

Bousset, Wilhelm. *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*. Translated by John E. Steely. Nashville: Abingdon, 1970.

INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE 5TH EDITION BY RUDOLF BULTMANN

The influence of the history-of-religions school for NT research includes the following areas:

- 1) The significance of eschatology.
- 2) Hellenistic Christianity is to be distinguished from the primitive Palestinian community.
- 3) Point 2 necessitates the study of “Jesus and Paul” and “The historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ.”
- 4) The sacrament and the church.
- 5) The peculiarity of Hellenistic Christianity.
- 6) Bousset sought to remove the wall of separation between NT theology and the history of doctrine in the early church.

Bousset’s thesis: Jesus was first characterized and addressed as “Lord,” not in the primitive community but in Hellenistic Christianity.

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION BY WILHELM BOUSSET

Kyrios Christos is Jesus of Nazareth in essence as the Lord of his community, venerated in the cultus. The present work takes its point of departure from the practice of the cultus and of the community’s worship and to understand the way things developed from this perspective. In this work, Bousset removes the following 2 restrictions:

- 1) The removal of the wall of partition between NT theology and the history of doctrine in the early church.
- 2) The removal of the separation of the religious history of primitive Christianity from the development of the religious life surrounding Christianity in the time of its earliest childhood. Thus Bousset avoids any discussion of the NT canon and of the presupposition of the uniqueness of the NT message.

In discussing the validity of his method in observing the development of Hellenistic Christianity within its larger context, Bousset disagrees with his critics who argue that the exact proof of chronology and interrelation of his sources has not been established. Bousset states that his research is not based on literary dependence. The main thing is the recognition of broad intellectual connections and the awareness that the Christian religion grew within such an intellectual atmosphere. What is involved here is not a set of interesting parallels but a recognition that a form of piety which grew in its own soil merged with the gospel of Jesus and entered into a new form, a form which we would not be able to understand unless we were acquainted with the former.

1) JESUS THE MESSIAH-SON OF MAN IN THE FAITH OF THE PALESTINIAN PRIMITIVE COMMUNITY

Contemporary Judaism during the time of the primitive Palestinian community had two oscillating views of the Messiah: (1) an earthly political ideal of a Son of David who would destroy the rule of the Romans; and (2) a transcendent ideal of a supra-terrestrial, angel-like and

preexistent being of Jewish apocalyptic. In which sense did the Palestinian primitive community apply to Jesus?

The answer to this question can only be found in the Synoptic Gospels. The entire gospel tradition in the narrative speaks of Jesus as ὁ Ἰησοῦς. In our investigation, we therefore have to examine cases in which Jesus is designated with messianic title in the addresses of other persons or those which he speaks of himself in the third person as Messiah. Bousset notes that the title “Son of David” is hardly found in the older stratum of the gospel tradition. Rather, the phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου dominates the presentation of the Gospels. Bousset argues that this phrase does not go back to Jesus but stems from the tradition of the primitive community. It is possible that a few “Son of Man” passages could have come from the mouth of Jesus himself, but one cannot escape the impression that we have before us the deposit of the theology of the primitive community.

What is the source and origin for the “Son of Man” title? Bousset believes that the title originates from apocalyptic circles as witnessed in Dan 7 and in the Ethiopic book of Enoch. The primitive community appropriated the symbolic representations of the apocalyptic title and understood the Messiah to be a supra-terrestrial figure. Thus the total Jewish *preformed* “Son of Man” dogma entered into the theology of the primitive community as they viewed the *exaltation* of the earthly Jesus of Nazareth with the dignity of the Son of Man. In a similar manner, the coming of the heavenly Messiah is transferred to Jesus and his Parousia. The most momentous step in this development occurs when Jesus is portrayed as the judge of the world and displaces God from his position. A further addition to the stock of Jewish “Son of Man” dogma is the idea of the preexistence of Jesus. In summary, the early community viewed Jesus as the Messiah not in the “Son of David” ideal but in the Jewish apocalyptic figure of the “Son of Man.”

When did this development occur? Bousset argues that this development occurred after the death of Jesus. The death of Jesus created a crisis. However, the indestructible impression which Jesus’ personality left behind coupled with the contemporary ready-made image of an apocalyptic Messiah provided an opportunity for the disciples to salvage their hopes and to reshape them into a loftier form. They therefore put a king’s mantle on Jesus and confessed Jesus as the Son of Man who through suffering and death enters glory. This fundamental conviction that Jesus is the Messiah (Son of Man) separates the Christian community from Judaism.

As the Palestinian primitive community lost its significance with the rise and development of the Gentile Christian church, this understanding of Jesus as the Messiah (Son of Man) also receded. However, this idea can still be found beyond the Synoptic Gospels in the Fourth Gospel.

Appendix I: Resurrected on the Third Day

Was the suffering and death of the Messiah already preformed in Jewish messianology such that the primitive community adopted it with the whole complex of the Messiah (Son of Man) dogmatics? After surveying various data, Bousset concludes that this problem cannot be solved. The idea of the resurrection on the third day goes back to the oldest stratum of the gospel literature, but once again, it is impossible to definitively identify the source of this idea.

Appendix II: Descent into Hades

The interval between death and resurrection opened a new door to Christian imagination which resulted in the fantasy of Jesus' descent into Hades. This tradition comprises two streams: (1) the preaching in Hades; and (2) an actual battle of the prince of life with the powers of the underworld and death. Bousset argues that the conceptions of Jesus' journey into hell and his struggle with the demons of the underworld contain a myth which has nothing to do with the person of Jesus. This myth was not framed by Christianity but was taken over from the surrounding intellectual atmosphere. What Christianity added to this myth was the idea that the prince of life descended into Hell in order to rescue the races of all men and thereby provide universal salvation.

This myth of Christ's descent into hell also impacts the pattern of Christian thought. Instead of Christ's descent into the underworld, Christ now appears upon earth. Seen from the standpoint of the heavenly world above, the earth is the place of darkness and of terror. The struggle of the redeemer-hero with the forces of the underworld becomes the struggle of Christ on the cross with the devil and the rulers of this world. Likewise, his victorious ascent from hell becomes the ascension from earth into heaven.

2) THE FAITH OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE PICTURE OF JESUS OF NAZARETH IN THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS

In the following study, Bousset presupposes the two-source theory (the priority of Mark, the Logia as the source for the speeches in Matt and Luke). The question that Bousset concerns himself is to what extent and in what way did the messianic "Son of Man" faith observed in the preceding chapter retouch and reshape the picture of Jesus?

a) The Messiah Dogma

Bousset begins by examining the passion narrative in Mark as it represents the most ancient kernel of a coherent tradition of the life of Jesus. Bousset notes that messianic idea totally dominates the passion narrative and the rubric of the proof that this crucified Jesus is the Messiah covers every aspect of the narrative. Although the passion narrative conceals a kernel of historical truth, the community has rewritten history and projected a messianic ideal onto his history as they elevated Jesus to be the Son of Man. This is seen in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, his trial before the Sanhedrin, and his answer before the high priest. In the early part of the life of Jesus as recorded in Mark, the messianic tendency of the community is still present, albeit less visible. Thus, passages like Mark 12:35–37 do not contain the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, but the theology of the primitive community. In summary, Bousset states that the entire life of Jesus as seen in Mark is placed under the messianic perspective. In the Logia, the messianic perspective occurs less frequently.

Bousset now picks up the "Son of God" motif and notes that later Jewish apocalypticism was unacquainted with this messianic title as a result of Israelite-Jewish piety. This leads him to wonder whether the creation of this messianic title occurred in the Palestinian or Hellenistic community. Bousset further notes that apart from υἱὸς θεοῦ, παῖς θεοῦ was another title that was used by the community. The term παῖς θεοῦ has a firm liturgical usage in which the most ancient material is contained. This designation of Jesus as the Isaianic servant of God (in the messianic sense) can therefore be traced to the earliest Jewish Christian community. Since

Bousset argues that the two designations (υἱὸς θεοῦ, παῖς θεοῦ) stand in tension with each other and could not have developed in the same milieu, the title “Son of God” probably does not belong to the earliest community.

b) Miracle

The faith of the community not only infused the life of Jesus with the messianic idea but also surrounded it with the nimbus of the miraculous. Bousset notes that the historical tradition of Mark’s gospel is divided into two streams which flowed in total separation: (1) teaching anecdotes; and (2) miracle stories. Although Jesus did exercise the gift of healing in his lifetime, the community transferred to Jesus current miraculous and wonderworking motifs that went beyond the simple healing and expelling of demons. Furthermore, the dogma of the bodily resurrection and the empty tomb can only be understood as a late addition to the earliest gospel narratives of the life of Jesus.

c) The Messianic Secret

In this section, Bousset adopts Wrede’s theory of the messianic secret within the gospel tradition: Jesus did not intend that the Jewish people should come to believe; he indeed revealed his messianic glory, but just as often and just as decidedly he again concealed it.

d) Prophecy

The theory of fulfilled prophecy of the OT was imposed upon the image of Jesus by the primitive community. The community even placed in the mouth of Jesus the predictions concerning the particulars of his passion. Not only did the community find prophecy fulfilled in the life of Jesus, the proof from prophecy also *made* history. In areas where historical recollection was defective, the community used the OT and fulfilled prophecy to retouch and embellish their understanding of history.

e) The Significance of the Death

In Bousset’s opinion, the Palestinian primitive community found a double reason for the necessity of the crucifixion: (1) As a passage for Jesus from earthly lowliness to the glory of the Son of Man; and (2) fulfillment of OT prophecy. The idea of the sacrificial vicarious death originated with Paul and may have arisen from the tradition of the Hellenistic community.

f) Conclusion

From the above, it is seen that the community embellished the life portrait of its master although they kept a fair amount of the authentic and original life.

3) THE GENTILE CHRISTIAN PRIMITIVE COMMUNITY

Between Paul and the Palestinian primitive community stand the Hellenistic communities. The course of development runs: Jesus => primitive community => Hellenistic Christianity => Paul. Thus, from the Pauline epistles, we may be able to distill what he presupposed as basic convictions of the Hellenistic congregations.

a) *The Title Kyrios*

Bousset notes that Paul (and the Hellenistic primitive Christian community) did not take over the Χριστός or “Son of Man” titles from the Palestinian primitive community. The Hellenistic community preferred the designation ὁ κύριος. The title ὁ κύριος is rare in Mark and Matt although it has penetrated into the gospel of Luke. From a linguistic examination of the Aramaic equivalent of אֲדֹנָי, Bousset argues that the absolute title ὁ κύριος could not have arisen in the Palestinian community. As for the only counterexample of 1 Cor 16:22, Bousset suggests that the Maranatha formula arose from the bilingual region of the Hellenistic communities.

b) *The Cultic Significance of the Kyrios Title*

The bestowal of the title ὁ κύριος upon Jesus brought about a new relationship of the community to its κύριος. This new relationship is particularly seen in the community’s worship. Around the κύριος the community gathers in reverence, confesses his name, and invokes his name in baptism and exorcism. The sacred meal is the δεῖπνον κυριακόν and the first day of the week is the κυριακὴ ἡμέρα. In this manner, the Hellenistic community brought together the name Kyrios and the cult of Christ.

c) *The Religio-Historical Source of the Title*

Bousset surveys the history of religion and finds that the title κύριος was used in Hellenistic-Roman religion, Egyptian-Roman worship, and in the OT. Furthermore, surrounding religions such as the Egyptians, the Simonians, the Valentinians give the title κύριος to the deities which stood in the center of their cult. From this prevailing atmosphere, Bousset argues that the Hellenistic Christian community unconsciously appropriated the formula κύριος for their cult-hero, Jesus.

d) *Further Consequences*

Bousset reiterates that the Hellenistic community’s use of κύριος did not rise out of the OT. But once this designation for Christ has been adopted, the community read into the OT and connected the name of God with Jesus of Nazareth. This interpretation of the OT heightened the veneration of the Kyrios and blurred the boundary lines between the OT and the Christ. Another consequence of the attribution of the position of Lord to Jesus is that Jesus now became the object of Christian faith, a trend that was not present in the oldest gospel traditions.

With the adoption of Kyrios by the Hellenistic Christian community, there arose a change in perspective from the future to the present. The Palestinian primitive community with its focus on the eschatological Son of Man looked forward to a *future* Messiah. However, the Hellenistic Christian community held to a Kyrios who is *present* in the cult and in the worship. Thus, the centre of gravity imperceptibly began to shift from the future to the present. In essence, Kyrios cult, worship service, and sacrament became the most dangerous and most significant opponents of the primitive Christian eschatological outlook.

4) PAUL

Paul built on the foundation of the Kyrios faith in the Hellenistic primitive Christian community but added one development: the intense feeling of personal belonging and of spiritual relationship with the exalted Lord.

a) Christ Mysticism and Cultic Mysticism

The picture which Paul sketches of the κύριος Ἰησοῦς is not taken from the earthy life of Jesus but from the preexistent supra-terrestrial Christ which supports and fills Paul's life with its presence. This Pauline Christ mysticism and the formula ἐν κυρίῳ [Χριστῷ] εἶναι did not arise from the Damascus road experience but from the powerful reality of the Kyrios as Paul experienced in the first Hellenistic communities. Pauline Christ mysticism grew out of the cultus; the Lord who governs the entire personal life of the Christian developed out of the cultically present Kyrios.

b) The Identification of κύριος and πνεῦμα

A second formula parallel and analogous to ἐν κυρίῳ [Χριστῷ] εἶναι is ἐν πνεύματι εἶναι. These two formulas coincide and can be interchanged at will such that the Christian is both ἐν Χριστῷ and ἐν πνεύματι. These two formulas have a similar genesis as they arise out of the worship experience and the cult mysticism of the community. For the Hellenistic primitive community, the Spirit is powerfully at work in communal worship. Paul, however, extends these conceptions and ties the Spirit to the entire Christian life. In the popular view the Spirit stands most in connection with worship and cultus. For Paul, it is the basic reality of the Christian life.

c) Religio-Historical Estimate of Paul's Christ Mysticism

Pauline Christ mysticism differs from the religious mysticism of antiquity in two ways. (1) The goal of Greek piety is deification such that it erases the distinction between the divine and human. For Paul, the believer never becomes the Christos. Although the believer is ἐν Χριστῷ, the distance between believer and the Christos is maintained. (2) While religious mysticism of antiquity focuses on the individual, Paul's mysticism becomes the foundation of a new sociological view such that individual is absorbed into the totality of a new community.

d) The Christ-Adam Theology

The Kyrios Christos becomes for Paul the δεύτερος Ἀδάμ. Paul's doctrine of the Spirit and his contrast of πνεῦμα and σὰρξ are necessary to comprehend his Christ speculation. Paul's *pneuma* doctrine has two central features: 1) a "stark" supernatural outlook which concerns the sharp duality of πνεῦμα and σὰρξ; and 2) a "strong natural trait" which combines the spiritual and the sensual/natural (the *pneuma* cannot exist apart from the *soma*). The first Adam (a psychic man) and the second (a pneumatic man) have nothing in common and are antithetical to one another. Christ is the "exact opposite" of the first man. Yet the new man and new humanity "represent a spiritual-body unity." The new man is the "κύριος Χριστός whose body is the ἐκκλησία." Christ's delivery from sinful flesh, accomplished by his death, becomes prototypical for all Christians, who have "already died and risen with Christ."

e) The Source of the Pneuma Doctrine

Paul's πνεῦμα-σάρξ doctrine asserts (in an apparently contrary manner) the supernatural quality of the "divine pneuma" and its opposition to the "human, natural being" as well as that every Christian possesses this "divine pneuma." The uniqueness of Paul's religion *qua* redemptive is built upon this very foundation. This "redemptive religion" of Paul (in which the "best and highest" of man is found not in man but supplied from without) is not found in either the OT, the Gospels or Greek philosophy. Yet traces of parallels can be found in Philo, who claims humankind must receive a "higher element" from God. More striking are the Hermetic writings which admit of a divine Nous being a gift of grace to the pious. Christian Gnosticism stands in "the same line" as this "purely Gentile" Gnosticism, the latter being a pre-Christian phenomenon. Thus, Paul's doctrine of the Pneuma (anthropological pessimism, dualistic-supernatural development of the redemption doctrine) "follows a contemporary mood."

f) Religio-Historical Analogies

Paul's theory of redemption has strong parallels with the Hellenistic religious myth of the "suffering, dying, and rising god." The death and rising of the god is a reoccurring phenomenon and the speculations about this myth originate in the cultus and the believer's experience in the cultus. This cultic myth allows the believer to be united mystically with the deity. The Pauline emphasis on dying and rising with Christ is to be located within the context of this "spiritual atmosphere." In each the believer experiences mystically what his/her divine hero experienced. Yet whereas in the Hellenistic religions one is delivered from death and mortality, in Paul's schema one is liberated from sin and guilt. Hence the greater "moral-religious power and spiritual originality" of the latter. However Paul does seem to borrow his idea of a second Adam, albeit with notable differences, not from the OT but from his Hellenistic milieu. Thus Paul's speculation on the πνεῦμα and σάρξ, Christ, the second Adam and destruction of the first, living and dying with Christ, all stands in the larger religio-historical context. In so doing Paul imposes a foreign "strong supernaturalism, a gloomy dualism and pessimism" upon the Gospel.

g) Consequences

Pauline religion crystallizes in the "faith in Christ." With the apostle "faith in Christ" for the first time becomes the "inner center" of religious life. Though Paul's elevation of the role of faith in religion finds parallels to Philo and the Hermetic writings, it is Christ who is made the object of faith in Paul's system.

h) Theology

Paul's thought thus imposes a complicated burden upon the simplicity of religion found in the OT and the Gospels. Paul's monotheism results in his keeping God "separate" from Christ, always calling the former θεός or πατήρ and the latter κύριος. Whether or not Paul created the term 'Son of God' for Jesus, it is clear that he gives it a new "imprint" in which Jesus becomes a "supra-terrestrial being" who has the closest possible connection to God. This term would have been readily understood by Paul's Hellenistic audience (whereas Son of Man would not). For Paul the SOG refers to the "present exalted Lord" (the Kyrios) whom the Christians worship in the cultus. The title SOG clarifies the dilemma of a monotheistic community seeking to understand the proper relationship between θεός and Christ. The Father proclaimed by Jesus becomes the Father of Christ.

5) THE BELIEF IN CHRIST IN THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS

a) *Designations of Title and Dignity*

The paltry references to Jesus as Kyrios (only in the resurrection narratives) can be explained by the self-understanding of the community as friends of Jesus and therefore not servants. The ubiquity of Son of Man language in John (albeit reinterpreted in a spiritualized fashion) points to a strong Palestinian connection. SOG, which in Jn has a “metaphysical significance quite alien to all Jewish messianology,” becomes the preferred title to describe Jesus’ position of honor. The Johannine title SOG carries within itself all that Kyrios does for Paul and Hellenistic Christianity.

b) *The Reconstruction of the Life of Jesus*

What is peculiar to the 4th Gospel is the projection of “myth and dogma all the way back into the history” of Jesus. History became fully dissolved into myth. We are given a divine Jesus, almost completely lacking in humanity, a God-Logos who sojourns on the earth.

c) *Fading of the Pauline View of the Pneuma*

The Johannine writings do not adopt Paul’s view of the κύριος-πνεῦμα due to the absence of the πνεῦμα-σάρξ speculation that is prominent in Paul. Piety and worship praxis in Hellenistic mystery religions provide an appropriate context for understanding the Johannine emphasis on “deification through vision of God.”

d) *The Peculiarity of Johannine Piety*

The unique and original view of the 4th Gospel is that the “vision which deifies men occurs in the image of the SOG who has appeared on earth.” The Logos mediates to believers the highest blessings of salvation and purifies them. The community experiences the vision of God in Jesus. Faith in Jn is “looking upon the likeness of Jesus in his divine Doxa.” Faith is not a belief in specific facts but a “submergence of oneself” into Jesus.

e) *The Son of God the Light*

The Johannine use of φῶς is dependent upon ideas that were common in Gnostic literature in Hellenistic mystery piety. The association of φῶς with ζωή as well as the contrast between φῶς and σκότος are also rooted in this Hellenistic mysticism. In Jn Jesus is no longer a figure of future eschatology but one whose power is manifest in the present.

f) *Christ Mysticism and God Mysticism*

In the Johannine writings “Jesus mysticism” leads to a “God mysticism,” a feature more prominent in the epistles than in the Gospel. In the Gospel “God mysticism” is completely tied to the Christ mysticism whereas in the Epistles it is separated from the Christ mysticism. Yet, the SOG remains the dominant figure.

g) *John and Paul*

Though there are similarities between the Christ mysticism of Paul and John, the differences are striking: John focuses more upon the “pre-temporal nature of the SOG” and the “earthly” Jesus. For Paul Christ is the power of the pneuma which “storms out of heaven” seizing and shaking man [sic] until the old man is shattered and the new is created. John’s Christ is the “gentle,

illuminating, warming, and fructifying light.” For Paul, coming to Christ involves the death of the old man whereas for John it is a “simple joyous experience of being lifted up” to a vision of the SOG. John lacks Paul’s struggle between spirit and flesh. The dividing line for Jn is not between the old and new man but between the community of believers and the unbelieving world. This particular dualism is much stronger in John than in Paul. Yet both John and Paul present a redemptive religion, the former being even more removed from the preaching of Jesus and the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

6) GNOSTICISM

a) Intellectual Foundations

Gnosticism is a pre-Christian movement which “has its roots in itself.” It must be understood on its own terms and not in the context of the Christian religion. G is characterized by a sharp dualism and radical pessimism towards the “lower, natural” world. Its motifs represent a mix of (Neo) Platonism and “Oriental, mythologically determined dualism.” Spirit and matter are two opposing, antagonistic forces. Certain aspects of Gnosticism conflict sharply with ideas in Hellenistic piety. Hellenism protested against the Gnostic “demonization” of the world. Gnostic religion is redemptive in its attempt to rescue humans from this depraved world. Marcion’s search for a new God fits well with the Hellenistic affinity for the “new.” This Gnosticism is antithetical to the OT-Jewish view of monotheism and creation.

b) Gnosticism and Paul

Gnostics are attracted to Christianity because of the form which Paul gives to it. Specifically, it is the “one-sided religion of redemption” and the redeemer myth (both introduced by Paul) that are attractive to Gnostics. Gnosticism adopts the apostle as its “doctrinal master.” Gnostics found justification for their dualistic views in Paul’s attitude towards σάρξ, the old man”, the law, marriage and the “spiritualization” of the resurrection. Agreement between Paul and the Gnostics is greatest in the negative attitude both hold toward angelic beings.

c) Pauline and Gnostic Anthropology

Certain Pauline notions (the opposition of πνεῦμα and σάρξ, the opposition of πνεῦμα and ψυχή, the formulas ψυχικός and χοϊκός) parallel Gnostic terminology. Both Paul and the Gnostics entertain an anthropological dualism in which that which is best in mankind is opposed to the “lower nature.” Yet what is merely an attitude for Paul becomes a worldview for the Gnostics.

d) Pauline and Gnostic Doctrine of Redemption

Despite its allowance for a divine pneuma to exist in humankind, Gnosticism nonetheless remains a redemptive religion in which one is rescued by something from “above and without.” In the Gnostic view myth “everywhere takes the place of the historical.” Paul wove a redemptive myth around the historical Jesus; the Gnostics allow history to be completely swallowed up by myth. The Gnostic redemptive myth finds its closest parallel to Paul in the latter’s view of the “dying and rising with Christ.”

e) The Connecting of the Figure of Jesus of Nazareth with the Gnostic Redeemer Myths

Gnostic Christology connects the figure of Jesus of Nazareth with its own redeemer myths. Distinctive to the Gnostics (especially among the Valentinian sects) is the connection of the redeemer myth with the redeemer's sacred marriage to Sophia.

f) Jesus' Earthly Appearing

Jesus' earthly existence proved problematic for the sharp dualism of Gnosticism. The solution was a docetic view of Jesus, adopted by Marcion and Saturnilus. They understood Jesus' baptism as the time when the Christ descended upon the earthly Jesus. The Christology of the Gnostics "gradually approached" that of the orthodox Church.

g) Summary

In Gnosticism a dualistic pessimism (foreign to both Hellenistic mysticism and the OT) becomes attached to Christianity. A one-sided religion of redemption, it yearns for what is entirely new and that which is alien to human nature. Creation is a wrong which redemption will correct. It believed Paul offered a view that was in accord with their own. Gnosticism thus gathered affinities it found in Paul into a system which Paul "would not have recognized as his own." It left "little room for a unique redemption taking place at one point in history". Redemption thus becomes a myth. The historical figure of Jesus has limited appeal to Gnostic groups.

7) THE CHRIST CULT IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC AGE

a) Fading of the Pauline Doctrine of the Spirit and of the Pauline-Johannine Christ Mysticism

Post-Pauline Christian canonical literature contains Paul's voice but it has lost his spirit. The "total outlook" of Paul is no longer present. Almost nothing remains of his spirit-flesh dichotomy, the shifting of the pneuma concept from the cultic to the religio-ethical, the radical "psychological pessimism", *et al.* In the place of the "enthusiastic-ecstatic" view of the Pneuma comes the "office", the organized church. The Christ mysticism of Paul and John virtually disappears.

b) The Title Kyrios

Continuity with the post-apostolic age is maintained by the title of κύριος for Jesus. The developing tendency is to refer to God as θεός and reserve for Christ alone the title of κύριος.

c) The Kyrios Cult in the Post-Apostolic Age

The κύριος-Jesus is the "cultic hero" of the Christian community.

- 1) The *name* of Jesus comes to hold singular importance for this community.
- 2) The relationship between the κύριος and his ὄνομα to Christian worship finds particular expression in the exorcisms of evil spirits.
- 3) The pronouncement of the name in the sacrament of baptism signifies a protection of the baptizand by his κύριος.
- 4) The Christian confession of κύριος Jesus is integrally connected to baptism.
- 5) The eucharist, to which the baptizand is allowed, is integrally connected to the κύριος Χριστός.

- 6) For the most part, prayer in the community is to the Father. However, the “massive and naïve community faith” [sic] insisted upon praying to Christ.
- 7) The worship hymnody becomes focused on the person of the κύριος.

d) *The Sacrificial Death and Its Significance*

The κύριος is one who has sacrificed himself and died on behalf of the community. Such sacrifice becomes central to various aspects of the cult such as the Eucharist. The expressions about the Lamb of God, the blood of Christ and the cross utilize mystery language which is greeted with understanding in its cultural milieu. That this god suffers and dies “for us”, for the community, is what sets it apart from other Hellenistic mystery religions.

e) *Kyrios Cult and Ruler Cult*

Around the middle of the second century Jesus begins to be characterized as the “Savior.” This title finds its roots in the ruler cult of the Roman Empire in which the emperor was venerated as a Savior. The veneration of Asclepius as the healer-savior also provides key parallels. The portrayal of God in the OT as the redeemer (*Goel*) should also not be overlooked.

f) *The Deity of Christ.*

Bousset (B.) reaches a conclusion of his study: the deification of Jesus in the early Church develops out of the veneration of the Kyrios. All the lines which have been previously drawn point to this end. Even the dogma of Jesus’ office as judge of the world, a concept of the primitive community, leads to the deity of Christ (B. points to 2nd Epistle of Clement). At the same time, B. shows that there is also influence from the roman emperor cult (Jn 20:28). The practical cultic element brings people to consider Jesus as a God. Influence of monotheistic feelings also: people only worship God. Boundaries between God and Christ disappear, at least in the worship practice. In this regard, B. is surprised that there is not more testimony in the post-apostolic literature for the introduction of the full title of God for Jesus. B. thinks that Jn and Paul imposed “Son of God” over the practical use of the community. But even in “Son of God” the community understood a reference to the full deity of God (e.g. testimony of Celsus). B. speaks of the *Ignatian Epistles* as the first texts where the reluctance to speak of the deity of Christ is completely and fundamentally abandoned. B. then discusses several examples. With Ignatius something that had existed for a long time in faith is expressed in literature. Justin also testifies in this sense (*Dialogue*). B. says that Justin is the best example for the community’s faith in connection with Christ as the new God. Another witness to this fact is Melito of Asia Minor, who transmit the faith of the community and also transmits the paradox of Jesus as God, of the Man-God. In Melito, B. finds the trace of a hymnological community theology. Its distinctive mark is contradiction and its result is the complete deification of Jesus: Christ is God. The last witness B. brings up is the group of the apocryphal acts of the apostles. For B., they might represent the popular belief of the church in the 2nd half of the 2nd century. In these texts, Christ has simply become God. He is the new God, an expression of naïve modalism. After presenting his evidences, B. repeats his conclusion: “The belief of early Christianity in the deity of Christ arises altogether out of the veneration of the κύριος in worship” (330). B. then discusses parallels in the ancient world: cult of the rulers, cultic reverence of philosophical schools for their founders.

g) Theological Reflection.

Here B. analyzes what theological movement, or lack thereof, was behind the deification of Jesus. B. notes that the Kyrios cult took place almost without theological reflection. According to B., this accounts for the great unity and uniformity in the development of the concept. No polemic against it. Within the Great Church, we have uniformity and continuity of development. The theological differences are of an extraordinarily limited importance (difference between adoptionist and pneumatic positions; preexistence of Christ-elevation of a man) and for the cult it all amounted to the same. B. will however treat 4 issues that had been discussed theologically.

1. The first question is, "How is the greatness of the Kyrios related to the one God and Father?" In the post-apostolic age, reflection on this point had hardly begun. The 2 magnitudes simply stood next to each other.

2. The second question concerns the relationship of the divine Kyrios Jesus to the earthly Jesus of Nazareth. For post-apostolic Christianity, especially in opposition to Gnosticism, the divine nature of Christ had appeared on earth as a tangible and human reality (Christ has appeared in flesh). Union of flesh and spirit becomes a great mystery, important for the present Christian faith (eating of the *sarx* in the Eucharist). For B., this is moving away from the spiritualism of Paul.

3. A third issue arises from the fact that the bodily reality of Jesus was firmly established: how could one understand the union of the higher divine element with lower sarkical element? It goes back to the opposition between adoptionist and pneumatic Christology. But B. says that practically, the differences need to be minimized. Different conceptions have peacefully existed side by side. Dominant ideology however is the one of the preexistence of Christ. The adoptionist position is more like an undercurrent (Ac 2:36 for example). No adoptionist theologian until the 3rd century. B. underlines the importance of the baptism account in this regard. B. brings different evidences of the importance of the baptism account into play (Justin, Gnosticism, celebration of the baptism).

4. A new interpretation of the coming-into-flesh of the Son of God emerges: miraculous birth. Late origin: for B., it is only with Ignatius that the testimonies start to flow more abundantly. B. discusses the significance of the virgin birth and its origin: not a consequence of the doctrine of preexistence or of the metaphysical Pauline-Johannine Christology. B. says it might have come from popular fantasy. Relationship to the doctrine of the baptism and to other stories of miraculously born sons of God. B. points out particularly the relationship to the festival of the epiphany of Dionysos.

8) THE STRUCTURING OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE BASIS OF THE CHRIST CULT AND ITS VARIOUS TYPES

a) Introduction.

Where B. shows what the Christ cult means for the development of the Christian life and of the basic Christian convictions. The first consequence of this question is to describe what forms and types the Christianity of post-apostolic era took. B. will conclude that the Kyrios cult dominated early Christian life. It seems, according to B., that the Christian communities gathered every day, at least a large part of their members. Assemblies with communal ceremonial meals. Created a unity and a strong sense of fellowship. B. goes on to describe what happened in worship. Central role of worship for the understanding of the primitive Christian communities: entire social

structure of the Christian community; life is determined and governed by worship. Cultus as heart of the sociological body. Also charity function.

b) The Christianity of Ignatius.

B. appeals to Ignatius of Antioch as the classic witness of the development of the Christian religion as a predominant cultic piety, or as B. says, a cultus determined by the Kyrios and Theos Jesus Christ. For Ignatius, Christianity is an organic cultic fellowship in which the Christos is the determinative factor. Unity in worship and cultic association matters above everything else. Importance in this context of the bishop (the ones with the bishop are the ones who belong to God). The unity of worship can come into question in the observance of the sacramental actions: only the Eucharist that takes place under the bishop is valid. For B. a same picture emerges from the writing of Ignatius: Christianity is Christ cultus. Bishops and deacons are the cultic officials. At the heart, though, there is Christ. Distance from Pauline-Johannine piety. Sacramental piety of Ignatius vs. ethical personal element in Paul.

c) The Christianity of Certain Epistles.

In this paragraph, B. discusses the question whether or not Ignatius can be representative of the post-apostolic era. Ignatius represents an advanced development in the history of the Church. However, there are other manifestations which show how the worship context and the attitudes of cultic piety determine the whole of the Christian religion and the position of the Kyrios Christos in this totality. B. reviews these evidences:

- the epistle to the Hebrews, which affirms the importance of the high priest. The heart of the epistle concerns the doctrinal discussion of this high priest and his ancestry. Importance of belonging to the church. Here the cultic point of view is dominant.

- 1 Clement is very different: there is little said in it of cultus and sacrament. Christianity is essentially a belief in God and a purified new morality. B. insists that at certain points, where cultic connections are present, a different basic attitude emerges. In chap. 34, clear echoes of the Lord's Supper liturgy. Chap. 36, Christ is celebrated in a more exuberant manner. He's not the high priest, but the one who holds sway over the present cultus of the community.

- comparison between Ephesians and Colossians: here too, the cultic connections with the estimation of Jesus as the cultic head of the community move into the center of consideration. Long hymnic sections show that Christ is the head of his church. Favorite theme of Ephesians: Christ and church (reworks Colossians).

- writings that are specifically concerned with constitution and questions of ecclesiastical order: pastoral epistles in particular: "Paul" outlines an ideal picture of Christian community life (very different from what Paul has to say). Very few notes of personal Christianity. The epistles are interested in the politics of the Church (heretics, office of bishops and deacons, widows, etc.). Person of Christ appears in expressions which have a confessionally formulated character. Limited role of the sacramental element, only ordination is frequently mentioned. All the stress falls on the teaching activity of the bishop.

- Didache: sacramental cultus in the center.

B. discusses briefly a few more writings (Revelation, 1 Peter, Shepherd of Hermas, II Clement). By this, he can prove his point: "When in the Ignatian epistles Christianity appears as a new mystery cult whose center is the new God Jesus Christ, we have here no singular phenomenon" (366), but the ultimate goal of a development which Christianity everywhere in its broad masses was pressing.

d) The Christianity of I Clement.

B. compares the above picture of Christianity with I Clement. Not all writings in early Christianity gave the same expression to cultic sacramental element and to the role of Jesus as Kyrios. Over against Ignatius, one can place the Roman Clement: Orient against Occident. B. defines the theology of Clement as a Diaspora-Judaism liberated to a complete universalism. Christians as third race, neither Jews nor Greeks. The new people of God takes the place of the old one. Judaism has never been the people of God. The Christian Church becomes aware of its superiority over the synagogue. B. reviews some of the characteristics of this type of Christianity:

1. Belief in the one almighty Creator God (cf. Shepherd of Hermas, I Clement).
2. This Christianity perfects the tendency of the Jewish Diaspora with its demand for a genuine morality, free from particularism and ritual (I Clement lives in the ethic of the OT). Use of later Jewish literature for ethical purposes.
3. The basic ethical attitude is supported by belief in imminent retribution and by fear of the approaching judgment.
4. This Christianity could acquire from the synagogue even the idea of the present forgiveness of sins. It had not disappeared from late Jewish piety. Basic convictions that after their sins are forgiven, Christians no longer sin.
5. This Christianity is rooted in the worship of the synagogue (even though the Kyrios cult and several other aspects of worship cannot be understood from this perspective): scripture reading, preaching and prayer.

e) The Significance of the Person of Jesus for This Type of Christianity.

B. insists that one has to have a picture of the totality of this kind of Christianity in order to understand how, alongside the Kyrios cult, a much simpler and more rational evaluation of the person of Jesus Christ emerged. Significance of Jesus in this milieu: new lawgiver and, as the new lawgiver, also the future judge (cf. I Clement, Johannine writings, Epistle of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas). Even Ignatius speaks of the commandments of Jesus Christ. The principle is very simple: Christ himself is the great example of virtuous conduct. Along with this goes the fact that the sayings of Christ gain a status as sacred writings alongside the OT => a large part of Christendom drew its spiritual nourishment from the OT and from the words of Jesus (not from Paul, for example). Importance of the figure of Jesus. With the emphasis of Jesus as law giver comes the emphasis of Jesus as judge (overshadowing of the figure of God). It's part of the eschatological attitude of primitive Christianity. Eschatology has a personal note, which distinguishes it from Jewish eschatology. B. concludes with a precision: this Christianity represents an abstraction and it arises from a community praxis where the Kyrios cult and the sacrament became more and more important. Slowly in the West, faster in the east, it will develop in a mystery religion with a cult-hero, Jesus Christ. Eschatology will fade and the presence of the Lord in worship will become the most important feature. But before that, B. points out that in the Christianity of the Apologists, the rational basic outlook will experience a complete formation into a unified outlook. It's the topic of the next chapter.

9) THE APOLOGISTS

B. discusses the theology of the Apologists in this chapter and he starts by summarizing how this theology can be qualified: continuation of the rational and simple Christianity which is found in I

Clement; extension and removal of the restraints upon the Jewish piety of the Diaspora; continuation of the argument with polytheism which the Jewish Diaspora had begun in polemic and apologetic. B. says that if one looks at the apologists' Christology, one touches the centre of their thoughts. It is what he will analyze in this chapter. He sums up the Christology in this formula: Christ the logos of God.

a) The Logos Theology.

Prehistory of the concept of Logos in the pre-apologetic period: John. Takes up a term which was used in Hellenistic milieu. B. argues that looking at the Gnostic speculation can help date the Logos doctrine. B. thinks that the pair Logos-Zoë first gained acceptance in the Gnostic speculation under specifically NT influence. The entire Valentinian school is acquainted with the Logos speculation. Outside this school, the figure of the logos only appears in the late and complicated system of Barbelo-Gnosticism (Coptic Apocryphon of John and excerpt in Irenaeus I, 29) => the Logos idea gradually entered into Christianity after the turn of the century. Not a creation of Christianity. Belongs to hypostasis theology: concepts like this one occur when the monotheistic idea struggles free from older polytheism. Within the thought-world of Christianity, the hypostasis theology in its clearly defined form occurs first in the Logos idea. B. also discusses the relationship with stoic philosophy. The stoic philosophers never place the Logos as a second figure beside the deity. When Philo speaks of the Logos as separated from the highest deity, we've left the soil of stoic philosophy. But Philo also refers again and again to the contemporary Hellenistic philosophy. Distinction between Philo and Stoics: Philo's logos is a mythological figure. B. discusses the parallels with the figures of Hermes and Mercury as representative of the logos, understood as the word of revelation which mediates the intercourse between gods and men. The significance of Hermes as the revelatory word is expanded into that of the world-creating word of the deity (cf. Philo). This expansion occurred through the combination of the Greek divine figure with that of the Egyptian God Thoth. Thoth is assimilated to Ra and becomes the word of Ra, and also the creator of the world. With this figure of Thoth, the one of Hermes emerged, but was spiritualized => Hermes-Thoth becomes the inner thought and the revelatory word of the God, in both senses the Logos. In consequence of the identification of Hermes with Thoth, the conception of the world-creating word is transferred to Hermes. Influence also of the cultic word (power of the word). This word could be combined with a half-concrete, half-idealized divine figure. This mixture of Hellenistic philosophy and oriental mystic speculation gave birth to two great types of literature, even before the apologists: Hermetic literature and Philo.

b) Appropriation of the Logos Idea.

Numerous influences on the Logos theology: Greek-stoic philosophy, allegorical interpretations of myths, living piety, oriental mysticism, veneration of Hermes, Egyptian religion. Out of the Logos, birth of a particular entity: word which mediates between men and Deity. Christianity took over this complex concept, taking it one further step: applied it to Jesus Christ. Regarding the apologists, for B., it means the following: they were not interested first in solving the problem of the relationship between a transcendent God and the material world through the Logos theory and then transferred the Logos to Jesus. In fact, what they did is to take over the elements of the Logos speculation. It also means that none of the apologists has his own logos doctrine. They share in it. Their goal in taking over the concept was the following: to defend and justify the fact that the Christians rendered divine honors to the Jesus of Nazareth who had been

crucified. They could also avoid the charge of polytheism. B. sees a problem in the position of the apologists, in the fact that they do not preoccupy themselves with the incarnation of the Logos (apart from Justin, Tertullian, Athenagoras and before them John and the author of the *Kerygma Petri*).

c) Import of the Logos Idea.

Central importance of the logos theology in the interpretation of Christianity by the apologists. B. summarizes their message in the following sentences: the Christian faith is the absolutely reasonable, perfect religious truth, perfect practical truth. Importance of reason in the process. Justin claims that whoever had lived with the logos is in fact a Christian. This is why he can claim for Christianity whatever good has been said among men. In Tertullian, the conviction that Christian truth is universal and reasonable finds its climax. Demand for the rational, the universally valid, the orderly. But B. insists, there's another side to the coin: the apologists also proclaim the most irrational paradox: the Logos has appeared bodily in the one man Jesus of Nazareth (starts with John, and the *Kerygma Petri*). This is also where the apologists take their distance from the Hellenistic philosophers. The truths are basically the same with the Hellenistic philosophers, but their form is different: human thoughts and conjectures vs. supernatural divine truth assured by authority (prophetic authority). The rationalism of the apologists has a supernatural crowning element: truth requires no proof. The Apologists also develop a theory of demons to explain why supernatural revelation is necessary. The demons are the misfortune of men. Because of them the appearance of the Logos on earth has become necessary. With the demons, it also means that there is no discussion of the fundamental corruption of nature of the human race.

d) Concluding Estimate.

B.'s first conclusion is that we're left with an overall outlook full of contradictions when we come to the apologists: Christianity is the absolutely rational, but this rational has come into the world through a supernatural revelation. The Logos was and always will be, yet it had entered the world at one particular point in a historical figure, etc. B. will try to see what is right and wrong in the Apologists. For him, the error does not lie in the basic affirmation of the apologists of the reasonableness and universality of Christian truth. In fact, B. points out that the Apologists have been considered wrong because they did not share the Pauline-Gnostic understanding of Christianity. The Apologists go back to the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel over against the virtuosity of Pauline-Gnostic piety. B. also insists that the rationalism of the Apologists is one-sided and distorted. Christian religion becomes philosophy, and then it becomes difficult to understand why a supernatural revelation is still needed, if at the same time the Christian truth is natural and rational. It's the first emergence of the problem of faith and knowledge. And it already emerges in a hopeless confusion. B. mentions one more contradiction which needs closer scrutiny: the contradiction between the rationalism of their Logos view in general and their proclamation of the incarnate concentration of the Logos in Jesus Christ. Behind this irrationalism stands the community faith. Apologists are rooted on the ground of the community dogma and the community cultus. Central belief: Christ's deity.

10) IRENAEUS

B. starts by presenting the possibilities of development for Christianity in the 2nd century.

Foundation: proclamation of the new God. On this foundation, two main directions:

- Pauline-Johannine interpretation of Christianity as the religion of redemption
- Christianity is unshackled Diaspora-Judaism. Insistence on the eternally and universally valid.

B. then asks: how may the development turn out? A look at the Christ faith of Irenaeus gives us an answer. Irenaeus presents a provisional conclusion in the development and this is why B. will conclude his study with him. Irenaeus is the theologian of the dominant community piety. The deity of Christ is the beginning point of all this thought. But he opposes the idea of dissolving the human figure of Jesus into a myth as the Gnostics do. The proclamation of the second God causes no more difficulties for him. Familiar with the concept of Logos, it has become a traditional element. Irenaeus will seriously busy himself with the question: why did the redeemer descend to earth?

a) God Must Become Man in Order That Men May Become Gods.

Irenaeus' answer to that question will become dominant in Christian piety. This answer, B. presents like that: Christ, God, had to become man so that men could become Gods or humanity could be united to God. For Irenaeus, likeness to God shows itself first in participation in eternal life. Irenaeus then develops the idea of the mystical unity in which God's nature and that of men are joined.

b) Deification by Means of the Vision of God.

No natural redemption theology in Irenaeus. No redemption mysticism centered on the cult and sacrament. His mysticism remains a spiritual-personal one. Walks into the path of Johannine mysticism: the union of the human nature with the divine comes about through the miraculous vision of God. Object of the vision of God: God-Logos, the image of Jesus, as something present for Irenaeus. Importance of the earthly Jesus as the divine proclaimer of the secrets of the celestial world => Jesus as mystagogue.

c) The Deification Ideal of Irenaeus and the Community Piety.

For B. the outlook of Irenaeus signifies a deepening of the community piety. In this context, the deity of Christ was an undoubted fact. But Irenaeus asks the question of why Christ was incarnated very clearly, and gives it the answer of the deification of man. With that answer, the Christ cultus lost some of its irrationality. A goal was set to the coming of Christ on earth ? thought triumphs in Irenaeus. Relative role of the sacraments. The cult and sacrament were self-evident for Irenaeus. Irenaeus lives in the actuality of a cultus which creates the κοινωνία between deity and humanity. B. also discusses parallels to Hellenistic mystery piety.

d) The Christology That Arises on the Basis of the Idea of Deification.

The Christology of Irenaeus is deeply influenced by the idea of deification of man. If the logos brings about the unity between man and god, it must be both: true God and true man. But Irenaeus did not reflect on the way in which the human nature was united with the divine. Relies on Jn. He did give an answer to how the relationship of the God-Logos relates to the God-Father. His answer is that the word who has appeared upon earth is God himself become visible and tangible (*deus manifestus*). The logos is the revealer of the hidden God.

e) *The Theory of Recapitulation.*

Irenaeus also poses the question of how the unity between human and divine natures brought about through Christ is possible. The answer to this is his recapitulation theory. B. argues here that this doctrine is wholly anti-Gnostic in orientation. The first man has come forth from the will of God pure. This first man was originally intended for immortality. He has fallen, but his revolt was not primarily his fault, but it was the fault of the tempter. This tragic occurrence demands a corrective. The bond between man and God is finally not broken. God does save Adam. And Adam is a symbol of humanity as a whole. Because of the first saving action of God in Adam, Jesus' redeeming work is qualified as *recapitulation*: redemption is nothing but the reestablishment of the original nature of man. B. then compares the parallel presentation of Adam and Christ in Irenaeus. The move of Irenaeus is to insert into this context of recapitulation theory the view that Jesus' life and particularly his death was a conquest of Satan. Irenaeus in doing this probably only expanded and redirected motifs of Pauline theology.

f) *Irenaeus' Tendency Toward the Idea of Evolution.*

B. claims that Irenaeus, here and there, almost assumes a straight line of development from the first to the second man and interprets the incarnate Logos of God as the goal of the human race. Teleological point of view on the fall. It is something willed by God. Irenaeus favors the idea of evolution: men were not created perfect for perfection has to be attained in freedom. Evolution also makes its way in eschatology for Irenaeus. Related to it: importance of human freedom. One could possibly see a contradiction between the idea of redemption through recapitulation and evolution, but B. points out that in Irenaeus the two circles of ideas nevertheless form a unity, because the most extreme aspects of both thoughts have been eliminated. Interweaving of evolution and supernaturalism which will dominate the history of the church.

g) *Irenaeus and Paul.*

For B., Irenaeus is the theologian who for the first time breaks the Church's silence about Paul. Paul appears as a valid authority to whom Irenaeus refers again and again. He develops insights of Paul (Adam-Christ theology). But B. is quick to point out that this harmony is only an appearance. Irenaeus made Paul acceptable in distorting his ideas. B. then presents the contrasts between Paul and Irenaeus:

- first man: Irenaeus: lofty god like being; Paul: less worthy being
- for Paul, the appearance of Christ does not signify a recapitulation, or a return of the end to the beginning. Paul draws a sharp contrast between Adam and Christ. For Irenaeus, even in the fallen man, there is still freedom through which God leads him to completion. Paul proclaims the lack of freedom of men.

- For Irenaeus, creation and redemption form a unity. For Paul, they are separated.

In brief, the apostle is pessimistic, the Church Father is optimistic. From this, B. draws more observations of the opposition between Irenaeus and Paul. Main difference in eschatology. Irenaeus affirms the resurrection of the flesh as a fundamental principle. Paul is not as clear on this topic. The contrast between *sarx* and *pneuma* is also much stronger in Paul than in Irenaeus. In fact, Irenaeus eliminated from Paulinism all the points which could have lead to Gnosticism. This is also why Irenaeus stands in close connection with the apologists.