CHAPTER ELEVEN

REFLECTIONS ON GLORY AND PAUL

The introduction to this work alluded to the fact that studying the background, origin and use of Glory in Paul may prove to be a good test case for reading Paul in general. It is now time to draw together some of the conclusions reached in previous chapters to show how Glory forms just such a test case.

(1) *Paul inherited a symbolic universe with signs already "full" of signification.* As opposed to neutral signs, the words, phrases and images Paul employed had already acquired a range of meaning. In the case of Glory, this range of meaning relates to the כבוד יהוה tradition preserved in the Jewish scriptures.

Based upon a limited structural semantic analysis, כבוד יהוה in the Hebrew Bible should be considered a technical term. The closely circumscribed group of syntactic constructions employing כבוד יהוה and the less plastic behavior of כבוד יהוה, when compared to other divine presence signifiers, bears witness to the technical nature of כבוד יהוה, and thus lays the necessary groundwork for an investigation of the tradition-history of Glory.

Though depending on older divine presence כבוד יהוה language, language which stretches back to traditions about ancient Israel's earliest experiences, כבוד יהוה, in its most precise and technical sense as reflected in "P," first crystallized as a tradition at the beginning of the Davidic monarchy. כבוד יהוה crystallized as a tradition to legitimize the transition from settlement worship to worship under kingship.

Once introduced, the Glory tradition continued to flourish during the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy. In a Royal theology, כבוד יהוה, the visible presence of Yahweh which appeared at the tabernacle, came to signify the unqualified blessing of Yahweh in
all aspects of the Davidic-Solomonic kingdom. By addressing kingship, creation, blessing and worship, the Glory tradition powerfully spoke to those who were experiencing the social change associated with the growth of the Davidic monarchy.

In the hands of the prophets, God's חמשון, a sign of approval in a Royal theology, came to re-signify God's judgment. Because of Israel and Judah's failure, the creative and nourishing presence of God withdrew and, through its absence, חמשון became a sign of divine chastisement. The prophets also employed the Glory tradition to proclaim a message of hope. The Lord will one day manifest himself, his חמשון, in order to reconfigure the existence of his people. Judgment and suffering will be replaced by a revelation of Glory, a manifestation which will effect a second exodus, a restoration and recreation. The Glory tradition also played a significant role in the calls of the prophets. In their calls, the prophets were confronted by Glory and had their prophetic mission defined by חמשון.

In the throne visions of early Jewish apocalypses, Glory formed part of the characteristic field of signifiers used to describe the heavens. That is, when a seer peered into the heavens, he saw Glory--whether associated with God, a throne or a special angel. Glory thus denoted and connoted divine and semi-divine beings which populate the heavens. The profound and pervasive influence of Ezekiel's inaugural vision explains how Glory came to have such a diverse signifying power in early Jewish throne visions. The description of the manlike חמשון in Ezekiel 1:28 impacted the descriptions of God, defined certain angels as divine agents and demonstrated the exalted status of translated patriarchs and heroes. Specifically, the "one like a son of man," the "Son of Man," the "Elect One": each became equated with חמשון of Ezekiel 1. The sometimes anthropomorphically described חמשון became the sometimes anthropomorphically described special angelic figure.

But the long exegetical trajectory stemming from Ezekiel's call vision was not the only construal of the variegated Glory tradition to be preserved and nourished during the Hellenistic