

Christology

A Biblical, Historical, and
Systematic Study of Jesus

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it will try to understand and interpret the truth about Jesus' being and doing. Christologies have been valuably developed, however, in two further contexts: a practical and a liturgical one. A Christology can take as its favoured context the worldwide situation of massive injustice, hunger, and deprivation. Such a Christology with and for the poor makes the search for justice and liberation focus its exploration of who Jesus is and what he does. A third possibility is to develop Christology in a context of liturgical worship. Here the primary focus is not on the quest for meaning and truth (first context) nor on the search for justice (second context) but rather on the celebration of the infinite divine beauty through public prayer.

The academic context will inevitably bulk large in this book. But, I will try to keep in mind the practical and liturgical concerns that have fed other styles of Christologies. Searching for truth need not mean ignoring the cause of justice and the celebration of beauty. It is questionable whether academic dialogue alone gives a privileged access to truth in theology and similar disciplines. It is certainly false to say that such dialogue provides the *only* access to truth in theology.

Enough has been said to indicate how this book will take shape. Let me now turn to the Jewish roots for the New Testament's presentation of Jesus Christ.

2

The Jewish Matrix

The only-begotten Word, who is always present with the human race, united and mingled with his handiwork... is Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*)

To succumb to a typically Christian temptation and dismiss the Old Testament Scriptures as 'merely' recording a historical phase in God's pedagogy would be to risk losing, among other things, much of what the New Testament meant and means in presenting Jesus. To put this positively, the Old Testament is essential for grasping both the matrix of Jesus' life and what the New Testament witnesses have to say about him. As a Christian I use the terminology of Old Testament and New Testament. Here 'old' is understood as good and does not imply any 'supersessionism', or the view that the New Testament has rendered obsolete, replaced, and so 'superseded' the Old Testament.

Hans Hübner has rightly insisted on the way in which the first Christians fashioned their proclamation and interpretation of Jesus largely by putting together two elements: on the one hand, their experience of events in which Jesus was the central protagonist and, on the other hand, the ready-made images and concepts they found to be relevant and illuminating in their inherited Scriptures.¹

¹ See H. Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 3 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990–5), vol. i. For an integral Christology based on the Old and New Testaments, see J. A. Fitzmyer, *Scripture and Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).

To articulate their convictions about the identity of Jesus and his role in fulfilling the divine purposes, they depended upon the ideas, beliefs, and expectations of Judaism which we primarily come across in the Old Testament, including the so-called 'Apocrypha'—books written in Greek and Hebrew mostly after 200 BC included in the Septuagint (ancient Greek version of the Scriptures)—printed in Roman Catholic bibles, but at times still omitted from other bibles.²

In the last paragraph I spoke of the Old Testament as the major source providing the first Christians with their theological language and concepts. But, the images and language they used are also illuminated secondarily by other sources from the world around them—for example, the non-canonical Jewish pseudepigrapha (non-canonical works that pre-date Christianity, like the Book of Enoch), the writings from Qumran, the Letter of Aristeas, fragments from Hellenistic-Jewish authors, the works of Philo (c.25 BC–AD 40) and Josephus (c. AD 37–post-100), and the oral rabbinic traditions which were recorded in the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud of the fourth and fifth centuries AD, respectively, and some of which may go back to the time of Jesus or even earlier. Middle Eastern writings, Graeco-Roman thought, and non-canonical literature from Hellenistic Judaism can at times throw light on New Testament ideas. But, the major sources from which the first Christians and authors drew their theological notions are clearly the Old Testament Scriptures. To descend to the obvious, this is mirrored by the fact that well over 90 per cent of the clear quotations and vaguer allusions in the New Testament come from the Old Testament books of pre-Christian Judaism. Relatively few come from such pseudepigrapha as Enoch and other non-biblical sources.

Those who wish to appreciate what the New Testament meant about Jesus need to examine the inherited Scriptures which the first Christians quarried for language to press into christological service. Their sacred texts, known now as the books of the Old Testament,

were indispensable for interpreting their experience of Jesus. A Christology that ignores or plays down the Old Testament can only be radically deficient. Something essential will be missing from our account of Jesus, if we ignore his Jewish roots and those of his first followers. The Old Testament Scriptures continue to play their crucial role in interpreting any contemporary faith in and experience of Jesus.

Before examining Old Testament images and concepts that fed into the New Testament interpretation of Jesus' being and doing, it seems important to recall three points. First, affected by the destruction of the Davidic dynasty, the Babylonian exile, later foreign domination, and other watersheds, the use and meaning of Old Testament religious themes often remained fluid and not very sharply defined. Over the centuries, in response to new circumstances, key themes could be interpreted, reinterpreted, emphasized, and marginalized. Hence, one cannot speak, for example, of clear-cut messianic 'titles' (titles for some anointed and promised deliverer) emerging and simply holding their ground in the Old Testament. Second, when roughly etched Old Testament images and designations were applied to Jesus, they could be radically changed in the process. We will see this at once in the case of 'Christ', a central Christian designation for Jesus which fairly quickly became simply his second name.

Third, interpreting his person and work through Old Testament themes began with Jesus himself. We will see more of this in the next chapter. Here one example should suffice: that of relating Jesus to the person of King David and messianic hopes linked to the name of David. In Mark's Gospel Jesus invokes David to justify the conduct of his own disciples (2: 23–8). A blind beggar twice calls Jesus 'Son of David' (Mark 10: 46–52). On the occasion of a spectacular entry into Jerusalem, Jesus is associated with David by the crowd (Mark 11: 10). When teaching in the Temple, Jesus argues, on the basis of Psalm 110: 1, that the Messiah, even if descended from David, is superior to him (Mark 12: 35–7). Unless one wishes to argue that all this Davidic material derives from the Christian, pre-gospel tradition or even from the evangelist himself, one should agree that the interpretation of Jesus' person and work by aligning him with David began historically in the very ministry of Jesus himself.

² *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) gives full details of the difference between the biblical canons recognized by Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Jews, and Protestants (pp. xxi–xxiii, xxv–xxvi). See also J. H. Charlesworth, 'Apocrypha: Old Testament Apocrypha', *ABD*, i. 292–4; J. A. Sanders, 'Canon', *ibid.* 837–52.

Five Titles

To illustrate the essential contribution of the Old Testament to the New Testament christological message, let me sample a number of descriptive titles or designations for Jesus: as Christ, High Priest, Last Adam, Wisdom, and Word.

Christ

The oldest Christian document shows us Paul repeatedly calling Jesus 'Christ' in a way that suggests that within twenty years of Jesus' death and resurrection this comprehensive title for Jesus' identity and powers was simply taken for granted by Paul and his readers, had almost lost its original significance, and was more or less his second (personal) name (1 Thess. 1: 1, 3; 5: 23, 28).³ In a notable pre-Pauline formulation, which also goes back to the earliest years of Christianity, 'Christ' seems already to have lost much of its titular significance (or messianic expectations) and to be functioning largely as an alternative name for Jesus (1 Cor. 15: 3). In his letters Paul uses 'Christ' 270 times but never considers it necessary to argue explicitly that Jesus is 'the Christ' whom Israel expected.

The title goes back to the Septuagintal 'Christos' and its Greek rendering of the Hebrew *mashiah* or 'anointed one'. By a ritual act of anointing, Old Testament kings (and monarchs in ancient and other cultures) were installed: for example, Saul (1 Sam. 10: 1), David (2 Sam. 2: 4; 5: 3), and Solomon (1 Kgs. 1: 34, 39). Hence, a king would be called 'the Lord's anointed' (1 Sam. 16: 6; 24: 6; 2 Sam. 1: 14, 16; Ps. 2: 2) or simply 'the anointed one'. The practice of anointing kings at their investiture was extended to the service for the ordination of the Aaronic priesthood. As in the case of the king, the high priest's head was anointed with oil (Exod. 29: 1-9; Lev. 4: 3, 5, 16; 6: 22; 16: 32). Prophets

³ Many scholars agree with this observation, but not N. T. Wright, who argues that in Paul's letters 'Christ' is not simply a proper name but can retain its Jewish significance as 'Messiah' (*The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 41-55). See also J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); M. de Jonge, 'Christ', *ABD*, i. 914-21; id., 'Messiah', *ABD*, iv. 777-88; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The One Who is to Come* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007).

also could be considered anointed by God, even though no actual rite of anointing is mentioned. Elijah was commanded to 'anoint' Elisha prophet, but in the event simply 'threw his mantle' over him (1 Kgs. 19: 16, 19). A prophetic author knows himself to be empowered by the divine Spirit and sent to encourage the exiled and oppressed: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Isa. 61: 1-2). When their prophetic role was to the fore, the ancestors of Israel could be called God's 'anointed ones' (Ps. 105: 15; see Gen. 20: 7).

In what follows I will concentrate on the kingly messianic roles and expectations. But, in parenthesis one might well observe how the Old Testament-anointed ('messianic') king, priest, and prophet provided the ultimate origin for recognizing in Jesus the *munus triplex* (triple office) of anointed prophet, priest, and king. Already present in the writings of the Fathers and medieval theologians, this theme of Christ's 'triple office' was developed by John Calvin (1509-64), many Protestant scholars, John Henry Newman (1801-90), and the Second Vatican Council in its 1964 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 34-6).⁴

Old Testament expectations of a divinely anointed deliverer to come nurtured at Qumran hopes for a distinct priestly Messiah alongside a kingly Messiah.⁵ Expectations also involved the coming at the end-time of a prophet or 'the prophet like Moses', normally identified as Elijah returning from heaven (Deut. 18: 15, 18; Mark 6: 14-16; 8: 28; 15: 35-6; John 1: 21; 6: 14; 7: 40; Acts 3: 22-6; 7: 37). John's Gospel both associates this prophetic figure with kingship (John 6: 14-15) and distinguishes the expectations concerned with 'the prophet' from those concerned with 'the Christ' (John 7: 40-1).

⁴ In *On the Unity of Christ* St Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) calls Christ 'prophet, apostle, and high priest' (75a) but expounds only the first of the three titles (75b-1c). For the use of this triple scheme by Calvin, his predecessors, and his successors, see P. Gisel, *Le Christ de Calvin* (Paris: Desclée, 1990), 131-50. On Newman's use of the scheme, see M. T. Yakaitis, *The Office of Priest, Prophet and King in the Thought of John Henry Newman* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1990). See also R. Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (New York and London: T. & T. Clark, 2004).

⁵ On this, see G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (3rd edn, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 53-4, 295; see also Zech. 4: 14; 6: 9-14.

Later in this chapter I will say something about Jesus and Old Testament priesthood.⁶ The next chapter will add something on his prophetic role. Here let me simply note how a classic passage in Malachi expects the returning Elijah to bring a moral conversion, and identifies him as the divine messenger who will prepare the day of the Lord's coming in judgement (Mal. 3: 1–4): 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse' (Mal. 4: 5–6; see Sir. 48: 10). Invoking Isaiah 40: 3 and Malachi 3: 1, Mark interprets this forerunner as John the Baptist (Mark 1: 2–4; see Mark 9: 11–13)—an interpretation accepted by Matthew and Luke (Matt. 11: 10–14; Luke 1: 16–17, 76; 7: 26–7). Thus, the prophetic forerunner of 'the Lord' was identified as the forerunner of Jesus himself. Chapter 6 will reflect on this christological development of 'the day of the Lord'.

Let us return to the kingly messianic role, not least because the 'Christos' or 'anointed one' normally denoted the king of Israel. Any kingly Messiah was linked with the divine election of the house of David and the hope for an everlasting dynasty. Through the prophet Nathan, God was believed to have promised David, 'your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever; your throne shall be established forever' (2 Sam. 7: 16). Psalm 89 recalls this promise by putting on God's lips the following words: 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: "I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations"' (Ps. 89: 3–4). The same psalm goes on to spell out the terms of this eternal covenant (Ps. 89: 19–37; see 132: 11–12). Historically David's dynasty did not prove everlasting. It fell in 587 BC and a king from the Davidic family was not restored to the throne when the exile ended in 538 BC. Even if efforts were made to interpret the governor of Judah (Zerubbabel) as a messianic king on the throne of David (Hag. 2: 20–3; Zech. 3: 8; 4: 6–10), literally the Davidic kingdom was not restored. Davidic messianism, apart from some Jewish circles (see Pss. Solomon and some Qumran texts) and then the Christians, was not a primary idea and expectation.

⁶ On Old Testament priesthood, see M. D. Rehm, 'Levites and Priests', *ABD*, iv. 297–310.

Nevertheless, the Old Testament contained lyric language (perhaps originally used for the accession of King Hezekiah) which celebrated the ideal messianic king to come. He would exercise divine power ('Mighty God') and a fatherly love ('Everlasting Father'), and would bring peace and prosperity ('Prince of Peace') (Isa. 9: 2–7; see 11: 1–9; Mic. 5: 2–6). The royal or messianic psalms (Pss. 2, 18, 20, 21, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144) witness to the lofty notion of the king and his function for the people. He could even be called God's son (Pss. 2: 7; 89: 27)—a theme to which we will return in Chapter 5. The Old Testament contained a rich reservoir of language for expressing and developing expectations about a promised ruler from the line of David who was to deliver and shepherd the suffering people (Ezek. 34: 23–4; 37: 24–5). He would free Israel from foreign domination (Isa. 9: 4) and, through his power and wisdom, justice and peace would prevail (Isa. 9: 6–7; 11: 1–9). YHWH would be the eschatological king over all the earth (Zech. 14: 9); the rule of the transcendent God would be revealed in the rule of the messianic, Davidic king, who may also possibly be symbolized by the one 'like unto the son of man' to whom universal and everlasting dominion would be given (Dan. 7: 13–14).

In pre-Christian Judaism, alongside hopes for a liberating, warrior Messiah to come, we also find the expectation that God would simply punish Israel's oppressors and deliver the people (Isa. 13: 6–16) and the righteous (Wis. 3: 1–9). God would directly bring such deliverance without any messianic intermediary being involved. No such agent turns up in the apocalyptic scenario with which 1 Enoch 91–104 presents the end-time. The superb hymn that concludes the Book of Habakkuk celebrates YHWH who marches in, saves the people (Hab. 3: 1–19) and their anointed king (Hab. 3: 13), and does so without needing any messianic agent to effect this liberation. It is important to hear such passages and not fondly imagine that Old Testament expectations of deliverance always imply a messianic intermediary or royal agent from God.

The first Christians identified Jesus as the promised Messiah and, as I will argue, Jesus himself interpreted his person and activity messianically. But, both he and his followers massively reinterpreted the messianic figure. Behaving in an unregal and unwarlike fashion (see Mark 10: 42–4; Luke 22: 24–7), Jesus never promised, let alone tried, to free the people from foreign domination. Nor did he announce the

imminent lordship of Israel over all the nations (see Isa. 2: 2–3; 25: 6–9; Mic. 4: 1–2). For Jesus the signs of the kingdom differed from that national hope. Ezekiel's language about God's promise to care for the flock through a Davidic shepherd-king to come (Ezek. 34: 23–4; 37: 24–5; see also Mic. 5: 2–4) found an echo in Jesus' parable of the lost sheep (Matt. 18: 12–14; Luke 15: 3–7; see Mark 6: 34) and eventually in John's Gospel identifying Jesus as 'the good shepherd' (John 10: 7–16; see 21: 15–17; 1 Pet. 2: 25; 5: 4). But, this shepherd would lay down his life for his sheep (John 10: 11, 15, 17–18). Here we reach a major readjustment in the notion of Messiah.

At best we find in the Old Testament only faint traces of a suffering Messiah or a suffering Davidic king to come. One of the psalms speaks of a taunting of the anointed, Davidic king (Ps. 89: 50–5). The final chapters of Zechariah, which were written in the fourth and third centuries BC and hence years after the career of Zechariah himself in the late sixth century, promise a messianic prince of peace (Zech. 9: 9–10) and speak of God's shepherd who will be killed for his sheep (Zech. 13: 7). Second Isaiah contains the four Servant Songs (42: 1–4; 49: 1–6; 50: 4–11; 52: 13–53: 12) which are frequently applied to Jesus and his work by the New Testament (e.g., Matt. 12: 18–21). The identity of the servant in these songs is by no means clear: the nation of Israel, an individual, or both. Further, the first mention of suffering occurs in Isaiah 50: 6, well into the third song. (Here I agree with those who do not read 49: 7 as the final verse of the second song.) The final Servant Song tells both of his suffering, death, and burial and of his exaltation and the vicarious value of his sufferings for the people. Christians found references to Jesus' fate and redemptive work in that song (e.g., Acts 8: 32–3; 1 Pet. 2: 22–5). Nevertheless, possible messianic allusions in the original fourth Servant Song are slight (Isa. 53: 2). To sum up: Jewish messianic expectations hardly show a hint of envisaging a suffering and martyred Messiah, who would be the persecuted and vindicated 'servant' of God (see Acts 3: 13, 26; 4: 27, 30).⁷ A crucified (and resurrected) Christ

⁷ The judgement of H. H. Rowley still stands: 'there is no serious evidence of the bringing together of the concepts of the Suffering Servant and the Davidic Messiah before the Christian era' (*The Servant of the Lord* (London: Lutterworth, 1952), 85). See also W. H. Bellinger and W. R. Farmer (eds), *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998).

was even more alien to Jewish messianic expectations. It was precisely over that point that the Christian proclamation of a crucified Messiah proved so new, strange, and scandalously offensive (1 Cor. 1: 23).

High Priest

From the great reservoir of Old Testament images Christians also called upon that of priesthood to express their experience and evaluation of Jesus. Once again adjustments were made.

The Old Testament, Levitical priesthood was set apart to offer sacrifice and mediate in a cultic way between God and human beings. The tribe of Levi became a priestly class, within which Aaron and his sons were distinguished from the other Levites (Exod. 28: 1–5; 32: 25–9; Num. 1: 47–54; 3: 1–51; Deut. 10: 6–9; 18: 1–8; 33: 8–11).

His celebration of the Passover, institution of 'the Lord's supper' (1 Cor. 11: 20), and crucifixion at the time of the Passover soon led Christians to apply sacrificial language to the death of Jesus. Paul, when writing of Christ as 'our paschal lamb' who 'has been sacrificed' (1 Cor. 5: 7) and whose blood expiated sin (Rom. 3: 25; see 1 John 2: 2), apparently took over early, already traditional formulations. Christ was seen as sacrificial victim. But, was he also priestly—in his celebration of the Lord's supper and/or in the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday? Even if he sanctified the people through his own blood, he 'suffered outside the gate' (Heb. 13: 12)—in a profane location and not in the Temple or some other cultic place appropriate for priestly mediation between God and human beings. The setting for his death was no holy place, as was the case with Zechariah, 'murdered between the sanctuary and the altar' (Matt. 23: 35; see Luke 11: 51; 2 Chr. 24: 15–22). Further, unlike his cousin John the Baptist, Jesus was not born into a priestly family and could not claim Aaronic, or at least Levitical, priesthood.

The Pastoral Epistles recognized 'the one mediator' between God and humanity in 'the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all' (1 Tim. 2: 5–6; see Heb. 9: 15; 12: 24). But, it was the Letter to the Hebrews which developed an intricate analogy and contrast between Jesus and the role of the Jewish priesthood, especially that of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. As the 'great high priest' (Heb. 4: 14–5: 10), Jesus was not born into the Levitical class but was

appointed 'after the order of Melchizedek' (Heb. 5: 6, 10). He enjoyed the two essential qualifications for priesthood: divine authorization (Heb. 5: 4) and the solidarity with those to whom he was sent that was required to represent them (Heb. 4: 15; see 2: 17–18; 3: 1). The story of Abraham's meeting with a mysterious priest-king (Gen. 14: 17–20) allowed the author of Hebrews to argue that Jesus had received an eternal priesthood 'after the order of Melchizedek' (Heb. 7: 1–28; see Ps. 110: 4). The efficacy of his sacrifice, his mediation of the new covenant, the perfect consistency between his human life and cultic activity, his divine identity, and his direct appointment by God made Jesus' priesthood quite superior to the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 6: 20–10: 18).

Priestly language will recur when we turn to examine in detail the background to and reality of Christ's atoning, sacrificial 'work'. The point of these paragraphs was to illustrate how another Old Testament image was pressed into christological service by Christians seeking to describe their experience of Jesus. In comparison with the New Testament's elaboration of his kingly and prophetic roles, the idea of Jesus as priest is—for all intents and purposes—confined to one major document (Hebrews). Nevertheless, the notion of Christ as priest has its biblical roots in completing the picture of his 'triple office'.

Last Adam

Christ's sinless solidarity with the human race (Heb. 4: 15) leads us towards the image of him as the last or ideal Adam. Just as in the case of the messianic and priestly titles, calling Jesus 'the last Adam' pointed primarily, albeit not exclusively, to his salvific meaning and function. Here the symbol was full of significance for the entire human race and the whole of its history.

Genesis presents human beings not only as the climax of God's work of creation but also as made in the divine image and manifesting God's rule on earth:

Then God said, 'Let us make human beings in our image; after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. (Gen. 1: 26–7)

The next two chapters of Genesis repeat (from a different tradition) the story of the creation of humanity, and add a story about Adam and Eve falling into sin.⁸

Subsequent tradition proved both positive and negative about Adam (and Eve). The roll call of famous persons in Sirach 44–9 ends by praising Adam, who is 'above every living being in creation' (Sir. 49: 16). When the Wisdom of Solomon sets out to show the power and work of wisdom in history it begins with Adam, 'the first-formed father of the world' (Wis. 10: 1–2). With words to be cited by Hebrews (2: 5–9) and clearly echoing the story of creation, the psalmist celebrates the dignity and power over the rest of creation God has given to Adam and humanity.

What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?

Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honour.

Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;

Thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen,

and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the path of the sea.

(Psalm 8: 4–8)

This positive picture of Adam at the beginning of history led some to postulate an Adam-like figure to appear at the end of the messianic age. Qumran has supplied evidence for this view of Adam which links positively his role at the beginning with that at the end (1 QS 4: 23; CD 3: 20). Some scholars find a pointer to this eschatological function of Adam in the canonical Scriptures (Dan. 7: 13–14).

The Scriptures also recalled Adam as the one who sinned and brought death to humanity (2 Esd. 3: 6–10; 1 Cor. 15: 21–2). Some biblical passages named Eve as the one primarily responsible for the fall into sin: 'From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die' (Sir. 25: 24; see 1 Tim. 2: 13–14). But, Adam's representative role in originating sin was generally more to the fore (see Rom. 5: 12–14; 1 Cor. 15: 21–3).

⁸ See G. O'Collins, *Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1–7.

With almost improbable ease Paul could contrast Adam and Christ as two corporate personalities or representatives (Rom. 5: 12–21; 1 Cor 15: 20–3, 45–9) and see human beings as bearing the image of both Adam and Christ (1 Cor 15: 49). Where Adam's disobedience meant sin and death for all, Christ's obedience more than made good the harm due to Adam by bringing righteousness and abundance of grace (Rom. 5: 12–21).⁹ As a 'life-giving spirit', the last Adam is risen from the dead and will transform us through resurrection into a heavenly, spiritual existence (1 Cor. 15: 22, 45, 48–9). Thus, Paul's Adam Christology involved both the earthly Jesus' obedience (Rom. 5) and the risen Christ's role as giver of the Spirit (1 Cor. 15).¹⁰

So far we have seen how the New Testament and, in particular, Paul understood Adam to foreshadow Christ (Rom. 5: 14) and what Christ was to do as a—or, rather, the—corporate, representative personality. The same symbol was taken up to express Christ's being: he is 'the last Adam' (1 Cor. 15: 45), or the 'second man from heaven', and one not made 'from earth, of dust' (1 Cor 15: 47; see Gen. 2: 7).

Some scholars detect an Adamic reference in several other New Testament passages: for instance, in the language about 'the glory of Christ, who is the image (eikōn) of God' (2 Cor. 4: 4). Perhaps this is an echo of the language of Genesis 1: 26–7 about Adam being created in the divine image. If so, Paul would be thinking here of Christ as the ideal Adam, with his humanity perfectly expressing the divine image. But, this exegesis is not fully convincing.¹¹ One may likewise be less than fully convinced by those who find a reference to Adam in two hymnic or at least poetic passages: Colossians 1: 15–20 and Philippians 2: 6–11.

In Colossians 1: 15, Christ is called 'the image (eikōn) of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation'. In isolation this verse could be taken

⁹ J. D. G. Dunn assembles evidence to show how not only Rom. 5 but also Rom. 1–8 interpret the human condition, at least partly, in the light of the creation and fall narratives of Genesis (*Christology in the Making* (2nd edn, London: SCM Press, 1989), 115). On the figure of Adam in the Old Testament, intertestamental literature, and the New Testament, see H. N. Wallace, 'Adam', *ABD*, i. 62–4.

¹⁰ An explicit Adam Christology seems to have been introduced by Paul himself—first in 1 Cor. 15 and then in Rom. 5: see J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 136, 406, 412.

¹¹ As the divine *eikōn* or image (2 Cor. 4: 4), Christ reveals God. The 'glory' which becomes visible on the face of Christ is his own glory or, equivalently, 'the glory of God' (2 Cor. 4: 6). See J. A. Fitzmyer, 'Glory Reflected on the Face of Christ and a Palestinian Jewish Motif', *Theological Studies*, 42 (1981), 630–44; M. J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 330–31.

merely in an Adamic sense as referring to Christ as the first created being, the archetypal human being who visibly reflects God, the invisible Creator. But, the context suggests finding the background in personified wisdom, the perfect image of God (Wis. 7: 26) and the agent of creation (Prov. 8: 22–31). The verses which follow speak of 'all things' being 'created through him and for him', of his being 'before all things', of 'all things holding together' in him, and of the plenitude of deity dwelling in him (Col. 1: 16–17, 19). Any parallelism with Adam, who was simply made in the divine image and likeness, gets left behind here.¹² On the contrary, every created thing, including the angelic 'thrones, dominions, principalities, and authorities' (Col. 1: 16), is said to have originated through Christ (as creative agent) and for Christ (as final goal), who likewise is the principle of cohesion in holding the universe together. Further, it strains plausibility to argue that a mere Adamic model does justice to the language of 'the fullness of God' dwelling in Christ (Col. 1: 19; see 2: 9).

The context of Colossians 1: 15, therefore, prompts one to interpret 'the image of the invisible God' as pointing to Christ being on the divine side and being the perfect revealer of God—a thought paralleled by John 1: 18 and 2 Corinthians 4: 4. Like the hymn or poem in Colossians, Hebrews also portrays Christ as the exact (divine) counterpart through whom the Father speaks and is revealed, and who is the one that sustains the entire universe: 'He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power' (Heb. 1: 3).

The whole context of Colossians 1: 15–20 suggests a more than Adamic and human interpretation of 'the first-born of all creation'. Christ is 'the first-born' in the sense of being *prior to* and supreme over all creation, just as by virtue of his resurrection from the dead he is supreme vis-à-vis the Church (Col. 1: 18). The emphatic and repeated 'kai autos' (and he) of Colossians 1: 17, 18 underline the absolute 'pre-eminence' of Christ in the orders of creation and salvation history; he is pre-eminent both cosmologically and soteriologically. He through whom the universe was created is the same Christ who formed the Church by rising from the dead. He has been active in both creation and redemption. The context is decisive for interpreting the nature of the genitive in Colossians 1: 15 ('of all

¹² For comments on the hymn, see M. Barth and H. Blanke, *Colossians* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 193–251, esp. 213–24; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 99–119.

creation'). The 1989 Revised English Bible catches nicely the comparative force of the genitive: 'his is the primacy *over* all creation' (italics mine). The 'firstborn *from* the dead' (Col. 1: 18) is also the 'firstborn *over* all creation' (Col. 1: 15).

What then of the hymn in Philipians? Here any Adamic interpretation of Christ's prior state of being 'in the form of God' and enjoying 'equality with God' (Phil. 2: 6) seems to be made doubtful by what follows. This divine status and mode of existence stand in counterpoint (the emphatic 'but' of 'but he emptied himself') to the subsequent state of 'assuming the form of a slave', 'being born in likeness of men', and 'being found in human form' (Phil. 2: 7). It is what is said in v. 7 that *first* puts Christ with the community of human beings and their collective image, Adam. Christ belonged to the eternal sphere of divine existence (Phil. 2: 6) and joined the human (and Adamic) sphere only when he assumed another mode of existence (Phil. 2: 7) which concealed his proper (divine) being. Nevertheless, in talking of Christ as refusing to use for his own advantage or exploit for himself the godhead which was his, v. 6 might *also* be contrasting his humility (in becoming human and dying the death of a slave) with the presumptuous aspiration of Adam (and Eve) to enjoy illegitimate equality with God and become 'like God' (Gen. 3: 5–6).¹³

Whether we accept the wider circle of references to Adam or limit ourselves to the clear references in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, the New Testament used Adamic language to express the being of Jesus and, even more, his task and goal. In post-New Testament times the symbol

¹³ On Phil. 2: 6–11, see Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 113–21. Against Dunn, Wright convincingly shows that finding elements of an Adam-Christology in the hymn in no way means following Dunn by squeezing everything into a purely Adamic pattern and ruling out a Christology of pre-existence and incarnation: 'The contrast between Adam and Christ works perfectly within my view: Adam, in arrogance, thought to become like God; Christ in humility became human' (*The Climax of the Covenant*, 91; see also 90–7). Despite my substantial agreement with Wright, I still wonder how closely one may associate Phil. 2: 6–11 with the clear Adam-Christology of Rom. 5: 12–21 and 1 Cor. 15: 20–3, 45–9. Unlike those passages, the Philipians hymn neither mentions Adam by name, nor clearly refers to his creation (out of the earth), his sin, and the way that his sinful disobedience was more than countered by Christ's obedience. Add too that the *morphe* or 'form' of Phil. 2: 6 is hardly synonymous with the *eikon* or 'image' of Gen. 1: 26–7; if Paul wanted to say 'image', he could and should have used *eikon*. Dunn himself has acknowledged that 'the majority of scholars' would hardly agree with him in finding Adam-Christology in Phil. 2: 7 ('Christology (New Testament)', *ABD*, 1: 983. For a thorough account of the exegetical and theological issues, see N. Capizzi, *L'Uso di Fil. 2, 6–11 nella cristologia contemporanea* (1965–93) (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1997).

of Adam proved a valuable foil for Clement of Alexandria, Origen (d. c.254), St Athanasius of Alexandria (c.296–373), St Hilary of Poitiers (c.315–67), St Gregory of Nazianzus (329–89), St Gregory of Nyssa (c.330–c.95), and other Church Fathers, when they presented and interpreted the person and work of Christ. St Irenaeus (c.130–c.200), in particular, did much to elaborate further Paul's antithetical parallelism between Adam and Christ, the latter reversing the failure of the first. In a typical passage of his *Adversus haereses* he wrote: 'The Son of God... was incarnate and made man; and then he summed up in himself the long line of the human race, procuring for us a comprehensive salvation, that we might recover in Christ Jesus what in Adam we had lost, namely the state of being in the image and likeness of God' (3. 18. 1).

Interpreting Christ as the 'second' or 'last' Adam who 'reran' a programme¹⁴ and more than made up what had failed in Adam has proved a long-lived christological theme, not only in theological teaching but also in liturgical, hymnic, and catechetical texts. To quote John Henry Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*:

O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.
O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.¹⁵

Wisdom

The Old Testament theme of wisdom also proved its worth for the first Christians when reflecting on their experience of Jesus. The conceptuality offered various possibilities.¹⁶

¹⁴ For this helpful terminology, see Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 122–3.
¹⁵ The *Exultet* or Easter Proclamation, which can be traced back at least to the seventh century, presents Christ as reversing Adam's failure. See also J. McAuley, 'By your kingly power, O risen Lord, all that Adam lost is now restored: in your resurrection be adored' (in L. A. Murray (ed.), *Anthology of Australian Religious Poetry* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1986), 142).
¹⁶ See R. E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (2nd edn, New York: Doubleday, 2002); A. O'Boyle, *Towards a*

Proverbs vividly personifies the divine attribute or function of wisdom, which existed before the world was made, revealed God, and acted as God's agent in creation (Prov. 8: 22–31; see 3: 19; Wis. 8: 4–6; Sir. 1: 4, 9). Wisdom dwelt with God (Prov. 8: 22–31; see Sir. 24: 4; Wis. 9: 9–10) and being the exclusive property of God was as such inaccessible to human beings (Job 28: 12–13, 20–4, 23–7). It was God who 'found' wisdom (Bar. 3: 29–37) and gave her to Israel: 'He found the whole way to knowledge, and gave her to Jacob his servant and to Israel whom he loved. Afterward she appeared upon earth and lived among human beings' (Bar. 3: 36–7; see Sir. 24: 1–12). As a female figure (Sir. 1: 15; Wis. 7: 12), wisdom addressed human beings (Prov. 1: 20–33; 8: 1–9: 6) inviting to her feast those who are not yet wise (Prov. 9: 1–6). The finest passage celebrating the divine wisdom (Wis. 7: 22b–8: 1) includes the following description: 'She is a breath of the power of God, and the radiance of the glory of the Almighty... She is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness' (Wis. 7: 25–6). No wonder then that Solomon, the archetypal wise person, fell in love with wisdom: 'I loved her and sought her from my youth, and I desired to take her for my bride, and I became enamoured of her beauty' (Wis. 8: 2). Such was the radiant beauty of the wisdom exercised by God both in creation and in relations with the chosen people.¹⁷

In understanding and interpreting Christ, the New Testament uses various strands from these accounts of wisdom. First, like wisdom, Christ pre-existed all things and dwelt with God (John 1: 1–2). Second, the lyric language about wisdom being the breath of the divine power, reflecting the divine glory, mirroring light, and being an image of God appears to be echoed by 1 Corinthians 1: 17–18, 24–5 (verses which associate divine wisdom with power), by Hebrew 1: 3 ('he is the radiance of God's glory'), John 1: 9 ('the true light that gives light to everyone'), and Colossians 1: 15 ('the image of the invisible God'; see 2 Cor. 4: 4). Third, the New Testament applies to Christ the language about wisdom's cosmic significance as God's agent in the creation of the world: 'all things were made through him, and without him

nothing was made that was made' (John 1: 3; see 1: 10; 1 Cor. 8: 6; Col. 1: 16; Heb. 1: 2). Fourth, faced with Christ's crucifixion, Paul vividly transforms the notion of divine wisdom's inaccessibility (1 Cor. 1: 17–2: 13). 'The wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1: 21) is not only 'secret and hidden' (1 Cor. 2: 7) but also, defined by the cross and its proclamation, downright folly to the wise of this world (1 Cor. 1: 18–25; see also Matt. 11: 25–7). Fifth, through his parables and in other ways Christ teaches wisdom (Matt. 25: 1–12; Luke 16: 1–8; see also Matt. 11: 25–30). He is 'greater' than Solomon, the Old Testament wise person and teacher *par excellence* (Matt. 12: 42). Sixth, the New Testament does not, however, seem to have applied to Christ the themes of Lady Wisdom and her radiant beauty. Pope Leo the Great (d. 461), however, recalled Proverbs 9: 1 by picturing the unborn Jesus in Mary's womb as 'Wisdom building a house for herself' (*Epistolae*, 31. 2–3).

Up to this point I have been pursuing strands from the Old Testament ideas about wisdom which, more or less clearly, are taken up (and changed) in New Testament interpretations of Christ. Here and there the New Testament eventually not only ascribes wisdom roles to Christ but also makes the equation 'divine wisdom = Christ' quite explicit. Luke reports how the boy Jesus grew up 'filled with wisdom' (Luke 2: 40; see 2: 52). Later, Christ's fellow-countrymen were astonished 'at the wisdom given to him' (Mark 6: 2). Matthew 11: 19 thinks of him as divine wisdom being 'proved right by his deeds' (see, however, the different and probably original version of Luke 7: 35).¹⁸ Possibly Luke 11: 49 wishes to present Christ as 'the wisdom of God'. Paul names Christ as 'the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1: 24) whom God 'made our wisdom' (1 Cor. 1: 30; see 1: 21). A later letter softens the claim a little: in Christ 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge lie hidden' (Col. 2: 3). Beyond question, the clearest form of the equation 'the divine wisdom = Christ' comes in 1 Corinthians 1: 17–2: 13. Yet, even there Paul's impulse is to explain 'God's hidden wisdom' not so much as the person of Christ himself but rather as God's 'wise and hidden purpose from the very beginning to bring us to our destined glory' (1 Cor. 2: 7). In other words, when Paul calls Christ 'the wisdom of God', even more than in the case of other titles, God's eternal plan of salvation overshadows everything.

¹⁸ On Matthew's identification of Jesus with wisdom, see Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 197–206.

Contemporary Wisdom Christology (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1993); O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, 54–63, 230–47.

¹⁷ For a summary account of wisdom in pre-Christian Judaism, see R. E. Murphy, 'Wisdom in the Old Testament', *ABD*, vi. 920–31.

At times the Church Fathers named Christ as 'Wisdom'. Thus, when rebutting claims about Christ's ignorance, Gregory of Nazianzus insisted that, inasmuch as he was divine, Christ knew everything: 'How can he be ignorant of anything that is, when he is Wisdom, the maker of the worlds, who brings all things to fulfilment and recreates all things, who is the end of all that has come into being?' (*Orationes*, 30. 15). Irenaeus represents another, minor patristic tradition which identified the Spirit of God, and not Christ himself, as 'Wisdom' (*Adversus haereses*, 4. 20. 1-3; see 3. 24. 2; 4. 7. 3; 4. 20. 3). He could appeal to Paul's teaching about wisdom being one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 8). However, the majority applied to Christ the title/name of 'Wisdom'. Eventually the Emperor Constantine set a pattern for Eastern Christians by dedicating a church to Christ as the personification of divine wisdom. In Constantinople, under Emperor Justinian, Santa Sophia ('Holy Wisdom') was rebuilt, consecrated in 538, and became a model for many other Byzantine churches. Nevertheless, in the New Testament and subsequent Christian thought (at least Western thought) 'the Word' or Logos came through more clearly than 'the Wisdom' of God as a central, high title for Christ. The portrayal of the Word in the prologue of John's Gospel shows a marked resemblance to what is said about wisdom in Proverbs 8: 22-31 and Sirach 24: 1-12. Yet, that prologue speaks of the Word, not the Wisdom, becoming flesh and does not follow Baruch in saying that 'Wisdom appeared upon earth and lived among human beings' (Bar. 3: 37). The evangelist develops the theme of the Son of God as *revealer*, communicating the divine self-revelation (John 1: 18)¹⁹—the Logos as spoken word or rational utterance (rather than merely as thought or meaning that remains within the mind). When focusing in a classic passage on what 'God has revealed to us through the Spirit' (1 Cor. 2: 10), Paul had written of the hidden and revealed wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1: 17-2: 13). Despite the availability of this wisdom language and conceptuality, John prefers to speak of 'the Word' (John 1: 1, 14; see 1 John 1: 1; Rev. 19: 13), a term that offers a rich complexity of meanings.

¹⁹ As Logos, the Son is associated with revelation, while Matthew's Gospel, by referring explicitly to the Son and implying his identification with wisdom, associates the Son as wisdom with revelation (Matt. 11: 25-30; see Luke 10: 21).

Word

Like wisdom, the Word is with God from the beginning (Gen. 1: 1; John 1: 1), powerfully creative (Gen. 1: 1-2: 4; Isa. 55: 10-11; Ps. 33: 6, 9; 107: 20; Judith 16: 14) and God's personified self-expression (Wis. 18: 14-16). Like wisdom, the word expresses God's active power and self-revelation in the created world. Solomon's prayer for wisdom takes word and wisdom as synonymous agents of divine creation; 'God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, you made all things *by your word*, and *by your wisdom* fashioned humankind' (Wis. 9: 1-2). Even so, John's prologue does not open by saying: 'In the beginning was Wisdom, and Wisdom was with God, and Wisdom was God' (see John 1: 1).

Despite the fact that, in the literature of pre-Christian Judaism, wisdom, word, and, for that matter, spirit were 'near alternatives as ways of describing the active, immanent power of God',²⁰ why did John choose word and not wisdom? Several considerations may have told against 'wisdom' and for the choice of 'word'. First, given that *sophia* was personified as Lady Wisdom (e.g., Prov. 1: 20-33; 8: 1-9; 6; Wis. 8: 2), it could have seemed awkward to speak of this female figure 'being made flesh' when Jesus was male. Second, in Hellenistic Judaism the law of Moses had been identified with wisdom (Sir. 24: 23; Bar. 4: 1-4) and credited with many of her characteristics.²¹ To announce then that 'Wisdom was God and was made flesh' could have been felt to suggest that 'the Torah was God and was made flesh'. Within a few years Christians were to identify the Son of God and Logos with law or the law (Shepherd of Hermas, *Similitudines*, 8. 3. 2; St Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165), *Dialogue with Trypho*, 43. 1 and see 11. 2). But, neither John nor any other New Testament authors identified

²⁰ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 196. In pre-Christian Judaism, 'Spirit, Wisdom and Word are simply variant ways of speaking of the creative, revelatory or redemptive act of God... all three expressions are simply alternate ways of speaking about the effective power of God in his active relationship with the world and its inhabitants' (ibid. 219). See T. E. Fretheim, 'Word of God', ABD, vi. 961-8; T. H. Tobin, 'Logos', ABD, iv. 348-56. E. Haenchen rightly observes that 'it goes virtually without saying that the hymn in John's prologue could not have used "Messiah" or "Son of man"' (*A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. R. W. Funk, 2 vols (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1984), i. 110). Yet the question remains: why 'Logos' rather than 'Sophia'? This is something that not only Haenchen but also Tobin leaves unexplained ('Logos', 353-5). The question is addressed by A. T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: Continuum, 2005), 96-7.

²¹ At least in one place (Isa. 2: 3) 'word' is associated with Torah.

Christ with the Torah.²² Third, Paul, Luke (especially in Acts), and other New Testament witnesses prepared the way for John's prologue by their use of *logos* for God's revelation through Christ. As Dunn rightly argues, the background for John's choice of 'word' is also to be found in the earlier books of the New Testament and not just in the Old Testament, Philo, and other such sources.²³

Both in New Testament times and later, the Johannine 'Word' offered rich christological possibilities. First, the possibility of identification and distinction. On the one hand, words proceed from a speaker; being a kind of an extension of the speaker, they are, in a certain sense, identical with the speaker ('the Word was God'). On the other hand, a word is distinct from the one who utters it ('the Word was with God'). Thus, Christ was/is identified with, yet distinct from, YHWH. Second, God has been uttering the divine Word always ('in/from the beginning'); the Word 'was' (not 'came to be') God. In this context 'Word' opens up reflection on the personal, eternal pre-existence of the Logos-Son, a theme to which we return in a later chapter. God has never been without the Word.

Third, we did not need John Osborne and other modern playwrights to be reminded of the fact that words reveal their speakers. Shamefully, or happily, words express what are in our mind and heart. In the Old Testament, 'the word of God' repeatedly denotes the revelation of God and the divine will. John's Gospel can move smoothly from the language of 'the Word' to focus on 'God the only Son who has made the Father known' (John 1: 18). As the Son of God sent from the Father, or the Son of man who has come down from heaven, in a unique and exclusive way Jesus reveals heavenly knowledge.²⁴ At the same time, this Word offers light to everyone coming

²² The closest approach to such an identification is found in Gal. 6: 2 ('the law of Christ') and Rom. 10: 4 (if one adopts the more 'positive' translation, 'Christ is the goal of the law'). For New Testament authors, Jesus replaces Torah and its attributes. Torah had been described in terms of light (Ps. 119: 105; Prov. 6: 23) and life (Ps. 119: 93; Prov. 4: 4, 13). Now Jesus, especially in Johannine language, is the light of the world and the life of the world.

²³ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 230–9. A. T. Lincoln also finds a source for the use of 'Word' in John's prologue not only in the Old Testament but also in earlier books of the New Testament. He cites the letters of Paul but neglects to mention the use that Luke makes of 'Logos' in Acts (*The Gospel According to St John*, 94–8).

²⁴ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, pp. xxvi–xxviii.

into the world (John 1: 9), a theme soon developed, with help of Philo, Middle Platonism, and/or Stoic thought, by Justin, Origen, and others.

A later chapter will explore the question of Christ's revelatory and salvific role for non-Christians. Yet, it may be as well to anticipate here how helpful the Logos Christology quickly proved for this question. In his *First Apology* Justin wrote: 'We have been taught that Christ is the first begotten of God and that he is the Word (Logos) of whom the whole human race partakes. Those who have lived according to the Word are Christians, even though they have been considered atheists: such as, among the Greeks, Socrates, Heraclitus, and others like them' (46. 1–4). Wherever there was the Logos there was some true light and genuine knowledge of God. Like Justin, Origen acknowledged how this happened beyond and before Christianity: 'It is not true that [God's] rays were enclosed in that man [Jesus] alone... or that the Light which is the divine Logos, which causes these rays, existed nowhere else... We are careful not to raise objections to any good teaching, even if their authors are outside the faith' (*Contra Celsum*, 7. 17).

Fourth, John's Logos Christology opened the way for Christians not only to recognize the influence of the Logos outside Christianity but also to dialogue with non-Christian thinkers. Those who endorsed Jewish, Platonic, and Stoic strands of thought about the Logos could find a measure of common ground with Christians, who, nevertheless, remained distinctive with their claim that 'the Logos was made flesh'. The notion of 'the Logos' probably offered a more effective bridge to contemporary culture than that of 'wisdom'.

Finally, when New Testament Christians called the crucified and risen Jesus the Word and Wisdom of God, they were not only expressing his divine identity but also drawing attention to the fact that Christology might not necessarily begin with the incarnation and not even with Jesus' background in the call, history, and religious faith of the Jewish people. By maintaining that the whole world was created through the divine Wisdom and Word (John 1: 3, 10; 1 Cor. 8: 6; Col. 1: 16; Heb. 1: 2) they did more than link Jesus as the last Adam with the high point of the original creation in the making of human beings. They interpreted him as the divine agent of all creation. Thus, creation, right from the beginning, carried a christological face.

Two Closing Comments

This chapter has listed and examined five major terms found in pre-Christian Judaism which came to be applied to Jesus. Along the way we have noted how this application called at times for startling readjustments: the notion of a suffering Messiah, for example, hardly surfaces before Jesus but became central in the proclamation of 'Christ crucified' (1 Cor 1: 23). Before we leave it, our list invites two comments.

First, it will be supplemented by subsequent chapters when we discuss Jesus' prophetic activity, his use of 'prophetic' and 'Son of man' language (Chapter 3), and his being called Son of God (Chapter 5), Lord, Saviour, and God (Chapter 6). Even then, much more could be said about the way the language of pre-Christian Judaism was adopted to interpret who Jesus was and is. Two brief examples should suffice. The New Testament repeatedly introduces the figure of Moses as an Old Testament type with whom Jesus is sharply contrasted.²⁵ After the Old Testament compared God with a shepherd, the New Testament also applies to Jesus this image, understanding his followers and others as the flock to which he dedicates himself.²⁶

Second, as we saw, all five terms that we examined (Messiah, Adam, Priest, Wisdom, and Word) have a strong functional flavour not only in pre-Christian Judaism but also when used of Jesus himself. In fact, speaking about him in such ways often meant saying more about his doing than his being. While they indicated something about his ontological identity 'in himself', these terms highlighted his saving role 'for us'.

A later chapter will address the question of Jesus' redemptive role for all human beings and their world. That chapter will examine and use three characteristic ways for interpreting salvation which come from the New Testament and have been variously developed through the history of Christianity. First, the *victorious redemption* that Jesus effected brings *freedom* from *sin* and *evil*, by a *new exodus* from *death* to *life*. Second, through his *bloody sacrifice*, as *priest* and *victim*, he made *expiation* for us and reconciled us to God. Third, his *love*

mediated for us the *mercy*, *peace*, and *blessing* of a *new* and final *covenant* with God.

It may be labouring the obvious, but all the redemptive terms italicized in the last paragraph have their deep roots in pre-Christian Judaism. If we fail to appreciate the ways in which the New Testament massively appropriated and reread this salvific language in the light of the whole Christ-event we can hardly expect to describe and explain competently how the first Christians articulated the deliverance Jesus brought them and us. The only significant New Testament word not italicized in the last paragraph is 'reconciled'. As a helpful notion for expressing some important aspects of Jesus' salvific 'doing', 'reconciliation' (Rom. 5: 10–11; 11: 15; 2 Cor. 5: 18–20; Eph. 2: 16; Col. 1: 20–2) stands almost alone in the New Testament by not being directly rooted in pre-Christian Judaism.²⁷

Almost as much as their experience of Christ himself, the first Christians' rereading of the pre-Christian Scriptures produced the New Testament Scriptures—above all, what those Scriptures teach about Jesus' soteriological 'doing' and ontological 'being'. This New Testament christological appropriation of the Jewish Scriptures has helped to shape not only the way in which later Christians have understood, in particular, the salvific work and personal identity of Jesus but also, in general, the whole way they read the Scriptures of pre-Christian Judaism. The New Testament rereading of the Suffering Servant language, for example, has shaped for ever Christian interpretation of those passages from Second Isaiah. Here, as elsewhere, the New Testament rereading of the pre-Christian Scriptures has decisively influenced ways in which those texts have helped to form the thinking and life of Christians over the centuries.

These considerations should sufficiently justify my decision, when I come to reflect at length on Jesus' saving role, to indicate some of the ways New Testament (and later) Christians have appropriated and reread Old Testament language in expressing the new life they experienced as mediated through the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Let us turn now, however, to some themes from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that assume major importance for a systematic Christology.

²⁷ See J. A. Fitzmyer, 'Pauline Theology', *NIBC*, 1397–402, esp. 1398–9; id., *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 119–20; O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, 3–18, esp. 11–15.

²⁵ For details, see D. M. Beegle and F. M. Gillman, 'Moses', *ABD*, iv, 909–20.

²⁶ See J. Jeremias, 'Poimen', *TDNT*, vi, 485–502.