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NEW  
NARRATIVES  
FOR OLD

THE HISTORICAL METHOD  
OF READING EARLY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF  
MICHEL RENÉ BARNES

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EDITED BY ANTHONY BRIGGMAN  
AND ELLEN SCULLY



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### 3. KAVOD ON THE RIVER

#### *Jesus's Baptism as Revelation of the Divine Glory\**

Accounts of Jesus's baptism found in the synoptic gospels reveal some similarities with Jewish biblical theophanies, including the one found in the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel. Indeed, ancient and modern interpreters of the gospels' baptismal accounts have previously acknowledged their symbolic ties with Ezekiel's vision of the divine Glory.<sup>1</sup> Already Origen saw Ezekiel's vision

\*It is a great privilege to offer this essay for a volume honoring Professor Michel Barnes, a scholar from whom I have learned so much.

1. For influences of Ezekiel 1 on the baptismal narratives, especially in the Gospel of Matthew, see David B. Capes, "Intertextual Echoes in the Matthean Baptismal Narrative," *BBR* 9 (1999): 42; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 329; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 121; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, vol. 1, HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 78; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 52; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC 33a (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 57; Fritzleo Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe Jesu nach den Synoptikern: Literarkritische und gattungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, FTS 4 (Frankfurt: Josef Knecht, 1970), 108; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss, Hermenia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 179; David Mathewson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus According to the Gospel of Matthew: Reading Matthew 3:16-4:11 Intertextually," *Tyndale Bulletin* 62, no. 1 (2011): 89-108; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 107; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 155; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 359; Leopold Sabourin, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Bombay: St. Paul, 1982), 281; D. L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 119-20; Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 148-52.

as the typological precedent<sup>2</sup> for Jesus's baptism by offering a detailed comparison of the similarities between those accounts.<sup>3</sup> In his presentation of these parallels, Origen specifically directed his attention to Ezek 1:1, "in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened." Origen construes the "thirtieth year" as a reference to the prophet's age, connecting it at the same time to the age of Jesus at his baptism.<sup>4</sup> Origen's *Hom. in Ezech.* 1.4.5–9 relates the following tradition: "So then, by the river Chebar Ezekiel saw the heavens opened when he was thirty years old. And the Lord Jesus Christ, 'when he began he was about thirty years old' (Lk 3:23), by the Jordan River (cf. Mt 3:13), and 'the heavens were opened' (Lk 3:21).<sup>5</sup> Origen also makes a link between the Ezekielien "fourth month" and the time of Jesus's baptism, arguing that "in the fourth month on the fifth day of the month" refers to the fourth month of the Jewish year, the time when Jesus was baptized.<sup>6</sup>

The acknowledgment of the parallels between Jesus's baptism and Ezekiel's vision are also found in Jerome's *Commentary on Ezekiel*. Drawing his attention to the Ezekielien phrase about the opening heavens on the river Chebar, Jerome compares this imagery to the symbolism of the torn heavens at Jesus's baptism by noting that "this is also why at the baptism of the Savior, when the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove, we read that the

2. "Now if you are willing to hear Ezekiel, the 'son of man' preaching in the captivity, he too was a type of Christ." Origen, *Homilies 1–14 on Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, ACW 62 (New York: Newman Press, 2010), 32.

3. "By the river Chebar' (Ezek 1:1). This refers to that very heavy river of the world. 'And the heavens were opened' (Ezek 1:1). The heavens had been closed and they are opened for the advent of Christ, so that when they are unbolted the Holy Spirit may come upon him in the form of a dove. For he could not pass to us unless he first came down to one who shares in his own nature. Jesus ascended on high, he led captivity captive, he received gifts among men. The one who descended is also the very one who ascended above all the heavens, that he might fulfill all things" (Scheck, *Homilies 1–14 on Ezekiel*, 36).

4. On this tradition, see A. R. Christman, "What Did Ezekiel See?" *Christian Exegesis of Ezekiel's Vision of the Chariot from Irenaeus to Gregory the Great*, BAC 4 (Boston: Brill, 2005), 25.

5. Scheck, *Homilies 1–14 on Ezekiel*, 32–33.

6. *Hom. in Ezech.* 1.4.53–68 reads: "When, in accordance with the capacity of my understanding, I investigate what is also said: 'In the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month' (Ezek 1:1), I pray to God that I may be able to understand what is in agreement with the intention of the Scriptures. A new year is now imminent for the Jews, and among them the first month is numbered from the commencement of the new year. (But another new year is counted from Passover: 'Among the months of the year it will be to you as the beginning of the months' [Exod 12:2].) From this year count with me the fourth month and understand that Jesus was baptized in the fourth month of the new year. For in that month, which is called January among the Romans, we know that the baptism of the Lord was carried out" (Scheck, *Homilies 1–14 on Ezekiel*, 34). For the discussion of this passage see Christman, "What Did Ezekiel See?", 25.

heavens were opened."<sup>7</sup> In *Ezech.* 1.3a Jerome draws attention to the topological similarities of these revelatory encounters, both taking place on the rivers, by relating to his readers that "to both Daniel and Ezekiel, who were by rivers in Babylon, the mysteries of the future are disclosed upon waters, or rather, in the purest of waters, so that the power of baptism could be shown."<sup>8</sup>

Jerome further unveils his familiarity with traditions which we have already seen in Origen in relation to Ezek 1:1, "in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month." In *Ezech.* 1.3a he offers his reflections on the similarity of Ezekiel's and Jesus's age, pointing also to calendrical parallels between the revelatory encounters.<sup>9</sup> The similar tradition about the identical age of the seers at the time of their revelations on the rivers is also attested in Gregory the Great's *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1.2.5.<sup>10</sup>

Like their ancient counterparts, modern interpreters have also acknowledged the connections between Ezekiel's vision and Jesus's baptism by noticing that already in the earliest version of the baptismal narrative, as it is attested in the Gospel of Mark, the presence of the Ezekielien traditions looms large. Other evangelists, most notably Matthew, attempted to further strengthen these connections with Ezekiel's theophany. Scholars often argue that Matthew has modeled Jesus's experience on Ezekiel as "the Old Testament's ex-

7. Thomas P. Scheck, trans., *St. Jerome: Commentary on Ezekiel*, ACW 71 (New York: Newman Press, 2017), 17.

8. Scheck, *St. Jerome: Commentary on Ezekiel*, 17. For a discussion of this tradition see Christman, "What Did Ezekiel See?", 27.

9. *Ezech.* 1.3a reads: "One should also understand the following, that the Lord was baptized in the thirtieth year of his life (cf. Lk 3:23); in the fourth month, which among us is called January, and is the first, as the commencement of the year, besides Nisan, the month of new things, in which the Passover is celebrated—for among the eastern peoples, October was the first month after the ingathering of the crops and the winepresses, when tithes were brought in to the temple, and January was the fourth. But he adds the fifth day of the month and signifies baptism in which the heavens were opened for Christ. And up until today, the day of Epiphany is revered, not as some think, as his birth in the flesh, for at that time he was hidden and was not manifest. For it corresponded to this time when it was said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased' (Matt 3:16)" (Scheck, *St. Jerome: Commentary on Ezekiel*, 17–18).

10. *Hom. Ez.* 1.2.5 reads: "But if indeed the intention is to define some mystery in the actual expression of his age, it is not absurd that the Prophet show forth the Lord, Whom he proclaims in words, also in the very time of his age. For in the thirtieth year of the Prophet Ezekiel the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God beside the river Chobar, because also in the thirtieth year of His age the Lord came to the river Jordan. Thus there the heavens were opened, because the Spirit descended in the form of a dove; and a voice resounded from heaven, saying: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Matt 3:17)" (Theodosia Gray, trans., *The Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great "On the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel"*, ed. Juliana Cownie [Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990], 23).

emplar of a visionary experience."<sup>11</sup> Thus, it has been argued that Matthew deliberately changes Mark's statement *σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς* ("the heavens were split") to *ἠνεώχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί* ("the heavens were opened") in order to make a more explicit link with the Ezekielian theophany.<sup>12</sup> Some experts further point to another important similarity previously addressed in our study, namely, that both revelations take place on rivers—in Ezekiel's case on the river Chebar and in the synoptic accounts on the river Jordan.<sup>13</sup> Another possible parallel is that both stories take place against the backdrop of occupation of the Holy Land: by the Babylonians in Ezekiel, and the Romans in the synoptic accounts.<sup>14</sup> Both narratives also mention that the Spirit came upon the visionaries.<sup>15</sup> Scholars have also observed some visionary tendencies expressed in the terminology of "seeing" found in both accounts (Ezek 1:1, 3; Mt 3:16).<sup>16</sup> Reflecting on these ocularcentric connections, David Capes notes that "utilizing a recognized vision formula, the evangelist portrays Jesus as the end-time, apocalyptic prophet according to the order of Ezekiel."<sup>17</sup>

Some similarities and differences in the depiction of the revealed "objects" also deserve our attention. David Mathewson points out that "the reference to the visionary object as coming down, the visionary object depicted symbolically (as [ὠσεῖ] a dove), [and] the inclusion of ἰδοῦ to introduce the visionary elements . . . establish this account of Jesus's post-baptism experience semantically as an apocalyptic visionary experience."<sup>18</sup>

Although scholars have previously acknowledged parallels with the Ezekielian theophany, these studies often fail to answer the question as to why the authors of synoptic baptismal accounts have strived to link Jesus's baptism with Ezekiel's vision of the divine *Kavod* through an elaborate set of allusions. A close analysis of these parallels also reveals that the bulk of them pertain to a very specific part of the prophetic book, namely, to its first chapter, which

11. Mathewson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus," 94.

12. Capes, "Intertextual Echoes," 42; Mathewson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus," 98.

13. Capes, "Intertextual Echoes," 42; Mathewson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus," 98.

14. Capes, "Intertextual Echoes," 42. Origen stresses the motif of captivity, which in his opinion is present in both accounts by noting that "if you wish to hear Ezekiel, the son of man, preaching in captivity, understand him as a type of Christ" (Origen, *Hom. in Ezech.*, 1.5.1–8). On this tradition, see Christman, "What Did Ezekiel See?," 24.

15. Capes, "Intertextual Echoes," 43; Mathewson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus," 98.

16. Capes, "Intertextual Echoes," 49; Mathewson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus," 98.

17. Capes, "Intertextual Echoes," 49.

18. Mathewson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus," 98.

deals with the revelation of the divine Glory. Therefore, it is natural to assume that in the minds of the synoptic authors, Jesus's baptism was somehow associated with the revelation of the divine *Kavod*. On the first look it may appear strange, since in the synoptic baptismal narratives God is not manifested as the anthropomorphic Glory but instead remains visibly hidden, conveying his revelation via the aural address. Such theophanic peculiarities leave the door open for the opportunity that other characters of the baptismal accounts, including Jesus himself, might be envisioned as the manifestation of the divine Glory.

### Fire and Light in Water

Several early Christian authors speak about the appearance of fire and light during Jesus's baptism.<sup>19</sup> Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* 88:3, while describing the event at the Jordan, mentions the fire which ignites the waters of Jesus's immersion.<sup>20</sup> A similar motif can be found in the *Sibylline Oracles* 7.81–84, where the theme of the baptismal waters again coincides with the symbolism of fire: "You shall pour a libation of water on pure fire, crying out as follows: 'As the father begot you, the Word, so I have dispatched a bird, a word which is swift reporter of words, sprinkling with holy waters your baptism, through which you were revealed out of fire.'"<sup>21</sup> Another Christian account, the *Preaching of Paul*, cited in Pseudo-Cyprian, also recounts that when Jesus "was baptized, fire was seen to be upon the water."<sup>22</sup> Like in the

19. On this tradition see also Daniel Vigne, *Christ au Jourdain: Le Baptême de Jésus dans la tradition judéo-chrétienne* (Paris: Gabalda, 1992), 270–72; Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 110–12.

20. "And when Jesus came to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, he stepped down into the water and a fire ignited the waters of the Jordan" (*St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas F. Falls and Thomas P. Halton, ed. Michael Slusser, Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3 [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003], 137). Some Syrian authors, like Jacob of Sarugh and Narsai, envision the baptismal waters as a furnace. On this see Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 107–18.

21. J. J. Collins, trans., "Sibylline Oracles," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 412. Another passage from *Sibylline Oracles* 6.1–7 appears to attest to the same tradition: "I speak from my heart of the great famous son of the Immortal, to whom the Most High, his begetter, gave a throne to possess before he was born, since he was raised up the second time according to the flesh, when he had washed in the streams of the river Jordan, which moves with gleaming foot, sweeping the waves. He will escape the fire and be the first to see delightful God coming in the spirit on the white wings of a dove" (Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 407).

22. "A Treatise on Re-Baptism by an Anonymous Writer," in *ANF* 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 677.

biblical and extra-biblical portrayals of the divine *Kavod* with its paradoxical conflation of elements incapable of existing together, like fire and water, here too fire dwells upon the water.

Another significant development that may stem from the same conceptual roots is the motif of light present at the baptism,<sup>23</sup> a tradition which is usually traced by scholars to Tatian's *Diatessaron*.<sup>24</sup> The heterodox *Gospel of the Ebionites*, a writing possibly influenced by Tatian, reports that during Jesus's baptism "a great light shone round about the place."<sup>25</sup> The motif of light at Jesus's baptism also appears in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* known to Epiphanius. A tradition preserved in the *Panarion* 30.13.7 conveys that during Jesus's baptism "a great light shone round about the place."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, several manuscripts of the Old Latin version of the gospels expand the details of the baptismal narrative found in Matthew with already familiar theophanic details. William Petersen points out that two Vetus Latina manuscripts, the witnesses which reflect the text of the gospels prior to Jerome's Vulgate revision in the late fourth century, interpolate the motif of light in the water into the Matthean baptismal account.<sup>27</sup> The oldest Vetus Latina manuscript, namely, fourth-century MS *a* (Codex Vercellensis), inserts the following phrase: "a great light shone about from the water" (*lumen ingens circumfulsit de aqua*). Another Old Latin manuscript, the sixth-century MS *g*<sup>1</sup> (Codex Sangermanensis I), also injects the theme of light: "a big light shone from the water" (*lumen magnum fulgebat de aqua*).<sup>28</sup> Reflecting on this evidence, Petersen suggests that "in order to have

23. William Petersen suggested the possibility that "the bifurcation of the tradition might have arisen in Aramaic, from confusion between two homophones which are also orthographically almost identical: *nubra* - 'light' and *nura* - 'fire'" (William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship*, VCS 25 [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 16).

24. See Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 18–20; H. J. W. Drijvers und G. J. Reinink, "Taufe und Licht: Tatian, Ebionäerevangelium und Thomasakten," in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn*, ed. T. Baarda, A. Hilhorst, G. P. Luttikhuisen, and A. S. van der Woude (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1988), 91–110; Louis Leloir, *Le témoignage d'Éphrem sur le Diatessaron*, CSCO 227, Subsidia 19 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1962), 106; Vigne, *Christ au Jourdain*, 76.

25. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1: *Gospels and Related Writings*, English translation ed. Robert McLachlan Wilson (Cambridge: James Clarke; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 169.

26. Frank Williams, trans., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Book 1 (Sects 1–46)*, NHS 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 142. On this see also Susan E. Myers, *Spirit Epicleses in the Acts of Thomas*, WUNT 2. Reihe 281 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 127.

27. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 15.

28. Adolf Jülicher, *Itala: Das neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung*, vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1938), 14.

found its way into the canonical Matthew of MS *a*, the reading must have originated earlier than the fourth century. Since Epiphanius states that the reading stood in the 'Hebrew gospel,' and since a similarly named document is cited in the second century by Clement of Alexandria and in the third century by Origen, circulation of the reading in the second century seems likely.<sup>29</sup>

Petersen further proposes that the motif about fire and light in the Jordan might even represent "a proto-synoptic tradition."<sup>30</sup> Reflecting on the presence of such motifs in Justin and the Vetus Latina manuscripts, he argues that "the fact that two Vetus Latina manuscripts of Matthew also contain this variant reinforces the conclusion that Justin's source was a synoptic or proto-synoptic tradition. The oldest canonical account of the baptism from a synoptic gospel is in *P*<sup>75</sup>, dated to about 200; it contains Lk 3:18–4:2. But Justin's reading antedates *P*<sup>75</sup> by at least half a century; in fact, if one compares Justin's absolute date with that of the papyrus, then it is Justin who offers the earliest 'synoptic' account of Jesus's baptism. And its description includes a 'fire' in the Jordan."<sup>31</sup>

The preceding theophanic developments received their further elaboration in various Christian milieus. Everett Ferguson points out that "the light of fire at the Jordan accompanying Jesus's baptism was particularly preserved in Syriac sources."<sup>32</sup> It appears that these interpretations were no mere invention of the Syrian authors, but instead perpetuations of the ancient traditions and sources similar to Justin and Tatian. Therefore it is not coincidental that such motifs appear in the commentaries on these ancient authors. While describing Jesus's baptism, Ephrem the Syrian, in his commentary on the *Diatessaron*, speaks about "the splendor of the light which appeared on the water."<sup>33</sup>

Very similar theophanic markers also play a prominent role in Jacob of Serugh's renderings of the baptismal event. Susan Myers points out that "in the description of Christ's baptism in the Jordan in Jacob of Serugh, the sanctifica-

29. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 15.

30. As one option, Petersen suggests that Justin might have had "access to a Hebrew or Aramaic gospel, the same early Hebrew or Aramaic traditions which are the *Vorlage* from which our Greek Matthew was later translated and given a specific redaction. In this case, Justin's text would be valuable as a witness to the pre-canonical form of Matthew traditions" (Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 17–18).

31. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 16.

32. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 112.

33. Carmel McCarthy, trans., *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 85. On this tradition see also Sebastian Brock, "St. Ephrem on Christ as Light in Mary and in the Jordan: Hymni de Ecclesia 36," *ECR* 7 (1975): 79–88.

tion of the water (and thereby all waters of the earth) is also described in terms of fire: "The Holy One came to the water to go down to be baptized; his fire kindled amongst the waves and set them alight."<sup>34</sup>

The already familiar motif of fire at Jesus's baptism appears also in the *Hymn on Epiphany* 14, attributed to Ephrem. There Jesus himself is portrayed as the flaming fire who ignites the waters of the Jordan. *Hymn on Epiphany* 14:32 unveils the following imagery: "the waters in My Baptism are sanctified,—and fire and the Spirit from Me shall they receive;—and if I be not baptized they are not made perfect—to be fruitful of children that shall not die."<sup>35</sup> This conceptual development is significant since Jesus himself is now understood as the fiery center of the theophany.

It is important for our study that the symbolism of fire and light with which early Christian exegetes surround Jesus's baptism is reminiscent of the theophanic imagery wherein the divine *Kavod* is portrayed in biblical and extra-biblical Jewish accounts.<sup>36</sup> Everett Ferguson rightly discerns the theophanic significance of such motifs by pointing out that "light was a common element of a theophany, and its accompaniment of Jesus's baptism would be theologically significant in association with the heavenly voice and the descent of the Spirit as testimonies to Jesus's unique status."<sup>37</sup> The reception history of the baptism story thus demonstrates that it was often understood by the earliest Christian interpreters as a theophanic event reminiscent of manifestation of the divine Glory in the water. Such proclivities already appear to be manifested in the earliest specimen of this tradition in the testimony of Justin Martyr. Reflecting on the peculiarities of this witness, Ferguson notes, "Justin's reference to 'fire' is not only the earliest reference to the phenomenon that can be dated with some confidence but is also distinct from the light tradition, for he puts the appearance of the fire at the time when Jesus entered water, whereas the reports of light put the phenomenon either at the baptism or after it as with the other divine acknowledgements."<sup>38</sup>

34. Myers, *Spirit Epicleses in the Acts of Thomas*, 127.

35. E. Johnston, trans., "Ephraim Syrus. Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of Epiphany," in *NPNF: Second Series*, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, vol. 13 (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1898), 285.

36. Vigne, *Christ au Jourdain*, 263.

37. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 111.

38. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 111.

## Robe of Glory in the Jordan

Another important aspect of Christian interpretations of Jesus's baptism that may also be related to the understanding of this event as the manifestation of the divine Glory in the river is the tradition about the presence of the glorious robe in the Jordan. Although the synoptic baptismal accounts do not speak explicitly about Jesus's endowment with any garment at the baptism event, implicit allusions to the clothing symbols may still be present in the text. The possibility that the baptismal clothing metaphors could be implicitly present even in the synoptic accounts receives additional support in light of the Pauline passage attested in Gal 3:27, where the apostle conveys to early Christians that many of them who were baptized into Christ were themselves clothed with Christ (*Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε*). This passage hints at the early Christian understanding of baptism as an endowment with an eschatological garment. For our study it is significant that later Christian exegetes often interpret both the descent of the spirit on Jesus and his immersion into the water as respective clothing metaphors: the heavenly garments that the later generations of Christian adepts will be predestined to receive during their own baptisms.

We first need to draw our attention to the tradition associating clothing with water. Sebastian Brock notes that in the Syrian authors "the Word not only 'puts on a body,' but He also 'put on the waters of baptism.'"<sup>39</sup> In one of the *Hymns on Epiphany*, attributed by the tradition to Ephrem the Syrian, baptism is interpreted as being clothed with the water of glory: "in baptism Adam found again that glory that was among the trees of Eden. He went down, and received it out of the water; he put it on, and went up and was adorned therein. Blessed be He that has mercy on all."<sup>40</sup> The endowment with the eschatological garment of glory in this hymn is contrasted with the protologically ominous garments of fig leaves which the protoplasts received after their fall:

Man fell in the midst of Paradise, and in baptism compassion restored him: he lost his comeliness through Satan's envy, and found it again by God's grace. Blessed be He that has mercy on all! The wedded pair were adorned in Eden; but the serpent stole their crowns: yet mercy crushed down the accursed one, and made the wedded pair goodly in their raiment. Blessed be He that has mercy on all! They clothed themselves with

39. Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, CSS 12.4 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 90.

40. *Hymn on Epiphany* 12:1. Johnston, "Ephraim Syrus. Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of Epiphany," 282.

leaves of necessity; but the Merciful had pity on their beauty, and instead of leaves of trees, He clothed them with glory in the water.<sup>41</sup>

Another important specimen of baptismal clothing metaphors found in later Christian interpretations is the tradition of Jesus's vestment with the spirit at his baptism. Sebastian Brock points to such imagery in one of Ephrem's *Hymns on Nativity*,<sup>42</sup> from which we learn that "our body was Your garment; Your spirit became our robe."<sup>43</sup> A similar motif can be found in the already mentioned *Hymns on Epiphany*: "Descend, my brethren, put on from the waters of baptism the Holy Spirit."<sup>44</sup> Kilian McDonnell notices that the same imagery can be found in *Demonstrations* 6:14 of Aphrahat, who similarly encourages baptismal candidates to take the robe of the Spirit from the water and reinvest themselves in the original attire which Adam had before the Fall.<sup>45</sup>

It is important that although the previously examined passages often discuss the glorious baptismal robes of the Christian adepts, they often disclose that this robe of glory<sup>46</sup> was placed in the baptismal water by Jesus himself.<sup>47</sup> For example, Jacob of Serugh informs his readers that "Christ came to baptism,

41. *Hymn on Epiphany* 12:2–4. Johnston, "Ephraim Syrus. Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of Epiphany," 282.

42. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 93.

43. *Hymns on Nativity* 22:39. K. E. McVey, trans., *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, CWS (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 185.

44. *Hymn on Epiphany* 5:1. Johnston, "Ephraim Syrus. Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of Epiphany," 272.

45. Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* 6:14 relates the following tradition: "Now it is from baptism that we receive the Spirit of Christ: for at that moment when the priests invoke the Spirit, (the Spirit) opens up the heavens, descends and hovers over the water (Gen 1:2), while those who are being baptised clothe themselves in her. The Spirit remains distant from all who are of bodily birth until they come to the birth (that belongs to the baptismal) water: only then do they receive the Holy Spirit. For at (their) first birth they are born with an animate spirit which is created inside a person, which is furthermore immortal, as it is said 'Adam became a living soul' (Gen 2:7; 1 Cor 15:45). And at the second birth, which occurs at baptism, they receive the Holy Spirit, from a portion of divinity and this too is immortal" (K. Valavanolickal, trans., *Aphrahat: Demonstrations*, vol. 1, CTSI 3 [Kerala: HIRS, 1999], 152).

46. Brock notes that in the baptismal traditions "when he or she is baptized, the Christian is himself going down into the Jordan waters and from them he picks up and puts on the 'robe of glory' which Christ left there. The 'robe of glory' which Adam and Eve lost in Paradise at the Fall is thus recovered by the Christian at Baptism in the font" (Sebastian Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. Margot Schmidt [Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1982], 12–13).

47. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 93. According to this understanding, Jesus "places his glory in the womb of the Jordan waters when the Holy Spirit descends on Him" (A. M. Aagaard, "My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation: On Likeness to God and Deification in Patristic Theology," *Religion and Theology* 17 [2010]: 320).

He went down and placed in the baptismal water the robe of glory, to be there for Adam, who had lost it."<sup>48</sup> Reflecting on this passage, Brock suggests that "Christ's baptism and the sanctification of the Jordan waters provide the occasion for the recovery of the lost robe of glory in Christian baptism."<sup>49</sup> McDonnell adds that for Jacob of Serugh "all who come to baptism receive a garment, wholly of light ... woven with fire and Spirit, a garment of living fire."<sup>50</sup>

Also noteworthy is the fact that the Syrian traditions regarding the glorious robe of the baptism are permeated with protological overtones which envision this attire as the garment of the prelapsarian humanity. Brock notes that in the *Hymns on Epiphany* attributed to Ephrem, the recovery of the robe of glory, once lost by Adam, is specifically connected with baptism.<sup>51</sup> The *Hymn on Epiphany* 12:1 states that "in baptism Adam found again—that glory that was among the trees of Eden. He went down, and received it out of the water; he put it on, and went up and was adorned therein."<sup>52</sup> Analyzing these conceptual currents, McDonnell suggests that in such a conceptual framework the adept "goes down into the waters to take up the robe of glory which Adam had lost, and which Christ had recovered and deposited in the Jordan."<sup>53</sup>

### The Glorification of Jesus at the Jordan

One of the most significant aspects of the later Christian interpretations of the baptism story relevant for our study is the tradition of Jesus's glorification at the Jordan. One early testimony that highlights such an understanding can be found in Origen's *Homilies on Joshua*. *Homily on Joshua* 4:2 unveils the following tradition:

What great things were manifested before! The Red Sea was crossed on foot, manna was given from heaven, springs were burst open in the wilderness, the Law was given through Moses. Many signs and marvels were performed in the wilderness, but nowhere is it said that Jesus was "exalted." But where the Jordan is crossed, there it is said to Jesus, "In this day I am beginning to exalt you in the sight of the people." Indeed, Jesus is not exalted before the mystery of baptism. But his exaltation, even his exaltation

48. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 93.

49. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 93.

50. McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan*, 142.

51. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 94.

52. Johnston, "Ephraim Syrus. Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of Epiphany," 282.

53. McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan*, 143.

in the sight of the people, assumes a beginning from then on. If "all who are baptized [into Christ Jesus] are baptized into his death," and the death of Jesus is made complete by the exaltation of the cross, deservedly then, Jesus is first exalted for each of the faithful when that person arrives at the mystery of baptism. Because thus it is written that "God exalted him, and gave him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth, and below the earth."<sup>54</sup>

Scholars previously suggested that this text traces "the beginning of Jesus' glorification to the Jordan."<sup>55</sup> It does not appear to be coincidental that the tradition of Jesus's glorification at the Jordan is found in the same author who, as we learned previously, was particularly attentive to the Ezekielian background of the baptismal story.

Another possible reference to Jesus's glorification at the Jordan can be found in the *Testament of Levi* 18:6–7, a passage which relates the following tradition:

The heavens will be opened [οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἀνοιγήσονται], and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac. And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth upon him. And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him [in the water].<sup>56</sup>

Several experts have previously noticed that this passage brings to mind some details of Jesus's baptism. Reflecting on the similarities between the baptism of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and the *Testament of Levi's* initiation, Joel Marcus suggests, "in the latter the heavens are opened, the glory of God burst forth on the eschatological high priest 'with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac,' the Spirit rests upon him in the water, and Beliar (= Satan) is bound (cf. Mk 1:12–13; 3:27)."<sup>57</sup> Marcus also points out some terminological similarities with the synoptic accounts by noticing that like Matthew and Luke, the *Testament of Levi* is using the verb ἀνοίγειν in its description of the opening of the heavens (οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἀνοιγήσονται).<sup>58</sup>

54. Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, trans. Barbara Bruce, ed. Cynthia White, FC 105 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 53–54.

55. McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan*, 82.

56. H. C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 795; Marinus de Jonge, ed., *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text*, PVTG 1.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 48–49.

57. Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 159.

58. Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 159.

Researchers have previously suggested that the *Testament of Levi's* passage appears to address the glorification of Jesus at his baptism. Entertaining this possibility, McDonnell points out that in the *Testament of Levi* 18, "the glory, tied to the theology of rest, will be fully manifested in his resurrection, but it begins already here at the Jordan."<sup>59</sup> McDonnell also draws attention to another specimen of this interpretive tradition found in Ephrem the Syrian's *Hymn on the Church* 36:3, the text which also places the initial glorification of Jesus at his baptism.<sup>60</sup> From Ephrem's hymn we learn that "the river in which He was baptized conceived Him again symbolically; the moist womb of the water conceived Him in purity, bore Him in chastity, made Him ascend in glory."<sup>61</sup>

The tradition of the glorification of Jesus at the baptism is also attested in the *Teaching of St. Gregory*, containing the Armenian baptismal catechesis, possibly from the end of the fifth century.<sup>62</sup> The *Teaching of St. Gregory* 425 offers the following interpretation of Jesus's baptism through the prism of the Johannine language of glorification:

And He Himself said to the Father: "The hour has come, Father; glorify your Son." And there came a voice from heaven: "I have glorified, and I shall glorify again." This was not to seek a refuge, or because He is lacking at all of the Father's glory, but in order that the creatures might hear and be confirmed in the Son. In the same way the Son, standing in our midst, shows the Father and the Holy Spirit to the world, as the Father cried concerning the Only-begotten: "This is my only begotten Son; He is pleasing to myself. I shall set my Spirit over Him," who was revealed at his descending and resting on Him; just as He Himself said of the Holy Spirit: "He glorifies me."<sup>63</sup>

Although McDonnell argues that in this passage the tradition of the glorification of Jesus is present in its most explicit form,<sup>64</sup> some exegetical efforts are still required to untangle this complex nexus of various biblical allusions. McDonnell suggests that in this passage God's promise about the hour of glo-

59. Kilian McDonnell, "Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan," *TS* 56, no. 2 (1995): 226.

60. McDonnell, "Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan," 226.

61. Sebastian Brock and George Kiraz, trans., *Ephrem the Syrian: Select Poems* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2006), 71.

62. McDonnell also finds a similar tradition which traces the beginning of Jesus's glorification to the Jordan in another Armenian text, the so-called *The Key of Truth*, which recounts: "[first at his baptism] he was glorified, then [first] he was praised ... then [first] he shone forth" (McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan*, 83).

63. *The Teaching of St. Gregory: An Early Armenian Catechism*, trans. R. W. Thomson, HATS 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 93.

64. McDonnell, "Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan," 226.



rification, reflected in Jn 12:28; “I have glorified it, and I will glorify again” is anticipated at the baptism.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, some Christian interpretations attempt to link Jesus’s transfiguration on the mountain with his glorious metamorphosis in the waters of the Jordan, thus making the link between the two theophanic encounters.<sup>66</sup> For example, in the aforementioned *Hymn on the Church* 36 Ephrem unveils such a connection between the baptism and the transfiguration by uniting both events with the memory of Moses’s Sinai encounter. *Hymn on the Church* 36:5–9 reads:

As the Daystar in His river, the Bright One in His tomb, He shone forth on the mountain top and gave brightness too in the womb; He dazzled as He went up [from the river], gave illumination at His ascension. The brightness which Moses put on was wrapped on him from without, the river in which Christ was baptized put on Light from within, [Mary’s] body, in which He resided, was made gleaming from within. Just as Moses gleamed with the [divine] glory because he saw the splendor briefly, how much more should the body wherein [Christ] resided gleam, and the river in which He was baptized? The brightness that the stammering Moses put on in the wilderness did not allow the darkness to darken the inside of his dwelling, for the light from his face served as a sun that went before his feet, like the supernal beings whose eyes need no other light, since their pupils flow with light, and they are clothed in rays of glory.<sup>67</sup>

Reflecting on this passage Serafim Seppälä calls attention to the striking contrast between Moses’s illumination, which came from outside, and Christ’s baptism in the Jordan, where he put on light from within.<sup>68</sup> Here again, as in the previously explored transfiguration story, unlike Moses, Jesus himself is envisioned as the source of the divine light.

In the *Hymn on Epiphany* 9:12, attributed to Ephrem, one can again see symbolic ties between the transfiguration and the baptism epiphanies: “his worshippers are made white like His garments, the garments in Tabor and the body in the water. Instead of the garments, the peoples are made white, and have become for Him a clothing of glory.”<sup>69</sup> Here Jesus’s glorification on the

65. McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan*, 83.

66. Vigne, *Christ au Jourdain*, 263.

67. Brock and Kiraz, *Ephrem the Syrian: Select Poems*, 73–75.

68. Serafim Seppälä, “Baptismal Mystery in St. Ephrem the Syrian and *Hymnen de Epiphania*,” in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. D. Hellholm, T. Vegge, Ø. Norderval, and C. Hellholm, BZNW 176 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 1148.

69. Johnston, “Ephraim Syrus. Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of Epiphany,” 280.

mountain and his glorification in the river are unified by common theophanic features, some of which are borrowed from the synoptic accounts of the transfiguration story.<sup>70</sup>

### The Motif of the Torn Heaven

After our brief excursus into the reception history of the baptism story we should return to our analysis of the theophanic details of Jesus’s vision at the Jordan. Another conceptual nexus of the synoptic versions of Jesus’s baptism is the motif of the “opened” or “torn” heaven.<sup>71</sup> The synoptic accounts use different terminology in their renderings of this event. Mark uses *σχίζω* (to rend)<sup>72</sup> while Matthew and Luke use *ἀνοίγω* (to open). The verb forms, however, are not identical in Matthew and Luke: Matthew uses the aorist passive indicative (*ἠνεώχθησαν*)<sup>73</sup> while Luke employs the aorist passive infinitive (*ἀνεωχθήναι*).<sup>74</sup>

As previously mentioned, ancient and modern interpreters often read this motif in light of the Ezekielian imagery with its portrayal of the open heavens on the river Chebar. Scholars also point out that the opening of the heavens represents a principal element of early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic visionary accounts, where it is often understood as a prelude to a vision.<sup>75</sup>

70. On the interconnections between the baptism and the transfiguration in this passage, see Seppälä, “Baptismal Mystery in St. Ephrem the Syrian and *Hymnen de Epiphania*,” 1140.

71. Matthew (*ἠνεώχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί*) and Luke (*ἀνεωχθήναι τὸν οὐρανόν*) use the same verb while Mark uses *σχίζόμενους*.

72. Mk 1:10: “*σχίζόμενους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς*.” Scholars have previously suggested that Mark’s terminological choice appears here to imply an irreversible cosmic change with his picture of the torn heavens. This is in contrast to the tamer Matthean/Lukan scenario, in which they are merely “opened,” since what is opened may be closed but what is torn apart cannot easily return to its former state. Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 165; D. H. Juell, *Mark*, ACNT (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 33.

73. Mt 3:16: “*ἠνεώχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί*.”

74. Lk 3:21: “*ἀνεωχθήναι τὸν οὐρανόν*.” On this terminology see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, AB 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 480.

75. Mathewson, “The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus,” 92. Joel Marcus notes that “the Markan account of the baptism of Jesus should probably be viewed as a description of an eschatological theophany, like the pertinent passages from Isaiah. As Ernst Lohmeyer points out, the violent tearing of the heavens, emphasized by the Markan verb *σχίζειν*, points to a background in apocalyptic dualism: [The tearing of the heavens] is rooted in the view that heaven and earth are shut up against each other, so that God can no longer associate with his people in an unmediated manner, or they with him, as once happened. It is therefore a sign of unusual grace when the heaven opens. This occurs in a miracle that embraces the entirety of the people or of the world; not accidentally, the motif is found almost solely in apocalypses” (Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992], 56; see Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and

Indeed, the theme of the upper realm's opening in the synoptic gospels appears to rely here on a rich theophanic legacy. In relation to this background Richard Thomas France notes that "the opening of heaven is a recurrent theme in biblical and other literature (Jewish and pagan) to indicate a vision which reaches beyond the earthly dimension (Ezek 1:1; Jn 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rv 4:1; 19:11)."<sup>76</sup> Christopher Rowland and Christopher Morray-Jones further narrow the possible conceptual background of the heavens' opening motif by noticing that there the heavens were opened just as they were to the prophet Ezekiel by the river Chebar, thus fulfilling that prophetic longing that God would rend the heavens and fulfil the divine purposes.<sup>77</sup> The process of gradual assimilation to the Ezekielien traditions can be discerned through a comparative analysis of the synoptic baptismal accounts. Reflecting on the differences of the rendering of the torn heaven theme in various gospels, Davies and Allison notice that "Matthew differs from Mark in putting 'heavens'—the plural ... and ... in the nominative and by changing the verb to the passive of ἀνοίγω,"<sup>78</sup> suggesting that "both modifications probably signal assimilation to Ezek 1:1: ἠνοίχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδον ὀράσεις θεοῦ."<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, the torn heaven theme appears to be related in the gospels not only to the apparition of the heavenly *Kavod* as it is described in the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel and other early Jewish accounts; it also appears connected to a different, this time "earthly," theophany of the divine Glory,

Ruprecht, 1951], 21–22). See also William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 55.

76. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark. A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 77. In his other commentary France notes that "the phrase 'the heavens were opened' echoes Ezekiel's inaugural vision (Ezek 1:1)" (R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 95).

77. Christopher Rowland and C. R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, CRINT 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 104–5.

78. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 329.

79. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 329. The motif of splitting heaven associated with the appearance of the otherworldly being recalls another important Jewish account where the visionary currents reach their conceptual apex, namely, *Joseph and Aseneth*. In relation to this connection, Adela Yarbro Collins notices that the unusual Markan expression "the heavens split" (σχίζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς) does not occur in the LXX or anywhere else in the New Testament. However, it does occur in *Joseph and Aseneth*, where the heaven was split (ἐσχίσθη ὁ οὐρανός) near the morning star, revealing a "man," that is, an angel, who came down to Aseneth from heaven (*Joseph and Aseneth* 14:1–3); Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermenia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 148. In the baptism account, however, the open heaven does not reveal the descent of the anthropomorphic being, but rather a pteromorphic creature, which may suggest that in the baptismal narrative Jesus himself remains the main theophanic focus of the vision.

which was only accessible once a year to the high priest on earth in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple. Such a connection is likely referred to in the Gospel of Mark and other synoptic accounts through a set of corresponding metaphors of tearing found not only in the baptismal account, but also in the portrayal of Jesus's death on the cross, where the motif of tearing appears again. In Mk 15:38–39,<sup>80</sup> a passage which describes events that occurred immediately after Jesus's crucifixion, one can find a narration of the following extraordinary incident:

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom [καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπ' ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω]. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

Here, like the heavens during Jesus's baptism, the curtain of the earthly temple is said to be torn. The tearing of the sacred fabric from the top, rather from the bottom to the top might suggest here that it was torn not by a human agent but rather by some unnamed heavenly force.

Analyzing the two instances of the supernatural tearing in the Gospel of Mark, David Ulansey suggests that the two ripping events in this gospel do not occur at random points in the narrative, but were intentionally placed at two pivotal moments in the story, where they provide an ideal counterpoint for each other. These moments in Ulansey's view represent the *precise beginning* (the baptism) and the *precise end* (the death) of the spiritual career of Jesus.<sup>81</sup> Ulansey proposes that such placement of the two instances of the motif of tearing form a symbolic *inclusio*—a narrative device well known in biblical and other ancient texts where a detail, repeated at the beginning and the end of a narrative unit, intends to provide a sense of closure and structural integrity.<sup>82</sup> Ulansey concludes by suggesting that "seen in this context, the presence at both moments of the motif of something being torn is unlikely to be coincidental."<sup>83</sup>

Here we must note that Ulansey was not the first scholar who drew attention to these correspondences. Joel Marcus reminds us that already Ernst

80. See also Mt 27:51 and Lk 23:45.

81. David Ulansey, "The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic 'Inclusio,'" *JBL* 110, no. 1 (1991): 123–25 at 123.

82. Ulansey, "Heavenly Veil Torn," 123.

83. Ulansey, "Heavenly Veil Torn," 123–24.

Lohmeyer's apocalyptic interpretation of the Markan baptismal account was based on a comparison with Mk 15:38–39, a passage whose vocabulary and context are strikingly similar to 1:10–11.<sup>84</sup> In its turn, Marcus also reflects on several common features of the two Markan “tearing” episodes, which both include an appropriation of the verbs σχίζειν (in the passive voice) and ἰδεῖν (“to see”), reference to “spirit” (ἐξέπνευσεν/πνεῦμα), and the use of an identification formula (“this man was”/“you are”) that points to Jesus's divine sonship.<sup>85</sup> Marcus also points out that both passages reflect a descending divine action (the descent of the Spirit, the tearing of the Temple veil from top to bottom).<sup>86</sup>

The parallelism between the tearing of the sacerdotal fabric and the opening of the heavenly realm calls to mind some early Jewish testimonies in which the veil of the earthly temple was likened to the heavens. Ulansey's research reminds us about one such often neglected witness from Josephus's *Jewish War* in which the sanctuary's veil was portrayed as a panorama of the heavens.<sup>87</sup> Analyzing this tradition, Ulansey proposes that the outer veil of the Jerusalem temple was actually one huge image of the starry sky.<sup>88</sup> He further suggests that Markan readers “who had ever seen the temple or heard it described would instantly have seen in their mind's eye an image of the heavens being torn, and would immediately have been reminded of Mark's earlier description of the heavens being torn at the baptism.”<sup>89</sup>

It should be mentioned here that recognition of the connections between Mk 1:10 and Mk 15:38 has been steadily gaining scholarly support in the recent scholarship.<sup>90</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins affirms this scholarly consensus in her *Hermeneia* commentary on Mark by noting, almost in Ulansey's style, that

84. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 57.

85. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 57.

86. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 57.

87. Ulansey, “Heavenly Veil Torn,” 124–25.

88. Ulansey, “Heavenly Veil Torn,” 124.

89. Ulansey, “Heavenly Veil Torn,” 124–25.

90. Elizabeth Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 187n93; Stephen Motyer, “The Rending of the Veil: A Markan Pentecost?,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 155–57; H. M. Jackson, “The Death of Jesus in Mark and the Miracle from the Cross,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 23–31; Johannes Heidler, “Die Verwendung von Psalm 22 im Kreuzigungsbericht des Markus: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Christologie des Markus,” in *Christi Leidenspsalm: Arbeiten zum 22. Psalm; Festschrift zum 50. Jahr des Bestehens des Theologischen Seminars “Paulinum” Berlin*, ed. Hartmut Genest (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 26–34; D. M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus*, SNTSMS 139 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 172–74.

for members of the Markan community who heard about the torn curtain, “the announcement of the rending of the curtain would evoke an image of ‘the heavens being torn and [they] would immediately have been reminded’ of the account of Jesus' baptism.”<sup>91</sup>

The parallelism between the torn heaven at Jesus's baptism and the rending of the sacerdotal fabric that once concealed the glory of God in the earthly temple is important for our ongoing study since it provides additional support for the possible presence of the *Kavod* symbolism in the synoptic baptismal accounts. What is also significant is that in both Mk 1:10 and Mk 15:38, Jesus is not placed in the Temple or in heaven, typical places for the divine *Kavod*, but rather portrayed outside of these conventional sacerdotal *topoi*. Such placement may be intended to underline Jesus's role as a new custodian, and possibly even the center, of the *Kavod* ideology, predestined to replace old theophanic realities.

## Conclusion

Our analysis of the synoptic baptismal accounts points to the possibility that these conceptual developments attempt to enhance Jesus's profile as the embodiment of the divine *Kavod*. Several details of the baptismal narratives divulge such a possibility.

First, the synoptic accounts reveal the tendency to connect Jesus's baptism with the imagery and terminology present in the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, a distinctive portion of the prophetic book where the *Kavod* imagery reaches its most developed symbolic expression in the entire Hebrew Bible.

Second, the Gospel of Mark, as well as the other synoptic gospels, unveils the connection between the imagery of the torn heaven in the baptismal story and the symbolism of the torn veil of the Jerusalem temple in the story of Jesus's crucifixion. Two depictions, unified by this similar terminology, point to the possibility that the ripped curtain that concealed the *Kavod* in the earthly sanctuary could be associated in the minds of the synoptic authors with the opening of the cosmological curtain of the *Kavod* represented by the heavens.

Finally, the reception history of the synoptic baptismal accounts in later

91. Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 762.

Christian interpretation suggests that Jesus's baptism was the first step of his glorification, the process inundated in these materials with the peculiar visual markers of the *Kavod* ideology.

These features all point to the possibility that the synoptic accounts attempted to closely connect Jesus's baptism with the *Kavod* traditions, thus envisioning him as the representation of the divine Glory.

*Mark DelCogliano*

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#### 4. "THE DROPS OF THE DEW"

*The Interpretation of "Begetting" Language in the  
Early Trinitarian Controversies*

The Trinitarian controversies of the fourth century were, at their core, debates over the correct exegesis of scripture. One of the main issues was how to interpret scriptural language that spoke of the Father "begetting" the Son. Some argued that this language meant that the Son was the same kind of being as the Father, of the same substance or nature, the Father's "natural" Son. Others disagreed, saying that scriptural usage did not warrant understanding the divine begetting in this way. For scripture used the language of "begetting" in a way that emphasized that the Father created, made, or established sons who were fundamentally different from him. Accordingly, when scripture said that the Father begot the Son it indicated nothing more than that the Father created the Son, similarly to all other creatures.

In the earliest days of the Trinitarian controversies those who denied any sort of substantial likeness between Father and Son assembled a cluster of biblical verses to support their position on what "begetting" language meant in scripture: Is 1:2, Dt 32:18, and Jb 38:28. Each of these verses spoke of the Father begetting sons who were clearly not the same kind of being as him, of a different nature. And thus, they argued, so was the Son. Eusebius of Nicomedia is the earliest extant witness to this "Arian" cluster. In order to make a successful argument that the Son was the Father's "natural" Son, theologians had to