

him—as with the messenger of YHWH—to exercise divine power and to be both identified with and distinguished from that deity. The Christian scriptures nowhere go remotely as far as having Jesus declare “I am the deity of your father,” as we read in the received version of Exod 3:6, but that declaration originally resulted from a textual interpolation, not from an original composition. The Christian authors are much more circumspect, satisfied to present a messianic figure who was more clearly compartmentalized from the deity, but enjoyed an ambiguous relationship with them that facilitated access to the necessary power and authority through the deity’s agency, communicated via the name. All this is not necessarily to identify Jesus as an “angel”—though early Christians frequently saw Jesus in the manifestations of the messenger of YHWH (Hannah 1999)—but to say the conceptual template that facilitated the messenger of YHWH’s unique and ambiguous relationship with YHWH was the most intuitive and proximate way to represent Jesus’s relationship to divinity. Authors further fleshed out the content of those representations in a variety of ways (on Mark’s gospel as adoptionist, for instance, see Peppard 2011), but undergirding it all was the intuitive concept of divine agency communicated via the divine name.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Bird (2014b, 35–38) works to distance Jesus from the messenger framework in order to reject an angelomorphic christology, but none of the arguments are relevant to the case made above, which is not necessarily that Jesus was first an “angel” and then later graduated to being worshipped, but that Jesus’s conceptualization built on the same foundation laid by that of the messenger of YHWH.