

# NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTOLOGY: A CRITIQUE OF BOUSSET'S INFLUENCE

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The subject of NT Christology is so important and the amount of discussion on the subject so large that surveys of research are helpful from time to time.<sup>1</sup> This survey of recent studies relevant to NT Christology intends to advance the discussion by showing that the new directions being taken in some recent work mean that it is time to engage in a complete restudy of the formation of belief in Jesus in the early Church. Because the views of Wilhelm Bousset expressed in *Kyrios Christos* have dominated the study of NT Christology heretofore, the following discussion is also a critique of Bousset organized around key issues in his book. But before I turn to this critique, it may be helpful to summarize quickly the nature of Bousset's work.

## BOUSSET'S INFLUENCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos* not only is the high-water mark of the German history-of-religions school of the early twentieth century but has determined the agenda for the scholarly study of NT Christology since the publication of the book in 1913.<sup>2</sup> The appearance of an English

<sup>1</sup> I mention here only the most recent and helpful surveys. H. Balz, *Methodische Probleme der neutestamentlichen Christologie* (WMANT 25; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1967); N. Perrin, "Recent Trends in Research in the Christology of the New Testament," in *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 41-56; M. Hengel, "Christologie und neutestamentliche Chronologie," in *Neues Testament und Geschichte: Oscar Cullmann zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. H. Baltensweiler and B. Reicke (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972) 43-67; H. Boers, "Jesus and the Christian Faith: New Testament Christology since Bousset," *JBL* 89 (1970) 450-57; id., "Where Christology Is Real: A Survey of Recent Research on New Testament Christology," *Interpretation* 26 (1972) 300-327; F. Hahn, "Methodenprobleme einer Christologie des Neuen Testaments," *VF* 15 (1970) 3-41; M. Black, *A Survey of Christological Thought 1872-1972* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrews, 1972); R. E. Brown, "Who Do Men Say That I Am? Modern Scholarship on Gospel Christology," in *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (Paramus, N.J.: Paulist, 1975) 20-40; I. H. Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1976). For a helpful survey of various approaches to Christology in systematic theology, see J. P. Schineller, "Christ and the Church: A Spectrum of Views," *TS* 37 (1976) 545-66.

<sup>2</sup> W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913; rev. ed. 1921, 1965); ET, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970). For a friendly but not uncritical evaluation, see N. Perrin, "Reflections on the Publication in English of Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*," *ExpTim* 82 (1970-71) 340-42.

translation in 1970 testifies to the continuing impact of Bousset's work and provides some justification for using his positions on issues as a means of measuring movement in scholarly thought. Although *Kyrios Christos* has proved enduring in its influence, the book also reveals the time-bound situation of its author, particularly his own religious convictions of a now quaint, Old Liberal bent.<sup>3</sup> It is, however, a few of his critical positions which must receive our attention here.

Though it is a major characteristic of modern NT Christology that Bousset's positions on several issues have dominated all subsequent research, it has to be said that, whatever the power of the book itself, part of the continued influence of *Kyrios Christos* is owed to Bultmann, who heartily endorsed Bousset's views on nearly all points and raised up many disciples.<sup>4</sup> Even now, in Bultmann's absence, *Kyrios Christos* does not lack his devotees, who, while they may lack Bultmann's influence, erudition, and power of expression, are not wanting in intensity in their endorsement of Bousset.<sup>5</sup>

It may be proper at this point to indicate what may be acknowledged freely as some of Bousset's contributions to NT Christological study, contributions not dependent upon interpretation of the data but of a methodological nature. Three characteristics of *Kyrios Christos* come to mind easily: an emphasis upon knowledge of Jewish and pagan background as indispensable for scientific study of earliest Christology, attention to the process of *development* of Christology and the factors in early Christianity that provoked this development, and the sheer size of the scholarly effort reflected in the book. All these characteristics, of course, are true of the work of the history-of-religions school as a whole.

In the present paper I wish to show how the discussion has moved beyond Bousset and, indeed, has rendered questionable some of his positions. For reasons of space, I select three areas of discussion: Bousset's view of early Christianity as divisible into the two pre-Pauline stages of Jewish Christianity and Hellenistic Christianity, his view of the earliest form of Christology as an apocalyptic Son of Man Christology, and his contention that the *Kyrios* title reflected a Christology that was possible only in a non-Palestinian setting dominated by pagan religious influence. It should be noted that even the more recent studies which call in question Bousset's views on these and other matters owe something to

<sup>3</sup> Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* 117-18. This is noted by Perrin, "Reflections" 342. R. E. Brown, "Who Do Men Say That I Am?" 30-31, n. 20, remarks that the recent translation of *Kyrios Christos* perhaps indicates a "revival of interest in liberalism."

<sup>4</sup> Note Bultmann's endorsement in the "Introductory Word to the Fifth Edition," *Kyrios Christos* 7. I remember, in reading *Kyrios Christos* in student days, how struck I was with the indebtedness of Bultmann to Bousset on many points that are popularly regarded as "Bultmannian."

<sup>5</sup> Note, e.g., the strident prose of Boers, "Jesus and the Christian Faith" *passim*.

him for making critical study of Christology the central and somewhat scientifically conducted task that it is today.

#### REVISED NOTIONS OF "JEWISH" AND "HELLENISTIC" CATEGORIES

Fundamental to Bousset's whole work on Christology was his use of a twofold division of early Christianity.<sup>6</sup> It cannot be exaggerated how important it was for Bousset to be able to date and categorize virtually anything having to do with the early Church by means of his conception of what was either "Palestinian-Jewish" or "Hellenistic," and the fairly clear distinction he thought it possible to make between these two categories. The present generation of NT students knows of these categories most forcefully through Bultmann's writings, where this twofold scheme is used often.<sup>7</sup> Ferdinand Hahn, in more recent years, has urged a subdivision of "Jewish" Christianity into "Palestinian-Jewish" and "Hellenistic-Jewish" categories, thereby producing a threefold layering of the pre-Pauline Church: Palestinian-Jewish, Hellenistic-Jewish, and Hellenistic-Gentile.<sup>8</sup> This scheme has been adopted wholeheartedly by others whose writings have become widely known and influential.<sup>9</sup> Despite the minor differences between Hahn's threefold division and Bousset's twofold view, both schemes amount to the same approach.

I am by no means the first, however, to point out that such division of early Christianity is now highly questionable.<sup>10</sup> These schemes are questionable above all for a history-of-religions approach to the NT, because they reflect an inaccurate view of the cultural background of the early Church. It is clear that, though influences stemming from the OT, from rabbinic and Jewish-sectarian groups, as well as from Greek sources can be detected in the culture of first-century Palestine, these influences were all simultaneously at work making the cultural background of the earliest Christians far too complex to reduce into rigid categories of "Jewish" and "Hellenistic."

When we look at the linguistic background of early Palestine, for example, we are confronted by a multilingual situation with probably a great influence of Greek in all sectors of the land and its population.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Kyrios Christos* 12, 21, and many other places. This twofold scheme is usually credited to W. Heitmüller, "Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus," *ZNW* 13 (1912) 320-37.

<sup>7</sup> Especially R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* 1 (New York: Scribner's, 1951) 33-183.

<sup>8</sup> F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (Cleveland: World, 1969) 12.

<sup>9</sup> We may mention, as examples, R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner's, 1965); Perrin, "Reflections" 340; W. Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (SBT 50; London: SCM, 1966) 33-34.

<sup>10</sup> See especially the gathering of arguments and literature by I. H. Marshall, "Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity: Some Critical Comments," *NTS* 19 (1972-73) 271-87.

<sup>11</sup> Note recently A. W. Argyle, "Greek among the Jews of Palestine in New Testament Times," *NTS* 20 (1973-74) 87-90. Important works include S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish*

What is true of the languages of Palestine is true for the whole cultural background, as is now abundantly demonstrated by Martin Hengel's massive work.<sup>12</sup> That is, it appears that all forms of Jewish culture were "Hellenized," though in varying ways and degrees to be sure, and no "pure" Jewish culture existed except in the minds of some modern scholars. As H. C. Kee points out, "The result of Hengel's endeavor is a work that calls for reassessment of nearly every rule-of-thumb generalization repeated endlessly by handbooks and by pronouncements of lesser scholars—such as the simple distinction between Palestinian Judaism and Hellenistic Judaism."<sup>13</sup>

If it is now difficult to speak of a Palestinian-Jewish setting free from Hellenistic influence, it is also inaccurate to speak of a "purely" Hellenistic-Gentile community prior to Paul. All evidence points to the observation that, well in the Pauline period and beyond, the Church in all sectors was dominated by Christian *Jews*. When this observation is combined with the fact that a scant twenty years intervene between the death of Jesus and the earliest of Paul's letters, and that these letters reflect a well-developed Christology that on several points predates Paul's conversion, it becomes perilous indeed to continue to talk seriously of a creative, pre-Pauline Gentile Church.<sup>14</sup>

It should be obvious at this point that the seriously revised portrayal of the cultural background of earliest Christianity, made necessary especially by recent research, will demand revised notions about the possible development of Christology in the first two decades of the Church. That such significantly different notions are not only permissible but called for, I hope to demonstrate briefly in what follows. It is already clear, however, that the basic historical framework of Christological development that Bousset employed must now be regarded as simplistic and inaccurate.

#### THE SON OF MAN CONTROVERSY

In 1972 Hendrikus Boers wrote: "No single topic received as much attention in the journal literature of the past fifteen years as the question concerning the origin of the Synoptic Son of Man tradition."<sup>15</sup> Certainly

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*Palestine* (New York: Feldheim, 1965 [1942]); J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Language of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," *CBQ* 32 (1970) 501–31.

<sup>12</sup> M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974). Hengel's work does not deal with NT times but covers the period from Alexander the Great to about 150 B.C. His work is of obvious relevance, however, for NT times. Cf. L. H. Feldman, "Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism* in Retrospect," *JBL* 96 (1977) 371–82. See also H. R. Balz, *Methodische Probleme der neutestamentlichen Christologie* 129–37.

<sup>13</sup> H. C. Kee, review essay of Hengel in *RelSRev* 2 (1976) 5.

<sup>14</sup> Above all see Hengel, "Christologie und neutestamentliche Chronologie," esp. 60–62.

<sup>15</sup> Boers, "Where Christology Is Real" 302.

the debate has been intense, and one is hard pressed to keep clearly in mind the varying theories and the arguments used to support them. It was Bousset's book that helped force the Son of Man title to the forefront of research.

It is not necessary to detail the history of the Son of Man debate, as this has been done already.<sup>16</sup> Here I point out that Bousset's view that the Son of Man title was *not* in fact used as a self-designation by Jesus has been popular right down to the last few years, particularly among those in our own time most desirous of remaining in step with the line of scholarship represented by Bultmann and his students.<sup>17</sup> The most thorough case for this view was presented by H. E. Tödt in his landmark book on the Synoptic Son of Man material.<sup>18</sup> However, while Bousset denied to Jesus any use of the term, Tödt insisted that Jesus did speak of the Son of Man but meant another, future figure. Tödt's view was adopted by Ferdinand Hahn in his impressive book on the Synoptic Christological terms.<sup>19</sup> In 1967 Morna Hooker wrote (disapprovingly): "It has become almost axiomatic in recent work on the Son of Man that Jesus could not have spoken of himself in terms of the Son of Man."<sup>20</sup>

For Tödt, whose book became so influential, the crucial proof-texts were Lk 12:8 and its Mk 8:38 parallel, where he saw Jesus making a distinction between himself and the Son of Man.<sup>21</sup> The more fundamental factor in Tödt's case, however, was also the crucial item in Bousset's view: the term Son of Man was a well-known title in first-century Judaism for a heavenly eschatological figure who would appear at the "last day."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, this view of the pre-Christian history of the Son of Man *title* has been accepted as a commonplace, even by those who would hold that Jesus used the term as a self-designation.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Note M. Black, "The Son of Man Problem in Recent Research and Debate," *BJRL* 45 (1963) 305-18; R. Marlow, "The Son of Man in Recent Journal Literature," *CBQ* 28 (1966) 20-30; I. H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion," *NTS* 12 (1965-66) 327-51.

<sup>17</sup> Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* 31-55. On this point Perrin was convinced that research done since Bousset "has validated Bousset's argument a hundred times over" (*A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology* 43).

<sup>18</sup> H. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1965). A very similar case was made by A. J. B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964).

<sup>19</sup> Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* 15-67.

<sup>20</sup> M. D. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark* (London: SPCK, 1967) 182; see also 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> Tödt, *The Son of Man* 343-44 and 40-46.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 22-31.

<sup>23</sup> Representative of those who have helped make this a scholarly commonplace are R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (rev. ed.; London: Lutterworth, 1943), and Sigmund Mowinkel, *He That Cometh* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954) 346-450. One who accepts basically the apocalyptic, titular significance of the term but regards the term as Jesus' self-designation is Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1971) 257-76. See also the scholars mentioned by Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage* 23-24.

For Bousset and for others since, such as Tödt and Fuller, the identification of Jesus with the pre-Christian *title* Son of Man was the earliest Christology of the Church, and the term Son of Man the earliest confessional title.<sup>24</sup> It is my judgment, however, that this whole construction is very suspect in the light of recent work.

The first and very important item to note is that a doubt is rapidly creeping among NT scholars as to whether there was in fact a well-established Son of Man expectation in pre-Christian Judaism. The doubts were voiced a goodly time ago by C. H. Dodd.<sup>25</sup> In more recent times, scholars as diverse as Morna Hooker and Norman Perrin, while disagreeing about Jesus' use of the term, agree that Son of Man was probably *not* a pre-Christian *title* and that it bore no *univocal* significance.<sup>26</sup>

A full presentation of the reasons for this spreading doubt about the nature of the pre-Christian Son of Man tradition would involve a more detailed treatment and much more space than I can devote to the matter here. A brief statement of the major reasons will have to do. First, it now appears clear that the Son of Man figure in Dan 7:13-14 is a symbolic representation of the "saints of the Most High," as the explanatory context (esp. v. 18) makes plain. Secondly, the term as it appears in the contemporary Jewish literature does not seem to bear any *titular* significance and does not seem to connote a well-known figure. Thirdly, the absence of any *confessional* use of the term in the New Testament and the somewhat ambiguous usage of the term that does occur there seems to support the idea that Son of Man was *not* a well-known, clear title.<sup>27</sup>

The chorus of suspicion continues to grow, now including notably Ragnar Leivestad and Barnabas Lindars.<sup>28</sup> The result for Christological study is that if it is no longer clear that Son of Man could have connoted clearly and only a heavenly redeemer figure, then the strongest reason for denying the term to Jesus as a self-description of his earthly ministry and the strongest reason for seeing the term as possibly early Christian

<sup>24</sup> Fuller, *Foundations of New Testament Christology* 34-43, 142-50; Tödt, *Son of Man* 229-31.

<sup>25</sup> *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952; reprint London: Fontana, 1965) 116-18; id., *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1965 [1953]) 241-43.

<sup>26</sup> Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark* 44-56; Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage* 23-34.

<sup>27</sup> See the discussions by Balz, *Methodische Probleme* 61-68, and the literature cited above in nn. 25 and 26.

<sup>28</sup> See the *volte-face* by R. Leivestad, "Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man," *NTS* 18 (1971-72) 243-67, and Lindars's basic agreement in his somewhat misleadingly entitled article "Re-enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man," *NTS* 22 (1975-76) 52-72. See also the discussion by L. Gaston, *No Stone on Another* (NovTSup 23; Leiden: Brill, 1970) 370-409. Recently M. Casey, "The Corporate Interpretation of 'One Like a Son of Man' (Dan 7:13) at the Time of Jesus," *NovT* 18 (1976) 167-80, and J. Bowker, "The Son of Man," *JTS* n.s. 28 (1977) 19-48, present further evidence for the background of the term.

has dissolved before our eyes.<sup>29</sup> That is, only so long as it is assumed that Son of Man was a clearly understood apocalyptic title is it possible to make it unlikely, on the one hand, that the title could have been applied to an earthly figure, and likely, on the other hand, that the Church might have applied the term to the exalted Jesus so as to claim for him the honor of the supposedly well-known title.

Briefly put, I believe the most likely hypothesis left is that Jesus used the term Son of Man as a self-description that had no previous titular significance for his hearers. Further, the term was apparently not used as a confessional title, since it connoted nothing clearly titular either to Jew or to Greek. The Synoptic material does show, however, that the term was retained in the Jesus tradition as a kind of technical term characteristic of Jesus' self-description and that, in imitation of Jesus' usage, the term was further inserted in some Synoptic sayings. Taken as a whole, then, the Synoptic Son of Man sayings furnish us with what we may call Jesus' *vox*, if not in each case his *verba*, to use Jeremias' distinctions.<sup>30</sup> That is, the Synoptic usage may very well preserve the *pattern* of Jesus' usage of Son of Man, even though the term may have been inserted in some particular sayings. The point to emphasize here, however, is that Bousset's idea that Son of Man was a pre-Christian *title* with a clear and distinct meaning, and even an early Christian confessional title, now seems more and more like a piece of historical fiction. It is now necessary to reopen the question of what may have been the earliest kind of Christology in the post-Easter Church.

#### JESUS THE LORD

If "Son of Man" represented for Bousset the earliest Christian confession, the confession of Jesus as "Lord" represented the "Hellenization" of Christian faith, a later stage of Christology which came to be the characteristic Christology of Gentile Christianity. Indeed, Bousset's chapter on "The Gentile Primitive Christian Community" is wholly a discussion of the *Kyrios* title.<sup>31</sup>

We may summarize Bousset's views on the *Kyrios* title as follows. (1) The title is characteristic of Pauline literature but not of the older [*sic*] Christian materials reflected in the Gospels. (2) The term was characteristically used in the mystery cults for their cult deities. (3) The absolute

<sup>29</sup> In saying this I am also saying that Perrin's claim that Son of Man was an invention of the early Church strikes me as unconvincing. Cf. Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage* 34-36, 57-83.

<sup>30</sup> I confess a certain attraction to the views expressed in 1952 by C. F. D. Moule and reprinted in his *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (SBT 2/1; London: SCM, 1967) 82-99.

<sup>31</sup> *Kyrios Christos* 119-52.

usage "the Lord" cannot be derived from the Aramaic community and its possible use of *Mar* derivatives for Jesus, because the term was probably not current in Jesus' time but only later, and because there was no evidence in Jewish materials of *Mar* used in the absolute sense without a suffix as a divine title. (4) Even if Jesus had been referred to in the Aramaic-speaking Church as *Mari* or *Maran* (my lord, our lord), the fact that *Mar* was not used as a title for God would mean that the term would not have reflected the quasi-divine status that the Greek term *Kyrios* certainly carried. Thus the use of *Kyrios* would reflect a new and considerably heightened Christology developed in the Greek-speaking Church.

Against Bousset's case two major points were made in the debate that followed. First, Rawlinson challenged Bousset's view that the use of *Mar* was in imitation of an initial Greek usage of *Kyrios*, insisting that the *Maranatha* formula found in 1 Cor 16:22 was best understood as a relic of earlier Aramaic-speaking Christian usage; and Rawlinson contended that Bousset's attempts to deny any significance to the *Maranatha* phrase were unconvincing. In Rawlinson's words, "The phrase *Maranatha* is in fact the Achilles' heel of the theory of Bousset."<sup>32</sup> Rawlinson's point has been echoed by many others, notably Cullmann.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, against Bousset it was argued that the *Kyrios* title in early Christianity derived not from pagan cults but from the usage of the term as a translation for Yahweh in the LXX.<sup>34</sup>

In 1962, however, Sigfried Schulz wrote a formidable reaffirmation of Bousset's view that the veneration of Jesus as "the Lord" stemmed from Diaspora settings where pagan religious influence was strong.<sup>35</sup> The heart of Schulz's case was linguistic evidence for the use of the terms *Mara* and *Kyrios* among Jews. Most importantly, Schulz pointed to the fact that first-century Greek translations of the OT did *not* use *Kyrios* as a translation for Yahweh.<sup>36</sup> Further, while the Hebrew *Adonay* appeared as a substitute for the tetragram in Jewish writings, there was no evidence that the Aramaic term *Mara* was so used.<sup>37</sup> This meant that while Jesus may have been addressed in the Aramaic church as *Mara*, such an address could have connoted only an honorific status for Jesus as perhaps the coming Son of Man, a royal authority-figure, and not the divine figure

<sup>32</sup> A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The New Testament Doctrine of Christ* (London: Longmans, Green, 1926) 235.

<sup>33</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 203-15.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., *ibid.* 200-201.

<sup>35</sup> S. Schulz, "Maranatha und Kyrios Jesus," *ZNW* 53 (1962) 125-44.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 128-31.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 133-37.



reflected by the use of *Kyrios* in the Pauline letters.<sup>38</sup> Briefly put, the *Mara* title went back to the Aramaic Church (contra Bousset) but the concept of Jesus as a quasi-divine figure did not. In this way the significance of the *Maranatha* phrase was minimized, as it might reflect only an undefined honorific status for Jesus.

Schulz's arguments have found acceptance among several other students of Christology,<sup>39</sup> but there are several reasons for questioning his thesis. First, as we have seen already, the existence of a Son of Man Christology that is supposed to have found confessional expression in calling Jesus *Mara* seems unlikely ever to have existed; for the vital assumption that the Son of Man term had a pre-Christian *titular* significance is now a most doubtful assumption indeed. What is more, if there had been such a Son of Man Christology, it was never answered why *Mara* and not Son of Man was used in referring to Jesus in the eschatological petitions coming from the early Aramaic Church, such as the *Maranatha* formula.<sup>40</sup> That is, if all *Mara* meant was Son of Man, why did they not use the Son of Man title?

Secondly, as Foerster noted in answer to Bousset and as Hengel has insisted again, it is not so clear that *Kyrios* was the dominant cult-deity title that some have assumed.<sup>41</sup> We should be cautious, therefore, about attributing too much influence upon early Christology to the pagan religious usage of *Kyrios*.

Thirdly, it still is likely that the use of *Kyrios* for Jesus owes much to the Jewish use of the title for Yahweh. Schulz himself admitted that *Kyrios* was no doubt the Qêrê read aloud for Yahweh in Greek-speaking Jewish circles, and he admitted that this usage is reflected also in Philo and Josephus.<sup>42</sup> Thus, to call Jesus *Kyrios* was, for Greek-speaking Jews, to confer on him a divine title. It does not minimize the significance of this to say, as Schulz does, that this happened among Diaspora Jews only. Is there clear evidence that Diaspora Jews were any less sensitive about God's honor and any more likely to blaspheme by using a divine title for Jesus without good reason? Further, is it so clear in fact that the

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>39</sup> This approach was taken, following Schulz, by Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* 99–107. Boers, indeed, accepted completely Schulz's case and headed his discussion of Schulz's work "One Problem Resolved: *Maranatha*." See "Where Christology Is Real" 315–17.

<sup>40</sup> Kramer noted this problem and admitted he had no answer for it in *Christ, Lord, Son of God* 101.

<sup>41</sup> W. Foerster, *TDNT* 3 (1965) 1049–58; M. Hengel, *The Son of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 77–83 and n. 135.

<sup>42</sup> Schulz, "Maranatha" 132–33, 137. On Philo and Josephus, see 131–32. Schulz's view that the use of *Kyrios* among Greek-speaking Jews was a result of pagan religious influence is pure conjecture and not a likely one at that. See literature cited in n. 41 above; cf. also J. Fitzmyer, "Der semitische Hintergrund des neutestamentlichen Kyriostitel," in *Jesus Christus in Historie und Geschichte*, ed. G. Strecker (Tübingen: Mohr, 1975) 285–88.

application of *Kyrios* to Jesus could have happened *only* in a Diaspora city? Let us not forget, as noted earlier in this paper, that Greek was a well-used language in Palestine, and a strict cultural separation between Palestinian and Diaspora Jews is exceedingly difficult to make. The historical data about the "Hellenization" of Palestine in the first century and the picture in Acts of "Hellenists" in the earliest Church means that the application of *Kyrios* to Jesus may go back in time and place to the earliest Church in Palestine.

There is now also an important fourth reason to reject Schulz's views. New evidence shows that *Mārêh* (indefinite state, "Lord," = *Kyrios*) was also used in the definite/emphatic state, *Māryā'* ("the Lord," = *ho Kyrios*) as a divine title in pre-Christian Judaism.<sup>43</sup> Of course, for a long time we have known that *Mārêh* with suffixes or modifying phrases (e.g., my lord, lord of the heavens) was applied to the deity. Now, the clear use of *Māryā'* in the absolute sense for God means that calling Jesus "the Lord" in Aramaic is linguistically acceptable and cannot be written off as possible only under the influence of later usage of the Greek *ho Kyrios* for Jesus. What is more, it can no longer be maintained that the application of the term *Mārêh* to Jesus could not reflect a quasi-divine reverence for him.<sup>44</sup> This means that the absolute usage of *Kyrios* in the NT with reference to Jesus and with the implications of divine honor may reflect the use and meaning of *Mārêh/Māryā'* in the earliest Aramaic-speaking Christianity. To put it succinctly, the use of *Māryā'* and *ho Kyrios* may have arisen simultaneously in the earliest bilingual Church—the Jerusalem Church!

Thus the strict separation of the Aramaic-speaking Church from the Greek-speaking Church, so vital to the views of Bousset and others, seems much less likely now to reflect the actual situation. There is, it now appears, not only a "linguistic bridge" but also "a bridge in the sense of theological content" between *Mārêh* and *Kyrios*, between Aramaic-speaking and Greek-speaking Christians in the earliest Church.<sup>45</sup> This does not justify a simplistic view about the origins of Christology. All I

<sup>43</sup> Fitzmyer, "Der semitische Hintergrund" 291-96, and in a lecture read to the annual meeting of the AAR/SBL Northwest Region in Victoria, B.C., Canada on May 6, 1977, "The Aramaic Background of the New Testament Words *Kyrios*, *Maranatha*, and *Kephas*," in which Fitzmyer cites now 4QEn<sup>a</sup> 1 iv 5. See also M. Black, "The Christological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *NTS* 18 (1971-72) 10, and K. Berger, "Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund christologischer Hoheitstitel," *NTS* 17 (1970-71) 391-425.

<sup>44</sup> Contra, e.g., Schulz 137-39; Boers, "Where Christology Is Real" 315-17; H. Braun, "The Meaning of New Testament Christology," in *God and Christ: Existence and Province*, eds. R. W. Funk and G. Ebeling (JTC 5; New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 97-100; H. Boers, "Jesus and the Christian Faith: New Testament Christology since Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*," *JBL* 89 (1970) 450-56.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Braun, "Meaning of New Testament Christology" 99, n. 24.

am saying here is that the most recent data make simplistic not only some "traditional" views but also, on several points, the views represented by Bousset and his followers of our own day.

#### THE WAY AHEAD

In this survey I have omitted several areas of study that characterize the modern period. I have made no mention of the dubious attempts to represent early Christology as a presentation of Jesus along the lines of a supposedly ubiquitous *theios anēr* motif.<sup>46</sup> Nor have I dealt with the suggestion that the "Q" material reveals the existence of a distinct "Q" community with its own Christology, a suggestion that I find fascinating but questionable on methodological grounds.<sup>47</sup> Nor have I mentioned the studies that deal specifically with Jewish Christianity and its Christology, though important work in this area has appeared in recent years.<sup>48</sup>

One important line of research must be mentioned, if only briefly, for I am convinced that it does lead to new and more accurate insights into the formation of Christology in the primitive Church. I refer to studies of the influence of the OT on early Christology. Dodd's work *According to the Scriptures* was seminal, but Lindars has surely put us all in his debt with his programmatic book *New Testament Apologetic*.<sup>49</sup> As the studies of this subject appear, it becomes clear that a major factor in the remarkable and complex development of belief in Jesus was the early Christian use of the OT, a factor not given enough attention by the early history-of-religion scholars such as Bousset; and the proper way ahead

<sup>46</sup> See the cautious words of D. L. Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (SBLDS 1; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1972) esp 241-92. See also Hengel, *The Son of God* 31-32; W. L. Lane, "Theios Aner Christology and the Gospel of Mark," in *New Directions in New Testament Study*, eds. R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 144-61, and the literature cited there; and now C. H. Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic Judaism* (SBLDS 40; Missoula: Scholars, 1977).

<sup>47</sup> Interest in special Christology in "Q" can be traced back at least to Schulz, "Maranatha und Kyrios Jesus" 143; but a fuller treatment is found in Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition*, whose views were received enthusiastically, e.g., by Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage* 3, and by Boers, "Where Christology Is Real" 302-3. See further studies by R. A. Edwards, *The Sign of Jonah in the Theology of the Evangelists and 'Q'* (London: SCM, 1971), and id., *A Theology of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), and the review of the latter book by J. Topel in *CBQ* 39 (1977) 148-50. Some criticisms of this line of investigation were given by G. N. Stanton, "On the Christology of Q," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, eds. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1973) 27-42.

<sup>48</sup> Two studies from many may be mentioned: J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longmans & Todd, 1964); R. N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (SBT 2/17; London: SCM, 1970). See the literature review by A. F. J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," *NTS* 20 (1973-74) 419-31.

<sup>49</sup> C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952); B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM, 1961).

surely involves further research into the part played by the OT in early Christological formulation.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, as others have argued, the promising way forward also involves a recognition that Jesus' earthly ministry surely contributed heavily to the formation of Christology in the post-Easter situation, and attempts to understand early Christology otherwise are "blind alleys," to use Käsemann's term.<sup>51</sup> The assertion that resurrection appearances alone would have caused the early disciples to see Jesus as a messianic figure, even though (so it is further asserted) Jesus in his earthly ministry scrupulously avoided any hint that he was to be so identified, seems to me more and more dogmatically motivated and less and less credible.<sup>52</sup>

The course of NT Christological study since Bousset has taken many tedious windings. Yet, as I have tried to show, there has been a general direction of movement, particularly in recent years under the force of newer historical data and scholarly studies, and the movement seems to be away from Bousset's positions on several issues. But if Bousset's structure (to change the image) seems now seriously weakened or even partially collapsed, we await some stronger, more adequate structure equivalent in dimension. That structure will have to be built upon a foundation composed of the best of information on the complex cultural background of first-century Palestine and the wider Hellenistic world. The structure will have to employ a wider assortment of materials than just the Christological titles of the early Church so prominent in recent studies. If it seems even more difficult now than in previous years to describe correctly the development of Christology, it is perhaps partially because we can recognize anew in the light of recent historical data how remarkable the whole phenomenon was. If we must vacate the somewhat unstable structure of Christological development erected by Bousset, perhaps we are thereby warned not to be too simplistic in our own constructions. And if we learn this from Bousset, he will have taught us something quite enduring after all.

<sup>50</sup> Only more widely known work can be mentioned here: J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts*, 1953; Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968 [1954]); E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); M. D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: SPCK, 1959); M. Black, "The Christological Use of the Old Testament," *NTS* 18 (1971-72) 1-14, and the literature cited there; Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage* 10-22, 57-103.

<sup>51</sup> E. Käsemann, "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM, 1969) 42-43. See also Hengel, "Christologie und neutestamentliche Chronologie," 64; and now C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1977).

<sup>52</sup> Boers, "Where Christology Is Real" 319-23, 336-37, is an example. His existentialist underpinnings are in evidence, affecting his views as much as does logic or historical evidence.