

Introduction

ANYONE WHO READS EVEN A smattering of Paul's writings recognizes early on that his devotion to Christ was the foremost reality and passion of his life. What he said in one of his later letters serves as a kind of motto for his entire Christian life: "For me to live is Christ; to die is [to] gain [Christ]" (Phil 1:21). Christ is the beginning and goal of everything for Paul, and thus is the single great reality along the way. So when one dares to attempt what I have tried to do in this book—offer a Pauline Christology—one needs a clear sense of what one is doing: after all, Christ appears on every page, as it were.¹ Our first task, then, is to clarify what is meant by the term "Christology" and at the same time to define the word "Pauline."

Pauline Christology: What Is It?

The word "Christology" in this study is used exclusively to refer to the *person* of Christ—Paul's understanding of *who* Christ was/is, in distinction to the *work* of Christ—*what* Christ *did* for us as Savior (soteriology). But this is also our first difficulty, since a distinction between Christology and soteriology is not one that Paul himself makes.² If Christ is the singular passion of

¹Except for Rom 1:16–3:20, which is so remarkably theocentric that Christ is mentioned but once (2:16), and this with reference to Paul's gospel.

²Indeed, as pointed out in ch. 11, for Paul this is an artificial distinction; cf. S. Kim: "In Paul Christology and soteriology are not two separate doctrines but one, the former being the ground of the latter" (*The Origin of Paul's Gospel* [WUNT 2/4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981], 100); and H. Ridderbos: "Paul's Christology is a Christology of redemptive facts" (*Paul: An Outline of His Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 49). The (valid) recognition of this reality has led scholarship down one path that is appreciated but will not be taken in this book, that of attempting to do Christology by way of narrative. See, e.g., B. Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 86–214; M. L. Soards, "Christology of the Pauline Epistles," in *Who Do You Say I Am? Essays on Christology* (ed. M. A. Powell and D. R. Bauer; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 88–109; F. Matera, *New Testament Christology*

Paul's life, the focus of that passion is on the saving work of Christ; and Paul spells this out often enough in intentional moments for at least a modest understanding of what it meant for him to say, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3).³

This in turn leads directly to the second difficulty: there is only one passage in the entire corpus, Col 1:15–17, that might be described as intentionally christological. Here, over against some who (apparently) were diminishing the role, and thus the person, of Christ by their fascination with the "powers," Paul intentionally sets out to put the "powers" in their place with respect to the eternal Son of the Father.⁴ And if this passage is, as most NT scholars believe, the first "stanza" of a two-stanza "hymn," then the second stanza (vv. 18–20) returns altogether to Paul's primarily soteriological concerns.

Third, and in many ways the greatest difficulty of all, is the inevitable question of trying to ferret out a coherent Christology from the scores of contingent moments⁵ in Paul's letters where his "theology" emerges by way of presupposition or affirmation but not by explication. My ultimate concern in this study is with coherence in Paul's thought concerning the person of

(Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 83–133. My appreciation lies with the attempt to try to do Pauline Christology without being dominated by "titles." But the difficulty lies with trying to do what is attempted in this book (rightly or wrongly): to look at Christology on its own right and not to have it overlaid with soteriology, even though, as pointed out in chs. 4 (pp. 196–98) and 11, the latter deeply impacts the former.

The main difficulty with the narrative approach is that it has trouble in dealing with Paul's christological *presuppositions* (see n. 8 below). This emerges especially in Matera's discussion of the Christology of 1 Thessalonians (*New Testament Christology*, 90–91), where he fails to take into consideration the Christology that Paul presupposes between himself and his readers. Furthermore, both Witherington and Matera try to factor personified Wisdom into the narrative, to which any ordinary reading of Paul should play the lie, since outside the Wisdom literature itself (esp. Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon) "she" has no role of any kind in Israel's essential narrative, and certainly not in that of Paul, who neither cites nor alludes to these two works in his letters. See further appendix A.

³This is said too easily, of course, since centuries of debate have accumulated around this question, mostly, I am convinced, because Paul uses a variety of metaphors to express the saving results of Christ's death, depending on which aspect of "sin" is in purview. Our theological difficulties have stemmed from pressing the metaphors beyond Paul's own usage. See G. D. Fee, "Paul and the Metaphors of Salvation: Some Reflections on Pauline Soteriology," in *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer* (ed. S. T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins; Oxford University Press, 2004), 43–67.

⁴Some may see this last phrase as presupposing a later christological emphasis. But as is pointed out in the exegesis of this passage in ch. 7 (pp. 293–95), the grammatical antecedent of the "who" in Col 1:15–20 is "the beloved Son" of v. 13, into whose "kingdom" the Gentile Colossians have entered. So my language is predicated on what Paul actually says in the passage.

⁵For the use of this language in dealing with Pauline theology, see J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 11–15.

Christ; but the approach one must take to get at this coherence is altogether by way of the contingencies of the several letters, which are decidedly not intentionally christological (in the sense of systematically laying out what Paul believed about the person of Christ).⁶

The difficulty here can be illustrated by a brief look at 1 Cor 1:9, 18–25. As the concluding word of his opening thanksgiving, a thanksgiving that is at the same time “loaded” with theological and behavioral issues that will be taken up in the letter, Paul affirms (in our v. 9) that the Corinthian believers’ ultimately attaining the eschatological prize rests altogether on the faithfulness of God. The evidence, and thus the ground, of God’s faithfulness on their behalf is the fact that God has “called [them] into *κοινωνία* with⁷ his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” With these words Paul presupposes a common christological ground between himself and the Corinthians regarding the three designations here attached to the historical person named Jesus: “Son,” “Christ,” and “Lord.” At the same time, this is language to which later Christians are so accustomed that we read the whole set of names/titles as a singular reality, which in fact in this case it was almost certainly intended to be.

But when we come to the beginning of the first argument in the letter (1:18–25), we find that both the Corinthians and we must make some singular adjustments to our preconceptions. For the designation “Christ,” it turns out, still carries freight from Jewish messianism, but with a decidedly singular twist. Indeed, Jesus, “God’s Son” and the now exalted “Lord,” turned out to be a messiah whom no one was expecting and who was being evaded by the believers in Corinth. For a “crucified Messiah” is the ultimate scandal and folly for those expecting a bit more triumphalism in their messiah.

So whether one wishes it or not, this basic Christian affirmation of God’s faithfulness (1:9) and this first exposition in the Pauline corpus of what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah (1:18–25) are filled with christological presuppositions that one must come to terms with if one is going to be fair to Paul. Our christological task is to try to tease out what Paul himself

⁶On this whole question cf. the proviso of M. Hengel: “We should not forget, that in the Corpus Paulinum we have only a minimal (and partially also accidentally preserved) extract of his *oral* preaching which spanned a period of almost thirty years, an extract which nevertheless reveals a thinker of fascinating greatness. The richness of his preaching must have been even more fascinating!” (“‘Sit at My Right Hand!’ The Enthronement of Christ at the Right Hand of God and Psalm 110:1,” in *Studies in Early Christology* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995], 163). Indeed!

⁷On the meaning of this difficult phrase, see G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 45; cf. A. T. Thiselton: “The Communal Participation of the Sonship of Christ” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 103–5); and D. Garland: “Into Common-Union with His Son” (*1 Corinthians* [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 35–36).

understood *presuppositionally* about Christ, and to do so on the basis of his explicit and incidental references to Christ.⁸

And that leads to a few words about yet another, the fourth, of the primary difficulties with this exercise. One can hardly, nor should one be expected to, come to these letters with a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate that has no presuppositions. The difficulty lies in recognizing one's own presuppositions (another's presuppositions being more obvious!) and asking in every case whether our reading of Paul is based on what Paul himself believed or on what we have long assumed he believed. In any case, this book will regularly remind us that we are seldom reading Paul's *argued* Christology, but rather his *assumed* Christology, and in these letters a Christology that he also assumed on the part of his readers.⁹

Because this is a given for us and because all of Paul's letters are full of assumptions between him and his readers based on their contingent circumstances, one needs to exercise special caution in terms of how much theological grist one makes of singular, sometimes isolated, statements about Christ in his letters.¹⁰ Our best hope for getting it right, as it were, is to focus on those kinds of statements that are repeated throughout the corpus in a variety of ways.

For these various reasons I have attempted a Pauline Christology that is primarily exegetical, looking for the Christology that emerges in each of the letters in turn and thus trying to analyze each letter on its own terms.¹¹

⁸Noted also by L. Hurtado: "Paul characteristically seems to *presuppose* acquaintance with the christological convictions that he affirms" (*Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 98); cf. D. J. Moo regarding no explicit Christology in the earliest six letters: "First, . . . Paul and his churches apparently were in basic agreement about who Jesus was," and "second, Paul must have inherited a good deal of his understanding of Jesus' person . . . from Christians who had gone before him" ("The Christology of the Early Letters of Paul," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* [ed. R. N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 169).

⁹See the preceding note. This point needs to be repeated and emphasized because one could be accused of finding what one is looking for (and in a sense that is arguably true); but the fact that Paul argues for *none* of this is especially significant in terms of his and their shared assumptions.

¹⁰This surfaces especially regarding an alleged Spirit Christology that some find in the apostle, which ultimately is based on a single text (1 Cor 15:47); but this finds its singular expression as the direct result of Paul's use of Gen 2:7 and his making a deliberate set of contrasts between Christ and Adam. See the discussion in ch. 3 (pp. 114–19) and in ch. 13.

¹¹The advantage of this over a narrative approach (see n. 1 above) is that one is (hopefully) less likely to overlook or omit what does not fit the prior construction of the narrative. The primary disadvantage of an exegetical approach, as Moo has rightly pointed out ("Christology," 170), is that it can be "tediously repetitive" (*caveat lector!*). At the same time, however, the evidence of this study has verified his assertion that "significant development in Paul's christology over the course of the decade during which these letters were written does not seem to have taken place" (*ibid.*). Moreover, as argued in chs. 14–15, it is nearly impossible to understand Paul's two

What is avoided here is a Christology that is basically an analysis of titles, although one can scarcely avoid some of this because Paul himself designated Christ in a variety of ways, some of which are titular. In so doing I am trying to follow Leander Keck's admonition that we respect "the grammar of the theological discourse."¹² Because each letter tends to have its own christological emphases, I realized that ordering this volume canonically would cause the reader (not to mention the writer) to get even more "lost in the woods." So I have chosen to group passages under certain themes or kinds of usage, as these emerge in each letter, and explain at the beginning of each chapter the reason(s) for the arrangement. I have also chosen to include a detailed table of contents for those who wish to find where certain passages are discussed in detail.¹³

So Christology in this study has to do with Paul's understanding of the *person* of Christ, as it emerges in his letters both in explicit statements about Christ and in other statements full of shared assumptions between him and his readers. And it therefore must be emphasized at the outset that the issue in this book is not the doctrine of the incarnation (or preexistence) per se, but rather *Paul's* theology, whether or not *he* believed it and asserted it, regardless of whatever I or others may or may not believe about it. Whether I am successful in this regard—I am a believer, after all—I will leave to others to judge.

By choosing to go this way, I am at the same time making a commitment as to what I mean by "Pauline." In the exegetical chapters of this volume that word has to do with all the letters in the canonical Pauline corpus, and thus "Pauline Christology" here refers to the *canonical Paul*. By going this way, I am intentionally making several important methodological decisions. First, inherent to this choice is the assumption that one letter or set of letters is not more significant than others.¹⁴ This way, Romans, for example, which

primary christological emphases if one does not keep them solidly within Israel's (and thus Paul's) basic narrative.

¹²L. E. Keck, "Toward the Renewal of New Testament Christology," *NTS* 32 (1986): 370.

¹³As another help, in the Scripture index I have put references in bold to indicate where they are actually discussed in some measure, as over against where they are merely referenced.

¹⁴Related to this is the inherent difficulty that one finds in those who have written chapters on the "real" Paul and the "deuterocanonical" Paul (e.g., Matera, *New Testament Christology*; cf. C. Tuckett, *Christology and the New Testament: Jesus and His Earliest Followers* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001]). The alleged differences are the result *only* of the arbitrary choice regarding authorship. The point is that if one began, e.g., with the view that Paul did not write Philippians, then one could easily show how "un-Pauline" its Christology is in relation to the others, and this would generally be true of all the letters. This whole scenario becomes highly suspect when Tuckett, e.g., can exclude from Pauline Christology things of actual Pauline authorship under the guise that the Christology (of, e.g., 1 Thess 1:10 or Rom 1:3–4) is really that of Paul's source and perhaps not fully assimilated into Paul's own sentence (*Christology*, 49–50). See further n. 16 below.

is somewhat idiosyncratic at this point,¹⁵ does not set the agenda for what one is to find in the other letters.¹⁶

Second, and especially important exegetically, by analyzing the Christology of the letters as they come to us, assumably “written” by a colleague at Paul’s dictation,¹⁷ we thereby also affirm that the alleged “hymns” in Col 1:15–20 and Phil 2:6–11; 3:20–21 are “Pauline” in both senses of the word—the *canonical* Paul, who is the only Paul available to us, and the *historical* Paul in these cases. After all, when someone incorporates previous language into their own text without acknowledgment, they are thereby de facto taking ownership of what is said, whatever “meaning” it may be supposed to have had in an “original” source.

Third, by approaching the letters in an assumed chronological order,¹⁸ I have also kept my eyes open to the possibilities of “development.” On this latter question, there seemed to be nothing that could be legitimately so categorized. Indeed, to my own surprise, that was not even true between the church corpus (the ten letters, including Philemon, written to churches) and the three letters to Timothy and Titus.¹⁹

¹⁵See ch. 6. By “idiosyncratic” I do not mean “different from” in terms of substance; rather, the very nature of the argument puts different emphases forward. For example, (1) totally out of sync with the rest of the corpus, God is mentioned one and a half times more often than Christ (see the chart on p. 26); (2) of the 96 specific references to Christ, the title κύριος (“Lord”) appears comparatively fewer times than in all the rest of the corpus except for Galatians; (3) 7 of the 17 references to “the Son” occur in Romans (while Romans and Galatians together have 11 of the 17).

¹⁶At some point NT scholarship needs to take ownership of the circularity of some of its reasoning. One commonly encounters statements such as “The use of the term [Son of God] in Paul’s writings is slightly complicated by the fact that the phrase seems to have been current in the pre-Pauline tradition as well, and Paul’s use of the term may represent a slight modification of this pre-Pauline usage” (Tuckett, *Christology*, 49) (in this case having bought into Käsemann’s highly suspect argument regarding Rom 1:3–4 [see pp. 240–44 below]). What is done here is that we (1) determine that the language is not like the Paul whom we have reconstructed, and thus is pre-Pauline; then (2) take the pre-Pauline “statement”—which is available to us *only* in a Pauline sentence—and use it in *contrast* to the real Paul; and then (3) argue that Paul has *modified* this pre-Pauline material for his own purposes. We are an amazing lot, to be sure.

¹⁷See, e.g., Tertius’s own “signature” at the end of Romans, where he designates himself as “the writer of this letter” (16:22), and Paul’s signing off Galatians with “large letters in his own hand” (6:11); cf. 2 Thess 3:17; 1 Cor 16:21; Col 4:18; Phlm 19.

¹⁸At issue are two matters: whether Galatians is Paul’s first letter or was written much closer to the time of Romans; and whether Philippians was written near the time of Romans or from the same imprisonment as Colossians. I have taken quite traditional stances on both of these matters, in both cases because the internal data of the letters have pushed me there. Thus the order of discussion is 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Colossians/Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy.

¹⁹This is even more remarkable when one considers that historical “logic” should demand that at least christologically this would be so; yet even the most avid proponents of pseudepigraphy recognize the opposite to be the case and thus

Pauline Christology: The Theological Difficulty

Besides the difficulties of exegesis and coherence just noted, when turning to the *theological* dimension of Pauline Christology, one is faced with two contingencies that make a resolution very difficult indeed.

First, whatever else is true about Paul (whichever “Paul” one is looking at), he was an avid monotheist. On this point he is unyielding, since this was one of the primary “sticking points” between Jew and Gentile in the Jewish Diaspora, in which he had been born and raised. And it would have been all the more so for him as a trained Pharisee. Thus the Shema, “Hear, Israel; Yahweh your God, Yahweh is one” (Deut 6:4),²⁰ probably recited regularly in Sabbath and home, would have been the very first distinguishing mark of the Jew in the Diaspora. For them it would have meant simultaneously that Yahweh himself is a single God, not a multiplicity of “gods,” and that he alone is God; there are no others.

Second, as already noted, the primary focus in all the Pauline Letters is on *salvation in Christ*, including Spirit-empowered ethical life as the genuine outworking of such salvation. But in the process, Paul regularly speaks of Christ in ways that indicate that “the Son of God” is also included in the divine identity. Before being sent by the Father to be born of a Jewish woman (Gal 4:4–5), he was himself in “μορφῇ θεοῦ [*the ‘form’ of God*],” having an equality with God that he did not exploit; rather, he chose to share our humanity (Phil 2:6–7). But this conviction, expressed in very presuppositional ways as the common belief of Paul and his churches, puts considerable tension on the first conviction: that there is only *one* God.²¹

argue circuitously on this issue. See the bibliography and critique in P. H. Towner, “Christology in the Letters to Timothy and Titus,” in Longenecker, *Contours of Christology*, 219–21.

²⁰This “translation” is arbitrary on my part, since at this point I have chosen to follow the (apparent) “interpretation” in the Septuagint. For the options, see the text and footnote in the NRSV.

²¹This tension lies behind every form of “adoptionism,” from the Ebionite, through Arius, to New England Unitarianism and German liberalism, to *Christology in the Making* by J. D. G. Dunn, who candidly acknowledges that “the too quick resort to the ‘obvious’ or ‘plain’ meaning [of Paul’s texts] actually becomes in some cases a resort to a form of bitheism or tritheism,” and “if we take texts like Col. 1.15ff. as straightforward descriptions of the Jesus who came from Nazareth we are committed to an interpretation of that text which has broken clearly and irrevocably from monotheism” (*Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], xxxii). So at issue for Dunn is that either Paul or we who interpret Paul in more traditional ways have given up monotheism. Dunn’s apparent concern is to protect Paul, who is otherwise something of a theological hero for him, from that theological “error.” But is that not to do theology in reverse? If Paul in fact asserts Christ’s deity, while maintaining his rigid monotheism, as the evidence itself indicates that he has done, then our task is to ask a different theological question: “How could Paul do so within his

Thus these combined realities—Paul’s historic monotheism and what he says about Christ in both intentional and incidental ways—create the tensions for us on this side of Nicea and Chalcedon. On the one hand, what Paul often says about Christ should fill a monotheist with anxiety, or even horror; indeed, along with the Johannine corpus and Hebrews, Paul’s letters became a primary source for the Nicene “settlements” about God as triune (Nicea) and Christ as one person with two natures (Chalcedon). On the other hand, the questions with which these later councils wrestled were simply not addressed by our NT authors, including Paul. Rather, they provide the “stuff” for the later theological resolutions. Or to put it another way, what Paul the monotheist says about Christ as Son of God and Lord is what causes any of us to raise the issue of Pauline Christology.

But the even greater difficulty for us is the one already mentioned: the attempt to extract Christology from Paul’s letters apart from soteriology is like asking a devout Jew of Paul’s era to talk about God in the abstract, without mentioning his mighty deeds of creation and redemption. Although one theoretically may theologize on the character and “person” of God on the basis of the revelation to Moses on Sinai (Exod 34:6–8), a Jewish person of Paul’s era would hardly imagine doing so. What can be known and said about God is embedded in the story in such a way that God’s person can never be abstracted out of the story. Whatever else, God is always “the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob.”

So it is with Paul, who brings this dimension of his Jewishness to his reflections on Christ in a thoroughgoing way. However one finally understands the (purposely?) ambiguous statement in 2 Cor 5:21, it stands as a kind of centerpiece of how Paul thought about the Father and the Son. Was it “God was *in Christ* reconciling the world to himself”? or was it “God *in Christ* was reconciling the world to himself”? At the end of the day, both are true of Paul’s understanding. Everything that God has done for us human beings and our salvation has been done in Christ. And precisely because God was doing it *in Christ*, it would have been quite out of character for Paul to think of God and Christ in totally separate categories. Whatever else is true of Paul, his worldview is now utterly christocentric. The risen Christ, who confronted him on the way to Damascus, by Paul’s own confession, had “taken hold of me” (Phil 3:12), and had done so in such a way that Paul had gladly suffered the loss of all things for the surpassing worth of “*knowing* Christ Jesus *my Lord*” (Phil 3:8). Thus his life motto: “To live is Christ; to die is gain” (Phil 1:21).

So thoroughgoing is Paul’s christocentric worldview that he can hardly talk about God without also mentioning Christ. Even in 1 Corinthians, the

own Jewish worldview?” This is what the church historically has tried to do. But rather than revise what the church has done, Dunn chooses to revise what Paul has said. In so doing, he stands in strong contrast to nineteenth-century liberalism. For the latter, Paul was the christological “bad guy”; for Dunn, that charge should be leveled against the authors of Hebrews and John’s Gospel.

letter that might be considered most given over to the correction of behavioral aberrations, he starts with “Paul, called to be an apostle of *Christ Jesus* by the will of God” (1:1). This picks up again immediately in the address proper: “To the church of God, *sanctified in Christ Jesus*, which is in Corinth” (1:2),²² to which he adds, “called to be saints together with all those everywhere who *call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*,” a phrase taken directly out of the Greek Bible (Joel 3:5 LXX) and applied specifically to Christ. And the salutation proper (1:3), as in all of his letters from this point forward, is “grace to you and peace, from God our Father and *the Lord Jesus Christ*,” with one preposition holding both nouns together. And how does the letter end? “If anyone does not love *the Lord*, let that person be Anathema. *Marana tha* (Come, Lord). The *grace of our Lord Jesus* be with you” (16:22–23).

Thus, even a casual reading of Paul’s letters reveals how christocentric his basically theocentric worldview has become. God the Father is always the “first cause” of everything and thus always appears in the primary position as the “prime mover”; nonetheless, the focus of Paul’s life is on Christ himself.

All of that is to say that the term “Christology” in this book expresses a very focused theological concern. First, the issues of Chalcedon are simply not raised at all, since the question of the “two natures” arises only after one is convinced that the proper resolution of the biblical data about the “one God” and the “Three Divine Persons” has been resolved in a Trinitarian way. Second, the actual Trinitarian questions (about the One and the Three as one God) are not raised either, since that too lies beyond Paul’s expressed concerns. At issue in this book is the singular concern to investigate the Pauline data regarding the person of Christ in terms of whom Paul understood him to be and how he viewed the relationship between Christ, as the Son of God and Lord, and the one God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is therefore now revealed as our Father as well.

Since these questions are often put in terms of a “high” or a “low” Christology, I need here to speak to that issue as well. Although this might be considered an oversimplification, the ultimate issue has to do with the Son’s preexistence; that is, does an author consider Christ to have had existence as (or with) God before coming into our history for the purposes of redemption, which included at the end his resurrection and subsequent exaltation to “the right hand of God” in “fulfillment” of Ps 110:1? If the answer to that question is yes, then one speaks of an author (e.g., the Gospel of John, the author of Hebrews) as having a high Christology. If the answer is either no or ambiguous at best, then the author (e.g., James) is credited with a low Christology. The ultimate question of Pauline Christology, therefore, is where Paul fits on this spectrum; and my conviction after a careful analysis of all the

²²See the discussion of this passage on p. 127 n. 107 below, for the argument that this is Paul’s original word order.

texts is that he fits at the high end, along with John and the author of Hebrews.²³

The ultimate purpose of this study, therefore, is twofold. The first concern is to offer a close examination of the texts in the Pauline corpus that mention Christ, and especially to offer a careful but focused exegesis of those texts deemed to have or, in some cases, not to have christological significance. Here the evidence seems conclusive that Paul belongs on the “high Christology” end of the NT spectrum. The second part of the study will then offer a *thematic* analysis of these data with the ultimate goal of determining how we might best speak *theologically* about Paul’s Christology in its first-century setting.

Pauline Christology in the Twentieth Century

One of the historical questions that needs an attempted answer is why in the history of NT scholarship *only one* study, Werner Kramer’s *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, can legitimately be called a “Pauline Christology.”²⁴ And Kramer’s study is less interested in Paul per se than in Paul’s role in the “development” of early Christology. Using Paul as his beginning point, Kramer devotes over half his study to digging out of Paul’s letters what might be assumed to be “pre-Pauline Christology.” He then devotes the rest to how Paul handles the pre-Pauline material—which is available only in Paul in any case! So even though Kramer deals with Paul in a significant way, what drives the study from beginning to end is the question that dominated most of the twentieth century, namely, that of “origins”: where did Paul come by his Christology? And that question inevitably carries with it the primary issue of “high” or “low” with regard to that Christology.

²³At the same time, one must admit that not only do the texts drive one to that conclusion but also the very notion of a “low Christology” seems to contain an inherent contradiction. Note, e.g., J. B. Reid: “A Christ who is merely equated with another human being, however great, be he ‘John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets’ (Mt 16:14), is not enough” (*Jesus, God’s Emptiness, God’s Fullness: The Christology of St. Paul* [New York: Paulist Press, 1990], 68). Reid then cites Donald Baillie: “A toned down Christology is absurd. It must be all or nothing—all or nothing on both the divine and human side. That is the very extreme of paradox” (from *God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* [London: Faber & Faber, 1961], 132). After all, within the framework of true monotheism a developmental scheme would seem to be a logical impossibility. Either Christ was divine or he was not; and if divine, then of necessity he must be included in the divine identity. A *tertium quid* simply cannot be considered truly divine in any true sense of “deity” within the framework of monotheism.

²⁴My emphasis on “legitimately” here is based on my definition of Christology as having to do with the person, not the work, of Christ. Thus the one other “Pauline Christology” of the century, Lucien Cerfaux’s *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (trans. G. Webb and A. Walker; New York: Herder & Herder, 1959), covers the whole gamut of Christology and soteriology, with more emphasis on the latter than the former.

Thus the answer to the “why” question raised above does not seem terribly difficult to come by. Historically, the issue had been altogether a canonical one—the Christology of the NT—to which debate Paul’s letters offered several key texts, especially Phil 2:6–11 and Col 1:15–17. Thus Paul was simply a part of the larger scene as the church wrestled with the data presented in its primary documents: how to reconcile Christ’s humanity with the deity that also emerges in the texts. And “orthodoxy” did so by rejecting “adoptionism” on the one hand (a nonpreexistent Christ given “divine status” at his exaltation) and Arianism on the other (a preexistent Christ, who was not eternally so).

But with the Enlightenment all of that changed. What for centuries had been assumed because of the role of Scripture in the church was now being rejected within the framework of a historicism that was overlaid with antisupernaturalism. The “deity” of Christ could only have been the invention of the early church; and Paul was the leading culprit. Thus a line of inquiry developed that ran from Schleiermacher to Harnack and beyond, exemplified by a rejection of historic orthodoxy accompanied by a series of attempts on the part of some to find the “real Jesus” behind the “supernatural overlay,” a Jesus that “modern man” could follow and try to emulate. With this a new kind of “historicism” arose that sought for “origins,” since the biblical picture, with its inherent supernaturalism, could not be “true” as historical data.

This basically accounts for no Pauline Christology as such. A high Christology was simply assumed as a part of the biblical record; so at issue historically was how Paul, and the early church with him, came by this divinization of the merely human Jesus of Nazareth. Thus in all of this there was a standard basic assumption that Paul was one of the villains, if not *the* villain, who turned the historical Jesus into a divine being that had little or no relationship to the Jesus of history.

But much of that changed with the appearance of Wilhelm Bousset’s *Kyrios Christos* in 1913, a work that heavily influenced a considerable sector of NT scholarship through much of the first half of the century and that picked up steam again when the English translation appeared in 1970. Bousset’s own presuppositions are several and obvious. He held to the (common) view that only seven of Paul’s epistles are genuine, so Pauline Christology means specifically that which comes to us through these seven letters. Philosophically, he was wedded to rationalism, with its concomitant historicism and thus antisupernaturalism. At the same time, he held a rather strictly Hegelian developmental scheme of history that saw early Christianity as emerging from Judaism but quickly influenced by Hellenism (certain sectors of Judaism itself already being influenced by Hellenism). And above all, Bousset was a thoroughgoing advocate of a *religionsgeschichtlich* (“history of religions”) view of early Christian history.

Thus, for Bousset, Paul’s Christology is best understood in light of Hellenistic influences, quite divorced from the Jewish synagogue in which he had

been raised, which had no place in it in any case for a truly divine Christ. Paul is thus understood to have received his view of Christ as κύριος from the Hellenistic believers in Antioch, who had adopted it from their pagan background in the mysteries. At the end of his chapter on Paul (pp. 153–210), after surveying all of his allowable data, Bousset asserts, “In the Pauline communities the veneration of the Kyrios stands alongside the veneration of God in an unresolved actuality,” but then adds, “After all this one may not actually speak of a deity of Christ in the view of Paul.”²⁵ And with that a considerable shift took place with regard to Pauline Christology.

The influence of Bousset’s study has been massive, receiving a mid-century boost from Rudolf Bultmann, who wrote a preface to the fifth edition that was translated into English. And although the pendulum has swung considerably in recent years, Bousset’s search for “origins” thoroughly dominated the century, both implicitly and, frequently, explicitly.²⁶ But at the same time, his own conclusions made it clear that the long-assumed high Christology in Paul’s writings could no longer be simply assumed.

The first major response to Bousset came after World War II in the form of Oscar Cullmann’s *The Christology of the New Testament* (1957; ET, 1959),²⁷ which was in fact the first major NT Christology after Bousset’s; and though Bousset obviously had set the agenda for the historical inquiry, Cullmann set the agenda of the subsequently dominating tendency to do Christology by way of titles. He begins with titles that speak of Christ’s earthly work (Prophet, Suffering Servant, High Priest—none of which is Pauline) and

²⁵W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (trans. J. E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 209 n. 150, 210.

²⁶All one need do is to observe many of the titles, beginning with F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (trans. H. Knight and G. Ogg; London: Lutterworth, 1969); see I. H. Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Issues in Contemporary Theology; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1976).

²⁷Cullmann’s book appeared in Switzerland at roughly the same time as Vincent Taylor’s much more popular *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (1958) appeared in the United Kingdom. Taylor’s book served as an excellent overview for many but lacks sufficient supporting evidence or interaction with the larger scene of NT studies to merit discussion here. Also excluded is E. Hahn’s *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (1963; ET, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* [1969]), which focused on the Synoptic Gospels, thus showing little interest in Paul. In many ways Hahn’s work marked the end of an era, since he pressed to an extreme the scheme of historical “layers” that marked much of twentieth-century German scholarship (Palestinian Jewish community; the Hellenistic Jewish community; and the Hellenistic community as such) but which by the end of the century had been generally discredited, especially by various studies by I. H. Marshall and Martin Hengel. So also with R. Fuller’s *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (1965), since even more than Kramer, who showed considerable interest in what Paul did with the “foundations,” Fuller is interested only in the historical and cultural foundations on which the NT writers built.

then moves on to where Bousset began, dealing with Christ's future work (Messiah, Son of Man [eschatological figure]); here he also discusses Paul's Adam Christology (as the heavenly man). It is in the third and fourth sections that Cullmann deals with Pauline Christology: Christ's "present work" as Lord and Savior (section 3) and titles that refer to Christ's preexistence (Logos, Son of God). But for all that, Cullmann's main emphasis is that NT Christology focuses on "function," not "being," which is true, of course; but at some point one must wrestle with the "being" that underlies the function.

The next major player (after Kramer) to emerge on the twentieth-century scene was Martin Hengel, whose first interest was the dissolution of the "developmental" scheme of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, which had become pervasive in much of German and American scholarship by way of the influence of Bousset and Bultmann. This was the basic concern of his massive study *Judaism and Hellenism*, indicated by the subtitle, *Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. When Hengel turned to Christology itself, he produced two works that are significant for our purposes. The first was *The Son of God* (1975; ET, 1976), where, with another frontal attack on the History of Religions school, he demonstrated how early and "high" this language was; and, of course, here Paul becomes the key player, not as the "inventor" but as one who carried on a very early tradition. Hengel's *Studies in Early Christology* (1995), which included some previously published papers, was composed mostly of lectures. Here in particular he demonstrated the significant role of Ps 110 in early Christology; however, he also argued for Jesus himself as the originator of Wisdom Christology. On this latter question his influence has been especially significant, even though the idea had been around since the beginning of the century.²⁸

The next significant work involving Pauline Christology was James D. G. Dunn's *Christology in the Making* (1980), a book that is very important but in some ways disappointing.²⁹ With an especially adept ability both to analyze texts and to think outside the box, as it were, Dunn basically returned to an earlier era in two ways. First, the major thrust of the book was a return to the developmental scheme, but in this case built not on the prior philosophical agendas but rather on a careful analysis of the biblical texts. In this scheme Paul is the "halfway house" between an early low Christology and the full-blown high Christology of John and Hebrews. Second, in order to make this work, he set out to demonstrate that in Paul's thought there is no concept of a genuine preexistence of Christ himself; the texts that seem to say as much are either to be understood differently or, in the case of Col 1:15–17, to be understood as having to do with the preexistent Wisdom, with

²⁸For a critique of this christological bypath, see appendix A in the present volume, pp. 594–619.

²⁹A second edition appeared in 1989, published in the United States by Eerdmans, in which Dunn responded to his critics in a twenty-four-page foreword, while the substance of the first edition remained unchanged.

whom Paul identifies the nonpreexistent Christ. This leads him to argue for a form of adoptionism, but without using that language.³⁰

That was followed the next year by Seyoon Kim's *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (1981), the main thesis of which stood as the total antithesis to that of Dunn. Kim argued that the crucial matters of Paul's (very high) Christology and soteriology all stem from his encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road. Although this was quite overstated,³¹ it offered a welcome corrective regarding a matter that by and large had been overlooked in Pauline studies: Paul's own conversion experience. Working especially from those passages that suggest "revelation" (e.g., 2 Cor 4:4–6), Kim first examines "Christ, Lord, Son of God" and then offers over 130 pages on the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ (*image of God*). At the heart of things, he argues for Paul's prior acquaintance with personified Wisdom as the key to his Christology, thus carrying Hengel's assertions forward with vigor.³²

The most significant steps forward in work that impinges on Pauline Christology have been taken in the past decade by Richard Bauckham and Larry Hurtado, both of whose studies portend a new development in NT Christology in general and in Pauline Christology in particular. Bauckham's *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (1998) represents some published lectures given in anticipation of a much larger study to be entitled *Jesus and the Identity of God*. Writing particularly in response to the many recent studies by Hengel, Kim, Dunn, and others, who see a divine mediatorial figure in Second Temple Judaism as the way forward (Hengel) or backward (Dunn), Bauckham argues that these studies are working backwards by using a small amount of questionable data to the exclusion of the

³⁰To get there, Dunn also had to resort to several instances of circuitous exegesis of a kind that leaves one wondering how the first readers could possibly have understood Paul without Dunn's help. For an exegetical critique of his handling of the crucial passages, see in the present volume the excursuses in chs. 3 (pp. 102–5), 7 (pp. 317–25), and 9 (pp. 390–93), plus appendix A at the end.

³¹Indeed, when Kim revisits this question in ch. 5 of *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 165–213, not only does he not back off, but also he reasserts all of his questionable positions even more strongly. So, e.g., he continues to insist that "in the Wisdom of Solomon . . . the personified Wisdom . . . [is] spoken of as the εἰκὼν of God," which is patently untrue, as the exegesis in ch. 7 and appendix A in the present volume demonstrate (pp. 323–25; 594–619).

³²Both of these books (Dunn's and Kim's), it should be noted, independently went after this subject with the issue of "origins" as their first concern (obvious in Kim's title; for Dunn, see p. 5: "The questions can be posed thus: *How did the doctrine of the incarnation originate?*"). One is led to think that the two of them arrived at such radically different conclusions in part because they were both driven by this issue, and they set out to prove their own positions from the texts rather than letting the chips fall where they may by a much more straightforward exegesis of the Pauline texts themselves. This becomes especially noticeable with Dunn in his commentary on Colossians, where he spends much of his time trying to demonstrate a Pauline position that is not explicitly in the text itself—and from my perspective, not implicitly either.

large amount of certain data. Instead, he argues, one should begin not with these figures but with Jewish monotheism as such. Using the language of “identity” instead of “being” (thus adopting a Jewish, rather than Greek, view of the world), Bauckham is concerned with *who* God is rather than *what* God is. In so doing, he points out that two things are absolutely consistent in Second Temple Judaism: it was self-consciously monotheistic, and it was self-consciously monolatrous (exclusive in its worship).

Bauckham’s first concern is to demonstrate that Israel’s understanding of God was always in terms of God’s relationship to Israel and then to all other reality. Thus Yahweh was never thought of in Greek abstractions. His character is always described in terms of relationship to Israel, as in Exod 34:6: a God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. In terms of God’s relation to all other reality, he is constantly referred to as both the Creator of all that is and thus the Ruler of all that is. And precisely at these crucial points Yahweh’s character and role are *unshared* with intermediate figures; that is, though they were his *agents*, they never shared his identity as such.

In taking up the issue of Christology per se, Bauckham shows that from the beginning Christ shared the divine identity at all the crucial points: with regard to the divine “Name,” in relation to all other things, and in relation to Israel. Finally, he argues that as “God crucified,” Christ’s identity as God means that God’s identity is now wrapped up in the work of Christ on earth.

Larry Hurtado comes out very much at the same place. He has been on a long journey arguing that devotion to Christ can be traced back to the very earliest communities³³ and that it is the kind of devotion that is elsewhere given only to God. In the overview chapter on Paul in his magisterial *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (2003), his concern is less with what Paul *believes* than with what Paul’s letters reflect about early Christian practices regarding *worship*, especially in their ways of expressing devotion to Jesus.

Even before Bauckham, Hurtado has long argued that Paul is an avid monotheist. Yet totally without precedent in the Judaism of which he is a product, Paul ascribes various forms of worship and devotion to Christ that would seem to put considerable tension on that monotheism. On the other hand, neither Paul nor his communities seem to be aware of the tension, in the sense that Paul, at least, never once speaks to it. Indeed, in Colossians, the one letter where he speaks to such issues at all, he is intent on maintaining a very high role for Christ against those who (apparently) would subordinate him to a lesser role *vis-à-vis* “the powers.”

In many ways the present study hopes to follow in the train of these last two scholars, in this case by putting most of the emphasis on the exegesis of all the significant texts, while at the end pointing out the christological implications of the exegesis.

³³See the various Hurtado entries in the bibliography, pp. 656–57.

Pauline Christology: Some Basic Matters

Before turning to the Pauline texts themselves, I need here to address some basic exegetical matters and, for the sake of the reader, to anticipate the primary conclusions to which the exegetical chapters have led. I begin with the latter.

Whither Pauline Christology?

At the end of the exegetical process it became clear to me that even though the cumulative evidence tells the story in full, there are, by anyone's reckoning, three key texts that put forward most of the issues: 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15–17; Phil 2:6–11. Here I isolate the primary christological data that emerge in these three passages, which are spelled out or assumed in all the rest of the data. In the section that follows this one I address the issue that surfaces in full measure in the earliest of the letters: Paul's application to Christ of the κύριος = *Adonai* = Yahweh of the Septuagint and whether Paul did indeed find this in the Greek Bible he knew.

1 Corinthians 8:6

The significance of this passage for the analysis of Pauline Christology is universally recognized, but not all are agreed on the nature of that significance. The conclusions drawn from the exegesis of this passage in ch. 3 (pp. 89–94) can be briefly summarized, since they set the pace for so much else in the letters that follow.

1. What turn out to be the two most significant features of Pauline Christology are already in place in this passage: Christ as Son of God and as Lord. The latter of these is explicit in the passage itself (“there is one κύριος, Jesus Christ”); the former is implied in the preceding “there is one θεός, the Father,” where all the evidence of the letters indicates that by this usage Paul begins not with God as *our* Father but with the fact that God has been revealed as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”³⁴ which leads to his being our Father through Christ and the Spirit.

2. As the exegesis of all the crucial passages demonstrates, these basic distinctions, already in place in the Thessalonian correspondence, are maintained in an exclusive way throughout the entire corpus.³⁵ At issue here are two matters: (1) some instances where κύριος has been suggested

³⁴For the evidence of this, see the discussions of 2 Cor 1:3 and Gal 4:4–7 (pp. 169–71, 217–20).

³⁵The only exceptions are the twelve passages where Paul is citing the Septuagint and no point is made of the referent; so one may assume that Paul is simply carrying over the reference to Yahweh = God from his source. For the twelve passages, see n. 7 in ch. 3 (p. 87).

to refer to God the Father;³⁶ and (2) the two instances³⁷ where many have argued that Paul's use of $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ refers to Christ: Rom 9:5 and Titus 2:13. Because of the significance of these latter two passages, they receive extended discussion in their respective chapters (pp. 272–77, 440–46). In both cases, when one pares off all the modifiers to get to the basic noun itself, the evidence seems strongly in favor of consistency: $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ in each case refers to God the Father.

3. Along with the considerable earlier evidence in 1 and 2 Thessalonians (see ch. 2), this passage offers a classic example of Paul's use of the Septuagint's $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ = *Adonai* = Yahweh as a reference to Christ as the "Lord" of these OT passages. For here the fundamental theological reality from Paul's Judaism, the Shema, has been divided up so to embrace the Son along with the Father.

4. This is the first passage in the corpus where Paul asserts, as something assumed between him and his readers, that Christ was both preexistent and the mediatorial agent of creation. This assumption of preexistence is expressed in a variety of ways hereafter in the corpus.

5. Despite what is plainly stated by Paul, this passage has also been the place of first and last resort with regard to finding a "Wisdom Christology" in his writings. To get there, one must argue (1) that Paul will expect his readers to read Wisdom into this sentence on the basis of what he had said back in 1:24, 30 about the *crucified Messiah* as God's "wisdom," and thus (2) that \acute{o} $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ as agent of creation is here in fact to be identified with *personified* Wisdom, and (3) that in the Wisdom literature itself personified Wisdom is regularly seen as the *agent of creation*. Both the exegesis of these three passages in 1 Corinthians³⁸ and the lack of any kind of *verbal* correspondence between the Wisdom literature and these passages³⁹ should ring the death knell for this point of view.

Colossians 1:13–17

The fact that I include vv. 13 and 14 in this discussion says a lot about the significance of this passage for Pauline Christology. There are three matters of significance here.

1. This is the first of the two major christological passages in the corpus.⁴⁰ Here Paul has picked up the language he had used of Christ in

³⁶See, e.g., discussion on 2 Thess 2:13; 3:3, 5 (pp. 64–65, 65–66, 71–72).

³⁷A few would add a third from 2 Thess 1:12 (see n. 92 on p. 62).

³⁸See pp. 100–102, 106–7, 89–94, and esp. the excursus on this matter on pp. 102–6. For a full discussion of this matter, see appendix A (pp. 594–619).

³⁹Esp. the lack of a single instance of the crucial preposition $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$ (*through*), which here and elsewhere implies mediatorial agency.

⁴⁰At least this is true for those who take seriously its relationship to Philemon; for the inherent difficulties and lack of genuine supporting evidence for denying Pauline authorship, see n. 2 in ch. 7 (p. 289).

1 Cor 8:6 and spelled it out in some detail. This means that many scholars are ready to find personified Wisdom in this passage as well, although as with 1 Cor 8:6, and despite assertions to the contrary, there is not a single genuine verbal correspondence between this passage and the Wisdom literature.⁴¹

2. This is also the first instance where scholarship has invested enormous capital trying to demonstrate that Paul is here citing a “hymn” that had prior existence in the church. While one must remain open to this likely possibility, the same does not hold true of what is sometimes alleged on the basis of this assumption, namely, that Paul is not in full agreement with what he cites. That is, it is frequently suggested that Paul has not fully assimilated the “citation” into his argument, so that one must be careful in using it to discover Paul’s own Christology. But besides the fact that this assertion appears to have little merit on its own right—after all, the alleged “original” is the product of our own making—one should always begin with the assumption that a first-century author “cites” precisely because he is in agreement with what he incorporates from another source into his own sentences.

This is all the more the case with Paul, since we have a clear analogy in his use of the Greek Bible, from which he both cites and borrows on a regular basis. And when he “borrows” from the Greek OT, as he would presumably have “borrowed” from a “hymn” in this case,⁴² he regularly makes the language his own, and means what *he* intends, not necessarily in the same way the original author intended. In fact, this is precisely what happens in his very first “citations” of the Greek Bible in the corpus (1 Cor 1:31; 2:16), where Paul has considerably “rewritten” the passages with his own concerns in view. The point is that one may be sure in the case of this Colossians passage that the sentence in its entirety is now from Paul⁴³ and has Pauline intent in all its parts, whatever its origin.

3. Besides the points already made above from 1 Cor 8:6, which Paul is here expanding in greater detail, my reason for including vv. 13 and 14 in the discussion is that the grammatical antecedent of all the (some eighteen) instances of the relative and personal pronouns in vv. 15–20 is “the Son of the Father’s love” in v. 13, into whose “kingdom” the Colossian Gentiles have now been included. Thus in this crucial christological passage, where neither Κύριος nor Χριστός appears, the theme of Son of God does appear, and inherent to this usage is the Jewish messianism expressed in v. 13. Thus besides spelling out in greater detail what is said in couched form in 1 Cor 8:6, Paul quite matter-of-factly puts that Christology in the context of his Son of God Christology as well.

⁴¹On this matter, see the excursus on pp. 317–25 in ch. 7.

⁴²The point is that Paul regularly “cites” the Greek Bible and indicates as much by his “it is written” formula.

⁴³This assumes, of course, with Dunn, Wright, and many others, that Paul is the author of Colossians; see n. 2 in ch. 7 (p. 289).

Philippians 2:6–11

This “acropolis” of the christological passages in the Pauline corpus has also had a long history of discussion as to whether Paul is adapting a previously existing “hymn.” And as with the alleged Colossians “hymn,” one can neither prove nor disprove the assertion, nor can one assume that some of this is not really Paul’s own point of view.⁴⁴ Its significance for our present purposes is that besides also asserting Christ’s preexistence, now in even stronger language regarding his actual deity, Paul also asserts Christ’s “equality with God the Father.” Along with some points made from the two preceding texts, there are three further matters that need to be noted from this passage.

1. This is the primary passage in Paul’s writings that will not allow one to assert Christ’s divinity without taking seriously the full *humanity* of his incarnation. This is repeated often enough in the passage to fly full in the face of any attempt to try to work out Paul’s Christology in Apollonian terms. Fully God though he was asserted to be in v. 6, what he became when he “poured himself out” in order to redeem us was one who was equally fully human.

2. This emphasis, plus the possible “conceptual echo”⁴⁵ of Gen 1 in Christ’s not considering his equality with God as something to be held onto selfishly, has caused a significant group of NT scholars to find an Adam Christology here as well. And although there are no good reasons to deny this somewhat distant “conceptual echo,” there is every good reason to be wary when one watches some scholars push this analogy to extremes that the passage itself will not sustain.⁴⁶

3. Finally, and back to the first point made regarding 1 Cor 8:6, here in particular Paul significantly spells out both the reason for, and the origins of,

⁴⁴One can only sit in amazement at the frequency with which it is asserted that the passage in its present form does not reflect Pauline Christology as much as it does that of the “pre-Pauline hymn” that Paul is “citing.” This is all the more puzzling when one notes exegetically that the *reason* for the narrative is to offer a paradigm (in vv. 6–8) for the Philippians to emulate (v. 5).

⁴⁵This is my own language for the possibility of “hearing” an echo of Genesis in this passage, since there is not a single *verbal* echo. Those who try to create such by arguing that μορφή and εἰκὼν are verbal “equivalents” not only are in error on that score (see pp. 377–79) but also seem to be out of step with reality. Only the language itself could call forth a verbal echo. One may as well argue that “eighty-seven years ago” would cause someone to think of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (which begins with “four score and seven years ago”). First, no one would ever think of echoing Lincoln without Lincoln’s own archaic language; and second, the only reason for using Lincoln’s words at all would be for the effect that those words alone would create. So also with Paul’s “failure” to use εἰκὼν here if he intended his readers to catch an echo of Gen 1.

⁴⁶On this matter, see the discussion on pp. 375–76, and esp. the excursus (pp. 390–93). For the broader discussion of the matters noted in this paragraph, see ch. 13 (pp. 513–29).

the risen and exalted Christ's having been given the "Name" *Κύριος*. This is further elaborated as "the Name above all names" and then substantiated by applying what is said of Yahweh in Isa 45:23 to the risen Lord. Thus this depiction of how the exalted Christ was given the "Name" explains how he had had transferred to him the exclusive use of this expression of the divine "Name," which had come to the Greek-speaking church by way of the Greek Bible and emerges in a thoroughly presuppositional way in Paul's earliest preserved letters. And this in turn, though appearing later in the corpus, is the certain evidence for Paul's exclusive use of this "Name" to refer to Christ and not to God the Father.

So although there are many more moments of significant Christology in Paul's writings and, as the following chapters will demonstrate in full measure, very much assumed Christology everywhere, these three primary christological texts have embedded in them all the key elements of that Christology. These are developed in the second part of this book, "Synthesis."

Paul and the Septuagint

There are some readers, however, who will (rightfully) wince at the confidence with which I have spoken of Paul's referring to Jesus as the *κύριος* = *Adonai* = Yahweh of the Septuagint. So I need to address this matter. At issue are two questions. First, did Paul know and use a form of the Greek Bible known to us on the basis of basically Christian manuscripts that come from nearly three centuries after Paul wrote his letters? Second, whatever form of the Greek Bible that he and they had in common, would his readers have caught both the fact and the significance of his so often applying to Christ the *κύριος* of these many texts? I take these two matters up in turn.

Did Paul Know and Use the Septuagint?

Although the question of the "origin" of the Septuagint and its relationship to the editions that we currently possess is not easily answered, there are good reasons from the Pauline corpus itself for us to use this term with regard to the Greek Bible that he himself used and that was assumed by him to be a text that he had in common with his Greek-speaking churches. At the least, even if this question cannot be decided with absolute certainty, the evidence that we do have seems strong enough to allow the term "Septuagint" with regard to Pauline usage without constantly offering a learned hesitation. The primary evidence for this is twofold.

First, Paul refers to the Greek Bible in a variety of ways. In some instances he "cites" texts that are verbally identical to the text of the Septuagint known to us. In other cases he "cites" with a degree of freedom, while in still others he echoes the language of the Septuagint with enough precision to give one confidence that it is the ultimate source of his own

language.⁴⁷ When Paul actually “cites” what he calls “Scripture,” even though he does not do so in the thoroughgoing way the author of Hebrews does, his wording is so closely that of the Septuagint that we have basically one of two options. Either he *accidentally* lands on the same wording, including word order, that the translator had used before him (which is doubtful in the extreme), or he *cites* the Bible commonly used in the Diaspora synagogue in which he himself had been raised. There are just enough idiosyncratic moments where Paul and the Septuagint agree against a more precise rendering of the Hebrew text to give us considerable confidence here.⁴⁸

Second, there are enough instances where Paul agrees with the Septuagint’s rendering of the Hebrew text in places where the translator had several choices, both with words and word order, to make one think that Paul is citing a common Bible rather than imagine that this happened independently in some way. The analogy would be to try to decide, when a writer in English is citing the Bible without indicating the translation, whether he or she was, for example, using the NASB. The woodenness of that translation would tend to stick out and make dependence obvious. And so it is with Paul’s Greek rendering of the OT; his wording, including some unusual renderings, are too often that of the Septuagint to allow one to think that he did not regularly use a form of translation that has come down to us as the Septuagint.

But for some scholars the more crucial matter is Paul’s use of Κύριος = *Adonai* = Yahweh: whether, or how much, Paul is indebted to the Septuagint for this use as a primary appellation of Christ, a usage that is so considerable that I have assembled all of the examples in appendix B at the end of this book. This question has arisen especially because of the Septuagint

⁴⁷ An illustration in point is Paul’s use of Joel 2:32 (3:5 LXX) in Rom 10:13: *πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται* (*For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved*). The γάρ (*for*) in this instance serves as his “introductory” formula, while the rest is precisely the text of the Septuagint. On the other hand, earlier, in 1 Cor 1:2, he apparently echoes this “biblical” language by referring to fellow believers with the Corinthians as *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (*all who call on the name of the Lord of us, Jesus Christ*). Had we only the latter passage, there would still seem to be no serious question as to the source of Paul’s *language*, even if a direct allusion to the Joel prophecy may no longer have been up front in his mind. But the actual citation in context indicates that this Joel passage had become common stock among early Christians regarding their place in the biblical story (see, e.g., Acts 2:21).

⁴⁸ This assertion is enough to make any good Septuagintalist squirm. But my concern is not that of the expert in Septuagintal studies; rather, it is to point out that Paul *and* his churches show evidence that a text very much *like* the Septuagint was in use in the Jewish Diaspora in the mid-first century of the Christian era. Moreover, it has been demonstrated by N. Dahl and A. Segal (“Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God,” *JSJ* 9 [1979]: 1–28) that Philo of Alexandria read Greek MSS that used κύριος for the Tetragrammaton at about the same time as Paul did in Asia Minor.

texts that were discovered at Qumran, plus other (extremely fragmentary) evidence from some isolated papyri, since some of these fragments do not have a Greek equivalent at all but simply carry over the Tetragrammaton itself.⁴⁹

It is difficult, however, to see what real difference this makes. For even if our present Septuagint is the product of use among Christians, as it most likely is, the Qumran evidence says very little finally about Pauline usage, since both Qumran and Paul in fact bear witness to the phenomenon of not pronouncing the Divine Name. One can be sure that when these Greek texts with the Tetragrammaton were read in synagogue, the reader did not actually say “Yahweh.” Something else would have been substituted for the name, and the evidence of Paul, whether from written or oral sources, is that κύριος was used in its place.⁵⁰ Or to put that another way, Paul, along with Hebrews, is evidence of the later “Septuagint” at these places whether or not his Greek texts actually had κύριος in them, since that would most likely have been the regular *oral* substitution for the Divine Name as the common “translation” of the *Adonai* that had been substituted in the Aramaic-speaking synagogue.⁵¹

Equally important are the scores of “intertextual” uses of κύριος in the Pauline corpus, where the language of the Septuagint has been taken over by Paul so as to become a part of his own sentence. It is one thing to imagine what the public reader of Paul might have done with passages that begin “as it is written,” since that assumes a “citation” of the biblical text. How-

⁴⁹On this matter, see J. Fitzmyer, “The Semitic Background of the New Testament *Kyrios*-Title,” in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 115–42; and esp. the mild critique by A. Pietersma (“Kyrios or Tetragram: A Renewed Quest for the Original Septuagint,” in *De Septuaginta: Studies in Honour of John William Wevers on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [ed. A. Pietersma and Claude Cox; Mississauga, Ont.: Benben, 1984], 85–101), whose evaluation of this evidence is noteworthy. Not only does he point out that only one of these pieces of evidence has actual value, but also he suggests (rightly, it would seem) that the use of the Tetragrammaton in Qumran and elsewhere probably reflects an *archaizing* tendency on the part of some to heighten emphasis on the Divine Name lest it be lost altogether through translation of a familiar, but not sacred, word.

⁵⁰In any case, we lack any evidence that in the Greek-speaking synagogues the reader of the Bible in Greek would have substituted Aramaic *Adonai* for the Divine Name.

⁵¹Cf. the similar judgment by L. J. Kreitzer (*Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology* [JSNTSup 19; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987], 109): “Indeed, one is tempted to ask what was actually *said* when one came to pronounce יהוה within the public reading of Paul's letters to the churches concerned.” Furthermore, as noted above (n. 48), there is sufficient evidence that Paul's older contemporary Philo of Alexandria used a Greek Bible where this substitution had already taken place; see D. B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology* (WUNT 2/47; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 40–42 (who notes Josephus as well); and J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 249–52.

ever, it is quite another thing for Paul to use κύριος in, for example, no less than four instances in 2 Thess 1:7–12, where each is a substantial echo of a passage from the Greek Bible. At this point any argument to the contrary, that either Paul himself or his Gentile churches did not use κύριος as a substitute for the Divine Name, seems to implode.⁵²

Would Paul's Readers Have Been Aware of This Usage?

If we can, then, be rather certain that Paul regularly used and cited a form of the Greek Bible known to him and his readers, the second issue is whether there was an intentionality on Paul's part in echoing its language that *he expected his Gentile readers to pick up on*.⁵³ I begin my basically positive answer to this question with two observations.

First, the considerable volume of these data speaks for itself. Paul can hardly help himself; his own life had been steeped in Scripture from the time of his youth. Once he had encountered the exalted Lord, the sacred text was transformed into a place where the long-awaited Christ could now be found everywhere. And since his reading of the texts had been so remarkably transformed and since he is writing letters that have "sacred matters" as their immediate concern, citations and echoes of the OT are found throughout his letters. After all, the issue of *continuity* with his past is equally as

⁵²This is especially true of the argument by G. Howard, "The Tetragram and the New Testament," *JBL* 96 (1977): 63–83. Again see the critique in Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*.

⁵³Here I face a considerable difficulty in nomenclature. At issue is what to call these many places in Paul's writings where there can be little question that he is using the language of the biblical text (almost always some form of the Septuagint). Throughout the present study one will find the language of "echoing," "intertextuality," or "borrowing language from" in a variety of contexts. What I intend always is that Paul is (usually deliberately) using language from the Septuagint to recall or reinterpret the biblical text in his own situation(s); cf. R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 6. For a much more precise use of language with regard to this phenomenon, see V. K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996).

For a view different from the one taken here and throughout this book, see C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (SNTMS 74; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) (cf. C. Tuckett, "Paul, Scripture and Ethics: Some Reflections," *NTS* 46 [2000]: 403–24). Stanley's focus is altogether on the capacity of these Gentile churches to pick up on Paul's biblical quotations and echoes. He (helpfully) divides his fictive congregation into three types of audience: the "informed," the "competent," and the "minimal." But what he fails to take into serious consideration is the capacity for memory of the spoken word, and especially the "word" that is spoken over and over again, by those who cannot read or write. This is evidenced in preliterate children. "Grandpa, that's not how that story goes!" they exclaim; but by the time they become teenagers, this capacity is lost almost altogether, regarding both oral and written speech.

important to him as the measure of discontinuity brought about through Christ and the Spirit.

Moreover, in an oral/aural culture, where only about 15 percent of the population was able to read, both the limited amount of reading and the significance of sacred texts would mean that many people in Paul's churches would be biblically literate in ways reminiscent of the echoes of the KJV that abound in seventeenth-to-nineteenth-century English literature. Such verbal remembrance of any text, let alone Scripture, has in modern Western society become a thing of the past even among most of those who are avid lovers of the Bible. But Scripture undoubtedly would have been the standard "reading" fare for all of Paul's congregations.⁵⁴

Thus, Paul's letters are full of verbal echoes of a variety of kinds that he could expect many of his hearers to catch (even if contemporary readers might not), although undoubtedly not all hearers in every case or every text in the same way. A contemporary analogy is the way that the large majority of Americans of my generation would hear echoes of our national "sacred documents" if someone were to say publicly, "Four score and seven years ago" or "When in the course of human events,"⁵⁵ even though many in the next generation would not.⁵⁶

Second, and as noted throughout the following exegetical discussions, these transfers of biblical language from Yahweh to Christ are a part of what Paul does regularly. None of this is argued *for*, as though some kind of christological innovation was a point Paul wanted to make. To the contrary,

⁵⁴But see Stanley (*Paul and the Language of Scripture*), who offers a minimalist view in this regard that seems to stand in some tension with the narrative of Luke-Acts, written by a Gentile convert who had a rather thorough knowledge of the Greek Bible. Indeed, so much is this so that Luke himself engages in considerable intertextuality (as the birth narratives offer full evidence). Furthermore, not only is the two-volume work addressed to a Gentile who is assumed to know the Jewish Bible in some detail but also, beginning with Acts 13, Scripture is both known and studied in the Diaspora synagogues (13:15; 17:2, 11; 18:24, 28), and earlier a proselyte is actually reading the scroll of Isaiah on his journey from Jerusalem back to Ethiopia (8:30–35).

⁵⁵For those outside my own historical culture, these are the opening words of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

⁵⁶A telling example (pointed out to me by my colleague Bruce Waltke) is found in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered orally at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, the centennial year of the Emancipation Proclamation. It is doubtful whether all of the many thousands who heard that (now famous) speech would have caught all of his (surely deliberate) intertextual echoes of (1) Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, (2) Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, (3) Steinbeck's *The Winter of Our Discontent*, (4) Amos 5:24, and (5) Isa 40:4, although almost all of them would have known and been able to sing the quoted first stanza of the patriotic hymn "America." I did not hear the speech that day, but in reading it, I found that all of these echoes were readily at hand (and there may have been more that I simply did not recognize!).

they are used in such a way that Paul assumes them to be common knowledge between him and his readers. Thus, they often occur in quite off-handed ways, as assumptions between them, and sometimes as something to argue *from*, as is the case in the very important Christian reformulation of the Jewish Shema in 1 Cor 8:6. At the end, therefore, both the volume and the nature of these biblical echoes give evidence of an assumed high Christology between Paul and his churches.⁵⁷

For these reasons, and also because the Septuagint is the term and text of familiarity, this will be the term of choice throughout the study that follows, noting only that the reader needs mentally to put quotation marks around it at every point.

A Numerical Analysis of the Pauline Data

Before turning our attention to the christological data in the individual letters, and since “usage” appears as the first thing up in each of the chapters, one may find it helpful to have handy a place where all the data are presented together. The full presentation of these data for each letter, with this kind of analysis, can be found as appendix II at the end of each chapter. For the most part these data comport with the Greek text found in NA²⁷ and UBS⁴, except in a few instances where I have offered text-critical arguments in a footnote for a different reading.⁵⁸ I also add the cautionary note that one should use these data with considerable circumspection because what is missing in this kind of “analysis” are innumerable pronouns and the unexpressed subject of verbs, especially the so-called divine passives, which always have “God” as the implied subject (e.g., the three verbs in 1 Cor 6:11). So one must be especially cautious in using the final column (θεός). As for the rest, my concern was not with how *often* Paul refers to Christ (that would require the inclusion of pronouns) but with the specific *language* he uses when so doing, since, as it turned out, this sometimes does appear to have a measure of significance. (The various combinations of K, I, and X represent the word order of the “names” Κύριος, Ἰησοῦς, and Χριστός.)

⁵⁷Paul’s use of the Septuagint should also be part of the discussion, though it seldom is, of Paul’s alleged use of “pre-Pauline” hymns and creeds as though one could “reconstruct” the original hymn or creed on the basis of the “obvious Pauline constructions” within it. But the methodological issue is seldom faced, even though such an example is ready at hand in Paul’s “adaptations” of the OT. When he cites, not every word in the citation is relevant; but when he adapts by intertextual usage, then the very changes to the Septuagint make it clear that one could not always (or even most of the time) reconstruct the OT text, and especially not reconstruct *its* theology on the basis of what *Paul* does.

⁵⁸See, e.g., the textual notes on 2 Thess 2:8; Rom 8:34; 14:12.

Letter	KIX/IXK/ XIK	KI/IK	XI/IX	KX	Κύριος	Ἰησοῦς	Χριστός	υἱός	Totals	θεός
1 Thess	5	6	2	x	13	3	3	1	33	36 [-3]
2 Thess	9	3	x	x	10	x	1	x	23	18 [+5]
1 Cor	8 / 1 / 1	4 / 1	6 / 2	x	49[+2]	2	45	2	121	103 [+18]
2 Cor	4 / 1	3	1 / 3	x	18[+2]	7	38	1	75	78 [-3]
Gal	3	x	7 / 5	x	2	1	22	4	44	29 [+15]
Rom	6 / 3 / 2	2 / 1	12 / 7	1	18[+8]	3	34	7	96	149 [-53]
Col	1 / x / 1	1	3	1	10	x	19	1	37	22 [+15]
Phlm	2	1	3	x	2	x	3	x	11	2 [+9]
Eph	6 / x / 1	1	10 / 1	x	16	1	28	1	65	31 [+34]
Phil	4 / x / 1	1	12 / 3	x	9	1	17	x	48	22 [+26]
1 Tim	2 / x / 2	x	10	x	1	x	1	x	16	22 [-6]
Titus	x	x	1 / 3	x	x	x	x	x	4	13 [-9]
2 Tim	x / 1	x	11 / 1	x	16	x	x	x	26	11 [+15]
Totals	48/5/7	22/2	78 / 25	2	164 [+12]	18	211	17	599	536 [+63]

Some general observations about these data:

1. The two final columns represent the total number of explicit references to Christ in relationship to actual uses of θεός, with the differential between the two columns found in square brackets in the θεός column. These data are obviously a bit skewed because I have not included in the count the (very few) references to God as Father where the designation “Father” is not accompanied by “God.” Furthermore, I have deliberately avoided the inclusion of pronouns, as the actual value thereby gained did not seem to merit the added effort involved.

2. The full designation Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός appears in the very first reference in each letter. Thereafter it occurs in all the letters, but not as frequently as shorter designations.

3. The individual names occur most often, but not consistently throughout the letters. Some of this seems likely to be related to the situation and kind of letter in each case, but in the final analysis no apparent patterns seemed to emerge in the corpus.

4. Regarding the combinations of two “names”: Κύριος Ἰησοῦς occurs less than others, and the majority of these occur in the first four letters (hardly ever Ἰησοῦς Κύριος, which is almost certainly because Κύριος is titular rather than a “name”); for reasons that are not altogether clear, Χριστός Ἰησοῦς appears in a ratio of about 3:1 over Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. In any case, this suggests that by Paul’s time what was originally a title had come to be used increasingly as a “name.”

5. Excluding Titus, which has by far the fewest direct references to Christ in the corpus, each of the single “names” occurs in most of the letters (Ἰησοῦς being the exception), but without consistency.

6. The twelve bracketed items represent instances where Κύριος is found in a citation of the Septuagint in which it does not refer to Christ. One may safely assume that all other instances are references to Christ.

7. Since some things that do not seem to comport with the data have been suggested about the use/nonuse of the article with Κύριος, I have included an excursus on this matter in the next chapter (p. 35).