

CHRIS TILLING

Paul's
Divine Christology

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

Writing the Preface to a monograph is a daunting task, especially when so many people have contributed to the final product. As this work is only a slightly revised version of my Ph.D. thesis, to start off I would like to thank my *Doktorvater*, Max Turner, for his friendly, wise and insightful comments at key points, for his faith in this project and his encouragement. I am very thankful to my examiners, Professors Steve Walton and Larry Hurtado. I considered myself honoured to be examined by you. I would also like to thank the Laing Foundation for a number of generous scholarship awards, all of which helped to make my research a financial possibility. I am very grateful to Professor Jörg Frey, for accepting this thesis for publication, and to Doctor Henning Ziebritzki and the not only helpful but also friendly team at Mohr Siebeck. For their assistance, particularly that of Frau Dominika Zgolik, my appreciation. Thanks also to Katie Law for her superb work in producing the indices.

I must also acknowledge the constructive feedback from participants of the New Testament research seminars of Professor Hans-Joachim Eckstein, and the New Testament research conferences at London School of Theology. Most of all, however, I must warmly thank the members of the bilingual Colloquium for Graduates of Professor Hermann Lichtenberger and Doctor Scott Caulley. Since my move to London I have missed our weekly gatherings, the valuable learned input and discussions, not to mention friends left behind.

But moving to London also has had its benefits, not least life at a most remarkable church, Holy Trinity Brompton. Inspiration, encouragement and, most important of all, new friends and colleagues have helped smooth the last few months of this project. I would like to thank my colleagues at St Mellitus College, especially Andrew Emerton and Graham Tomlin, for their kindness and support. I consider it an honour to work with you, and the rest of the team.

I would like to thank a number of people who have made an effort to help me in the proof-reading process. Doctor Michael Gorman, in particular, made numerous helpful comments, and I was most grateful for his expert input. I remain grateful also to Doctor Stephen Fowl for his encouragement. Thanks to Nick Norelli for his numerous insightful observations – I await his own academic contributions with great anticipation. My sincere thanks also to Volker Rabens and David Vinson who gave of their time to read through earlier drafts of my thesis. Your help was both valuable and appreciated! Special mention must go to my good friend, Jim West, who has not only made valuable sug-

gestions to improve my argument at various points, but he has been a constant source of encouragement. His friendship is the best thing to have come out of my adventures as a ‘biblioblogger’. Of course, I want to also acknowledge the wider, growing, diverse and evolving community of biblio- and theologians. You know who you are. Our discussions have sometimes enriched my work tremendously.

My warmest thanks to my dear parents, Roger and Rosalind Tilling, for financial support, proof-reading help, and most of all, more love and encouragement than I can ever repay. This project would not have been possible without you.

My deepest thanks are reserved for my beautiful wife, Anja, who not only financially supported me through the last few years of the Ph.D., but also proof-read every page of my work with a fine toothed comb, spotted more mistakes than I care to remember and helped correct my grammar at various points (and that even though she is German!). Her precious love and support throughout this project could never be summarised with mere words, and the end product is, at many levels, as much her work as it is mine. I dedicate this thesis to her with every ounce of my affection and love.

It was during a season of prayer that the idea behind this thesis developed. During the entire research process, I felt sustained, animated and inspired by my Heavenly Father. I hasten to add, of course, that all mistakes and shortcomings in the following argument remain mine! Indeed, having begun life as a New Testament lecturer, it is not a surprise that aspects of my thinking have subsequently sharpened, but as one of Leo Tolstoy’s characters said in *Anna Karenina*: ‘If you look for perfection, you’ll never be content’. Nor would one ever publish! I look forward to continued interaction with the academic community in the coming years, together with the inevitable correction of my own proposals that this will entail, over the truly fascinating subject of the nature and development of early Christology.

Soli Deo honor et gloria!

Chris Tilling
St Paul’s Onslow Square, 2012

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Abbreviations

The abbreviations in this thesis adopt those in P.H. Alexander et al. (eds.), *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999). Only abbreviations not found in the *SBL Handbook of Style* are noted below.

General Abbreviations:

<i>EMSM</i>	Boccaccini, G., ed. <i>Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man</i> . Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007
ESV	English Standard Version
ETS	Evangelical Theological Society
LJC	Hurtado, Larry W. <i>Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity</i> . Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003
NET	New English Translation
NLT	New Living Translation
NT	New Testament
<i>OG</i>	Hurtado, Larry W. <i>One God, One Lord</i> . London: SCM, 1988
<i>OG</i> ²	Hurtado, Larry W. <i>One God, One Lord</i> . Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998 ² (second edition)
OT	Old Testament

Abbreviations for journals not noted in the SBL Handbook of Style:

<i>ED</i>	Euntes Docete
<i>FzB</i>	Forschung zur Bibel (Würzburg)
<i>JHeS</i>	Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

Chapter 1

Paul's divine-Christology. An introduction

1. Framing the debate

The question concerning the identity and divinity of Christ is one born and raised in controversy. Ever since it has been asked it has generated a wide mixture of responses, ranging from physical violence and vicious debate to worship and praise, with not just a little painfully subtle metaphysical theorising on the way. Debate continues in many quarters, especially within the world of Pauline scholarship which, for the last few decades, has witnessed a resurgence of dispute as to whether Paul's Christology should be properly understood as 'divine'. And these are not peripheral concerns for if those who deny a Pauline divine-Christology are correct, perhaps some difficult questions need to be fearlessly pursued and not sidestepped in the name of unthinking orthodoxy. This is all the more true as Paul has traditionally been understood to have authored over half of what became the canon of the New Testament. What is more, it is also arguably fair to claim that without an understanding of what Paul thought about Christ, one is not likely to understand much about Paul at all. Indeed, it can be maintained that a clearer grasp of Paul's Christology will speak into contemporary debates concerning justification. On top of this, given that the (at least, undisputed) Pauline corpus is the earliest layer of NT literature, the question of whether Pauline Christology is divine is of great significance for one's understanding of the development of early Christology generally, and thus the history of early Christianity.¹

So this is not a minor topic, and one must, therefore, immediately address matters of definition, even if only in a preliminary fashion. This is necessary because what one scholar means, by cheerfully affirming particularly a Pauline *divine*-Christology, means something very different when the same language is used by other scholars – even to the point of contradiction. To give this discussion focus, the following provisional and working definition of 'divine-Christology' will thus be adopted. To cite Bauckham, a divine-Christology is one that places Christ, 'on the divine side of the line which

¹ For the range of views, cf. Carey C. Newman, "From (Wright's) Jesus to (the Church's) Christ: *Can We Get There from Here?*" in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel. A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. Carey C. Newman (Carlisle: IVP, 1999), 281–87.

monotheism must draw between God and creatures'.² It will be possible, in light of this thesis, to critically return to this definition in chapter 10.

But first, an important question can be anticipated. As shall be seen in the next chapter, mid-20th century scholarship exhaustively analysed the various Pauline christological titles, and Larry Hurtado's work in particular has already proficiently analysed the importance of Pauline Christ-devotion. On top of this, in 2007, Gordon Fee published a massive tome addressing precisely the sort of questions we wish to analyse here.³ Some may wonder, then, what more needs to be said. Can another book on Paul's Christology offer any new insight or will it simply be doomed to a matter of 'moving the furniture'?

What is more, modern scholarship has arguably reached something of an impasse on the precise question to be tackled in this volume, namely Is Paul's Christology divine? On the one hand, scholars such as Gordon Fee, Richard Bauckham and Larry Hurtado have variously answered in the affirmative. Yet others remain profoundly unpersuaded. So James Dunn, while maintaining an early 'high-Christology',⁴ surrounds his affirmations with all manner of qualifications, and ultimately denies the kind of divine-Christology affirmed by Bauckham and others. After all, Christ is, for Paul, unambiguously *subordinate* to God (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:27–28) and the Father is Christ the Lord's 'God' (e.g. 2 Cor. 1:3). Maurice Casey, too, opines that Paul's Christology cannot properly be called 'divine'. Such a decisive break with Jewish monotheism could only come later, with the influx of Gentiles into the population of those professing Christian-faith. Indeed, some could suggest there is, in some very recent scholarship, a turning of the tide away from affirmations of a Pauline divine-Christology to its denial, as is evidenced in the publications of, for example, James McGrath, James Crossley and Pamela Eisenbaum.⁵ This is consistent with the fact that not only can a case be made for a less-than-fully divine-Christology in Paul, some observe weaknesses in the arguments used by scholars to affirm a divine-Christology. For example, Bauckham's divine-identity categories do not, when examined against the literature of second Temple Judaism, appear as clear-cut as he seems to maintain, and one won-

²Richard J. Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity," *NTS* 27 (1981): 335.

³Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007).

⁴James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 258.

⁵James F. McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in Its Jewish Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); Michael F. Bird and Crossley James G., *How Did Christianity Begin? A Believer and Non-Believer Examine the Evidence* (London: SPCK, 2008); James G. Crossley, *Reading the New Testament: Contemporary Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2010), 75–98.

ders to what extent his approach really gets to the heart of Paul's language. Hurtado's approach, too, must be critiqued at important points, and it can be maintained that the weaknesses in his own arguments have indeed provoked some of the Pauline-divine-Christology-denial now entering the field of NT studies. Likewise, Fee's contributions, while extensive, are problematic at numerous levels, as will be explored below.

This volume enters the debate by offering a fresh way of approaching the question of Pauline Christology, in terms of the 'divinity debate'. This, it will be argued, is demanded by a number of factors, ranging from Paul's monotheism, his epistemology, and most importantly, the shape and content of his major concerns in his letters. Building on the works of Hurtado, Bauckham and Fee, it is the contention of this volume that affirmation of a Pauline divine-Christology is necessary. In a nutshell, it will be argued that the whole Pauline divine-Christology debate has yet to grasp sufficiently the most obvious, namely Paul's own language and the most appropriate pattern of Pauline themes relevant to this debate. By analysing the data in Paul which concerns the relation between the risen Lord and believers, it will be maintained that relational data concerning Christ in Paul's letters corresponds, as a pattern, only to the language concerning YHWH in second Temple Judaism. It is concluded that the Christ-relation is Paul's divine-Christology expressed as relationship. Before overviewing how this argument will unfold in the following chapters, two points will be made about wider concerns addressed by the approach of this thesis.

2. Two wider concerns

The first matter tangentially engaged in the following thesis concerns the present debate about the legitimacy of theological readings of the NT, and the propriety of the 'great ugly ditch' in academic theological research between NT studies, on the one hand, and theology or dogmatics, on the other. To what extent should the NT be read from within the concerns of a faith community, as a supposedly God-inspired text, or to what extent should the text be better analysed via recourse to 'independent' scholarship using historical-critical tools employed in other disciplines concerned with historical research? For many this sets up a false alternative, but some will insist that the only properly academic route must resist the commitments and concerns of faith communities, which more often than not project anachronistic concerns on to ancient texts. Some, on the other hand, will argue that to engage with the NT texts correctly, one must necessarily speak of God, thus theologically, while others will further add that to appreciate the context, substance, purpose, and origin

of these texts correctly, one must allow one's rhetoric to be determined by the content of God's triune self-revelation in the gospel.⁶

This study certainly begins with what some could consider a rather specialised New Testament academia-insider matter, namely the debate concerning whether or not, to what extent or in what sense, Paul's own Christology should be considered 'divine'. Certainly the main dialogue partners in what follows are NT scholars. And this thesis likewise engages this question using the usual tools of NT exegesis, those which would be employed by my academic colleagues without any personal association with a faith community. Yet what may be most surprising for some, as it certainly was for me, is that the following exegetical argument, by its very nature, arguably cannot end where it begins. It shall be maintained that to correctly engage this debate in a Pauline fashion, the scholar must ultimately end up making statements about communal and contemporary Christian life. To speak correctly of Paul's divine-Christology is to speak both the languages of NT studies and the *ecclesia*, where Christians believe the risen Lord is present and active through his Spirit. Paul's Christology, understood in terms of the divine-Christology debate, is a vital instance of Church dogmatics. In other words, while the larger debate concerning theological exegesis cannot be directly engaged here, arguably the shape of this thesis contributes to it as it is an illustration of engagement with the NT that is theological *because* it is critically exegetical.

A second aspect of the following study needs comment. This thesis aims to make, again albeit indirectly, a methodological point concerning how NT study is best undertaken. Many NT studies now seek to refract Pauline text through a variety of hermeneutical models,⁷ and they often do so by engaging with his letters in an atomised fashion (with in-depth exegesis of a few texts declared to be 'key'). In such a context, not only must one spend a few chapters detailing the specific model of interpretation before one engages with the primary literature, but also broader NT patterns simply *cannot* be examined due to space and time limitations.⁸

⁶ This is not the place to list all of the relevant literature, but cf. the different positions represented in, e.g., H. Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1990) on the one hand, and Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) and John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*, Current Issues in Theology, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), on the other.

⁷ This can be coupled with the questionable research method of analysing (usually) second Temple Jewish literature for the majority of a work, before, at the end, spending a few words on the NT texts to demonstrate a 'new' reading.

⁸ Although this is anecdotal evidence, I am not surprised that I was chided by one reviewer of an earlier version of this work – my unpublished PhD thesis – for attempting to analyse too much Pauline material. I needed, it was urged, to rather focus on a few key passages. As understandable as this comment was, my method was deliberate. I leave it for the reader to judge if it is successful.

Long ago, Adolf Schlatter contended that for NT theology and exegesis ‘the hardest thing to observe is often right in front of our eyes’.⁹ The present volume thus seeks to refocus the Pauline divine-Christology debate by re-engaging the sweep of themes in Paul’s letters, while avoiding the construction of an interpretative lens that is uninformed by those same Pauline themes. This is certainly not to capitulate once again, as some could misunderstand Schlatter to mean, to a supposedly ‘objective’ simple reading of the NT. Rather, it can be understood to counterbalance some unhealthy trends in the approach of some NT studies, which neglect broader Pauline themes and construct various reading models without sufficiently intense engagement with Paul’s letters.¹⁰ Nor is this to suggest, of course, that detailed exegesis be sidelined.

A few examples of these problems from the following study can be cited. First, Fee attempts a ‘primarily exegetical’ approach,¹¹ but neglects to consider how an arguably unrecognised Aristotelian, and unPauline, metaphysics shapes his own questions and claims. His results, as we shall seek to demonstrate, are thus slightly out of step with Paul’s letters. Larry Hurtado’s works have sought to analyse early Christian devotion,¹² but one wonders, however, to what extent his understanding of devotion is something Paul would recognise. It is to suggest that his key interpretive angle has been under-informed by Paul’s own texts (cf. chapters 3 and 4 below). One could also mention the learned contributions of William Horbury and Andrew Chester’s, in which they opine that to understand Pauline Christology correctly, one must precisely not ‘set Pauline Christology as the central point’.¹³ We shall argue later that this counterintuitive claim is also counterproductive.

Naturally, any thesis faces the problem of circularity, of reading the texts from a particular perspective while hoping that one’s exegetical approach is

⁹ Cited in Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ. A Pauline Theology* (Leicester: IVP, 2001), 16.

¹⁰ In a compatible manner, Douglas Campbell has also, in his magisterial book *The Deliverance of God*, rejected an atomistic preoccupation with Pauline pericopae, analysed one after another, and sought to cultivate what he calls a ‘horizontal’ approach, namely one which keeps overarching themes close to mind, which appreciates how individual texts work as ‘semantic and rhetorical events’ within that broader sweep of concerns. See Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), xxviii-xxix.

¹¹ Fee, *Christology*, 4.

¹² Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, reprint, 1988 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998²); Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

¹³ Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 329.

shaped by, or at least not entirely alien to, those texts. And if there is no one objective perspective to clear up all debates, how can one judge the value of different interpretive proposals? This thesis, without claiming any kind of naive realism, or even critical realism, simply wants to return as a point of method, again and again, to Paul's own texts, both in the shaping of its reading method and in the scope of its engagement with Paul's letters. That is, it refuses the *cul-de-sac* methodological 'professionalism' of the in-depth exegesis of a few 'key' texts – an approach that, in terms of the Pauline divine-Christology debate, has arguably not delivered on its claims – for a broader analysis of Paul's letters. To understand Paul's Christology, to Paul's letters we will repeatedly go. What all of this will look like in this thesis of course remains to be detailed, and much ground will be covered before these claims can be sufficiently justified. It will prove useful to now offer a short reconnaissance of the upcoming ground to be covered.

3. An overview of the argument

Chapters 2–4 will open up an argumentative space for this thesis. Chapter 2 offers a 'history of scholarship', and will examine how particularly post 1970s NT experts have sought to determine whether, or not, Paul's Christology is divine. After a demonstration of the reasons for the scholarly shift in the 70s, it orders the various scholarly proposals according to two questions: a) How does Paul's Jewish-style faith in God affect our understanding of his Christology? and b) Where, if at all, is there evidence in the Pauline corpus for (or against) a divine-Christology? Chapter 3 will critically examine the works of three key scholars overviewed in the previous chapter, namely Gordon Fee, Larry Hurtado and Richard Bauckham.

Criticisms of their works will begin to point the way to a fresh approach which will be discussed in more depth in chapter 4. Having already argued that post 1970s academic discourse about the Pauline divine-Christology debate proceeds by engaging two overlapping questions, this chapter makes observations about the first. Through engagement particularly with the proposals of Bauckham and Hurtado, it is maintained that one should still speak of Paul's monotheism, even a strict monotheism, and Bauckham's language of God's transcendent uniqueness is employed to this end. Importantly, while agreeing with the thrust of Hurtado's response to scholars such as Fletcher-Louis and Barker, that no one has yet demonstrated 'an actual *devotional pattern* involving public and corporate worship offered to any figure other than the God of Israel' in Second Temple Judaism,¹⁴ it is noted that to reduce "the

¹⁴Hurtado, *LJC*, 34, italics his.

decisive criterion” by which Jews maintained the uniqueness of God¹⁵ to such worship does not appear particularly appropriate in light of the fact that true Jewish worship of God was meant to involve the entire life of the Second Temple Jew, that by its very nature and content, it reached beyond the cultus into the life, habits, goals and desires of the faithful (cf. the *Shema*), and that if it did not, it induced the scorn of the Prophets. This suggests a broader pattern needs to be found, into which cultic worship finds significance. Before this pattern is elucidated, the relational nature of both OT and Pauline monotheism is detailed, and in light of this three points are maintained. First, the more comprehensive context, one in which cultic worship belongs, is the God-relation pattern of data. Second, as God was understood, and faith in him expressed, in a thoroughly relational manner, then God’s *uniqueness* is likewise expressed, i.e. relationally. Third, this chapter argues that the YHWH-relation pattern of data, not just cultic worship, is the appropriate context in which to understand the emergence of early Christology.

All of this paves the way for a new suggestion concerning the second question, namely, Where, if at all, is there evidence in the Pauline corpus for (or against) a divine-Christology? It proposes to analyse the data in Paul’s undisputed letters concerning the relation between the risen Lord and believers. Just as Paul’s faith in God is relational, so this thesis will examine the relation between the risen Lord and believers in Paul’s letters, with a view to the divine-Christology debate. In the following exegetical section (chapters 5–8), an attempt is made to map the contours of this Christ-relation.

Chapter 5, while it begins the exegetical study of Paul’s letters, also functions as a frame for the following 4 chapters. It does this because it pursues two main propositions, one concerning the nature of Paul’s monotheistic strategy in 1 Corinthians 8:1–3, and another concerning the relation between risen Lord and believers, thus bringing together the two questions posed above. It is argued that Paul, having opened his argument in a way that expresses true faith in the one God as the relational commitment of believers to this God over against idolatry, goes on to explicitly and continually speak of the relation between risen Lord and believers over against idolatry. Furthermore, he details this Christ-relation with the terms and categories drawn from the complex of themes and concepts that, in the Jewish scriptures, describe the relation between Israel and YHWH over against idolatry.

Having established that Paul spoke of the Christ-relation in terms of the God-relation, chapter 6 examines the Christ-relation throughout the undisputed letters. This chapter, the longest in the thesis for the methodological reasons noted above, examines the broad pattern of data concerning the Christ-relation. It refuses to be tied to one or two key passages and instead works through the entire undisputed corpus, which leads to mixed exegetical depth.

¹⁵ Hurtado, *Earth*, 129.

But the goal is reached: in particular, the general shape of this Christ-relation is uncovered, seen in Paul's ultimate goals and motivations, in the variety of his explicit Christ-devotion language, in the passionate nature of this Christ-devotion, in the language Paul contrasted with this devotion, in the presence and activity of the risen Lord, yet also in the absence of Christ, and thus the Lord's presence through the Spirit, in the communications between the risen Lord and believers, and finally in the various ways Christ was characterised and the depiction of the scope of his lordship. At various points it is shown that the relation between the risen Lord and believers is explicitly expressed, as in 1 Corinthians 8–10, with the language used to describe relation to YHWH in the scriptures of Second Temple Judaism. With all of this data gathered together, chapter 7 argues that it is a pattern of material that Paul would recognise, hence it functions as the best perspective from which to assess christological significance. The final chapter of this extensive engagement with Paul's letters ends with an examination of 1 Corinthians 16:22, a text full of christological significance once relational factors are kept in focus.

Some have considered it good methodology to start with second Temple texts before engaging with Paul. Unfortunately, in terms of the divine-Christology debate, scholars have combed the dense and complex texts for various intermediary figures before really grasping the significance of Christ in Paul, and the meaning and extent of Paul's interrelated language, and so have necessarily drawn faulty conclusions. Here we start with Paul, making sure we clearly grasp some of the key contours of his Christ-relation, and only having done this do we, in chapter 9, look at Jewish devotion to figures other than God, particularly as evidenced in Sirach 44–50, Adam in the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the 'Son of Man' in the Similitudes of Enoch. These texts, are often used by detractors of Hurtado and Bauckham to assert that beings other than God could be worshipped, that blur God's transcendent uniqueness. It is argued, however, that precisely in these texts the Pauline Christ-relation finds very little correspondence with the language concerning 'worshipped' figures other than God (whether Adam in *L.A.E.*, the praised Ancestors in Sir., or the Son of Man in *1 En.*). Rather, the pattern of data concerning Paul's Christ-relation is, with remarkable consistency, reflected in the *God*-relation in these texts (whether the deity be called Lord of Spirits, YHWH or God). Indeed, aspects of Paul's language might suggest Paul did know of Enochic traditions, and sought in some important ways to associate Christ with the Lord of Spirits, and the Son of Man with Christians.

At this stage of the argument, in chapter 10, it is possible to propose some conclusions regarding the divine-Christology debate. Four points lead to the conclusion that Paul's Christ-relation *is* a divine-Christology. First, it is argued that Jewish God-relation data, including Paul's own, overlaps considerably, in general shape and in detail, with Paul's Christ-relation. Second, it is noted that the pattern of God-relation data constitutes the way God was con-

ceived as unique. Third, the correspondence between Paul's Christ-relation and the Jewish God-relation is expounded. It is argued that because of Paul's deliberate link between God-language and certain Christ-relation elements, the use of the title *κύριος*, the relational monotheistic context with which Paul framed his rhetoric concerning the Christ-relation, and the important overlap of the general shape and contours of the Christ-relation with the Jewish God-relation pattern, the way Second Temple Judaism understood God as unique, through the God-relation pattern, was used to express the pattern of data concerning the Christ-relation. But fourth, the argument of Boers is engaged, in which he asserts that to write a Pauline Christology is merely a 'scholarly abstraction'. In light of recent studies of Paul's epistemology, it is noted that this epistemology was *relational*. On this basis it is maintained that, by analysing the *Christ-relation* in Paul, and by noting the Apostle's relational epistemology, one can claim that to speak of Paul's divine-Christology is actually to present Paul's own conceptions, and in a mode that the Apostle likely employed. In a study of Paul's epistemology it has been argued that knowledge, for Paul, can be expressed as relationship.¹⁶ In light of the previous chapters it is argued that the Christ-relation *is* Paul's divine-Christology – knowledge expressed as relationship. The Christ-relation was Paul's way of expressing a divine-Christology. With this way of constructing a Pauline divine-Christology, nine important arguments proffered by those denying such a Christology are reengaged.

Having summarised the central arguments of this thesis in chapter 11, a final appendix makes a point which, as noted above, surprised even its author. The conclusions of the exegetical work of this thesis facilitate fresh engagement with various broader ecclesial questions. Building on the work of Bauckham, the problem of Lessing's ditch – in terms of the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith' – is broached, followed by an extended meditation on the new avenues of conversation opened up between Pauline Christology, as presented in this thesis, and the concerns of theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna, John Zizioulas and others. This all suggests, in ways that remain beyond the scope of this thesis to fully justify, that it is in this relationship with Christ that not only theology and history meet, but also ethics, epistemology and doxology.

Admittedly, summaries of entire arguments, like the one above, can often seem a little unintelligible, and only truly make sense *after* the book is read from cover to cover – even when the reader is a fellow specialist (the same could be said about Paul's so-called 'thesis statements' in Romans 1:16–17!). Nevertheless, it will provide a road map for navigating the upcoming

¹⁶ Mary Healy, "Knowledge of the Mystery: A Study of Pauline Epistemology," in *The Bible and Epistemology*, eds Mary Healy, Robin Parry (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 142.

Sehenswürdigkeiten. It only remains for me to hope, especially if my summary appeared a little opaque, that you, my reader, will press on to the end of this book and continue the important task of wrestling with the question of 'what to make of Jesus'.¹⁷

¹⁷Hurtado, *LJC*, 652–53.

Chapter 2

A Pauline divine-Christology? A history of research

1. Introduction

Given the contemporary Pauline divine-Christology debate, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that a detailed history-of-research concerning the specific question of *Pauline* divine-Christology has not been written.¹ And while this chapter partly attempts to make up for this lacuna, it will nevertheless do so selectively. First, pre-1970s scholarship is examined. This division of material is based on the judgment that the 1970s involved a revolution in approach and focus concerning the divine-Christology debate. Scholarly questions and strategies, which had until then largely focused on chronological schemes of development, the background of Paul's Christology (Jewish or Hellenistic) and the study of titles and their etymology, were creatively developed and expanded in various new directions which deserve more detailed examination and classification, under the heading 'Post-1970s scholarship'.

2. Pre-1970s scholarship and Pauline divine-Christology

During the Reformation and the so-called 'Period of Orthodoxy', Paul's Christology was not seen as a self-contained subject of study. And so while christological discussion referred to Pauline texts, the specific question of whether Paul's Christ was divine was not a matter of debate.²

However, the developing dogma of the early enlightenment era posed a fundamental challenge to the theological notions of incarnation and divine-

¹However, see the helpful but limited and/or indirect treatments in Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 1–15; Carl Judson Davis, *The Name and Way of the Lord: Old Testament Themes, New Testament Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 13–27; L.J. Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 15–27; Fee, *Christology*, 10–15.

²Cf. e.g. the approach in John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1:2:14, which is representative of others.

Christology.³ To oversimplify the complexities of the range of argumentation then used, it was seen as *a priori* unacceptable to assert a ‘new’ and historically bound, but nevertheless ‘universal’ revelation of truth, such as the incarnation.⁴ Furthermore, the ‘Gospel miracles’, which were traditionally used as a defence of the divinity of Christ, were also unacceptable on philosophical grounds. And while most efforts were not specifically focused on *Pauline* Christology, the matters raised set the frame for almost all proceeding debate.

And what were these raised matters? First, it became clear that Paul had to be treated on his own terms. Early English Deists (e.g. Thomas Morgan⁵), proposed that behind the apparent unity of the NT, there was evidence of theological development. This line of reasoning was picked up somewhat later in Germany, particularly by J. S. Semler (1725–91), F. C. Baur (1792–1860) and A. Harnack (1851–1930). Philosophical ‘wind in the sails’ was provided by Hegel (1770–1831) and his dialectical model of history. Thus a fundamental challenge against those who assumed that Paul’s divine-Christology must be substantially the same as that in the Johannine material was developed. Christology was no longer seen as a static formulation within the NT. The dogmas themselves developed, and Paul must be plotted on the line of this development. And in the light of this, many were to start doubting that Paul’s Christology was divine at all, that the earliest Christology was ‘low’ (i.e. not divine), and only later developed into a divine-Christology.⁶

Second, and hand in hand with the above, was the division posited, especially by Harnack, between Jewish and Greek/Hellenistic thought forms.⁷ He argued that Christology proper was to be associated with abstract Greek thinking, while soteriology was more fundamentally Jewish. Harnack himself was to situate Paul somewhere in-between these two ‘worlds’. Thus Paul, he argued, while nevertheless not going as far as the later church Creeds in his Christology, started to introduce into it the influences of Greek categories of thinking.⁸

These two foundational matters were to change the shape of christological debate entirely. Key assumptions concerning the theological unity of the NT

³ Cf. Alistair E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology 1750–1990*, reprint, 1987 (Leicester: Apollon, 1994²), 13–35; Werner G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (London: SCM, 1973), e.g., 55; Anthony C. Thiselton, “New Testament Interpretation in Historical Perspective,” in *Hearing the New Testament. Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 10–36; and J.C. O’Neill, *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 7–14.

⁴ Cf. esp. Alistair E. McGrath, *Making*, 20–35, and the literature cited there.

⁵ Cf. the citations in Kümmel, *History*, 56–57. For the following cf. O’Neill, *Jesus*, 7–8.

⁶ On the introduction of an ‘adoptionist’ reading of Rom. 1:4 and Acts 2:3 by Julius Wellhausen cf. O’Neill, *Jesus*.

⁷ Adolf Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, reprint, 1909 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1990⁴).

⁸ Harnack suggests that this is to be seen especially in Paul’s thinking about the risen Lord in terms of ‘spirit’ (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 103, 105–6, 803).

and in it the place of Paul, were forever overturned. In one way or another they were to appear in and guide the discussions that were to follow.

Also important in these early days of critical engagement with Pauline Christology is the reaction of conservative scholars to the sort of reasoning outlined above. Conservatives within Germany,⁹ England¹⁰ and America¹¹ sought to reaffirm more traditional christological claims on the basis of Paul. Although some of them worked with an arguably naive hermeneutic for understanding Paul,¹² it would only be a slight exaggeration to claim that their creative and learned engagement with the Pauline-corpus pre-empted almost all modern debate in a small way.¹³

The development of (especially German) critical scholarship in regards to Christology through the 19th century is a story of reaction, absorption and counter-reaction. The rise of the Ritschlian school, while seemingly absorbing an apparent 'Kantian agenda'¹⁴ reacted to the eroding confidence in Hegelianism and the 'feeling' emphasis of Schleiermacher. And Christology was read through these lenses. Likewise, in reaction to the German Ritschlian school and the so-called 'Paulinism' of much (largely German) scholarship, the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* developed. Thus, instead of focusing on moralism, or abstract doctrines or liberal understandings of the religious significance of the personality of the historical Jesus etc., scholars such as Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) and Adolf Deissmann (1866–1937) emphasised the experiential aspects in Paul.¹⁵ However, the most significant contribution from this *Schule* to be made in relation to the question of Christology was that of W. Bousset. In his famous *Kyrios Christos* he focused on Paul's personal Christ piety and devotion which, he maintained, was the Apostle's unique

⁹ E.g. A. Schlatter, *Die Theologie der Apostel*, reprint, 1922 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1977), cf. e.g. 336–37; and Paul Feine, *Jesus Christus und Paulus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902), 14, 25, 50, etc.

¹⁰ E.g. H.P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Eight Lectures Preached Before the University of Oxford in 1866* (London: Rivingtons, 1875⁷), 306–59, and Joseph B. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 232, including his commentaries (on, e.g., Phil. and Rom.).

¹¹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory: A Study of the Designations of Our Lord in the New Testament with Especial Reference to His Deity*, reprint, 1907 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 229–32.

¹² It appears, however, that Schlatter's hermeneutic was more sophisticated (cf. the discussion in Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments: eine Hermeneutik* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986], 169–74, 'Adolf Schlatters Hermeneutik der Wahrnehmung').

¹³ Cf. e.g., the scope of material covered in Liddon, *Divinity*, 306–59.

¹⁴ Cf. Alister E. McGrath, *Making*, 82.

¹⁵ H. Gunkel, *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes nach der populären Anschauung der apostolischen Zeit und der Lehre des Apostels Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1888), 62–110; A. Deissmann, *Saint Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), xi.

adaptation of the Christ-cult mysticism of the Hellenistic Gentile Christian communities. Bousset was well aware of the christological implications of such Christ-devotion. Indeed, it suggested that the simple God-human relationship would appear to be complicated by ‘a peculiar thoroughgoing duplication’ of the object of religious faith and veneration.¹⁶ As Bousset admitted, this would all seem to suggest a Pauline divine-Christology.¹⁷ However, in the light of certain theological and titular considerations, which Bousset felt spoke against this (particularly the absence of θεός applied to Christ¹⁸), he concluded that ‘one still may not actually speak of a deity of Christ in the view of Paul’.¹⁹ Bousset has thus also helped to steer the focus of study onto the importance of christological titles which, as shall shortly be seen, is a matter of no small significance.

The dovetailing of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* with the ‘consistent eschatological’ reaction to Ritschlian liberalism manifests most formidably in the writings of Bultmann whose contributions to NT scholarship in the mid 20th century are, in terms of influence, without equal. Indeed, Bultmann’s basic acceptance of Bousset’s thesis served to confirm the latter’s influence. Of particular importance was Bultmann’s agreement with the division postulated between Palestinian Jewish and Hellenistic Gentile, so fundamental to Bousset’s chronological scheme.²⁰ And it was this very scheme, tied as it was to the study of individual titles, that was to dominate NT christological discussion from the middle of the 20th century up to the beginning of the era of the modern debates.²¹

Indeed, these were precisely the problems caused by this historical scheme, as it was used to understand the history of certain christological titles, that stimulated much academic discussion. One of the first historical critiques of

¹⁶ W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (New York: Abingdon, 1970), 205.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 209 n.150.

¹⁸ Cf. his comments on the disputed Rom. 9:5 (Bousset, *Kyrios*, 210).

¹⁹ Bousset, *Kyrios*, 210. It is for this reason that Schrage is hardly correct to speak of ‘the one sided preference of the cult over the teaching [of Paul] ...’, as practised in the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and especially in relation to the topic “monotheism”, now, e.g., brought back into the debate by L. W. Hurtado’ (Wolfgang Schrage, *Unterwegs zur Einzigkeit und Einheit Gottes: zum “Monotheismus” des Paulus und seiner alttestamentlich-frühjüdischen Tradition* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002], 159, italics and translation mine). In reality it was precisely these theological considerations that stopped Bousset from pushing the significance of the Christ-cult to what he felt were its natural theological consequences.

²⁰ Though it appears that Bousset himself derived this scheme from W. Heitmüller (cf. Hurtado, *LJC*, 15).

²¹ Most, however, did not consider Christology a subject that deserved separate treatment (cf. e.g. Conzelmann, Eichholz, Goppelt, Ridderbos etc. See the useful, if rather lopsidedly German focused, analysis in H. Hübner, “Paulusforschung seit 1945. Ein kritischer Literaturbericht,” in *ANRW* II.25.4 [1987], 2649–2840).

Bousset's scheme was Oscar Cullmann's important monograph, *The Christology of the New Testament*.²² Apart from the fact that it was for its titular emphasis a model that many were then encouraged to follow,²³ it provided a strong case against Bousset's argument that the 'Christ cult' emerged only on Hellenistic Gentile soil, not earlier. Particularly telling was Cullmann's recourse to the Aramaic prayer, *μαράνα θά*, preserved in 1 Corinthians 16:22.²⁴ Furthermore, based on his understanding of certain titles, Cullmann, contrary to Bousset, did not have the same hesitations in concluding that Paul's Christology was indeed divine.²⁵

Such was the lot of Pauline scholarship for the decades until the 1970s: major emphasis on chronological schemes of development, the background of Paul's Christology (Jewish or Hellenistic), and the study of titles, especially their etymology. By the 1970s the scholarly questions, strategies and historical schemes were about to experience a process of significant change.

3. Post-1970s scholarship and Pauline divine-Christology

What happened in the 1970s to create such a change in the scholarly landscape? In 1979 Hurtado insisted on the need for fresh analysis of the question of NT Christology.²⁶ In 1985 he published an article describing the forces that he saw as creating this need. He argued that because of the discovery of new material (the Nag Hammadi material,²⁷ revision and further publication of pseudepigraphal material, the publication of Qumran manuscripts), a better appreciation of how to handle some of that material (particularly a reconsideration of the importance placed on rabbinic material for understanding Paul)

²² O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1963²).

²³ Cf. Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, reprint, 1963 (London: SCM, 1966); F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity*, reprint, 1963 (New York: World Publishing, 1969); and R.H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner's, 1965).

²⁴ Cullmann, *Christology*, 208–9.

²⁵ This difference of opinion comes about primarily through an alternative understanding of Rom. 9:5, as well as the christological use of the title 'Lord'. It appears that the christological implications of Christ-devotion were thus allowed full expression, for Cullmann, as Bousset's theological objection had been removed (cf. Cullmann, *Christology*, 312–13, 320–21). However, Cullmann makes this affirmation as a primarily (though *not* exclusively, as some have misunderstood him) functional rather than ontological Christology (3–4). Hahn and Fuller also affirmed a Pauline divine-Christology (Hahn, *Titles*, e.g. 110; Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, 230).

²⁶ Larry W. Hurtado, "New Testament Christology: A Critique of Bousset's Influence," *TS* 40 (1979): 306–17.

²⁷ In relation to the general scholarly change, Stuckenbruck highlights, in addition, documents found in Oxyrhynchus, Cairo Geniza and the Elephantine papyri (Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995], 7 n.7).

and the publication of important monographs, especially by Schillebeeckx and Dunn (which attempted to interact with this wider range of material in constructing the development of NT Christology), it was possible to claim that ‘the origin and development of christology remains an engaging and unsettled topic’.²⁸ One could also mention Hengel’s learned and important contributions as another force of change. During the 1970s he, in a number of publications, developed some telling arguments against the titular and chronological schemes, particularly of Hahn and Kramer. Against Hahn’s distinctions between Palestinian Jewish Christianity, Hellenistic Jewish Christianity and Hellenistic Gentile Christianity, Hengel simply pointed out how difficult distinctions of this kind are to maintain in reality. Historical analysis shows that such boundaries did not exist in a strict sense, and certainly not when chronologically understood.²⁹ Already in the late 1960s, Hengel had influentially argued that, since approximately the middle of the 3rd century B.C., Judaism should best be called a ‘hellenistic Judaism’.³⁰ This is a fact that placed a large question mark against the neatly defined stages of historical development and Paul’s supposed place within it.

Furthermore, against Kramer, Hengel was to stress that the attempt to study in an isolated manner ‘individual christological ciphers [i.e., titles, formulae and phrases]’ misses the point.³¹ The ultimate goal of understanding the development of early Christology must attempt to see matters more holistically. This important critique fed the growing dissatisfaction with the christological studies of the years following Bousset and meant that scholars were ready to experiment with new approaches. What is more, Hengel also maintained that a high Christology was very early.³²

The 1970s thus marked a change in Pauline scholarship. In fact, probably one could even speak of the beginnings of a veritable explosion of scholarly interest and publications on Pauline Christology in this period.³³ Although it will be the individual arguments that will concern us, the new proposals mostly grew out of a more intense and judicious engagement with the literature and nature of Second Temple Judaism. This, in turn, has led to the mod-

²⁸ Larry W. Hurtado, “New Testament Christology: Retrospect and Prospect,” *Semeia* 30 (1985): 19.

²⁹ M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1983), 35–38.

³⁰ M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM, 1974), 1:104. Cf. the commentary in Hübner, “Paulusforschung,” 2737.

³¹ Hengel, *Jesus*, 38.

³² M. Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (London: SCM, 1976), sections 6.3 and 6.4.

³³ In this light, Berger’s claim ‘that Paul, in the last 25 years has disappeared from the centre of NT scholarship’ (Klaus Berger, *Paulus* [Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002], 7, translation mine), is inexplicable.

ern more self-conscious divide on the question of whether Paul's Christology should be called 'divine'. Although scholarly opinion concerning the question of whether Pauline Christology should be called 'divine' has always, since the enlightenment, been divided (e.g., Harnack more-or-less denied it, while Liddon and Lightfoot affirmed it; Bousset denied it, while Cullmann, Fuller and Hahn affirmed it), up until the 1970s there was less consensus concerning other important related questions (such as regarding the appropriate religious and cultural milieu in which to situate Paul's Christology, the best chronological scheme for understanding the historical development of early Christology etc.), and thus this line in scholarship was not as sharply defined. There is now an intensification of definite sides being taken specifically with regard to this question. Yet despite their differences, it appears that scholars on both sides of this dispute have all been trying to answer two fundamental questions: a) How does Paul's Jewish-style faith in God³⁴ affect our understanding of his Christology?³⁵ and b) Where, if at all, is there evidence in the Pauline corpus for (or against) a divine-Christology? In the following we shall overview how post-1970s scholarship, in both affirming and denying a Pauline divine-Christology, has reacted to these two questions.

3.1. The post-1970s engagement with the first question

If Paul was a Jewish monotheist, how can he treat or think of a recently crucified Jew as divine? How can Jewish "monotheists" worship him? This is, as M. Barker has put it, indeed a 'problem'.³⁶

Four basic proposals exist. The first maintains that because Jews were monotheists, it would be impossible for Paul to accommodate a divine-Christology as this would blur the strict line of distinction monotheism draws around God. On this basis some deny a Pauline divine-Christology.³⁷ Others

³⁴This way of formulating the question leaves open, for the time being, whether 'monotheism' is an appropriate term. In chapters 4 and 5 it will be necessary to examine the term 'monotheism'. For now, the meaning of the word, when used, will be understood according to its usage in the scholarly literature analysed.

³⁵Indeed, Bauckham categorises approaches to the question of NT Christology by its relation to the question of monotheism (cf. Richard J. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998], 2–4, and the critique in S. Vollenweider, *Horizonte neutestamentlicher Christologie: Studien zu Paulus und zur frühchristlichen Theologie* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002], 4, 24).

³⁶Margaret Barker, "The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, eds C.C. Newman, J.R. Davila, and G.S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 93.

³⁷So, e.g., A.E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 154, 157–58; James D.G. Dunn, "How Controversial Was Paul's Christology?" in *The Christ and the Spirit: Christology*, reprint, originally published in 1993 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 225–26; Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 116.