

## 1

**THE SON OF DAVID AND THE CHRIST  
OF MARK***Beyond an Interpretive Impasse*

Wir haben nicht ganz wenig Zeugnisse, dass die Davidssohnschaft Jesu in den ersten Jahrhunderten von gewissen Seiten bestritten worden ist.

– William Wrede, *Vorträge und Studien*, 171

[T]he pull of the use of Psalm 110:1 as a proof-text for Jesus' Davidic sonship elsewhere in and beyond the New Testament is strong on many Markan readers and interpreters . . . From the point of view of Matthew, Luke, Romans, and 2 Timothy, this aspect of the Markan narrative might be mystifying, but reading this text through those is not the best way to make sense of it . . . [M]any readers and commentators resolve (or dissolve?) the mystery . . . by reading Mark's Gospel against a strong background belief in Jesus as the Son of David that they bring with them to the narrative, a Christian belief that is simply assumed to be in all "Christian" materials.

– Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 160

The Synoptic evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke present their audiences with a puzzle. While teaching in the temple courts around the time of the Passover festival, days before his crucifixion, Jesus openly disputes the premise that the messiah is the son of David by appealing to an ancient oracle in which David calls the messiah "my lord" (citing Ps 110:1). The upstart from Nazareth presses his interlocutors, "David himself calls him lord; how then can he be his son?" (Mark 12:37 pars.). The answer is not at once obvious. Is the point of the *Davidsohnfrage* ("son-of-David question") to deny the premise that the messiah would be a descendant of David? Or does the question assume the premise in order to say something more about the messiah? Current wisdom suggests that the answer

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depends, at least in part, on *which* Jesus is asking the question. That is, while interpreters generally agree that the evangelists Matthew and Luke circumvent a negative answer to the *Davidssohnfrage* – a denial that the messiah would be a descendant of David – the same cannot be said for the evangelist Mark. In fact, many are convinced that he guides his audience to precisely the opposite conclusion: his messiah is manifestly *not* the son of David.

The ostensive dissonance between the Gospel of Mark and its Synoptic counterparts on the question of the messiah's ancestry is governed by the most basic of interpretive principles. “[A]ny interpretation given of a certain portion of a text can be accepted if it is confirmed by, and must be rejected if it is challenged by, another portion of the same text. In this sense the internal textual coherence controls the otherwise uncontrollable drives of the reader.”<sup>1</sup> Gospels scholars accordingly take it for granted that the meaning of the *Davidssohnfrage* – a certain portion of a text – is conditioned by the larger narrative – the remaining portions of the same text – in which the question is situated. (Indeed, part of the problem with extracting the question from its Synoptic context and recontextualizing it in an alternative *Sitz im Leben* is that there are no controls for the “drives of the reader.”<sup>2</sup>) The consensus of Gospels research is that whereas

<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco et al., *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 65. Ambrose offers an ancient example of this interpretive principle when he inquires, “This too must be considered, since he resists those who say that the Christ is the son of David: How did the blind man merit healing by confessing that he is the son of David? How did the children with loud shouts proclaiming, ‘Hosanna to the son of David,’ render glory to God? But they [the scribes] are not resisted, in this instance [the *Davidssohnfrage*], because they claim he is the son of David, but because they do not believe he is the son of God [*Illud quoque considerandum, quia reprehendit eos qui Christum David filium dicunt, et quomodo caecus ille David filium confitendo meruit sanitatem? Quomodo pueri dicentes osanna filio David praecelsae praedicationis deo gloriam deferabant? Sed non reprehenduntur hoc loco quia David filium confitentur, sed quia non credunt filium dei*]” (*Exp. Luc.* 10.2; Dom Gabriel Tissot, ed., *Ambroise de Milan Traité sur L’Évangile de S. Luc.*, 2 vols., SC 45 and 52 [Paris: Cerf, 1956–1958], 2:158). While textual coherence for the bishop of Milan is at least the twofold witness of Matthew and Luke, the basic guideline that one’s interpretation of a portion of a narrative must cohere with one’s interpretation of the rest of that narrative is analogous to the way modern scholars approach the *Davidssohnfrage*.

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Schneider chronicles modern scholarship’s fascination with the “real” *Sitz* of the *Davidssohnfrage* (“Die Davidssohnfrage [Mark 12,35–37].” *Bib* 53 [1972]: 65–90). There is evidence to suggest that the *Davidssohnfrage* may have circulated outside of its Synoptic context (cf. Barn. 12:10–11), and isolated treatment of this tradition, in conjunction with sweeping attacks on Davidic messiahship in general, seems to have serviced *adversus Iudaeos* and Marcionite polemics (cf. Tertullian,

the Matthean and Lukan narratives discard one possible interpretation of the *Davidssohnfrage*, a denial of the Christ's Davidic ancestry, the Markan narrative leaves this interpretive option squarely on the table. At best, the evangelist is circumspect about the idea of Davidic sonship; at worst, he finds it antithetical to his gospel message.

This book sets out to scrutinize the state of the question on Davidic sonship in the Gospel of Mark. I contend that the framework within which modern scholarship has assessed this issue, at least from Wrede onwards, is arbitrary when compared to the ways in which ancient authors constructed their messiahs. These were participants of a linguistic community whose members recognized multiple conventions for characterizing their messiahs, Davidic or otherwise. Markan scholars, by contrast, tend to assume that ancient discourse about messiahs is reducible to names and titles, and so they invariably attempt to answer Mark's *Davidssohnfrage* through isolated study of pericopae with the name David. My proposal is that the evangelist's language about his Christ should be evaluated on the terms of his own linguistic community, as nothing short of a "creatively biblical linguistic act."<sup>3</sup>

The present chapter establishes the rationale for my argument. A survey of the secondary literature demonstrates that Markan scholarship has long reduced the *Davidssohnfrage* to the insular study of passages with the name David. The proposed antidote to this misguided approach is an intervention along sociolinguistic lines: How did participants in ancient messianic discourse communicate what they meant by the term "messiah"? Do these writers make use of certain conventions when constructing their messiahs? How does son-of-David language feature within this field of discourse? And so forth. The answer to Mark's *Davidssohnfrage*, I will argue, lies neither in our capacity to reconstruct the *Sitz im Leben* of the evangelist's community nor in our aptitude to discern the veiled wink of an implied author, but in our commitment to read the Gospel as the product of a competent language user of a particular ancient linguistic community.

*Marc.* 4.36; Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 10.19; inter alia); as discussed, e.g., in William Wrede, *Vorträge und Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1907), 171–173.

<sup>3</sup> To borrow an apt phrase from Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 62. I explore the significance of Novenson's work on messiah language in Section 1.2.1.

4      *The Son of David and the Christ of Mark*1.1      **Contesting David's Son: The Problem of Messianism  
and the Christology of Mark**

Étienne Trocmé speaks for a large swathe of interpreters when he claims, “‘Christ’ – and the cognate titles ‘Son of David’ and ‘King of the Jews’ – is to say the least ambiguous in the eyes of the evangelist ... It carries no special stress, even though it is not as drastically rejected as some think.”<sup>4</sup> Although Trocmé ultimately falls in line with what Wrede calls the “orthodox” position on Davidic sonship,<sup>5</sup> there are, as he alludes, “some” who would want to go further. Indeed, for these interpreters the evangelist is not ambiguous on this issue at all; rather, he regards it as fundamentally incompatible with sound Christology. The following *Forschungsgeschichte* attempts to elucidate why “some” – in fact, quite a few – interpreters have arrived at the conclusion that the Christ of Mark cannot be the son of David.

1.1.1      **Shaping the Son-of-David Debate:  
From Reimarus to Wrede**

Every student of ancient messianism and early Christology remains indebted to the work of Hermann Samuel Reimarus. While previous skeptics had already begun to assail the notion that the historical Jesus could be aligned with the second person of the Trinity, Reimarus was the first to do so by locating him within the milieu of early Judaism.<sup>6</sup> In particular, he contended that “to be called ‘Son of God’ and ‘Christ the Messiah’ meant one and the same thing,”<sup>7</sup> concluding that the *Davidssohnfrage* discloses the messiah’s

<sup>4</sup> Étienne Trocmé, “Is There a Marcan Christology?” in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, eds. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 3–14, here 7. This section represents and develops material from Max Botner, “What Has Mark’s Christ to Do with David’s Son? A History of Interpretation,” *CBR* 16.1 (2017): 50–70. © The 2017. Reprinted by permission of SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X17717838>.

<sup>5</sup> Wrede, *Vorträge*, 168.

<sup>6</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, for example, traces Reimarus’s debt to the English Deists (*The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Clark [Nashville: Abingdon, 1972], 90). Unlike the Deists, however, Reimarus ruthlessly wielded the category of messianism, as he understood it, as a weapon against orthodox Christianity.

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Fragments*, ed. Charles H. Talbert, trans. Ralph S. Fraser (London: SCM press, 1971), 83. The so-called *Wolfenbütteler Fragmente* were published posthumously by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1974 and 1977.

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superiority “only insofar as he as Messiah is to establish a kingdom for which all the dead, including David himself, would be awakened by God.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he reasoned that if the historical Jesus was in fact the long-awaited son of David, he would have had but one option: he must cast off the Roman yoke and usher in an earthly political kingdom of God.<sup>9</sup>

The reception of Reimarus's proposal was mixed. On the one hand, many scholars, particularly those in the German-speaking world, followed his attempt to interpret christological categories within the framework of early Judaism, irrespective of doctrines and creeds.<sup>10</sup> “Son of God” was thus routinely treated as a messianic epithet, cognate with “son of David” and “messiah.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, virtually no one was willing to follow Reimarus's assertion that the historical Jesus capitulated to the political expectations facing any would-be messiah. Instead, *Neutestamentler* lined up in droves to argue that Jesus eschewed the messianic spirit of his time, often adducing the *Davidsohnfrage* as evidence that the harbinger of Enlightenment morality discarded the baggage of the son-of-David label.<sup>12</sup>

The year 1901 witnessed the publication of William Wrede's *Das Messiasgeheimnis* and Albert Schweitzer's *Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis*. As Schweitzer would conclude several years later,

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 87.<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>10</sup> Note, in particular, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann's declaration that “[k]lein namh-after protestantischer Theologe vertritt heute noch die Zweinaturenlehre der Symbole” (*Das messianische Bewusstsein Jesu: Ein Beitrag zur Leben-Jesu-Forschung* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1907], 100).

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Bernhard Weiss, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols., trans. David Eaton and James E. Duguid (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1882–1883 [German 1873]), 1: 78–81, 2:283–286; Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1896), 12; Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1903), 6–7; Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1911), 1: 336–337, 340, 352.

<sup>12</sup> This had long been the de facto position of critical scholarship by the time Wrede wrote his important essay “Jesus als Davidsohn,” in 1904 (*Vorträge*, esp. 148, 168). See, e.g., Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971 [German 1892]), 83, 102–103; Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci*, 104; Holtzmann, *Das messianische Bewusstsein*, 27 n. 4. According to Weiss, Jesus exchanged one messianic idea for another: “Jesus turned away from the Davidic conception of the Messiah to a loftier image of the Messiah. For Jesus, the proper form in which the figure of the Messiah was to be thought of was the Son of man of Daniel and Enoch” (*Jesus' Proclamation*, 116). This line anticipates what one finds in Bousset, *inter alios* (see Section 1.1.2).

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the viability of Jesus research had reached a crossroad: either one must follow Wrede's skepticism (*konsequenter Skeptizismus*) or one must embrace the profoundly un-Germanic eschatological world of early Judaism (*konsequente Eschatologie*) – “*Tertium non datur!*”<sup>13</sup> While the Schweitzer–Wrede split was primarily over the viability of the so-called quest for the historical Jesus, it had implications for Markan Christology as well. Whereas Schweitzer was persuaded that Mark's Jesus – with slight, albeit necessary, augmentation from Matthew's – fit within the broader messianic expectations of early Judaism, Wrede concluded that this construct belonged not to “the actual life of Jesus” (*das wirkliche Leben Jesu*), but to “the history of dogma” (*die Dogmengeschichte*).<sup>14</sup>

Wrede reaches a similar conclusion in his programmatic essay “Jesus als Davidssohn.”<sup>15</sup> After acknowledging that Davidic descent appears to be at the bedrock of early Christian tradition (cf. Rom 1:3), he devotes the first half of his study to examining whether this or any other piece of evidence for Davidic descent can be traced back to Jesus.<sup>16</sup> As one might imagine, he is suspicious that it can, and so shifts course to his real interest, “die Geschichte der

<sup>13</sup> The full passage reads: “Es gibt entweder die eschatologische Lösung, die dann mit einem Schlag die unabgeschwächte, unzusammenhängende und widerspruchsvolle Markusdarstellung als solche zur Geschichte erhebt, oder die literarische, die jenes Dogmatisch-Fremdartige als Eintrag des Urevangelisten in die Überlieferung von Jesus betrachtet und damit zugleich die Messianität aus dem historischen Leben Jesu tilgt. *Tertium non datur.*” (Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1913; repr. 2 vols., München: Siebenstern Taschenbuch 1966], 388; English translation: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery and F. C. Burkitt (Mineola, NY: Dover [German 1906]), 335. The first edition of Schweitzer's remarkable oeuvre was published under the title *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1906).

<sup>14</sup> The full statement reads: “Deshalb bleibt es wahr: als Gesamtdarstellung bietet das Evangelium keine historische Anschauung mehr vom wirklichen Leben Jesu. Nur blasse Reste einer solchen sind in eine übergeschichtliche Glaubensauffassung übergegangen. Das Markusevangelium gehört in diesem Sinne in die Dogmengeschichte” (*Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901], 131; English translation: *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig; [Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971]), 131.

<sup>15</sup> Wrede, *Vorträge*, 147–177.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 149–166. Although the first section comprises an impressive assessment of the evidence, its length is primarily the result of Wrede's sense that he needed to redress the objections leveled by Kawerau against the lecture he delivered on April 18, 2004 in Breslau at the opening of the Protestant-Theological Section of *Der Vaterländischen Gesellschaft für Schlesische Kultur*. As he confesses at the outset, “Handelte es sich lediglich um den historischen Wert der neutestamentlichen Tradition vom

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Davidssohnschaft Jesu in der ältesten Christenheit.”<sup>17</sup> Here, Wrede contends that the *Davidssohnfrage* provides demonstrable evidence that Jesus's Davidic descent was roundly rejected by some of the earliest Christians, most notably the author of the second-century Epistle of Barnabas (Barn. 12:10–11). By emphasizing a disjunction between the “Jewish” idea of a mundane messiah and the “Christian” idea of divine sonship *sensu metaphysico*, Pseudo-Barnabas captured what Wrede perceived to be the “plain meaning” of Mark 12:35–37.<sup>18</sup> He concludes his study by tracing this disjunction back to Paul's concept of the preexistent son who travels “vom Himmel her zum Himmel hin,” rendering Jesus's humanity, and therefore his status *as a descendant of David*, “nur noch den Schatten einer Würde.”<sup>19</sup>

Wrede's approach to Davidic sonship in the Gospels sets a clear agenda for subsequent research. According to the Breslau professor, “Die Erklärung kann nur gesucht werden in der Art, wie Nachrichten verschiedener Herkunft in diesem Evangelium [i.e., Mark] zusammengefloßen sind.”<sup>20</sup> That is to say, one attempts to identify an evangelist's position on this “Jewish” desideratum by isolating instances of genealogical material, titles, and scriptural proof texts containing the name David. In the case of Matthew's Gospel, Wrede felt that there was simply too much counterevidence to conclude that the evangelist adopted the “plain meaning” of the *Davidssohnfrage*.<sup>21</sup> Yet, in the case of Mark's, he concluded that the paucity of evidence in support of Davidic sonship opens up the possibility that the evangelist agreed with the premise of this tradition: according to one highly idiosyncratic interpretation of Psalm 110, the messiah cannot be David's son. The one piece of evidence that gave Wrede pause was a tradition in which Jesus is twice heralded “son of David”

Davididen Jesus, so hätte das Thema: Jesus als Davidssohn, *weing Reiz für mich*” (148, my emphasis).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 166–177.

<sup>18</sup> “Jesus ist Davids Sohn wird verworfen als die jüdische These, wobei aber daran zu bedenken ist, dass diese jüdische These auch von Christen akzeptiert wurde. Das tritt fast überall in der Polemik hervor. Barnabas spricht vom Irrtum der Sünder. Und auch Markus lässt Jesus sagen: Die Schriftgelehrten behaupten, dass der Christus Davids Sohn sei. Es ist also ein jüdischer Satz” (*Vorträge*, 176).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 177. <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>21</sup> Wrede claims, quite strikingly, “Ob Matthäus selbst geglaubt hat, die beiden Prädikate Davids Sohn und Gottes Sohn doch miteinander reimen zu können, was ich aus bestimmten Gründen annehmen möchte, ist einerlei” (*Vorträge*, 174). One would think the ease with which Matthew can “die beiden Prädikate . . . miteinander reimen” would be directly relevant to the subject at hand.



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(cf. Mark 10:47–48).<sup>22</sup> “Wie ist neben dem allen unsere Perikope innerhalb des Markus zu begreifen?” Wrede asks. His answer: “[D]ie Frage ist nicht leicht.”<sup>23</sup> Full stop.

Although no one from this period was particularly interested in *Markan* Christology, the landmark studies of Reimarus and Wrede clearly set the terms of the debate. Reimarus opened up a Pandora’s Box that continues to haunt New Testament studies to this day: Does the confession of Jesus as the messiah of early Judaism undermine the Christ of the church’s creeds? Many have approached Reimarus’s challenge that “son of God” means “messiah” rather than “second person of the Trinity” as if it demands participation in a zero-sum game. This may explain why many conservative scholars, who were in fact much closer to Reimarus and Schweitzer on the question of the historical Jesus, eagerly embraced the Wredean premise that son-of-God language in *Mark* no longer has anything to do with the anointed king of the Jewish scriptures.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it was not until Donald Juel’s dissertation (publ. 1977) that *Markan* scholarship was compelled, once again, to consider the possibility that divine sonship language is a subset of messiah language (see Section 2.4.4.1).<sup>25</sup> Reimarus also aided scholars of various ideological commitments to unite on another front: no one wanted Jesus to be the son of David if that entailed associating him with the militant, ethnocentric messianism of his time.

Wrede was not persuaded by the so-called “liberal” solution, however, and so he popularized the notion that the *Davidssohnfrage* represented the rejection of Jesus’s Davidic ancestry not simply, or

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Adolf Schlatter, *Markus: Der Evangelist für die Griechen* (Stuttgart: Calwer 1935, 30), 230; A. E. J. Rawlinson, *St Mark: With Introduction, Commentary, and Additional Notes*, 4th edn. (London: Methuen, 1936), 1–li; M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Marc, with Corrections and Additions*, 6th edn. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1942), CXVII–CXLIX, 11; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 120–121.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Johansson observes a similar shift in research on *Markan* Christology c. 1970 (“The Identity of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark: Past and Present Proposals,” *CBR* 9 [2010]: 364–393, at 371). His survey suggests that the dichotomy between “messiah” and “divine” Christologies persists in current scholarship (372–375). Consider, for example, Phillip Davis’s diagnosis of the problem with (what he perceives to be) Jack Dean Kingsbury’s unsatisfactory account of *Markan* Christology: “[U]nfortunately, Kingsbury himself is all too quick to resort to Old Testament and Jewish ideas when he turns to the task of interpretation” (“Mark’s Christological Paradox,” *JSNT* 35 [1989]: 3–18, at 17 n. 27).



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even necessarily, at the level of the historical Jesus, but at the earliest stratum of the tradition.<sup>26</sup> “Wir haben nicht ganz wenig Zeugnisse [including and especially the Gospel of Mark], dass die Davidssohnschaft Jesu in den ersten Jahrhunderten von gewissen Seiten bestritten worden ist.” Not only did he convince subsequent generations to set out on a quest for the community responsible for producing this tradition; he also set the agenda for what would count as evidence that an early tradent accepted, rejected, or augmented its Christology. The vast majority of subsequent scholarship, whether consciously or unwittingly, has adopted the Wredean position that primitive traditions with the name David constitute the only evidence of relevance to Mark's *Davidssonfrage*.

1.1.2 Sidelineing David's Son: The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*

Building on Wrede's project the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* sought to trace the development of christological concepts from their Palestinian origins into the wider Greco-Roman world.<sup>27</sup> The paragon of this approach is Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*.<sup>28</sup> According to Bousset, the messianic idea oscillated between two poles: while the majority of first-century Jews anticipated the arrival of a mundane messiah son of David, Jewish apocalyptic imagination had forged the notion of a transcendent messiah son of man.<sup>29</sup> Thus, he poses the question, “Did it [the Palestinian community] adopt the earthly political ideal of the Messiah as the Son of David or that strange transcendent ideal of the Messiah, or perhaps even in essence a blending of the two pictures of the Messiah?”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Wrede's disagreement with what he called “die liberale Hauptauffassung” was just that it could not be traced back to the historical Jesus but, rather, belonged to the primitive theologizing of some early community, which, for one reason or another, rejected the notion that Jesus was born of the Davidic line.

<sup>27</sup> Wrede was, of course, part of the original group of plucky young scholars who met in Göttingen in the 1880s and widely became known as *die religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. Yet, unlike his contemporary Wilhelm Bousset and subsequent generations of *religionsgeschichtliche Forscher*, he showed little interest in locating cultural parallels to early Christianity in Greco-Roman and mystery religions (see Robert Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contributions of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter*, SBT 25 [London: SCM, 1973], 10–11). It is only in this sense that my survey distinguishes his scholarship from that of the *Schule*.

<sup>28</sup> Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971 [German, 1921]).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–32.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

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Bousset answers his question by turning to the Synoptic Gospels. These documents indicate, as Wrede had demonstrated, that “the primitive community people were at best indifferent and even distrustful toward the ideal of the Son of David.”<sup>31</sup> Rejection of the populist son-of-David strand of messianism left the Palestinian community with only one viable alternative:

The first community of the disciples of Jesus viewed him as the Messiah, in that they, half-consciously rejecting the Son-of-David ideal, adapted to him the Jewish apocalyptic figure of the Son of Man. From this point all previously made observations draw their inner unity: the complete subsidence of the title of the Son of David, the polemic against the idea of Christ’s being a son of David, the less frequent use of the name Christ, the dominance of the Son-of-Man title . . . The messianic faith of the primitive community could be formed after the death of Jesus in no other form than that of the ideal of a transcendent Messiah. The hope that Jesus as an earthly man would take over the role on earth of the king from David’s tribe was once and for all shattered.<sup>32</sup>

Bousset was less certain about how son-of-God language fit within this scheme. While the title is ostensibly indebted to scriptural idioms about the Davidic king, he felt that it had “a much too mythical ring” to align with the Christology of the Palestinian community.<sup>33</sup> And so he posited that “an early influencing of primitive Christian messianology of Deutero-Isaiah,” represented by the designation *παῖς μου*, “my servant,” must lie beneath the divine designation of Jesus as *υἱὸς μου*, “my son.”<sup>34</sup> This in turn implies that divine sonship language, as it stands in the Synoptic Gospels, has “nothing more to do with Jewish-primitive Christian messianology.”<sup>35</sup>

Although he was not concerned with Markan Christology as such, Bousset’s account of Jewish messianism provides an explanation for why Palestinian Christians may have retained an apocalyptic form of

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 35, 81.<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 49.<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 93. He also concluded that the title “son of God” could not have been derived from biblical language, since “the Old Testament and the messianic faith of late Judaism did not know” it *as a title* (96). I address this objection in Chapter 2.<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 96–97.<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 97.