

Monotheism and Christology in Greco-Roman Antiquity

Edited by

Matthew V. Novenson



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

For use by the Author only | © Paula Fredriksen

Contents

- Preface IX
Abbreviations X
Translations XI
Notes on Contributors XII
- 1 Introduction 1
Matthew V. Novenson
- 2 The New *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* at Thirty: Observations by
a Participant 9
Larry W. Hurtado
- 3 The Universal Polytheism and the Case of the Jews 32
Matthew V. Novenson
- 4 The Divine Name as a Characteristic of Divine Identity in Second-Temple
Judaism and Early Christianity 61
Charles A. Gieschen
- 5 Jesus' Unique Relationship with YHWH in Biblical Exegesis:
A Response to Recent Objections 85
David B. Capes
- 6 God and Glory and Paul, Again: Divine Identity and Community Formation
in the Early Jesus Movement 99
Carey C. Newman
- 7 Confessing the Cosmic Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6 and
Colossians 1:15–20) 139
Richard Bauckham
- 8 One God, One Lord in the Epistle of James 172
Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr
- 9 Between Jewish Monotheism and Proto-Trinitarian Relations:
The Making and Character of Johannine Christology 189
Jörg Frey

- 10 God and Christ in the Earlier Martyr Acts 222
Jan N. Bremmer
- 11 Gnosis and the Tragedies of Wisdom: Sophia's Story 249
PHEME PERKINS
- 12 The One God Is No Simple Matter 263
April D. DeConick
- 13 How High Can Early High Christology Be? 293
Paula Fredriksen
- Index of Ancient Sources 321**
Index of Modern Authors 345
Index of Subjects 355

How High Can Early High Christology Be?

Paula Fredriksen

I have been a member of the Early High Christology Club (EHCC) for quite a few years now; and the heights of the Christology that I think are early rest primarily on my reading of Paul's letters. Paul makes very high claims for Jesus when he designates him as a "man from heaven" (1 Cor 15:47), as someone who pre-existed in a pneumatic form (Phil 2:6), and as the one who served as God's agent in creation (1 Cor 8:6b). Paul's Christ is the "first-fruit" of those to have "fallen asleep" (and thus of those who are about to be transformed and raised, 1 Cor 15:20). He is God's "son"—that is, the eschatological lord and Davidic warrior—who is about to return to defeat pagan gods and to effect that signature eschatological miracle, the resurrection of the dead (Rom 1:3–4; cf. 1 Thess 4:13–18; 1 Cor 15:20–28). Once Christ appears at the temple mount, the twelve tribes of Israel will reassemble and, together with the seventy gentile nations descended from Noah, will unite under Christ in praise of God (Rom 11:25–26, cf. the table of nations in Gen 10; 15:9–12). Lower cosmic powers, newly subject to divine universal sovereignty, will as a result of Christ's victorious parousia praise God as well (Phil 2:6–11; cf. Rom 8:38–39). After Christ's conquest of the cosmos, God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). That's quite a job description, in my view.

But in terms of the EHCC, I am definitely low church. This august body has a two-tiered membership, and the description given just above does not adequately express the claims of the higher tier. These scholars are committed to "Big Bang Christology." They maintain that Paul—and before him, the post-resurrection community assembled in Jerusalem—radically "identified" Jesus with the god of Israel.¹ In one interpretation, this identification is seen in the early communities' binitarian or dyadic devotion, that is, their liturgical identification of God with the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers "call upon" Jesus as "lord" in ways that deliberately recall devotion to the Jewish high god (e.g., Rom

1 "To identify" *vel sim.* is a spongy term. It can mean claiming that A is the same thing as B ("He identified the statue as a ritual object"). It can mean claiming that A associates closely with B ("He identifies with his mother"). It can mean *naming something properly* ("She identified the man as John Doe"). Its Christological deployment, steering between the Scylla of Sabellianism and the Charybdis of ditheism, never quite settles on a clear usage.

10:13). This liturgical “mutation” in Israel’s worship, in this argument, originated not in the gentile milieu of the Diaspora, but rather in the earliest, Jewish, Jerusalem community. Its vaulted claims for Christ, construed as a novel violation of traditional Jewish monotheism, in turn explains Paul’s both giving and, later, getting hostile responses to and from other Jews (Gal 1:13, 23; Phil 3:6; 1 Cor 15:9; 2 Cor 11:26).²

Other higher-tier scholars parse Big Bang Christology in terms of divine attributes assigned to Jesus, which, in this construction, a rigorously “monotheistic” Second-Temple Judaism had previously associated with God the father alone. This identification-through-shared-attributes sometimes focuses on God as creator. Within a strict “binary distinction that allows for no ambiguous semi-divine beings”—a supposed binary of “created” (which is everything *but* God) and “uncreated” (which is God alone)—Christ “belongs on the divine side of the monotheistic distinction between Creator and creation.”³ Christ’s agency in God’s activity does not distinguish him *from* God: rather, his creative role “is contained within the unique identity of the one God.”⁴ In other words, early *very* high Christology complicates “monotheism” but does not compromise it, because Christ, though other than God, is so intimately and radically “identified” with God.

Or, perhaps, the defining term that reveals this “Christ monotheism” is *kyrios*, “Lord.” The favored Septuagintal translation in “YHWH texts” for “God,” “Lord” when deployed to name Jesus in paleo-Christian writings reveals the earliest movement’s radical, singular, unique identification of Jesus with God.⁵ Or, perhaps, the defining attribute is *doxa*, “glory,” the LXX’s term for *kavod*, which in earlier Jewish scriptures indicates God’s divine presence. In this view, Paul champions Jesus as the “eschatological divine glory” in ways utterly distinct from contemporary religious patterns whether Jewish or Greco-Roman. The Jesus movement’s “unwavering commitment to monotheism,” coupled with its

2 Larry W. Hurtado has argued tirelessly for this interpretation. His definitive opus on the topic is *Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

3 Richard Bauckham, “Confessing the Cosmic Christ” (chapter 7 above), 166. Bauckham has made this distinction between “created” and “uncreated” in many of his other publications: see esp. the collection of his essays in *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

4 Bauckham, “Confessing the Cosmic Christ,” 146. I confess that, if I block out what I know about later patristic Christology, I have a hard time understanding exactly what this claim in a first-century Jewish context of any sort (or even in a first-century Platonizing philosophical context, like Philo’s) is supposed to mean.

5 David B. Capes, “Jesus’s Unique Relationship with YHWH in Biblical Exegesis” (chapter 5 above), 88. An expanded presentation of his view may be found in *The Divine Christ: Paul, the Lord Jesus, and the Scriptures of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

referral of uniquely divine attributes (in this case, “glory”) to Jesus, means that Jesus as “the glory of God,” revealed as such through his resurrection, “*is the god of Israel’s divine presence.... Jesus shares God’s divine identity.*”⁶ This “redefinition of Jewish monotheism” venerates Jesus as God, ascribing “to Jesus [those] sacred texts [that were] previously reserved only for God.”⁷

In short, for this new movement, Jesus *is* God.⁸ Paul in this reading really is the first Christian theologian, and what he articulates is a theological *novum* distinctively, even disruptively (or “transgressively”) different from preceding sorts of (“monotheistic”) Jewishness. Its transgressiveness in turn explains early Jewish resistance to the gospel, with Paul on both the giving and the receiving ends of this resistance. Nicea (325 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE) might be centuries off over the historical horizon line but, according to the above reconstructions, these imperially-sponsored councils’ Christological points of principle were already articulated and proclaimed in Jerusalem, at Easter, among Jews, following the initial Big Bang of Jesus’ resurrection.

Let’s take a closer look.

1 The Many Gods of Ancient Jewish ‘Monotheism’

Supposed Jewish “monotheism” is the intellectual keystone of higher-tier High Christology. The absolute, austere uniqueness of the Jewish god, a conviction imputed to ancient Jews, ensures both the supposed (purely?) Jewish pedigree of early *very* high Christology, and sets its terms: if the god of Israel is uniquely divine, and if Jesus’ first followers intimately identify Jesus with that god, then Jesus is uniquely divine too. This idea of uniqueness, of utter and absolute singularity, is in turn rhetorically hardwired into the very definition of monotheism, “the doctrine that there is only one God” (thus the *OED*).

But “monotheism” is not a term of historical description, even for peoples whom we habitually identify as “monotheists.” The fundamental problem is not that the term is a late seventeenth-century coinage: historians routinely use modern words (“inflation,” “pandemic”) to describe ancient phenomena. The problem is that the concept that the term describes and defines—the unique existence of a single (and therefore unique) god—is itself a late

6 Carey C. Newman, “God and Glory and Paul, Again” (chapter 6 above), 124. For his fuller treatment of these ideas, *Paul’s Glory Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), and the article “Glory” in *NIDB* 1:576–80.

7 Newman, “God and Glory and Paul, Again,” 135.

8 Newman, “God and Glory and Paul, Again,” 138.

seventeenth-century idea. Its retrojection back into the Roman past distorts ancient theology more than it describes it.⁹ In antiquity, the highest “god” (be he pagan, Jewish, or Christian) was a member of a larger class, “gods.” The very idea of a *theos hypsistos*—a favorite designation for Israel’s god in the Septuagint—is itself intrinsically comparative: the god in question is the highest of all the (other) gods. Even the phrase εἷς θεὸς ἐν οὐρανῶ, “one god in heaven,” asserted superiority, not singularity.¹⁰

Antiquity’s cosmos, in short, was a god-congested place. Loyalty to (or pious enthusiasm for) one particular god, or assertion of the superiority of one’s own city’s god, was not the same as asserting that the deity in question was the *only* god. For those (rare) ancients who thought systematically in terms that we identify (confusingly) as “monotheist,” heaven, though heavily populated, was organized hierarchically. At the pinnacle was the “one god.” Numerous and various others ranged beneath.

9 I have weighed in against using this term to describe ancient Jews and Christians in “Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins whose Time Has Come to Go,” *SR* 35 (2006): 231–46; I argue further in “Philo, Herod, Paul, and the Many Gods of Ancient Jewish Monotheism” (forthcoming). See too the well-considered objections of J. Lionel North, “Jesus and Worship, God and Sacrifice,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. S. North (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 186–202; and, in the same volume, the essays by William Horbury, “Jewish and Christian Monotheism in the Herodian Age,” 16–44, esp. 20–21, for many primary references in Jewish sources to “gods”; and by R. W. L. Moberley, “How Appropriate is ‘Monotheism’ as a Category for Biblical Interpretation?,” 216–34. These latter essays all assemble broad bibliographies.

10 Angelos Chaniotis, “Megatheism: The Search for the Almighty God and the Competition of Cults,” in *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, ed. Stephen Mitchell and Peter van Nuffelen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 112–40. See also, in the same collection, the essay by Nicole Belayche, “*Deus deum ... summorum maximus* [Apuleius]: Ritual Expressions of Distinction in the Divine World in the Imperial Period,” 141–66, on divine hierarchy and plurality. The current scholarly vogue in ancient pagan “monotheism” expresses what earlier scholars termed “henotheism,” one god among many: see most recently Christian Gers-Uphaus, “Paganer Monotheismus anhand der θεὸς ὑψίστος- und εἷς θεός-Inschriften,” *JAC* 60 (2017): 5–82. Pagans who invoked *theos hypsistos* need not have had the LXX’s god in mind, on which Dorothea Rohde, “Die religiöse Landschaft einer Hafenstadt im Wandel,” in *Juden-Christen-Heiden? Religiöse Inklusion und Exklusion in Kleinasien bis Decius*, ed. Stefan Alkier and Hartmut Leppin, *WUNT* 400 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 197–217, esp. 210; cf. Christian Marek, “Nochmals zu den Theos Hypsistos Inschriften,” *ibid.*, 131–48. As Marek points out, commenting on the Oenoanda inscription, Apollo—one of the Olympian gods—demotes himself to being a messenger (“angel”) vis-à-vis the highest, self-existing god, 143–44. By contrast, Clement of Alexandria considers “gods” and “angels” as two distinct and non-hierarchically arranged categories (*Strom.* 7.3.20.4); cf. Celsus’ ranking of these entities as the greatest god, gods, angels, daemons (which can be good or evil), and heroes (*Cels.* 7.68).

Cosmology recapitulated theology. Divinity stood on a gradient, and it spanned heaven and earth: stars, planets, sun, moon, lesser superhuman beings (*daimones* and *daimonia*) were to varying degrees divine. “Lower” gods, like divine humans and heroes, stood further down and closer in to the geocentric center of the universe. “Higher” gods, especially the glowing, perfect, immortal *somata pneumatika* of astral deities, were quite literally “higher,” above the line of cosmic demarcation set by the moon, superior both morally and metaphysically to beings ranged beneath.¹¹

Compounding our efforts at clarity is the fluidity of ancient vocabulary. “Gods,” “*daimones*,” “angels,” “stars,” “spirits,” and special humans (whether heroes or emperors—or even, as we shall see, apostles) all attested to and expressed degrees of divinity; but ancients used words inconsistently and variously when naming these entities. Apollo, for example, was unquestionably one of the Olympian high gods. But, with philosophy’s development of the idea of a “highest, uncreated god” (an idea to which we will return), Apollo referred to himself and to his Olympian colleagues as merely that god’s *angeloi* or “messengers.”¹² For Clement of Alexandria, by contrast, “gods” and “angels” were two distinct and different species of beings, both serving as celestial spectators for heroic Christian sufferings (*Strom.* 7.3.20).

Philo’s first-century heaven glowed with gods, those sidereal bodies whom he names “manifest and visible *theoi*” (*Opif.* 7.27; *Spec.* 1.13–14; *Aet.* 46). For Philo, further, the Jewish god’s *logos* was a “second god” (*QG* 2.62) as, similarly, was Jesus for Justin (*heteros theos*, *Dial.* 59.1).¹³ Paul forthrightly acknowledges the existence of many gods and many lords, active social agents who serve as

11 On the religious and scientific implications of this cosmic architecture, E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 6–14; on the ways that it structures second and third-century Christians theologies, Paula Fredriksen, *Sin: The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 51–112 (Valentinus, Marcion, Justin, and Origen). For a brief first-century tour of this cosmos, 1 Cor 15:39–42; for a more orderly, fourth-century survey, Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe*, ed. and trans. A. D. Nock (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966). Nock’s introduction richly repays reading.

12 “Born of itself, untaught, without a mother, unshakeable, not contained in a name, known by many names, dwelling in fire, this is god. We, his angels, are a small part of god.” Thus, the opening hexameter lines of the famous Oenoanda inscription. For text and analysis, Stephen Mitchell, “The Cult of *Theos Hypsistos*,” in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, ed. Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 81–148, with Greek text at p. 86. The oracle was known to Lactantius (*Inst.* 1.7). This philosophical definition of highest divinity as non-contingent will be carried over into the contesting systems of second-century Christian *paideia*.

13 Fluid terminology marks Justin’s usage, too: in this same passage, he refers to Jesus as *angelos*, and shortly later as God the Father’s creative *Logos* (*Dial.* 61.1). Christ in other

Christ's cosmic resistance at his messianic return, and who seek to frustrate Paul's mission in the fast-diminishing meanwhile.¹⁴ Both Celsus and Origen agree that many different divine entities exist (angels, demons, gods), though Origen disputes demonic morality (*Cels.* 5.2–8). As late as the fifth century, no less a light than Augustine conceded that the true difference between pagan gods and Christian demons really got down to terminology (*Civ.* 9.23).

Jews, Christians, and pagans, finally, all imputed divinity to special humans.¹⁵ Philo named Moses a “god” (*Mos.* 1.158; *Somn.* 2.189; *Sacr.* 9–10). And though he nowhere calls Jesus a god (a point that I see as significant), and though he specifically classifies Jesus as a human being (*anthropos*), Paul certainly imputes divine functions and characteristics to Jesus, elevated messianic status not least of all. For Origen, both David and Paul are gods (*sine dubio non errant homines sed dii*, *Comm. Rom.* 11.10,18; SC 532, p. 438). And for pagans as well as (post-312 CE) for Christians, Roman emperors were also a type of god. Up until Constantine, emperors received sacrificial cult. Thereafter, though blood sacrifices were gone, divine prerogatives like priesthoods, liturgies, adoration of the imperial image, celebration of festal days, ritual *proskynesis*, incense (a marker of divine presence), and public acknowledgment of divine *numen* remained.¹⁶

words is Justin's go-between god, showing up in history, as the highest, “nameless” god never would (1 *Apol.* 63, cf. 60).

14 Besides saying so forthrightly at 2 Cor 4:4 (the θεός του αἰῶνος τούτου) and at 1 Cor 8:5 (ὡςπερ εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί), Paul in my view refers to cosmic divinities at Gal 4:8–9 (στοιχεῖα); at 1 Cor 2:8 (ἄρχοντες του αἰῶνος τούτου); at 1 Cor 10:20–21 (δαίμονια); and at 1 Cor 15:24–27, a sort of messianic theomachy between the returning Christ and lower cosmic powers (ἔταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν, cf. Rom 8:19–21, where these entities “groan”). According to Phil 2:10, in the End, these cosmic beings wherever they are—“above the earth or upon the earth or below the earth”—will “bend knee” (in defeat? in homage?) to Christ and so to his Father; cf. Ephesians 3:10; 6:12. For the definitions of rule (*archē*), authority (*exousia*), and power (*dynamis*) as cosmic forces (a.k.a. “gods”) see *BDAG*.

In *Constructing Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), building a case for Paul's naming the Romans as Jesus' executioners, Dale Allison refutes this reading of 1 Cor 2:8 at length, citing much supporting secondary literature (395–98, esp. 396 n. 41). While perhaps by the *archontes* who “crucified the lord of glory” Paul intended “Romans,” those entities to be overwhelmed by the returning victorious Christ are clearly superhuman (Phil 2:10), and the *archai* and *dynameis* named in Romans 8:38 are listed together with hostile angels. All of these beings, if encountered, might be addressed as *kyrios*.

15 Jesus, arguably, falls into this category for Paul.

16 On imperial divinity in the early empire, Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31–49; on the sanctity and *numen* both of the emperor (whether pagan or Christian) and of his image, Jas Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 53–87; further, Keith Hopkins, “Divine Emperors, or the Symbolic Unity of the Roman Empire,” in *Conquerors*

In other words, for all of these ancient persons and groups, sharp lines and clearly demarcated boundaries between divinity and humanity were lacking.¹⁷ Scholars of higher-tier early high Christology require exactly such a clear line, however, in order to “identify” Jesus with God. They find it in their construction of a first-century Jewish “monotheism” that distinguished its high god from everything and anything else, by appeal to the issue of “creation.” God alone (so goes this argument) is uncreated; everything else (Jesus somehow excepted) is created by him.

Let’s take a closer look.

2 Created and Uncreated Gods

Jewish scriptures teem with other gods. As is common in ancient literatures, and as is to be expected given antiquity’s normal association of peoples and pantheons, gods struggled when their peoples did. Heaven’s politics conformed to human politics. Thus, when Israel battles Egypt, Israel’s god executes judgment on the gods of the Egyptians (Exod 12:12). When Israel prevails over the Ammonites, YHWH sends Milcom into exile (Jer 49:3). Their contesting relationship with YHWH implies the moral autonomy, thus independence, of these gods: they resist him. In Jewish texts, of course, YHWH always prevails, even when Israel does not.¹⁸

and Slaves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 197–226. Emperor worship continued under Constantine and his successors, A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 1:93 (with comments on Constantine’s personal approval of various dedicated cultural competitions and gladiatorial games under the supervision of an imperial priest); G. W. Bowersock, “Polytheism and Monotheism in Arabia and the Three Palestines,” *DOP* 51 (1997): 1–10; Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth through Eighth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 34–39, on the cult of the Christian Roman emperor.

- 17 An interesting (and unusual) opportunity for clarity, however, did present itself, over an accounting question. The god Amphairaus, recipient (*qua theos*) of a votive inscription in the third century BCE erected by Moschos Ioudaios son of Moschion (*IJO* 1, BS20), was a minor deity closely associated with the healing god Aesculpius. But Amphairaus’ status was qualified by act of the Roman senate in the first century BCE. At issue was Amphairaus’ tax status. Lands dedicated to his cult could be taxed, the Senate ruled, since, having begun life as a human, Amphairaus did not fall in the category of “immortal gods,” whose tax-free status was evidently secure (Cicero, *Nat. d.* 3.49). See Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 3–10.
- 18 For a full consideration of the vocabulary and polemical logic of Jewish texts coping with categorizing these superhuman powers while concerned “to assert the incomparable

Outside of battle situations, the supremacy of Israel's god over these lesser ones is simply asserted. YHWH presides over a divine court: "In the midst of the gods he gives judgment" (Ps 81(82):2). He appoints these lesser beings to be the gods of gentile nations (Gen 32:8). They all bow down to him (Ps 97(98):7). Though Israelite religious culture condemned the worship of visual representations of these deities, the reality of these gods themselves was assumed. In the LXX, their images received an upgrade: the nations' idols become *daimonia* (lower gods, not just their images, Ps 95:5 LXX; a view repeated by Paul, 1 Cor 10:20). The larger point, however, remains: God is not the only god, not even in his own book.

Where did all these other gods come from? A good question. Ancient Jewish texts display a certain narrative insouciance about divine origins. Some of these beings, sometimes, will be named as God's "sons" (as at Genesis 6:2, 4, for example). The hierarchical family language organizes their relationship: "sonship" implies derivation, dependence, and subordination. Angelic origins likewise go unexplained, though angels abound in all sorts of ancient Jewish texts, with many powers and duties—including bearing the divine name, and providing God's visual stand-in—delegated to them. God's absolute *power* over all of these lesser beings is continuously asserted. His role as their maker, however, usually must be assumed or inferred.¹⁹

As with these lesser divine entities, so also with the larger universe itself. In Genesis, God organizes what seems to be already to hand: empty and formless earth, primeval cosmic waters (Gen 1:1–2). Like gods and angels in the later narratives, these media, without apology, are just *there*. No idea of creation

power of the high God" of Israel, see Emma Wasserman, "An Idol Is Nothing in the World' (1 Cor 8:4): The Metaphysical Contradictions of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1 in the Context of Jewish Idolatry Polemics," in *Portraits of Jesus: Studies in Christology*, ed. Susan E. Myers, WUNT 2/321 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 201–27, quotation from 227; eadem, *Apocalypse as Holy War. Divine Politics and Polemics in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). If his people are defeated by another power, it is because Israel's god is using that foreign nation to punish Israel for its sins: military defeats do not call into question God's total sovereignty, though sometimes circumstances pounded cracks in this theodicy: see Adiel Schremer, "The Lord Has Forsaken the Land': Radical Explanations of the Military and Political Defeat of the Jews in Tannaitic Literature," *JJS* 59 (2008): 183–200.

19 For a quick orientation to this angelic throng, L. W. Hurtado, "Monotheism, Principal Angels, and the Background of Christology," in *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Timothy H. Lim (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 547–64, at 552–5. See too Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology*, WUNT 2/70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), and his essay, "Angels' and 'God': Exploring the Limits of Early Jewish Monotheism," in Stuckenbruck and North, *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, 45–70.

ex nihilo complicated the biblical stories—nor would it until long after Paul's lifetime.

Pagan philosophy in the early Roman period, especially as inflected through the *Timaeus*, helped to organize the Septuagint's opening chapter into rational cosmology. In theistic philosophies, *theos* and *hylē* were the two extreme poles of reality: *cosmos* represented a sort of organized precipitate formed between them. Definitions of *theos*, the eternal, unnamed and ungenerate god, expressed ideas of absolute perfection. The highest god was self-existing (that is, contingent upon nothing else), all good and all powerful, radically changeless (an aspect of his perfection), radically unembodied (body being a form of limitation), beyond space and time. This god's metaphysical opposite pole was *hylē*, preexistent matter, absolutely without form, coeternal with *theos* which, otherwise, would have been implicated in change (and, worse, in imperfection).²⁰

The actual "activity" of cosmic organization was tasked to divine subordinate powers, the highest god's *демиурге* or *logos* (rational power) or *logoi* or (depending on the myth) to his *angeloi*. Activity and temporality do not really frame this idea of world making, however: to preserve *theos* from any imputation of change, philosophers posited that *hylē*, thus *cosmos*, were co-eternal with God, his divine *logos* perpetually organizing the whole.²¹ In later centuries, Christian theologians will adapt such formulations to describe the effortless co-eternality and inter-relationship of the persons of the Trinity.

Philosophically educated readers of the LXX, whether Jewish (like Philo in the first century) or gentile (like Justin in the second), understood the biblical creation narrative in these terms. The divine lower rational agent in creation, God's *logos*, is Philo's "second god," as he is Justin's *heteros theos*, the pre-incarnate Son. And while biblical exegetes from Philo through Clement to Athenagoras will assert that the world was made "out of nothing," their word choice is both cautious and telling. *Cosmos* is shaped *ek mē ontos*, not *ek ouk ontos*. The subjunctive form of the negative ($\mu\eta$) implies relative, not absolute

20 The fourth-century Neoplatonist Sallustius gives a clear explanation of this cosmology: "The cosmos must of necessity be indestructible and uncreated.... Since the cosmos exists by the goodness of God it follows that God must always be good and the cosmos always exist, just as light coexists with the Sun and with fire, and shadow coexists with body" (*On the Gods and the Universe* 7.1).

21 In these systems, *cosmos* is unwilled, precisely to protect divine changelessness. Was subsequent reality, then, the result of unwilled emanation(s), a kind of natural outpouring from *theos*, given the nature of *theos*? Valentinian cosmologies split the difference, with syzygies flowing out of the high god, but Christ's later rescue mission the historical act of one of the lower aeons.

non-being, “that is to say, [the world] is made not from that which is absolutely non-existent, but from relative non-being or unformed matter, so shadowy and vague that it cannot be said to have the status of ‘being.’”²² In brief: relative “nothing” is still *something*.

As the metaphysical opposite of *theos*, *hylē* represented imperfection and change. Despite the divine impress of Form, primal matter could communicate its intrinsic deficiencies to cosmos, especially in the sublunar realm. *Hylē* thus provided this system with a theodicy: unformed matter, not the perfect god, was the ultimate source of the world’s imperfections.²³ In the crucible of developing second-century Christianities, however, various theologians fretted over this idea. Did pre-existent matter imply some kind of limit on God? Why would the good God have pronounced creation itself “good” if it were based in and on deficient matter? And to what degree would matter imply or enact a cosmic realm independent of God? It was only in these circumstances, as a battle between Christian intellectuals over the moral status of matter, that the (counterintuitive) idea of creation *ex nihilo* eventually took hold.²⁴

Creation *ex nihilo* drove the arguments fueling later classical Christology.²⁵ If only God was God, and if he “created” out of nothing, then was anything that was not-god by definition a part of his creation? To which pole of such a binary should Christ be assigned? Theologically (thus, philosophically) speaking, the issue was contingency. Was the Son independently God? If so, was that

22 Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 46–47. Chadwick’s appeal to the grammatical distinction between *ek mē ontos* and *ek ouk ontos* has been challenged (see, for example, John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness* [London: T&T Clark, 2006], 254), but his larger point remains: if something exists *before* matter does, then creation is not *ex nihilo*. Even Origen, as we saw above, had to posit a (nonmaterial) cosmos before (material) cosmos to explain cosmos. By the time Rufinus translates Origen for the fourth-century Latin West, *creatio ex nihilo* was established doctrine, especially in light of the battles against Manichean Christian cosmology.

23 Plotinus, R. T. Wallis notes, argued that “since goodness consists in form ... it is precisely Matter’s lack of any form whatever that proves its identity with Absolute Evil.... Plotinus, however, is no dualist; his Matter is not an independently existing principle, but the point at which the outflow of reality from the One fades away into utter darkness. Matter’s evil is thus not a positive force ... [but rather] an utter sterility, or ‘poverty, which communicates its own deficiency to the bodies based on it, and thus becomes the source of all the sensible world’s imperfections, including ... the wickedness of individual souls’ (*Neoplatonism* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972], 49–50, with many references to Plotinus’ *Enneads*).

24 See esp. Frances Young, “‘Creatio ex Nihilo’: A Context for the Emergence of the Christian Doctrine of Creation,” *SJT* 44 (1991): 139–51.

25 “Creation out of nothing was not just a doctrine about the world. It was doctrine about God” (Young, “‘Creatio ex Nihilo,’” 150).

not ditheism? If not, was that then Sabellianism? Was Christ, *qua* “Son,” not contingent upon the Father? Simple vocabulary pulled in one direction (contingency), concerns about cosmology and soteriology pulled in another (equality); and the great Origen, alas, could be read in support of either position.²⁶ Imperial politics compounded the controversies; consensus documents (also known as “creeds”), hammered out by committee, shed more heat than light. The factions that resulted from all the fourth- and fifth-century Christological infighting remain to this day.

According to the higher tier of the EHCC, however, this issue—the status of Christ relative to God the Father—was already clarified by Jesus’ resurrection, celebrated in the worship practices of the earliest post-resurrection community in Jerusalem, and articulated in the letters of Paul.

Let’s take a closer look.

3 Early (Very) High Christology

I leave to the end the significance of his earliest followers’ conviction that Jesus had been raised, which is the explanatory Big Bang that precedes the EHCC’s Big Bang Christology, its identification of Jesus with God. Let’s review, instead, the arguments, all of which interlock and reinforce each other. These are (a) a “purely Jewish” originary matrix of “strict monotheism”; (b) distinctive early devotional practices implying, indeed celebrating Christological “identification”; (c) a “strict binary distinction” between God and creation; (d) using texts or terms like *kyrios* or *doxa*, attributed to God in the LXX, as descriptive of Christ.

For the study of Christian origins, *purely Jewish monotheism* denotes the idea of a kind of Judaism untouched by “Hellenism,” a.k.a. “paganism.” An authoritative academic source for such an idea, interestingly, is the same as

26 In his shattered masterpiece the *Peri Archōn*, the first Christian systematic theology, Origen distinguished between God and everything else (divine pre-existent rational beings) in terms of *body* and in terms of *contingency*: only the trune god was self-generated, and only he/they radically *asomaton*. In this sense, all were equally “god.” The inner dynamics of the Trinity, however, accommodated gradients of divinity, the scope for God the Father being unrestricted; for the Son, especially involved with (secondary, temporal, material) creation; for the Holy Spirit, restricted to the (true) church. In other words, Origen was brilliant enough to frame a Christology that was both radically egalitarian and subordinationist at the same time. Almost a century later, Arius, worried about Sabellianism, took Origen’s Christology in one direction (that of subordinationist contingency, which is where the scriptural language of sonship and the philosophical language of *logos* led him); Athanasius, innovating, in another. See Fredriksen, *Sin*, 100–12.

the authoritative academic source against such an idea: Martin Hengel. In his great classic, the two-volume study *Judaism and Hellenism*, Hengel argued pellucidly that, three centuries after Alexander, no aspect of Jewish culture, even in the homeland, was untouched by that of Greece. Yet in his subsequent smaller study, *The Son of God*, Hengel urged the opposite case: the roots of early Christology, he asserted, were Jewish in ways utterly independent of Hellenistic (read “pagan”) influence.²⁷ The theological novum of Christianity burst fully-formed from Jewish foreheads unsullied by messy ideas of divine intermediation: the Lord their God, after all, was One. The more austere solitary the Jewish god, the more radical the intimate association of Jesus with this god. Early Very High Christology was born.

As we have seen, however, Jewish texts written in Hebrew, ages before Alexander, left scope for many gods. YHWH always had (lesser) colleagues; and his address to some undefined external others in Genesis 1:26 certainly implied superhuman assistants. The marriage of biblical myth to Greek language, thus conceptualization, opened the door to philosophical rationalization of scriptural stories. Philo’s *oeuvre* is an early monument to this intellectual achievement; Origen’s, a later one. The point of attending to the Semitic substratum underlying the LXX in the context of our current discussion, however, is to note that the Greeks were not the ones to introduce many gods (and lower divine beings) into traditions about the Jewish one. Other gods were always there. And before Hellenistic ideas of graded divinity rationalized the relationships of this divine throng, Canaanite “paganism” contributed in fundamental ways to Israelite ideas of divinity.²⁸ The problem with the interpretive notion of “purely Jewish monotheism,” in short, is that it has never existed.

This is not to say that Jewish ideas about the Jewish god were not “distinctive.” Aniconic worship was certainly singular. (Christianity long ago abandoned this practice; Islam picked it up. Pagan Neoplatonists practiced it vis-à-vis the highest god through the discipline of introspection.) But Ugaritic ideas about divinity are likewise “distinctive,” or else we could not distinguish them from corresponding Akkadian ones, or later Hellenistic ones, or parallel Roman ones. YHWH is distinct from Ba’al—though they share similarities, too. Zeus is

27 M. David Litwa, *Jesus Deus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 6–18, gives a concise review and analysis of Hengel’s two mutually exclusive positions. As Litwa nicely notes, “Christianity was born from a Jewish mother who was already Hellenized” (15).

28 For YHWH’s Canaanite backstory, see Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), though Römer speaks of “monotheism” as a post-exilic invention.

not Jupiter, though similarities abound there, too.²⁹ “Distinctive,” like *hypsistos*, does not mean “unique” in a way that denies or disenables comparison. The term is in fact intrinsically comparative: distinct *from what* or *with respect to* what? Of course Jewish monotheisms were distinct from pagan monotheisms, and both of these are distinct from Christian monotheisms. We can describe what we take to be their distinctions. But all of these monotheisms all share some characteristics too, and we can also identify and describe these.³⁰

The argument about *first-generation devotional practices* flows into those about the referral of divine designations and attributes to Jesus. We do not in fact know what Jesus-specific practices the earliest community in Jerusalem, in the decades between April of the year 30 (?) and August of the year 70, actually kept. The best we can do is infer from Paul’s letters what the practices of his gentile assemblies (mid-century, within pagan cities) *might* have been; then note that there seems to have been no controversy between him and the Jerusalem community over these practices; and finally argue on that basis that their respective practices concerning devotion to Jesus may have been similar. We triangulate between material in the later Gospels, in Acts, and in Paul’s letters to try to get back to what James’ people might have done when they gathered.³¹

Calling on Jesus to return—*Marana tha!*—seems likely as a core practice, especially given the plausible priority of early Aramaic tradition. But note: “lord” in Aramaic (*mar*) does not function as a designation for “God” in biblical Targumim.³² Addressing Jesus as *mar*, in other words, goes nowhere in terms of

29 See Matthew Novenson’s essay in the present volume for an exploration of how ancient people worked with such divine similarities and differences.

30 In the late fourth century, the Manichaean theologian Faustus identified Mediterranean “monotheism”—“the belief in a single principle” that stands as the source of the cosmos—as a (wrong) way of thinking common to pagans, other Christians, and Jews (Augustine, *Faust.* 20.3–4).

Specifically non-dualist forms of “monotheism” are indeed “distinctive,” but “distinctive” does not mean “incomparable.” Quite the contrary: distinctions emerge only through comparison. The gold standard essay on comparison in religious studies, and specifically in Christian origins, remains Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990). And see now Matthew V. Novenson, “Beyond Compare,” in *The New Testament in Comparison*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Benjamin G. White (London: T&T Clark, 2020).

31 For one recent effort, see Paula Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 94–107, 123–40, emphasizing charismatic behaviors and scriptural interpretation, rightly characterized by Jennifer Eyl as divinatory practices. (See note 34 below.)

32 I thank my colleague Steven Fassberg, professor of ancient Semitic languages at the Hebrew University, for confirming this observation. He writes: “Different targumim do

“identifying” him with the Jewish “lord god.” If the Aramaic-speaking original community in Jerusalem is the (“purely Jewish”) source of the identification of Jesus with God, then they would have had to have been actually thinking in Greek, and with the LXX. Only *kyrios* will do that work; *mar* will not. Taking seriously that *mar*—an Aramaic outcropping still visible in Paul’s letters (1 Cor 16:22)—was an early term for Jesus means letting go of the divine-identification-through-*kyrios* argument, or at least letting go of Jerusalem as its source.

What else? Prayer in Paul’s communities seems to have occurred in Jesus’ name; but the prayers themselves are offered to God, not to Jesus. And when, at his parousia, the knees of superhumans bend and tongues confess that *kyrios Iêsous Christos*, it is God, not Jesus, who is glorified (Phil 2:10–11). By contrast, many other late Second-Temple texts invoke angels and venerate them (especially in the Scrolls).³³ In *Sefer ha-Razim* 4.61–63, the Jewish adept bows down to and addresses the Sun as *kyrios*. Naming Jesus in prayer, even calling him *kyrios*, are indeed practices specific to Pauline communities. But within the broader context of Second-Temple and even post-Second-Temple Jewish devotional practices, Paul’s do not seem egregious.

Various divinatory activities (prophecy, scriptural interpretation, glossolalia, visions, works of power, healing), attributed to the presence of spirit, may have characterized Jerusalem’s gatherings as they did Paul’s satellite communities.³⁴ So too sharing common meals. Commemorating Jesus’ death “until he comes.” Exorcisms in Jesus’ name. These practices are indeed *distinctive*. Still: distinct from what? From what we know of those of Qumran—though in other ways, they are similar. From Jewish evocations of lower pagan deities in manumission ceremonies—though in other ways, they are similar.³⁵ From meals held in diaspora professional guilds and various associations and *collegia* and in synagogues—though in some ways, they are similar.

Does *devotion* to Jesus thus constitute *worship* of him? And does such worship encode a claim of radically identifying Jesus with God? Here we must

different things. The Peshitta regularly writes מרִיא. Targum Onqelos gives יי, Targum Neophyti usually writes ״ but on occasion uses an anthropomorphism like מימריה ד״, ‘the word of the Lord,’ or אִיקֶר שְׁכִינִתָּה ד״, ‘the honor of the Shekhina of the Lord.’ Pseudo-Jonathan also writes ״ (personal correspondence, 28 August 2019).

33 On which, Stuckenbruck, “‘Angels’ and ‘God.’”

34 See now especially Jennifer Eyl, *Signs, Wonders and Gifts: Divination in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). For all we know, of course, those other communities founded and sustained by Paul’s competitors behaved in the same ways.

35 Such as the famous Pothos synagogue inscription (1JO 1, BS20), which calls upon Zeus, Gaia and Helios (a formula of legal witness).

consider a question not only of practice, but also of translation. *Latreia* is the term commonly rendered in New Testament translations as “worship” (e.g., Rom 9:5 RSV), but in fact it means “cult.” The best a member of a diaspora *ekklesia* can offer, says Paul, is “rational” or “intellectual” cult (*logikê latreia*); and this notional offering is made not to Jesus, but to God (Rom 12:1). But such notional *latreia* would well describe the devotional practices of diaspora Jews utterly unaffiliated with the Jesus movement, both in Paul’s lifetime and long thereafter: Jews outside of Jerusalem, removed from the temple, in any case could “worship,” as Tacitus observed, only as a mental act (*mente sola*, *Hist.* 5.5.4).

On this point precisely, Jerusalem pre-70 was different from anywhere else. Members of James’ community had ready access to the temple. Their *thusia* could be actual, not just notional; they could perform *latreia* according to ancient tradition. We might wonder, then: when James, or Peter, or John, or Paul when he was in town, or any of the other Jewish, male members of the community in Jerusalem offered at the temple, *did they offer to Jesus as well as to the god of Israel?*

Great question. An affirmative answer would clinch the core convictions of the higher-tier EHCC.³⁶ Unfortunately, of course, we cannot know. Surveying the surviving literature, we can say, however, that nothing indicates that this would have been the case. When Matthew’s Jesus gives directions on how to worship at the altar (*thusiastêrion*), he teaches only that one should make peace with his “brother” before bringing his gift; he says nothing about the offering in effect being for or to himself as well (Matt 5:23–24). Paul obviously thinks very highly of the temple and of its protocols of sacrifice: he lists them among the gifts graciously given by God to Israel (Rom 9:4–5), and he uses them as his touchstone for articulating ideas of worship, behavior and community for his own groups.³⁷ He never says anything about sacrificing *to* Jesus, even mimetically through donations or good behavior: when community activities represent an “acceptable sacrifice (*thusia*),” its “sweet smell”—the biblical *rayach nekoach* of burnt offerings—ascends not to the enthroned Jesus, but to God

36 North (“Jesus and Worship”) emphasizes rightly that cult was the “ultimate criterion of deity” in ancient Mediterranean piety, thus distinguishing “devotion” (Hurtado’s favored term) from “worship” (tendered only to deities; North, 202 n. 32). By this criterion, as far as we can tell, the Jerusalem community clearly distinguished Jesus from God.

37 On Paul’s own positive orientation toward the temple, and the ways that Levitical temple protocols structure his ideas on Gentile participation in the Christ-assemblies, Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 151–154 and notes; see too Friedrich W. Horn, “Paulus und die Herodianische Tempel,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 184–203. On the earliest community in Jerusalem and the temple, and that of Jesus, Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews*, 7–42.

the Father, to whom “be glory forever and ever” (Phil 4:18–20; cf., e.g., Gen 8:21 LXX).³⁸ And even Acts, undergirded with decades of further Christological development, has the apostles only teaching about Jesus from the temple, never offering *to* Jesus in the temple. Acts 21 might have provided such a narrative opportunity, has the thought ever crossed the author’s mind. Evidently it did not.

These hypothetical musings about the Jerusalem community’s devotional practices are reinforced by a historical datum: for its four decades of life before the Roman destruction, the city’s religious authorities (which is to say, the chief priests) left this group pretty much alone. Nor did the priests call on the Romans to oppress the assembly on their behalf. Paul’s list of repeated woes and harassments in 2 Corinthians 11:23–26 and 12:10 finds no echo in the experience of James’ group.³⁹ If the earliest community’s devotional practices had indeed been the source of Paul’s, and if its claims for Jesus’ exalted identity had indeed so transgressed “devout Jewish monotheism” that unaffiliated Jews responded with muscular aggression (Paul witnessing to both sides of this reaction), then the community’s decades of quiet residence in Jerusalem, under the very noses of the priests, are simply inexplicable.

Whatever the source of the friction between Paul and the “men from James” in Antioch, differences over Christology was not one of them (cf. Gal 2:12). This inclines me to think that, on this issue, they were agreed. And whatever their early Christological claims may have been, these could not have been the reason for the diaspora synagogues’ abreaction—since there was no such abreaction in Jerusalem, the putative source of early high Christology both at home and abroad. Perhaps the reasons for the synagogues’ rejection, then, were not theological. Perhaps they were social, political and practical instead.⁴⁰ Perhaps

38 North notes that in passages both in Paul (four places) and in other New Testament writings (fifty examples), where (virtual) “sacrifice” language is deployed, the object or entity to whom the “offering” is “pleasing” or “acceptable” is God, never Christ (“Jesus and Worship,” 199 and n. 27).

39 See Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews*, 128–31 on Stephen, and on the “persecution” of everyone *but* the original disciples, in Acts. Whatever situation lay behind Ananus’ execution of James in 62 (Josephus, *A.J.* 20.200), it did not affect the entire community; nor did whatever James had been doing alienate or upset other non-affiliated Jerusalem Jews who, offended by Ananus’ behavior, secured his dismissal. On the evidence, things were a lot quieter for a Christ-follower in Jerusalem than in the Diaspora.

40 For a reconstruction of a practical and social impetus behind diaspora resistance to the Jesus-movement, though one that had religious dimensions, Fredriksen, *Paul*, 61–93; *When Christians Were Jews*, 144–59; Martin Goodman, “The Persecution of Paul by Diaspora Jews,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. Menahem Mor and Jack Pastor (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Tzvi Press, 2005), 376–87; idem, “Galatians 6:12 on Circumcision and Persecution,” in *From Strength to Strength: Essays in Appreciation of Shaye J. D. Cohen*, ed. Michael L. Satlow, BJS 365 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 275–80. Focusing on

these early devotional practices were idiosyncratic (“distinctive”) but not transgressively so. Perhaps, indeed, within their first-century context, they fit.

Consideration of the first-century context brings us to the so-called *strict binary* that “allows for no ambiguous semi-divine beings.”⁴¹ As I hope our earlier tour through pagan and patristic cosmologies established, there was no such “binary distinction” between Uncreated and Created in Paul’s lifetime. Before the (slow) birth of the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, there was no such idea of—well, of “creation” as such. Given the presumption, expressed both narratively (Gen 1:2) and philosophically (the *theos-hylē-cosmos* cluster) that something did not and could not come from (absolute) nothing, divine “making” was fundamentally a form of organizing. Pre-existent stuff was whipped into shape, ordered and sorted, with the heavy lifting timelessly subcontracted to divine intermediaries. In the first century, there were plenty of them. Several of them were Jewish. After his death, and after (some of) his followers’ experience of his resurrection, Jesus was interpreted to be such an intermediary too.

Jesus’ putative role in creation was not the center of gravity of the early kerygma, however. Rather, it was the significance of his death and resurrection (to which I will shortly turn). And his role in creation did not require that Jesus be radically “identified” with *the* creator, the Jewish high god: he only had to be that deity’s lieutenant. Was he like a chief angel? In some ways, yes; in other ways, no. Was he like God’s divine logos? According to the Fourth Evangelist, yes; according to Paul, only sort of. All of these similarities and differences can be (and have been) explored ad infinitum. In the first century, however, being an agent of creation was ipso facto a role clearly beneath that of *the* god, the one at the pinnacle of divinity. Everything about Paul’s vocabulary—“son,” “messiah,” “first born,” even “lord” (the term of address for any social superior and, certainly in Paul’s case, for a divine, “royal” Davidic one)⁴²—subordinates the risen Jesus, raised not by himself but by *the* god, *to* God, the Father.

social rather than Christological reasons for such resistance may diminish the imputed transgressiveness of early Christology, but it has the virtue of ascribing a coherent motivation to *all* of the “persecutors” whom Paul names: synagogue authorities, Roman magistrates, urban mobs, and pagan gods.

41 Bauckham, “Confessing the Cosmic Christ,” 146.

42 On the specifically messianic usages of *kyrios*, Fredriksen, *Paul*, 134, 139–40, 143–45, 168. J. Albert Harrill notes, “‘Lord’ was an epithet common to all deities in the ancient Mediterranean world ... [and] had a regular use in the daily speech of slaves to masters, commoners to aristocrats, soldiers to commanders (Luke 7:6–8) ... virtually all ancient people spoke like this to their social betters” (*Paul the Apostle: His Life and Legacy in Their Roman Context* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 88). Further, as Nils Dahl observed, when applied to Christ, *kyrios* signals not a divine status so much as a royal, Davidic one (*Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed.

Did Paul think that Jesus “was” God, as some of the present authors claim? If he did, one might wonder, why did he never just say so? Well, he does, say some of our authors, *if* you know how to read the letters aright. Here the “strict binary” argument recapitulates many of the aspects of the *divine attribution* arguments. Command of a fantastic amount of detail is required but, so go these arguments, once you see the pattern, Paul’s claim is clear. The gematria embedded in Paul’s bicameral Hebrew/Greek brain, expressed in the numerical and alphabetic formulae of chosen passages in his letters (like the “Christological shema” of 1 Cor 8:6) proclaims the identity of Jesus with God.⁴³ Prepositional theology and numerical composition compel the conclusion. *Kyrios* names both God the Father and God the Son: *ergo*.⁴⁴ *Kavod*, the Hebrew behind the LXX’s *doxa*, “glory,” stands for God’s glorious, manifest presence. Paul associates *doxa* with Jesus in so many ways that he in effect “scandalously and brazenly transfers God’s glory to Jesus,” having been cued by Jesus’ own glorious resurrection, all without ever compromising an “unwavering commitment to monotheism.”⁴⁵ Faith, not election and Law, marks Paul’s new religious commitment (Christianity, in effect) off from his old one (Judaism).⁴⁶

These arguments are fine-grained, intensely engaged both with Pauline texts and with biblical ones. The Paul who emerges through this weaving together of scriptural associations is instantly (and comfortably) recognizable theologically, proclaiming as he does the teaching of Roman imperial orthodoxy. Indeed, this Paul anticipates Luther.⁴⁷ So coherent are these exegetical arguments, so finely detailed, made with such conviction—and so clearly vindicated by the subsequent developments of (especially) Protestant theology—that one has to wonder how reasonable people could disagree.

Let’s take a closer look.

Donald H. Juel [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], 20). On the divine aspects of messianic figures, Jesus included, see esp. the study by Adela Y. Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

43 Bauckham, “Confessing the Cosmic Christ,” 141–143, who nods to Fletcher-Louis.

44 Again, this argument works only in Greek, and not in Aramaic, the vernacular of the earliest community. This observation effectively severs Jerusalem as the source of Paul’s *very* high Christology, if that were what his Christology was.

45 Newman, “God and Glory and Paul, Again,” 129, 105–106.

46 Newman, “God and Glory and Paul, Again,” 135.

47 So Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, x, 59.

4 Text and Context, Theology and History

It is true that an intelligible line can be traced from Paul through Nicea to Augustine to Luther and thence to Hengel and thence to the EHCC, one that resonates with the idea of a radical identification of Jesus with God. But that is not an argument about or for the first-century interpretation of a first-century text. It is an observation about the continuing importance—and, thus, about the necessary reinterpretation—of a first-century text. The history of exegesis cannot establish that a later idea existed in the first century, just because later theologians interpreted first-century texts to make their own, later case. Later interpretations of earlier texts mean nothing in terms of establishing the historical, contemporary meaning of those texts.

A strong line, for example, can also be drawn from Augustine through Cyprian past Tertullian to Paul that resonates with the idea of Original Sin.⁴⁸ But the clarity (and the obvious Paulinism) of that line establishes nothing in terms of what Paul would or could have thought about Original Sin—because Paul did not think about Original Sin. (And until the early 400s, not even Augustine thought with the idea of Original Sin: he had not come up with it yet.⁴⁹) The rhetoric of genealogies faces forward, deploying the language of “descent” from *then* to *now*. The actual generation of genealogies, however, always moves backward, from *now* to *then*. It is thus little wonder that everything—all those theologically orthodox names, and the “Old Testament” too, via the LXX—can line up behind early very high Christology.

So too with textual hermeneutics. The scholars whose work we have referenced have proved past doubting that Paul’s letters can sustain a reading in support of the intricate associative interpretations that they have proposed. Their essays have just *demonstrated* that that is the case. But what is the relationship of their arguments to what Paul thought? What *did* Paul think? And how, if not by textual hermeneutics, can we know?

48 Traced, exhaustively, by Julius Gross, *Entstehungsgeschichte der Erbsündendogmas*, vol. 1 (Munich: E. Reinhardt, 1960).

49 As early as 392, Augustine, reading Paul, will come to an idea of mitigated free will (*Fort.* 22), but his full-blown construction of sexually-transmitted heritable sin has to await his encounter with Pelagius and with Julian of Eclanum in the 420s. See A. Sage, “Péché original. Naissance d’un dogme,” *REAug* 13 (1967): 211–48; Fredriksen, *Sin*, 114–34.

Here, for the purposes of this conversation, we come to the Parting of the Ways between Judaism⁵⁰ and Christianity.⁵¹ I mean by this the distinction between historical interpretation and theological interpretation, between doing history and doing theology. Theology, especially New Testament theology, is *textual*. It proceeds through exegesis. History, by contrast, is *contextual*. It requires the sympathetic and critical reconstruction of the ancient *Umwelt*. Such reconstruction can never be achieved by explicating the text to be interpreted. Gazing closely at a text will not get us its historical context: all that will be gained is a mirror reading.⁵² Doing history requires a lot of peripheral vision, the coordination and critical assessment of as vast an array of ancient contemporary evidence in as many media—papyri, amulets, inscriptions, artifacts, the writings of outsiders—as we can possibly assemble.

To do history, when we read Paul, means getting *outside* of his letters. It also means getting outside of the LXX's echo chamber. It means reimagining his *context*—not only his immediate personal religious/cultural one (a messily improvising, idiosyncratically apocalyptic, and tiny movement within late Second-Temple Judaism), but also his larger social/cultural one, the eastern Mediterranean cities of the early Roman Empire. It means, further, realistically imagining his audiences, and assessing his goals in communicating with them. It means interpreting him by imagining *their* context, as they lived their lives within their native religious institution, the Greco-Roman city.

It means remembering that when Paul dictated his letters, he was attempting to communicate with (recently) ex-pagan gentiles. This fact, for me, fatally undermines the plausibility of the higher tier EHCC's arguments. How could Paul reasonably hope that his ex-pagans could ever decrypt the intricate codes,

50 By which I mean Paul's native cultural and religious context, late Second-Temple Judaism, between ca. 33 (when he received his call) and ca. 57 (when we lose sight of him).

51 By which I mean the theological content of early *very* high Christology, "Christological monotheism," "dyadic devotion," "*doxatic* Christosis," which our authors forthrightly name as "Christianity"—even though the term (and I would argue, the concept) does not exist for another 50 years or so after Paul's lifetime. On the anachronistic alchemy worked by applying this term (as the translation "church" for *ekklesia*) to Paul's letters, see John W. Marshall, "Misunderstanding the New Paul: Marcion's Transformation of the *Sonderzeit* Paul," *JECs* 20 (2012): 1–29, esp. at 6: "Using a category of 'Christianity' is fundamentally erroneous when interpreting Paul. It exercises transformative influence on his writings in the same way the [later] pseudepigraphical Pastoral epistles do.... By reading Paul's writings as instances of 'Christianity,' the new, but later, religion is already retrojected onto the letters, the force of Paul's eschatological conviction is blunted, and the specificity of his address to Gentiles is effaced."

52 On which, esp. John M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 73–93.

dense verbal associations, delicate scriptural allusions and bilingual gematria by which he was supposedly, subtly signaling to them that Jesus was God?⁵³ Why would he make it so hard for himself, and all but impossible for them?⁵⁴ Was Paul *really* talking only to himself? And if he were—forgetting for the moment that letters are supposed to be about communication—could he really have worked out such intricate encryptions for himself, even if aided by Spirit, in the age before search engines and databases? It would take a miracle.

These exegesis-based arguments for early very high Christology thus not only domesticate Paul's letters for later centuries of theological doctrine. They also strain credulity once we factor in the likely scriptural knowledge base of Paul's ex-pagan Christ-followers, who were the reason for his composing the letters in the first place. A further problem, for me, also emerges. The structure and sensibility of these arguments perforce ignore an obvious Jewish context for Paul's *euangelion*—one that was fundamental, too, to the earliest community's interpretation of their experience of the resurrection—and thereby ignore, as well, one of the twentieth century's greatest and most courageous contributions to the study of Christian origins: the work of Albert Schweitzer.⁵⁵ Resurrection in late Second-Temple traditions was linked to eschatology, "the ends of the ages," as Paul says. But Paul—and some of Jesus' followers before him—had already seen the "first fruit" of the dead's resurrection. Jesus' resurrection immediately implied and, for them, entailed the coming general resurrection. Paul expected to see the risen Christ return in his own lifetime.⁵⁶

Of all the followers of messianic figures, from antiquity and later, only those of Jesus of Nazareth (so far as I know) claimed that he had been raised from the dead. That itself is an index of the intensity of *their* expectation of a proximate End, which, in their tradition, was when such resurrections were supposed to happen. Jesus had not been raised to re-enter quotidian life: that sort of resurrection was the stock-in-trade of celebrity Mediterranean healers, Jesus included.⁵⁷ Rather—at least, according to Paul—Jesus was raised in a

53 Copyists made (and make!) mistakes all the time. They introduced changes to texts deliberately, too. And the earliest Pauline MSS that we have go back only so far as the second century. For these reasons, the gematria argument seems to me particularly fragile.

54 Assuming that none of his ancient audience was a member of the SNTS.

55 Schweitzer championed a robust apocalyptic eschatology as the chief interpretative framing for both Jesus and Paul. Before him, no less insistent, Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971; orig. pub. Göttingen, 1892).

56 Fredriksen, *Paul*, 133–69.

57 See John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:773–837, for an examination *à la loupe* of gospel stories about Jesus raising the dead. He includes consideration of pagan achievement in this same healing subspecialty, as related by Pliny the Elder,

pneumatic body, similar to the one that he had had before his descent into a human modality (Phil 2:6); similar to the one into which the redeemed, whether living or dead, would be transformed (1 Cor 15:52).⁵⁸ This conviction, linking Jesus' resurrection to the coming eschaton, was the Big Bang that reconvened his community in Jerusalem. And this conviction, after their reassembly, propelled some of his followers to go back on the road, to fan out from Jerusalem to Judean coastal cities and ultimately to cities throughout the Mediterranean.⁵⁹

Why? What were they saying? And to whom? According to my colleagues in the EHCC, reconstructing the message through Paul's letters, these early apostles were proclaiming a new vision of redemption, replacing old biblical ideas like election and Torah with the new idea of faith in Jesus the messiah who, they realized, on the basis of his (pneumatic) resurrection, was "included within the identity of the God confessed in the Shema," "constitutive of God's unique identity," "the god of Israel's divine presence."⁶⁰ The chief import of Jesus' resurrection, in this reckoning, was Jesus' theological identity. The primary work of Jesus' resurrection is to carry this Christological message. Jesus' enthronement, in terms of the theological action of this message, seems like his final stop. "Eschatological," when and if invoked, gestures toward "final" as in "absolute." No timetable is implied. Indeed, absent a first-century Jewish interpretive context for Paul's letters, the missing timetable is hardly noticeable.

There are several problems, however, with the temporal open-endedness of this construal. It seems, first, to run head-on into one of the oldest problems of New Testament scholarship: Why was Jesus *Christ*? Being resurrected is certainly a special dignity, but it does not qualify the man so raised to be identified as a messiah. Yet "messiah" in its Greek form, *christos*, obviously attached very early to Jesus.⁶¹

Apuleius, Lucian (a somewhat arch account), and Philostratus, as well as other examples from Jewish scriptures. Matt 10:8 extends this prerogative to Jesus' disciples; Acts 9:36–40 to Peter, Acts 20:7–12 to Paul (perhaps. Eutyclus might be only mostly dead). The miracle becomes somewhat more routine in later apocryphal acts.

58 On which see M. David Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed. Deification in Paul's Soteriology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 119–71; Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 129–60.

59 Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews*, 74–107, from miracle to mission.

60 Bauckham, "Confessing the Cosmic Christ," 141; Capes, "Jesus's Unique Relationship with YHWH in Biblical Exegesis," 88; Newman, "God and Glory and Paul, Again," 124.

61 Dahl's classic essay "The Crucified Messiah" (in *Jesus the Christ*, 27–47) closes the gap between Jesus' non-messianic mission and the messianic attribution with the crucifixion itself.

Charismatic Galilean healer-prophets, however, lack two premier qualifications for the job: lineage and military prowess, both aligned with leadership.⁶² Evolving traditions early on filled in precisely these gaps in Jesus of Nazareth's resumé. Already in Romans, Paul asserted Jesus' Davidic descent and his military might. Davidic descent, of course, comes explicitly in Romans 1:3 and 15:12, which also hymns Jesus' conquest of foreign nations: "he rises to rule [*archein*] the *ethnê*." But Jesus' role as a conquering warrior appears earlier elsewhere: in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (a cry of command, sounding celestial trumpets, the archangel's voice); lavishly, in 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 (subjecting all things, including lower cosmic rulers and powers);⁶³ in Philippians 2:10 (celestial, terrestrial and subterranean beings kneel). His warrior role is tied to his defeat of the gods of the nations;⁶⁴ and in so doing, he will also bring about the End-time resurrection of the dead.

So when *is* the end of time? When Christ returns in his public debut as warrior, descending from heaven once again. It is at that point that his already-designated role as God's son—that is, as the Davidic messiah—will be universally broadcast, undeniable: the dead, too, will be raised (Rom 1:4; cf. 1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:23, 35, 51; Phil 3:20–21, where the transformation of the believer's body is tied explicitly to Christ's reappearance in power, "to subject everything to himself").

But *when* does Christ return? Soon, says Paul. How soon? Paul expects the parousia within his own lifetime—at least, that is what he says. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor 15:51). "We" are awaiting the Lord's parousia (Phil 3:20). "We who are alive, who are left" will be caught up with and to the transformed, resurrected dead (1 Thess 4:17). History, teaches Paul, is moving quickly toward its finale: the travails before the Kingdom are "impending," the "appointed time has grown very short," the form of the world "passing away," and upon Paul and his community "the ends of the ages *have come*" (1 Cor 7:26, 29, 31; 10:11: note the past completed action of the verb, *katēntēken*).

62 "Messianism" has many different variations, elements, and job descriptions, which show up in different combinations to cohere with different figures: the term's attachment to the figure of Jesus in fact attests to its flexibility. See now Matthew V. Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

63 Even though "messiah" does not appear in these lines, it occurs four times in the lines immediately preceding. As Novenson concludes, "The Davidic messiahship of Jesus is not the point of 1 Cor 15:20–28, but it is axiomatic for the argument" (*Christ Among the Messiahs* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2012], 146).

64 In other words, the presence—and reality, and real power—of pagan gods is hardwired into Paul's conviction that Jesus is the eschatological Christ: it is through his defeat of these gods that Jesus manifests specifically *as* a warrior. No final battle, no final Davidic messiah; no opponents, no battle.

Time's happy ending, the establishment of God's kingdom through the agency of his dead, raised *and returning* messiah, is assured.

Raised *and returning*. Soon. *How soon?* Within the lifetime of Paul and of his communities. How does Paul know? Because he is already witness to two End-time miracles: the resurrection of Jesus, and the nations' rejection of their own gods. Gentiles, through Paul's own agency (and the agency of *pneuma*) are turning from their idols and turning to the exclusive worship of the god of Israel—just as Isaiah had foreseen.⁶⁵ The eschatological Judaization of the nations, through Christ's or God's *pneuma*, was already in process. The ends of the ages had already arrived. Redemption would wrap up as soon as the full number of the nations came "in" (Rom 11:25). Then all Israel, too, would be saved (11:26).

The higher tier ΕΗCC's diminuendo of apocalyptic eschatology is of a piece with its *haut* divinization of Christ. It cuts in two this dynamic cycle of redemption, quietly dropping the second half. Christ comes down, dies, goes back up exalted, sits on his throne, and somehow merges his identity with that of the high god. It's not quite the whole story, but it might as well be.

But as we have just seen, Paul proclaims another whole cycle of coming down and going back up, and it is only at that point that Jesus' messianic identity, already assigned and made known to a select group of insiders charged with spreading the word (1 Cor 15:5–8), is *universally* made known. Christ's own resurrection had indicated how closely the general resurrection loomed—"Nearer to us *now* than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand" (Rom 13:11–12). Christ would reappear as an eschatological warrior, and it is that reappearance, not his own resurrection, that manifests him as *christos*, the "son of God in power" (Rom 1:4).⁶⁶ He then transforms the dead, lifts the living, subdues the cosmos and establishes the kingdom, which he hands over to his father, God, to whom he himself—as we should expect in an ancient Mediterranean family—is subjected (1 Cor 15:24, 28). Μαράνα θά! (1 Cor 16:22). The divine identities are quite distinct—as is Paul's exigence.⁶⁷

65 On the role of an eschatological understanding of Isaiah in Paul's letter to Rome, see the rich study by J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

66 On reading Rom 1:4 not as Christ's *own* resurrection *from* the dead but as "*the* resurrection *of* the dead"—which is what the Greek happens to say (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν; cf. 1 Cor 15:12–21)—see Fredriksen, *Paul*, 141–45; cf. Augustine, *Ep. Rom. in ch.* 5.11.

67 There is a work-around to Paul's urgent eschatology. Paul claimed merely that Jesus was coming back—indeed, that Christ may return at any time—but Paul did not actually say when. This anxiety about the lag in Paul's timekeeping also characterizes scholarly resistance to seeing Jesus as meaning something millenarian when he proclaims that the Kingdom at hand. (On this resistance, see esp. Dale Allison's works on the historical Jesus.) But John the Baptist's timekeeping was also off. So was that of the Teacher of

One last historical problem with early very high Christology: it renders the next several centuries of theological development all but incomprehensible. How could generations of theologians have consistently and universally failed to see Paul's message? How could Marcion, that committed Paulinist, so miss the memo? How could Justin, so at ease with Septuagintal reference, so comfortably refer to Jesus as a second god and as an angel, if the identification of Jesus *as* and *with* the high god was so available in Paul's letters? How could Origen—master of Paul's corpus and probably in better control of Jewish biblical texts in Hebrew and in Greek than was Paul himself—still frame a godhead of graduated divinity? Why indeed did the Arian controversy even happen at all, if the radical identification of Jesus with God had already debuted back in the mid-first century?⁶⁸ Why, if Paul provides the Christological Big Bang, do we have this big lag?

Righteousness. And of Joachim of Fiore. And of Shabbatai Zvi. And of William Miller. I fail to see why this should be so unsettling. The Pope is the only one I know of whose job description includes a clause about infallibility.

The claim that Jesus may return "at any time" is indeed logically distinct from the claim that Jesus will return "soon." That logical distinction has the virtue of leaving history with a lot more time on its hands—and conforms, happily, to the way that things did indeed work out. But Paul does say "soon." He uses the past perfect tense when he speaks of the ends of the ages. He says "we," "us," and "we the living" when he speaks of those who will witness Christ's return. The Thessalonians got their impression that no one of their assembly would die before the parousia from someone, and that someone was Paul. He did not correct or qualify that impression so much as reassure them that things were, after all, on track. Paul measures time between "now" and "soon." I close on this topic with a thought from Krister Stendahl: "If the text says 'now' in year 56 of the Common Era, where does that leave you and me? It leaves us almost 2000 years later. No kerygmatic gamesmanship can overcome this simple fact" (*Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 23).

68 Adela Collins, responding to Hurtado, raises this same objection: "This recognition of ambiguity ... is supported by the Christological controversies of the fourth century. If the texts of the New Testament had been unambiguous, there would have been fewer disagreements about what the texts meant" ("How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? A Reply," in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children*, ed. David B. Capes *et al.* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007], 55–66, at 64).

Christology, as classical Christian theology more generally, was utterly dependent on Greek philosophy, just as physics is dependent on math. Philosophy itself had to develop from middle to late Platonism before binitarian and trinitarian Christian theologies would have the tools to articulate themselves. And as the radioactive fall-out from Nicea and Chalcedon exemplifies—Arianism, Monophysitism, Nestorianism, and all the other isms—even with the theological developments of late Platonism, high Christological claims were highly contested, unanimity impossible to achieve, even with the *douceurs* of imperial favor.

I conclude with a statement of Dale Allison's: "To do history is not to do theology."⁶⁹ What is the difference? Theology—even historically sensitive theology—ends by expressing the traditions of its author's religious community. And that community lives in the present, while drawing on texts, Old Testament and New Testament, bequeathed by the past. Theology is a kind of time machine, updating these texts, retrieving them from intellectual obscurity and ethical irrelevance, rendering them meaningful to the contemporary church. (Or churches: Catholics will see something different in these texts than will Protestants, Ethiopian Copts from Greek Orthodox. Different churches have different doctrines, thus different traditions of interpretation—and thus, *in this way*, different Bibles.)

But what a text *meant* cannot but be different from what it, within a current community, *means*.⁷⁰ The Renaissance is the point of origin for this vital distinction, as well as for much else: modern science, the sun-centered solar system, critical historiography, commitment to primary languages, textual criticism. And, of course, for Protestantism.

Within that highly charged intellectual climate, Protestant theology legitimated itself by appeal to the (then) "new" history, a shining new criterion of legitimacy and meaning. Luther, as far as Luther was concerned, was not simply defying the Pope. He was not constructing a *new* theology at all. He was simply recovering what *Paul actually meant*. And what Paul actually meant, Luther urged, was justification by faith alone, not by the works of the Law. New Testament "Jews" and their current Catholic proxies—as well as Luther's Jewish contemporaries—were felled in one blow.

Did Sanders' 1977 masterwork undo this historicizing theology once for all? I wish. Criteria of theological legitimacy still seem pinned to this sort of historicism: a modern theological thought is somehow not legit unless Paul (or Jesus) himself had that very same theological thought. Therefore, the historical Jesus or Paul must have thought the same thought. This is the prime reason, I think, why so many Protestant New Testament historians keep discovering a first-century Protestant Paul.⁷¹

69 Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 462.

70 On this distinction, the seminal essay by Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *IDB* 1:418–32.

71 "Paul replaced election and law wholesale ... and thereby made faith front and center" (Newman, "God and Glory and Paul, Again," 135).

Churches are trans-temporal communities, stretching from Jesus and Paul to now. Identity is contiguous thanks to the ligature of theology. Theology inscribes identity.⁷²

History unsettles it. What Paul thought, reconstructed historically, will always line up more closely with what any other first-century person thought—even if that person were an Egyptian magical adept, a devotee of Cybele, a Roman senator, or the Jewish high priest—than with whatever Augustine thought, or what Luther thought, or what current theologians think. True, what Paul said about Jesus was, in its historical context, distinctive. So too, however, were the teachings about Sarapis, once his divinity manifested to his community in Alexandria. And Paul's claims for Christ's divinity, further, were indeed genuinely "new," relative to claims that were made for, say, Augustus; but they were similar, also, in some ways, to claims that were made about Augustus.⁷³ And Paul's claims could be new only in a first-century way, not in a fourth-century way, or in a sixteenth-century way, or in a twenty-first-century way.

Theology refamiliarizes Paul's letters. History defamiliarizes them—and should. This is because ancient people were not modern people, and they lived in a world utterly different from ours. We should mind the gap—and respect it.

72 This identity-confirming and conferring function of theology is equally true for Jewish and Muslim communities: in any community concerned with "orthodoxy," the foundational past is the measure of authenticity and legitimacy. For this reason, as I have written elsewhere, that past is too important to be allowed to exist ("Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *JTS* 37 [1986]: 3–34, at 34). Rabbinic Judaism, aware of and celebrating its updating of scriptural *halakot*, falls more into the mold of What-Would-Maimonides-Do than What-Would-Moses-Do. The Roman Catholic magisterium also acknowledges developments in doctrine, though that church's traumatized response to radical nineteenth-century European politics saddled the Pope, in 1870, with infallibility.

73 On which, toggling nicely between imperial and New Testament materials, Peppard, *Son of God*.

