

## Appendix:

### Divine Agency and Early Christology

The framework developed in this book, and particularly the treatment of the messenger of YHWH's endowment with the divine name, has direct relevance to ongoing debates about early christology, and it lends significant support to frameworks known as divine agency christology and angelomorphic christology. These debates more or less orbit around questions related to the trajectory and mechanism of Jesus's identification with the very deity of Israel. The perspective that appears to me to come closest to a consensus view among those scholars who assert that Jesus was clearly identified with Israel's deity by the time the canonical gospels were written is a model that is known as "divine identity christology." Richard Bauckham (2008) is responsible for what I see as the most commonly cited articulation of that model, which argues that first-century Jewish communities asserted a "'strict' monotheism" (2) that is most clearly attested in the centrality of those divine roles—such as creator of all things—that "distinguish God absolutely from all other reality" (9). This ontological dichotomy of one single creator over and against all creation means that Jesus is either included "in the unique identity of this one God" (4), or is a created being that therefore cannot possess any "real divinity" (2). Since Jesus is so frequently identified as in some sense being one with, or being identified with, the deity of Israel, the former conclusion is preferred. The rhetorical goal here seems largely to be to find the core of Nicene trinitarianism in the Christian scriptures in order to assert a shared identity with the earliest community of Christians. The weight of Bauckham's argument rest almost entirely on the clear and sharp conceptual boundaries he draws around identity, and between the dichotomies of monotheism/polytheism and creator/created.

My fundamental concern with Bauckham's model is the fact that these strict dichotomies simply cannot be shown to have been in circulation in the first century CE.<sup>1</sup> The two most problematic are his notion of "identity," which he

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<sup>1</sup> Bauckham also argues for dichotomous conceptualizations of deity and of monotheism, which I do not consider here, but see McClellan 2017 for some discussion within a cognitive framework.