisdom as a separate being alongside God, was to hand in Judaism is undeniable. What it was actually taken as meaning is another matter. Dunn and Hurtado have both pointed out that, however similar the language is to that used in other religious traditions, there is no evidence of Wisdom ever being associated with cultic activity. Nor was such language ever felt to compromise or threaten Jewish monotheistic belief.⁶⁷ Thus it may well be that the language was never felt to be anything other than a vivid expression of God's own wise action and ordering of the creation. The psalmist could quite happily pray to God 'send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling' (Ps. 43:3) without ever thinking of God's 'light' or 'truth' as personal agents sent from God capable of independent existence and undertaking a role of guiding human beings to a specific place where God was supposed to dwell. So too then perhaps with Wisdom: language about Wisdom in Judaism may have been no more than an attempt to express vividly God's own activity, based on his 'wisdom' in creating and caring for the universe. Nevertheless, it seems clear that such language was open to an interpretation that what was said was being predicated of a person other than God, and certainly early Christians exploited some of this at times when talking about Jesus.

Word

Much the same is probably also the case in relation to language about the Word (Greek *logos*) of God. In the older biblical tradition there are passages where God's 'word' could be read as having some kind of independent existence, for example Ps. 33:6: 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made' (although this could simply be another way of saying 'God spoke and it was done'), or Isaiah 55:11: 'So shall my word

be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and succeed in the thing for which I sent it'. (But again this is probably vivid pictorial language for God speaking, and speaking powerfully and authoritatively).

Talk about God's Word is developed significantly by Philo who uses this language in what is at times a bewildering variety of ways. And some of Philo's language is at times open to being interpreted in ways that suggest he thought of the Word as a separate being. He calls the Logos the 'first born', 'who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were' (*Conf.* 146), 'the interpreter and prophet of God' (*Immut.* 138). The 'God' in whose image Adam was made according to Genesis 1:27 was the Logos, who is even called a 'second God' (*Quaest. Gen.* 2.62).

How far Philo's language, let alone his ideas, were shared by others is not certain. Yet even here it is unlikely that the language was ever used within Judaism as implying anything more than a vivid metaphor. As with Wisdom, there is no hint of any cultic activity associated with the Word.⁶⁸ Yet as with Wisdom, Jewish language about the Word did give the opening to Christians at times to exploit the language used when applied to Jesus.

We have surveyed a wide range of different terminology and ideas which were evidently current at the time of the start of the new Christian movement, and which early Christians at times took up and used to express their convictions about the person of Jesus. It is though perhaps worth reiterating what was said earlier about the differences in meaning which the same terminology can have when used in different contexts. We noted earlier the dangers of anachronism, of reading back meanings which terms acquired later in Christian history into an earlier period. But we noted also the opposite danger of assuming too much continuity with the past. Just as there is a danger of assuming too much continuity (or identity) between the New Testament and what came after, there is an equal danger of assuming too much continuity (or identity) between the New Testament and what came before. Having discovered something of the meanings of key words or phrases in 'the background' for early Christianity, we should not assume that these meanings were taken as read and simply transferred to Jesus (as opposed to someone else). We have already seen something of the fluidity inherent in some of these terms anyway. But there is a real

sense in which, to a certain extent, the meaning of some of the terms when applied by Christians to Jesus is determined by *Jesus* quite as much as by the term itself. A claim that 'Jesus is the Messiah' may say something about what it means to be a 'Messiah' figure (as defined now by the Jesus event) as it does about Jesus (as if messiahship were well defined and the question is simply whether Jesus 'fits' a predetermined and well-defined 'bill'). In considering the use of christological terms by Christians, we must thus be alive not only to the meaning such terms may have had in the first century outside a Christian context, but also to the changes and adaptations which Christians made when applying them to Jesus. Historical study must acknowledge elements of both continuity and innovation and we must be sensitive to both. With this in mind, we now turn to the Christian texts themselves to see how some of this language was used, as well as changed and adapted, as Christians applied it to Jesus.

NOTES

1. I shall be considering most of the New Testament writers individually. Space precludes a fully comprehensive coverage and hence I omit here discussion of 1-2 Peter, James and Jude.
2. One of the standard works on the history of the development of the New Testament canon remains H. von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (London: A. & C. Black, 1972). The main outline of the present New Testament canon was agreed by the fourth century, though there were still debates about some details (for example the status of Revelation) in some churches much later than this.
3. Cf. D. H. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1975).
4. See Robert Morgan, 'Expansion and criticism in Christian theology', in M. Pye and Robert Morgan (eds), *The Cardinal Meaning* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), pp. 59-101.
5. Cf. J. Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 117.
6. Information about the possible dating of New Testament documents can be found in most *Introductions* to the New Testament. A standard work remains that of W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. edn, London: SCM Press, 1975).
7. Cf. above all the work of the Jesus Seminar in America. The results of much of their work is summed up in R. W. Funk and R. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York, 1993).

analysing and attempting to assess the authenticity of many Jesus traditions. The 'five' gospels are the four canonical ones together with the *Gospel of Thomas* which is often regarded as preserving authentic Jesus materials. For a high evaluation of the *Gospel of Peter* (or at least of traditions preserved in the *Gospel of Peter*) in this respect, see J. D. Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988).

8. In relation to the *Gospel of Thomas*, see my 'Thomas and the synoptics', *NovT*, 30 (1988), pp. 132-57; also my 'The Gospel of Thomas: Evidence for Jesus?', *NTT* 52 (1998), pp. 17-32. There is an excellent survey of the issues in J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), pp. 112-66.
9. For a more general discussion of these and related issues, see Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989).
10. Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1977).
11. At least this was the view of Christians: whether others agreed is another matter!
12. It is in fact at one level quite surprising how uncontroversial explicitly christological questions seem to be in the debates reflected in the New Testament: the question of the level of Torah observance required by Christians, or the relation between Christian commitment and membership of the Jewish community is often quite prominent; but the explicit question of the nature of Jesus' identity does not appear to surface quite so frequently as one might expect.
13. A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (London: Mowbrays, 1975) is one of the standard works. See too J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A. & C. Black, 1960), for a shorter survey of the historical developments.
14. Text from J. Stevenson (ed.), *Creeeds, Councils and Controversies* (London: SPCK, 1972), p. 337.
15. Falling into this category might be James, perhaps Ephesians (assuming [as most do] that this 'letter' is not by Paul himself but written in his name by a later admirer) and some of the other so-called 'Catholic' epistles.
16. Cf. the work of so-called 'form criticism'. On this, cf. E. V. McKnight, *What Is Form Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969); also my *Reading the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1987), ch. 7.
17. See below, ch. 12.
18. The work of so-called 'redaction criticism'. Cf. N. Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (London: SPCK, 1970); also my *Reading*, ch. 8.
19. See further ch. 9 below.

20. Cf., for example, the so-called 'formula quotations' in Matthew, where the narrator provides a comment to the effect that a particular event in the story 'fulfils' very precisely a text from Jewish scripture (for example the virgin birth fulfils 'the prophecy' of Isa. 7: 14 according to Matt. 1: 23). In John 2: 21, the narrator explains that Jesus' prediction about 'raising up' a 'temple' (v. 19) should be interpreted in relation to 'the temple of his body'.
21. On these issues, see my *Luke* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), and see ch. 8 below.
22. See, for example, the treatments of O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1959); F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1969).
23. See especially L. E. Keck, 'Toward the Renewal of New Testament Christology', *NTS*, 32 (1986), pp. 362–77, repr. in M. C. de Boer (ed.), *From Jesus to John* (FS M. de Jonge, JSNTSup 84, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 321–40.
24. Cf. H. D. Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology* (SNTSMS 89, Cambridge: CUP, 1996), pp. 201–4 and others cited there.
25. For all these facets of Paul's Christology, see ch. 2 below.
26. See especially L. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).
27. The process was long and complicated, with not all sides necessarily agreeing about the appropriateness of the split. Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991).
28. The only Christian to try to do so was Marcion in the second century, and he was judged to be heretical.
29. Cf. W. Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).
30. Cf. M. de Jonge, 'Monotheism and Christology', in John Barclay and John Sweet (eds), *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (FS M. D. Hooker, Cambridge: CUP, 1996), pp. 225–37.
31. Cf. above on 1 Cor. 10: 1. The same idea is reflected in much of Paul's writings (cf., especially Rom. 11), as well as the ubiquitous claim in the New Testament that Jewish scriptures point forward to, and are 'fulfilled' by, the events surrounding the new Christian movement.
32. The latter is sometimes described as a more 'apocalyptic' viewpoint, though any distinction between the two types of vision or hope for the future is probably a little artificial.
33. Given the nature of Jewish belief in the uniqueness and power of God, such a view is so obvious that it is perhaps surprising that there was ever any alternative envisaged!

34. See the short survey in N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 164–7. A full survey of expectations concerning eschatological figures is provided by J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); also J. Neusner, W. S. Green and E. Reischs (eds), *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987).
35. So G. Verneis, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973), pp. 130–40; C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1977), p. 32.
36. This is the reading of all the MSS, though some suggest that the text should be amended to read 'the Lord's Messiah'.
37. Cf. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Black, 3 vols; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–87), vol. 2, pp. 488–544; G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (2 vols; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971, original 1927).
38. Hence the trend by some even to talk about 'Judaisms' (plural) rather than 'Judaism' (singular): cf. the title of the book edited by Neusner et al., cited in n. 34 above.
39. Cf. J. H. Charlesworth, 'From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects', in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 3–35; G. S. Oegema, *The Anointed and his People: Messianic Expectations from the Maccabees to Bar Cochba* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).
40. See Collins, *Scepter*, esp. chs 2, 3.
41. So Collins who has made probably the strongest and best argued case for such a view.
42. If two figures are not meant, it is hard to see why mention is made of both 'Aaron' and 'Israel'. See Collins, *Scepter*, pp. 74–7.
43. 1 Cor. 15: 3 is almost certainly a pre-Pauline formula quoted by Paul: hence the development, whereby the name 'Christ' had become so firmly attached to Jesus that it had displaced the name Jesus itself, had evidently already happened by the time of this pre-Pauline formula.
44. For such 'background' usages, see W. Foerster, *Kyrios, TDNT*, 3, 1050–8.
45. Above all this was the theory of W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginning of Christianity to Irenaeus* (ET New York: Abingdon Press, 1970; German original 1913).
46. See J. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: OUP 2nd edn, 1990), pp. 37–8.
47. J. A. Fitzmyer, 'The semitic background of the New Testament *Kyrios*-title', in Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 115–42 (originally published in German in the *Festschrift* for H. Conzelmann).

48. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
49. See the material in P. Wülfing von Martitz, *huios*, *TDNT*, 8, 335–40.
50. Cf. M. Hengel, *The Son of God* (London: SCM Press, 1976), pp. 23–41.
51. See ch. 11 below on Revelation; perhaps too the Christology of the Fourth Gospel may be influenced by such ideas (ch. 9 below).
52. See in general Collins, *Scepter*, ch. 7.
53. Though the reading 'brings' has also been proposed: see the discussion in Collins, *Scepter*, pp. 164–5.
54. So Collins, *Scepter*, pp. 154–64. However, there is a gap in the manuscript between the initial description and the subsequent continuation and so it is not clear if the later part of the fragment refers to the same person as the one referred to at the start.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 165, for problems of interpretation and whether the Latin/Syriac references to son 'here might reflect a Greek *pais*, meaning 'servant'.
56. The extra *a* at the end is the definite article in Aramaic.
57. The strongest advocate of the view that son of man means 'I' is G. Vermes who has argued the case strongly over many years (cf. for example his *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 160–91). However, there has been fierce debate about his claim in this respect and many have argued that the Aramaic phrase cannot be forced away from some kind of a generic usage: see for example P. Maurice Casey, *Son of Man* (London: SPCK, 1979); B. Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1983).
58. E.g. Ezek. 2:1 and several other instances.
59. 4 *Ezra* is certainly to be dated after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. 1 *Enoch* is much harder to date, and the final version of the book may well be relatively late. At the same time, it may well preserve earlier traditions.
60. See Collins, *Scepter*, ch. 8, a reworking of his earlier 'The Son of Man in First Century Judaism', *NTS* 38 (1992), pp. 448–62.
61. On this, see especially Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, ch. 1.
62. Cf. Gen. 16, where Hagar encounters an 'angel of the Lord' (v. 7) who speaks to her; and yet by v. 13 it is assumed that it is God himself who has been speaking all the time.
63. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, pp. 26–7.
64. In any case it is clear that Jesus was regarded in this way by a number of Christians in the period after the New Testament. See Justin, *1 Apol.* 63; Origen, *Comm. Joh.* 1.217–19, 277; the Ebionites according to Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.16.3–4; *Ep. Apost.* 14, and the discussion in P. R. Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (SNTSMS 95; Cambridge: CUP, 1997), ch. 5; also C. A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), chs 7–10.

65. Although, as we have already noted earlier, some Jews apparently expected the return of a past figure such as Elijah (cf. Mal. 3:1; Sir. 48:10). Such an expectation may lie behind the speculations that Jesus might be Elijah, as articulated in Mark 6:15; 8:28.
66. In part the use of such language may be intended as an attempt to counter rival claims associated with the Isis cult in Egypt.
67. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 42–8; J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 168–76.
68. Hurtado, *ibid.*; Dunn, *Christology*, 215–30.