

**The Use of Monotheism in the Shaping of Christian Identities
vis-à-vis Judaism in the Second Century**

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Declaration

This thesis is submitted for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in New Testament and Christian Origins at The University of Edinburgh. The work contained herein has been composed by myself and represents exclusively my own contribution to scholarship. It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Abstract

This thesis argues that early Christians actively engaged rhetoric and symbols of monotheism in diverse literary strategies as an ideological tool for resisting, repositioning, and rereading Judaism in order to shape their own collective identity from 100 to 200 CE (ch. 1). Belief and confession of one God provides an important basis for social comparison between Jews and Christians because it represents a fundamental Jewish identity marker also shared by Christians (ch. 2). A survey of divine unity and uniqueness rhetoric in early Christian literature revealed three broad trajectories in which monotheistic motifs assumed significance in shaping Christian literature and thereby the production of “Christianity” itself. This thesis examines specific moments in each trajectory that highlight particularly well the functionality of monotheism in the process of forming Christianity relative to Judaism.

Ignatius of Antioch provides the first example (ch. 3). The literary shaping of *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* reveals that for Ignatius what fundamentally distinguished “Judaism” and “Christianity” was not monotheism but their respective response to the revelation of God through Jesus in the gospel. Monotheism was not a tool for classifying difference but a powerful weapon for resisting threatening Jewish influence *within* the Christian church. Only as an element of resistance brought to bear on an already established “Judaism”–“Christianity” divide did monotheism represent, reflexively and secondarily, a means of shaping Christian identity.

Another trajectory overtly utilized “knowledge” of the one God as primary criterion for indexing sameness and difference between Christianity, Judaism, and other groups (ch. 4). *Kerygma Petrou* and Aristides’ *Apology* employ such monotheistic classification strategies to situate Christianity in a global framework alongside other religious and/or ethnic collectivities. Both texts locate the “newness” of Christianity alongside the more well-known status of Jews. In so doing, they effectively reposition Judaism within the global framework of religious and ethnic groups to clarify and legitimate the meaning of belonging to Christian identity.

Some Christians employed “two powers” hermeneutic strategies to reinterpret Jewish scriptural traditions of exclusivist monotheism by insinuating into scripture a second figure, Jesus, alongside the one God (ch. 5). Aristo’s *Disputation of Jason and Papiscus* and Justin’s *Dialogue* demonstrate awareness that the scriptures are shared intellectual property and the proper locus for Christian–Jewish debate. “Two powers” interpretations thus reflect conscious attempts to reread Jewish monotheistic textual traditions in a new way. Through them an entire reconstruction of the symbolic universe of monotheism can take place in explicitly Christian terms.

These diverse strategies reveal a complex network of early Christian literary production that used monotheistic symbols and rhetoric as an implement to resist, reposition, and reread Judaism, thereby producing distinctly Christian identities (ch. 6).

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Abbreviations

This thesis adopts the abbreviations in Patrick H. Alexander, John F. Kutsko, et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), with some exceptions. The following list of abbreviations supplement and, in several cases, replace those of the *Handbook*. Because of the large quantity of manuscript abbreviations and textual editions involved in some of the footnotes, it was deemed preferable to list these according to chapter for the reader's convenience.

Short Abbreviations

alt.	alternatively
app.	apparatus
c.	century
ca.	circa
col(l).	column(s)
ded.	dedicatory address (dedication)
ed./eds.	editor(s)
Eng.	English
esp.	especially
fol.	folio
fr./frs.	fragment(s)
Heb	Hebrew
impf.	imperfect
inscr.	<i>inscriptio</i> ; inscription
lit.	literally
masc.	masculine
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
par.	parallel(s)
perh.	perhaps
pl.	plural
repr.	reprinted
resp.	respectively

sim.	similarly
tit.	title
trans.	translated; translation

Common Textual Abbreviations

<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
LXX	Septuagint; Old Greek tradition
MT	Masoretic Text
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament

Manuscripts and Textual Editions by Chapter

Chapter Two

<i>C. Eunom.</i>	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Contra Eunomium</i>
FT-P	Ms. Paris Biliothèque nationale Hébr. 110 (fragmentary Targumim)
Odes	LXX Odes
<i>Or.</i>	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Orationes</i>
Pesh	Peshitta
PTgs	Palestinian Targumim
SamP	Samaritan Pentateuch
TPsJ	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
Vg	Vulgate

Chapter Three

Ar	Armenian
g	Greek MSS of the Long Recension
G	Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus (Middle Recension)
l	Latin MSS of the Long Recension
L	Latin version of the Middle recension
Sy ^f	Fragments of the Syriac version (Middle Recension)

Chapter Four

<i>Apol.</i>	Aristide's <i>Apology</i>
Melito <i>Apol.</i>	Melito's <i>Apology</i> [cf. Eusebius <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> 4.26.5]
Ar	Armenian
<i>Ba</i>	<i>Life of Barlaam and Joasaph</i>
<i>Did.</i>	Alcinous (=Albinus) <i>Didaskalos</i>
<i>DiscBa</i>	<i>Discourse of Barlaam</i> (§§45–56 <i>Ba</i>)
<i>DiscNa</i>	<i>Discourse of Nachor</i> (§§239–55 <i>Ba</i>)
<i>Elench.</i>	Pseudo-Hippolytus <i>Elenchus</i>
<i>KP</i>	<i>Kerygma Petrou (The Preaching of Peter)</i>
L	Codex Laurentianus V 3 (Clement of Alexandria's <i>Stromata</i>)
N	Codex N of Eusebius' <i>Chronicon</i>
Π ¹	Papyrological Tradition One (<i>Papyrus Oxyrhynchus</i> XV, 1778 and Heidelberg inv. G 1013, fol. 1 ^{r-v} and 2 ^{r-v})
Π ²	Papyrological Tradition Two (<i>Papyrus Lond. Litt.</i> 223 [2486])
Sy	Syriac
<i>Ref.</i>	Hippolytus <i>Refutatio omnium haeresium (Philosophoumena)</i>

Chapter Five

<i>Ad. Vig.</i>	Pseudo-Cyprian <i>Ad Vigilium Episcopum</i>
<i>AJ</i>	<i>Anabathmoi Jakobou (The Ascents of James)</i>
<i>AZ</i>	<i>The Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus</i>
<i>Comm. Ps.</i>	Hilary of Poitiers <i>Commentary on the Psalms</i>
<i>JP</i>	Aristo of Pella <i>Disputation of Jason and Papiscus</i>
LR	Long Recension of <i>The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila</i>
<i>Rec.</i>	Pseudo-Clementine <i>Recognitions</i>
<i>Sc. my. th.</i>	John of Scythopolis <i>Scholia de mystica theologia</i>
SR	Short Recension of <i>The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila</i>
<i>STh</i>	<i>The Dialogue of Simon and Theophilus</i>
TA	<i>The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila</i>

Periodicals and Journals

ANCL	<i>Ante-Nicene Christian Library</i>
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AOCS	Anecdota Oxoniensa. Classical Series
<i>Apocrypha</i>	<i>Apocrypha: le champ des apocryphes</i>
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
<i>BCESS</i>	<i>Bibliothèque des Centres d'Études supérieures spécialisés</i>
BPatr	Biblioteca patristica
CCSA	Corpus Christianorum: Series Apocryphorum
DMOA	Idocumenta et Monumenta orientis antiqui
<i>EHPHR</i>	<i>Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse</i>
<i>EPHESE</i>	<i>École pratique des Hautes Études—Section des Sciences économiques et sociales</i>
<i>EPHESR</i>	<i>École pratique des Hautes Études—Section des Sciences religieuses</i>
<i>EPhM</i>	<i>Études de philosophie médiévale</i>
EuH	Europäische Hochschulschriften
FKD	Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society
IPE	Initiations aux Pères de l'Église
<i>JBT</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism: Supplement Series

LLJC	The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization
NABPR	National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NKWG	<i>Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse</i>
RivAC	<i>Rivista di archeologia cristiana</i>
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SCJ	Studies in Christianity and Judaism
SPHKAW	Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften
SSTh	Studies in Sacred Theology
VCSup	Supplements to <i>Vigilia christiana</i> e
VIGM	Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte Mainz

Chapter One

Introduction and Methodology

“God is one, and there are many gods.”¹ It is not surprising that the man who articulated this aphorism was himself a *popularizer* of Platonic philosophy. Maximus of Tyre’s concern to describe the divine nature in terms of unity and plurality reflects not only that of his contemporary intellectuals but of the common folk as well. Antique Graeco-Roman religion was permeated with a concern for issues of divine unity and plurality. Whether an adherent to one of the traditional Roman cults, flourishing mystery religions, or philosophic schools, or to the historic and time-honored Jewish faith, it was impossible to escape some conception of the divine closely linked to cultic worship in terms of “one” or “many,” of divine unity and plurality/exclusivity. If religious or exposed to religion at all, as was everyone in the ancient Empire, one was in daily contact with certain metaphysical and confessional commitments related to concepts of divine unity and plurality (“one God,” “many gods,” “Great God,” “Most High God,” etc.).

1. The “Jesus Problem” and Early Christian Monotheism

Within this context, early Christian confession of belief in one God who had revealed himself uniquely through the person of Jesus was something of an oddity. In particular, the early and popular strain of Christian monotheism² which worshipped Jesus alongside the one God did not fit readily into the monotheistic (or monolatrous) construct of early Judaism, however diverse the latter was in religious expression and experience.³ Nor did the adamant Christian denial of the efficacy or reality of all other “gods” but one⁴ readily lend itself to irenic co-existence alongside

¹ Maximus of Tyre, *Who is God according to Plato* 17.5: θεὸς εἷς καὶ θεοὶ πολλοί. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of foreign languages are the author’s.

² The question of what constitutes “monotheism” is addressed in ch. 2 §1.

³ Both in his *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2003) and in his earlier *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), Larry Hurtado called attention to the very real nature of the historical problem raised by christological monotheism within an early Jewish religious matrix. None of the categories found in early Judaism for a second divine figure alongside the one God (hypostatizations, principal angels, exalted patriarchs) seems readily to fit the pattern of early Christian Jesus-devotion without some significant “mutation.”

⁴ By demoting pagan deities to demonic status or by denying their existence altogether.

the popular polytheistic cults of its pagan neighbors. Christological monotheistic practice raised manifold questions which did not go unnoted by Jews or pagans. How could Christians confess the unique existence of one, and only one, God and yet simultaneously worship Jesus as divine or venerate him as an exalted figure alongside the one God? How does the divinity and/or exalted status of Jesus coincide with God's unity? Quite simply, these are two aspects of a single problem that lay at the core of many (and, arguably, most) early Christian communities—How does the person of Jesus relate to early Christian confessions of God's unity and unique existence as the “only God?”⁵ The perceived incongruity between early Christian monotheism (i.e., devotion to one God *and* Jesus) and more traditional presentations and practices of Jewish monotheism and pagan polytheism we label the “Jesus problem.”

Cast in this way, the “Jesus problem” appears primarily theological. Yet its outworking was not the exclusive preserve of Christian intellectuals with their theoretical propositions. Very early on, the juxtaposition of “one God, one Lord” had become part of Christian *cultic* idiom, and devotion to a second, exalted figure within the context of monotheistic worship somehow enthused and attracted ordinary people not as philosophical proposition but as religious confession.⁶ Christians *worshipped* one God in a different expression (sc. via Jesus) than previously known by Jews or pagans. In light of the importance of cultic behavior in antiquity, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the idea *and* practice of Christian monotheism touched the mundane sphere of everyday Christian social intercourse with pagans and Jews. Christian monotheism, with its inherent conceptual and cultic difficulties regarding divine unity and uniqueness, must have manifested itself in the most practical of ways and the most varied of contexts—on the streets, in the marketplace, within places of worship—as Christians sought to work out their shared cultic confession of “one God, one Lord” in terms of wider social realities.

How did Christians make use of monotheistic ideas and symbols in mundane social contexts, and more importantly, for what ends? What political, social, economic motives were operative in early Christian monotheism? In what ways did Christians appropriate monotheism as a power system, as an ideology? These are

⁵ The question, in a different form, was posed by the pagan Celsus (Origen, *Cels.* 8.12) and was placed by Justin on the lips of the Jew Trypho (*Dial.* 55.1).

⁶ 1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Eph 4:5–6.

important questions about the social function of early Christian monotheism, which have all too often been neglected. Providing satisfactory answers would require a host of scholarly books, monographs, and articles. The present thesis represents a single contribution in this regard.

This thesis explores Christian use of monotheism vis-à-vis Jews within the second century. We argue that during the second century Christians actively engaged rhetoric and symbols of monotheism in diverse literary strategies as a powerful ideological tool for resisting, repositioning, and rereading Judaism and Jewish traditions in order to shape their own peculiar collective identity. The monotheistic techniques of resisting, repositioning, and rereading Judaism were unearthed first by examining a generous sampling of second-century Christian literature to excavate rhetorical and literary practices respecting divine unity and uniqueness language.⁷ They emerged as the product of a single heuristic question posed to the literature: How did second-century Christian communities utilize concepts of divine uniqueness and unity literarily vis-à-vis Judaism and Jewish traditions? Or, reformulated, how did Christians technically engage the idea of monotheism with respect to Judaism in their literature? In keeping with the desired social emphasis of this thesis, a second question was asked of the emergent techniques: For what social ends did Christians strategically utilize these techniques? What makes them strategies rather than simply techniques?⁸ This question is dynamic. There are many ways to approach it. In this thesis, we offer an interpretation of the rhetorical and conceptual techniques of Christian monotheism as literary and ideological strategies by which Christian communities framed a sense of who they were as distinct from other social groupings. Among the many concepts available for Christians to identify themselves as similar or dissimilar to Jews, monotheism figured prominently.

The ultimate *desideratum* of this thesis is then some elucidation of the social functions which the concepts of divine unity and uniqueness assumed within the “symbolic universe” of early Christianity as it relates to Jews during the second

⁷ “Technique” includes the syntactic forms and rhetorical structures of divine unity and exclusivity language (see Hans Rechenmacher, »Außer mir gibt es keinen Gott!« *Eine sprach- und literaturwissenschaftliche Studie zur Ausschließlichkeitsformel* [ATSAT 49; St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1997] 161–76) with which Christians express concepts of divine unity and uniqueness. “Technique” further includes the discursive logic in which this language is used vis-à-vis Judaism, in this case, to resist, reposition, and reread Judaism.

⁸ “Strategy” indicates use of a technique(s) *for some end*. It is vectorial—with direction (internal logic) *and* magnitude (intended purpose). In this thesis, we interpret the strategy (i.e., intended goal) of the monotheistic techniques in terms of identity construction.

century. After an overview of various prior approaches to the study of early Christian monotheism (§2), we summarize the approach (§3) and chapters of this thesis (§4).

2. Approaches to the Study of Early Christian Monotheism

The best way to clarify the methodology and scope of this thesis is to situate it in the context of the varied heuristic approaches and concerns of prior scholarly research on early Christian monotheism. The present section does not evaluate all technical works on early Christian monotheism. The body of literature is simply too vast. Rather, we uncover heuristic strands within scholarly literature that seeks to articulate the phenomena of early Christian monotheism. By delineating common approaches to the analysis of Christian monotheism, the creative and nuanced value of the present study becomes clear.

Studies of early Christian monotheism have proceeded along five methodological lines: ideational-theological, social-descriptive, social-explanatory, social-scientific, and historical-universalizing. The first three may be classified as “historical-critical” (§2.1), while the latter two have their own respective techniques (§2.2) and concerns (§2.3). Further delimitation of these methods into five groups follows their particular *emphases* and *concerns* as seen through the kinds of questions they ask. The particular methodological direction of this thesis is explained more fully in the conclusion to this section (§2.4). The following studies, though they do not constitute a comprehensive listing of literature on early Christian monotheism, are more than mere representative samples. Most are among the more important works produced on Christian monotheism, and they have all played an important role in the formation of this thesis.

2.1 Historical-Critical Studies

Works of the ideational-theological, social-descriptive, and social-explanatory types are related in prioritizing the classic historical-critical method⁹ over other competing interpretive techniques. They rely on the same traditional

⁹ By which a literary work is subjected to philological, textual, literary, form, and/or compositional investigation. Among works of this type may also be classed the many linguistic and literary studies that highlight some aspect of monotheism or monotheistic rhetoric. E.g., Catrin H. Williams, *I am He: The Interpretation of ‘Anî Hû’ in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (WUNT 2.113; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2000) and David Ball, *‘I Am’ in John’s Gospel: Literary Function, Background, and Theological Implications* (JSNTSup 124; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

historical-critical analytic technique(s), and every work of this category seeks some measure of historical *and* social description related to early Christian monotheism. Yet there are discernable emphases sufficient to warrant their distinction, particularly based upon the relative *emphasis* they place on the “social” side of this equation. They are separated here for heuristic purposes according to the following criteria. If a work describes the development or maintenance of early Christian monotheism almost entirely in terms of an *intellectual* or *theological* endeavor, the most accurate descriptor for it is “ideational-theological.” Works of this type often contain in some measure description of social facts, yet they do not emphasize this element. If the primary emphasis of a scholarly investigation rests on *describing* the broader social environment (cultic, conceptual, economic, political, etc.) within which Christian monotheism emerged and thrived, the designation “social-descriptive” is apropos. Insofar as a work extends this concern for social-description to an *interpretive* attempt at integrating Christian monotheism with other ancient social-forces, factors, and structures in cause-and-effect relations, a study is most appropriately labeled “social-explanatory.”

2.1.1 Ideational-Theological

With few exceptions the scholarly study of early Christian monotheism has been one of the production, development, and spread of monotheism as an *idea* or *concept*. Studies of this type may be multiplied indefinitely by reference to any of the classic works on early Christian theology, particularly sections on the doctrine of God.¹⁰ We content ourselves to a few key investigations which have emphasized the *conceptual* side of divine unity and/or exclusivity in particular.

Important among ideational-theological studies is Gerhard Delling’s 1952 article “*ΜΟΝΟΣ ΘΕΟΣ*.”¹¹ Delling evaluates the exclusivity expression “God alone” (μόνος θεός=*monos theos*) in antiquity. Unfortunately, given the brevity of treatment, his article provides only general highlights of the use of this type of exclusivity language in antiquity. This seeming weakness, however, also proves to be a strength. Delling’s primary contribution comes in the synthesizing and generalizing

¹⁰ E.g., G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1952); J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (5th rev. ed.; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978); and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Volume 1: Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

¹¹ *TLZ* 8 (1952): 470–76.

process, so clearly presented at the beginning of his article, where he categorizes the antique *monos theos*-expressions under three viewpoints—the superlative uses of polytheistic piety, the philosophical clauses (*Sätze*), and the predications of monotheistic religion. Though he confesses that these categories are not without exception in every case, Delling nevertheless provides a valuable service in highlighting basic rubrics. These are, however, just that—basic rubrics, and little more; the categorization corresponds generally to what one would expect from ancient religion, that is, paganism, philosophical works, and Jewish and Christian monotheism. Any attempt, however, to force the data consistently into one of these categories (e.g., to assume all Jewish usage of this language falls under “monotheism”) only breaks the mold, for the problem comes in the seams of an historical process that was not nearly so cut and dry as Delling’s categories imply. The ways this language was manifested in Christian monotheism are manifold, and the general category of “*die Prädikationen der monotheistischen Religion*,” may only broadly be applied. It does not allow access to historical particulars (which always provide interesting exceptions!). Further, Delling’s curt analysis of the usage of this language in Christianity is limited to the New Testament, and he does not even provide an exhaustive list of divine uniqueness rhetoric within that corpus. With regard to early Christian uses of this language, Delling does helpfully recognize the special place divine uniqueness language held in first-century Christian worship contexts.¹²

A study of lesser importance than Delling’s, though generally helpful for understanding the Jewish background and New Testament uses of divine exclusivity and unity concepts, is the article composed by E. Stauffer in Gerhard Kittel’s *Theologisches Wörterbuch*.¹³ True to the theological orientation of the “dictionary,” the discussion of God’s oneness and uniqueness comes not under the entries for εἷς or μόνος but under the word θεός. Stauffer’s article on εἷς makes only a few tantalizingly brief comments about the importance of divine unity before redirecting the reader to the article on θεός.¹⁴ No corresponding entry on μόνος is to be found,

¹² Delling comments, “offenbar hat die *MONOS*-Prädikation ihren besonderen Ort im christlichen Gottesdienst des 1. Jh” (*ibid.*, 476): a brief social-descriptive element in a largely ideational-theological work!

¹³ “Θεός,” in Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1950 repr.) 3.65–120.

¹⁴ “Εἷς,” in Kittel, *ibid.*, 2.432–40.

though Jesus' oneness with the father is treated briefly elsewhere by H. M. F. Büchsel.¹⁵ Stauffer's treatment (s.v. θεός) is relatively extensive and very helpful for demonstrating many similarities and divergences between Jewish and early Christian concepts of God, particularly as these relate to divine oneness and exclusivity. His analysis of these phrases is, of course, subject to all the usual methodological criticisms leveled against Kittel's *Wörterbuch*,¹⁶ but it nevertheless provides valuable information.

The studies of Delling and Stauffer examine a broad swath of evidence. A more common approach is reflected in the number of significant studies which investigate Christian monotheism within a more limited collection of writings. The works of Joseph Lortz and Eric Osborn take pride of place here. The particular contribution of the former's article "Das Christentum als Monotheismus in den Apologien des zweiten Jahrhunderts" was to highlight the singular significance of monotheism within the theology of the second-century Christian apologists.¹⁷ Lortz observed three characteristics in Christian apologetic literature: (1) The first and primary issue, viewed as decisive for Christianity's very survival, was whether there exists one God or many gods; (2) since the essence of Christianity for the apologists was seen in monotheism, the person of Jesus strongly faded in importance (i.e., was intentionally suppressed);¹⁸ (3) the apologetic literature stresses that the entire Christian life in its guidelines and various consequences is represented as the fruit of correct knowledge of and reverence for God, who decisively rules the entire religious consciousness. Monotheism was the apologetic shibboleth, theologically and morally.

Eric Osborn's *The Emergence of Christian Theology*,¹⁹ though not in direct conversation with Lortz's work, expands upon the latter by demonstrating the fundamental position that monotheism (in particular the question of divine unity) obtained in developing a Christian approach to physics, ethics, and logic within the theologizing of Justin, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.

¹⁵ "Μονοθενής," in Kittel, *ibid.*, 4.745–50.

¹⁶ On methodological criticisms of *TWNT*, see M. Silva (*Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994] 24–28).

¹⁷ In Albert Michael Koeniger, ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte des christlichen Altertums und der byzantinischen Literatur: Festgabe Albert Erhard* (Bonn; Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder, 1922) 301–27.

¹⁸ A point also noted by Kelly (*Early Christian Doctrines*, 145–47).

¹⁹ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

For Osborn the issue of the one God is *the central theological problem* facing the enterprise of these early Christian thinkers. From the particular construction of Christian monotheism shared by these thinkers three significant questions were—indeed had to be—raised and addressed in rather creative manners: (1) Was there one God who was both father of Jesus Christ and creator of this world of evil and chaos; (2) Was Christian faith truly monotheist, seeing that Christians confessed Jesus as God while maintaining that there was only one God; and (3) What were the consequences of these affirmations (i.e., how does the one God as first-principle affect well-known philosophical categories of physics, ethics, and logic?). These questions provide the structure of earliest Christian theology and of Osborn’s work as a whole.²⁰ According to him, the theological method for answering these issues is supplied by the philosophy of “metaphysic of mind” (*Geistmetaphysik*),²¹ while the Bible (including NT) offers material for a reasoned account of the one God.²² Osborn establishes an accurate understanding of Christian theological development as primarily an academic and ethical exercise in monotheism, and the reader can readily see the prominent position of divine uniqueness and unity concepts within the questions that drove second-century theological inquiry.

In one way or another, each of these sources describes the emergence and spread of early Christian monotheism (in its various forms) primarily in terms of its significance as a *conceptual, intellectual, and theological enterprise*. And though these works frequently reference broader antique conceptions of deity and other philosophical categories within the Graeco-Roman world, they do not emphasize the extra-noetic social context as formative in the emergence of early Christian monotheistic practice or belief. The Christian concepts of divine unity and exclusivity are (inadvertently?) presented as having sprung—or at least almost sprung—via the conversations of Christian intellectuals with the theological ideas of

²⁰ Osborn, *Emergence*, 3. Though, confusingly, in the Preface he states that only the third of these concerns provides the book’s structure. The outworking of Christian monotheism in regard to three areas of physics, ethics, and logic, however, provides the major rubrics only for chapters four through eight.

²¹ In which the multiplicity of Idea-thoughts exists *within* the mind of the one God. On *Geistmetaphysik* see Osborn (ibid., ch. 2) and an unpublished contribution by Will Rutherford (“Middle Platonic Resources for Early Christian Conceptions of Divine Unity” in Graeco-Roman Philosophy Section of the 2006 International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature [Edinburgh]).

²² Osborn, ibid., ch. 3.

the ancient world almost entirely without reference to their broader social significance.

2.1.2 Social-Descriptive

Ideational-theological studies are necessary to demonstrate the intellectual atmosphere of early Christianity. Yet insofar as they envision the emergence and perpetuation of Christian monotheism as a primarily noetic endeavor, they fail to give appropriate weight to other socio-religious, political, or economic factors which were operative in that process. To focus exclusively or primarily on the theology of monotheism is to present a portrait of early Christianity which is all head and no body. Social-descriptive studies help offset this monopodal imbalance by supplementing conceptual development with description of wider social and societal factors at work in the rise, spread, and maintenance of Christian monotheism.²³

In his *Gods and the One God: Christian Theology in the Graeco-Roman World*, Robert Grant provides a prime example of a scholar who focuses on religious conflict with a view to its consequences for the development of Christian theology (and of monotheism in particular).²⁴ Though ultimately concerned about understanding the theological development of monotheism, Grant sets this process squarely within the broader constraints of the antique socio-religious environment. Roughly the first third of his book (i.e., parts one and two) is devoted to this subject. Using the missionary journeys and experiences of the apostle Paul as his staging point, Grant sets the religious tone of both eastern and western parts of the Roman empire and uncovers through a variety of primary texts a situation of considerable diversity in ancient attitudes towards pagan religion (from hostile antagonism to unquestioning devotion). He adroitly demonstrates the diversity of the ancient Graeco-Roman religious world—all was not idols, for there were atheists too! Grant's distinctive contribution comes, however, in setting the emergence of Christian monotheism within the context of conflict between the one God of

²³ Within this category may also be included works that recognize or stress the emergence of Christian monotheism as one expression within a broader cultural shift towards "monism" or "monotheism" in the ancient Graeco-Roman world. E.g., Ramsey MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1981) 83–89; L. Michael White, *From Jesus to Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004) 50–52; and W. Schrage, *Unterwegs zur Einzigkeit und Einheit Gottes: Zum "Monotheismus" des Paulus und seiner alttestamentlich-frühjüdischen Tradition* (Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002) 35–43.

²⁴ (London: SPCK, 1986).

Christian religion and the many gods of Graeco-Roman paganism. His demonstration from primary texts is forcefully effective in elucidating the importance of religious struggle within early, first-century Christian missionary activity. However, in our opinion, Grant has not made the link between Christianity and anti-idolatry thoroughly enough for subsequent centuries of pre-Nicene Christianity. His analysis of the impact of belief in one God on not just the theology but on the missionary movement of the early Church represents one of the more well-balanced approaches to this issue; it does justice to the importance of exclusivist monotheism in the ordinary comings and goings of Christianity (at least as represented in missionary outreach) as well as in the theological arena.

Another characteristic representative of this category is Erik Peterson's 1926 compendious *Εἰς Θεός: Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche, und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, which without a doubt represents the classic expression of scholarship on the use of the Christian acclamation "one God" (εἰς θεός=*heis theos*) in antiquity.²⁵ Peterson collects and investigates the ninety-three Syrian and one-hundred and three Egyptian epigraphs discovered by the mid-1920s which bear the inscription εἰς θεός, in an attempt to understand the significance of the Christian lapidary formula and to piece together its etiology and social function. The genius of Peterson's analysis lies in his connecting of the *heis theos*-formula of Christian epigraphs with the *heis theos*-acclamations of the Christian miracle-narratives and martyrologies. In so doing, he demonstrates that the *heis theos* formula did not arise in oriental liturgy but in the popular antique (not only Christian) practice of collective, enthusiastic, repetitious shouting of a formulaic utterance (sc. acclamation). The formula did not arise out of confessional concerns but from practical social situations in which it was perceived as necessary by an individual or crowd to invoke apotropaically the supremacy and power of the Christian God. *Heis theos* thereby becomes frequently a magical formula appearing on everything from tombstones, household doorways, porticos, and windows, to smaller personal items—amulets, stamps, seals, rings, dolls, etc. Peterson's socially-informed etiology of course holds direct implications on the meaning of the phrase *heis theos*. The common Christian practice of publicly and privately acclaiming "εἰς

²⁵ (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926). The work is scheduled for 2008 reprint by Echter Verlag with an introduction by Christoph Marksches. Cf. also Erik Peterson, "Εἰς Θεός als Zirkusakklamation in Byzanz," *ThLZ* 52 (1927): 493–95; non vidi.

θεός” reaches its *Höhepunkt* beyond the second- and third-centuries (outside the scope of this thesis).

The studies of Grant and Peterson are characterized in their own peculiar ways by a concern to situate early Christian monotheism within a much wider antique social context.²⁶ As they emphasize *description* of the broader socio-religious context within which Christian monotheism emerged and flourished, these studies are “social-descriptive.” Studies of this type are critical for situating early Christian monotheism both within the wider thought world and preexisting social structures of antiquity.

2.1.3 Social-Explanatory

Still other historical-critical studies go beyond social-description and attempt a cause-and-effect linking between preexisting social categories and some aspect(s) of early Christian monotheism. Studies of the “social-explanatory” type attempt to *explain* the occurrence of particular monotheistic phenomena on the basis of socio-religious influences or other functional social categories from the larger antique environment. The boundary between social description and explanation is often quite thin. The latter requires the former. Links of cause-and-effect cannot be made until ideational-theological and social-descriptive processes have been thoroughly catalogued. Peterson’s explanation of the acclamatory function of the “one God” formula, for example, stands on the cusp between social description and explanation. Yet, his work remains typically descriptive, emphasizing, for example, *that* Christians used “one God” amulets for theurgic purposes. He does not attempt to provide a mechanism for understanding *why* theurgy was sociologically perceived as necessary or by what mechanism an acclamation of “one God” could emerge into a theurgic use on magical amulets.²⁷ The social-explanatory strategy attempts such interpretations.

The concern to elucidate and attribute causation and consequence between Christian monotheistic symbol systems and broader social phenomena is particularly strident in the growing body of literature dedicated to explaining the rise of devotion

²⁶ Also Robert L. Wilken “Toward a Social Interpretation of Early Christian Apologetics,” *CH* 39 (1970): 437–58, though not explicitly concerned with monotheism.

²⁷ He does, however, intuit that the amulet-wearer subjectively-perceives that evil forces threaten his or her life in some form and therefore require appropriate (i.e., magical) means of vitiating those forces.

to Jesus within the context of early Jewish religion. Works such as Larry Hurtado's *One God, One Lord* and more recently his *Lord Jesus Christ*, Lauren Stuckenbruck's *Angel Veneration and Christology*,²⁸ and Richard Bauckham's *God Crucified* and "The Throne of God" reflect this category.²⁹ In one way or another each of these works attempts to situate the religious phenomenon of early Christian devotion to Jesus firmly within the broader socio-religious thought-world *and* cultic practice of early Jewish "monotheism." Yet they go further and offer potential mechanisms for how the worship of Jesus alongside one God could have arisen from within the context of early Jewish "monotheism." They point to the emerging importance of secondary divine agencies for many early Jewish circles. A strong interest in secondary divine hypostatizations and exalted patriarchs alongside the growing importance of—and devotion to?—principal angels within early Jewish religion has certain similarities to early Christian worship of a second divine figure. Hurtado doubts whether secondary exalted figures were ever publicly and cultically worshipped by Jews of the second Temple era. He attempts to explain the emergence of Jesus-devotion in early Christianity in terms of a "genetic mutation," related to early Judaism yet clearly different in terms of cultic practice. Bauckham, on the other hand, envisions earliest Christians as actively locating Jesus within the already well-established Jewish understanding of God in terms of his unique identity vis-à-vis all other created reality.³⁰

Each of these works is concerned not merely with describing a monotheistic phenomenon (in this case, Jesus-devotion). Rather they occupy themselves with expounding an etiology for this phenomenon, with explaining how cultic devotion to a second exalted figure could have occurred within the context of certain preexisting religious rites, beliefs, and concepts in early Jewish religion. Inasmuch as they are concerned with *explaining* the emergence of the phenomenon of Jesus-devotion *in terms of a social response* (intellectual, cultic, or otherwise) or *in terms of a socio-historical mechanism* framed in reference to wider social *realia*, they represent

²⁸ *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2.70; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995).

²⁹ *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999); "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (JSJSup 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 43-69.

³⁰ "In this way they develop a kind of christological monotheism which is fully continuous with early Jewish monotheism but distinctive in the way it sees Jesus Christ himself as intrinsic to the identity of the unique God" (Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 26-27).

works of a “social-explanatory” type. Such works owe much to ideational-theological and social-descriptive methods, yet their primary emphasis lies in bringing explanatory power to bear on monotheistic phenomena.³¹ Works of this type are important for the kinds of social questions and concerns they manifest and for the creative attempts to effect a broader synthesis of data respecting early Christian monotheism. The success of an author’s interpretive proposals, however, rests upon the relative accuracy of his or her detailed preparatory study of an historical-critical nature (ideational-theological and social-descriptive).

2.2 *Social-Scientific Studies*

In the attempt to integrate and explain aspects of early Christian monotheism with certain social forces and factors (conceptual, cultic, economic, political, or otherwise) in the ancient world, works of a social-explanatory nature presage yet another category of investigations, social-scientific studies. This relatively new methodological approach to the study of early Christianity has developed, though not as yet matured, among certain scholarly circles in the past several decades.³² Like the social-explanatory approach, advocates of this technique also proceed from careful study of the historical data to some social interpretation or explanation of that data (i.e., an *interpretive* social-description). And they indulge questions and concerns of an explicitly social quality: What are the social causes and consequences of this or that symbol system, cultic activity, relationship, etc.? What broadly differentiates the two methods, however, is the technique used to answer those questions. The social-explanatory method is marked by the emphatic use of historical-critical apparatus for making inferences and drawing deductions of a social nature. Yet for scholars of a social-scientific persuasion the historical-critical method is generally inadequate—or at least not well-equipped—to provide the type of methodologically-coherent solutions (i.e., explanations) required by questions concerned with explicating the

³¹ Garth Fowden’s study (*Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993]), though technically outside the time-frame covered by this thesis—it examines monotheism in Byzantium and Islam—deserves mention as an example of this type.

³² The roots of this relatively-recent trend go back to the types of questions and concerns represented in the German *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, more importantly, to the methodological approaches of the “Chicago School” of the 1910s and 1920s, with the work of Shailer Mathews and Shirley Jackson Case. An important impetus was again provided by E.A. Judge (*The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century* [London: Tyndale, 1960]).

interaction of inter-subjective and structural-objective aspects of human society. Building on the results and factual evidence provided by historical-criticism, they opt rather for a judicious application to the historical data of techniques and theoretical models developed explicitly within the modern social-sciences (e.g., sociology, anthropology, social psychology) in order to better make sense of the interaction of social forces and factors that shaped and were themselves shaped by early Christianity. Key among this type of investigation of early Christian monotheism are two works by Wayne Meeks.³³

In a brilliant study entitled “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,”³⁴ Meeks presents an anthropologically- and sociologically-informed analysis of the social function which the mythic pattern of the descending/ascending heavenly redeemer played within Johannine community.³⁵ Eschewing scholarly attempts at understanding this redeemer motif almost exclusively in terms of conceptual explanation,³⁶ Meeks argues that the solution to explaining this motif and its importance within Johannine literature must come precisely in understanding its origin and social function *qua* myth within the community that formulated it.³⁷ His concern is to shift the interpretive approach away from viewing Johannine literature “as a chapter in the history of *ideas*” and towards “questions in the form, What functions did this particular system of metaphors have for the group that developed it?”³⁸ He takes as his point of departure certain anthropological attempts to arrive at the “function of myths in the societies that create them by means of close analysis of

³³ The publications of Gerd Theissen also deserve special attention as well as John Gager’s impressive *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), which explores the constitutive social symbols of early Christianity and evaluates the emergence of Christianity into the dominant religion of the late empire. For bibliography see Daniel J. Harrington (“Second Testament Exegesis and the Social Sciences: A Bibliography,” *BTB* 18/2 [1988]: 77–85) and David M. May (*Social Scientific Criticism of the New Testament: A Bibliography* [NABPR Bibliographic Series 4; Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1991]).

³⁴ *JBL* 91 (1972): 44–72.

³⁵ Meeks frames the investigation within the context of prior scholarly attempts to understand the relationship between the descending/ascending redeemer motif in Johannine christology and that of some gnostic circles. Though he ultimately “does not attempt a direct answer to that question,” he shifts the issue in such a way as to provide “clues which may be helpful in pursuing that problem” (citations from *ibid.*, 46 et 71, respectively).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 49: “It is astonishing that attempts to solve the Johannine puzzle have almost totally ignored the question of what *social* function the myths may have had.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

their *structure*.”³⁹ By analyzing the underlying mythic structure of descent/ascent in Johannine literature, Meeks believes then that he can project the results by means of analogy to the social function which the mythical pattern of the descending/ascending redeemer performed within the Johannine community.⁴⁰

What Meeks observes literarily is that the motif of descent/ascent in the gospel of John functions to depict Jesus “as the Stranger *par excellence*.”⁴¹ In a positive sense, the mythic pattern presents Jesus, and Jesus alone, as the one who descended and ascended from heaven and *ipso facto* as the *only* one capable of revealing divine truth (i.e., exclusivity concept; cf. John 3:13),⁴² the revelatory content of which is his (self-attested) identity as heavenly redeemer/revealer. In every case the mythic pattern is closely linked with Jesus’ identity,⁴³ yet it functions not to identify him as heroic protagonist—as common in other ancient mythic narratives⁴⁴—but as someone utterly alien, whose identity is freighted with potential for misunderstanding.⁴⁵ At key points in the story, in his discussion with Nathanael “the true Israelite” (1:51), with Nicodemus “the teacher of Israel” (3:11–14), the midrash on the bread from heaven (6:30–31), indeed, wherever the motif of ascent and/or descent occurs, “it is in a context where the primary point of the story is the inability of the men of ‘this world,’ pre-eminently ‘the Jews,’ to understand and accept Jesus.”⁴⁶ Meeks’s engaging discussion of the literary structure of the descent/ascent pattern in John’s gospel ultimately uncovers the dualistic, tensile nature of the christological myth. Far from being the symbol of unity, representing the “union of heaven and earth, the spiritual and the physical, eternity and history, God and man,” as many well-respected commentators have posited, the function of

³⁹ Ibid., 48 et n. 15 (bibliography).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁴¹ Ibid., 50.

⁴² Ibid., 60: “The pattern, descent and ascent, becomes the cipher for Jesus’ unique self-knowledge as well as for his foreignness to the men of this world. His testimony is true *because* he alone knows ‘where I came from and where I am going’ (8:14).”

⁴³ Ibid., 60–61: “The descent and ascent of the Son of Man thus becomes not only the key to his identity and identification, but the primary content of his esoteric knowledge which *distinguishes* him from the men who belong to ‘this world.’” Again, “[T]he identity of Jesus here, as in the other examples of the ascent/descent motif which we have examined, is bound up with the pattern of his coming from heaven and going back there” (*loc. cit.*, 63).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 58.

the mythic pattern of descent/ascent within the literary structure of John suggests “an interpretation diametrically opposed.”⁴⁷ “[I]n every instance,” Meeks observes, “the motif points to contrast, foreignness, division, judgment,”⁴⁸ and, analogously, to a tense, hostile, and alienating social setting.

The gospel of John itself reflects the etiology of the community that created it. The mythic pattern of the descending/ascending redeemer from heaven recapitulates the community’s own story and establishes a pattern of significance to help the group deal with that history.⁴⁹ In the misunderstanding of Jesus’ identity and the progressive rejection and alienation of him by “the world” (i.e., the wider Jewish community) in the Johannine gospel, we see reflected the story of a collective of those who have gathered around the figure of Jesus and who were beginning to understand his identity and identify with him, so as to become themselves alien to this world.⁵⁰ In short “their becoming detached from the world is, in the Gospel, identical with their being detached from Judaism,” no doubt an image of their expulsion from and continued hostility towards the synagogue.⁵¹ The descending/ascending heavenly redeemer figure of John thereby provides a symbolic mechanism by which the Johannine group was able to interpret their social situation as a beleaguered sectarian movement in conflict with the larger Jewish community and by which they could legitimate their own isolated social identity in terms of a cosmic myth.⁵²

In his explanation of social realities by means of *analogy* to mythic structure, one might be tempted to view Meeks as engaged simply in social-explanatory analysis. Yet he consciously appeals to a method outside the scope of historical-critical analysis to make this jump. As noted above he takes his starting point from certain anthropological attempts to understand mythic social function in terms of mythic structure via recognition of mythic signal redundancy (i.e., frequent repetition

⁴⁷ Ibid., 66–67. Cf. “Only within that dominant structure of estrangement and difference is developed the counterpoint of unity—between God and Christ, between God, Christ, and the small group of the faithful.”

⁴⁸ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 68–69: In sum, John “*functions for its readers in precisely the same way that the epiphany of its hero functions within its narratives and dialogues*” (emphasis his).

⁵⁰ “[W]e have in the Johannine literature,” Meeks observes, “a thoroughly dualistic picture: a small group of believers isolated over against ‘the world’ that belongs intrinsically to ‘the things below,’ i.e., to darkness and the devil” (ibid., 68).

⁵¹ Ibid., 69.

⁵² Ibid., 70.

of variations of the basic mythic structure as means of communicating in light of “the overwhelming complexity of the total social matrix”). Neither does he stop with the conclusions gleaned analogously between mythic structure and social *realia*, but he embarks further on a sociologically-informed explanation of his interpretation of the Jesus-figure in the Johannine community. He grounds his analysis of the sectarian, myth-making character of the Johannine community by appeal to the “sociology of knowledge,” particularly in the shape advocated by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.⁵³ It is his specific application of these types of methods which move Meeks out of the social-explanatory format and into the social-scientific realm.

In a book entitled *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, Meeks makes a further contribution to the study of an aspect of early Christian belief in “one God, one Lord.”⁵⁴ He devotes a small section of *First Urban Christians* to understanding and interpreting the social force of monotheistic belief within the Pauline churches,⁵⁵ pursuing his task by asking whether there exist correlations between belief and confession of one God and social forms in the Pauline community. Unfortunately, the brevity with which Meeks treats the subject of monotheism precludes detailed analysis, yet he does a masterful job of highlighting, even if only briefly, the use of monotheism by Paul and the Paulinists as a socially-integrative symbol for their churches.

For our purposes, it suffices to note that Meeks is keen to stress the social-unifying function which results from Christian rites of initiation (baptism) and solidarity (eucharist)—in which confession of “one God, one Lord” figure.⁵⁶ Yet he locates the distinctively social-integrating character of Pauline monotheism not so much in these rituals as in the nature of monotheistic *belief* for the structure of the community. “The one God for the Paulinists is precisely the God of Jews and gentiles together in one community.”⁵⁷ It is this distinctive—neither Jew, nor Greek—quality that supplies the unique socially-unifying character of Pauline monotheism. The belief in one God was formulated by Paul and the Paulinists as

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 70–71.

⁵⁴ (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1983).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 165–70, 190.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 140–63 (passim). “Paul uses the symbolism of the Supper ritual not only to enhance the internal coherence, unity, and equality of the Christian group, but also to protect its boundaries vis-à-vis other kinds of cultic association” (*op. cit.*, 160).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

having necessary moral consequences for the Christian community. Regarding the social and moral correlates of belief in one God and the place of the confession in one God during ritual, it is best to permit Meeks to speak in his own words:

The Pauline Christians believe in one God, sole creator of the universe and ultimate judge of all human actions. In most respects their monotheism is exactly that of Judaism: they worship not the highest God but the only God and regard the deities of other cults as nonexistent or as antigods, demons. Yet they also accord to the crucified and resurrected Messiah, Jesus, some titles and functions that in the Bible and Jewish tradition were attributed only to God. The social correlate is a network of local groups that wants to be a single "assembly of God" in the whole world. The connections among the local cells are, relative to size, much stronger than those among Jewish communities of the Diaspora. Unity is a powerful and constant concern of the leaders, both in the life of the local assemblies and in the connections among them. The local group is intimate and exclusive; it has strong boundaries. At the same time, its members interact routinely with the larger urban society, and both the local group and the leadership collective are vigorously expansive.

The one God of the Christians, as of the Jews, is personal and active. His spirit or, alternatively, the spirit of his Son, acts in, on, and with individual believers and the whole community. The social correlate is the intimacy of the local household assembly. A high level of commitment is demanded, the degree of direct interpersonal engagement is strong, the authority structure is fluid and charismatic (though not exclusively), and internal boundaries are weak (but not untroublesome).⁵⁸

What places Meeks squarely in the social-scientific category is his use of methods and ethnographic techniques from the field of the social-sciences applied to antiquity. And, though he does not consistently make use of any one particular social-scientific method in his interpretation of the Pauline communities, he is, nevertheless, methodologically aware, describing his application of social-scientific methods as "eclectic" and "suggestive, rather than generative in the manner of experimental sciences."⁵⁹ His discussion of patterns of monotheistic belief and practice must be understood as comprising only a small portion of a much broader sociological interpretation of Pauline communities, and Meeks capably navigates the web of theory and historical data to demonstrate the socially-integrative function of monotheism in the Pauline communities.

Before moving to the final heuristic approach we should note that the boundary between social-scientific studies and social-explanatory studies is

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

somewhat fluid. The two are not mutually-prohibitive. Larry Hurtado, for example, does use certain anthropological models in his “social explanation” of early Jesus-devotion. We have not ranged his *Lord Jesus Christ* or *One God, One Lord* among social-scientific studies, however, because proponents of the latter are marked by a more rigorous and sustained application of social-scientific principles and methods than were felt to characterize these works of Hurtado’s. This does not, however, preclude Hurtado from assuming a different approach elsewhere. His article entitled “Religious Experience and Religious Innovation in the New Testament,” for example, fits more readily within the social-scientific approach than the social-explanatory model because of its more rigorous appeal to theoretical models from anthropology.⁶⁰

2.3 Historical-Universalizing Studies

Works in this category distinguish themselves by an overriding concern to draw implications of a social (usually political) nature from the historical data for some wider, more totalizing historical scope (hence “historical-universalizing”). Like their social-explanatory and social-scientific counterparts, historical-universalizing works integrate and explain some aspect(s) of early Christian monotheism with the wider social framework of antiquity. What distinguishes them, however, is the ultimate goal of inquiry, the capacious scope of application, *the broader social purpose(s)* for which the historical data are used. The former techniques are concerned with understanding and explaining the matrix of human social relations and social phenomena *in antiquity*. Historical-universalizing studies, on the other hand, not only integrate the data with the antique life-world but try to achieve more totalizing deductions from that data for some larger, more universal (and usually modern political) context.

In addition to his classic analysis of Christian acclamation *Εἰς Θεός*, Erik Peterson has graced us with another contribution to the study of early Christian belief and social function in his relatively-brief tractate “Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem.”⁶¹ This study, however, reaches beyond the socially-descriptive and mildly

⁶⁰ *JR* 80 (2000): 183–205; cf. “Lord Jesus Christ,” 64–74.

⁶¹ In his *Theologische Traktate* (München: Hochland-Bücherei, 1951): 45–147. “Monotheismus” is largely adapted from two articles previously published by Peterson: “Göttliche Monarchie,” *ThQ* 112 (1931): 537–64, and “Kaiser Augustus im Urteil des antiken Christentums: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie,” in *Hochland* 30 (1932/33) 289–299. There is,

explanatory format evident in *Eἰς Θεός* to investigate—somewhat ambitiously—a larger “metaphysical-political problem.” Peterson’s concern is specifically with identifying the relationship(s) between theology (sc. metaphysics) and politics in antiquity and early Christianity. Yet not just any theology. His focus is the antique concept of divine monarchy—belief in one supreme divine first principle—and how it was related to political forms in antiquity. To this end Peterson traces the reception history of the concept *μοναρχία θεοῦ* in antiquity and Christian history to the Cappadocians.

He first discerns the concept in book twelve of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* in which Aristotle, borrowing a passage from the *Iliad* (2.204f.: οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη, εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω), utilizes a political concept of unity (*politischen Einheitsbegriff*) to conclude his theology. This illustration from the political sphere for the necessity of metaphysical unity in the single first principle represents a “strict monarchism” in which the supreme deity is portrayed in terms of a Homeric warrior.⁶² Peterson cautiously traces modifications of this traditional teaching into the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo*, where God is drafted in terms of the Persian monarch, and particularly to the thought of Alexandrian hellenistic-Judaism, among which Philo is most notable. Philo reinterprets Jewish monotheism into a “cosmic monarchy” by fusing the Jewish God with the monarchic principle of Greek philosophy.⁶³ His portrait of God bears traces of the Persian monarch and the Roman emperor, and he finds the concept of divine monarchy useful as “a political-theological propaganda formula” for pedagogical instruction of Jewish proselytes. It was for Philo ultimately a politically and religiously legitimating concept for the Jewish race, who were in essence priests for the entire human race.⁶⁴ Hence, the

however, a marked contrast in Peterson’s resistance to the possibility of Christian political theology in “Monotheismus” over against his more open stance towards that endeavor in the earlier articles. Rudolf Hartmann (“Die Entstehung des Monotheismus-Aufsatzes,” in Alfred Schindler, ed., *Monotheismus als politisches Problem? Erik Peterson und die Kritik der politischen Theologie* [Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1978] 14–22) has demonstrated how this shift reflects Peterson’s own *Sitz im Leben*.

⁶² The term “monarchy” itself does not appear until Philo.

⁶³ Two modifications were made: God is predicated as Creator and avoidance of polytheistic concept (i.e., officials of the emperor must not be venerated); cf. Hartmann, “Entstehung,” 15.

⁶⁴ Peterson, “Monotheismus,” 54–62. “Der »Monarchie«-Begriff des Alexandrinischen Judentums war letztlich ein politisch-theologischer Begriff, dazu bestimmt, die religiöse Überlegenheit des jüdischen Volkes und seine Sendung an das Heidentum zu begründen” (ibid., 64).

concept of divine monarchy developed into a “political problem”⁶⁵ first in Philo, who shifted it away from the metaphysical inquiry of Aristotelian tradition. From the influence of this “politico-theological propaganda formula,” peculiar to Alexandrian hellenistic-Judaism, the concept of divine monarchy took hold in early Christian apology and heresiology and played an integral role in Christian catechetical instruction and propaganda literature.⁶⁶

From further diachronic survey, Peterson discerns two relational modes between metaphysics of divine monarchy and *Realpolitik* in antiquity.⁶⁷ There are first those who *construct* the metaphysical conception of one God on analogy with a particular manifestation of political monarchy (sc. “construction” approach). Among these may be listed the hellenistic-Jew Philo, the Christian apologists Athenagoras and Tertullian, as well as pagans such as Aristotle, the anonymous author of *De mundo*, Maximus of Tyre, Aelius Aristides, and Celsus.⁶⁸ There are further those that *legitimate* a particular political monarchy through identification with the divine monarchy (sc. “legitimation” approach). Here may be classed Origen and Eusebius. The ideas of the latter had a prolific *Wirkungsgeschichte* in later Christian thinkers, both East and West (cf. John Chrysostom, Ambrosius, Jerome, Orosius). This legitimation endeavor is acutely characteristic of Eusebius’ attempt to interpret the *Pax Augusta* in terms of prophetic fulfillment of OT prophecies regarding *Völkerfrieden* (e.g., Mic 5:4–5). The rise of Augustus (under whose reign Jesus was

⁶⁵ It is not clear what Peterson means by “political problem” (he does not define the term). It appears sometimes that he refers to the political *consequences* or *implications* of divine monarchy as a problem for hellenistic-Jews and Christians, while at other times he seems to indicate that every attempt to link the metaphysic of divine monarchy with political polity presents a theological problem. His lack of referential clarity has been criticized; see *infra* n. 76.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 62ff.

⁶⁷ Cf. Ernst L. Fellechner (“Methode und These Petersons als Spiegel dogmatischer Entscheidungen,” in Schindler, ed., *Monotheismus*, 71–75) for a similar survey. Our analysis differs from Fellechner’s in that we do not believe his third category (sc. construction of polity from metaphysics) constitutes significant enough a part of Peterson’s argument in “Monotheismus” to be distinctly enumerated. The two relational modes which we posit (“construction,” “legitimation”) are evident already in the discussion of the Ps.-Aristotelian *De mundo* (Peterson, *ibid.*, 53): “[T]he final formulation of the unity of a metaphysical world-view is always influenced and predetermined (*mit- und vor-bestimmt*) by the decision for one of the political possibilities of unity (sc. ‘construction’). And yet the other (sc. relation) is immediately clear, that the differentiation of the ‘Power’ [*potestas*, δύναμις] from the ‘Force’ [ἀρχή], which the author of *De mundo* makes, is a metaphysical-political problem. When God is the prerequisite for the fact that there is *potestas* [δύναμις], then the one God becomes the bearer of the *auctoritas*. Then monotheism becomes the principle of the political *auctoritas* (sc. ‘legitimation’).”

⁶⁸ Peterson, *ibid.*, 54–62 (Philo), 70–71 (Athenagoras), 68–73 (Tertullian), 49–50 (Aristotle), 50–54 (Ps.-Aristotle), 71 (Maximus of Tyre, Aelius Aristides), 79–81 (Celsus).

born) ushered in an era of political placidity and the cessation of political pluralism through the unification of the nations under *one* monarch. For Eusebius, this was not only necessary for the spread of the Christian faith, but this historical situation further received a universalizing interpretation as corresponding to a shift away from polytheism to belief in one God. What began under Augustus was secured with Constantine's defeat of Licinius at Milvian Bridge. Constantine stands uniquely related to the one God for Eusebius. By bringing his monarchical rule into correspondence with divine monarchy in a universalizing-historical scheme, Eusebius legitimates imperial rule on the basis of theology. In sum, Peterson gives the impression that the concept of divine monarchy was linked in antiquity with *every* attempt at political theology.⁶⁹

If Peterson had stopped with the preceding analysis, "Monotheismus" might appropriately be considered a prime example of a "social-descriptive" monotheistic study. Yet his final intent is much broader, and what is surprising about the tractate is the evaluative analysis he ascribes to both political-theological modes—construction and legitimation—and his further paradigmatic use of this analysis for the endeavor of modern political theology. Scattered throughout "Monotheismus" one finds various judgments about the validity of the antique Christian political-theological endeavor. We see this most clearly in Peterson's analysis of Tertullian⁷⁰ but also in the political use of divine monarchy by heretical groups such as the Arians.⁷¹ Whenever Christians attempted to build theological patterns of divine monarchy on the basis of *Realpolitik* (i.e., construction), the endeavor ended up (or was quickly subject to ending up) in some heretical christology (e.g., subordinationism, Arianism; cf. Praxeas). Further, when the political circumstances of imperial monarchy were closely linked to the concept of divine monarchy (i.e., legitimation), it would not be long before historical circumstance and political-theological challenges to orthodox trinitarian doctrine from heretical groups (e.g., Arianism) would threaten the entire

⁶⁹ He "politicizes" the concept of "divine monarchy" and moves it into the center of political theology (Hartmann, "Entstehung," 20).

⁷⁰ In his discussion of Tertullian, he opines, "Perhaps the uniformity (*Geschlossenheit*) of the double principate, which permitted a »*participatio imperii*«, had not permitted him to see that it is impossible (*unmöglich*) to simply transfer the secular monarchy concept of pagan theology to the Trinity, which certainly demands its own conceptual development" ("Monotheismus," 73). And again, "Our observations have shown that the first attempts to combine the divine monarchy with the trinitarian-dogma had failed. This is valid for the attempt of Praxeas just as for that of Tertullian" (*ibid.*, 76).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 101–02.

process of political theology in the Roman Empire. Ultimately, neither the drive to legitimate earthly empire through divine monarchy (Origen, Eusebius, Orosius) nor to construct theology on the basis of polity (Aristotle, Ps.-Aristotle) worked, since the concept of divine monarchy when tied to politics (the two were *everywhere* united in antiquity)⁷² was simply incompatible with orthodox doctrine of the trinity. In every case *Christian* attempts to unite the doctrine of divine monarchy with the political sphere failed on theological and historical grounds. Not until after the development of trinitarian dogma at Nicaea did the concept of divine monarchy lose its “political-theological character” in the writings of Gregory Nazianzus.⁷³ After becoming unbound from relations to *Realpolitik*, divine monarchy could finally be reconciled *theologically* (not politically) with orthodox trinitarian doctrine (Gregory of Nazianzus; cf. Dionysius of Rome).

By showing at every stage of its brief history how the political-theological concept of divine monarchy could not be reconciled with the orthodox trinity, Peterson rejects altogether the validity of political theology as a Christian enterprise. In light of the development of trinitarian doctrine at Nicaea, he does not find it tenable for a Christian “political theology” to exist, inasmuch as the mystery of trinitarian doctrine is incompatible with divine monarchy and the latter is *always* equated with political theology in antiquity. He encapsulates this in the conclusion, as follows:

Only on the soil of Judaism or paganism is something like a “political theology” capable of existing. Christian proclamation of the three-in-one God, on the other hand, stands opposite Judaism and paganism, because the mystery of the trinity exists only in the Godhead itself, not in the creation. Even so the peace which Christ seeks is not granted by any emperor, but is alone a gift of the one who “is higher than all reason.”⁷⁴

The final allusion to Philippians 4:7 and the peace of God that “surpasses all reason” grounds his ultimately dogmatic conclusion to this historically-detailed study in the mysterious and hypernoetic revelation of God. There can be *no* concourse between revealed Christian trinitarian doctrine and political theology. The nature of the trinity is ultimately mysterious and not subject to human development as is

⁷² Ibid., 102: “Der Monotheismus ist eine politische Forderung, ein Stück der Reichspolitik.” Theophilus and Dionysius of Rome may be possibly excluded from this analysis (cf. *ibid.*, 65–68; 76–78).

⁷³ Ibid., 102–03.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 105.

political theology. The latter produces *theological* difficulties with orthodox confession. Trinity and divine monarchy can only be resolved *theologically*.

In the end Peterson draws conclusions from his study of antique political theology to inform the present enterprise of Christian “political theology.” He dogmatically employs the various historical trajectories of ancient “political theology” to deny the plausibility of *any* Christian “political theology” after the development of orthodox trinitarian doctrine in the early fourth-century, on the basis that political theology is inconsistent with the divinely-revealed mysterious nature of trinitarian doctrine.⁷⁵ In short, Peterson portrays divine monarchy as *always* having been a political-theological problem in antiquity; further, neither the antique constructing or legitimating political-theological functions of divine monarchy worked because they collided against orthodox trinitarian doctrine! Only by the transmutation of divine monarchy to an exclusively theological concept can it become compatible with orthodox trinitarian doctrine, and only in Gregory does divine monarchy cease being a political-theological problem and becomes an exclusively theological one.

The dogmatic basis of Peterson’s work, his interpretation of historical sources, and his failure to define “political theology” have been criticized.⁷⁶ Yet “Monotheismus” has assumed and still retains an important role in the ongoing discussion of political theology,⁷⁷ and the kinds of sociological questions Peterson asked were foundational to the development of that endeavor. Peterson moved beyond the social-descriptive and sought to demonstrate how political circumstance and ideology *interacted* within early Christianity (sc. social-explanation). Yet he did not stop there. In his dogmatic application of the *social* (here, *realpolitische*) *function* of divine monarchy in early Christianity to deny a comprehensive relationship between trinitarian monotheism and “political theology” in the modern sphere, Peterson engages in a study of monotheism which may ultimately be classed as “historically-universalizing.”

⁷⁵ Ibid., 104–05; cf. Schindler, ed., *Monotheismus*, 9.

⁷⁶ His work has spawned a multi-contributor edited volume in which his controversial positions and his treatment of primary sources are investigated: Schindler, ed., *Monotheismus*. For definitional criticisms, see Fellechner’s contribution to the Schindler volume (“Methode,” 71–75, esp. 71 n. 3); cf. *supra* n. 65. For criticism of his handling of texts, see the discussions of various authors in Schindler (ibid., 23–70).

⁷⁷ Most notably in the school of political theology represented by Jürgen Moltmann and Johann Metz; cf. Frithard Scholz, “Bemerkungen zur Funktion der Peterson-These in der neueren Diskussion um eine Politische Theologie,” in Schindler, ed., *Monotheismus*, 170–201.

One additional work reflects the intersection between monotheism and sociological approaches in early Christianity, Milan Machoveč's *Jesus für Atheisten*.⁷⁸ A committed atheist Marxist, Machoveč evaluates the teachings of Jesus and early Christianity on the basis of their social, political, and moral function—for their “bearing on real human problems.”⁷⁹ He begins by locating the thought-world of Jesus and his first disciples in two principle Jewish religious concerns—monotheism and prophetic-eschatological message (sc. the announcement of a coming future age).⁸⁰ What was distinctive about Jesus was his charismatic moral power⁸¹ and his proclamation of “*the demand which the ‘future age’ makes on men in the present.*”⁸² His teaching was not merely social or political but existential and moral,⁸³ insisting on the totalizing claim⁸⁴ which the vision of the future holds for “inner conversion” at present.⁸⁵ In transforming the future eschatological vision into a quotidian concern for the *individual* subject—every human “I”—Jesus aligns himself precisely with the tradition of Mosaic monotheism, which Machoveč also interprets existentially as a “concern of the subject, of the human ‘I.’”⁸⁶

Long before Jesus Moses introduced an anti-anthropomorphizing program into Hebrew religion. Since God was no longer viewed as acting in human form, a new impetus for specifically *human* action emerged from Mosaic doctrine.⁸⁷ God’s role was subjectivated, relegated to the inner transformation of the individual, shifted

⁷⁸ Published by Kreuz Verlag Stuttgart in 1972 and translated into English as *A Marxist Looks at Jesus* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976). All page references are to the English translation. There is an interesting historical confluence here. Prof. Machoveč organized a seminar in Prague in the early 1960s on Christianity and Marxism at which he crossed paths with the likes of Moltmann and Metz; cf. *supra* n. 77 and Peter Hebblethwaite in the introduction to Machoveč, *A Marxist Looks at Jesus*, 10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 51–73.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 85: “Here one must note that Jesus makes no fundamental distinction between ‘this’ world and the ‘other’ world...,” and again, “But because Jesus and his first disciples did not draw a line between this world and the ‘other’ world, the consequences of his reflections about the Kingdom of God concern this world, with its history, politics, social situations, and the real longings of real men for their earthly future.”

⁸² *Ibid.*, 86; emphasis his.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 104: “[E]verything is subordinated to the all-encompassing and powerful idea of the Kingdom of God with its demands of inner conversion.”

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 57–62, 88, 90.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

to a sphere not “of cosmic and natural events but rather that of human self-awareness, of need, guilt and the possible mission of the man who is thus addressed.”⁸⁸ God, who no longer acts in human form, now speaks and imposes moral norms as an external “Thou” upon the individual “I.”⁸⁹ According to Machoveč this Mosaic move to God as “subject” rather than “object” was essential for the development of existential human individuation (sc. being “wholly at one with oneself”) and the totalizing prophetic-eschatological tradition so necessary a part of Jesus’ own self-understanding.⁹⁰ Insofar as Jesus carried forth this mission there is coincidence with Mosaic monotheism. Jesus’ message thereby represents the synergistic confluence of two ancient Jewish themes—monotheism and prophetic-eschatological message—yet with only one ultimate goal⁹¹—the realization of the individual’s true humanity by inner commitment to the fullness of the present in light of vision of the future age.

When we come to subsequent Christian generations, however, the process of messianic and christological interpretation progressively distorts the meaning of Jesus’ message and ministry. For Machoveč this process is expressed particularly vividly in the gospel of John, in which “the dogmatic basis was prepared for the later complete identification of Jesus with the Godhead as the ‘second divine person’ of the Trinity, while at the same time being truly man.”⁹² The early church—*qua* that movement reflecting “the worship of a divinised Jesus”⁹³—shifts from the purity of Jesus’ humanistic ideal. A different function for monotheism thereby emerges in the early Church than was present in Jesus’ preaching, though this distortion to worship the “God-man” was not *entirely* “without value for man’s self-knowledge, nor was it simply an error, since it opened up (even though in a way which was remote from the Galilean Master himself) possibilities of transcendence, of overcoming the *status quo* and being open to a more demanding future.”⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 61: “[T]he downfall of polytheistic ideas and nature worship is understood in Mosaic monotheism as the defeat of the divinity of ‘things’, and therefore as the downfall of God as an ‘object’. The divine is transferred exclusively to the realm of the subject and is brought into the relations between the higher and lower levels of the ‘self’ and into the ‘I-thou’ relationship.”

⁹⁰ Ibid., 58.

⁹¹ Ibid., 88–90.

⁹² Ibid., 190.

⁹³ Ibid., 193.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 190–91.

From Jesus' continuation of Mosaic monotheism and its humanizing program to the later Church's divinization of Jesus, belief in one God takes a key place in Machoveč's radically humanizing and subjectivized interpretation of monotheism in Jesus and early Christianity.⁹⁵ Belief in one God is not treated as an ideology or a concept *per se* but only with reference to its function as an historical transition point. The move to belief in one God becomes for Machoveč a critical first step in the historical shift away from religion towards human individuation and the humanistic enterprise of self-discovery—an historical step which ultimately and inexorably necessitated the transference of the doctrine of God out of the religious realm into something unreligious, humanistic, and atheistic. Mosaic monotheism conceived humanism—and what a lengthy delivery it was!

It is difficult to evade the feeling that in aligning Mosaic monotheism and Jesus' prophetic-eschatological message as allies in an existential turn towards a *moral* humanism from which the early church more or less departed by divinizing Jesus, we tangibly encounter not Moses or Jesus but Machoveč himself, or rather his own deeply-held humanistic convictions and *Sitz im Leben*, his personal encounters with the violence of Stalinism.⁹⁶ Machoveč crafts a monotheism (and a Jesus) palatable to a Marxist, yet a Jesus with a heart. What more can we expect from a committed atheist who methodologically excludes divine transcendence and reduces everything to a wholly immanent world?⁹⁷ Despite its faults, *Jesus für Atheisten* provides a service in offering a macro-level historical interpretation of monotheism and its role in the life and message of Jesus and the early church. Machoveč's study illustrates the kinds of questions, concerns, and the use of a methodological approach (Marxist humanism) to questions about the function of monotheism in early Christianity.

The studies of Peterson and Machoveč make an interesting comparison. Both link some facet of the social setting of early Christians—for Peterson, the political *Sitz im Leben*; for Machoveč, socio-economic *realia*—to the concept of early Christian monotheism. Yet they are concerned with much more than the social function of monotheism for the life of early Christians, and they do not attempt an

⁹⁵ Despite the relatively small portion (*ibid.*, 57–62) dedicated to the concept of Jewish monotheism in Machoveč's book we are not overstating the role of monotheism (viewed as a crucial turn inexorably leading towards humanism) in Machoveč's presentation.

⁹⁶ Hebblethwaite, in *ibid.*, 8–17.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

explanation of social facts along the lines of the social-explanatory or social-scientific approaches. From their respective interpretations of Christian monotheism Peterson and Machoveč deduce inferences for a more totalizing meta-narrative. Both have modern concerns which their interpretation of historical data serves. Both move from historical data via questions of a social nature to a “universalizing” interpretation. Their interpretations of historical data develop into theological or dogmatic statements so as to become normative for modern society. In Machoveč the entire monotheistic endeavor (viewed as shift towards humanism) justifies the perpetuation of Marxist humanism in the modern era; for Peterson, it vitiates the possibility of Christian political-theology.

2.4 Analysis

Each of these approaches to the study of Christian monotheism has its own distinctive utility. In this section we offer observations on these methods before isolating and explaining the methodological approach of this thesis in the next section. First, ideational-theological approaches, insofar as they heuristically limit the investigation of Christian monotheism to the history of an idea, risk being reductionistic, while social-descriptive studies, though helpful for clarifying social context, offer little real explanatory ability. These approaches are descriptive and scalar. They limit themselves to the presentation and description of conceptual and/or larger socio-religious trajectories and trends related to early Christian monotheism. Neither possesses the explanatory power needed to achieve the *desideratum* of this thesis, elucidation *and* explanation of the social function of the concepts of divine unity and uniqueness in early Christian literature vis-à-vis Jews.

Second, studies of an historical-universalizing type are fraught with perilous methodological difficulties. The reader inevitably casts back his or her own modern biases upon the antique world in order then to draw conclusions for the modern setting. For Peterson, what is ultimately at stake is the relationship of the church and its confessions to *modern* political function. For Machoveč, it is how a materialist-Marxist interpretation of Jesus, as founder of the Western intellectual and spiritual tradition, is morally necessary for the *modern* Marxist atheist to offset the corruptions of violence observed in the Marxist states of his time. All readers project their peculiar interests into readings of ancient texts. Yet there are degrees of violence in this kind of retrojection. Those engaged in the historical-universalizing approach seem particularly prone to abusing ancient texts. This tendency appears

only mildly mitigated when the author is overtly self-aware of his methodology, as in the case of Machoveč.

Third, no empirical sociology of antiquity is possible by virtue of historical distance to our subject. Additionally, all that survives to historian and social-scientist alike are ancient artifacts—epigraphs, literary texts, archaeological remains, certainly not all of which are wholly representative of the actual cross-sections of antique societies.⁹⁸ Yet from this oftentimes sparse, sometimes enigmatic, and frequently non-representative material an attempt must be made not only to identify but to interpret social phenomena in the ancient world. The social-explanatory and social-scientific approaches attempt this. They are prescriptive and vectorial, endeavoring to explicate social phenomena and symbolic systems of thought in terms of interplay among social forces. They deal with the ebb and flow of social processes and generally ask *Grundfragen* along the following lines: How can the emergence or perpetuation of a religious phenomenon be explained in terms of the symbol structures and social matrix within which it came to be embedded? Or, How do we narrate the social function of a religious phenomenon or “symbolic universe” in terms of its interaction with other social forces in the larger social environment?

Yet these latter two approaches posit answers to these questions from slightly different trajectories. Social-explanatory studies attempt explanation from firmly *within* the bounds of historical-critical method. They posit solutions to social questions by means of *analogy with* or *abstraction from* other social, structural, or symbolic forms (cultic, linguistic, etc.) from the wider social matrix within which a phenomenon is embedded. Only *rarely* do advocates of this approach explicitly invoke theoretical anthropological or sociological models to achieve explanation. Works that attempt, for example, to explain the rise of Jesus-devotion in earliest Christianity posit conceptual models based on *analogy* with other preexisting historical and conceptual categories or social symbols and practices. Scholars observe, for example, certain preexisting categories of thought (e.g., hypostatized Wisdom operative at creation) and social practices (e.g., angel-devotion) within early Judaism which bear a particular similitude with early Christian devotion to a second exalted figure alongside the one God. From there they propose various relational links (historico-genetic, conceptual, cultic) between ostensibly similar phenomena in

⁹⁸ We possess a disproportionate amount of ancient Christian literary evidence written by Christian intellectuals, and modern scholars do not always account for epigraphic or archaeological evidence, which provide data from other levels of social and economic status.

order to clarify the social processes by which Jesus-devotion could have arisen within an early-Jewish matrix.

Social-scientific approaches, on the other hand, are explicit in applying theoretical models developed in those fields of study which have as their distinctive interest the explanation of human actions and conceptual development in relation to socio-environmental factors. Meeks interacts in his “Man from Heaven” (§2.2) with “sociology of knowledge” and takes his methodological starting point to the study of John’s gospel from certain anthropological attempts to arrive at the “function of myths in the societies that create them by means of close analysis of their *structure*.”⁹⁹ Yet social-scientific approaches, too, operate *on analogy* and abstraction from one community to another, for they project explanatory models developed through study of *modern* societies and thought onto *ancient* historical data, across wide temporal, cultural, and linguistic gaps.

Both social-explanatory and social-scientific approaches to Christian monotheism are then distinctively positioned to answer questions of a social nature, even while not always navigating the perils of reductionism.¹⁰⁰ On the basis of analogy and abstraction with ancient social structures and/or modern theoretical models they have some measure of explanatory power. In both cases, however, the methodological explanatory ability is directly dependent on the accuracy of prior historical-critical and social-descriptive work. Any explanatory reading of history is only as good as the socio-historical data on which it is based. Interpretive explanations are also only as valid as the level of correspondence between the historical community under investigation and that (antique or modern) community with which the scholar would compare it. In the case of social-scientific studies, there is a further danger, the relative accuracy or inaccuracy of the modern theoretical model employed.

⁹⁹ *Supra* n. 39.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Thomas F. Best, “The Sociological Study of the New Testament: Promise and Peril of a New Discipline,” *SJT* 36 (1983): 181–94. There is no fool-proof means of answering historical questions of a social-functional nature, neither by the historical-critical method nor by social-scientific methods. Both tend towards reductionism, describing the nature and interplay of social processes in terms of mechanistic categories which exclude *a priori* the possibility of religious transcendence; they are completely immanent, “this-worldly,” and allow for little possibility of transcendent otherness in religious experience (Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998] 12–26). Yet both have played a formative role in the history of scholarly explanation and interpretation of early Christian monotheism and are necessary approaches to furthering our understanding of the religion of “one God, one Lord.”

The present thesis shares affinities with both social-explanatory and social-scientific models. As previously noted, this study argues that during the second century Christians actively engaged rhetoric and symbols of monotheism in diverse literary strategies as a powerful ideological tool for resisting, repositioning, and rereading Judaism and Jewish traditions in order to shape their own peculiar collective identity. The present study is social-explanatory. We rigorously examine the concepts of divine unity and uniqueness as they were employed vis-à-vis Jews within certain second-century Christian writings. This requires tools and techniques of an historical-critical nature, especially literary analysis.¹⁰¹ And we provide an interpretation for understanding how the idea of one God alone actually functioned socially as a symbol system among early Christian groups. Our approach further lies along the border with social-scientific methods. The explanation we provide of second-century Christian monotheism vis-à-vis Judaism represents a conscious interpretation of the data in terms of identity construction, a burgeoning area of social-studies.¹⁰² Similar to Meeks in his “Man from Heaven,” we utilize close literary analysis of six second-century Christian monotheistic texts (Ignatius’ *Philadelphians*, *Magnesians*; *Kerygma Petrou*; Aristides’ *Apology*; Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*; Aristo of Pella’s *Disputation of Jason and Papiscus*) as a pathway to understand a community’s mythic and symbolic thought structures. By identifying and analyzing monotheistic modes of discursive reasoning within several second-century Christian texts, we uncover the functionality of these patterns of thought vis-à-vis Judaism. We suggest that the function of these monotheistic ideologies expressed textually is best interpreted as a conscious Christian exercise in forming the meaning of Christianness itself vis-à-vis Judaism. We are not familiar with any attempt to-date to produce a broader interpretation of second-century Christian monotheism in terms of identity construction. This thesis fills that void.

¹⁰¹ Literary analysis has emerged as a field of study in its own right. We catalogue it here under historical-critical studies because it relies on techniques of close-textual analysis earlier developed and still prominent within historical-critical methodology.

¹⁰² As evidenced, e.g., by a recent conference at the University of Manchester on this very subject: “Identity Formation: Modern Languages Postgraduate Conference” in the School of Languages, Linguistics, and Cultures (April 4, 2007). The editors of *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, interestingly, included three summary chapters entitled “Articulating identity” at the end of each section of their overview of Christian literature (Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth, eds., *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* [Cambridge: University Press, 2004] chs. 8, 18, 38).

3. Monotheistic Textual Strategies in the Shaping of Christian Identities

We have described our approach as a process of uncovering a series of *textual* strategies designed to shape specifically “Christian” identities (vis-à-vis Jewishness) in monotheistic directions. This formulation is not self-evident. The supposition that texts both construct *and* influence identities raises concerns that require theoretical justification. In this section we construct a theoretical interpretive model that helps locate our investigation within a larger framework of the study of Jewish and Christian relations in late antiquity (§3.1) and of the role of discourses, and especially textual ones, in the construction of Jewish and Christian cultural identities (§3.2).

3.1 Shifting Paradigms for Jewish-Christian Relations in Late Antiquity

Recent years have witnessed the beginnings of a monumental paradigm shift in how scholars describe Christian and Jewish relations in late antiquity and, as a correlate, how they understand the role played by textual discourse within that complicated relationship. Scholars have for some time been accustomed to speak of an early and discrete “Parting of the Ways” between Judaism and Christianity.¹⁰³ Under this paradigm, some pivotal historic occasion(s)¹⁰⁴ catastrophically precipitated a final and lasting separation between Judaism and Christianity sometime in the first or early second century. Whatever social ambiguities and interactions may have existed between Jews and Christians prior to this historic rupture were now past. In their place, relatively stable, fixed boundaries fossilized between the two “religions.” According to earlier versions of this paradigm,

¹⁰³ Though the roots of the idea are earlier, the “Parting of the Ways” was popularized by the British clergyman James Parkes (“The Parting of the Ways,” in *The Conflict of the Church and Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Anti-Semitism* [London: Soncino, 1934] ch. 3). Marcel Simon reinforces the major lineaments of the traditional paradigm in his classic *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (AD 135–425)* (trans. H. McKeating; The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization; New York: Oxford University Press, repr. 1996) ix–xviii, 3–97.

¹⁰⁴ Various historical events are customarily postulated as momentous in crystallizing an early break between Christianity and Judaism: Christian flight from Jerusalem to Pella prior to the destruction of the Jewish temple (70 CE), Nerva’s imposition of the *fiscus Judaicus* (96 CE), the Trajanic revolts (115–117 CE), and the Bar Khokhba revolt (135 CE). To these the Birkat Ha-Minim (read as a curse against Christians) is often adduced as corollary evidence of an early definitive separation.

normative, first-century Judaism—identified either with the Pharasaic sect or conceived as an abstract reification of commonalities shared among various Jewish sects¹⁰⁵—continued on in the form of rabbinic Judaism. This normative Judaism was the “mother” religion from which proto-orthodox Christianity emerged as a separate “daughter” religion.¹⁰⁶ Another approach, recognizing the profound complexity and variety of first-century Judaisms, invokes a different kinship metaphor. These scholars envision Christianity and Judaism in the image of twin siblings.¹⁰⁷ According to this metaphor, out of the great mass of first-century Jewish sects, rabbinic Judaism and proto-orthodox Christianity survived the cataclysm of the Jewish Wars to emerge simultaneously as brother religions from the same mother.¹⁰⁸ The image of twins has a certain advantage for capturing some of the complexities of Jewish and Christian relations in antiquity as well as their shared heritage. Yet the sibling metaphor still portrays Judaism and Christianity as entirely autonomous entities from the moment of birth.¹⁰⁹ In either case, once the two religions were formed, further contact between the two, though rare, was characterized almost entirely by polemic and dispute over who was the rightful heir of first-century Judaism.¹¹⁰ From the historic point of fracture, (rabbinic) Judaism and (proto-orthodox) Christianity continued to develop along entirely divergent paths in relative isolation from one another.

The traditional, value-laden¹¹¹ “Parting of the Ways” model remains

¹⁰⁵ On this, see Philip S. Alexander, “‘The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” in James D.G. Dunn, ed., *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135. The Second Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism* (WUNT 66; Mohr [Siebeck], 1992; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 2–3.

¹⁰⁶ On kinship metaphors, see esp. Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 1–6.

¹⁰⁷ E.g., Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca’s Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

¹⁰⁸ Martin Goodman presents this paradigm graphically in his “Modeling the ‘Parting of the Ways’” in Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 121 (Figure 1).

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Boyarin, a chief architect of the interpretive paradigm shift noted above, proposes that we abandon such kinship metaphors altogether because of “the kinds of organic entities and absolute separations” they imply (*Dying for God*, 8).

¹¹⁰ Some Christians, for example, argued that they were the true Israel (cf. Justin, *Dial.* 11.5). For some Jews, if we may invoke Celsus’ Jew, Christians had apostatized or revolted against their ancient (Jewish) traditions (in Origen, *Cels.* 2.1; 3.5; 5.33).

¹¹¹ See Judith Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways’: Theological Construct or Historical Reality?” *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101–19.

popular,¹¹² yet it has not gone entirely unchallenged. Increasingly dissatisfied with what they perceive as the model's heuristic shortcomings and incongruities with archaeological and textual evidence, many scholars in recent years have called for a dismantling of the "Parting of the Ways" approach.¹¹³ Some have even posited new sets of descriptive models in its place.¹¹⁴ While these scholars do recognize certain early historical events, such as the destruction of the Temple and the Bar Khokhba revolt, as important moments in shaping Jewish and Christian identities, they do not regard these as definitive fracture points that would have caused a universal, early, and distinct separation between "Judaism" and "Christianity" as separate religions.¹¹⁵ They prefer rather to push back the date of a much more-definitive and distinct separation between rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity to the fourth century (or even later) when orthodox Christianity gained hegemony in the Empire.¹¹⁶ According to advocates of this approach, Christians and Jews were engaged in a much longer, more profound history of cultural disentanglement than the traditional "Parting of the Ways" model would allow. And rather than speak of early Christianity and Judaism as separate "religions," these scholars refer to them as

¹¹² E.g., Richard Bauckham, "The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why," *Studia Theologica* 47 (1993): 135–51; Vincent Martin, *A House Divided: The Parting of the Ways Between Synagogue and Church* (Studies in Judaism and Christianity; New York: Paulist Press, 1995); Segal, *Rebecca's Children*.

¹¹³ See, *inter alia*, Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions," in eadem, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted*, 1–24, and the contributions in *ibid.*; Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways,'" and Alexander, "'The Parting of the Ways.'"

¹¹⁴ Cf. Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 1–16; *idem*, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

¹¹⁵ On the difficulty with contrasting Judaism and Christianity as religions, see Daniel Boyarin, "Semantic Differences; or, 'Judaism'/'Christianity,'" in Becker and Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted*, 65–85; *idem*, *Border Lines*, 8. *Ioudaismos* appears in Jewish sources first as an ethnic, political, or cultural term (Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* [Berkeley; Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999] 105–06), and the label "Judaism" as a religion is itself a Christian adaptation.

¹¹⁶ Rosemary Radford Ruether ("Judaism and Christianity: Two Fourth-Century Religions," *Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion* 2 [1972]: 1–10) and Jacob Neusner (*Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine: History, Messiah, Israel, and the Initial Confrontation* [Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1987] ix; cf. "Why Judaism Won the Fourth Century as the True First Century in the History of the Judaic and Christian West," in *Major Trends in Formative Judaism. Third Series: The Three Stages in the Formation of Judaism* [Brown Judaic Studies 99; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985] 77–85) acknowledge the fourth century as definitively formative for separate Jewish and Christian identities. Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed suggest "that Jews and Christians (or at least the elites among them) may have been engaged in the task of 'parting' throughout Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, *precisely because* the two never really 'parted' during that period with the degree of decisiveness or finality needed to render either tradition irrelevant to the self-definition of the other, or even to make participation in both an unattractive or inconceivable option" ("Introduction," 23).

complexly intertwining “cultures,” “conversations,” or “dialogues.”¹¹⁷ The shift in terminology is not insignificant. The latter terms offer a helpful corrective to the traditional “Parting of the Ways” model, precisely because they focus on elements both of convergence *and* divergence and on the interactive nature of relations between Jews and Christians throughout late antiquity. Complex interdependencies accompanied the long process of separation, not the least of which was the relation to their shared cultural heritage, the biblical texts.¹¹⁸ In this new picture, scholars are more apt to see parallel cultural discourses and fuzzy boundaries of identity.¹¹⁹ This way of viewing things opens up possibilities for Christian culture to influence developing rabbinic culture, and vice versa, in a way not envisioned by the earlier paradigm.

3.2 Theoretical Model: (Textual) Discourses and the Making of Jewish and Christian Cultural Identities

The shift in metaphors from “religion” to “cultures” and “conversations” is heuristically helpful. It broadens our definitions of Christianity and Judaism out of the narrower confines of strictly religious movements into the more complex image of cultural systems that inhabit shared spaces.¹²⁰ The metaphor of cultures, in particular, recalls the fluid nature of cultural identities and the fuzziness of cultural boundaries. Identities are constantly claimed and then reclaimed, negotiated and then renegotiated. The process of creating discrete Jewish and Christian cultures was much longer and much messier than traditionally recognized and involved various processes of cultural differentiation and convergence. These concepts are all too

¹¹⁷ Daniel Boyarin prefers to speak not of two “religions” but of two “conversations” (*Dying for God*, 11). Similarly, Galit Hasan-Rokem examines “interaction between cultures in terms of dialogue rather than ‘influence’” (“Narratives in Dialogue: A Folk Literary Perspective on Interreligious Contacts in the Holy Land in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity,” in Guy G. Stroumsa and Arieh Kofsky, eds., *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land. First-Fifteenth Centuries CE* [Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1998] 127; cited in Boyarin, *ibid.*, 10); cf. also the studies in Marc G. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (trans. Batya Stein; SUNY Series in Judaica: Hermeneutics, Mysticism, and Religion; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

¹¹⁸ Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Hirshman, *ibid.*; Boyarin, *Border Lines*.

¹¹⁹ See the essays in Judith Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2002, repr. 2005).

¹²⁰ This is not to suggest that there were not in various locales more or less clearly demarcated cultural identities in place that delineated Jewish from Christian. See *infra* n. 125.

easily lost in the traditional “Parting of the Ways” model. Another insight to be gained by this paradigm shift is the value of discursive processes in the articulation of cultural difference and sameness and in the delineation of cultural systems. This builds on insights from cultural anthropology in which identities can be regarded as being both reflected and formed through the discourses that societies create.¹²¹ Discursive processes lie at the vanguard of the formation, negotiation, and articulation of cultural identities.

With these insights about cultural discourses and identities in mind, we propose the following working model in order to situate the argument of this thesis within a broader framework of Jewish-Christian relations and of discursive strategies of identity. For the first four centuries CE, Jews and Christians shared a cultural heritage marked by various traditional symbols (scripture, circumcision, sabbath, belief in one God, etc.). Within this overarching Judeo-Christian culture, individuals and local communities occupied positions along a continuum of sub-cultural identities, from non-Christian Jew, Christian Jew, Jewish Christian, and non-Jewish Christian. The identities of individual Judeo-Christian communities were shaped and reshaped through the discursive processes they themselves continued to reassert as culturally significant, whether through their mythic structures, ritual systems, classification schema, or oral and textual articulations.¹²² Localized communities would ascribe (and reascribe) to themselves a given identity relative to other groups of self-styled Jews and Christians by creating various patterns of discourse in relation to traditional Judeo-Christian symbols.

¹²¹ Bruce Lincoln, in particular, offers interesting examples in his *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹²² Averil Cameron demonstrates that the emergence of Christian culture in the fourth century took place largely because of the Christian ability to create meaningful discourses in relation to wider Graeco-Roman cultural discourses (*Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* [Sather Classical Lectures 55; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991]; cf. Keith Hopkins, “Conquest by book,” in Mary Beard, Alan K. Bowman et al., *Literacy in the Roman world* [Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 3; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 1991] 133–58). Frances Young demonstrates the same with respect to Christianity’s Jewish heritage by appealing to discursive patterns of biblical exegesis (*Biblical Exegesis*). Daniel Boyarin has made a case that rabbinic Judaism gained hegemony in the fourth century as the dominant form of Judaism largely through discursive process (*Border Lines*). The theory of how communities construct their world through verbal and symbolic actions is explained in Peter L. Berger (*The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967] and *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* [New York; London: Doubleday, 1967; repr. 1990]).

We suggest then that second-century (i.e., in our period of interest) Judeo-Christian culture comprised complexes or webs of localized “discursive communities” in contact through various interlocking discursive systems of convergence and divergence from one another.¹²³ All engaged in the negotiation of distinctive identities through their patterns of discourse. Many (if not most) Judeo-Christian communities remained quite complexly intertwined and their discourses could overlap in surprising ways,¹²⁴ though there were individuals and communities for whom Jewish or Christian cultural identities were sharply differentiated.¹²⁵ In a given locale, one community of Christ-followers may have condoned circumcision and placed preeminent importance on observing Sabbath and would have understood itself through its patterns of discourse in important ways as both “Christian” and “Jewish.” This same group, one might imagine, may have had contact with other self-styled “Jews” (individuals or groups) that nevertheless recognized in Jesus an important personage, though not the Messiah. Identities were often blurred “on the ground.”

Movement towards disentangling Judeo-Christian culture was not the inexorable process of disinterested spectators, but an active engagement by the rabbis and élite among the church to establish different discourses¹²⁶ and, in the case of many Christians, to differentiate Jewish from Christian identities.¹²⁷ This is particularly the case in the second century, when both rabbinic Judaism and proto-orthodox Christianity were engaged in parallel attempts to create orthodoxies, as Daniel Boyarin has demonstrated.¹²⁸ The process of differentiation into two clearly demarcated cultural identities, Judaism and Christianity, occurred with some finality

¹²³ This is not much different from the image of waves invoked by Boyarin (*Dying for God*, 7–16). While Alexander’s model of circles is broadly helpful, it is much too simplistic (“The Parting of the Ways,” 2).

¹²⁴ As, e.g., in the practice of the Quartodecimani, Christians who depended on Jewish pronouncements concerning the date of Passover.

¹²⁵ As, e.g., among the second-century followers of Marcion, who completely rejected the “Jewishness” of Christianity.

¹²⁶ See *supra* n. 122.

¹²⁷ Discursive juxtapositions of “Christian” and “Jewish” were a Christian endeavor; for the rabbis, the *minim* were the object of contrast.

¹²⁸ *Border Lines*. According to Boyarin, the process was eventually abandoned by the rabbis in favor of ever-widening discourses of inclusivity, so that rabbinic Judaism ultimately rejected attempts at creating itself in terms of a religion.

in the fourth century at the earliest.¹²⁹ Only then did the alternative discourses of rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity gain hegemony in the majority of local communities. Those who had fought so hard to voice separate identities for their communities had finally succeeded. Rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity emerged as the two dominant cultural forms out of the shared Judeo-Christian heritage that had characterized earlier centuries. The long period of disentanglement may thus be imagined as a story about various localized negotiations of Jewish and Christian identities through a congeries of discursive strategies. The eventual cultural separation between Jewish and Christian brothers was due in no small part to the success of their alternative discourses.

And one of the very distinctive features about the Judeo-Christian cultural tradition in late antiquity is that many of the discourse strategies described above as having given rise to Jewish and Christian cultures were so often encoded as specifically *textual* strategies.¹³⁰ Our intertwining “discursive communities” were, even more narrowly, “textual communities.”¹³¹ Their corporate lives centered in so many ways around texts, their production, distribution, and circulation.¹³² Their collective identities were constructed on the basis of the particular texts they created,

¹²⁹ *Supra* n. 116. Even into the fourth century (and beyond) there existed various permutations of significant convergence in cultural identities (as John Chrysostom was painfully aware; cf. also John S. Crawford, “Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in Late-Antique Sardis,” in Steven Fine, ed., *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural interaction during the Greco-Roman period* [London; New York: Routledge, 1999] 190–200), even as there had existed significant cultural divergences as early as the first and second centuries. Yet from the point of Christianity’s ascendancy in the empire, more permanent and definitive separations of Jewish and Christian cultural identities reified into two largely separate cultures—a “Parting of the Ways.”

¹³⁰ While Mary Beard rightly emphasizes the often undervalued role of writing in pagan religion (Mary Beard, “Writing and religion: *Ancient Literacy* and the function of the written word in Roman religion,” in idem et al., *Literacy in the Roman world*, 35–58), there remain noticeable differences between Judeo-Christian traditions and those of the broader Graeco-Roman religions as regards the value of texts and writing in general. Cf. Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1995) 18; John F.A. Sawyer, *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts* [London; New York: Routledge, 1999] 60.

¹³¹ The phrase is borrowed from Brian Stock (*The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983]; “Textual Communities: Judaism, Christianity, and the Definitional Problem,” in idem, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* [Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990] 140–158). By “texts,” Stock intends texts “physical and mental” (“Textual Communities,” 146). Though he developed the phrase to help interpret certain communities in Medieval Europe, he acknowledges its usefulness (with modifications) for Jewish and Christian communities in late antiquity.

¹³² See esp. Gamble, *Books and Readers*.

transmitted, read, wrote, and lived out,¹³³ and this despite the fact that many in these communities would have been illiterate or only semi-literate.¹³⁴ Texts were, after all, read aloud.¹³⁵ Regarding such textual communities, Brian Stock explains:

Wherever there are texts that are read aloud or silently, there are groups of listeners that can potentially profit from them. A natural process of education takes place within the group, and, if the force of the word is strong enough, it can supersede the differing economic and social backgrounds of the participants, welding them, for a time at least, into a unit. In other words, the people who enter the group are not precisely the same as those who come out. Something has happened and this experience affects their relations both with other members and with those in the outside world.¹³⁶

And because Judaism and Christianity were more particularly communities for whom ethics played an important role, “reading is an endowing of principles with values for life situations.”¹³⁷ These communities not only read texts; they produced them. To accommodate their literary production, Christians even appear to have adopted a form of textual production, the codex, quite distinct from popular bibliographic convention among Jews and pagans, the roll.¹³⁸ Texts, both sacred and convenient, acquired positions of prominence in these communities.¹³⁹

¹³³ Stock elaborates, “We can think of a textual community as a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organization. It is an interpretive community, but it is also a social entity” (“Textual Communities,” 150), and again, “We can say that the members of such a community will, intend, project, and shape their futures” (ibid., 152). Cf. Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, “Literacy and power in the ancient world,” in *idem*, eds., *Literacy and power in the ancient world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 13.

¹³⁴ As Robin Lane Fox sagely observes, “Many Christians came from a social class and a sex (female) where literacy would be least widespread, yet as Christians they had sacred texts of the utmost authority and value which were important to their own identity” (“Literacy and power in early Christianity,” in Bowman and Woolf, eds., *Literacy and power*, 128). The majority of Christians (as with all ancients) were illiterate or only semi-literate. William Harris estimates adult male literacy at 10 percent in the 2nd c. BCE (*Ancient Literacy* [Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1989] 173, 272); he is followed by Gamble (*Books and Readers*, 5).

¹³⁵ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 8: “It may seem paradoxical to say both that Christianity placed a high value on texts and that most Christians were unable to read, but in the ancient world this was no consideration.”

¹³⁶ Stock, “Textual Communities,” 150.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹³⁸ On the codex see Colin H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat (*The Birth of the Codex* [London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1983]), Gamble (*Books and Readers*, 49–66), and, more recently, Larry Hurtado (*The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* [Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006]).

¹³⁹ While the importance of oral traditions, particularly about Jesus, continued into the second century (cf. Papias [c. 125 CE; in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39], though note the cautionary comments of Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 30–32), it gradually receded.

To a large extent this emphasis on textuality can be attributed to the role which scripture played already in first-century Judeo-Christian culture from which both rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity would later take shape. Christians inherited a faith “of the book,” early adopting as their own the sacred scriptures of the Jews in Greek form (LXX). Intertextuality and traditions of rewritten scripture permeate Christian texts.¹⁴⁰ Christian discourse was biblically informed and shaped the Christian culture that emerged in the third and later centuries,¹⁴¹ and rabbinic textualizations of oral Torah emerged with significant intertextual connections to written Torah. The importance of scripture within the Judeo-Christian tradition hardly requires elaboration.

The significance of Christianity’s other literature does, however, need to be observed. In her recent work, Averil Cameron has shown how other, extra-biblical texts functioned as highly significant in shaping an emerging Christian discourse (and thus culture) in the second and later centuries.¹⁴² *Martyr Acts* and *Lives of Saints* assumed the character of sacred literature, functioning alongside scripture in authoritative ways in the development of what it meant to participate in Christian culture. The importance of texts and textuality for emerging Christianity also helps explain why the battleground for early Christian doctrine was so frequently worked out through texts, which became the field of contestation. Early Christian communities (at least those which we treat) were loci where issues of social world-construction met with a belief in texts as the place where such creative activity of identity construction takes place. Christian and Jewish communities inhabited a common Judeo-Christian culture which valued textuality as a tool for expressing and shaping collective identity.

It is interesting to observe that to a large extent the momentous paradigm shift in Jewish-Christian relations signaled here has taken place because of new ways of reading textual evidence.¹⁴³ Scholars have too often been complicit in the

¹⁴⁰ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 27–61.

¹⁴¹ See particularly Frances Young, *Biblical exegesis*.

¹⁴² Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*.

¹⁴³ We do not wish to downplay the critical contribution which archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence has made in this reevaluation. On this see, L. Michael White with E.M. Meyers, “Jews and Christians in a Roman World,” *Archaeology* 42:2 (1989): 26–33; Leonard Victor Rutgers, “Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and non-Jews in Antiquity,” *AJA* 96 (1992): 101–18; F. Millar, “The Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora between Paganism and

narratives which orthodox Christians and rabbinic Jews themselves created through their texts and which would seem to indicate an early and distinct separation between Jews and Christians.¹⁴⁴ The “Parting of the Ways” model, in large part, emerges from straightforward readings “with the grain” of our earliest textual evidence. Yet texts are not as straightforward as they first appear, as scholars are increasingly aware.¹⁴⁵ They often hide and complicate historical realities, frequently present alternative visions and interpretations of Christian and Jewish relations, and present constructed realities. The “rhetoric” of the text does not always imitate (quite often it contradicts) historical “reality.” At their most innocent, texts attempt mimetic imitation. Yet mimetic representation is still representation, and such texts give us only a partial image of the “real” world. More violently, they attempt to overturn received conventions or behaviors, to impose or affect new, alternative realities and identities. Reading “against the grain” of the text to uncover these strategies has yielded productive insights that have resulted in increased awareness of the complexity of Christian and Jewish interactions and identities in antiquity. Deconstruction of texts has gone hand in hand with deconstruction of the “Parting of the Ways” paradigm.

If, as we argue, texts act as vehicles for voicing identity in Judeo-Christian textual communities, then we must also note that they voice a particular construction of identity. Each of our six texts refers to Christians/Christianity, Jews/Judaism, and the concept of “one God,” and sets these in some constructed relation to one another. They present an *image* of what it means to be “Jewish” and what it means to be “Christian” and what it means to believe in “one God.” In every case appeal in the text to some constructed idea of “one God” represents a power bid¹⁴⁶ at creating (or reestablishing) an equally constructed identities of “Christian” and “Jew.” Recognition that our texts engage in acts of power raises the possibility that the textual identities they create may run counter to prevailing communal identities and that these texts may seek to shape the latter in a different direction. Some of our texts may contest existing identities. Yet some of them may just as well reinforce and

Christianity, AD 312–438,” in Judith Lieu, John North, and Tessa Rajak, eds., *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians* (London: Routledge, 1992) 97–123.

¹⁴⁴ Boyarin speaks of “a kind of general collusion between Jewish and Christian scholars (as earlier between the Rabbis and the Doctors of the Church) to insist on this total lack of contact and interaction [between Judaism and Christianity], each group for its own reasons” (*Dying for God*, 7).

¹⁴⁵ On this theme generally see Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

¹⁴⁶ Bowman and Woolf, “Literacy and power.”

rearticulate existing communal identities. In our readings, we must therefore be sensitive to the nature of Jewish, Christian, and monotheistic identities being created, sustained, or overturned by these texts.

With this theoretical model we may gain an appreciation for how texts were an important mode in early Christianity for voicing discursive strategies that played a part in the emergence of a distinctive Christian culture vis-à-vis a Jewish culture. Within the web of textual communities that characterized the Judeo-Christian tradition in the second century, textual discourses and strategies were a significant factor in the staking out of various cultural identities. Emerging Judaism and Christianity comprised webs of textual communities where the unique intersection of textuality and discursive processes of communal identity were operative. These processes invoked a variety of symbols from broader Judeo-Christian culture, one of which was the idea of belief in “one God.” It is this monotheistic sub-discourse that we investigate for the second-century in this thesis.

4. Chapter Overview

In this chapter we framed the heuristic questions that direct our inquiry (§1). Antique religions—and society in general—were permeated with concern for belief and cultic reverence of the divine couched in terms of unity and plurality. Within that context Christian cultic devotion to Jesus presented a *tertium quid* alongside traditionally recognized forms of pagan and Jewish cult. It was bound to raise ideological and social problems with Jews and pagans alike. In this thesis we examine the Christian–Jewish aspect of this complex religious atmosphere, focusing on how ideas of divine unity and uniqueness gave shape to second-century Christian identities vis-à-vis Judaism. In section two we arranged key scholarly studies on various aspects of Christian monotheism in terms of methodological approach. We identified five such trajectories. In the third section we posited a theoretical paradigm that integrated textual discourses about the one God within a larger narrative of emerging Jewish and Christian cultural identities in late antiquity. The remainder of this thesis is dedicated to elucidating the functions which concepts of divine unity and uniqueness served within the “social world” of early Christianity as it relates to Jews during the second century.

To speak of Christianity’s “social world” is ambiguous and subject to two interpretations. The first envisions the social environment within which Christian

worship of “one God, one Lord” arose and spread—the factors and forces external to Christianity yet which however haphazardly, surreptitiously, forcefully, or otherwise influenced and interpenetrated the religion of Christ-followers. This “world” is the social context, the great diversity of Graeco-Roman religions, occupied by various Jewish religious communities as well as traditional and oriental cults dedicated to pagan deities. It is a context within which second-century Christianity was a minor (relatively unnoticed) sectarian religious movement.¹⁴⁷ Chapter Two recreates in part this “social world” in which seemingly miniscule Christian conclaves and communities emerged and operated. We engage in social description of Jewish religion, examining not what Christians reported or claimed about Jews, but what Jewish texts and artifacts themselves say about the prominence of symbols of divine unity and uniqueness in Jewish communities.¹⁴⁸ We examine the pre-eminence of divine unity and exclusivity *rhetoric* and exclusive *cultic* devotion to one God in Jewish religion, arguing that in the latter half of the early Jewish period (ca. 167 BCE–70 CE) Jews generally asserted an “exclusivist monotheistic” religious stance (§2). Rabbinic Judaism in no way vitiated the place of exclusivist monotheism, as evidenced by the rabbis’ growing anxiety and opposition to teachers of “two powers in heaven” (§3). The presence of the latter attests lively intramural Jewish debate over the nature of belief in “one God” between the rabbis and certain para-rabbinic traditions. Among many diaspora Jews cultic worship of the Most High God also manifests an exclusivist monotheistic penchant not comparably attested in the inclusivist monotheism of pagan worship of the Most High God (§4). Though not the only identifiable marker of Jewishness, belief in and worship of one God alone was a *sine qua non* for most Jewish communities of what it meant to be “Jewish.” Exclusivist monotheism is arguably *the* central tenant of Jewish faith. In its earliest decades and into the second century, Christianity was indebted often quite directly to early Jewish texts, traditions, symbols, and ideologies of exclusivist monotheism for its belief in one God as well as the rhetoric of uniqueness and unity that expresses that monotheism (§5). Because belief in one God was so crucial an identity marker

¹⁴⁷ Note the careful qualifications to “sectarianism” as a descriptive category for early Christianity by L. Michael White (“Shifting Sectarian Boundaries in Early Christianity,” *BJRL* 70 [1988]: 7–24).

¹⁴⁸ By almost entirely avoiding Christian sources in Chapter Two a description of socio-religious facts about divine unity and exclusivity in the larger religious environment may be established, while simultaneously obtaining a level of abstraction from the inter-subjective “socially-constructed world” of early Christian experience.

for both Jews *and* Christians, it represents a promising area of study in early Christian-Jewish relations.

Christianity's "social world" may also refer to that matrix of symbols which Christians themselves constructed and projected, and which reflexed back upon them via their symbol-specific structures and rituals. This is "the world as they perceived it and to which they gave form and significance through their special language and other meaningful actions."¹⁴⁹ In Chapters Three through Five, we examine how Christian sources utilize monotheistic concepts to shape the meaning of Christianness vis-à-vis Jewishness.¹⁵⁰ We investigate strategic uses of monotheistic concepts in early Christian literature, looking specifically for contexts where Jews are in view. These chapters broadly organize the diverse contexts and manners in which Christians utilized monotheistic concepts in their thinking about Jews. Yet they also interpret that process. Monotheism played an important role in three broad trajectories of second-century Christian self-definition vis-à-vis Judaism. We envision these monotheistic "trajectories" as part of a strategic process of Christian resistance, repositioning, and rereading of traditionally "Jewish" symbols and texts *for the purpose of* creating a distinctive sense of what it means to be "Christian."

A first trajectory in the monotheistic shaping of Christian identity appears in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch (ch. 3). The literary shaping of *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* reveals that for Ignatius what fundamentally distinguishes "Judaism" and "Christianism" is not monotheism but their respective response to the revelation of God through Jesus in the gospel. And, he believes, the anti-gospel influence of "Judaism" manifests itself operationally within the "Christian" church at Philadelphia through certain patterns of scriptural interpretation and at the church in Magnesia through cultic observance of sabbath rather than the Lord's Day. It is then the gospel, not monotheism *per se*, that Ignatius uses as a tool for indexing difference between "Judaism" and "Christianism." Monotheism (specifically divine unity) he invokes, rather, as a powerful weapon for resisting threatening "Jewish" influence *within* the cultic practices of the "Christian" churches at Philadelphia and Magnesia. He appeals to social harmony based in the unity of God and mediated sacramentally.

¹⁴⁹ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Pagan and Jewish references to Christians are not nearly as well-preserved as Christian references to Jews and pagans, and at any rate are generally more enigmatic than the latter. We touch upon non-Christian sources at various points though ultimately this thesis is predominantly a study of Christian literature.

In both *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*, Ignatius ascribes the symbol of divine unity with social and sacramental force and uses it as a prophylactic against harmful context-specific “Jewish” influence. As an element of resistance brought to bear on an already established divide between “Judaism” (anti-gospel) and “Christianism” (pro-gospel), divine unity regularly reenacted in sacrament reinforces a specifically “Christian” identity vis-à-vis “Judaism.”

A second important trajectory in the monotheistic formation of Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism is the emergence of a Christian ethnoracial and cultic identity particularly characterized by belief in one God (ch. 4). Proponents of monotheistic classification strategies overtly utilized “knowledge” of the one God as primary criterion for indexing sameness and difference between Christianity, Judaism, and other groups. *Kerygma Petrou* and Aristides’ *Apology* employ such strategies to situate Christianity within a global framework alongside other religious and/or ethnic collectivities. Each text reveals discrete social concerns for why these strategies are used. Yet both share a desire to locate the “newness” of Christianity alongside the more well-known status of Jews. In so doing, they effectively reposition Judaism within the global framework of religious and ethnic groups to clarify and legitimate the meaning of belonging to Christian identity.

A third trajectory in the monotheistic shaping of Christian identity emerges through patterns of Christian reading that reimagine traditional Jewish cosmic structures. Some Christians employed “two powers” hermeneutic strategies to reinterpret Jewish scriptural traditions of exclusivist monotheism (ch. 5). Aristo of Pella’s *Disputation of Jason and Papiscus* and Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* attest Christian readings which insinuate into scripture a second figure, Jesus, alongside the one God. These sources demonstrate awareness that OT scriptures are shared intellectual property of Jews and Christians. Aristo and Justin explicitly recognize that scriptural texts are the proper locus for Christian–Jewish debate. These “two powers” interpretive patterns thus reflect highly conscious attempts to reread Jewish monotheistic textual traditions in a new way. They are sociological strategies in the continual process of negotiating and indexing Jewish and Christian identities. Through them an entire reconstruction of the symbolic universe of monotheism can take place in explicitly Christian terms.

In the final chapter we briefly review the observations of this study and draw conclusions about the monotheistic shaping of early Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism (ch. 6). Together these diverse monotheistic strategies reveal a complex

network of early Christian literary production which made use of monotheistic symbols and rhetoric as an implement to resist, reposition, and reread Judaism, thereby producing a distinctly Christian identity. These strategies of monotheistic identity construction legitimate distinctively “Christian” brands of monotheism. Through them, Christians can embrace their identity as worshippers of the one God in a “new” way (i.e., through Jesus) vis-à-vis the antique traditions of Jewish monotheism. They provide socially-constructed responses to the larger “Jesus problem.”

Chapter Two

Monotheism as Jewish Marker: Divine Unity and Uniqueness in Judaism

The relationship between early Christianity and its immediate Jewish religious milieu is complex and cannot be reduced to mere aphorisms. Indeed, there is no single point at which Christianity can be said to overlap seamlessly with this or that Jewish community or mode of thought. But overlap in some sense it did, and scholars generally agree that the confession and worship of one God alone represents a shared practice among Jews and Christians. Before embarking on an examination of Christian monotheistic strategies vis-à-vis Judaism, it will thus prove useful to examine some of the more important trends, beliefs, and cultic practices in Jewish religion, and ask: In what ways were rhetoric and concepts of divine uniqueness and unity at work in that part of Christianity's "social world" which the Jews inhabited? Was there a general "monotheistic" atmosphere in Jewish religion that may enlighten our investigation into Christian monotheistic identity construction?

This chapter paints the socio-religious context for primitive Christian monotheism and for the second-century Christian monotheistic strategies examined in this thesis. We look at how certain "monotheistic" forces and factors predominated in Jewish socio-religious milieu in which first- and second-century Christianity came of age. We offer first a definition of monotheism that integrates myth, rhetoric, and cultic practices associated with belief in one God as relevant indicators (§1). After investigating ways in which Jews expressed monotheism cultically and rhetorically, we suggest that "exclusivist monotheism" provides the category which best labels the dominant streams of early Jewish religion at the time when Christianity was just emerging (§2).¹ This is especially important since several

¹ Early Judaism provides the most important constitutive *religious* milieu for the immediate development of *primitive* Christian monotheism. This conviction is shared by a growing number of scholars who investigate earliest Christian origins. The last two decades, in particular, have witnessed an upsurge of scholarly activity attempting to situate Christianity's origins firmly within a Jewish matrix. In common with the older *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, these scholars locate Christianity within its larger cultural Graeco-Roman context. However, unlike earlier scholars in the history-of-religions tradition, who sought to find substantial connections between Christianity and Graeco-Roman religion(s), this new group of scholars believes the most influential context in which to understand Christian origins is the Jewish religious milieu. Cf. Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003) 12–18; Jarl Fossum, "The New *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*: The Quest for Jewish Christology," in E. Lovering, ed. (*SBLSP*; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 638–46; and Carey C. Newman, James R.

scholars have challenged the use of “monotheism” as a category by which to understand early Judaism. Rabbinic Judaism in no way attenuated the pride of place afforded exclusivist monotheism in early Jewish religion (§3), yet their polemic against certain *minim* that believe in “two powers in heaven” adumbrates a certain variety in Jewish religious belief about God. Some first- and second-century Jews (including Jewish Christians) outside the reach of rabbinic hegemony believed in a second divine agent, the Word (Logos, *Memra*) of God. Yet this difference operates within the context of a larger intramural (rabbinic and para-rabbinic) Jewish debate over the nature and limits of belief in “one God.” A number of monotheisms were operative among second-century Jews. Here again, however, among diaspora Jews the very popular cultic worship of the Most High God manifests an exclusivist monotheistic penchant not comparably attested in the inclusivist monotheism of pagan worship of the Most High God (§4). Belief in and confession of one God alone therefore represents a fundamental and predominant marker of Jewish identity in the first and second centuries of the common era, and Jewish exclusivist monotheism (and binitarian patterns of belief) offer us an important basis against which Christian attempts at formulating monotheistic identities can be measured (§5).

1. Defining “Monotheism”

First, some methodological ground rules. The term “monotheism” is notoriously elusive.² Since this chapter depends on how it is defined, it is worth asking how one should determine whether the religion of a particular socio-religious

Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (JSJSup 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999).

² The issue is exacerbated with respect to Judaism and earliest Christianity because biblical texts lack a sufficiently clear philosophical linguistic apparatus. For discussions of methodology and the use of “monotheism” with particular relevance to the debate over Israelite religious development, see Mark S. Smith (“Yahweh and Other Deities in Ancient Israel: Observations on Old Problems and Recent Trends,” in Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein, eds., *Ein Gott allein?* [OBO 139; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 1994] 223–27), Fritz Stolz (“Der Monotheismus Israels im Kontext der altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte—Tendenzen neuerer Forschung,” in Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein, *ibid.*, 33–50), Gary A. Herion (“The Impact of Modern and Social Science Assumptions on the Reconstruction of Israelite History,” *JSOT* 34 [1986]: 3–33), Baruch Halpern (“‘Brisker Pipes than Poetry’: The Development of Israelite Monotheism,” in Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, et al., eds., *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987] 77–115), and David L. Petersen (“Israel and Monotheism: The Unfinished Agenda,” in Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, et al., eds., *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988] 92–107).

community is “monotheistic.”³ We pause briefly here to note that when we speak in this thesis of a community as “monotheistic,” we refer to an identifiable socio-religious group that understands itself as recipients of a tradition of belief in one God *and* consistently expresses that confession by means of cultic and corporate devotion to that one God.⁴ To determine whether a group is “monotheist,” the historian of religion should proceed *inductively* to determine a group’s own self-definition by examining two fronts, *cultic acts* and *religious rhetoric* (particularly confessional or monotheistic-sounding language).

It is not our intention to provide a rigorous defense of this definition. To do so would be a lengthier discussion than is reasonable. We submit the following brief clarifying comments. First, this approach to monotheism is inductive, the goal of which is to locate a group’s own socio-historical self-understanding.⁵ Our model is certainly not the only one available, and sociologists might argue that it is incomplete or at least not the best analytic tool, since there are always gaps in a community’s own self-understanding.⁶ Nevertheless, historians of socio-religious traditions should proceed (at least initially) inductively from a group’s own self-definitional activity—

³ It is preferable to speak in terms of a *community’s* belief system, since the theology of any given individual will deviate in various particulars from that generally shared by the group. Furthermore, emphasizing collective religion accords with assertions of the sociology of knowledge that “the world-building activity of man,” of which religion is a subset, “is always and inevitably a collective enterprise,” and “[w]hile it may be possible, perhaps for heuristic purposes, to analyze man’s relationship to his world in purely individual terms, the empirical reality of human world-building is always a social one” (Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* [New York: Anchor Book, 1990 repr.] 7).

⁴ The work of Larry Hurtado has been influential in our thinking on this matter, though we have modified his approach in several important regards. Cf. his *Lord Jesus Christ*, 29–53; “First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” *JSNT* 71 (1998): 3–26. We adopt Emile Durkheim’s definition of cult, which “is a system of rites, feasts, and various ceremonies *all having the characteristic that they recur periodically*” (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [trans. Karen E. Fields; New York: The Free Press, 1995] 60). N.B. Our emphasis on cultic ritual in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is not intended as a universal descriptive of all religious activity. Even some major religions—Buddhism and Jainism, for example—do not possess the prominence of collective cultic activity we see active in the Judaeo-Christian tradition (cf. Durkheim, *ibid.*, 27–33).

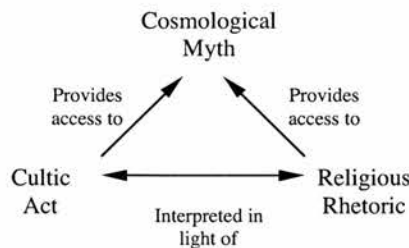
⁵ Hurtado, “First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” 5–9.

⁶ A more rigorous sociological analysis of a religious community may wish to move beyond a group’s self-understanding. Historians often create typological constructs that account for a group’s core identity. This allows them to join the diverse expressions manifest among the variegated members of that group. This process involves viewing the movement from outside as an unconstrained observer to the group’s own internal social dynamics and traditions. It further involves reifying the diverse religious phenomena into an “ideal type” that successfully models the phenomenological reality. No such typology of a socio-religious system is perfect, yet it is hoped that it adequately accounts for a majority of the data. See Michael A. Williams (*Rethinking “Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996] 29–50) for a helpful discussion of methodology.

how it understands itself vis-à-vis the broader culture and within the panoply of its own internal religious diversity. Third-party contemporary descriptions, however imperfect or devoid of perspective arising from historical distance, provide a natural corollary to a group's own self-testimony. Eye-witness accounts are closer to events than modern researchers and supply real data about socio-religious issues *as understood by people at the time*. Such external testimony should generally be considered secondary and supplementary to a group's own self-testimony.

Second, cultic patterns of devotion and religious rhetoric are the primary factors for identifying monotheism. There is an inextricable link between cosmogonic myth, cultic devotional patterns, and religious rhetoric.⁷ Each provides certain “hermeneutical keys” to the interpretation of the other; myth was after all performed on a cultic stage, both ritually and rhetorically. Yet the role of myth is not nearly as important as that of cultic behavior or religious rhetoric in determining a group's “monotheistic” status. First, to utilize myth as a determinant for the presence of monotheism necessarily requires one to make *a priori* assumptions about which myths are compatible with monotheism. This leads inevitably back to the presuppositions of the scholar and not the assumptions of the ancient world.⁸ Secondly, the meaning of myths change. Communities inject them with new meaning or reimagine them. Myths or mythical fragments developed in a polytheistic

⁷ By “myth” we refer to traditional stories used to explain the origins and structure of the universe in terms of symbols and imagery. Cosmogonies authenticate cultic behavior, for the various cults of ancient religions were instituted by their respective gods (for gods establishing cults or laws, see *ANET* 43b; 68b; 69a f.; 311a; 316b; 385b; 5b; 397a, cited in Morton Smith [“The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East,” *JBL* 53 (1952): 142 n. 38]). Further, myths are expressed rhetorically and symbolically. We suggest the following model in which the three components are “hermeneutically” interlinked:



⁸ For example, if one understands monotheism (mythically) as that belief in which there exists only one first-principle, then they are forced artificially to exclude those Jews or Christians who may have believed that Matter eternally existed (as second first-principle). Athenagoras presupposes the preexistence of matter, while yet affirming that Christians do not worship it but the one who shaped and formed it (*Leg.* 15–16). By all accounts one is hard pressed to find a Jewish or Christian community dedicated to the worship of Matter as first-principle. Whatever first-principles existed (God, matter, Idea-Forms, etc.), it is clear worship was reserved for God. For sociological purposes he is the only first-principle worthy of worship.

context mean something very different when applied in a monotheistic setting. It is cultic patterns and rhetoric that permit the researcher to determine most clearly how myth was understood in a particular community at a given time.

But what is the relationship between religious rhetoric and cultic devotion? Is it reciprocal, or is one subordinate? Ritual acts are closely linked with verbal expressions of religious devotion, so that clear-cut separation between practice and profession is not strictly possible. In this sense, their relationship is reciprocal. Cult aids interpretation of rhetoric; rhetoric uncovers significance in cultic acts. The value of cultic practice and religious rhetoric is they both provide evidence by which to understand a people's own religious self-perception. On the other hand, the value of religious rhetoric should generally be subordinated to that of cultic devotional patterns. Religious rhetoric is so firmly linked with historical setting and symbol structures, that identical language about the deity (or a particular deity) in two different contexts can often mean something very different.⁹ Nevertheless, such rhetoric, when appearing within a monotheistic cultic setting becomes powerful secondary testimony to the presence of monotheism. In those cases where the historian knows little about cultic context, textual language remains our only recourse, and conclusions can be drawn based on surviving rhetoric. However, deductions based exclusively on rhetoric must be couched more cautiously than those based on cultic practice. Such deductions can nevertheless be reasonable—rhetoric is after all a means of expressing monotheism—if warranted by frequency or potency of language and if the monotheistic-sounding rhetoric is closely aligned with a literary context involving cultic issues.¹⁰ We demonstrate this latter point in relation to Deutero-Isaiah (§2.2.2).

⁹ Devoid of identifiable cultic context, monotheistic-sounding language can signify any number of things. Ancient Near-Eastern societies had a clearly polytheistic matrix within which very monotheistic-sounding prayers, hymnic laments, and letters occurred. Devotees who created these works often lavished their patron deity with universal language, themes of creation, the absence of beginning, and rhetoric of incomparability that places that deity in a class of its own (e.g., *A Hymn to Amun-Re* [ANET 365]; *The Journey of Wen-Amon to Phoenicia* [ANET 25–29]). If one observes this rhetoric without reference to the polytheistic cultus to which it is attached, one might inappropriately conclude that they represent monotheistic belief. See further Smith (“Common Theology,” 137–45) and the brief comments of Rainer Albertz (“Der Ort des Monotheismus in der israelitischen Religionsgeschichte,” in Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein, eds., *Ein Gott allein?* [OBO 139; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 1994] 80–81).

¹⁰ Paul Rainbow's study (“Monotheism and Christology in 1 Corinthians 8.4–6” [D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1987]) has effectively demonstrated that frequency and force of theological rhetoric can be a valid indicator of monotheism.



Cultic devotional patterns should take priority and be used wherever possible as the surest guide to accessing and interpreting a community's theological concepts. As the most public expression of a people's religious devotion, cultic ritual provides the clearest and most certain access to a group's own belief system and religious self-identity.¹¹ J. Daniélou's comment on the sociological importance of cult in the Graeco-Roman world is apropos:

It was by way of the traditional forms of worship that paganism permeated the family, professional and civic life of the contemporary world; and it was their refusal to participate in these rites which constituted the principal ground for the accusation of impiety brought against the Christians. Above all, therefore, it was these rites which the Christians had to denounce without hesitation as a fraud; and they did so by proving them to be a false cult inspired by demons and addressed to demons. The cultus was the crucial issue. Opinion in the heathen world on the nature of God or of the gods might vary; but the religious ritual formed part of the very structure of civilization.¹²

A group's cultic behavior must be grasped against the background of how that group interprets such behavior. A community may be willing to incorporate certain religious practices that a modern scholar (with his or her own *a priori* presumptions) might consider incompatible with monotheism, all the while they retain an identifiable self-identity as "monotheist." For example, it may be perfectly acceptable within certain socially-constrained parameters for a secondary-figure to be corporately or publicly venerated within a religious community, which nevertheless retains its distinct identity as "monotheist."

Third, emphasis on cultic praxis minimizes the modern, academic distinction between monolatry and monotheism.¹³ The former, according to most religious scholars, involves the condemnation of any worship directed towards deities other than one patron deity, while the existence of other gods is not necessarily denied. Monolatry requires the rejection of the worship of all other gods in favor of a group's

¹¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973, rep. 2000) 112–18.

¹² *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, vol. 2 in J. Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine* (trans. J. A. Baker; London: Darton, Longman & Todd; Philadelphia: Westminster Press; 1973) 18.

¹³ Precisely because there is so little distinction between monolatrous and monotheistic worship. One may argue that monotheism represents a "universalizing monolatry," and we should expect a missiological urge in monotheism not detectable in monolatry. Yet it is not certain that missionary activity is inextricably linked with monotheism nor that ancients themselves made such a distinction. Either way, conversion to Judaism, which had little missionary activity, and to Christianity, with its highly active mission, both involved exclusive worship of "one God."

own deity. Monotheism, it is claimed, goes further by explicitly rejecting the very ontological existence of other deities.¹⁴ The technical, linguistic apparatus by which modern scholars speak in terms of “polytheism” and “monotheism,” however, is highly anachronistic, and, if discussions of “monotheism” in Israelite and early Jewish religion are any yardstick, the clarity these terms are intended to bring is long in coming. First, it is highly unlikely that such methodological distinctions were ever made among ancients, as Mark Smith reminds us when he notes that monotheism “functioned as a rhetoric expressing and advancing the cause of Israelite monolatrous practice.” Religious distinctions were measured in terms of cultus. If one wished to know a particular group’s beliefs, he examined how that group worshipped. Secondly, if religious valuations are measured with reference to cult rather than concept, as we suggest, it is easy to see that the socio-religious implications of monolatry are not wide afield from those of monotheism. Both enhanced a group’s distinctive self-identity with respect to outsiders¹⁵ and functioned socially as a type of collective nationalism.¹⁶ By shifting cultic activity forward, conceptual differences so often highlighted by modern scholars between monotheism and monolatry, become less significant, and the scholar is freed to focus on social implications of a group’s devotional patterns.

In summary, if a religious community corporately confesses belief in one God alone and understands itself as consistently and communally offering cultic worship to that one God alone, one is justified in labeling it “monotheist.” Inclusion of additional figures in a community’s corporate devotional patterns does not inherently compromise its “monotheism” provided the group continually aligns itself confessionally with one God alone and regards any devotion to such a second figure within the context of its confession of one God. In such cases, the historian’s first instinct should not be to jettison the label “monotheism” but to understand how that group harmonizes this second figure with its confession of one God.

¹⁴ So Mark Smith’s forceful statement, “[I]n discussing monotheism, one *must exclude* the reality of other gods” (*The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* [Oxford: University Press, 2001] 153; emphasis added). Cf. Michael Heiser, “The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 2004) 9.

¹⁵ See *Cels.* 1.11, where Origen places the monolatrous and monotheistic options side-by-side and does not distinguish them in this passage for purposes of his argument. Cf. V.H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (NTTS 5; Leiden, 1963).

¹⁶ On nationalism and cult, see Smith (“Common Theology,” 23).

2. Jewish Religion from 167 BCE–70 CE

The nascent Christian tradition was birthed in a Jewish milieu, and it was a Jewish religious environment which everywhere provided the most immediate context in which Christianity took its first steps. The church was essentially a breakaway Jewish sect; earliest Christians were Jewish believers in Jesus, and to a large extent their basic confessions and practices continued those of Judaism. For this reason, an investigation into the nature of Jewish religion in the period immediately preceding the florescence of Christian Jesus-devotion will prove helpful in establishing earliest Christianity's "social world." More specifically, since our investigation is channeled towards certain monotheistic rhetoric and concepts and their function within second-century Christianity, it is appropriate to demonstrate that Jews in the latter half of the early Jewish period (i.e., 167 BCE–70 CE)¹⁷ were already asserting an exclusivist, monotheistic religious stance, and were using the rhetoric of divine uniqueness and unity to do so. The present investigation bolsters the claim that the predominant theme in Jewish religion was one of exclusivist monotheism, and that by the Roman era, Judaism was indeed *characteristically defined* by belief in one God of the biblical tradition. This is not to suggest Judaism was everywhere monolithic and that all religious Jews from the second century BCE onwards were uniformly monotheistic in their faith confessions and practices. We know this not to be the case; but deviations from a pattern are just that. The broadest confession of the variegated religious expressions which may be labeled "Jewish" in the Maccabean and Roman periods was that of allegiance to one God revealed in Hebrew scriptures. We begin by briefly reviewing the long path towards popular acceptance of monotheism in the Graeco-Roman period.

¹⁷The *terminus a quo* corresponds roughly to the time of the Hasmonean revolt, and the time-frame closes with the destruction of Jerusalem's Temple. A number of monographs and articles treat the religio-political history of this time. See Isaiah Gafni ("The Historical Background," in M.E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* [CRINT 2.2; Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress: 1984] 86–213), Lester L. Grabbe (*Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice From the Exile to Yavneh* [London; New York: Routledge, 2000] 1–31; *An Introduction to First Century Judaism: Jewish Religion and History in the Second Temple Period* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996] 1–31; *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian. Volume 1: The Persian and Greek Periods* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992]), Martin Hengel (*Judaism and Hellenism*), and Robert A. Kraft and George W.E. Nickelsburg (eds., *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* [SBLCP 2; Atlanta: Fortress Press, 1986]).

2.1 Towards Monotheism

Scholarly discussion about the nature, origin, and existence of early pre-exilic Jewish monotheism played an important role throughout most of the twentieth century, and it continues at present to be significant for the study of early Israelite religion.¹⁸ Whatever the eventual outcome of the continuing conversation surrounding Israel's early religious developments and origins, both archaeology and the biblical text yield evidence indicating that Israelite devotion during the period of the Judges and the monarchy incorporated the cults of various Canaanite deities and accommodated a diversity of religious and cultic practices.¹⁹ There is a growing body of evidence indicating that Israel's earliest religious beliefs and practices were polytheistic and that popular Israelite religion up to the time of the Exile in the sixth century BCE largely centered on worship of several deities.²⁰ Reform movements towards a mono-Yahwism were at best henotheistic with only an occasional glimmer of monotheism.²¹ Israel would have to wait until her immurement in Babylon before these monotheistic intimations received fuller expression in a doctrine of strict

¹⁸ For an excellent summary of the present state of the debate and its key players, consult Robert Gnuse (*No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel* [JSOTSup 241; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997] 62–128). For more concise presentations see Mark S. Smith (*The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990] xix–xxvii) and B. Lang (“Vor einer Wende im Verständnis des israelitischen Gottesglaubens?,” *TQ* 160 [1980]: 53–60). Debates continue in a number of areas, particularly, (1) Israel's cultural identity, (2) the nature of the Yahwistic cult, (3) the role of the monarchy, and (4) the nature and extent of goddess veneration in pre-exilic Israelite religion.

¹⁹ Mark Smith, *Early History*, passim; idem, “Yahweh and Other Deities,” 226; and Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1987) 18. Hebrew scriptures confirm the scholarly assertion of Israel's Canaanite origins (Ezek 16:3, 45).

²⁰ New epigraphic, iconographic, and archaeological discoveries substantiate a popular veneration of gods alongside Yahweh in pre-exilic Israel. These discoveries include *inter alia* the continued publication of the Mari letters and Ugaritic texts; inscriptions found at Deir ‘Alla, Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd, and Khirbet el-Qōm; the excavation of a cultic shrine at Ta’anach; the continued discovery of new ostracons; new personal names upon seals (i.e., seal imprints); new analyses of previously discovered artifacts; and the Aramaic version of Psalm 20 in Demotic. Cf. Smith, *Early History*, 108–181; P. Kyle McCarter, “Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy: Biblical and Epigraphic Data,” in Patrick D. Miller et al., eds., *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 137–156; William G. Dever, “The Contribution of Archaeology to the Study of Canaanite and Early Israelite Literature,” in Miller, *ibid.*, 209–248; and Norbert Lohfink, “Gott: Polytheistisches und monotheistisches Sprechen von Gott im Alten Testament” in idem, *Unsere großen Wörter: Das Alte Testament zu Themen dieser Jahre* (Heder Freiburg: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977) 127–44. Lohfink sees in polytheism and monotheism not *zwei Sachen*, but *zwei Sprachen* (pp. 138–41).

²¹ If, e.g., one is willing to grant this to Amos, as does Th.C. Vriezen (*An Outline of Old Testament Theology* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2nd ed., 1970] 326).

monotheism propounded through the preaching of Deutero-Isaiah,²² who used a plethora of literary devices to bolster the universal dimensions of Yahweh's reign (cf. §2.2.2). Deutero-Isaiah's efforts, coupled with the transition to a *Buchreligion*, the destruction of most of the cultic shrines in the wake of the Exile, and the Deuteronomistic reforms implanted at least the seeds of monotheism in Jewish religion during and immediately after the Exile.²³

Certainly, pre-exilic, syncretistic Yahwism survived into the post-exilic era.²⁴ The syncretistic cult had been exported to northern Mesopotamia along with Israel in 722 BCE, as well as to Egypt and Babylon with Judah in the fifth- and sixth-centuries. Evidence of the latter can be found in the fifth-century texts from the Jewish community living in Elephantine in Egypt, whose syncretistic Yahwistic practices demonstrate the ubiquitous nature of this phenomenon as far back as the Persian Period and provide a glimpse into earlier pre-exilic Judaism.²⁵ Traces of this old syncretistic cult may even be found in later, post-second-Temple magical, "gnostic," or pagan circles.²⁶ Even into the Hasmonean and subsequent Roman eras Judaism did not represent a single monolithic entity, and one may rightly speak of many *Judaisms*.²⁷ The diversity of religious experience and expression preserved in the literature of this period is astonishing, all the more so when set against the relative

²² The label "Deutero-Isaiah" is a modern category. Jews in the latter half of the second-Temple period, early Christians, and "gnostic" groups would not have utilized such a term, as they would have understood the book of Isaiah to be a unified work of composition. Nevertheless, Richard Bauckham has observed that at least among early Christians these chapters would have been *viewed* (though not *labeled*) as a distinct interpretive unit (*God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999] 47). For our purposes, the term "Deutero-Isaiah" may refer either to Isaiah 40–55 or its author (depending on context), and it remains a helpful heuristic term, since much divine uniqueness language comes from this section.

²³ Albertz notes the profound impact these events had not only upon the inculcation of exclusive Yahwism within the state but in familial piety as well ("Der Ort," 84–85; also Hans Rechenmacher, »*Außer mir gibt es keinen Gott!*« *Eine sprach-und literaturwissenschaftliche Studie zur Ausschließlichkeitsformel* [ATSAT 49; St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1997] 196–98).

²⁴ Susan Ackerman, *Under Every Green Tree: Popular Religion in Sixth Century Judah* (HSM 46; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) passim; Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, 62–74.

²⁵ Translation of selected Persian Period texts from Elephantine are available in James M. Lindenberger (*Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* [SBLWAW 4; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994] 53–70). For texts throughout the entire history of the site see Bezalel Porten and J. Joel Farber (*The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-cultural Continuity and Change* [DMOA 22; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996]).

²⁶ Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, 63; M. Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992) passim.

²⁷ On the various sects of the period, see Gary G. Porton ("Diversity in Postbiblical Judaism," in Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg, eds., *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* [SBLCP 2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Atlanta: Scholars Press: 1986] 57–80).

uniformity of what later became Rabbinic Judaism as it developed and standardized during the second century CE. Nevertheless, a notable change in the character of popular Israelite religion began to assert itself during the second-Temple period. Helped in part by factors listed above, monotheism was destined to become assimilated into popular Jewish religion among Israel's diverse population centers.

2.2 Jewish Monotheism (167 BCE–70 CE)?

But can we go so far as to speak of “monotheism” as the predominant pattern of Jewish religion during the second-Temple era? A number of scholars have recently challenged the traditional image of a popular, first-century, monotheistic Jewish religion. Among these, we refer to three in particular: Michael Heiser, Peter Hayman, and Margaret Barker.²⁸ Several commonalities in method are distinguishable in their writings. Our comments and critiques are interspersed.

First, advocates of this view concur in casting doubt on the category “monotheism” as a valid descriptor for first-century Judaism. They do not *per se* (Heiser excepted) deny the existence of monotheistic strands at various times in Israel's history,²⁹ but they would deny to monotheism any place of prominence in popular Jewish religion of the Graeco-Roman era. In its stead, Hayman and Barker variously posit some form of dualistic Graeco-Roman Jewish religion more or less continuous with pre-exilic Israelite religion. In his 1990 presidential address to the British Association for Jewish Studies, Hayman contended “that it is hardly ever appropriate to use the term monotheism to describe the Jewish idea of God, that no progress beyond the simple formulas of the Book of Deuteronomy can be discerned in Judaism before the philosophers of the Middle Ages, and that Judaism never escapes from the legacy of the battles for supremacy between Yahweh, Ba'al and El from which it emerged.”³⁰ Yet, although he highlights what he perceives as the

²⁸ Heiser (“Divine Council”) ambitiously argues for a monolatrous second-Temple Jewish religion which retained the divine council of pre-exilic times (i.e., there was never a fusion of El and Yahweh and the ‘gods’ of the divine council were never demoted to angelic beings). Peter Hayman (“Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?,” *JJS* 42 [1991]: 1–15) and Margaret Barker (*Great Angel*) argue also for a prominent dualistic pattern to Jewish religion.

²⁹ Hayman speaks of “the monotheism which is more nearly attained in the Book of Deuteronomy” (“Monotheism,” 9). Barker admits a genuine monotheistic development in and shortly after the exile with the work of Deutero-Isaiah and the Deuteronomists (*Great Angel*, 12–27). From a reading of Heiser's “Divine Council,” we find no sense in which he allows a genuine “monotheism” in Second-Temple Judaism.

³⁰ Hayman, *ibid.*, 2.

common practice of angel veneration, he later concedes the following: “For most Jews, God is *the sole object of worship*, but he is not the only divine being. In particular, there is always a prominent number two in the hierarchy to whom Israel in particular relates.”³¹ Hayman speaks of “a cooperative dualism,” of the supreme creator God and a second figure, his vice-regent (or other spiritual agency) who provides the point of contact with humanity. This dualistic pattern was firmly impressed upon Judaism from the ancient Canaanite background to Israelite religion, and it continued even into rabbinic Judaism.³² Similarly, in her work *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God*, Barker advocates that Graeco-Roman Judaism reflected a ditheistic tendency inherited from pre-exilic Jewish religion. She attempts to demonstrate the continuation of this dualistic outlook by reexamining sources traditionally understood as monotheistic (e.g., Philo, Qumran, Josephus, etc.). Strictly speaking, though she confesses that “pre-Christian Judaism was not monotheistic in the sense that we use the word,” she does permit the *existence* of monotheism in the Graeco-Roman era; what she challenges is any notion of its *predominance*. Also of interest is the negative evaluation she gives to whatever monotheism existed in second-Temple Judaism. For Barker, it is no positive development, but a deviation (or devolution) from traditional ditheistic Jewish religion. Heiser’s approach and conclusions—he seems genuinely to deny the presence of any monotheism in Judaism—differ slightly from those of Hayman and Barker, yet he shares with them the challenge to traditional views of a predominantly monotheistic Graeco-Roman era Judaism. His views are presented below.

Second, these scholars acknowledge a large measure of *continuity* between Judaism of the Graeco-Roman period and the Canaanite roots and polytheistic practices of ancient Israelite religion. In this respect, they address the nature of Jewish religion *conceptually-theologically* and much less *cultically*. To the question, How continuous was Graeco-Roman Jewish religious *belief* (still less, *practice*) with its ancient Israelite precursors, they answer by attempting to demonstrate a strong sense of continuity. The character of second-Temple Judaism thus depends largely on how these scholars conceive the theological constructs of ancient Israelite religion. They each begin with the conception that ancient Israelite religion esteemed

³¹ *Ibid.*, 15; emphasis added.

³² “And even when, as in rabbinic Judaism, there clearly is one dominant divine figure, I doubt whether the picture of God presented to us is really unitary at all” (*ibid.*, 2).

El as the most high God, with a pantheon of divine beings subordinate to him. Yahweh was only one of these “sons of God” (בני אלים/בני אלהים), one member of the “heavenly host” (צבא השמים), Israel’s particular patron deity.³³ From there the proposals deviate. Hayman, following the traditional reconstruction, assumes an ancient fusion of Yahweh with El, in which Yahweh became king of the divine cadre after his identification with El Elyon, the head of the Canaanite pantheon.³⁴ The power void within the divine council was subsequently filled by a principal angel, the other members of the divine council were demoted to angelic beings, and Israel’s dualistic religious construct persisted under a different guise.³⁵ Heiser agrees with the ancient assimilation of Yahweh to El. For him, however, there was retention—not “demotion” to the ranks of angelic beings—of the members of the divine council.³⁶ As such, Israel’s cosmology even in the second-Temple era retained a belief in the divine council and hence the existence of many gods, while practicing the exclusive worship of only one God for Israel. This leads him to classify Jewish religion as “monolatrous.” Barker, on the other hand, does not accept the traditional reconstruction. She doubts that a merging of Yahweh and El ever definitively occurred in ancient Israelite religion. According to her, the dualistic pattern of Graeco-Roman Judaism has its roots in the ancient relationship between Yahweh—Israel’s patron deity, “the son of Elyon,” and chief among “the sons of God” on the divine council—and El, the Most High God. Together, father and son received Israel’s cultic reverence. This belief in two deities was retained in force *despite* the exilic reform efforts of the Deuteronomists and Deutero-Isaiah, which sought unsuccessfully to eradicate Israel’s classic belief in two gods. According to Barker duality appears in a host of Graeco-Roman Jewish traditions and even

³³ Cf. Deut 32:8–9. LXX, with support from DSS (cf. app. *BHS*), reads “the angels of God” (ἄγγελων θεοῦ). Editors of *BHS* suggest the *Vorlage* of this *lectio* be reconstructed as בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים or בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (“the sons of God”). The reconstructed text would read: “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated human beings, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods (=the sons of God). And Yahweh’s portion was his people.” MT reads “the sons of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל); cf. Gen 10; 46:27.

³⁴ This identification (i.e., יהוה הוא האלהים) Hayman regards as “the essential theme of the Hebrew Bible” (“Monotheism,” 5). On this fusion, see Gnuse (*No Other Gods*, 201–205) and Smith (*Early History*, 7–12; *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 142–45).

³⁵ Hayman comments, “In post-exilic and later Jewish sources, of course, there is no awareness that El Elyon was ever anything other than Yahweh himself, but the pattern of belief revealed in [Deut 32:8f.] persisted” (“Monotheism,” 6).

³⁶ The term “demotion” appears specifically in Heiser’s discussion of the divine council at Qumran (§7.2; “Divine Council,” 193).

becomes the basis for early Christian worship of Jesus as Yahweh, son of the Most High God.

Hayman, Heiser, and Barker share the belief that Yahweh belonged to the class of divine beings in the Hebrew scriptures (בני אלים/בני אלהים), and they interpret second-Temple Judaism in terms of “mythic” continuity with its ancient roots. These scholars do not believe that Graeco-Roman Jewish belief (less so Jewish cultic practice) ever significantly broke from the Canaanite mythological background of ancient Israelite religion. Generally, these scholars allow some form of monotheism to have existed in second-Temple Jewish religion, but they deny it a place of prominence.³⁷ They focus on *theological continuity* with the myths of Israel’s ancient religious past; *cultic continuity* (see below) receives only brief mention as evidence of this dualistic tendency.

Third, these scholars highlight the long-lasting presence in Jewish religion of an important secondary figure alongside the one God. This may be the figure of Wisdom (corresponding to Yahweh’s ancient female consort, Asherah),³⁸ a principle angel (a vizier who carries out God’s will and can even bear his name), Philo’s “second God,” Logos, etc. Principal agent figures (whether hypostatizations of divine attributes, exalted patriarchs, or principal angels) were clearly important for Graeco-Roman Judaism.³⁹ The difficulty for scholars comes in knowing how best to interpret evidence about them. Hayman is unequivocal in his assessment, “From the book of Daniel on, *nearly every variety* of Judaism maintained the pattern of the supreme God plus his vice-regent/vizier, or some similar agency who relates Israel to God. The names change but the roles remain the same...Hardly any variety of Judaism seems to have been able to manage with just one divine entity.”⁴⁰ The general interpretive views regarding this second figure have already received brief mention in the second point above. The issue of angel veneration receives treatment below (cf. §2.2.1).

Fourth, though specifics of approach vary on a case-by-case basis, the overarching methodology employed by scholars of this persuasion may be described

³⁷ See *supra* n. 29.

³⁸ Smith, *Early History*, 94–95.

³⁹ Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Loren Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2.70; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995).

⁴⁰ “Monotheism,” 11; emphasis added.

as deductive, since it draws conclusions based on prior suppositions about what constitutes monotheism. As good historians, each of these scholars addresses relevant historical data. Yet they proceed to deduce the absence of monotheism in Graeco-Roman Judaism by imposing modern categories and preconceptions of what “monotheism” actually signifies.⁴¹ Hayman, for example, begins with the following comment: “I do not intend to proceed here by setting up a model definition of monotheism and then assessing the Jewish tradition against this yardstick.”⁴² However, he continues by providing at least four criteria which to him demonstrate the inappropriateness of “monotheism” as a descriptive term for Jewish religion. He notes the absence of a clear doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and the presence of the apparently common Jewish belief in mystical union with God.⁴³ To these he adds the presence of angelology and magical practice, “two areas where the steadily increasing weight of evidence makes very clear the continuity of Jewish religious belief and practice from its ancient Canaanite sources.”⁴⁴ Here Hayman crosses over into performative cultic acts, albeit acts which he perceives as representative not of monotheism. He concludes that Jewish angelology in the second-Temple and rabbinic periods “reveals a pattern of religion that is anything but monotheistic,” and it actually seems to have represented “a development away from the monotheism which is more nearly attained in the Book of Deuteronomy.”⁴⁵ A similar method is evident in Heiser’s work, who requires an explicit denial of the existence of other gods before he is willing to apply the label “monotheism.” For example, after going to great lengths to demonstrate the absence of monotheism in Deutero-Isaiah, traditionally interpreted as attesting a rigorous expression of an exclusivist monotheism, he concludes:

⁴¹ So Hurtado, “First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” 5–8.

⁴² “Monotheism,” 2.

⁴³ “Is a doctrine of monotheism conceivable,” Hayman asks, “without a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*?” (“Monotheism,” 3). For him the absence of an explicit doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* removes “one of the most generally accepted components of monotheism,” namely, God’s omnipotence (ibid., 4)! This is a shocking deduction, since the rhetorical evidence indicates a strong adherence to the idea of God’s universal omnipotence within first-century Judaism (cf. *infra* §2.2.2 and the sources cited in n. 91 below). A number of early Christian “monotheists” spoke of the creative act in terms of one God shaping preexistent matter, yet no self-respecting Christian would have worshipped matter as a second principle alongside God (cf. *supra* n. 8)!

⁴⁴ Ibid., 5. On differentiation of magic and religion see Durkheim (*Elementary Forms*, 39–44), whose aphorism “*There is no Church of magic*” highlights the contrapuntal nature of magic relative to the shared, social aspect of “religion” (emphasis his).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8–9.

Finally, one could ask what the author of Deutero-Isaiah (and other canonical authors) could have done to go beyond the above phrases to communicate a denial of the existence of other gods. Two options come to mind. First, Deutero-Isaiah could have explicitly equated the other אלהים with מלאכים. Given the pre-exilic Israelite council's well-defined hierarchy, such an explicit equation would have left no doubt as to a redefinition of the other nations' אלהים. Second, the biblical author could have said something along the lines of "the gods of the council are not gods," or, "the sons of God are not אלהים." Phrases that declare "they are no gods" (לא אלהים הקמה) and "it is no god" (לא אלהים הוא) do occur, but without exception they refer to idols made by human hands and not the entities represented by those idols, or speak of inability in comparison to Yahweh.⁴⁶

Surely this is too stringent a test and does not allow for rhetorical flair and flexibility. We should not expect ancient writers to compose in such a way as to placate our modern desires for taxonomization and schematic clarity.⁴⁷ The question of Deutero-Isaiah's religious stance is treated below (cf. §2.2.2).

We offer the following comments and critiques. These scholars evince an implicit preference for theological definitions of monotheism in terms of myth over cultic patterns.⁴⁸ That is, their approach defines early Jewish religion in terms of "mythic" *continuity* with pre-exilic Israelite religion. Neither Barker nor Heiser permit any significant shift in "mythic" meta-narrative between ancient Israelite religion and early Judaism; Hayman acknowledges changes in certain narrative elements of ancient Israelite religion (e.g., the assimilation of Yahweh to El), but once the basic pre-exilic, dualistic myth had settled, that model remains relatively stable into the second-Temple era. As noted above (§1) the popular penchant to define monotheism in terms of myth is dangerous in that it inevitably leads back to *a priori* presumptions about what elements constitute monotheism. Even if one grants that the ancient dualistic pattern remained into second-Temple times (most certainly

⁴⁶ "Divine Council," 120.

⁴⁷ Whereas the explicit denial of the existence of other gods would help identify a text as "monotheist," the absence of such an assertion does not necessarily indicate the lack of monotheistic belief; *argumentio e silencio* is simply not conclusive. It is wholly inappropriate for modern scholars to demand such an exclusivity statement before identifying a text or community as "monotheist." Heiser's burden of proof is simply too heavy. Interestingly, Rechenmacher's study has also demanded a rigorous, *explicit* denial of other gods for valid monotheism, yet he has come to an altogether different conclusion about Deutero-Isaiah than has Heiser (»*Außer mir*« 198–204).

⁴⁸ Barker and Heiser restrict themselves with few exceptions to textual phenomena. In our estimation, Heiser has not adequately addressed any cultic acts or their role in Israelite and later Jewish religion. In his favor, Hayman posits angelology (and the use of magical texts) as evidence of a dualistic religious practice, but his conclusion that this is the predominant practice of Second-Temple Judaism is suspect.

it did), what is really at issue is how Jewish communities of the second-Temple period—not modern scholars—interpreted the two principles of the myth! Myths are imbued with a measure of hermeneutic plasticity. Their interpretations change; the symbolic world of myth takes on new significance in light of new sociological settings and new cultic practices. Did second-Temple Jews understand a second figure within the context of worship to one God alone? The existence of two first-principles is not necessarily sufficient to exclude someone from being a monotheist.⁴⁹ Cultic activity must be determinative in interpreting how Jewish cosmology was perceived at the time.

In our opinion, neither Hayman, Barker, nor Heiser sufficiently allow for significant change and diachronic dynamism within the Jewish religious tradition. The Exile, in particular, was an event of radical religious and sociological *discontinuity* with truly significant transformative power;⁵⁰ at least it was sufficient to transform many of Israel's corporate cultic practices. Religious developments towards monotheism were happening elsewhere in the Axial Age, and there is nothing *per se* preventing significant religious developments among the Jews.⁵¹ When we consider cultic behavior as the predominant factor in analyzing religious

⁴⁹ *Supra* nn. 8 et 43.

⁵⁰ Bob Becking, "Continuity and Discontinuity After the Exile: Some Introductory Remarks," in Bob Becking and Marjo C.A. Korpel, eds., *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (OtSt 42; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999) 1–8. Hans Jürgen Hermisson ("Diskussionsworte bei Deuterocesaja: Zur theologischen Argumentation des Propheten," in Jörg Barthel, Hannelore Jauss, et al., eds., *Studien zu Prophetie und Weisheit: Gesammelte Aufsätze* [FAT 23; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1998] 158) rightly observes the diversity of experience and emotional upheaval that inhered in the Exile event: "Ein einheitliches Bild der religiösen und geistigen Lage der Exilierten dürfte schwerlich zu entwerfen sein; wie überall ist auch hier mit ganz verschiedenen Reaktionen auf die geschichtlichen Erfahrungen zu rechnen—von Anfechtung und Zweifel bis hin zum Abfall vom Jahweglauben." At its worst Babylonian captivity amounted to a profound existential crisis that threatened the very survival of Jewish faith. More positively, however, the majority of Israel's sixth-century, creative theological reflection (excluding Jeremiah) occurred in Babylon and surrounding districts, and the words of God found renewed expression in a new cross-cultural reality through Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. Repatriation led to forced reevaluation of the meaning and extent of Yahweh's reign, the understanding of his uniqueness, and the reasons for the exile of his people. Whatever local and regional notions Jews previously held regarding Yahweh's rule over his people had to be rethought in light of an international, foreign context and without the objects of Yahweh's sacred cultus. Perhaps for the first time the Jewish people were compelled to engage in a period of reimagining their own identity and that of their patron God, especially in relation to the gods of the *Weltmächte* among whom they were living. This process of transvaluation fueled by threat of forced internationalization and enculturation into a foreign country moved certain key Jewish figures beyond a comprehension of Yahweh's uniqueness (evident already in mono-Yahwism) into a deeper understanding of Yahweh's universal reign and exclusive existence as the one true God.

⁵¹ E.g., the monotheistic cult of Ahuramazda (in Persia no less) originated during this time. On the "Axial Age" (coined by Karl Jaspers) consult Gnuse (*No Other Gods*, 214–26).

belief, it should be readily evident that cultic patterns changed significantly between Israel's pre-exilic Canaanite roots and Graeco-Roman Judaism. Not the least, Ezekiel's image of solar-worship (heliolatry) within the First Temple no longer applies to the worship practices of the Second Temple. Cultic idol-shrines were destroyed. Surely new cultic patterns which arose after the Exile necessitate a reevaluation of Jewish religion in terms of cultus.

Contrary to these scholars, we believe there is ample testimony to characterize the predominant forms of Graeco-Roman era Judaism as monotheist. To begin with, sources outside the Jewish tradition are aware of Jewish commitment to worship one God.⁵² These sources clearly indicate that those who did not participate in (and who were at times hostile to) Jewish religion understood Jews as devotees of one God alone; but did Jews view themselves as monotheists? For this one needs to look at cultic patterns (§2.2.1) and religious rhetoric (§2.2.2) within Judaism of the Hasmonean and Roman period.

2.2.1 Cultic Devotion to One God Alone

The most obvious example of cultic worship indicating the exclusive monotheistic character of second-Temple Judaism is temple sacrifice directed towards the one God. Though not the only datum, the practice of offering oblations both daily and at appointed festival times in cultic sacrifice to the God of Israel represents *prima facie* evidence for the presence (and one might argue predominance) of exclusivist monotheism in early Judaism. At least it represents an interest by the priestly cadre in disseminating monotheistic religion to Jewish faithful from the chief Jewish cultic center. Jerusalem was the spiritual capital of Judaism, and the influence of its religious practice was felt throughout the Jewish world,⁵³ though most Jews by virtue of geography were not privy to the daily comings and goings of temple life. The morning and evening Tamid offerings constituted a daily

⁵² Tacitus *Hist.* V.5; Juvenal *Sat.* XIV.96–106; cf. John Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) 67–88. Celsus regarded Judaism as a departure from polytheism to monotheism (*Cels.* 1.23–24). The testimony of Numenius (second century CE) that the Jewish God was “without communion with others (ἀκοινωνήτων), and Father of all the gods (πατέρα πάντων τῶν θεῶν), who will not allow anyone to share in his honour” (Édouard des Places, *Numénius: Fragments. Texte établi et traduit* [Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1973] fr. 56) demonstrates more his syncretistic tendencies than those of the Jews.

⁵³ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958) 1.86–89.

reminder to the priests, inhabitants, and visitors of Jerusalem of the uniqueness of Israel's one God,⁵⁴ but it was especially at festival times, when Jews from around the inhabited world would come to the temple to express corporate devotion to one God, that monotheistic cultic observance was most clearly disseminated from Jewish religious authorities at Jerusalem to Jews in the imperial provinces.⁵⁵ In addition to this localized sacrificial practice, there was among certain groups an eschatological expectation that the nations would one day come offering cultic sacrifice to the God of Israel at the Jerusalem temple.⁵⁶ This universalizing vision of sacrificial worship to the one God was embedded in Israel's prophetic literature,⁵⁷ and it represented the totalizing expectation—not merely the desire—for the full manifestation of Yahweh's universal reign *qua* the only God. To these groups at least, requirements for sacrificial worship of one God were not limited to Israel, and their faith should not be labeled merely “monolatrous.”⁵⁸

The temple was not the only outlet for expressing corporate Jewish devotion to one God; there was also the synagogue. And at least one practice was shared between the two—public recitation of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4–5). During the Hasmonean and Roman periods the *Shema*, which may have originally demonstrated the qualitative unity of God or of Israel's unique relationship to Yahweh,⁵⁹ now finds currency in strongly monotheistic, confessional texts, designed to express God's quantitative unity—his utter uniqueness as the *sole* God. The Mishnah preserves the memory of priests daily reciting in the Temple the *Shema* and Decalogue, in conjunction with Deut 11:13–21, Num 15:37–41, and several benedictions after the Tamid offering.⁶⁰ The memory of this pattern within first-century Palestinian synagogue worship is retained in later Talmudic texts.⁶¹ The custom of daily

⁵⁴ Cf. Exod 29:42; Num 28:3, 6; *m. Tamid* 3:5; 4:1.

⁵⁵ Cf. Acts 2:1, 8–11; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 1.66–97.

⁵⁶ E.g., *Sib. Or.* 3.564–72, 715–23, 772–75. Cf. Wolfgang Schrage, *Unterwegs zur Einzigkeit und Einheit Gottes: Zum “Monotheismus” des Paulus und seiner alttestamentlich-frühjüdischen Tradition* (Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002) 32–35.

⁵⁷ Cf. Isa 2:2; 55:5; 56:7; 60:3, 5; 66:20; Jer 3:17; 16:19; Ezek 37:28; Mic 4:2; Hag 2:7; Zech 8:22–23; 14:16; Mal 1:11. Prophetic expectation did not always include all Israel's ancient enemies; some would find themselves on the wrong end of God's judgment!

⁵⁸ *Pace* Heiser, “Divine Council,” 15.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 153.

⁶⁰ See *m. Tamid* 4:3; 5:1; *m. Ta'an.* 4:3; cf. *m. Ber.* 2:2.

⁶¹ See *b. Ber.* 10b–11a; *y. Šeb.* 4.2; Sifré Deut. 34; *y. Ber.* 1.3. The Houses of Hillel and Shammai and the early Yavneans purportedly debated the precise practice of the *when* and *how* of the

recitation also seems to have functioned in the Qumran community,⁶² but the earliest and perhaps most scintillating piece of evidence pointing to religious appropriation of the *Shema* remains the Nash Papyrus.⁶³ These four second-century BCE papyrus fragments⁶⁴ contain the *Shema* (Deut 6:4–5)⁶⁵ preceded by the entire Decalogue (probably from Deut 5:6–21 rather than Exod 20:2–17)⁶⁶ on a single leaf (i.e., not as part of a scroll).⁶⁷ The close collocation of these two texts indicates the use of the text as a lectionary or for instructional purposes,⁶⁸ though one cannot be certain whether the document was produced for public or private use. Nevertheless, at the least the Nash Papyrus adumbrates a pattern that was present—and even retained from earlier

ritual use of *Shema*, not the fact that it should be read. That is, the practice of reading the *Shema* was previously established. Cf. Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 112; *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70. Part II: The Houses* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971) 41–42.

⁶² See IQS 10:10; cf. E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992) 196.

⁶³ Initially edited and published by Stanley A. Cook (“A Pre-Massoretic Biblical Papyrus,” *PSBA* 25 [1903]: 34–56).

⁶⁴ W. F. Albright (“A Biblical Fragment from the Maccabean Age: The Nash Papyrus,” *JBL* 56 [1937]: 149), correcting the earlier estimate of Stanley Cook (“Pre-Massoretic Biblical Papyrus,” 51) that the papyrus should be dated to the first quarter of the second century CE, dates the text on paleographic grounds to the Maccabean age (165–137 BCE), indicating that the text should probably be located in the second half of the second century BCE, contemporary with the Roberts fragments of Deuteronomy. Albright’s conclusions have been largely accepted by other paleographers. See Frank Moore Cross (“The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” in G. Ernest Wright, ed., *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in honor of William Foxwell Albright* [The Biblical Colloquium 1961; repr. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1979] 135) and Joseph Naveh (*Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982] 162–63), cited in Paul Rainbow (“Jewish Monotheism as the Matrix for New Testament Christology: A Review Article,” *NovT* 33 [1991]: 82 n. 9). But V.A. Tcherikover and A. Fuks (eds., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (3 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957) 107 n. 48) prefer a first- or second-century CE date on the basis of “historical evidence,” by which they mean the Talmudic references indicating the Decalogue—*Shema* liturgical pattern. Since these references “refer in the utmost cases to the last decades of the Temple,” they are compelled to accept a later date (*op. cit.*, 107 n. 49). We see, however, no reason to doubt Albright’s conclusions despite the reservations of Tcherikover and Fuks.

⁶⁵ The text of the *Shema* preserved by Stanley A. Cook (“Pre-Massoretic Biblical Papyrus,” Plate II) reads:

שִׁמְעוּ (ע ישראל) לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד הוּא וְאֵלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לֹא (הַיְהוָה אֵת יְהוָה אֵלֵינוּ) לֹא (בְּכֹךְ וּגְוֹ).

The presence of אֶחָד after הוּא is conspicuous.

⁶⁶ That the *Shema* would occur in conjunction with a copy of the Deuteronomistic Decalogue makes sense in light of the proximity of the *Shema* and Decalogue in the biblical text of Deut 5–6 and the injunction in Deut 6:6 to remember “these words.” Albright avers that the Nash Papyrus presents a divergent form of the Deuteronomistic Decalogue, most closely related to Vaticanus (“A Biblical Fragment,” 175).

⁶⁷ Pace Cook, “Pre-Massoretic Biblical Papyrus,” 36. The juxtaposition of Decalogue and *Shema* indicate it did *not* come from a continuous scroll of the Pentateuch (cf. Albright, *ibid.*).

⁶⁸ Albright, *ibid.*

times?—in the first-century temple and synagogal practice of the recitation of the Decalogue followed by confession of the *Shema*.

The Decalogue and *Shema* were further worn on the hands and forehead of many faithful Jews in fulfillment of the command in Deut 6:8,⁶⁹ and *mezuzot* were placed upon household and other doors.⁷⁰ The use of phylacteries (*tefillin*) and *mezuzot* containing the *Shema* is well-attested at Qumran,⁷¹ and there is no reason to doubt that this practice was limited to that location in light of the biblical enjoiner in Deut 6:6–9 and the evidence above.⁷² The placement of the *Shema* on doorposts indicates further that the confession “the Lord is one” was not limited to synagogal or temple recitations, but penetrated into family religiosity, that is, the basic fabric of religious and social life. This conclusion finds support in debates among later rabbis and the practice of daily prayers.⁷³ On the individual level, one may envision a spectrum of religious adherence to this practice—one person reciting the *Shema* daily, another weekly, yet another as often as perceived necessary, and still another not at all.

We suggest that it is in the places of public worship—the temple and synagogue—in the very acts of sacrifice and public recitation of the *Shema* that we see most clearly the significant break from pre-exilic syncretistic Yahwism, where the public veneration on cultic altars of such deities as the Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:18; 44) alongside of Yahweh was not only tolerated but quite popular.⁷⁴ Similarly, some form of solar worship (heliolatry) had been connected to the temple in exilic times,⁷⁵ but we find no (overt) traces of this practice in the Second Temple. By the

⁶⁹ Matt 23:5; *Let. Arist.* 159; Josephus *Ant.* 4.213.

⁷⁰ *Let. Arist.* 158; Josephus *Ant.* 4.213.

⁷¹ Phylacteries: 4Q129–30, 4Q135, and 4Q140; *mezuzot*: 4Q150 (prob.), 4Q151. In J.T. Milik, ed., *Qumrân Grotte 4, II: Tefillin, Mezuzot et Targums (4Q128–4Q157)* (DJD 6; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

⁷² Deut 6:6 indicate that all God's commands, but primarily the Decalogue (note הַדְּבָרִים הַאֲלוֹהִים in 5:22 [cf. Deut 12:28] as well as the preponderance of forms from the root זָכַר in Deut 5 which link this section with the command in 6:6), are to be remembered in the ways specified in 6:6–9. On the use of *tefillin* and *mezuzot*, see Sanders (*Judaism*, 196–97).

⁷³ Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 4.212. Sanders' comment is apropos, “[T]he early rabbis linked prayer with saying the *Shema*”, and consequently they thought of the morning and evening prayers as being said privately at home” (*ibid.*, 203).

⁷⁴ Note also the continued post-exilic veneration of a female deity (named Anatyahu; i.e., the Queen of Heaven) at Elephantine in Egypt. The fifth-century BCE Jewish community at Elephantine demonstrates the ubiquitous nature of syncretistic Yahwism as far back as the Persian Period and provides a glimpse into earlier pre-exilic Judaism (*supra* n. 25).

⁷⁵ Ezek 8:16.

first century, many images from Israel's earlier pre-exilic worship had become absorbed in such a way that they no longer posed a threat to Israel's monotheism;⁷⁶ myth was reinvented. To whatever extent Israel's earlier syncretism was retained in popular Graeco-Roman Jewish religion, there is no evidence that this was of a public and cultic nature, nor that it was tolerated as the "accepted norm." The Deuteronomic reforms succeeded at the very core of public worship practice in the very heart of Judaism's most sacred temple. There was significant departure from earlier Israelite religious cultic practices at the very core of the cultic apparatus and presumably of the cultic rhetoric; what it meant to be a worshipper of Yahweh changed. Unless we give due weight to this dynamic shift, we will not properly evaluate the nature of Jewish religion.

There were, of course, dissident groups—most notably at Qumran—sectarians who had broken from the temple apparatus and its sacrifice. Yet this break occurred for reasons of fundamental disagreement about temple administration, not about the monotheistic penchant they found there. There is no evidence that these denizens of the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea ever practiced anything other than monotheism, as their practice of corporately hymning and praying to the one God alone indicates.⁷⁷

Another datum to incorporate is the practice of public prayer. The act of prayer itself is by no means a mark of monotheism, but a number of scholarly analyses of extant Jewish prayers have demonstrated that all the prayers in the non-canonical second-Temple Jewish literature were addressed to the God of Israel alone utilizing highly monotheistic rhetoric. This must be construed as first-hand evidence

⁷⁶ So, e.g., astronomical symbols appear on synagogal reliefs; cf. Rachel Hachlili (*Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* [HO; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988]) and J.H. Charlesworth ("Jewish Interest in Astrology during the Hellenistic and Roman Period," *ANRW* 20.2:926–50). Terminology and imagery formerly attested in Asherah worship became incorporated in the figure of Wisdom (*supra* n. 38). Martin Goodman argues that such images are not incompatible with Jewish belief in one God ("The Jewish Image of God in Late Antiquity," in Richard Kalmin and Seth Schwartz, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire* [Leuven: Peeters, 2003] 133–45). Erwin R. Goodenough (*Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period. Volume 8: Pagan Symbols in Judaism* [Bollingen Series 37; New York: Pantheon Books, 1958] 221) judges that the "invasion of pagan symbols into either Judaism or Christianity...involved a modification of the original faith, but by no means its abandonment." For him, hellenized Jews accepted the "value" of the pagan symbols but not their "explanation." This they did "with the same scorn of pagan gods, myths, and rites as the Christians and the rabbis showed" (*ibid.*, 224), and remained "equally loyal to their Jewish heritage of devotion to the Jewish God, Torah, and People" (*ibid.*, 226).

⁷⁷ See n. 62.

for the presence of a monotheistic penchant.⁷⁸ From the apocalypses and Jewish polemic literature to the sectarian literature of Qumran, there is no evidence that Jews deviated from the practice of directing their prayers to the one God. However, enough epigraphic and secondary testimony has survived attesting the Jewish practice of prayers directed apotropically towards angels that some forms of angel veneration must have existed in Graeco-Roman era Judaism.⁷⁹ This is further bolstered by references preserved within primary Jewish literature possibly attesting the practice of sacrifice directed towards angels.⁸⁰ If all of the cultic patterns mentioned above indicate a fundamental cultic commitment within Graeco-Roman Judaism to exclusivist monotheism, what then are we to make of the practice of veneration to angels or other personal divine agency figures⁸¹ that clearly held an important role to some Jews?⁸²

⁷⁸ See the studies of Rainbow ("Monotheism and Christology," 1.49–51, *passim*), Henry J. Wicks (*The Doctrine of God in the Jewish Apocryphal and Apocalyptic Literature* [London: Hunter & Longhurst, 1915] 122–29), N.B. Johnson (*Prayer in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Study of the Jewish Concept of God* [SBLMS 2; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1948]), and J.H. Charlesworth ("A Prolegomenon to a New Study of the Jewish Background of the Hymns and Prayers in the New Testament," *JJS* 33 [1982]: 265–85; "Jewish Hymns, Odes, and Prayers (ca. 167 BCE–135 CE)," in R.A. Kraft and G.W.E. Nickelsburg, eds., *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986] 411–36).

⁷⁹ For epigraphic evidence, see C.E. Arnold's unpublished paper ("Mediator Figures in Asia Minor: Epigraphic Evidence," SBL Consultation on Jewish and Christian Mediator Figures in Graeco-Roman Antiquity, San Francisco, November 1992), cited by Hurtado ("First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 17 n. 36). The practice of apotropaic appeal to angelic beings continued into rabbinic times (cf. Hayman, "Monotheism," 10–11).

For secondary testimony to Jewish angel worship, see Col 2:18; *Kerygma Petrou* (in Clement, *Strom.* 6.5.39–41); and Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.17; *Cels.* 1.26; 5.6 (note Origen's counter-argument in 5.6). The value of reference to angel veneration in Aristides *Apol.* 14 (Syriac), however, is too often overrated; it actually offers a veiled attestation of a strongly monotheistic penchant in Jewish cult (see *infra* ch. 4 n. 113)! The fact that such activity was later proscribed by the Rabbis indicates they perceived the practice as posing a real threat to Jewish monotheism.

The names of angels eventually found a place in the public liturgy of medieval synagogues, yet this in no way implies any practice of corporate angel veneration in the Middle Ages—however local or ubiquitous. L. Zunz (*Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* [Berlin: Julius Springer, 1855]) provides a list of approximately forty angels so referenced (Supplement 22, pp. 476–79), though he notes (p. 149), "Keins dieser Gebete konnte den Betenden zu glauben veranlassen, dass sein Heil von einem andern als von Gott abhänge; auch ist nur in einem, in aramäischer Sprache, Michael, in einem ähnlichen Metatron genannt und in einer, übrigens ungebräuchlichen, Selicha werden 22 Gottes- und Engelnamen mit eingeführt." The latter comment refers to the hymn (from Greece?) אֲרִי־מִן־שָׁמַיִם ("I will exalt You, the Name;" *ibid.*, 301–02).

⁸⁰ *Pseudo-Philo* 13:6; 34:2.

⁸¹ Conceptually, personified (hypostatized?) divine attributes (sc. Logos, Wisdom) should be distinguished from the category of personal divine agency figures (sc. principal angels, exalted patriarchs) when discussing early Jewish belief, since there was within the ancient Jewish mind a qualitative difference between Creator and created (cf. Rainbow, "Jewish Monotheism," 84). In the realm of religious practice, one would be hard pressed to find evidence of devotion, whether private or public, directed towards God's Wisdom or Logos in Graeco-Roman Judaism; these were powerful

Did devotion to a “second figure” alongside God constitute a serious threat to Jewish monotheism? In reference to theology and cult, one could contend that devotion to a “second figure” alongside the one God does pose such a threat. Certainly the Rabbis argued so,⁸³ and they mounted “a tremendous propaganda battle in the midrashim to downgrade the angels and stress Israel’s superiority to them.”⁸⁴ Nor were they arguing only against the theological significance of a second exalted figure; they were concerned with actual worship practices. On the other hand, from the paucity of primary Jewish references attesting the practice of devotion to a second exalted figure, one may be justified in concluding it was limited in scope (see further §3 below). It is clear that in some Jewish communities certain principal angels (e.g., Metatron) took on a sustained importance theologically, and several texts preserve traditions about the exaltation of certain patriarchs to angelic status (e.g., Enoch, Moses, and Jacob).⁸⁵ These figures were endowed with numinous qualities, were closely involved in carrying out the purposes of God, and could even be invested with the divine name. Yet despite the powerful *theological* presentations of these personal beings in this literature, there is no clear-cut example that any exalted patriarch or principal angel ever received corporate veneration in Jewish circles nor that the crucial Jewish distinction between Creator and creature was ever corporately broken. Further, there exist a number of apocalyptic passages in which a human is explicitly forbidden from worshiping an angel, whom he has mistakenly identified with God.⁸⁶ An investigation into epigraphic evidence (with special

extensions of God’s power, but were not objects of worship. Rather, it was personal divine agency figures and principal angels that came closest to encroaching upon the cultic worship of Yahweh and posed a greater threat to his cult.

⁸² On angel veneration, see Samuel Cohon (“The Unity of God: A Study in Hellenistic and Rabbinic Theology,” *HUCA* 26 [1955]: 474–76), Barker (*Great Angel*, 70–96), Hurtado (*One God, One Lord*, 28–35 et ch. 4), Stuckenbruck (*Angel Veneration*, 75–103), Michael Mach (*Entwicklungsstadien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit* [TSAJ 34; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992]), Saul M. Olyan (*A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism* [TSAJ 36; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993]), Charles Gieschen (*Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* [AGJU 42; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998]), Bauckham (*God Crucified*; “The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* [JSJSup 63; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999] 43–69).

⁸³ Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

⁸⁴ Hayman, “Monotheism,” 7. He further notes the prominence of referring to God and his angels in Jewish magical texts, but the evidence is from Talmudic or later periods (*ibid.*, 10).

⁸⁵ Cf. 2 *En.* 22.6–10.

⁸⁶ Cf. *Apoc. Zeph.* 6.15; *Ascen. Isa.* 7.21–22; *Rev* 19:10; 22:8–9; see Bauckham, “Throne of God.”

reference to the role of angels) led Clinton Arnold to grant that angels were invoked apotropically in certain Jewish inscriptions, though he concluded that the epigraphic testimony simply does not point to any kind of organized devotional pattern in which Jews “gather regularly to adore, pray to, and worship angels.”⁸⁷ Personal divine agents, however exalted and proximate to the one God, were clearly distinguished from that God in respect to corporate cultus. There seems to have been no sense in which the one God of Israel was ever in jeopardy of losing his corporate, cultic preeminence within the predominant streams of Judaism, and there is simply not enough evidence to state affirmatively that a corporate cultus devoted to angels or exalted patriarchs existed at all within early Judaism; the practice appears to be private.⁸⁸ Rainbow rightly comments, “[S]urely such worship of angels as there might have been was a declension from a socially shared ideal.”⁸⁹ Even if one were able to locate an indisputable instance of corporate cultic reverence of a being other than the true God within second-Temple Judaism (a concession which has yet been demonstrated), the question must still be raised as to how significant that instance would be, given the numerous Jewish writings which have come down to us that not only attest no such veneration but rather actually support the conclusion that Jewish religious practice was solidly monotheistic.⁹⁰

2.2.2 Rhetoric as Clue to Jewish Monotheism

A number of scholars have investigated aspects of Graeco-Roman Jewish monotheistic rhetoric,⁹¹ and most of these have received brief review elsewhere.⁹² In

⁸⁷ “Mediator Figures,” 21 (cf. pp. 26–27), cited by Hurtado (“First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” 17). Similarly, note Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, 8.228: “Many individual Jews... seem to me to have been paganized, but not the Judaism of the group as a whole.”

⁸⁸ Rainbow comments, “It is difficult if not impossible to demonstrate that there was any widespread Jewish movement toward cults other than that of the one God” (“Jewish Monotheism,” 83).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Further, one would have to ask whether it could not have occurred within an “orthodox” conception of monotheistic cult. As Michael Frede observes with respect to Christianity, “Even on an orthodox [Christian] view there is a place for the invocation or even the veneration of the angels and the saints in some sense of these words” (“Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity,” in P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede, eds., *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999] 64). Note also the conclusions of Rainbow (“Jewish Monotheism,” 85), who quotes Gerhard Pfeifer (*Ursprung und Wesen der Hypostasenvorstellungen im Judentum* [AzTh 1/31; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1967] 66, 102).

⁹¹ On the emergence of monotheistic rhetoric before the Exile, see Smith (*Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 151ff.). On rhetoric in Graeco-Roman Judaism, see Cohon (“Unity of God,” 425–79), Adolf Schlatter (*Wie sprach Josephus von Gott?* [BFCT 1/14; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932]), R.J.H.

our opinion, the single most significant analysis of second-Temple Jewish rhetoric is the D.Phil. thesis of Paul Rainbow, who undertook a rigorous evaluation of monotheistic rhetoric in early Judaism (ca. 200 BCE–100 CE). Rainbow’s analysis of Jewish religious rhetoric led him to note that over half of all the monotheistic Jewish texts (which he surveyed) functioned in either creedal or confessional statements or in prayers.⁹³ This is simply astonishing, and it demonstrates how deeply imbedded monotheistic rhetoric was within the corporate religious practice and psyche of early Judaism. The sheer frequency of this monotheistic language within the religious rhetoric of early Judaism in general and its inclusion into corporate and private devotion strongly indicate that Jewish religious language functioned to voice an already highly developed monotheistic scruple. In this section we focus on the appearance of monotheistic rhetoric within Deutero-Isaiah and its later reception and examine additional references to language of divine exclusivity and unity in early Jewish texts, since these latter types of language bear most directly on this thesis.

Since we have already had occasion to mention the use of the *Shema* in Jewish religious practice, perhaps the best place to begin investigating these aspects of unity and exclusivity rhetoric in the early Jewish period is with an examination of a set of monotheistic statements found in Deutero-Isaiah (esp. chs. 41–52) and of the reception these texts received in later Judaism. The prophet launches a salvo of “I”-style speech placed in the mouth of God, including: אֲנִי יְהוָה (41:17; 42:6, 8; 43:15; 44:24, 45:3, 5–8, 18–19, 21; 49:23, 26; cf. 43:11), אֲנִי הוּא (41:4; 43:10, 13; 46:4; 48:12; 52:6; cf. 43:25; 51:12), אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים (44:6; 48:12; cf. 41:4), אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים (43:12; 45:22; 46:9), אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךְ (41:13; 43:3; 48:17; 51:15), אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵיךְ (41:10), and the extended “I”-declarations in which אֲנִי or אֱלֹהִים are doubled for emphasis (43:11, 25; 48:15; 51:12), a technique characteristic of

Shutt (“The Concept of God in the Works of Flavius Josephus,” *JJS* 31 [1980]: 171–87), Wicks (*Doctrine of God*), Rainbow (“Monotheism and Christology;” “Jewish Monotheism,” 78–91), and Schrage (*Unterwegs*, 18–27). To the above list, we would add for NT monotheistic rhetoric (as a legitimate source of Graeco-Roman Jewish expression) David Ball (*‘I Am’ in John’s Gospel: Literary Function, Background, and Theological Implications* [JSNTSup 124; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996]) and Catrin H. Williams (*I am He: The Interpretation of ‘Aní Hú’ in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* [WUNT 2.113; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2000]). A. Marmorstein’s influential article (“The Unity of God in Rabbinic Literature,” *HUCA* 1 [1924]: 467–99) complements the theme for rabbinic literature.

⁹² See Hurtado’s helpful analysis (“First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” 10–12).

⁹³ Rainbow, “Monotheism and Christology,” 1.49. See particularly Appendix 1 (*ibid.*, 2.224–286), where Rainbow has performed a rather exhaustive cataloging of Jewish monotheistic texts from the period ca. 200 BCE to 100 CE.

Deutero-Isaiah's style.⁹⁴ Additionally, a number of divine "formulas of exclusivity" ("there is no other God besides me"; cf. 43:11; 44:5–6, 8; 45:5–6, 21; 46:9) and "formulas of incomparability" ("there is no one like me"; cf. 44:7; 46:9) occur.⁹⁵ With these various self-predication formulas, Yahweh himself, the covenant God of Israel, could boast of his *own* exclusive existence as the sole God as well as his incomparable uniqueness, saving power, and universal hegemony. He places himself in a class of his own. The programmatic amassing of these divine "I"-speeches in Deutero-Isaiah is designed rhetorically to emphasize Yahweh's utter uniqueness, incomparability, and exclusive existence as God. These formulas voice a strict monotheism in a manner rather unique to this portion of the OT.⁹⁶

Or do they? In his Ph.D. dissertation, Michael Heiser raises this interesting and important question. He contends that the rhetoric of Deutero-Isaiah, often taken as the most clearly monotheistic language in the OT, actually bears the rhetorical force of incomparability—not exclusivity—language, since, for Heiser, the meta-narrative of pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic Israelite religion is a monolatry in which the ancient divine council motif is retained.⁹⁷ Yahweh is simply elevated to incomparable status above these other gods within Israel's own belief system. For Heiser, Deutero-Isaiah was actually a proponent of monolatry not monotheism.

Strictly speaking we cannot utilize the criteria of actual cultic practice to analyze Deutero-Isaiah's religious assertions, for there are no clear indicators as to what he or his community actually practiced historically by way of cult.⁹⁸ There are, however, a number of rhetorical indicators that lead me to diverge from Heiser's

⁹⁴ Cf. also Deut 32:39; Hos 5:14.

⁹⁵ Rechenmacher (»*Außer mir*«, 161–76) identifies four formulas which occur in combination with the exclusivity formula (*Selbstidentifikationsformel*, *Fremdidentifikationsformel*, *Erkenntnisformel*, *Unvergleichlichkeitsformel*) and three which "vergleichbare Inhalte ausdrücken können" (*Unvergleichlichkeitsformel*, *Nichtassoziationsformel*, *Alleinigkeitsformel*). Only the "formula of incomparability" occupies a *Sonderstellung* as both combination partner and candidate for equivalent semantic value (*semantische Gleichwertigkeit*) to the exclusivity rhetoric (cf. *ibid.*, 161 n. 419).

⁹⁶ With the Deutero-Isaianic "self-identification formulas" (= *selbständiges Personalpronomen* + *Gottesname*) the idea of one God is positively affirmed; with the "exclusivity formulas" the existence of other gods is negated. Thus are met Rechenmacher's necessary elements of the definition of monotheism (»*Außer mir*«, 191–92). We are happy to note that we found ourselves in agreement with Rechenmacher's basic conclusions even before accessing his thoroughgoing work on OT exclusivity rhetoric (cf. *ibid.*, 184–86; 195–204).

⁹⁷ See his discussion in "Divine Council," 102–21.

⁹⁸ Reconstructing the historical setting of the composition of Deutero-Isaiah has always proven a slippery prospect.

incredulity in this regard, the first of which actually does concern cultic apparatus. The reader of chapters 40–55 of Isaiah cannot but notice the sardonic and vehement quality of the author’s foments against the *cultic apparatus* of idolatry itself (cf. Isa 40:18–20); even God himself is presented as sharing this sentiment (44:6–20; 46:1–2). This technique appears commonly in Jewish apologetic literature as a means of discrediting the practice of idolatry (e.g., Wis. 13–15), but here it seems to be aimed directly at discrediting the existence of any other god that could possibly be responsible for animating these idols.

Second, there is in Deutero-Isaiah’s rhetoric a genuine denial of the existence of other gods. The almost rapid-fire succession of exclusivity statements aimed at denying the actual existence of any other gods demonstrates this. Scholars have long noted a number of parallels between the rhetoric of Deutero-Isaiah and the prayers, hymns, and inscriptions of the ancient Near East,⁹⁹ but we submit that the language of Deutero-Isaiah is to some extent distinctive among the cultic language of the ancient Near East. The אֱנִי/אֲנִי-patterns found particularly in Isaiah 41–51 have similar counterparts in the self-predication hymns or “hymns to oneself” of the Sumerian literature, in which a deity praises his or her own attributes or abilities, as Dion has demonstrated.¹⁰⁰ Morton Smith has further observed the presence of exclusivity language in worship addressed to a patron deity.¹⁰¹ He notes, “The god being worshiped is regularly flattered—that is to say, exalted. Though he may occupy a minor position in the preserved mythological works, yet in the worship addressed to him he is regularly represented as greater than all other gods. It is often said that he created not only the world, but also the other gods. He is the only true

⁹⁹ For a listing (through 1968) of relevant literature on the use of Babylonian and other ancient Near-Eastern language in Deutero-Isaiah, see Shalom M. Paul (“Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions,” *JAOS* 88 [1968]: 180 n. 3); for a brief overview of the history of the debate, consult Eugene H. Merrill (“The Language and Literary Characteristics of Isaiah 40–55 as Anti-Babylonian Polemic” [PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1984] 4–12).

In discussing parallels between Deutero-Isaiah and cuneiform literature, one must be careful not to attribute to Babylonian influence that which Deutero-Isaiah used from his pre-tradition. If Benjamin Sommer’s proposal is correct (and we believe it has merit), Deutero-Isaiah was fond of using Jeremiah (cf. *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998] 61–66, *passim*). This observation led Paul (“Deutero-Isaiah,” 184–86) to exercise caution in attributing the oft-repeated Deutero-Isaianic motif of prenatal divine selection (e.g., 49:1, 5) to Babylonian influence (particularly the royal inscriptions), where the theme appeared from Aššur-rēš-iši I (1130–1113 BCE) to Nabonidus (556–539 BCE).

¹⁰⁰ H.-M. Dion, “Le genre littéraire sumérien de l’«hymne à soi-même» et quelques passages du Deutéro-Isaïe,” *RB* 74 (1967), 215–34.

¹⁰¹ “Common Theology,” 135–47.

god; sometimes, even when worshiped in close connection with other deities, the only god.”¹⁰² The overlaps are significant enough to have spawned at least one high-quality dissertation directed towards literary analysis of these parallels.¹⁰³ If monotheistic-sounding language exalting one god above all others occurs readily in cultures outside Israel, in sources of a clearly polytheistic background, in what sense can we speak of the “distinctive” quality of Deutero-Isaianic rhetoric? Only with respect to the strict exclusivity statements such as those found in Deutero-Isaiah in which a deity posits his or her own exclusive existence—“there is no god but me.” Smith’s examples of exclusivity language demonstrate this specific type of rhetoric only on the lips of *worshippers* fawningly addressed to a deity among the pantheon and always limited to terse adjectival additions, such as “sole God,” “only Lord,” etc. A survey of highly relevant literature produced no precise counterpart to this language in the contemporary cultures,¹⁰⁴ and we posit that Deutero-Isaiah is truly being rhetorically creative at this point. Indeed, of the explicit rejection of the existence of all other gods by a deity such as occurs in Deutero-Isaiah we have yet to locate a single instance in the religious language of the polytheistic cultures. A divinity may claim to create by himself (e.g., *ANET* 6b)—even to create the other gods—or to be the only savior, et cetera, but nowhere do we find rejection of the existence of the other gods in the pantheon. Perhaps this is due to the fact that such an assertion cannot obtain internal consistency within a polytheistic matrix. If such statements do occur, they are relatively rare, and certainly not collated with the kind

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 138–39. Smith comments further, “This does not mean, of course, that he is actually thought to be the only god; the expression is usually no more than a form of flattery; only in a few special cases does it come to be taken literally. As a form of flattery it is often an expression of local patriotism, which achieved it by a chain of exaggeration something like this: Our god is the greatest of all gods, there is none other like him, there is none other” (*ibid.*, 139–40).

¹⁰³ We refer to Merrill’s “Language and Literary Characteristics.”

¹⁰⁴ We welcome correction on this point. The author is no specialist in the field of ancient Near Eastern cultures; nevertheless, a search through the references in Smith’s “Common Theology,” Merrill’s “Language and Literary Characteristics,” and the sources utilized in H.-M. Dion’s famous “Le genre littéraire” (cf. 222 n. 36), revealed not a single instance of a deity denying the existence of other gods such as that found in Deutero-Isaiah, where it appears with astounding frequency! The closest, and most intriguing, parallel appears in the self-generation account of Re (sc. “After I had come into being as the sole god, there were three gods beside me;” *ANET* 6b), who also claims, “and I made (in concept) every form when I was alone...before (any) other had come into being who could act with me” (*ANET* 6b). These last two texts represent close parallels to Deutero-Isaiah, but they also presuppose that other gods would subsequently come into existence, such that there was a time when Re existed without counterpart, but now he is surrounded by other gods. By personal correspondence, Prof. Nicholas Wyatt at New College, Edinburgh, also confirmed that he was unaware of any such exclusivity statements in ANE literature comparable to those in Deutero-Isaiah. Deutero-Isaiah’s language is “distinct.”

of frequency found in Deutero-Isaiah. This alone indicates distinction between his rhetoric and the concepts it represents and that of other ancient Near Eastern cultures. In investigating the literature, scholars must look for actual parallels.¹⁰⁵ Apparently this type of language was the near exclusive inheritance of Israel's prophetic tradition.

Beyond this, one may add some more traditional factors used to recognize monotheism, though we should stress it is the cultic context and religious rhetoric that point most firmly in the direction of monotheism here. We may note that Yahweh worked entirely alone at creation (cf. Isa 40:12–17, 28–31; implied). Yahweh alone—not the other gods—has the ability to tell the future, as he himself declares (Isa 41:23; 44:7–8; 48:3–5), and his reign universally extends over the entire earth so that he does with the nations what he wills (e.g., Isa 40:15–17; 41:2; 52:10). This universal scope is expanded to include cultic practice as the prophet anticipates a universal dimension to the cultic worship of Yahweh through the administration of his servant (cf. Isa 55:5). Further, Yahweh's salvation of his people (ישועת אֱלֹהֵינוּ) will be universally recognized (Isa 52:10, 15).¹⁰⁶ Apparently, Deutero-Isaiah's ridicule of idolatry reveals that the worship of worthless idols is vain not only for Israel, but for the nations too! It is Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over history, over the future (and its predictability) that demands his worship and demonstrates the utter impotence of other fictitious "gods" to act.

Of course, to examine the rhetoric of the Hebrew texts of Isaiah does not necessarily place us outside of the time period of interest. These texts were later reappropriated during the Roman period as the discovery of Hebrew manuscripts of Isaiah uncovered in the caves of Qumran demonstrates. Even beyond Qumran, it is likely that these texts had become imbedded within the religious life (if not the very liturgy itself) of the synagogues of Palestinian Jewry in the first century CE (cf. Luke 4:16–21), though we know very little about the existence of set lectionaries for the

¹⁰⁵ A point well-stressed by Samuel Sandmel ("Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 [1962]: 1–13) and T.L. Donaldson ("Parallels: Use, Misuse, and Limitations," *EvQ* 55 [1983]: 193–210).

¹⁰⁶ Jews did not seem to back this conviction up with a missionizing agenda. Martin Goodman explores the evidence for a Jewish proselytizing mission before commenting, "On examination, then, the evidence for an active mission by first-century Jews to win proselytes is very weak. I think that it is possible to go further and to suggest that there are *positive* reasons to deny the existence of such a mission" ("Jewish Proselytizing in the First Century," in J. Lieu, J. North, and T. Rajak, eds., *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* [London; New York: Routledge, 1992] 70). There was, nevertheless, popular apocalyptic expectation that Yahweh would be universally worshipped.

Haftorah during this time period. Even as early as the second century BCE, continuing interest in these monotheistic texts may be demonstrated by their incorporation into the Old Greek translation. Yet to argue from the inclusion of Isaiah (as a religiously authoritative text) in the Greek translation of the Bible at the hands of Alexandrian Jewry or from its presumed usage in first-century CE synagogal worship is not to provide unequivocal evidence of a ubiquitous reappropriation of this Deutero-Isaianic literature or rhetoric. What it does demonstrate is the continuing presence of this language within the textual traditions of early Judaism, though admittedly, this tradition of divine-predication language did not find heavy usage within the continuing Jewish tradition *in the exact form it took in Deutero-Isaiah* (see below). The formula of divine self-exclusivity does, however, occur in some additional prophetic literature (cf. Isaiah 63:3, 5; Hos 13:4; Joel 2:27) as well as Deut 32:39¹⁰⁷ (=LXX Odes 2:39). Outside these biblical texts and apart from the possible exception of the Passover Haggadah and 2 *Enoch* (33:8; 36:1), if these latter two are datable to the Roman era or earlier,¹⁰⁸ the discourse of divine self-exclusivity does not find further expression in early Jewish literature.

The language of divine self-exclusivity in which Yahweh so unequivocally pronounced his exclusive existence as universal and sole God did, however, continue to receive special attention in early Jewish literature through a series of modified, counterpart, and cognate expressions, which we may call “confessions (or

¹⁰⁷ The peculiar phrasing of MT Deut 32:39 (אֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּי; there is no god *with me*; cf. Deut 32:12), in conjunction with other language which does not positively deny the existence of other gods (cf. Deut 5:7; 32:12) would seem to indicate that the Hebrew text of Deut 32:39 does not contain the same specificity and detailed rejection of the existence of other gods as found in Deutero-Isaiah. LXX Deut 32:39, however, clearly shifts the language in the direction of an exclusivist monotheism (καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς πλὴν ἐμοῦ). This movement towards an unambiguous monotheistic statement from the text of Deut 32:39 also occurred in other versions: PTgs, Pesh, and Vg, but not SamP. See Williams, *I am He*, 68–74, 86–102.

¹⁰⁸ For a late third-century dating (240–220 BCE) of the Passover Haggadah, consult Louis Finkelstein (“The Oldest Midrash: Pre-Rabbinic Ideals and Teachings in the Passover Haggadah,” *HTR* 31 [1938]: 291–317), who posits 150 BCE as an alternative interpretation. The section in question (the text reads אֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּי וְיְהוָה יֵלֵא אֱהָרָה) forms a midrashic commentary on Exod 12:12, which itself is offered in the Haggadah as an explanatory comment on the main text of Deut 26:8. Thus it forms a kind of midrash on a midrash. Following Williams (*I am He*, 201–05), we are inclined to date this text to the post-Christian era, believing it to be of secondary character. The third century CE represents the absolute *terminus ad quem*, since the Passover midrash is cited in the tannaitic midrashim.

On the date of 2 *Enoch*, see F.I. Andersen (“2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch. A New Translation and Introduction” in OTP 1.94–97), who notes that “dates ranging all the way from pre-Christian times to the late Middle Ages have been proposed for the production of 2 Enoch.” Lester Grabbe (*Judaic Religion*, 98–99) situates it in the Roman era (63 BCE–70 CE).

acclamations) of exclusivity.”¹⁰⁹ In these acclamations, a second party confesses and proclaims the exclusive existence of Yahweh as the one true God (e.g., “You alone exist”; “there is no other besides him”).¹¹⁰ This shift away from the strongly divine rhetoric of Deutero-Isaiah towards a confessional stance represents to some extent a move from epiphanic revelation towards cultic confession,¹¹¹ and it corresponds further to a general movement away in our period from the prophetic practice of speaking directly in the name of God. We believe it is justifiable to assert that the nearest conceptual basis for this type of language is Isaiah 40–55 and Deut 32:39 and possibly other Jewish texts (2 Sam 7:22; 1 Kgs 8:60) whose authoritative role was recognized among various Jewish communities, and not the generic language of prayer common in the ancient Near East. If we are correct in viewing this larger body of confessions of exclusivity as related to divine-exclusivity language of Deutero-Isaiah and Deuteronomy, then it is probable that Jews of the second-Temple period were reading Deutero-Isaiah monotheistically.

Perhaps what is most astonishing about this body of exclusivity language taken as a whole is the evidence it offers for the variety of settings, in particular cultic settings, within which this exclusivist language was used.¹¹² Such a cultic-communal application of this language is only intuitive, for by their very nature, these exclusivity statements are confessions spoken by a votary to the one God. In the extant early Jewish literature, this rhetoric was incorporated into the language of corporate (*Hel. Syn. Pr.* 4.26–7; 1QH 15:32; 18:9; Sir 36:4; 2 Esd 19:6) and private prayer (1 Kgdms 2:2; 2 Kgdms 7:22; 4 Kgdms 19:15, 19; Jdt 9:14).¹¹³ It is invoked in public blessings (3 Kgdms 8:60) and at least one acclamation (Isa 45:14). It is placed upon the mouths of the faithful, and it appears on the lips of pagans (Bel 41; Ps.-

¹⁰⁹ These statements are numerous and include the following: Deut 4:35; 32:12; 1 Kgdms 2:2 = Odes 3:2; 2 Kgdms 7:22 = *1 Par.* 17:20; 3 Kgdms 8:60; 4 Kgdms 19:15, 19 = Isa 37:16, 20; Isa 45:14; Dan 3:96 [3:29 Eng.]; Bel 41; 2 Esd 19:6; 4 Ezra 8:7; Jdt 9:14; Wis 12:13; Sir 36:4 [36:5 Eng.]; 1QH 15:32; 18:9; 20:11, 19; 1QS 11:18; 4Q377 f2:8; 4Q379 f22i:5; 4Q504 5:8b–9a; Ps.-Orph. 17; *Sib. Or.* 3.629, 760; *Hel. Syn. Pr.* 4.26–7; and 2 *En.* 47:3. Of course, not all of these stem from our period of interest.

¹¹⁰ These statements bear similitude with those of Isaiah 41–52 and are probably related to them directly. This confessional-exclusivity form was already present (though not preeminent) in the writings of Deutero-Isaiah (cf. 45:14).

¹¹¹ Cf. Rechenmacher, »*Außer mir*,« 168–69.

¹¹² OT literary genres in which exclusivity formulas occur are discussed by Rechenmacher (*ibid.*, 176–80).

¹¹³ The texts of these passages literarily position acclamations of exclusivity in the context of private prayer, yet the corporate language and parenetic content often used in these texts signal that they were composed for public consumption.

Orph. 17). Indeed, the ascription of this language of exclusivist monotheism to a pagan monarch presents one of the more genuinely shocking motifs in this analysis (Dan 3:96; Bel 41), and it appears both to highlight the universal nature of the one true and only God and to exhort the faithful against too extensive an assimilation into pagan culture. Another truly astonishing element is the appeal for gentile conversion to the one true God based upon the fact of his exclusive existence *qua* God (*Sib. Or.* 3:629). In this latter text, the Sibyl issues a plea for repentance to be demonstrated through the offering of a sacrificial hecatomb, indicating that confessions of exclusivity were appropriate to sacrificial contexts. The appeal to pagan sources (interpreted monotheistically) to bolster the case for the universal nature of the one unique God is not uncommon, and it is not surprising that we find confessions of exclusivity in such contexts (cf. Ps.-Orph. 17). Confessions of exclusivity appear in texts from Egypt (LXX; *Sib. Or.*), Palestine (1QH; 1QS), and a later text (ca. 150 CE) possibly composed in Syria (*Hel. Syn. Pr.* 4:27). As though the language of exclusivity were not sufficient enough to express the true nature of the one God, these texts appear in the context of other anti-idolatry statements (4 Kgdms 19:15, 19), a theme about which more will be said below.

Alongside this tradition of divine exclusivity language, in which God himself or his people affirm his own exclusive existence, one may consider the tradition of human self-predication also encountered in Isaiah (47:8, 10) as well as Zephaniah (2:15), a tradition which reappears in the second-Temple (Sirach 36:9) and post-second-Temple eras (*Sib. Or.* 5.173; cf. 5.186, 190–92). In this group of statements, a human speaker boasts of his or her own power (and usually military prowess) by means of a confession of exclusivity (e.g., “I am, and there is no one besides me”). In Isaiah 47 and Zeph 2, these exclusivity statements are coupled with the absolute confession ἐγὼ εἶμι (for Heb. אֲנִי!). In the former passage, we see personified-Babylon and in the latter Nineveh. In Isaiah, Zephaniah, Sirach, and *Sib. Or.* 5, this language is placed on the lips of foreign empires or rulers (personified Babylon/Nineveh or foreign nations) and represents an early Jewish stream of *argumentum contra imperium* on the basis of God’s universal sovereignty as the one true God. On the one hand, these statements expose the unbridled hubris and arrogance of world empires, which represent for the author the basest level of human pride. By means of this language, the author can fulminate against oppressive nations. But below the surface, this language is actually a carefully crafted argument in favor of the sole God. By presenting the corporate pride of empire as a complete

and utter refusal (not merely a misunderstanding) to acknowledge the presence of the sole God, the author highlights the actual existence of the one true God, who alone exists and reigns in universal sovereignty. This group of texts then stands in a kind of dyadic relationship with the divine self-exclusivity and confessional exclusivity statements. Together they work synergistically to reinforce a strong, exclusivist monotheistic stance. The one set affirmatively emphasizes Yahweh's unique existence as sole God; the other brings his exclusiveness into relief by negatively denouncing the folly of human hubris.

It is true that the use of “there is no other” by Babylon and Nineveh does not exclude the ontological existence of other cities and nations. On analogy with this, Heiser argues that the divine self-exclusivity statements actually do not exclude the existence of other deities (sc. the divine council concept continues in the monolatry of Deutero-Isaiah).¹¹⁴ For him, the point of אֵין עוֹד (divine self-predication) is “not to deny the existence of other gods, but to affirm that Yahweh is unique and the only god *for Israel*.”¹¹⁵ However, in his analogy between אֵין עוֹד and the human self-predication אַפְסֵי עוֹד, he has overlooked a larger distinction in the lexical forms of divine and human self-exclusivity statements, which actually reverses his argument. The linguistic and lexical structures of these human exclusivity statements are consistently different from those of the divine exclusivity statements in both Hebrew and Greek manuscript traditions.¹¹⁶ The rhetoric of human self-exclusivity is to be sure merely designed to differentiate the speaker as plenipotent over all other city-states, yet the overall force of that rhetoric demonstrates the feckless folly of specifically *human* pride in the face of *Yahweh's* universal power. It serves to safeguard the uniqueness and exclusiveness of the creator, by distancing him from the creature!

The discussion above has focused on self-exclusivity expressions, but another Deutero-Isaianic expression of significance appears also, the phrase אֲנִי הוּא / אֲנִי הוּא (“I am he”), which became the absolute (i.e., non-predicated) ἐγὼ εἰμι (“I am”) later

¹¹⁴ So Heiser, “Divine Council,” 95–96.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 96; emphasis added.

¹¹⁶ All the divine self-exclusivity statements use one of the following to express exclusion: [אֵין עוֹד]; אֵין בלעדי; אַפְסֵי בלעדי; אֵין זולתי; אֵין עוֹד; אֵין בלתי; אֵין בלתי, while human self-exclusivity statements (Isa 47:8, 10; Zeph 2:8) are unanimous in their use of אַפְסֵי עוֹד. Lexical distinction between these two types of statement is drawn in Hebrew, and it apparently was not overlooked by the translators of LXX (divine self-exclusivity: οὐκ ἄρα ἐμοῦ; οὐκ [ἔτι] πλὴν ἐμοῦ; human exclusivity: οὐκ ἑτέρω; οὐκ μετ' ἐμὲ ἔτι).

reappearing in the writings of the NT.¹¹⁷ Outside LXX versions, the absolute use of ἐγώ εἰμι occurs nowhere else in the Jewish corpora or the non-Jewish Greek literature included in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* corpus, and it does not resurface until the NT (cf. Mark 14:62; John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19).¹¹⁸ When it later resurfaces in Rabbinic literature, אֲנִי הוּא provides a succinct expression of God's claim to exclusiveness and uniqueness.¹¹⁹

In addition to the rhetoric discussed above, confessions of “God is one” occur frequently in writings with Jewish origin from the second century BCE to the first century CE. Among these we may include the fragment attributed to Sophocles by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5.113), which he says were preserved in a Jewish work entitled “On Abraham and the Egyptians” and which he (spuriously) attributes to Hecataeus of Abdera.¹²⁰ We may also mention here Ps.-Hec. 5; Aristob. 4:5 = Ps.-Orph. 10; LXX Dan 3:17; and the benediction in *Apoc. El. (C)* 2:10. Further evidence may be obtained from first-century Jewish inscriptions which attest an apotropaic use of the phrase “one God” (εἷς θεός; cf. 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6).¹²¹ In the case of early Judaism, εἷς- and μόνος-formulae appear with such frequency and force, that their presence should be classed as indicative of monotheism.¹²² Indeed, the juxtaposition of the adjective “one” (εἷς) or “only” (μόνος) with the title “God” (θεός) or “Lord” (κύριος) appear so frequently that their use may rightly be

¹¹⁷ Unlike the later Targumim, which demonstrate a penchant to formulating new divine self-predication statements, which were not present in the *Vorlage* (e.g., TPsJ Isa 41:4; 43:10; 48:12; 51:19; FT-P Gen 3:22; Exod 20:3), there are no significant additions or subtractions of self-exclusivity formulas in LXX Isaiah. There is, however, the addition of the absolute use of ἐγώ εἰμι in LXX Isa 45:18. This may not be meaningful, however, since it is conceivable that LXX was simply translating a *Vorlage* that read אֲנִי הוּא instead of אֲנִי יְהוָה. The apparatus of BHS shows no Heb MSS with the variant אֲנִי הוּא at this verse.

¹¹⁸ Williams, *I am He*, 11 n. 50. On the questionable nature of reconstructing the original Semitic phrases from the Old Slavonic translation in *Apoc. Ab.* 8:3 and 9:3 (translated “I am he” and “It is I,” respectively, in OTP 1.693), see *ibid.*, 11. At any rate, the text of the *Apocalypse* was written no earlier than 70 CE, for it shows awareness of the Temple's destruction.

¹¹⁹ On the use of אֲנִי הוּא in Rabbinic literature, see *ibid.*, 86–213.

¹²⁰ R. Doran believes this fragment must antedate Josephus (“Pseudo-Hecataeus. A New Translation and Introduction,” in OTP 2.907).

¹²¹ Erik Peterson, *Eἷς Θεός: Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche, und religions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926) 276–99.

¹²² In his analysis of Jewish theological language from the second century BCE to the end of the first century CE, Rainbow observes that εἷς occurs in conjunction with θεός or κύριος in thirty-one out of one hundred and forty-nine Greek passages surveyed (21%); μόνος appears with θεός or κύριος in twenty-three passages (15%); cf. “Monotheism and Christology,” 1.47–48.

considered a standard Jewish technique.¹²³ Based on prophetic writings, the rhetoric of divine exclusivity and unity took on a specifically monotheistic tone in Judaism unexperienced in the “pagan” world, where votaries would use a congeries of monotheistic-sounding language to invoke the favor of whichever deity they were appealing to at the moment.¹²⁴ This observation is no less true as regards that popular version of inclusive pagan monotheism that regarded the many gods of traditional cults as aspects or modes of a single divine nature, or God.¹²⁵ To be sure, rhetoric of “one and only God” is found there, yet not with the frequency that it appears in Jewish sources. Early Jewish religion and rhetoric was exclusive; and so was its God.

3. Rabbinic and Para-rabbinic Monotheisms

Having established that “exclusivist monotheism” best describes the predominant streams of early Jewish religion, a detailed look at divine unity and uniqueness in rabbinic Judaism is not necessary. It suffices only to demonstrate that monotheism continued to exert a formative influence in the rabbinic era. We mention here a few currents and sources for the reader’s further consultation. The significance of divine unity for rabbinic Judaism has been brought out most admirably in articles by A. Marmorstein and S. Cohon.¹²⁶ The divine exclusivity language of Deut 32 and Deutero-Isaiah appears frequently in conjunction with the phrase אֱלֹהֵינוּ (אֱלֹהֵינוּ), which has been discussed in detail for rabbinic-era sources in Catrin William’s excellent monograph *I am He: The Interpretation of ‘Anî Hû’ in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*.

Of note is the fact that divine unity language assumes particular significance during this period for the liturgy, as Marmorstein notes, “No teaching of the Law and Prophets acquired such a prominent place in the liturgy and the homilies of the Jews as the doctrine laid down in Deut. 6.4: ‘Hear, O Israel, The Lord is our God, the Lord

¹²³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1.32–33.

¹²⁴ Gerhard Dellling (“MONOS ΘΕΟΣ,” *TLZ* 8 [1952]: 470) explains, “Es ist selbstverständlich, daß der polytheistische Fromme den Gott, an den er sich im gegebenen Falle wendet, mit möglichst hohen Aussagen zu ehren sucht.” The worshipper would curry the favor of a particular god by boasting in hyperbolic and superlative language of that god’s hegemony and unique nature. Certainly, there was occasional place in popular Graeco-Roman religions for near exclusive devotion to a patron deity, but this is usually the result of a special relationship with a patron deity (nevertheless understood in a polytheistic matrix).

¹²⁵ On this, see below Chapter Two §4.3 and the articles in P. Athanassiadi and Michael Frede, eds., *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

¹²⁶ Marmorstein, “Unity of God;” Cohon, “Unity of God,” esp. 441–47.

is One.”¹²⁷ Marmorstein’s study focused on rabbinic (Haggadist) argument of the first four centuries, but his conclusion that the concepts of divine unity lay at the very core of corporate expressions of Jewish devotion can be telescoped onto Judaism of the second-Temple period, as we have shown above.¹²⁸

But divine unity and exclusivity rhetoric also play powerful roles in internecine Jewish debates as well as polemic against external pressures. Marmorstein opines that “It was very necessary to emphasize this idea in the liturgy, for the doctrine of God’s unity was more exposed to the opposition of the world outside the Synagogue, and to misrepresentation inside the Synagogue, than any other teaching of Judaism.”¹²⁹ He notes three forces “arrayed against this doctrine in fierce battle:” (1) adherence (or mere advocates) of the polytheistic cults, (2) “gnostics” and their two powers, and (3) Christians (who identified Jesus with God and advanced the doctrine of the trinity) and Jewish heretics (inclined to the worship of angels or to false conceptions about God).¹³⁰

Evidently, the long-persisting, dualistic pattern noted by Hayman and Barker continued into rabbinic-era Judaism and became a source of significant dispute over the boundaries of Jewish monotheism and Jewish identity.¹³¹ R. Jochanan records a number of tricky texts which could easily be—and apparently were being!—construed in a dualistic sense, including Gen 1:25–27; 11:5–7; 35:3–7; Deut 4:7; 2 Sam 7:23; and Dan 7:3.¹³² The rabbis expended much energy in polemicizing against this perceived dualism, and the unity and exclusivity language of texts such as Deut 32:39, Isa 41:4, and 44:6 becomes commonplace in this polemic.¹³³ It appears that

¹²⁷ Marmorstein, *ibid.*, 467.

¹²⁸ As Marmorstein acknowledges (*ibid.*).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 468–69.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 470.

¹³¹ On this, see especially Daniel Boyarin, “The Gospel of the *Memra*: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John,” *HTR* 94 (2001): 243–84, and *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) chs. 4–6.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 491, and Segal, *Two Powers*, 148–49. To these may be added Josh 22:22; 27:19; and Ps 50:1.

¹³³ One area of work that has yet to be fully explored, but promises fruitful results to the scholar skilled enough to undertake it, is the appropriation of Deutero-Isaianic passages in the debates between rabbinic Jews, hellenistic Jews (e.g., Philo), Christians, and biblical demiurgic traditions. The most thorough analyses of this phenomena to date has been performed by Alan Segal (“Judaism, Christianity, and Gnosticism,” in S.G. Wilson, ed., *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Volume 2: Separation and Polemic* [SCJ 2; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986] 133–61). “It cannot be merely accidental,” Marmorstein claims, “that all these verses, for instance, Isa. 42.8; 47.6; Deut. 32.39, etc. occurring again and again in undoubtedly apologetic or polemical sayings,

some portion of this reaction was directed against Christians (and later “gnostics”), whose inclusion of a second figure alongside God was perceived by the Rabbis as a threat to a developing “orthodox” Jewish monotheistic ideology and cultic practice.¹³⁴ Yet there should be little doubt that rabbinic “two powers” polemic was also directed against some Jews, and polemic against those who believe in “two powers in heaven” recalls how certain strands of Jewish para-rabbinic practice also continued to tolerate belief in a secondary heavenly agent alongside the one God even into the second century and third centuries.

Daniel Boyarin finds evidence of such a pre-Christian Jewish “two powers” belief in Philo’s teaching about the Word (Logos) of God and in the targumic Word (*Memra*) of God.¹³⁵ The former, he claims, provides evidence of belief in a second personal heavenly figure, God’s Logos, among a hellenistic diaspora Jew.¹³⁶ Yet Philo is not simply “a sport, a mutant, or even a voice crying in the wilderness,” for he “was clearly writing for an audience of Jews devoted to the Bible.”¹³⁷ Other, Semitic-speaking Jews also held to a similar version of “Logos theology” (or, “binitarian monotheism”).¹³⁸ Boyarin argues that the targumic *Memra* is “not a mere name,” simply a means of avoiding anthropomorphism, “but an actual divine entity, or mediator.”¹³⁹ By appealing to the hellenistic diaspora Jew Philo (and via extension, his community) and by locating “Logos theology” in the ancient Palestinian and Babylonian synagogues (through the targums), Boyarin believes that the para-rabbinic “two powers” belief in a personal Word of God alongside the one God was the predominant form of Jewish monotheistic belief in first- and second-century Judaism.¹⁴⁰ He observes:

always recur in the anti-Jewish polemics of the Church and the dialogues, partly in older, partly in younger sources” (“Unity of God,” 491). See particularly Chapter Five of this thesis.

¹³⁴ Segal, *ibid.*, 260–67.

¹³⁵ In Targum Onqelos and the extant Palestinian targums.

¹³⁶ “Gospel of the *Memra*,” 249–52.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 252, 249, respectively.

¹³⁸ By “Logos theology” Boyarin intends “a general term for various closely related binitarian theologies” (“Gospel of the *Memra*,” 260). His emphasis on theology indicates that by “binitarian” he intends only to indicate a *pattern of belief* that posits a second heavenly agent in close association with the one God. Hurtado, on the other hand, uses the term “binitarian” to indicate *patterns of cultic devotion* to a second figure alongside the one God.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹⁴⁰ Logos theology is “the religious Koine of Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora” (*ibid.*, 260). Cf. also *ibid.*, 254: “Although the official rabbinic theology suppressed all talk of the *Memra* or Logos by naming it the heresy of ‘Two Powers in Heaven,’ both before the Rabbis and contemporaneously

There is no reason to imagine, however, that “rabbinic Judaism” ever became the popular hegemonic form of Jewish religiosity among the “People of the Land,” and there is good reason to believe the opposite. Throughout the rabbinic period, there is evidence of a vital form of Judaism that was not only extrarabbinic but which the Rabbis explicitly named as a heresy, the belief in “Two Powers in Heaven,” in our terms, Logos theology. This doctrine became for the Rabbis, as it had been for orthodox Christian writers from Justin on—from the exactly opposite point of view—the touchstone of orthodoxy. Some Jews, perhaps even most Jews, resisted the efforts of Justin to appropriate the Logos exclusively for Christianity, as well as the efforts of the Rabbis to “collude” in that exclusion. For those Jews, even in Palestine, the Logos (named *memra* “word” in their spoken Aramaic) remained a pivotally important theological being.¹⁴¹

Boyarin’s conclusion that the *Memra* of God in the Aramaic targums represents a genuine personal hypostatization is not self-evident (nor universally accepted by targumic scholars).¹⁴² Neither is it certain that Philo’s Logos is a fully personal entity, as it is later for Justin.¹⁴³

Yet, even if his conclusions are granted, they do not necessarily call into doubt the nature of first- and second-century Jewish religious patterns as broadly monotheist. Unlike Heiser, Hayman, and Barker (§2.2), Boyarin himself does not believe the predominance of Jewish “Logos theology” casts doubt on the category “monotheism” as a valid descriptor for first- and second-century para-rabbinic Jewish belief.¹⁴⁴ On this point we agree. Even with Boyarin’s specialized reading of the targumic *Memra*, there is no evidence that worship or devotion were regularly directed to a personal Logos (or *Memra*) or other secondary entity in the context of para-rabbinic Jewish devotion to the one God in the synagogues where the targums

with them there was *a multitude of Jews*, in both Palestine and the Diaspora, who held onto this version of monotheistic theology” (ibid., 254; emphasis added).

¹⁴¹ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 89.

¹⁴² Robert Hayward (*Divine Name and Presence: The Memra* [Totowa, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun, 1981]) doubts that the divine *Memra* represents a hypostatization in the Targums, though Alejandro Diez Macho does prefer to see “en el Memra de Yahvé del Targum algo más que una pura metonimia verbal” (“El Logos y el Espíritu Santo,” *Atlántida* 4 [1963]: 393).

¹⁴³ Cf. Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition* (NovTSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987) 409–24.

¹⁴⁴ “Gospel of the *Memra*,” 249: “[T]here was nothing strange about a doctrine of a *deuteros theos*, and nothing in that doctrine that precluded monotheism.” He comments, “Although...official rabbinic theology sought to suppress all talk of the *Memra* or Logos by naming it the heresy of Two Powers in Heaven, before the Rabbis, contemporaneously with them, and even among them, there were a multitude of Jews, in both Palestine and the Diaspora, who held this version of *monotheistic theology*” (*Border Lines*, 116-17; emphasis added).

were regularly being read in Palestine or the diaspora.¹⁴⁵ There is simply no explicit evidence that adherents of para-rabbinic “two powers” traditions ever conceived of themselves as anything other than operating under the broad confession of “one God.”¹⁴⁶ It was, after all, the rabbis, and not the adherents of “two powers” themselves, that characterized the “two powers” belief as violating the unity of God.

Boyarin’s analysis helpfully highlights the plurality and fluidity of beliefs in “one God” in first- and second-century Judaism. If his analysis is correct (on this we are less certain), then the very nature of Jewish *monotheism* was under dispute between rabbis and some circles of para-rabbinic Palestinian and diaspora Jews during this time. On the one hand, the rabbis presented “binitarian patterns” as at odds with (their own understanding of) belief in “one God.” The rabbis sought to confine the concept to a single divine being who expresses himself in a plurality of modes.¹⁴⁷ The strain of strict monotheism among the rabbis coexisted alongside para-rabbinic binitarian patterns of monotheistic belief in which a secondary divine agent was closely related to the one God and acted with divine authority. The existence of this secondary figure, it seems, constitutes the very battleground over which Jewish identity as monotheist was debated and constructed across the second and third centuries. Rabbinic Judaism eventually won the debate in the fourth century, after which time Jewish monotheism became synonymous with the version of strict monotheism offered by the rabbis. After this point, all who posited a second divine agency were considered to have violated the parameters of Jewish monotheism.

This plurality should not engender doubt, however, as to whether Jewish religion was truly monotheist. This was an intramural debate over what patterns of belief and cultic practice could be acceptably subsumed under Jewish worship of “one God.” The confines of the confession themselves were not called into doubt.

¹⁴⁵ Note Boyarin’s careful qualification on the limits of our knowledge about Jewish *worship* as regards the Jewish Logos (*Border Lines*, 119): “There may be no gainsaying his [Hurtado’s] demonstration, I think, that worship of the *incarnate* Logos is a novum, a ‘mutation,’ as he styles it, introduced by Jesus people, but the *belief* in an intermediary, a *deuteros theos*, and even *perhaps* [emphasis added] binitarian worship was common to them and other Jews.” For Boyarin, the *incarnation* of the Logos/Memra represents a Christian “mutation” on earlier patterns of Jewish binitarian theology. For Hurtado, Christian *patterns of corporate devotion* to a second heavenly agent, Jesus, represent a “mutation” from pre-Christian Jewish monotheistic cultic practice. Neither doubt that the major patterns of pre-Christian Jewish belief and practice should be designated “monotheist.”

¹⁴⁶ If we may invoke the prologue of the fourth gospel (as does Boyarin) and the epistle to the Hebrews as evidence of intra-Jewish versions of “two powers” belief, it is clear that adherents to “two powers” did not understand themselves as operating outside the parameters of acceptable Jewish belief and practice.

¹⁴⁷ On rabbinic modalism, see Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 128–47.

The existence of the debate itself presupposes that Jews of all stripes shared common ground in the idea of one God and that the issue of debate was whether this monotheism could or should tolerate the presence of a secondary divine agent alongside God.

4. The Most High God and the Jewish Diaspora

The presence of certain “two powers” strands of theology among para-rabbinic Jews complicates somewhat any attempt at portraying a unified picture of Jewish monotheism of the second and third centuries in terms of beliefs about the one God. A variety of patterns of belief concerning the one God were represented within the pale of Jewish monotheism. The strict monotheism of rabbinic Judaism represents a largely Judaeian provenance,¹⁴⁸ yet we have seen how at some remove from rabbinic influence, some diaspora Jews (as also in Palestine) held to a pattern of “two powers” theology. Yet patterns of belief are not practices of devotion,¹⁴⁹ and there is every reason to suppose that the various ideological patterns concerning the one God existed within a context of strict monolatrous devotion to the one God alone even within the context of popular diaspora Jewish religion. Textual evidence for the Jewish diaspora is scant. Most of what we can reconstruct from diaspora Judaism is epigraphic or iconographic in nature, and there is reason to believe that icons were not incompatible with belief in one God.¹⁵⁰ There is little textual evidence for popular binitarian patterns of devotional practice within the scope of diaspora Judaism,¹⁵¹ and there is much powerful evidence that the practice of devotion to one God alone represents the predominant strain of diaspora Jewish religion.

¹⁴⁸ So, too, many (if not most) pagan accounts of Jewish practice and what they regarded as the separatism of Jewish monotheism are descriptive of Jews in Judaea; cf. Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 122–26.

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter Two §1.

¹⁵⁰ Goodman, “The Jewish Image of God,” 133–45.

¹⁵¹ There is no indication that Philo worshipped the Logos. If an original Jewish prayer lies behind the text of (the now Christian) *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.33–37, as Wilhelm Bousset argued (“Eine jüdische Gebetssammlung im siebenten Buch der apostolischen Konstitutionen,” *NKWG* [1915]: 435–89, discussed in Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (AD 135–425)* [trans. H. McKeating; The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization; New York: Oxford University Press, repr. 1996] 53–60), then we have perhaps such a textual instance of binitarian pattern within diaspora Judaism. The text of ch. 36 wishes that souls “might come into the remembrance of that Wisdom which was created by Thee” (cited in Simon, *ibid.*, 54).

We are speaking of the cult dedicated to worship of the Most High God (*Theos Hypsistos*). Spread throughout the entire eastern Mediterranean, the Hypsistarian cult represents the most pervasive and popular cultic activity shared by Jews and pagans.¹⁵² Stephen Mitchell notes the importance of the Hypsistarian cult in monotheistic discussions, avering, “More than any other cult of the Roman world, the worship of *Theos Hypsistos* has been taken to illustrate the predisposition among pagans of the second and third centuries AD to worship a single, remote, and abstract deity in preference to the anthropomorphic figures of conventional paganism. In other words it has a key place in discussions of monotheism in the later Roman Empire.”¹⁵³ Yet the cult of *Hypsistos* was also the property of Jews, who appealed frequently to *Theos Hypsistos* in religious ritual.¹⁵⁴ It therefore provides a unique point of entry for comparing the nature of diaspora Jewish religious expression vis-à-vis other (i.e., pagan) “monotheistic” expressions. In this section, we explore the extant inscriptional evidence to the Hypsistarian cult and argue that diaspora Jewish worship in the Hypsistarian cult is fundamentally different from that among pagan Hypsistarians and represents a version of “exclusivist monotheism.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² For a listing of documentation (typically epigraphic in nature) for the *Theos Hypsistos* cult, consult Stephen Mitchell, “The Cult of *Theos Hypsistos* between Pagans, Jews, and Christians” in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, 128–147, and the bibliographic sources listed there (p. 128). Throughout the remainder of this section, bolded numbers reference Mitchell’s list. Mitchell’s work does not include those inscriptions published after 1999, for which the reader is referred to the appropriate volumes of SEG.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 110–21. *Theos Hypsistos* had been used as early as the third century BCE in reference to the Jewish God. The Jewish epigraphs dedicated to the Most High God are conveniently discussed by Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 133–37, who collected inscriptions identified as Jewish in the *editio princeps* or by himself. These correspond, in order of appearance, to numbers **283, 285, 288, 110bis, 106, 107, 108, 109bis, 105, 207, 206, 85, 86, 87, 84, 88, 230, 202, and 203** in Mitchell’s list (*op. cit.*), 128–47.

The evidence for Christian use of the term in cultic contexts is less significant and for all intents and purposes is negligible for this thesis. Cf. Mitchell, *ibid.*, 121–25. For Christian equivalents of “the Most High God” (and variations), see, e.g., Mark 5:7 = Luke 8:28; Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35; Acts 7:48; 16:17; Heb 7:1; *1 Clem.* 45:7bis; 59:3; *Ign. Rom.* 1:0; Theophilus, *Autol.* 2.31; Irenaeus, *Epid.* 8; *Haer.* 3.16.3; *Sib. Or.* 1.179); the language was inherited from LXX (cf. *1 Clem.* 29:2; 52:3; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.34.2).

¹⁵⁵ In a recent contribution Richard Bauckham has collated a list of the use of “the Most High” in all extant second Temple Jewish literature (“The ‘Most High’ God and the Nature of Early Jewish Monotheism” in David B. Capes, April D. DeConick, et al., eds., *Israel’s God and Rebecca’s Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* [Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007] 39–53). The examples cited by Bauckham are almost entirely from the milieu of Palestinian Judaism, where he observes, the title of the Most High “does not function to evoke YHWH’s presidency of a council of other gods” (*ibid.*, 48). Upon summarizing the scant literary evidence for the western Diaspora, Bauckham concludes, “It

4.1 Methodology

Questions of interpretation loom large in historical analysis of the Hypsistarian cult. The issue primarily centers around the relationship between pagan and Jewish adherents to the cult. There is a great deal comparable between pagan and Jewish uses of *Theos Hypsistos*, and many scholars, following the suggestion of Cumont that the cults of Yahweh and Sabazios were merged in Asia Minor, have been quick to propose interpretations that posit direct and strong Jewish influence upon the popularity of not only the title *Theos Hypsistos* but certain cultic activities among pagan Hypsistarian cults.¹⁵⁶ Stephen Mitchell, for example, claims close contact between Jews and pagans, and speaks of the Hypsistarian cult in terms of a singular, ubiquitous eastern Mediterranean religious movement under which Jews and pagans were both subsumed. While he does allow for local and regional developments of the cult independent of Judaism, he apparently thinks none of the Hypsistarian cults were untouched by the synagogue, as they all absorbed Jewish elements.¹⁵⁷ In this regard he speaks of Jewish communities as a “powerful role model” for these monotheistic Hypsistarian cults. His view of an intense pagan–Jewish cross-fertilization is captured perhaps most clearly in his identification of the “God-fearers” — non-Jewish sympathizers with Jewish beliefs who attended synagogues — with the followers of *Theos Hypsistos* (it is unclear to us whether he includes followers of *Zeus Hypsistos* in this equation).¹⁵⁸ Comparing evidence for the cult of *Theos Hypsistos* from both literary (NT and patristic) sources and epigraphs (from Tanais on the north shore of the Black Sea) with that for the “god-fearers”

may not be accidental that in the three exceptions other than Philo and in several of the exceptions in the works of Philo (*Post.* 91–92; *Plant.* 58–60; *Leg. All.* 3:82), ‘the Most High’ is accompanied by other divine titles or descriptions that reinforce the significance of the title ‘the Most High’ as indicating the uniquely divine sovereignty over all things. Perhaps, in the Diaspora context, this unpacking of the title was necessary, as it does not seem to have been in Palestine” (*ibid.*, 49). This suggests an atmosphere in the western Diaspora in which the boundary between Jewish and pagan rhetoric of the “Most High” may have been quite similar.

¹⁵⁶ For the evidence, see Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 240 n. 20.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. “The Cult of *Theos Hypsistos*,” 126–27.

¹⁵⁸ Mitchell is not clear on this point. It appears to us that in his analysis of the *theosebeis* in §6, he limits his discussion to followers of *Theos Hypsistos* alone and thus does not include those of *Zeus Hypsistos* or *Hypsistos*. This seems a reasonable deduction from both his methodological intent (i.e., his chief enquiry is directed towards the almost 200 inscriptions mentioning *Theos Hypsistos*; cf. *ibid.*, 100) and from the title of his article. If this is the case, Mitchell nowhere gives a convincing argument as to why the dedications to *Zeus Hypsistos* should be left out of his analysis of the *theosebeis*.

(θεοσεβείς, σεβόμενοι, φοβούμενοι τὸν θεὸν) Mitchell proposed that the two be identified. He concludes, and we quote him here at some length:

The evidence for the cult of Theos Hypsistos and for the god-fearers of the inscriptions and the literary sources runs in strict parallel. Dedications for Theos Hypsistos occur at almost all the places where god-fearers appear (Cos, Aphrodisias, Miletus, Tralles, Philadelphia, in the Bosphoran kingdom, Rome). More important, given the randomness of epigraphic survival, the geographical distribution of the two sets of evidence is virtually identical, covering Syria, Asia Minor, old Greece and Macedonia, and the north shore of the Black Sea. The *theosebeis* are only missing from Egypt, where Theos Hypsistos occurs, while Theos Hypsistos is little attested in the Latin West. The followers of the god, however, may be identified in Africa with the groups known as *Caelicoli* (see §7). The chronological span of the two phenomena also matches closely. Most of the testimonia for the god-fearers, like those for Theos Hypsistos, occur between the first and fourth centuries, but the Septuagint version of 2 Chronicles, written around 200 BC, contains a passage referring to Jews, god-fearers, and proselytes in the phrase *πᾶσα συναγωγή Ἰσραὴλ καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι καὶ οἱ ἐπισυννηγμένοι*, while a passage in the *Jewish Antiquities* suggests that *theosebeis* were identifiable at the time of the Maccabean revolt. These correspond to the earliest Hellenistic attestations of Theos Hypsistos in inscriptions and literary sources. At the other end of the time range, not only do several of the inscriptions for god-fearers, including, I believe those from Aphrodisias and Sardis, belong to the fourth century or later, but the crucial passage of Cyril of Alexandria, which reveals *expressis verbis* that the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos called themselves *theosebeis*, dates to the early fifth century.¹⁵⁹

But the strongest evidence, he claims, is that the beliefs and practices of the two groups “precisely coincided.”¹⁶⁰ That is, at the level of theology and cultic activity, the Theos Hypsistarii were indistinguishable from the “god-fearers” attested elsewhere in the sources. Later in his impressive article of nearly seventy pages on the subject, he opines, “The Jews of the Dispersion had found a common religious language with a vast number of Gentile worshippers, and they forged a shared tradition, current throughout the eastern Mediterranean, of monotheistic worship. By any definition this was one of the most spectacular demonstrations of religious syncretism that the ancient world has to offer.”¹⁶¹ Christians as well (at least in rural Asia Minor), it is claimed, were stepping “without friction or confrontation” into a landscape where they could co-exist peacefully with followers of the “one and only

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 119–20.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 121.

god,”¹⁶² and in so doing, Mitchell envisions an eastern Mediterranean socio-religious climate in which pagans, Jews, and Christians intermingled rather seamlessly.

Mitchell’s conclusions arise from his particular methodological approach towards epigraphic evidence for the Hypsistarian cult. He comments, “The 200 surviving inscriptions which specifically refer to Theos Hypsistos are strikingly uniform. It is an important question to ask not what differentiates them, but *what they have in common*. We need to find out why worshippers chose to address their god by a name that fitted both pagan and Jewish patterns of belief. Instead of assuming that the inscriptions need to be sorted into Jewish and pagan groups we should try to see if they make sense as a single body of material, treated on its own terms.”¹⁶³ He thus urges caution against distinguishing between Jewish (or Judaizing) and pagan Hypsistarians on the basis of epigraphic evidence which has no clear identifying marks, as he comments, “The difficulty lies in the fact that most ‘pagan’ or ‘Jewish’ examples of the term Theos Hypsistos are formally indistinguishable from one another and that the arguments for assigning them to either category are rarely decisive.”¹⁶⁴ To be fair, Mitchell does not argue that the two groups should never be distinguished in historical analysis; indeed, he notes, “In a large number of cases the pagan credentials of the cult are unambiguously clear from the fact that the god is named not Theos but precisely Zeus Hypsistos.”¹⁶⁵ Rather, he offers a corrective to the procedure of arbitrary or rash ascription of social provenance and stresses that *in the majority of cases* the two groups simply cannot be distinguished with any certainty on the basis of the surviving archaeological and inscriptional evidence. Thereby, the evidence requires that they be treated as one.

Though writing prior to Mitchell’s article, Paul Trebilco, nevertheless, following a number of other scholars, disagrees with this assessment and offers the following comments:

The trend towards monotheism meant that a number of different gods were thought of as the Supreme deity or the ‘Highest god’, quite independently of Jewish influence. The frequency of the title ‘Theos Hypsistos’ in non-Jewish contexts reflects this tendency to concentrate

¹⁶² Ibid., 121–22.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 100; emphasis added. In all, Mitchell places the number of dedications to Hypsistos or Theos Hypsistos at 197 and those to Zeus at 81 (*op. cit.* 101). We were unable to confirm these numbers. Leaving aside uncertain readings, we reckon the ratio at 195:87.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 112.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 100.

powers in the hands of one exalted deity. Thus, there was sufficient reason for pagans to use 'Hypsistos' of any god and sufficient usage in clearly non-Jewish circles for there to be no need to suggest that Jewish influence was involved. Further, there is also no reason to think that the use of the title by a pagan would suggest to another passer-by that the dedicator was a 'Judaizer'. 'Hypsistos' was a vague title and it would not be clear which god was being referred to. Jewish influence would not have been an explanation for the use of the epithet in the period of its use; neither is it required now to explain its popularity.¹⁶⁶

After his investigation of nineteen Hypsistos inscriptions bearing "clear signs of Jewish provenance," Trebilco comes to the opposite conclusion as Mitchell that "in an albeit *limited number of cases*, Jews and pagans shared the same religious vocabulary."¹⁶⁷ Later he concludes by noting, "We have seen that scholars like Cumont and Nilsson argued that Judaism in Asia Minor was at times a strange mixture of Judaism and paganism. These arguments have been based on the supposed links between Yahweh and Zeus (or other gods who were also called 'Hypsistos') and Sabazios. We have shown that both of these connections are unfounded. No evidence has arisen from this study to suggest that Judaism in Asia Minor was syncretistic or had been compromised by paganism."¹⁶⁸ Trebilco represents a scholarly cadre that distinguishes more strongly than Mitchell and others between Jewish and pagan worship of Theos Hypsistos.

Was there then, as Mitchell claims, little to no distinction between pagan Hypsistarian worship and that of the Jews? Or are we to follow Trebilco in seeing a strong separation between Jewish and pagan instances of Hypsistarian worship? Before examining the epigraphic evidence, a few methodological comments are in order. First, Mitchell's scepticism about separating Jew from pagan is to a certain extent reasonable. There is a great deal in common in the rhetoric of the majority of Hypsistarian inscriptions, which read simply *Theos Hypsistos*, such that identification as Jewish or pagan is largely not possible with any certainty (even given archaeological context). So, for example, the terms φιλορωμαῖος, φιλοκαίσαρ, and εὐσεβῶν as self-referential terms appear in both clearly Jewish and pagan inscriptions (cf. **86, 89**). Furthermore, there is close connection between Jewish and pagan Hypsistarians in Tanais north of the Black Sea, where we find four

21. ¹⁶⁶ *Jewish Communities*, 132. For a list of scholars who follow this view, see *op. cit.* 240 n.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 143; cf. 137–40; emphasis added.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 142.

inscription dedicated to Theos Hypsistos by εἰσποιητοὶ ἀδελφοὶ σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὑψίστον (sc. adopted brothers who worship the Most High God; cf. **96, 98, 100, 101**), apparently of pagan Hypsistarians possibly adopted into a Jewish worshipping community.¹⁶⁹ The relief of an eagle found near one of these demonstrates that there may have been little distinguishing Jewish and pagan Hypsistarians in this region. No doubt this parity of rhetoric is due to the larger social context, and such examples demonstrate the possibility of a significant cross-fertilization between Jewish and pagan Hypsistarians in any given locale. Such similarities argue against drawing too distinct and unequivocal a demarcation between Jewish and pagans in Tanais north of the Black Sea, for example. Doubtless there were other areas of varying degrees of syncretism throughout Asia Minor and elsewhere, and Trebilco may jeopardize his case when he wishes to remove significant Jewish influence (at least on the terminology of *Hypsistos*) from all but a few Hypsistarian cults, noting, “We have also seen that in a very limited number of cases, two of which were in Asia Minor, pagans or pagan groups used the title ‘Hypsistos’ because of Jewish influence.”¹⁷⁰ In this sense, we must be careful to allow for the uniformity of historical data and not rush too quickly towards classifying every Hypsistarian cult or worshipper under more than one taxon.

However, this is not to suggest that we can make no distinctions between pagan and Jewish Hypsistarians when we analyze the data. Trebilco’s approach is not altogether without merit, for there are some identifiable differences in language in some of the epigraphs which have already with relative certainty been provenanced as Jewish or pagan. In such cases, it would seem irresponsible not to tease out the implications of the two groups when the data more clearly permit it. We should not be agnostic about all epigraphic evidence. One helpful method of analysis would be to begin by examining the epigraphs clearly-identifiable as pagan in origin and those clearly Jewish in provenance.

The main difference between these two capable scholars comes in how they address the data, that is, the question of methodology. Should the evidence be examined as a whole or should one attempt to dissect it into parts? It is this issue which leads to vastly different conclusions between Mitchell and Trebilco. Viewing

¹⁶⁹ *Pace* *ibid.*, 139, though Trebilco notes “Jewish influence *could have been* involved” in these inscriptions; *emphasis original*.

¹⁷⁰ Although, he does acknowledge that there may be more cases, “but it is exceedingly difficult to demonstrate that such Jewish influence did in fact occur” (*ibid.*, 142).

the data as a holistic unit of similar rhetoric, Mitchell believes the epigraphic evidence requires a more uniform Hypsistarian cult able to include Jews and pagans (after all, the *majority* of inscriptions have no clear socio-religious identifying markers). Focusing on Jewish evidence, Trebilco sees a distancing of Jewish groups from their pagan counterparts. A type of unifying dialectic appears to me possible. While we acknowledge the unity of much of the data which Mitchell has highlighted, it seems to us best to first examine those texts for which the data itself allow for (or, even demand, one might say) more clear cut distinctions. We propose to begin by dissecting the Hypsistarian cult, in order to compare the “clearly” pagan with the “unambiguously” Jewish inscriptions. As will become apparent, a number of differences in the rhetoric and cultic settings of the epigraphs themselves support such an approach. After extracting these texts of more certain provenance, the remaining body of texts—a majority as it turns out—can be isolated. These may be claimed by whatever ambiguous and arbitrary means scholars imagine as Jewish or pagan and should thus be claimed for neither, if the process of historical research is not to be damaged. We turn now to the evidence.

4.2 Epigraphic Evidence

The designations *Hypsistos*, *Theos Hypsistos*, and *Zeus Hypsistos* describe different manifestations of a larger religious phenomenon in the ancient eastern Mediterranean world, that of worship directed towards one highest God. The phenomena associated with the cult of Hypsistos were widespread, and the extent inscriptions permit a few observations regarding geographical orientation. The simple designation *Hypsistos* occurs in over two-thirds of the epigraphs found in Athens, and the unqualified name occurs almost nowhere else.¹⁷¹ In the Roman province of Achaëa, (i.e., mainland Greece; and excluding the Pnyx sanctuary at Athens), Macedonia, the coastal cities of Caria, Carian Stratonicea, Bithynia, and Syrian Palmyra, *Zeus Hypsistos* is amply represented,¹⁷² and inscriptions bearing this

¹⁷¹ At Athens: *Hypsistos* (2, 5–7, 9–10, 12, 15, 17–20, 22, 23), *Zeus Hypsistos* (4, 8, 14, 21), and *Theos Hypsistos* (1, 3, 13). Clear references to Hypsistos occur elsewhere only at Thracian Kavalla (61), on Delos (109), and in central and south coastal Asia Minor (sc. Iasos [131], Bagis [164], Germa [203], and Phrygian Nacolea [219]). It is not certain that 212 reads just Hypsistos.

¹⁷² I.e., in mainland Greece (not including Athens): *Zeus Hypsistos* alone is attested (24–28, 29–30?, 31–32). In Macedonia: *Zeus Hypsistos* (34–36, 38–42, 44–50, 52–54, 59), *Theos Hypsistos* (37, 43, 55–58), and *Theos Zeus Hypsistos* (51). At Caria: *Zeus Hypsistos* (129–30, 132–34, 137–46, 148–52, 155–57), *Theos Hypsistos* (127–28, 135, 136, 147, 153, 158), *Hypsistos* (131). In Bithynia:

designation are found as far away as Petra (282) and Egypt (287).¹⁷³ *Theos Hypsistos* predominates nearly everywhere else in the eastern Mediterranean, including central Asia Minor and the north shore of the Black Sea, and has an exclusive presence on Cyprus and Crete.¹⁷⁴ This distribution, of course, includes inscriptions from both Jewish and pagan provenance and views the Hypsistarian movement in its geographic entirety. Regional or local variations on *Zeus* or *Theos Hypsistos* also occur, such as the conflated form θεὸς Ζεὺς ὑψίστος (51), Ζεὺς οὐρανίος ὑψίστος (269), the extended ὁ ἀγιωτάτος θεὸς ὑψίστος σωτήρ (135; cf. 136), or the reference to θεὸς ὑψίστος ἄσυλος (256) and the much more frequently attested θεὸς ὑψίστος ἐπηκόος (69, 75, 90, 104, etc.).

If we now attempt to dissect the Hypsistarian cult, and to compare the clearly-provenanced pagan and Jewish inscriptions, a number of differences arise that are noteworthy. First, pagan provenance is readily identifiable in those eighty-seven clear cases where reference to *Zeus Hypsistos* occurs. If we examine the relevant inscriptions further, we find that a number of epigraphs make explicit a larger syncretistic theology often only implicitly at work in the *Zeus Hypsistarian* cult, as for example a dedication from the Aegean isle of Cos apparently representing the interests of a labor union. It reads as follows (105a):

[Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ Ἥρᾳ [Ο]ὐρανίᾳ καὶ Ποσειδῶνι Ἀσφαλείῳ καὶ Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ ἄλλοις θεοῖς ὑπὲρ τῆς Κόϊων πόλεως οἱ σακκοφόροι οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Καλύμνας ἐποίησαν ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων

To Zeus Most High and to Hera Ouranios and to Poseidon Asphaleios and to Apollo and to the other gods on behalf of the city on the island of Cos, the sack-bearers from Kalumna, constructed from their personal funds.

This practice of collocating *Zeus Hypsistos* with other deities occurs elsewhere in the Aegean, as for example at Delos we read (110a):

Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ θεοῖς οἷς τοὺς βωμοὺς ἰδρύσατο

To Zeus Most High and to the gods for whom these altars were established.

Similarly, the following inscription from Carian Mylasa should be mentioned (137):

Zeus Hypsistos (189–90), *Theos Hypsistos* (191–92). In Syria: *Zeus Hypsistos* (270–78), *Theos Hypsistos* (279).

¹⁷³ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 128, comments, “[W]e know of a temple of *Zeus Hypsistos* at Thebes, a precinct at Iasus, a priest at Mylasa and a cult association at Edessa.”

¹⁷⁴ I.e., *Theos Hypsistos* at Cyprus (243–65) and Crete (119–24).

ἐπὶ στεφάνηφόρου Ἀριστέου τοῦ Μέλανος τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου ἱερέως
Διὸς ὑψίστου καὶ Τύχης Ἀγαθῆς

On behalf of the crown-bearing magistrate Aristeos of Mylasa, priest of
Apollo, of Zeus Most High, and of Tyche Agathe.

The clear, genitival collocation of this last inscription leaves little doubt that this priest served three deities. In Stratonicea the cult of Zeus Hypsistos may have been linked (at least in the mind of one worshipper) to emperor devotion (140). These examples are only representative of the inscriptional evidence (cf. 54, 140, 269, 277).¹⁷⁵ Such cultic association of Zeus Hypsistos with an additional deity was common practice in Carian Stratonicea, where a lesser divinity referred to either as (τὸ) θεῖον (141, 143–46, 148, 155–56), (θεῖος) ἀγγέλος (142, 150, 151), or θεῖον βασιλικόν (149, 152; cf. 157) appears as an additional figure to Zeus Hypsistos, most likely representative of some form of local angel worship, since these figures are not traditional to Greek polytheism.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, there are occasions where a Zeus Hypsistos inscription appears in cultic context with portrayals of other gods (81, 182, 185). In the example above, we saw that reference to Τύχη can refer to the goddess Tyche (cf. 140),¹⁷⁷ but there is little reason to suppose that the pagan phrase ἀγαθῆι τύχη in the additional four instances in which it appears in dedications to Zeus Hypsistos (51, 180, 287; 190 possibly excepted) is anything other than a common oath or talismanic formula akin to “in God’s name” or “by the favor of the gods.” There are then twenty-one clearly identifiable inscriptions explicitly linking Zeus to additional deities, thirteen of which are located in Stratonicea; another in reference to the emperor cult; no further clear reference to the goddess Tyche; and three occurrences with portrayals of other gods. That is, of the eighty-seven clearly identifiable dedications to Zeus Hypsistos, nearly thirty percent of them have him cultically associated with other gods.

Inscriptions to Zeus Most High often occur in conjunction with an iconographic image of an eagle (e.g., 24, 36, 38, 49) or a thunderbolt (cf. 29, 269, 272), symbols commonly associated with Zeus, and the list of clearly pagan inscriptions above can be expanded to include those which attest *Theos Hypsistos* in

¹⁷⁵ That the phrase θεῶ μεγάλῳ in 277 is not a mere circumlocution for Zeus is shown from the fact that Zeus Hypsistos is elsewhere referred to with the superlative μεγίστῳ (cf. 270, 273).

¹⁷⁶ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 102. The lesser divinity appears also with Theos Hypsistos (147, 153).

¹⁷⁷ No Jewish use of this phrase is known, unless one considers 98 and 100 as indicating converts to Judaism.

collocation with the aquiline symbol (1, 65, 68, 89–90, 92, 96, 115, 121, 158, 176, 191, 195). This is reasonable, though not necessarily definitive.¹⁷⁸ One might also include those additional inscriptions from the Hypsistarian cult at the Pnyx in Athens (2–3, 5–7, 9–13, 15–20, 22–23), from Tanais (91, 93–95, 97–102, 103), from Carian Stratonicæa (153–54), et cetera, which though they do not appear directly with an eagle are nevertheless proximate to such images. Yet the inclusion of these latter, though tempting, is methodologically unsound, for the mere proximity to Zeus Hypsistos cult and accouterments does not indicate that there were not others at the same cult who genuinely did not associate Zeus with Theos Hypsistos. The inscriptions from the cult to Theos Hypsistos at Serdica (cf. 69–73), however, joined as they are with multiple images of eagles, are more likely linked with Zeus and may reasonably be included. Nevertheless, the eighteen additional iconographic inscriptions show us that worshipers at times referred to Zeus Hypsistos by the term *Theos Hypsistos* as well as *Hypsistos*,¹⁷⁹ and it appears that in some cultic centers, followers of Zeus Hypsistos could worship side-by-side with devotees of Theos Hypsistos and Hypsistos without feeling any compunction in so doing.

All told, the cult of Zeus Hypsistos was no small affair, and one can say with relative certainty that of the 105 extant inscriptions of clearly pagan provenance,¹⁸⁰ over a quarter of those distinctly demonstrate a willingness to assimilate symbols of traditional or local deities alongside of worship of Zeus. For a large number of worshippers and worshipping communities associated with the cult of Zeus Hypsistos, the reverence of other gods was not inconsistent with devotion to the highest Zeus. Furthermore, it is evident that a number of votaries to Theos Hypsistos associated him with Zeus though they chose not to directly apply the name of the exalted Olympion to the highest God in their dedicated epigraphs. We should remember, however, that the majority of dedications to Zeus Hypsistos mention no other deities alongside of him, and it is not beyond plausibility to assume that many worshippers simply associated Zeus alone with the highest God without feeling any compulsion to placate other deities.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 139 et 244 n. 59.

¹⁷⁹ *Hypsistos* is included on the basis of Zeus' close association with the Hypsistarian cult in Athens.

¹⁸⁰ I.e., 87 clear Zeus Hypsistos and 18 Theos Hypsistos inscriptions showing associations with Zeus.

If we assume the accuracy of Trebilco's list, and we see no reason to doubt his selection, then there are a total of twenty identifiable Jewish epigraphs to the highest God,¹⁸¹ not including the few in which he detects Jewish influence. As with the pagan inscriptions above, rhetorical indicators and cultic setting are clearly important in identifying Jewish sources. Among the typically Jewish language one may note the term *Almighty* (παντοκράτωρ; e.g., **84–87**) applied to the deity, ἡ προσευχή (sc. house of prayer; cf. **109**), and the adjective εὐλογητός (sc. blessed; cf. **85**). The first two of these occurs almost exclusively in Jewish contexts, and only rarely in pagan contexts,¹⁸² yet Mitchell's warning should be noted, since there are cases where the pagan associations of an inscription are clear and yet one finds a typically Jewish term (cf. **51**, ἀρχσυνάγωγον). Elsewhere, we find specifically biblical language such as τὸν κύριον τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός (sc. the Lord of spirits and of all flesh; cf. **110** and LXX Num 16:22; 27:16), Ἁγία καγαφυγή (cf. Sacred Refuge; cf. **230** and LXX Ex 17:15; 2 Sam 22:3; Ps 17:3; 30:4; 2 Macc 10:28, etc.), ἀράς δρέπανον (sc. sickle of the curse; cf. **207** and LXX Zech 5:1–5), or δύναμις υψιστοῦ (sc. power of the Most High; cf. **203** and LXX Pss 45:2; 58:17), all of which point very strongly towards Jewish provenance.¹⁸³ Fortunately, the Jewish provenance of this language is many times backed up through archaeological evidence.¹⁸⁴ Each of these has been provenanced and discussed by Trebilco and there is no reason to repeat his work here. We mention only that these date from the second century BCE to third century CE, and the clear majority of these inscriptions display nothing other than what one might think consistent with Jewish worship of the one God, Yahweh, whom they address as *Hypsistos* (cf. **109**) and more commonly *Theos Hypsistos*. On the other hand, apart from the specifically Jewish terminology, biblical references, and cultic settings, these inscriptions display little difference from many of the other *Theos Hypsistos* inscriptions! One distinctive element about many of these inscriptions is the clear reference to the *proseuche* (cf. **85, 88, 202, 283, 285, 288**) or their clear provenance from a *proseuche* (**106–09**). These inscriptions leave little room to suppose that Jews

¹⁸¹ See *infra* n. 154.

¹⁸² Pace Laurence H. Kant who claims προσευχή appears “only in a Jewish context” (“Jewish Inscriptions in Greek and Latin,” *ANRW* 20.2:707); cf. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 242 nn. 41–42 and the patristic evidence *infra*.

¹⁸³ The term καγαφυγή does not occur elsewhere outside of LXX; cf. Trebilco, *ibid.*, 136 et 242 nn. 45–46.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 133–37.

were mingling in cultic contexts with their pagan Hypsistarian neighbors outside of the synagogue. Furthermore, there is no additional figure of devotion alongside of the highest God, whom we have no reason to doubt the Jews identified with Yahweh. One dedication is set up “for the Great God Most High in heaven and for his holy angels and for his venerable house of prayer” (202), and the text proceeds from heaven to earth in such a way as actually to distance the Most High from the angels. Two of the epigraphs, however, both from Gorgippia and both clearly related, stand out in this regard (cf. 85, 86). The opening dedication “to the Most High God, Almighty, Blessed” (θεῶ ὑψίστῳ παντοκράτορι εὐλογητῶ) on both and the appearance of “set up in the house of prayer” (ἀνέθηκεν τ[ῆ]ι προσευχῆι) on the first would indicate that these are Jewish inscriptions. Yet both texts close with the common pagan oath formula “under Zeus, Ge, and Helios” (ὑπὸ Δία Γῆν Ἥλιον). A clue to this may rest in the fact that these texts represent manumission documents. The freeing of a slave represented a religious ritual necessitating the act being performed in the house of prayer, while the pagan oath formula may represent nothing more than the fulfillment of a legal requirement. Similar practices are attested elsewhere among Jews in such legal contexts.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, neither text attests the peculiarly pagan phrase ἀγαθῆ τύχῃ found very frequently at nearby Tanais (cf. 90–95, 97–100, 102), yet it is probably too much to suggest that these inscriptions demonstrate a programmatic avoidance of pagan connotations except where required (i.e., by law). At any rate, these epigraphs do not likely represent the kind of syncretistic cultic practices we saw present in the Zeus Hypsistos cult, though it may demonstrate a certain measure of Jewish willingness to accommodate pagan practices (or legal requirements?).

But these “clear” (or at least significantly less ambiguous) examples comprise only 125 (105 pagan + 20 Jewish), or just under forty-five percent, of the total 282 dedications to the highest God. That is, in over half of all inscriptions we have no way of identifying Jewish or pagan texts, no specific means of accessing with relative certainty the referent behind *Theos Hypsistos*. That leaves a large category of inscriptions which are not clearly identifiable as either Jewish or pagan and which should most likely be taken as representative of some mixture of the two, though it is simply impossible to determine with any measure of certitude how many of these are likely to be Jewish or likewise pagan. Furthermore, in this remaining body of texts,

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 136.

there is a referential ambiguity inherent in the designations *Hypsistos* and *Theos Hypsistos*. Who was this highest God? Which God precisely is referenced by the language? Trebilco rightly highlights this point: “[D]edications or inscriptions to ‘Theos Hypsistos’ are sometimes clearly to deities other than Zeus or are made to an unnamed pagan deity who was worshipped under this general name...Hence the same title can be used for a number of different gods. For example, in Syria ‘Theos Hypsistos’ (and also ‘Zeus Hypsistos’) was used to refer to the local Baal of a region, who was often a mountain god. In Lydia, ‘Thea Hypsiste’ was used for some form of the Mother goddess. In Egypt, Hypsistos was used as an epithet of Isis. Clearly, ‘Theos Hypsistos’ or ‘Hypsistos’ can designate a whole range of exalted deities...[O]nly a Jew or a Judaiser would understand that ‘Theos Hypsistos’ referred to Yahweh. There were many ‘Highest gods’ and a pagan hearer or reader would understand the referent of the term to be the deity he or she considered to be supreme, if in fact he or she considered any deity in this position. They would not think of Yahweh.”¹⁸⁶ With this final group, scholars must content themselves with referential ambiguity and not seek to exceed the bounds of what the data permits. Two observations seem to me permissible.

First, the syncretism which we saw in many of the clearly pagan epigraphs above appears also in some of these inscriptions but certainly with less frequency. We have already seen two such possible associations of *Theos Hypsistos* with other gods in the discussion of the two provenanced Jewish manumission documents above, though the link between the highest God and the oath “under Zeus, Ge, and Helios” may be little more than a legal necessity in the context (85–86). In the unprovenanced texts, at least one *Theos Hypsistos* inscription was closely connected to a cultic statue depicting the goddess Larmene (172). Further, a dedication in Lydia to *Thea Hypsiste* represents some form of goddess worship (167; by a man no less!). Other examples attest to a syncretistic theology behind some elements of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult, as, for example, on an inscription from an altar at Pergamum which reads (186):

[Ηλ]ίωι θ[ε]ῷ ὑψ[ι]στῶι Τάτιον εὐχήν
Tatios, a vow to Helios God Most High.

At Pisidian Andeda we read in an epigraph from the second or third century (228):

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 128–29, 143.

Κόιντος Νουμέριος ἱερεὺς Μηνὸς Ο[ὐ]ρανίου κατὰ χρηματισμὸν
ἀνέθηκε θεῷ ὑψίστῳ

Kointos Numerios, priest of Mên Ouranios dedicated to the Most High
God in accordance with an oracle.

Here, as in the cult of Zeus Hypsistos, we find that a priest's obligation towards a particular deity did not dissuade him from directing his devotion to another deity, named "the Highest God." Elsewhere we find Theos Hypsistos associated with Meter Theon (37), Hecate (147), Thea Larmene (172), Meter Oreia (232), Helios and Nemesis (284), and Hosios and Zeus (sic; 220). Excluding the clearly-provenanced Jewish inscriptions (85–86), these conflated Theos Hypsistos dedications number only ten, barely over six-percent of the Hypsistos inscriptions of undetermined pedigree.

Second, Trebilco has examined five cases in which he detects Jewish influence behind a pagan's use of *Theos Hypsistos*. In at least one of these inscriptions clear Judaizing tendencies can be detected (205), and in four others he allows that Jewish influence "could have been involved" (96, 98, 100–01).¹⁸⁷ Of course, Trebilco acknowledges "that there will be some cases in which such (Jewish) influence will go undetected," since Jewish influence, for example, is less likely to be discerned behind the use of *Theos Hypsistos* where a pagan makes a dedication to a pagan deity.¹⁸⁸ There is thus evidence from the inscriptions themselves that some pagans sympathized with Jewish worship of the highest God and adopted elements from them. The number of cases highlighted by Trebilco is relatively few, but enough to suggest that we can with confidence state that there was a measure of cross-fertilization between Jew and pagan in some elements of the Theos Hypsistos cult. Such cross-fertilization is further confirmed for the fourth century at least from patristic sources. Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, indicates that the Hypsistarians (at least the group his father had formerly been aligned with) rejected the idol worship and animal sacrifice of the pagans, and observed the sabbath and Jewish dietary regulations, yet shunned circumcision.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Gregory of Nyssa groups the Hypsistiani together with the Jews as those who confess god as ὑψίστον ἢ παντοκράτορα while not acknowledging him as πατέρα.¹⁹⁰ It is not entirely self-

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 137–39; emphasis original.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁸⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 18.5 (PG 35.990–91).

¹⁹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunom.* 2 (PG 45.482–83).

evident whether the group of “earlier Messalians” mentioned by Epiphanius is to be identified with the Hypsistarian cult.¹⁹¹ He nowhere designates them as offering devotion to “the highest God,” but does report for us that they adore one God whom they call παντοκράτορα and worshipped in their own extra-mural cultic centers, which they refer to as places of prayer (προσευχαί), with the lighting of many lamps and torches and with much hymning. He compares these *proseuchai* with the one mentioned in Acts 16:13. The affinities with Judaism are indisputable, yet, as Epiphanius reports, this worshipping community is comprised entirely of non-Jewish constituency. He further mentions the cultic use of lamps, a practice known to exist elsewhere in the Hypsistarian cult. There appears little reason then to deny that Epiphanius is describing a group belonging to the cult of Theos Hypsistos. At any rate, if this group is not genuinely part of a local Hypsistarian cult, then at least it shares strong affinities with the descriptions found in the other patristic sources listed above.

But how far does this Jewish–pagan syncretism extend? Does the relative uniformity of the remaining dedications to Theos Hypsistos support Mitchell’s suggestion of a world of religious syncretism, “a religious culture which spanned the pagan–Jewish divide,” an environment in which pagan and Jew moved together in worship to the one God?¹⁹² It is clear that there is some cross-fertilization as the discussion above has shown, but we simply have no way of knowing how many of the remaining epigraphs are Jewish or pagan. Can we confidently assert a large-scale pagan–Jewish syncretism on the basis of such evidence? We cannot assume that the remaining data is simply split 50-50 between Jewish and pagan sources, and if so, then what ratio should be assumed and on what basis? Furthermore, the randomness of epigraphic occurrence ensures that the data which exists certainly does not comprise all that existed. No, we must remain somewhat agnostic with respect to the unprovenanced data. Mitchell’s aligning of the followers of Theos Hypsistos with “god-fearers” is disturbing (at least on the basis on which he chooses to do it). Judging from the epigraphs, the designation of choice for the Hypsistarians was εὐξάμενοι not θεοσεβεῖς. The latter term occurs nowhere in the inscriptions containing a dedication to the highest God. The synonymous σεβόμενοι, on the other hand, occurs in at least one locale in only four inscriptions from the first-half of the

¹⁹¹ Pace Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 92–97.

¹⁹² Ibid., 126.

third century directly connected with the cult of Theos Hypsistos (96, 98, 100, 101). We find εὐξάμενοι, however, in dedications to both Zeus and Theos Hypsistos, at Sinope on the southern shore of the Black Sea, in Phrygia, on Cyprus, and in the Levant (e.g., 198, 209, 215, 247, 249, 266, 275–77, 292). The only patristic witness to explicitly make this connection is the fifth-century Cyril of Alexandria.¹⁹³ Surely this is enough to call Mitchell’s proposal into question. The simple juxtaposition of two sets of evidence (i.e., for the cult of Theos Hypsistos and for the “god-fearers”), as Mitchell has done, and the “strict parallel” between them constitute only circumstantial evidence, hardly worthy of his wide-ranging suggestion.

4.3 Evaluation

How are we to classify the Hypsistarian cult? In light of the pagan usage of *Hypsistos*, Trebilco states that “the term would not even imply monotheism for a pagan reader. Rather, it would simply suggest the creation of a hierarchy in their pantheon.”¹⁹⁴ Mitchell, on the other hand, refers to the movement as “quasi-monotheistic.”¹⁹⁵ How are we to evaluate the movement on the basis of cult and rhetoric?

Statistical analysis of epigraphy is inherently dangerous given the randomness of epigraphic distribution and survival. Nevertheless, the data do permit us to draw some conclusions. In the analysis above, we saw that there were eighty-seven clearly identifiable dedications to Zeus Hypsistos, twenty-five of which (~30%) verbally or iconographically link Zeus to additional deities. Over half of these (sc. thirteen) are located in Stratonicea and appear to be linked to a local manifestation of angel worship. Eighteen additional inscriptions dedicated to Theos Hypsistos have clear affinities with Zeus, and demonstrate that votaries at times chose to refer to Zeus Hypsistos by the term *Theos Hypsistos*. Of the 105 total clearly pagan inscriptions dedicated to Zeus, only twelve (sc. a meager 11%), excluding the cult at Stratonicea, demonstrate clearly identifiable syncretism with other gods in the Zeus Hypsistos cult. The clear majority of extant inscriptions dedicated or associated with Zeus Hypsistos demonstrate nothing more than the identification of the highest God with the Olympian Zeus. Of the twenty epigraphs from Jewish provenance, the

¹⁹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁹⁴ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 130.

¹⁹⁵ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 127.

clear majority display nothing inconsistent with the worship of one God, Yahweh, whom they address as *Hypsistos* or *Theos Hypsistos*. That is, no syncretistic tendencies are present and the exclusive devotion to one highest God is upheld. The two manumission documents from Gorgippia reading a clearly pagan oath formula “under Zeus, Ge, and Helios” do not threaten this conclusion to any significant extent. We see very little evidence in the epigraphs of wide-scale syncretism of Jews towards paganism, though we readily acknowledge that we can only identify as Jewish with some measure of confidence only a small portion of the available data. The remaining 157 dedications with no clearly Jewish or pagan provenance represent the majority (~56%) of all extant *Hypsistos* inscriptions. It is interesting that there is very little to distinguish these unprovenanced epigraphs from those clearly provenanced as Jewish! Both have similar forms and are dedicated simply to *Theos Hypsistos* or *Hypsistos*, with no explicit reference as to which God is actually being addressed. All in all, only twenty-five epigraphs out of 282, or less than ten percent, demonstrate any demonstrable syncretism in the worship of the highest God. These occur in the inscriptions of clearly pagan origin and always in dedications to Zeus *Hypsistos*. Even allowing for the epigraphic habit, this is astonishing and demonstrates, as Mitchell has noted, a large sense of uniformity in the language across the cult (or, at least across the dedications directed to the highest God)! Nevertheless, Trebilco reminds us that the terms *Theos Hypsistos* and *Hypsistos* have a great deal of referential ambiguity, and we cannot assume the same reality behind the same terms. Mitchell is correct in observing that “Zeus *Hypsistos* and *Theos Hypsistos* are not two ways of denoting the same reality,” but “at the practical level of cult, the association between them was extremely close.”¹⁹⁶

But there is a sense in which the cross-fertilization so ably argued by Mitchell is not as significant in the direction towards paganism as it is towards Judaism. There is, for example, no clear identification of a Jew setting up an epigraph to Zeus *Hypsistos* nor syncretising worship of the highest God with other deities. Jewish references to pagan oath formulas (85–86) obviously indicate some sort of move in the pagan direction among the Jews in Gorgippia, but are we to interpret this as a serious infraction against Jewish self-identity, as representative of the entire Jewish community, or as a mere legal necessity in the act of manumission? There is a clear break between Jewish worship of the Most High God and pagan worship of Zeus

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 99.

Hypsistos. These two groups will need to be evaluated on their own terms; no one category will cover both. Furthermore, when we looked at the devotees to Hypsistos and Theos Hypsistos, there was clear evidence of adoption of Jewish practice on the part of some pagan Hypsistarians. That is, there were some followers of Theos Hypsistos who moved towards Judaism in such a way as to be associated even with the Jewish houses of prayer. These are no doubt “god-fearers,” the *theosebeis* that Mitchell makes much of. But they represent only a portion of the Theos Hypsistarian movement, not its entirety. Most of this data came from fourth-century patristic sources but was confirmed in the epigraphs themselves. Ironically, this more unidirectional model of pagan syncretism to Judaism is adequately described by a phrase from Mitchell, who speaks of Judaism as a “powerful role model” for the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos. Another group of Theos Hypsistos followers worshipped freely side-by-side devotees of Zeus Hypsistos. At Athens, for example, we saw that worshippers of Hypsistos, Theos Hypsistos, and Zeus Hypsistos co-occupied the Pnyx sanctuary. Evidence of co-worship among these groups appears around many of the prominent centers for Zeus Hypsistos cult (sc. mainland Greece, Macedonia, the coastal cities of Caria, Bithynia). The followers of Theos Hypsistos represented by a group of epigraphs comprising the largest were pulled, it seems, in one of two directions. The variety of evidence *demand*s a partitioned approach to the cult. These groups will need to be evaluated on their own terms; no one category will cover both.

So was the cult of Theos Hypsistos truly monotheistic in nature? Inasmuch as the followers of Zeus and Theos Hypsistos direct their cultic worship towards one highest God (although not referentially the same God!), they are monotheists. This goes also for the inclusion of other deities in the syncretistic forms of Zeus Hypsistos worship; these should be interpreted as internally consistent within the cultic framework and with the monotheism it represents. But inasmuch as their communities represent a conglomeration of multiple referents, they are inclusive. One woman worships Helios, another Isis, yet another man worships Zeus, but all refer ambiguously to their deity as *Theos Hypsistos*. We thus suggest that the cult of Zeus and Theos Hypsistos be classified as “inclusivist monotheism.” This category applies also to those Jews who may have assimilated such practices, though we have no clearly discernible traces of Jewish syncretism in the inscriptional evidence; nevertheless, such probably existed in some communities. Furthermore, the epigraphic evidence provides certainty in classifying Jewish devotees of Theos

Hypsistos as “monotheists.” And like their counterparts, Jewish communities possessed a willingness to cultically accommodate “god-fearing” Theos Hypsistarians. But this probably involved only those who would take on a shared referent to Theos Hypsistos as Yahweh, though the epigraphs alone do not tell us such. That is, they apply an excluding criteria to those who desire to worship among their ranks. If this is the case, and we suggest it is, then such Jewish communities may be referred to as representing “exclusivist monotheism.” The picture is that of a spectrum. On the one side lies the cult of Zeus Hypsistos and a willingness to incorporate in common worship those who do not share the same referent when speaking of Theos Hypsistos. On the other side are those Jews who likewise have a willingness to include others, but only insofar as they share the same referent when speaking of Theos Hypsistos. In between lie any number of religious believers in Theos Hypsistos, some willing to allow for ambiguity, others taking on the Jewish God alone as the highest God.

5. Jewish “Exclusivist Monotheism” and Christianity

In light of the above evidence of religious practice and profession, we see no alternative but to refer to the *dominant* expressions of first- and second-century Judaism with the label “monotheist.” Pagans acknowledged it;¹⁹⁷ the majority of Jews also, it seems, acknowledged it through their rhetoric and practice. Of course there were deviations from the predominant devotional patterns that we have seen, but these were just that—deviations.¹⁹⁸ Devotion to angels or a second figure alongside the one God, though it apparently existed, was never publicly or corporately countenanced within Judaism of late antiquity; in the absence of any compelling evidence to the contrary, it is best to confirm the monotheistic character of Judaism’s corporate cultic practices. Monotheistic rhetoric was closely conjoined in Judaism with cultic act, and an examination of Deutero-Isaianic rhetoric, the *Shema*, and other “one God” language revealed the central significance of monotheistic rhetoric for Jewish worship and life. The sheer preponderance of this

¹⁹⁷ *Supra* n. 52.

¹⁹⁸ We may also mention two Jewish epigraphs from Egypt (mid-second to late-first century BCE) discovered in the Temple of Pan at Resediyeh (*CPJ* 1537, 1538) and two additional Jewish epigraphs dedicated with pagan invocations, respectively, *Dis Manibus* (*CIJ* 678) and *Iunonibus* (*CIJ* 77*). The implications of these finds are not immediately self-evident, and they may reflect pagan converts/sympathisers with Judaism. See Ross S. Kraemer’s discussion (“On the Meaning of the Term ‘Jew’ in Greco-Roman Inscriptions,” *HTR* 82 [1989]: 41–43, 46, 49).

language in all spheres of life, but particularly in the religio-cultic arena is further sufficient to point in the direction of “monotheism” as an appropriate descriptor for second-Temple Judaism. With its characteristic self-predication style, the rhetoric of Isaiah 41–52 may be considered *primus inter pares* in a larger set of rhetorical formulas of predication later appropriated in the corporate worship of early Judaism, albeit in modified form. The use of unity and exclusivity rhetoric within corporate devotion to the one God represents within early Judaism a pursuit of exclusivist monotheism, and to a large extent demonstrates the pervasiveness of monotheistic belief within familial religiosity and the cultic activity of early Judaism.

There is further no evidence to suggest that this predominant monotheistic penchant in early Judaism had changed by rabbinic times. Though patterns of “two powers” belief may have been predominant in first- and second-century para-rabbinic Jewish traditions, competing monotheistic ideologies (rabbinic vs. para-rabbinic) seemed not to have encouraged devotional practices that violated strict monolatry to the one God, even among Jews of the diaspora. Belief in and confession of one God represents therefore a fundamental marker of Jewish identity in the first and second centuries CE. And, since first- and second-century Christianity emerged as a web of textual communities in discursive interaction with similar webs of Jewish textual communities, exclusivist monotheism offers us an important symbolic basis against which Christian attempts at formulating identities can be measured. The next three chapters explore how Christians utilized belief and rhetoric of divine unity and uniqueness in specific strategies as a tool for shaping their own identity vis-à-vis Judaism.

Chapter Three

Resisting “Judaism:”

Divine Unity and the Marginalizing of “Jewish” Influence in Two Anatolian Churches

The emergence of the nascent Christian movement from monotheistic Jewish religion, long-established and esteemed for its antiquity, was accompanied by a complex variety of ideological and religious expressions, as individuals and communities of Christ-confessors constantly reevaluated and reimagined the relational boundaries of their relatively newfound faith with their monotheistic Jewish heritage. What constituted the identity of this new faith? Was it really something “new” at all? Was it fundamentally Jewish? Gentile? Somehow both? If so, how? Could (or even should) ancient Jewish customs like circumcision or sabbath observance be practiced by one who believed in something “new” in Jesus? How was Jesus to be understood within the constraints of traditional Jewish monotheism (sc. the “Jesus problem”)? The questions were answered quite differently and with a diversity parallel only to the form in which they could be asked. And there were Christian voices which reenvisioned the relationship of Christian identity and Jewish identity in terms more closely associated with traditional Jewish religious practices, forms, or ideologies than many other Christians preferred. We are fortunate to possess two letters from a Christian bishop written around 113 CE¹ to communities in Anatolia to warn them of harmful “Jewish” influence which he perceived as operating within some of the churches there.

In this chapter we examine how Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, strategically appeals to the concept of divine unity to counteract what he considers harmful “Jewish” influence within the Christian communities at Philadelphia and Magnesia. The distinctive literary shaping of two of his seven authentic epistles² reveals that the

¹ On the date see Stevan L. Davies (“The Predicament of Ignatius of Antioch,” *VC* 30 [1976]: 178–80; cf. Klaus-Gunther Essig, “Mutmassungen über den Anlass des Martyriums von Ignatius von Antiochien,” *VC* 40 [1986]: 105–17).

² Theodor Zahn (*Ignatius von Antiochien* [Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873]) and J.B. Lightfoot (*The Apostolic Fathers, Part II: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* [2d ed.; London: MacMillan, 1889] vol. 1) established the authenticity of seven letters of the Middle recension. William Schoedel (“Are the letters of Ignatius of Antioch authentic?” *RelSRev* 6 [1980]: 196–201; *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985]

influence of “Judaism” within the “Christian” church manifests itself operationally through certain patterns of scriptural interpretation (*Philadelphians*; §1.1) and cultic observance of sabbath rather than the Lord’s Day (*Magnesians*; §1.2). However, Ignatius fundamentally differentiates “Judaism” from “Christianism” ideologically, on the basis of their respective response to God’s revelation in the incarnational ministry of Jesus Christ. Whereas response to the gospel provides for Ignatius the criterion³ distinguishing “Judaism” from “Christianism,” it is modes of religious practice (i.e., scriptural reading and sacramental observance) that provide for him the operational indicia for identifying in the church those cultic patterns that are “Christian” vis-à-vis those that are “Jewish” (§1.3).

These important observations confirm that *it was not monotheism that served for Ignatius as criterion or indicium for distinguishing “Judaism” and “Christianism,” but other factors*. Monotheism, rather, functions for him as a powerful weapon for resisting threatening “Jewish” influence *within* the cultic practices of the Christian communities at Philadelphia and Magnesia. Against this “Jewish” threat Ignatius injects an equally-cultic response. He appeals to repentance unto social harmony based in the unity of God mediated sacramentally (§2.1). In both *Philadelphians* (§2.2) and *Magnesians* (§2.3), Ignatius ascribes the symbol of divine unity with social force and uses it as a prophylactic against harmful context-specific “Jewish” influence threatening the “Christian” church from within. As an element of resistance brought to bear on an already established divide between “Judaism” and “Christianism,” divine unity reinforces, reflexively and secondarily, a specifically “Christian” identity vis-à-vis “Judaism.” The bishop offers a complex reimagination of “Judaism,” fruitful not only for its historic value but for providing a detailed glimpse into the varied processes of Christian monotheistic world-construction in dialogue with Christian counter-voices more closely affined with “Judaism” (§3).

4–7) and C.P. Hammond Bammel (“Ignatian Problems,” *JTS* 33 [1982]: 62–97) respond to alternative theories by Weijenborg, Rius-Camps, and Joly.

³ Criteria represent collectively-ascribed standards of identity on which judgments about group similarity and dissimilarity are made. Indicia are (usually external) evidences of established identity and are the operational basis on which ready judgments of individual membership are made. On criteria and indicia see Donald L. Horowitz (“Ethnic Identity,” in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975] 119–20).

1. Context: “Jewish” Influence in Asia Minor

In this first section we analyze the literary construction of Ignatius’ opponents and the nature of the problem with “Judaism” in the letters of *Philadelphians* (§1.1) and *Magnesians* (§1.2). In each work, Ignatius gives distinctive literary shape to his opponents and the threat they pose. Since he had personal knowledge of the situation in Philadelphia and had heard by report about the situation in Magnesia, we suggest the literary depictions of his opponents harken back to historical realities in these communities, though doubtless imperfectly and certainly not disinterestedly.⁴ At the least they provide for us a picture of the criteria and indicia that distinguish for Ignatius “Judaism” from “Christianism” (§1.3). The close textual evaluation we perform in this section is critical. It provides a more sustained methodological base for understanding how Ignatius uses divine unity as an ideological tool for Christian identity construction, a motif we explore in the next section (§2).

1.1 “Judaism” as Interpretive Strategy (*Philadelphians*)

Bishop Ignatius dictated *Philadelphians* from Troas.⁵ The opening greeting is unparalleled in length and complexity among his letters to the Anatolian churches,⁶ and its emphasis on the suffering, resurrection, and blood of Christ as well as ecclesial unity, followed closely by a brief yet distinctive polemic on behalf of the (unnamed!) bishop’s charismatic authority (1.1), presages a sense that something serious threatens the social fabric of the community, at least as Ignatius sees it.⁷ The

⁴ In Appendix A we advocate a “thick(er) description” of the literary shaping of Ignatius’ opponents as a method for solving classic interpretive conundrums in the Ignatian epistles. Our proposed technique uses literary shaping as a window to historical setting.

⁵ *Phld.* 11.2.

⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 195. On *Philadelphians*’ distinctive structure among the letters see Hermann Josef Sieben (“Die Ignatianen als Briefe: Einige formkritische Bemerkungen,” *VC* 32 [1978]: 14–15).

⁷ *Philadelphians* is the only missive in which the bishop remains unnamed and “wird wie auf etwas Selbstverständliches auf das εἰς ἐπίσκοπος gepocht (Phld 4; 1,1; 3,2)” (Henning Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Brief des Polykarp von Smyrna. Zweite neubearbeitete Auflage der Auslegung von Walter Bauer* [HNT 18, Die apostolischen Väter 2; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1985] 29). Ignatius perceived the bishop’s authority as particularly threatened. He (as elsewhere) begins with praise, though here uncharacteristically not of the addressees but of the bishop (Sieben, “Ignatianen,” 14–15; Jerry Sumney, “Those Who ‘Ignorantly Deny Him’: The Opponents of Ignatius of Antioch,” *J ECS* 1 [1993]: 356). At the same time this is the only letter not to conclude with the customary greeting χαίρειν. Questions about episcopal authority may have arisen in connection with the bishop’s frequent “silence.” On episcopal “silence,” see Henry Chadwick (“The

sense of imminent danger escalates with the opening salvo of warnings in the letter body: “Flee division and false teaching” (2.1; cf. 6.2; 7.2); “Stay away from the evil plants” (3.1); “Do not let yourselves be misled” (3.3);⁸ culminating in a final exhortation to stave off division, “Make every effort therefore to celebrate one eucharist” (4.1). The term “division” (μερισμός) appears five times in this letter (only once elsewhere),⁹ indicating that for Ignatius the brand of “false teaching” found at Philadelphia posed a particularly serious threat to communal harmony. The acute emphasis on division and schism contrasts sharply with frequent reference to communal “unity” throughout the missive¹⁰—a contrast again unparalleled among the Anatolian epistles.¹¹ The overwhelming force on warnings against “division” and admonitions to unity appears slightly odd since Ignatius seems elsewhere to presuppose that the Philadelphian Christians have been “established in harmony from God” (inscr.)¹² and confesses to have found not “division but filtration” among them (3.1). Such concessions should, however, be understood in terms of rhetorical flare and conformity to “the diplomatic atmosphere of Hellenistic letters (both private and official) whose purpose is to make a firm but polite request.”¹³ The community’s harmonious life clearly remains contingent in his mind, and the situation at Philadelphia is not so resolutely pleasant as Ignatius would wish.¹⁴ His concern is tangible and harkens back not only to his firsthand experience with the Philadelphian

Silence of Bishops in Ignatius,” *HTR* 43 [1950]: 169–72), Peter Meinhold (“Schweigende Bischöfe. Die Gegensätze in den kleinasiatischen Gemeinden nach den Ignatianen,” in idem, *Studien zu Ignatius von Antiochien* [Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979] 19–36), and Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 56–57, 76–78).

⁸ Dependent on 1 Cor 6:9–10 (Schoedel, *ibid.*, 198; Robert M. Grant, “Scripture and Tradition in St. Ignatius of Antioch,” *CBQ* 25 [1963]: 323). For the “permissive” passive see BDAG, s.v. *πλανᾶω* 2.c.δ.

⁹ 2.1; 3.1; 7.2bis; 8.1; and *Smyrn.* 8.1 (“und dort wie eine Wiederholung von Ph 7,2 wirkt;” so Jakob Speigl, “Ignatius in Philadelphia: Ereignisse und Anliegen in den Ignatiusbriefen,” *VC* 41 [1987]: 361). Note *μερίζω* in *Magn.* 6.2.

¹⁰ 4.1; ἐνότης; 2.2; 3.2; 5.2; 8.1; 9.1; ὁμόνοια: inscr.; 11.2; ἐν ἐνὶ: inscr.; ἔνωσις; 4.1; 7.2; 8.1.

¹¹ Speigl, “Ignatius,” 371.

¹² Subjective genitive [θεοῦ]; cf. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 21–22.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 51. The verbal noun “filtration” is processual in force. At the time of Ignatius’ visit, the Philadelphian church was involved in a *process* of “filtration,” such that there had not *yet* been definitive expulsion of false teaching. Paul Donahue, “Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch,” *VC* 32 (1978): 92: “Although Ignatius minimizes the degree of dissension within the church at Philadelphia by describing it as filtering rather than as division, it is clear that such division exists.”

¹⁴ The issue was not resolved by the time of Ignatius’ writing (11.1b), and conformity with episcopal authority remains contingent (inscr.: *μάλιστα ἐὰν ἐν ἐνὶ ὄσιν*).

church¹⁵ but also to reports recently received from his liaisons from Antioch, Philo and Reus Agathopous (11.1b). These two legates had been “dishonored” in Philadelphia (11.1) by the same “specious wolves” Ignatius personally encountered there (2.2).¹⁶ When he therefore speaks with concern of the operation of “Judaism” as a threatening influence in the church at Philadelphia, we should pay all the more attention to the manner in which he gives literary shape to “Judaism.”¹⁷ How does Ignatius construct “Judaism” in *Philadelphians*? The relevant descriptive texts occur in 5.1–9.2:

^{5.1b}But your prayer will make me complete to God, that I might attain the fate in which I have been shown mercy, having fled to the gospel as to the flesh of Jesus and to the apostles as to the presbytery of the church.

^{5.2}And we also love the prophets, since they too made their proclamation with the gospel in view, and they hoped in him and waited for him, in whom by believing they too were saved, being in the unity from Jesus Christ (ένότητι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), saints worthy of love and admiration, attested by Jesus Christ and included in the gospel of the common hope.

^{6.1a}But if anyone expositis Judaism (Ἰουδαϊσμόν ἐρμηνεύη) to you, do not listen to him. ^bFor it is better to listen to Christianity (Χριστιανισμόν) from a circumcised man than [to listen to] Judaism from an uncircumcised one. ^cBut both, if they do not speak about Jesus Christ, are to me gravestones and tombs of the dead, on which only the names of men are written.

^{6.2}Flee therefore the deceits and the ambush of the ruler of this age, lest, being worn down by his intention, you become weak in love; but all of you gather together with an undivided heart.

...

^{7.1a}For even though certain people wanted to deceive me in a fleshly way, yet the Spirit is not deceived, since it is from God. For it knows whence it comes and where it goes, and it exposes hidden things. ^bWhile with [you] I cried out, saying with a loud voice—the voice of God:

“Pay attention to the bishop and the presbytery and the deacons.”

^{7.2}To be sure, there were those who suspected me of saying these things as having known beforehand about the division caused by some, but the one in whom I am bound as prisoner is my witness that I did not come to know [this] from any human being. Rather, it was the spirit who proclaimed, saying these words:

¹⁵ 3.1 (οὐχ ὅτι παρ’ ὑμῖν μερισμὸν εὖρον) and the personal account of 6.3–8.2.

¹⁶ Assuming the opponents of 6.1–8.2 are identical with “those who dishonored” the liaisons in 11.1b. Ignatius hopes for the redemption of both (8.1; 11.1), such that their identification is probable; cf. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 214; Sumney, “Opponents,” 356.

¹⁷ Zahn (*Ignatius*, 261–72; 373–78), C.K. Barrett (“Jews and Judaizers in the Epistles of Ignatius,” in Robert Hamerton-Kelley and Robin Scroggs, eds., *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976] 232–38, 240), and Speigl (“Ignatius,” 360, 368–69, 372–73) recognize the heuristic value of *Philadelphians* as an entry point to the Ignatian epistles.

“Do nothing apart from the bishop. Guard your flesh as the temple of God. Love unity; flee divisions. Become imitators of Jesus Christ even as he is of his father.”

...

^{8.2a}Now I exhort you to do nothing in accordance with selfish ambition, but in accordance with knowledge about Christ. ^bFor I heard some people say, “If I do not find [it] in the archives,¹⁸ I do not believe [it] in the gospel. And when I said to them, “It is written,” they answered me, “That is the question at issue.” “But for me Jesus Christ is the “archives;” the inviolable archives are his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith which comes through him; by these I want to be justified through your prayers.

^{9.1a}The priests were also good, but better is the High Priest who has been entrusted with the Holy of Holies, who alone has been entrusted with the hidden things of God, ^bfor he himself is the door of the Father through which enter Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets and the apostles and the church—^call these—into the unity of God (εις ενότητα θεου). ^{2a}Now the gospel possesses something distinctive, namely, the coming of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, his suffering, and the resurrection. ^bFor the beloved prophets made their proclamation with him in view (κατήγγειλαν εις αυτόν), but the gospel is the imperishable finished work. ^cAll things together are good, if you believe with love.

The entirety of 5.1–9.2 is concerned with evaluating competing claims to authority. One by one the authority of the gospel (8.2; 9.2), apostles (5.1b; 9.1), prophets (5.2a; 9.1), patriarchs (8.2; 9.1), Ignatius’ opponents (7.1–2; 8.2), the bishop of Philadelphia (7.1–2; cf. inscr.; 1.1–4.1), and Ignatius himself (7.1–2) are variously at issue. These observations suggest *a priori* that conflict in Philadelphia manifests itself in terms of the relation between mutually-exclusive systems of religious authority competing within the same social space. And Ignatius constructs this conflict in terms of “Judaism” versus “Christianism.”

Yet what does he intend by “Judaism?” Are we to think of rigorous observance of Jewish law? Or perhaps the “idea of Judaism rather than its practice?”¹⁹ An initial answer emerges by tracing two themes. First, “**gospel**” appears no less than three times in 5.1–2, matched by its threefold appearance in 8.2–9.2. It represents a key motif in the dispute with “Judaism,” as Ignatius understands it.²⁰

Interpretation of “Jewish” traditions and texts also represents a particularly prominent concern, as expressed through ἐρμηνεύη (6.1), the flashback in 8.2b, and the explanation of OT themes in 9.1. Frequent juxtaposition of imagery—prophets/gospel, “Judaism”/“Christianism,” archives/inviolable archives—further suggests

¹⁸ On the variant ἀρχείοις (g) / ἀρχαίοις (GL), see Lightfoot (*Ignatius*, 2.271) and Paulsen (*Briefe*, 85–86).

¹⁹ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 200.

²⁰ “Gospel” occurs just twice outside *Philadelphians* (*Smyrn.* 5.1; 7.2).

that to discover what “Judaism” is for Ignatius, we must properly define **the relation between the above two themes** in the logic of *Philadelphians*. We trace these motifs in greater detail, beginning with 5.1–6.2.

The extended introduction of OT prophets in 5.2 appears odd for its relative lengthiness compared to the brevity accorded the “gospel” and “apostles” in 5.1b. Yet the extended treatment is intentional. It reflects a response directed to specific accusations previously levelled against Ignatius by his opponents. Those who deal in “Judaism” regard Ignatius’ respect for OT prophetic authority as lackluster (cf. 8.2), so Ignatius offers his counter-claim. Not only has he “taken refuge in the gospel...and in the apostles” (5.1), he “*also* loves the prophets.”²¹ Like the apostles, the prophets made their proclamation with the gospel in view, placed their hope in Jesus, waited for him,²² and were saved by believing in him. In sum, they participated in “the unity from Jesus Christ,” a reference to the “unity conferred on the church by God.”²³ They have been insinuated into the “gospel of the common hope” shared by Christians.

To his respect for prophetic witnesses, Ignatius contrasts his opponents’ teachings. *Phld.* 6.1 concerns the interpretation and proclamation of “Judaism” *within* the context of the Christian community (cf. ὑμῖν). Ignatius designates their teaching “Judaism” and boldly aligns it with “the deceit and entrapment of the ruler of this age” (6.2). He warns his audience to resist the exposition of “Judaism” in the church (6.1a) and explains this proscription, according to the following paraphrase: “For it is better to hear Christianity from a circumcised Jewish (or Gentile?) Christian than Judaism from an uncircumcised Gentile Christian. However, if they don’t speak about Jesus Christ (i.e., if they teach ‘Judaism’), both men are but markers pointing to that which is dead, upon which are inscribed merely human names.” *In Philadelphia*, “Judaism” manifests itself as an interpretive system that does not exposit Jesus Christ; “Christianism” is that which does. Ignatius establishes a binary opposition of mutual-exclusion between “Judaism” (Ἰουδαϊσμός) and “Christianism” (Χριστιανισμός).²⁴ “Judaism” is the “other”

²¹ Καὶ...δὲ (5.2) is additive (cf. *Eph.* 2.1).

²² Ignatius regards the prophets as having waited for the *parousia* of Christ’s incarnation (cf. *Magn.* 9.2), and the apostles for the *parousia* of his return.

²³ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 202.

²⁴ He probably coined the term “Christianism” consciously vis-à-vis “Judaism.” Cf. Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) 29–30; “‘I am a Christian’: Martyrdom and the Beginning of ‘Christian’ Identity,”

against which he indexes “Christianness,” and he seals its insufficiency, *qua* religious system, with macabre funerary imagery of gravestones and tombs (6.1c). The illustration deprives his opponents of “the right to bear the Christian name”²⁵ and, more acutely, offers an illustration of the (dead, human) authority of “Judaism” vis-à-vis that (living, divine) authority of “Christianism.”

Description of Jew and Gentile in terms of circumcision and non-circumcision has suggested to some that the teaching of “Judaism” at Philadelphia comprised recommendation of circumcision (and perhaps other markers of “Jewishness”).²⁶ Yet it seems preferable to understand this language rhetorically as heightening the force of the argument over competing systems of authority. The polarizing rhetoric of 6.1b does not indicate that circumcision (or any other particularly “Jewish” observance) represents the content of the teaching at issue. It is invoked as an image, a highly-recognizable symbol of “Jewishness,” to draw the sharpest possible binary categories of mutual-exclusion. By using a key “Jewish” identity marker to highlight the severity of contrast with “Christianism,” Ignatius can emphasize the absurdity of listening to the exposition of “Judaism” within the “Christian” church! Nothing in the remainder of *Philadelphians* suggests that the practice or observance of circumcision or sabbath is at issue in Philadelphia.²⁷

Our interpretation of 5.1–6.2 comports well with the report of 8.2–9.2,²⁸ where we encounter a résumé of Ignatius’ direct experience with false teachers in Philadelphia. What lies at stake in 8.2 is the relation of the gospel to OT scripture. “Some people,” Ignatius recalls, asserted, “If I do not find [it] in the archives,” by which they mean OT scriptures,²⁹ then “I do not believe [it] in the gospel.”³⁰ In

in *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2002; 2005 repr.) 215–18. Ignatius was fond of coining Christ-compounds (χριστόνομος; χριστόφορος; χριστομαθία). Τοῦδαϊσμός first appears in 2 Macc 2:21 and 8:1 as an antonym of ἑλληνισμός (4:13) (Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* [Berkeley; Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999] 105–06).

²⁵ Paulsen, *Briefe*, 84.

²⁶ E.g., Meinhold, “Schweigende Bischöfe,” 28–29.

²⁷ In contrast, the rhetoric of *Magnesiums* confronts “Jewish” *praxis* (§1.2).

²⁸ 7.1–2 is discussed below (§2.2.1).

²⁹ This is the most convincing reading (William R. Schoedel, “Ignatius and the Archives,” *HTR* 71 [1978]: 97–106) and comports with Ignatius’ use of “it is written” (8.2b) elsewhere in reference to OT (*Eph.* 5.3; *Magn.* 12.1).

³⁰ The alternative—“If I do not find [it] in the archives, I do not believe in the gospel”—is unconvincing (*pace* Paulsen, *Briefe*, 86), for as Lightfoot observes, “The parallelism demands” the other reading (*Ignatius*, 2.271).

dispute with Ignatius, these “people” raised a critical issue regarding interpretive authority. Which has hermeneutical seniority? OT scriptures or the gospel message attesting the events of Jesus’ passion and resurrection, and the faith that comes through him? Bishop Ignatius meets their concern by pointing to OT scriptures—“It is written”—in a bid to prove that gospel events were proclaimed in advance by the prophets, who themselves already participated in the gospel.³¹ His attempt was unconvincing. The disuaded opposition responded, “That is the question at issue.” The “question at issue” is not the testing of the gospel message against OT scriptures *per se*,³² but the systematic prioritization *in the church* of the authority of OT textual witness over that of the gospel and the interpretation of OT scriptures in a manner that denies that the gospel is contained in the OT. By characterizing this as “Judaism” and insisting that this system is alien to “Christianism” Ignatius can demand that it not be present *within the church*.

Moving out of historical résumé,³³ Ignatius counters his opponents by constructing an alternative symbol system. His “archives” are a person, Jesus Christ, and “the inviolable archives” are key salvific events pertaining to Christ, “his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith which comes through him” (8.2c). Reference to Christ’s passion and resurrection does not indicate that Ignatius counters a docetic tendency. Possible references to docetic teaching in *Philadelphians* are so scant and ambiguous as to make this conclusion virtually certain.³⁴ The gospel imagery must not be read apart from the larger polemic over interpretive authority. Ignatius’ opponents do not read OT witnesses in a manner that necessarily directly *denies* the physicality of Jesus’ suffering and resurrection, but in a way that “exposits” them in a “Jewish” as opposed to a “Christian” manner (cf.

³¹ Cf. 5.2; *Magn.* 8.2–9.1.

³² As we find among Jews *in the synagogue* at Beroea (Acts 17:11).

³³ Whether the arguments advanced in 8.2c–9.2 were ever raised during the dispute at Philadelphia or are first put forward here is insignificant. Literarily, the argument of 8.2c–9.2 is linked to the polemic of the preceding résumé. Ignatius perceived the issues in these paragraphs as important, if not in his personal encounter, then at least for his *literary* rebuttal.

³⁴ Lack of “docetic” reference—which appears in every other Asian letter—is striking. Possible indicators of docetic christology (cf. *inscr.*; 3.3; 5.1; 9.2) must be “mirror read” with great uncertainty back into the historic situation to find doceticism among the opposition at Philadelphia. The (supposedly) clearest reference to docetic christology, that of dissociating oneself “from the Passion” (3.3: τῷ πάθει), indicates Ignatius’ evaluation of the status of “Jewish” schismatics. Because they participate in “Judaism,” a system of thought that rejects Christ’s gospel (i.e., suffering), those who engage in “Judaism” within the church do not effectively participate in his suffering (cf. *inscr.*; 3.2), even if they partake of the eucharist.

6.1). “Christianism” is established on Jesus Christ’s “cross and death and his resurrection and the faith which comes through him” (8.2c). To interpret “Christianly” is necessarily to include the gospel within the purview of ancient scripture. It is to exposit OT “archives” through the “inviolable archives.” *“Judaism,” conversely, rejects Jesus Christ’s cross, death, and resurrection and the faith which comes through him.* To read “Jewishly” is to *exclude* (directly or indirectly) fundamental elements of the gospel—Jesus’ death, resurrection, and faith in him—from the purview of the ancient, divinely-authorized OT witnesses. It is to read OT “archives” apart from the vantage point of the “inviolable archives.” The two systems of exposition are mutually-exclusive, for they are grounded in incompatible worldviews.

Ignatius continues his appeal for “Christian” hermeneutic. Pointing to Jesus’ preeminence (9.1), he advocates the distinctive priority of gospel “archives” to the “prophets” in a way that nevertheless does not exclude the latter from participating in the former (9.2). “The priests were also good,” he continues, “but better is the high priest,” better, that is, because of his *exclusive* (μόνος) care over the holy of holies, over the secret things of God (9.1a).³⁵ Here Ignatius defends his respect for OT priests (cf. 5.2a), yet he does so to demonstrate the high priest’s preeminence. Through divine appointment the high priest alone stands as “the door” through which all who have ever witnessed to and participated in the gospel—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and church—enter into God’s unity (9.1bc). Ignatius presents the high priest christologically,³⁶ and his argument thereby relates to the issue of hermeneutical authority under discussion (cf. 8.2c). Jesus is preeminent because he keeps divine mysteries. Any message about him must also be preeminent! “Now the gospel,” Ignatius notes, “possesses something distinctive,” the events themselves of the savior’s incarnation, passion, and resurrection (9.2a). Why distinctive? Because it represents “the imperishable finished work” of God through Jesus, while the beloved prophets only “made their proclamation with him in view.” Ignatius prioritizes the

³⁵ Hans-Werner Bartsch interprets “holy of holies” sacramentally—in terms of a conflict in Philadelphia between a sabbath and a Lord’s Day eucharist observance (*Gnostisches Gut und Gemeindetradition bei Ignatius von Antiochien* [BFCT 2/44; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1940] 39–47). However, if sacramental practice is at issue in Philadelphia, it is surprising that the contrast between sabbath and Lord’s Day is nowhere explicit in *Philadelphians* (as it is in *Magnesians*). We are inclined to reject Bartsch’s proposal.

³⁶ On the christological interpretation of “the door” in light of LXX Ps 117:20 see Bartsch (*ibid.*, 48–49). Doubtless Ignatius provides for us here an example of the type of “Christian” hermeneutic he urges.

gospel, not in a way that excludes or supplants the testimony of OT witness. The two operate in synergy. His reference to priests as “good” (9.1a) and to patriarchs and prophets as participating in “the unity of God” (9.1c) solidifies his favorable attitude towards OT witnesses, while demonstrating the all-inclusive nature of the “distinctive” gospel “archives.” The patriarchal and prophetic message is good when read in conjunction with that of apostles and church. “All things together are good” he says, if they lead to faith “with love” (9.2c; cf. 8.2c).

For him, ancient and more recent witnesses enter into “God’s unity” (9.1c) through one “door,” Jesus Christ. What Ignatius intends by participation in “God’s unity” is complex (see §2.2.1). Yet within the argument of 5.1–9.2, participation in divine unity reflects at a minimum the collective witness of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and church to the single message, which Ignatius equates with “the inviolable archives” of the gospel. To exposit “Christianly” is to participate with saints of all ages in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in God’s unity. For Ignatius, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and church all participate through Jesus Christ in the unity of God. Theirs is a single, common witness *from* God pointing always to the one Christ (cf. 4.1). To exposit “Jewishly,” on the other hand, is to read in a way that effectively excludes the gospel from the purview of patriarchs and prophets. This is then to reject the gospel and the unity of God. We have come full circle. *Phld.* 9.1–2 explains why the exhortation of 6.1 is true, namely, that “it is better” to listen to the interpretation and exposition of “Christianism” than “Judaism.”

1.2 “Judaism” as Mode of Cultic Practice (Magnesians)

Having not personally visited the Christian community at Magnesia, Ignatius composed his letter to the Christians there from Smyrna in reliance on information provided him by a handful of Magnesian delegates (the bishop, two presbyters, and a deacon).³⁷ We should not anticipate the same depth of personal familiarity with the situation at Magnesia as witnessed for Philadelphia. Nevertheless, Ignatius authorizes his exhortations in *Magnesians* on the basis of his personal contact with the entire Magnesian community through the members of its delegation.³⁸ We should thus avoid too great a suspicion about the contextually-directed nature of the literary

³⁷ *Magn.* 2.1; 6.1a; 11.1 (ἐπεὶ ἔγνω); cf. *Rom.* 9.3–10.3.

³⁸ 6.1a (ἐπεὶ οὖν ἐν τοῖς προγεγραμμένοις προσώποις τὸ πᾶν πλῆθος ἐθεώρησα ἐν πίστει καὶ ἠγάπησα, **παραινῶ**); 2.1a.

shaping of *Magnesians*. As in Philadelphia, there is a problem with “Judaism” at Magnesia (8.1; 10.3). Yet this affinity should not lead us too quickly to equate either the *Sitze im Leben* of the purported conflicts in the two cities or the identity of the opponents. Ignatius addresses a somewhat different concern at Magnesia, one which he explicitly labels “judaizing” (ἰουδαϊζειν). How does he give literary shape to the manifestation of “Judaism” in Magnesia?

Magnesians 8–10 provides a carefully articulated argument against “Judaism.” We offer a few general observations from the following structural layout, which organizes the argument of 8.1–10.3:

8.1^aDo not let yourselves be misled by false doctrines and antiquated myths, since they are useless.

^bFor if we are still living according to Judaism,

^cwe confess that we have not received grace.

^{8.2a}For the most divine prophets lived according to Christ Jesus

—this is why they were persecuted—

^bbeing inspired by his grace

^cso that those who are disobedient might be fully convinced

^dthat there is one God

who revealed himself through Jesus Christ his son,

who is his word which came out of silence,

who in every way pleased the one who sent him.

9.1^aIf then those [sc. disobedient] who lived³⁹ in antiquated practices came to newness of hope,

^bno longer sabbatizing but living according to the Lord’s [Day],⁴⁰

on which our life also (καὶ) arose through him and his death

—which some deny—...,

9.2^ahow will we be able to live apart from him

of whom the prophets too were disciples in the Spirit...?

10.1^aTherefore do not be insensible to his kindness.

^bFor were he to imitate how we act

we would no longer exist!

^cBecoming learners of him, therefore,

let us learn to live according to Christianity.

^dFor one who is called by a name other than this is not of God.

10.2^aDo away, then, with the evil leaven, which has become old and sour,

and turn to the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ.

Be salted with him...

10.3^aIt is absurd to proclaim Jesus Christ and to judaize.

For Christianity did not believe in Judaism,

but Judaism in Christianity...

³⁹ Οἱ...ἀναστραφέντες (lit. the ones who lived). Though syntactically a simple article, οἱ bears anaphoric force and refers back to the preceding idea (i.e., the disobedient of 8.2c). There is a clear parallelism between 8.2cd (*those who are disobedient might be fully convinced that there is one God...*) and 9.1a (*those who lived in antiquated practices came to newness of hope*).

⁴⁰ Κυριακὴν refers to the Lord’s Day [i.e. Sunday], as clarified by contrast with “sabbatizing” and with the following phrase. In *Did.* 14.1, κυριακὴν κυρίου [Lord’s (Day) of the Lord] probably refers to Easter Sunday; cf. *Gos. Pet.* 9.35; 12.50; Melito (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.2). G reads κατὰ κυριακὴν ζώην ζῶντες (sc. “living according to the life of the Lord,” or, “living life according to the Lord’s”), likely a later scribal attempt at explaining the unaccompanied adjective.

The argument opens with an admonition: “Do not let yourselves be misled by false doctrines or antiquated myths, since they are worthless” (8.1a). The exhortation against indulging “false doctrines” and “antiquated myths” evinces the bishop’s concern for what he perceives as the particularly threatening content of some strains of thought at Magnesia. The importance of the instructive content of these myths is betrayed further through reference in this section to “disciples” and “(only) teacher,” but also through the later description of such teachings as “evil doctrine” (11:1). The apparent emphasis on dogmatic substance naturally arouses our curiosity as to what Ignatius means when he refers to “myths,” and any number of solutions have been offered, from “gnostic” cosmology to the literal interpretation of scripture!⁴¹ Yet the question itself is somewhat misguided, since Ignatius interprets these myths primarily in terms of their sociological *function*. This is apparent from his subsequent evaluation—“since they are useless.” “Antiquated” and “useless” these myths have no functional religious value. Whatever they reference (the answer is not important), for Ignatius these “strange doctrines” and “antiquated myths” are functionally linked (explanatory γὰρ) to religious practice, particularly with “living according to Judaism” and a denial of “grace” (8.1b). Consider the following lexical survey from 8.1b–10.1 highlighting religious *praxis*: “to judaize” (ἰουδαΐζειν), “to observe sabbath” (σαββατίζειν),⁴² “to imitate the way we act,” “those who are disobedient,” “antiquated practices,” and the particularly important “living in accordance with.” The frequency of these phrases (esp. ζῆν κατὰ, “which Ignatius loves”)⁴³ in this section is unparalleled in the Ignatian letters and indicates that the bishop perceives something cultically distinctive occurring at Magnesia.⁴⁴ Imagery of religious *praxis* permeates his analysis and appears more prominent than doctrinal content, yet for him proclamation and *praxis* are inexorably linked. The interpretation of mythic imagery and doctrine in terms of religious function is evidenced also in reference to “disciples” (lit. “learners”) as those who “learn to live in accordance with (κατὰ)

⁴¹ Cf. Sumney, “Opponents,” 362 n. 109.

⁴² LXX Exod 16:30; Lev 23:32; 26:34–35; 2 Chr 36:21; 1 Esd 1:38; 2 Macc 6:6.

⁴³ Paulsen, *Briefe*, 82. Cf. *Eph.* 6.2; 8.1; *Trall.* 2.1; *Rom.* 8.1.

⁴⁴ Einar Molland is simply incorrect to deny the *praxis* aspect of this “heresy” (“The Heretics Combated by Ignatius of Antioch,” *JEH* 5 [1954]: 6). Only in *Magnesians* is the false teaching characterized with its own specific ζῆν κατὰ-phrase! The single occurrence elsewhere in the Ignatian epistles in reference to false teachers (*Phld.* 3.2: κατὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ζῶντες) specifically anticipates the repentance of those who teach “Judaism.”

Christianism” (10.1). These “antiquated myths” threaten the practice of “living Christianly” in *Magnesians*.

Yet Ignatius does not target just any mode of life, but that which he peculiarly aligns with and characterizes as “Judaism” and which he envisions as diametrically opposed to a lifestyle aligned with “Christianism” (cf. 8.1b; 10.1c). This emerges from the opening conditional clause explaining his opposition to “antiquated myths,” as the following interpretive expansion highlights: “For if, and let us assume so,⁴⁵ we are still living according to Judaism, then in this case we confess by our mode of life not to have received the grace of Christ Jesus” (8.1bc). This motif between two modes of life, one marked by “Judaism” the other by “grace,” characterizes the remainder of his explanation in paragraphs eight through ten and is confirmed by a number of rhetorical pairs:

If we live in accordance with Judaism (8.1b) // we confess not to have received grace (8.1c)
The prophets lived in accordance with Christ Jesus (8.2a) // being inspired by his grace (8.2b)
If those who lived in antiquated practices (9.1a) // came to newness of hope (9.1a)
If those who lived in antiquated practices (9.1a) // how can we live apart from Jesus (9.2a)
no longer sabbatizing (9.1b) // living according to the Lord’s [Day?] (9.1b)

In these pairs a conflict of diametrically-opposed lifestyles emerges. To live *κατὰ Ἰουδαϊσμόν* is to live apart from Christ’s grace. To live *κατὰ Χριστόν Ἰησοῦν*, as the most godly OT prophets did, is to be “inspired by his grace.” The contrast is heightened by threefold reference to “antiquated” things (*qua* things associated with “Judaism;” 8.1a; 9.1a; 10.2a), paralleled by the threefold reference to Christ’s grace/kindness (8.1c; 8.2b; 10.1a). An even broader structural parallel further emphasizes this opposition. Two exhortations frame Ignatius’ appeal to the prophets and the bulk of his discussion of living “Jewishly” in 8.1b–9.2. The first, we have seen, calls for avoiding “antiquated myths,” an image somehow aligned with “living Jewishly” (8.1a); the second appeals for sensitivity to “the kindness of Jesus” (10.1a). Reference to the prophets in 8.1b–9.2 sits Janus-faced, helping explain (8.1a: γάρ) the call to avoid Jewish “myths” and becoming the basis (10.1a: οὖν) for the plea for attentiveness to Christ’s grace. In *Magnesians* 8–10 what is contrasted is not “Mosaic law” and “God’s grace,” but “living according to Judaism” and the reception of “Jesus’ grace,” or ζῆν κατὰ Ἰουδαϊσμόν (8.1b) and κατὰ

⁴⁵ The first-class condition is assumed true for argument’s sake, though Ignatius actually does intend that there are some in Magnesia who “live according to Judaism.”

Χριστιανισμόν (10.1c). Whatever “grace” means theologically for Ignatius,⁴⁶ we cannot overemphasize that in the rhetoric of *Magnesian* grace or “living according to Christianity” represents a mutually-exclusive alternative and superior lifestyle to living “according to Judaism.”

In the historical review of 8.2–9.1b, Ignatius is concerned about some in Magnesia who still (μέχρι νῦν) live “according to Judaism” and consequently apart from grace (8.1bc). In view of this situation he draws on traditional symbols from Jewish antiquity as key illustrative material. The prophets, he explains, “lived in accordance with Christ Jesus,” a fact attested by their persecution and which was the very grounds of it (8.2a). They were endowed with Jesus’ “grace” to proclaim their message (8.2b) “so that those *who are disobedient* might be fully convinced” (8.2c) of the one God and his son, Jesus Christ (8.2d). By demonstrating that Hebrew prophets were thoroughly “Christian”—living κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, being “endowed by his grace,” and proclaiming one God and his son—Ignatius shows the absurdity of “Christians” living “Jewishly.”

He reasons with his audience: “If then those who lived in antiquated practices came to newness of hope, no longer keeping sabbath (sc. “sabbatizing”) but living according to the Lord’s [Day], how will we be able to live apart from Jesus Christ?” (9.1ab, 9.2a). Who are “those who lived in antiquated practices?” Surely OT prophets cannot be in view, as Molland and Hilgenfeld proposed,⁴⁷ for Ignatius regards them as having preached a message in conformity with Christ Jesus, and they cannot be said to “have lived in antiquated practices” (i.e., “Judaism”) from his perspective. Nor are they, as Zahn proposed,⁴⁸ contemporary “judaizers,” Jews who converted to Christianity yet continue to live according to “Judaism,” for it is evident from the additive use of καί in 9.1c (“our life *also* arose”) that Ignatius refers to a group other than himself and his contemporaries. The most plausible solution identifies “those who lived in antiquated practices” with its nearest antecedent, “those who are disobedient” of 8.2c,⁴⁹ for whose faith the prophets were inspired by Christ’s grace in their ministry (8.2bc). Ambiguity still remains. Are these

⁴⁶ On this question see Thomas F. Torrance (*The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* [Edinburgh; London: Oliver and Boyd, 1948] 56–89), Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 239), and Virginia Corwin (*St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960] 164–71).

⁴⁷ Molland, “Heretics,” 3–4; Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Ignatii Antiocheni et Polycarpi Smyrnaei epistulae et martyria* (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1902) 280 [non vidi].

⁴⁸ *Ignatius*, 372.

⁴⁹ Οὗν (9.1a) is explanatory of 8.2c.

“disobedient” contemporaries of the prophets who were converted to living “according to Christ Jesus” and who ceased observing sabbath in favor of Sunday (9.1ab)? Or, as Schoedel suggests, are these “the early disciples who once lived as Jews (by observing sabbath) but came to live as Christians (by observing Sunday)?”⁵⁰ For whom was the prophetic ministry inspired? Either suggestion is permissible, yet the former necessitates a wholesale telescoping of Christian ritual observance into ancient Jewish traditions. It is possible that Ignatius believes contemporaries of the prophets were persuaded to abandon sabbath and adopt Sunday worship; in such reimagining of history, he may have relied on traditional prophetic lampooning of sabbath observance as in Isa 1:13.⁵¹ However, Schoedel’s interpretation makes best contextual sense. Ignatius never explicitly claims the prophets preached christological monotheism (8.2d), only that they were imbued with Christ’s grace so that their ministry and message would (eventually) lead to that confession.⁵² The prophets were Jesus’ “disciples...in the Spirit” (9.2), not having “the advantage of looking back to Christ’s fleshly presence,”⁵³ but preaching in anticipation of his appearance (9.2). The christological content of their message became manifest through Christ’s incarnation and death (cf. 10.3; *Phld.* 9.1).

If those early Christian disciples “who lived in antiquated practices” received of the message and ministry of the prophets and converted to “newness of hope” (sc. the message of *christological* monotheism; cf. 8.2d), expressed by switching from sabbath to Lord’s Day observance, how will we Christians be able to live apart from Jesus Christ? The bishop offers choice between two modes of life, one *κατὰ Ἰουδαϊσμὸν*, another *κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν*. And he urges his hearers not to be insensible to the kindness (sc. grace) of Jesus, a point he pushes home with his strongest illustration yet (10.1ab). Assuming the earlier supposition that “we are still living according to Judaism” (cf. 8.1b), Ignatius claims that if Jesus were to imitate the way we act when we “live according to Judaism” (8.1b) by “sabbatizing” (9.1a) instead of “living according to the Lord’s Day” (9.1b), then we would no longer exist. Quite simply, we who are called “Christians” would no longer exist because “Christianism” as something newly initiated by Jesus (cf. 9.1a) would never have

⁵⁰ *Ignatius*, 119–20, 123. That OT prophets preached for the sake of Christians is a frequent motif elsewhere (1 Cor 10:6, 11; 1 Pet 1:11–12; Justin *I Apol.* 31ff.; Irenaeus *Haer.* 4.20.5).

⁵¹ Cf. *Barn.* 15.8; 2.4–6; 9.4; 10.11–12.

⁵² 8.2c: εἰς τὸ πληροφορηθῆναι; cf. *Phld.* 9.2.

⁵³ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 124.

existed (10.1b)!⁵⁴ That is why it is absurd for those who are designated “Christian,” and are “of God” (cf. 10.1d), and who “proclaim Jesus Christ,” to “judaize” (cf. 10.3). The two modes of life are incompatible, inasmuch as they are constructed on competing religious systems, “Judaism” and “Christianism.”

In one sense, the “antiquated myths” hold the key for the entire missive, as the purpose statement in 11.1 cannot be understood apart from the discussion of 8–10. “Now I write these things...because...I want to forewarn you not to get snagged on the hooks of worthless opinions but instead to be fully convinced about the birth and the suffering and the resurrection, which took place during the time of the governorship of Pontius Pilate. These things were truly and most assuredly done by Jesus Christ, our hope, from which may none of you ever be turned aside” (11.1). The contrast of the incarnate ministry of Jesus with “worthless opinion” in 11.1 must be interpreted in light of the argument of 8–10,⁵⁵ specifically the ministry of OT prophets. The prophets, Ignatius earlier noted, were “inspired by Christ’s grace so that those who are disobedient might be fully convinced” of the message of “Christianism”—of one God and one Lord (8.2b–d). And, like them, Ignatius now writes his letter so that its recipients might “be fully convinced” about the truth of Jesus’ incarnate ministry. The “worthless opinion” he warns them of in 11.1 parallels the “false doctrines” and “antiquated myths” he had railed against in 8.1a by illustration from the prophets (8.2–9.2). Ignatius therefore by continuing to polarize “Judaism” and “Christianism” as systems of cultic activity, a process he had begun in 8.1, carries on in 11.1 the prophetic ministry. This suggests that the proper interpretation of his exhortation to be convinced of the physical ministry of Jesus in 11.1 is best interpreted with respect to its *cultic* function, specifically in terms of the “Judaism” practiced by those envisioned in 8–10.

The overall force of 8–10 was the polarization of “Judaism” and “Christianism” as alternative cultic systems/modes of life. To “live Jewishly” amounts effectively to a functional denial of the pivotal importance of “Christianism.” To partake of any teaching which leads to a practice associated with the former is *ipso facto* to deny practice of the latter and its doctrine (cf. 10.1b, 3a). Now Ignatius argues that it is “worthless opinion,” “false doctrine,” “antiquated myths” which have effected a separate gathering on sabbath (sc. the performance of

⁵⁴ *Smyrn.* 1.2: “from the fruit of the cross we [exist], from his divinely blessed suffering!”

⁵⁵ Anaphoric use of ταῦτα (11.1).

“Judaism”) in Magnesia. Inasmuch as observing sabbath is “Jewish,” this amounts to a rejection (or at least an absurd supplementation) of the “Christian” Lord’s Day, effectively denying the fundamental, pivotal significance of the incarnation, passion, and resurrection. It was these events after all that rendered “Judaism” obsolete and “antiquated” (cf. 9.1a; 10.2a). To partake of “antiquated myths” and thus cultically observe “Jewish” sabbath represents the rejection of “Christianism” (cf. 10.1ab) and thereby the salvific import of Christ Jesus.

Whatever the “false doctrines” and “antiquated myths” about which Ignatius warns his audience may indicate, for him they are *functionally* and *cultically* affined with “Judaism” particularly envisioned in *Magnesians* as an antiquated system according to which (κατὰ) one may live (sc. “judaize”), especially by observing sabbath (sc. “sabbatizing”).⁵⁶ With the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus has come newness of hope—the message of christological monotheism and life according to Christ’s grace. “Sabbatizing” and the practices of “Judaism” have become “old and sour” (10.2a), no longer useful (cf. 8.1a). For those who are called by the name “Christian” (4.1; 10.1d) to continue living by these “antiquated” practices (8.1a; 9.1a) amounts to an “absurd” (ἄτοπὸν) acceptance of an outmoded system, “Judaism,” and a concomitant denial of the newness of Christ’s grace in “Christianism” (8.1b). Such “Christians” in reality cease to “be Christians” (4.1; 10.1b).

1.3 The Logic of “Judaism” vs. “Christianism:” Criteria and Indicia

In the preceding discussion we set “Judaism,” “Christianism,” and related terms in quotations as a reminder that the “Judaism” and “Christianism” we encounter in *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* are those perceived and constructed by Ignatius. What is “Judaism” and “Christianism” to him? Superimposing the images from *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* we uncover the following observations.

First, “Judaism” is for Ignatius a religious system that fundamentally rejects the revelatory significance of the gospel, Jesus Christ’s cross, death, and resurrection

⁵⁶ Ignatius doubtless envisions other “Jewish” practices in the “judaizing” category (cf. pl. πράγμασιν in 9.1a and the all-inclusive summary in 10.3a), such as circumcision or dietary requirements. Nevertheless, “sabbatizing” is his preeminent concern in *Magnesians* precisely because it represents participation in a shared meal *separate from* the single community who meets under the one divinely-authorized bishop. Sumney’s analysis that sabbath observance is not at issue remains unconvincing (“Opponents,” 360–64).

and the faith which comes through him (cf. *Magn.* 8.1bc; 10.1d, 3; 11.1; *Phld.* 3.3; 6.1c). “Christianism” is an alternative religious system that defines itself on the basis of its faith in the distinctive salvific value of Jesus’ death and resurrection. **The single criterion⁵⁷ that he uses to distinguish “Judaism” and “Christianism” is their respective response to the gospel.** The gospel is the pivotal historic event that differentiates “Christianism” from “Judaism.” It is the gospel that renders “Judaism” antiquated and useless (*Magn.* 8.1; 9.1) and that ushers in something profoundly new in “Christianism” (*Phld.* 9.2). Because of the historical advance through the gospel from “Judaism” to “Christianism,” the progression from old to new, Ignatius can claim that “Christianism did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianism” (*Magn.* 10.3).⁵⁸ When Ignatius speaks of “Judaism” and “Christianism” he has in mind, respectively, the ancient, traditional religion of Judaism and the new religious movement bound to Christ. For him, these two religions are mutually exclusive. If “Judaism” and “Christianism” are for Ignatius incompatible and distinctive religious movements, in what sense can he then speak of “Judaism” in the “Christian” church, as he does in *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*? This leads to our next two points.

As systems of religious authority, “Judaism” and “Christianism” possess their own distinctive cultic practices and strategies of reading. For Ignatius, adherents to the Jewish religion thus *live and read scripture according to “Judaism,”* that is, in a way that essentially rejects the gospel. Similarly, proponents of the Christian religion *live and read scripture according to “Christianism,”* that is, in a way that subjects all of life to the gospel and the faith that proceeds from it. Sabbath observance is a distinctive manifestation of “Judaism,” because it fails to recognize the significance of Sunday, the Lord’s Day, the peculiarly “Christian” day of worship on which Christ was resurrected according to the gospel. Patterns of scriptural exposition that fail to see Jesus in the testimony of Hebrew patriarchs and prophets are likewise manifestations of “Judaism.” “Christian” readings locate Christ in the OT scriptures. Patterns of *living and reading* are functional indicators, operational indicia, of the expression of “Judaism” or “Christianism” within a worship community. These indicia emerge for Ignatius from the well-established criteriological difference

⁵⁷ On criteria and indicia, see *supra* n. 3.

⁵⁸ Undoubtedly a claim that the historical progress of “Christianism” incorporates both Jewish and Gentile ethnicities within the universal church (*Smyrn.* 1.2).

between “Judaism” and “Christianism,” that is, along the lines of their response to the gospel, the earthly manifestation of God in Christ.

Finally, “Jewish” cultic patterns and modes of scriptural reading (i.e., *indicia*) can affect “Christian” thought and practice. The presence of “Jewish” *indicia* within the “Christian” church, however, threatens to undermine the very criterion on which the distinction of these two religions exists. The presence of “Jewish” cultic patterns and scriptural reading in a “Christian” community threatens the effective power of the gospel in that church’s ministry, for to live or interpret “Jewishly” is effectively to deny Christ’s incarnation, passion, and resurrection. In *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*, the conflict with harmful “Jewish” influences provides the referential frame against which rhetoric about Christ’s earthly life (sc. the gospel) must be interpreted. When Ignatius warns “be fully convinced about the birth and the suffering and the resurrection, which took place during the time of the governorship of Pontius Pilate,” and further affirms, “These things were truly and most assuredly done by Jesus Christ” (*Magn.* 11.1), he cautions against the threat which “Judaism” (not a supposed docetism!) poses to the manifestation of the gospel in their midst. The same observation applies to the many interjections that punctuate these two epistles.⁵⁹ As we will see below, this is closely linked with a threat to the very unity of God, and requires a response from Ignatius grounded in a discourse and logic of divine unity.

2. Resisting “Judaism:” Divine Unity and Ecclesial Unity

We now see that the fundamental Ignatian criterion for differentiating “Judaism” from “Christianism” is the respective response to God’s revelation in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and to the *new* faith that comes through him. Modes of religious practice (i.e., scriptural reading and sacramental observance) provide for Ignatius operational *indicia* for identifying “Christian” cultic patterns vis-à-vis those that are “Jewish.” *Our reading of Philadelphians and Magnesians suggests that Ignatius uses categories of divine unity and uniqueness neither as criteria nor indicia for differentiating “Christian” and “Jewish” identities.* Yet, even a cursory reading through the Ignatian epistles demonstrates that the unity of God, Jesus, and the

⁵⁹ *Magn.* 9.1 (“Through him and his death, which some deny”); *Phld.* inscr. (“fully convinced of his resurrection”); 3.3 (“he dissociates himself from the Passion”); 5.1 (“I have taken refuge in the gospel as the flesh of Jesus”).

church (ἔνωσις-motif) comprises a highly significant thematic element within his theology.⁶⁰ If not as indicium or criterion, how then does the unity-motif operate for Ignatius in the process of forming a distinctly “Christian” identity vis-à-vis “Judaism” at Philadelphia and Magnesia? We argue that Ignatius invokes the concept of divine unity to resist harmful “Jewish” influences.

There is an underlying logic operative in *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* in which Ignatius expresses the unity of God and Jesus functionally in terms of Jesus’ earthly, incarnational obedience to his Father and in terms of his faithful work of uniting believers of all ages into one “cosmic” church (§2.1). For Ignatius, this cosmic unity must be regularly incarnated and reconstituted in the life of the church, according to a pattern in which the earthly church imitates the (functional) unity which Jesus shares with the one God (§2.2). To bring the communities of Philadelphia (§2.2.1) and Magnesia (§2.2.2) into line with this divine plan of “cosmic” unity vis-à-vis threatening “Jewish” influence, Ignatius repeatedly invokes motifs of social harmony through a series of exhortations designed to enhance collective solidarity with ecclesial leadership. Philadelphian and Magnesian “Christians” must reclaim again and again the (functional) unity of Jesus with God by regular participation in the eucharist and collective cultic association under the authority of the divinely-appointed bishop, presbyters, and deacons. In this way, God’s unity, socially reclaimed and repeatedly reenacted in performative cultic acts, offers a means of habitually reconstituting “Christian” identity by resisting differentiating forces of “Judaism” (§2.3).

⁶⁰ Some scholars overstate the thematic significance of the ἔνωσις-motif for Ignatius, elevating it above even his *theology* and *christology* proper. Joachim Rogge, for example, claims: “Nicht nur die kurz angezogenen Themenkreise, sondern auch die Äußerungen über Kultisches, Sakramentales, Pneumatologisches, Christologisches, *Theo*-logisches, leiten dazu an, Ignatius von dem weder Alt- noch Neutestamentlichen Begriff der ἔνωσις her zu verstehen. *Seinem nicht spezifisch christlichen Einheitsprinzip subsumiert Ignatius alles,*” and (on Eph. 14), “*die Gottesvorstellung selbst dem gnostischen Einheitsprinzip subsumiert ist!*” (“Ἐνωσις und verwandte Begriffe in den Ignatiusbriefen,” in *...und fragten nach Jesus: Beiträge aus Theologie, Kirche und Geschichte, Festschrift für Ernst Barnikol zum 70. Geburtstag* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1964] 48, 50; emphases added). Also too aggressive is Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen (*Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* [BHT 14; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1953] 107–08: “Vielmehr stoßen wir hier auf das Grundanliegen seiner gesamten Theologie und Soteriologie”) and Theo Preiss (“La mystique de l’imitation du Christ et de l’unité chez Ignace d’Antioche,” *RHPR* 18 [1938]: 197–241). Such über-evaluations of the ἔνωσις-motif often result from all-too-hasty impositions of various “gnostic” religio-historical schema on Ignatius’ letters.

Appendix B discusses the Antiochene provenance of Ignatius’ unity-motif, details scholarly proposals of possible religio-historical backgrounds, and offers our specific proposal for how best to investigate this motif in the epistles.

2.1 Unity of God and Jesus: Solidarity for the Church

A binitarian shaping imbues *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*. God the Father and Jesus Christ are persistently invoked *together* in the opening inscriptions and concluding exhortations, as a matter of course (*Phld.* inscr.; 11.1; *Magn.* inscr.; 15), but also elsewhere (*Phld.* 1.1; 3.2; *Magn.* 5.2). God is not only universal “Father” of creation, but more specifically “Father of Jesus Christ” (*Phld.* 7.2; *Magn.* 3.1). Jesus, in turn, is uniquely “his Son” (*Magn.* 8.2; 13.1).⁶¹ A triadic pattern of unity also manifests itself. Ignatius hopes the Magnesian “Christians” prosper “in (ἐν) the Son and the Father, and in (ἐν) the Spirit,” that is, in God’s unity (*Magn.* 13.1). The Spirit is syntactically delineated, because it operates for Ignatius as an extension, the productive power, of the Father and Jesus. The Spirit is “from God” (*Phld.* 7.1) and is the Spirit of Jesus (*Phld.* inscr.; cf. *Magn.* 9.2). To utter something in the Spirit is to speak with God’s voice (*Phld.* 7.1–2). This binitarian and triadic language establishes for the readers of these letters a pattern of intimate heavenly relations between Jesus, his Spirit, and God the Father. It is clear that the unity of God and Jesus represents a central theme of Ignatius’ personal theology.

Yet when we evaluate how this pattern of divine unity functions discursively in the arguments of *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*, it is surprising to find neither a metaphysical nor an ontological emphasis to the motif. Unity of “essence” or “substance” between Jesus and his Father seems everywhere presupposed in these missives, yet there are no unambiguous expressions of that motif! An examination of the brief statements that situate Jesus alongside God uncovers a highly imminent and functional approach to the unity of God and Jesus. **Jesus participates in unity with the one God because, united to him in intent and act, he fulfills God’s plan on behalf of the “Christian” church.** That plan is to join believers of all ages into a cosmic unity with God and one another. Jesus carries out this plan in every age, yet it is distinctly the events of the gospel—his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection—that highlight his unity with God.⁶² The gospel is for Ignatius the fulcrum of revelatory history because (1) it reveals the unity of the one God and his Son and (2) it establishes the basis on which the church of all ages participates in God’s unity. The following observations clarify these claims.

⁶¹ Plural *υἱοί* occurs nowhere in Ignatius’ epistles!

⁶² Christ also operates for Ignatius in accordance with the Father’s will at creation (cf. *Rom.* inscr.), though this is not highlighted in the conflict with “Judaism.”

First, the functional, incarnational nature of divine unity is explicit in *Magn.* 7.1, “The Lord did nothing without the Father, either by himself or through the apostles, for he was united⁶³ with him.” United with God in purpose, Jesus never acts apart from the Father’s will. According to Ignatius, for Jesus to be united with God is for him *to do* nothing without God, or rather, to obey God in everything! And this is precisely what Jesus accomplished in the incarnational events of the gospel. Again and again, language expressing Jesus’ unity with the Father revolves around his earthly, incarnational ministry. “There is one God,” Ignatius asserts, “who revealed himself through Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word emitted from silence, who in every way pleased him who sent him” (*Magn.* 8.2). Here, Ignatius envisions Christ’s incarnation as the verbal emission of God. From heaven’s silence, God speaks his revelatory Word into the world. And what is spoken reveals him who speaks in perfect obedience.⁶⁴ Through Jesus’ obedience, humans see God. Christ reveals God because he imitates God. “Be subject to the bishop and one another, *as Jesus Christ [was subject] to his Father in the flesh*, and as the apostles [were] to Christ and to the Father” (*Magn.* 13.2). Again, in a proclamation to the Philadelphian community, epitomized in *Phld.* 7.2, Ignatius includes the image. “Become imitators of Jesus Christ, *even as he [is an imitator] of his Father.*” Through imitation of God, Jesus reveals his Father on earth. In this way, he is steward of God’s mysteries (*Phld.* 9.1).

Christ’s earthly obedience is also visible in two claims that at first glance express his pre-incarnational unity with God, precisely where we might anticipate ontologic claims to divine unity. Ignatius refers to “Jesus Christ, who before the ages was with the Father and appeared at the end of time” (*Magn.* 6.1). Reference to “before the ages” is the most explicit pre-incarnational statement in *Magnesians* or *Philadelphians*, yet it is endowed here with incarnational significance. “Therefore,” Ignatius continues, “let all you who have received a divine agreement in your convictions (ὁμοῖθειαν θεοῦ) respect one another.” The bishop’s exhortation appeals logically (οὖν) by analogy to a “divine agreement of convictions” that existed between God and Jesus “before the ages!” This divine agreement, we learn from 6.1, respected Jesus’ “appearing at the end of time” (i.e., incarnation). Far from a statement of ontologic unity between God and the pre-incarnate Jesus, *Magn.* 6.1 is a claim about how Jesus *obeyed* the Father by coming to earth! Similarly, *Magn.* 7.2

⁶³ Ἡνωμένος ὄν; so GL; absent from Sy^f, Ar, and John of Damascus.

⁶⁴ The imagery and language are Johannine.

relates how Jesus processed “from one Father, remained with and returned to the One.” This is not a claim about Christ’s precosmic generation but about the gospel.⁶⁵ Jesus descends “from the Father,” that is, at the Father’s bidding he becomes incarnate. He is obedient to (i.e., “remains with”) the Father throughout his earthly ministry, and returns to his Father (at the consummation of his earthly obedience) in a resurrected body. **Ignatius articulates the unity of God and Jesus in *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians* functionally, in terms of the Son’s harmony of will with the Father and his obedience in carrying out God’s plan in the gospel.**

The divine plan Christ fulfills in the gospel is the unification of the “cosmic” church. Through his passion, Jesus unites believers of all ages into one body and brings them to the Father by faith through himself. Thus, in his obedience to God, Jesus guides the ongoing life and growth of the present “Christian” church. He “cultivates” (through his Spirit) the contemporary church, as intimated in *Phld.* 3.1, which describes “evil plants [i.e., tradents of “Judaism”], which are not cultivated by Jesus Christ, because they are not the Father’s planting.” Horticultural imagery details the cooperative operation on behalf of the present church of the Father, who plants seed, and Jesus Christ, who cultivates it.

The “cosmic”⁶⁶ church motif surfaces in *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* particularly in relation to Jesus’ effective actions on behalf of OT patriarchs and prophets. He is “the door to the Father, through which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets and the apostles and the church enter in; all these come together in the unity of God” (*Phld.* 9.1). Thus OT prophets, too, are “in the unity from Jesus Christ” (*Phld.* 5.2). As suggested earlier (§1.1), the unity into which patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the church enter is their shared participation in a unified christological message, that is, their preaching of the gospel. The prophets “made their proclamation with the gospel in view, and they hoped in [Christ] and waited for him” (*Phld.* 5.2).⁶⁷ They are Jesus’ “disciples in the Spirit, who anticipated him as their teacher” (*Magn.* 9.2). Saints of all ages constitute a community *of witnesses*

⁶⁵ Lightfoot, *Ignatius*, 123; Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 117.

⁶⁶ Ignatius does not use the term “cosmic,” yet it is an appropriate descriptor. Believers of all ages are transposed into a heavenly community through the singular harmony of Jesus with God’s will in the gospel.

⁶⁷ Τῆς κοινῆς ἐλπίδος. The article assumes possessive force given the context and the semantic range of κοινῆς.

whose concordant message is *produced* by God and attests the validity of the gospel and *ipso facto* of “Christianism.”

Yet unicity of proclamation arises from an even more fundamental reality. Through obedience to God in the gospel, Jesus has united believers of all ages into a single community *of the saved*, with OT prophets, priests, and patriarchs joining apostles and contemporary Christians. The gospel is “*our common hope*” in which believers of all ages participate, including the prophets who “too were saved..., being included in the gospel” (*Phld.* 5.2). Christ “raised [the prophets] from the dead when he came” (*Magn.* 9.2).⁶⁸ The cosmic ecclesia participates in “unity from Jesus Christ” (5.2).⁶⁹ Through Christ’s incarnational obedience, “Christianism” becomes that system “in which ‘every tongue’ believed and ‘was brought together’ to God” (*Magn.* 10.3), both Jew and Gentile (cf. *Smyrn.* 1.2). Jesus’ earthly obedience to God has produced a single “cosmic” community, into which the faithful are joined in salvation through the singular mode of entry—the “door of the Father,” Jesus Christ. This cosmic ecclesial unity is effected by the unity of God, the cooperative efforts of Father and Son. The uniting of “cosmic” ecclesia into the “Christian” church is not a levelling out of all historical distinction between the OT era and the gospel (cf. §1.3). Ignatius recognizes something “new” in the gospel. Precisely because of “Christ” something new exists in “Christianism.” The gospel is the fulcrum of history, the prismatic lense through which Ignatius views God’s activity of uniting all things in Jesus. Through Jesus heavenly realities were united to the earthly realm in a “unity of flesh and spirit.” Through Christ’s unity with God expressed functionally in his obedience in the gospel, “Christianism” emerged out of “Judaism” (*Magn.* 10.3), the cosmic community of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the church was conjoined in harmony with each other and to the unity of God and Jesus. A totalizing logic of divine unity functionally constituted in the gospel possesses Ignatius and drives his approach to the harmful differentiation which “Judaism”—the anti-gospel—threatens at the churches in Philadelphia and Magnesia.

⁶⁸ Reference to Matt 27:52–53?

⁶⁹ Peter Meinhold, “Die Anschauung des Ignatius von Antiochien von der Kirche,” in idem, *Studien zu Ignatius von Antiochien* [Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979] 58: “Durch den Glauben an Christus sind die Patriarchen, Propheten und Apostel und auch die empirische Kirche in die „Einheit Gottes“ gekommen.”

2.2 Unity from God and Jesus: Reclaiming Divine Unity

The “Christian” church is constituted by Jesus. He assembles it into a cosmic unity, establishes its leadership according to a divine pattern,⁷⁰ effects its social harmony,⁷¹ and continually cultivates and guards it.⁷² Through the ongoing operation of *his* Spirit, Jesus fulfills his revelatory gospel ministry⁷³ by extension through the “Christian” church.⁷⁴ By “imitation of Christ” the church is the continuing incarnation of Jesus in the world.⁷⁵ Acting as the earthly representative of the risen Jesus to mediate the one God to humanity the church perpetuates Jesus’ own revelatory ministry. And in “Christian” obedience and collective social harmony is reflected analogously the unity of Jesus with his Father in the gospel.⁷⁶ **In sum, through its social harmony and unity, the “Christian” church is the ongoing outward revelation of the one God.**

For Ignatius, what the church does matters. Through its collective harmony or disunity, the church either reflects or jeopardizes, respectively, the continued effectiveness of the gospel, the manifestation of the one God among humans through the revelatory ministry of Jesus in his passion and resurrection. *Magn.* 1.2 expresses this contingency. Ignatius prays on behalf of all “Christian” churches that “[there

⁷⁰ *Phld.* inscr. (bishops, presbyters, and deacons are “appointed by the intent [ἐν γνώμῃ] of Jesus Christ, whom according to his own will he firmly established by his holy Spirit”); 1.1; *Magn.* 6.1 (ecclesial leaders “have been entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ”).

⁷¹ *Magn.* 1.2 (“union of flesh and spirit *from* Jesus in the churches”); 15.1 (“you who possess an undivided spirit, which [ὄς; masc. by attraction to Ἰησοῦς Χριστός] is Jesus Christ”); *Phld.* 4.1 (“one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup [leading] unto unity through his blood”).

⁷² *Phld.* 3.1; 5.1.

⁷³ *Magn.* 8.2.

⁷⁴ *Phld.* 4.1; *Magn.* 7.1: μία προσευχή, μία δέησις, εἷς νοῦς, μία ἐλπίς, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῇ χαρᾷ τῇ ἀμώμῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. So L, Antiochius (ca. 620 CE). G reads εἷς ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. The former, we believe, preserves Ignatius’ distinctive view that cultic practices in the “Christian” community constitute (i.e., continually incarnate) Jesus Christ. The subsequent text confirms this (7.2): πάντες ὡς εἷς <ἕνα> [so Latin, Armenian] ναὸν συντρέχετε θεοῦ, ὡς ἐπὶ ἐν θυσιαστήριον, ἐπὶ ἕνα Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. The unified cultic apparatus of the church (cf. repeated ὡς) instantiates the one Jesus Christ (no comparable ὡς).

⁷⁵ *Imitatio Christi* recurs through the Ignatian epistles, and is a key theme in Ignatius’ ministry at Philadelphia (*Phld.* 7.2) and to the Magnesian community as well (*Magn.* 7.1; cf. language of discipleship [9.1–10.1] and “living κατὰ Χριστιανισμόν” [§1.2]). Christian reenactment of Jesus’ unity with God reconstitutes the cosmic “union of flesh and spirit” (cf. §2.1). It is to realize divine unity (spirit) afresh on the earthly plane (flesh) through the church’s harmonious life. The pattern was first evident in the gospel ministry of Jesus, who imitated God. In the logic underlying *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* Ignatius links Jesus’ ministry to the ministries of local churches.

⁷⁶ On the church and its bishop as reflection (*Abbild*) of heavenly realities (*Vorbild*), see Meinhold (“Anschauung,” 57–66).

may be]⁷⁷ in them a union (ἔνωσιν) of flesh and spirit..., of faith and love,..., and, what is more important, of Jesus and the Father.” The analogy between Jesus and his church is so powerful for Ignatius that the failure of any “Christian” community to fulfill its (Christ-imitative) obedience actually threatens the manifestation of divine unity in that church’s midst! If the churches do not fulfill their commission to extend God’s revelation on earth through their unity with one another and with God, then the unity of Jesus and his Father is not actualized afresh in that community. Social disharmony in the church hinders Jesus’ revelation of God on earth!

And this is precisely the threat which the influence of “Judaism” in the practices of the “Christian” communities of Philadelphia and Magnesia raises. The harmonious life of these churches remains contingent in Ignatius’ mind because of continuing “Jewish” influence.⁷⁸ Against this differentiating “Jewish” threat he offers a powerful response that integrates his ideology of divine unity with cultic practice designed to inculcate that ideology in the community’s ongoing life.

The “Christian” churches at Philadelphia and Magnesia must continually reclaim their unity with one another and with God as a means of resisting harmful “Jewish” influence that threatens to differentiate these communities from within and thereby to destroy the effective manifestation of God’s unity among them. These communities must ensure their ongoing establishment “in the harmony of God.”⁷⁹ Again and again, they must reenact by their social harmony the solidarity which Jesus—whose body they are⁸⁰—possesses with God, and they must regularly realign themselves in their unity with the cosmic church. Yet such reenactment is contingent, because it involves acts of human will in ongoing communal solidarity. Ignatius recognizes this.⁸¹ He matches the contingency of human action by a powerful social agency, a set of performative cultic acts that repeatedly inculcates and reenacts the church’s unity with its divinely-appointed leaders—bishops, presbyters, and

⁷⁷ The subjunctive is required by context; this is a prayer in hope, a request that the churches fulfill their responsibility.

⁷⁸ See n. 14; *Magn.* 4.1; 5.2.

⁷⁹ *Phld.* inscr.

⁸⁰ Though language of the church as Christ’s “body” is not present in our two epistles, it is, interestingly, present in the single passage elsewhere that speaks of “Jews.” *Smyrn.* 1.2 refers to Jesus’ “saints and faithful, whether among Jews or among the nations, in one body of his church.”

⁸¹ “Living Christianly” is learned behavior (*Magn.* 10.1). Ignatius’ frequent mention of “disciples” and “learning” indicates that solidarity with “Christianism” involves human processes of development and choice.

deacons—and in so doing regularly reconstitutes their unity with God, the “Bishop of all.”⁸² Chief among these acts is the eucharist, participation in Christ’s body and blood (i.e., his gospel), mediated to the community through its leadership.⁸³ Examination of our epistles demonstrates the transposition of the unity-motif from heavenly reality to an imminently social, concretized theme to be reenacted in the church as a weapon of resistance against “Judaism.”

2.2.1 Philadelphia

In *Philadelphians*, Ignatius regards the simultaneous co-existence of radically incompatible ways of reading OT scripture as profoundly threatening the church’s unity. For him, “Judaism” in the “Christian” church at Philadelphia undermines the authority of the church’s leadership and their teaching of the gospel, and jeopardizes the manifestation of God’s unity among them. The clearest description that “Judaism” threatens ecclesial leadership at Philadelphia comes in Ignatius’ personal reminiscence of a conversation he held with “certain people” (i.e., tradents of “Judaism”)⁸⁴ associated with the “Christian” community there (*Phld.* 6.3–8.1).⁸⁵ These people ostensibly tried “to deceive him” by concealing the true nature of their beliefs and concerns (7.1a). In the course of dialogue with them Ignatius became upset. Enthused, he acclaimed two charismatic utterances that he regarded as uniquely inspired by God’s Spirit: “Do nothing apart from the bishop” and “Pay attention to the bishop, the presbytery, and the deacons.”

Both utterances, comprising a single conversation, foster obedience to church authorities. Ignatius rubber-stamps them with the divine authentication often

⁸² *Magn.* 3.1.

⁸³ *Phld.* 4.1; *Magn.* 7.1–2.

⁸⁴ In 6.1 Ignatius firmly aligns the “false teaching” of his opponents with “Judaism” (§1.1). The entirety of 6.3–8.1 which exposes the threat to episcopal authority is bracketed within a textual inclusio in which Jewish themes appear prominent (5.1–6.2; 8.2–9.2). A single group of opponents is thereby envisioned throughout *Philadelphians* (pace Christine Trevett, “Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: a Third Error Combated by Ignatius,” *JEH* 34 [1983]: 1–18). Cf. Matti Myllykoski, “Wild Beasts and Rabid Dogs: The Riddle of the Heretics in the Letters of Ignatius,” in Jostein Ådna, ed., *The Formation of the Early Church* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 354.

⁸⁵ For relevant texts from 6.3–8.1, see *supra* §1.1. Formal elements mark 6.3–8.1 as a unit: (1) The imperatives are confined to 6.1–2 and resume in 8.2a; (2) a shift in temporal frame from the present in 5.3f. to reflection on past events in 6.3; (3) the word of thanks (6.3) points to 7.1–2, and the self-defense (8.1) emerges from events described there (cf. 8.1a: οὖν); (4) μὲν...δὲ links 8.1ab internally and οὖν (8.1c) links it with 8.1ab; and (5) the introduction of παρακαλῶ (8.2) is an important structural signal for Ignatius (Sieben, “Ignatianen,” 8–18).

accorded such charisma.⁸⁶ The “prophetic” nature of his exhortation to unity was for him self-evident, and there is little reason to doubt his sincerity. He addressed “the division caused by some” without prior knowledge of it. Though the divine seal-of-approval failed to convince his opponents, his words must have appeared so keenly suited to actual events in Philadelphia that his detractors claimed Ignatius had prior knowledge of the situation. There existed in Philadelphia, it seems, a group of Christians whose hermeneutical activity Ignatius characterized as distinctly manifesting “Judaism,” because it effectively precluded gospel events from OT prophetic witness (§1.1). This pattern of “exposition” had already rent the community’s social harmony and significantly threatened the authority of the bishop and other ecclesial leaders (7.2). From Ignatius’ perspective, tradents of this hermeneutical method still threatened the ongoing cultic solidarity of the Philadelphian “Christian” community (11.1).

In his letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius issues claims and admonitions specifically against this threat to the *entire* leadership apparatus. The motif surfaces in the opening inscription, where he greets the church, “especially if they are at one (ἐν ἐνὶ) with the bishop and the presbyters and deacons with him.” It is further confirmed by the charismatic admonitions of 7.1–2 (above) and Ignatius’ hope that his “Jewish” opponents repent and return to “the council of the bishop,” a stylistic reference to the presbytery couched in terms of relation to the bishop (8.1).⁸⁷ Closer examination of the letter reveals greater subtlety. Ignatius’ primary concern is the threat which “false teaching” (sc. “Judaism”) poses uniquely to *episcopal* authority. The inscription mentioned earlier formally offsets presbytery and deacons from the bishop. The former are those “with the bishop.”⁸⁸ This distinction concords with mention elsewhere of presbytery and deacons as those “with the bishop” (4.1) and enlightens Ignatius’ reference to repentance and “belonging to God” in terms of synergy “with the bishop” (3.2; cf. 8.1). The extensive opening blessing at 1.1–2 represents a not-so-subtle polemic on behalf of specifically *episcopal* authority, highlighting both the divinely-authenticated origin of the bishop’s ministry as well as

⁸⁶ E.g., τὸ πνεῦμα οὐ πλανᾶται, ἀπὸ θεοῦ ὄν; ἐλάλουν μεγάλη φωνῆ, θεοῦ φωνῆ; etc. On the prophetic character of *Philadelphians* 7 see Trevett (“Prophecy,” 5–8 and nn. 14, 16–17); cf. Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt*, 112–16.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Magn.* 6.1; *Trall.* 3.1. On the unique bond between bishop and presbyters for Ignatius, see Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 46, 112–13).

⁸⁸ Note articular position: τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνοις.

his godly character and conduct. **Textual indicators point to the threat which “Jewish” interpretive patterns pose against episcopal authority as Ignatius’ primary concern for the “Christian” community of Philadelphia.** Insofar as he regards the presbytery and deacons as in accord “with the bishop,” it is natural for him to include their authority in his admonitions and warnings. The danger of “Judaism” is palpable for Ignatius.⁸⁹ And inasmuch as the bishop’s authority is uniquely representative of all harmony and ecclesial order (3.2)—a common Ignatian theme—a threat to his leadership represents vicariously a threat to the stability of the entire church. If unity with the bishop and with the presbytery and deacons is not maintained, how can the unity of God be continually realized anew in the ongoing gospel ministry of the Philadelphian community?

There can be but one response to an alternative system of authority (i.e., “Judaism”) that challenges the authority of the very persons Ignatius regards as the only proper authorities, the charismatically-derived bishop, presbyters, and deacons. Ignatius must resist the former by reinforcing the latter in the social harmony of the Philadelphian church. He spells out this logic in 2.2: “In your unity” with the bishop,⁹⁰ “Jewish” false teachers “will find no opportunity.” Calls to resist false teaching are simultaneously calls to unite with the bishop and his teaching (cf. 2.1–2). The admonitions of 7.1–2 are the characteristic appeals of his entire missive: “Do nothing apart from the bishop” and “Pay attention to the bishop, the presbytery, and the deacons.” Similar imagery reinforces the urgency of uniting with the bishop. To be “with the bishop,” Ignatius claims, is “to belong to God and Jesus Christ” (3.2), that is, to participate in the unity of Jesus with God. Alternatively, those tradents of “Judaism” must “repent and enter into the unity of the church” before they “will belong to God” (3.2). They must unite themselves to “the council of the bishop” (8.1). Only then will they “return to the unity of God” (8.1). Solidarity with the charismatically-appointed ecclesial leadership provides the only solution to the manifestation of “Jewish” teaching occurring in Philadelphia. General exhortations to “gather together” (6.2) and to “do nothing in a spirit of contentiousness” must be evaluated in light of this context. They are calls to submit to ecclesial authorities and thereby to reinforce the unity of God in their collective harmony. By so doing, they will resist “Judaism.”

⁸⁹ Of the five occurrences of “division” in *Philadelphians*, three occur in 7.2–8.1!

⁹⁰ I.e., shepherd (2.1).

As Christ's unity with God in the gospel was incarnational, so too the church's realization of the gospel through resistance of "Judaism" must occur in highly incarnational ways. In *Philadelphians*, the strongest manifestation of unity with the bishop comes in the church's participation in one eucharist. The link between episcopal authority and eucharistic practice is evident in the exhortation of 4.1: "Make every effort therefore to celebrate one eucharist, for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup which leads to unity through his blood; there is one altar, just as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons." The leadership of the community mediates the grace of God in the gospel sacramentally (i.e., in Christ's body and blood) to his church. The call to sacramental unity coheres with the call to episcopal, presbyteral, and deaconal authority in *Philadelphians*. **Collective social harmony reconstituted regularly through participation in one eucharist under the singular authority of the bishop and the presbytery and deacons is the most certain prophylactic against threatening differentiation posed by the insinuation of the teaching of "Judaism" (i.e., the anti-gospel) within the church.** In the disursive logic of *Philadelphians*, by resisting "Jewish" differentiation through obedience to the bishop in repeated celebration of the one eucharist, the community remains within "the unity of God" (9.1) and reenacts its participation in the cosmic ecclesia, "the unity of Jesus Christ" (5.2).

2.2.2 Magnesia

A similar concern about the threat that "Judaism" poses against episcopal authority and social solidarity permeates *Magnesians*. And here, too, Ignatius utilizes imagery of divine unity and the cultic reenactment of divine unity to resist "Judaism."

Though the main "burden of the communication" begins with the παραίνω in *Magn.* 6.1,⁹¹ there is a series of "digressions"⁹² in 3.1–5.2 which are not entirely interruptive, since they strongly foreshadow concerns in the body of the letter itself regarding the issue of episcopal authority. They piggy-back off the introduction in

⁹¹ So Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 112 n. 2; cf. Sieben, "Ignatianen," 13, 16–17.

⁹² So Schoedel. A number of structural elements indicate this is an appropriate designation. Note παραίνω followed by the customary series of formal imperatives at 6.1 (cf. "imperative" admonitions in 3.1–2; 4.1: *πρεπειν*) and the reintroduction of the delegates from Magnesia in 6.1a (cf. 2.1).

which Ignatius praises the “very well-ordered nature” of the Magnesians’ “Christians” love towards God (1.1). The exhortations in these digressions clarify how that “well-ordered” love should be and apparently is, to some extent, being manifest in Magnesia (cf. 11.1). **The entire force of the digressions of 3.1–5.2 rests on an appeal to social harmony and solidarity with the bishop,**⁹³ couched in characteristically Ignatian admonitions to do what “is right:” “It is right (πρέπει) for you not to take advantage of the bishop’s youthfulness, but to grant him every respect according to the power of God the Father, . . . , even by cooperating with him as one wise in God;” “It is right (πρέπον ἐστὶν) to obey [the bishop] without any hypocrisy;” and “It is right (πρέπον . . . ἐστὶν) not only to be called ‘Christians’ but to actually be [Christians], unlike some who designate [a man] ‘bishop,’ but do everything independently of him [sc. of his authority].” In obeying the earthly bishop the Magnesians’ “Christians” are actually reenacting (and thereby actualizing) the unity of God manifest by Jesus in the gospel. Quite simply, by yielding to the bishop “who is seen” (τὸν βλέπόμενον) they honor him “who is unseen” (τὸν ἀόρατον). They unite themselves with God, the Father of Jesus Christ and Bishop of all (3.1–2). This latter imagery recalls that Ignatius’ exhortations to obedience and social unity under episcopal authority are fundamentally grounded in his theology of divine unity (§2.1).

It appears that a sociologically identifiable group (τινες) had emerged in Magnesia,⁹⁴ which, though they refer to Damas by the title “bishop” nevertheless do not “act in good conscience” because they meet together separately from the rest of the community apart from the direct or delegated authority of the bishop (4.1).⁹⁵ Ignatius readily concedes that these evaluations reflect his opinion (μοι) of their motives, yet in this mild concession he in no way condones such behavior. Rather, he characterizes the meetings of “such persons” as “invalid” (μὴ βεβαίως) and not “in accordance with the commandment” (κατ’ ἐντολήν). The sectarian group

⁹³ The prime example of this solidarity is deacon Zotion (2.1) and the presbytery (3.1).

⁹⁴ There is no literary indication that the group that engages in separate meetings (4.1; cf. 7.1a) is different from those that practice “Judaism” in 8–10. The final imperative in the series from 6.1–8.1a is linked directly (cf. γάρ) to the description of the opposition in 8.1b–10.3.

⁹⁵ From *Smyrn.* 8.1–2 (ἐκείνη βεβαία εὐχαριστία ἡγείσθω ἢ ὑπὸ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον οὐσα, ἢ ὃ ἂν αὐτὸς ἐπιτρέψῃ), we see that Ignatius permitted alternative eucharists, as long as they occurred under the authority of a leader delegated by the bishop. Separate eucharistic celebrations are not, therefore, inherently incompatible with Ignatius’ calls to social harmony and communal unity. Yet without the bishop, presbyters, and deacons it is not possible for a community to be called a “church” (*Trall.* 3.1).

undermines the authority of bishop Damas.⁹⁶ According to Ignatius, they “take advantage of the bishop’s youthfulness.” Their separate meetings are described as an unwillingness to yield to the Damas’ authority (3.1). Inasmuch as they confess Damas as “bishop” yet do not acknowledge his authority, by meeting without him, they act hypocritically (κατὰ ὑπόκρισιν) and are disrespectful (3.2), not only to the presbytery (who *do not* “exploit the bishop’s apparent youthfulness”) but also to God, the Father of Jesus Christ and Bishop of all (3.1b–2). Ignatius warns against such perfidy in equally striking black-and-white dualities by invoking a pair of alternatives suggestive of the “two ways” teaching common in hellenistic-Jewish and early-Christian literature.⁹⁷ Two ways lie before the community, death or life (5.1). Yet this is formally no warning at all. Our bishop was so enthused it seems that he forgot to include an appropriate admonition, urging his hearers to choose life. The anticipated warning at 5.2 is simply missing, making redolent the urgent nature of the appeal against these unauthorized separate meetings. We suggest these separate meetings involved the celebration of sabbath rather than the Lord’s Day under the authority of a different bishop than Damas (cf. 8.1–10.2). These meetings are not *unofficial*; they are rather officiated by an alternate authority, probably one with greater perceived stature because of his age. Because this group participates in “Jewish” indicia by “sabbatizing” and “judaizing,” Ignatius regards them as introducing the threat of “Judaism” into the majority “Christian” community. As such, they pose a peculiar threat to bishop Damas’ authority, and, for Ignatius, to the realization of the unity of God in the gospel ministry at Magnesia.

The rhetorical force of these so-called “digressions” (3.1–5.2) is hardly digressive. It reinforces the admonitions that line the letter-body proper in 6.1–7.2 and which themselves link with the discussion of “Judaism” in 8–10 through the admonition at 8.1.⁹⁸ The formal “burden of the communication” begins, as customarily for Ignatius, with the “I exhort you” (παραινω) at 6.1a followed immediately by a series of seven imperatives in 6.1b–7.2. As in *Philadelphians* and in the earlier digressions, these admonitions and exhortations have as their leitmotif the encouragement of godly harmony and solidarity with the bishop, presbyters, and

⁹⁶ The comparative conjunction (ὡσπερ καί) and correlative adjective (οἱ τοιοῦτοι) in 4.1 descriptive of the sectarian group have in view all three preceding admonitions (3.1–2) which describe the threat to episcopal authority.

⁹⁷ 1QS 3:13–4:26; *Did.* 1–6; *Barn.* 18–20.

⁹⁸ See n. 94.

deacons. There is striking affinity with the preceding digressions, creating a literary unity. “Let there be nothing among you,” Ignatius appeals, “which will be capable of dividing (μερίσαι) you, but be united (ένώθητε) with the bishop and the leaders, as an example and lesson of incorruptibility” (6.2b), an ostensive challenge to the aforementioned sectarian group. Against those who meet separately and “do everything apart from (χωρίς) the bishop” (4.1), Ignatius exhorts the community to “do everything in godly harmony” (6.1) and to “do nothing without (ἄνευ) the bishop and presbyters” (7.1). Against those meeting separately the bishop admonishes the Magnesians to meet together “in the same place” with “one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope, etc.” (7.1b). The entirety of these exhortations revolves around the principle of social unity within the church, yet Ignatius grounds this unity foundationally in the unity of Jesus with his Father (6.1b) and a christology of imitation (7.1a). “Therefore,” he admonishes, “as the Lord did nothing without (ἄνευ) the Father (for he was united with him), either through his own agency or through the agency of his apostles, so you must not do anything without (ἄνευ) the bishop and the presbyters” (7.1a).

The frequency of these imperatives and the collocation of the motif of social harmony with the admonitions in 3.1–5.2 demonstrate that this is no mere hypothetical concern but one which Ignatius perceives as fully evincing itself in Magnesia. For Ignatius the call to ecclesial unity in 3.1–7.2 is closely linked with a sharply perceived sense of threat to the social fabric and to solidarity with the leadership in Magnesia posed by some who “live according to Judaism.” Into this context of dispute over eucharistic practice, which poses a direct endangerment to the bishop’s authority and hence to the community’s solidarity and gospel ministry, comes the emphatic call to harmony of religious practice under the proper authority of the bishop and presbyters. This is seen in the threefold repetition of an action verb accompanied by the preposition “in accordance with” (κατά): “show the bishop all due respect in accordance with the power (κατὰ δύναμιν) of God the father” (3.1) and “obey in accordance with no hypocrisy at all (κατὰ μηδεμίαν ὑπόκρισιν)” (3.2), in contrast to those who do not “meet together in a valid manner in accordance with the commandment (κατ’ ἐντολήν)” (4.1). As we have seen, this little preposition is not insignificant for our bishop and his overall argument against “Judaism” as a mode of cultic living (i.e., “judaizing,” “sabbatizing;” §1.2).

What is required to counteract the influence of “Jewish” cultic practices in the “Christian” community at Magnesia is an equally cultic response. All who would

bear the name “Christian” must participate in the corporate life of the one (majority) community that meets under the authority of the single bishop Damas on the Lord’s Day. “Let there be one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope...Let all of you run together as to one temple of God, as to one altar, one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father and remained with the One and returned to the One” (7.1b–2).

2.2.3 Observations

Philadelphians and *Magnesiums* are undergirded by Ignatius’ concern that these communities regularly reconstitute their unity with God and Jesus through solidarity with their bishop, presbyters, and deacons as manifest in programmatic assembly and participation in a single eucharist. Emphasis on ecclesial leadership manifests Ignatius’ logic of divine unity, for the earthly order in the ecclesia is established and modeled on a heavenly pattern. This *Abbild-Vorbild*⁹⁹ pattern is clearly indicated in his description of “harmony from God” in terms of ecclesial orderliness, “with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the apostolic council,¹⁰⁰ and the deacons, who are most dear to me, having been entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ, who before the ages was with the Father and appeared at the end of time.”¹⁰¹ For Ignatius, the unchallenged continuity of the authority of ecclesial leaders is the surest guarantee of the continuing solidarity of the community (and *ipso facto*) of Christ’s unity with God being incarnated anew in that community. His admonitions towards unity with ecclesial leaders reflect his larger program, an attempt to realize God’s unity in the church’s social life as a tool of resistance against “Judaism.” For Ignatius, this solidarity with ecclesial leadership is culturally mediated, particularly in the eucharist.

3. Divine Unity, Social Solidarity, and “Christian” Identity

In his letters to Philadelphia and Magnesia the bishop of Antioch engages in a process of constructing “Christian” identity through the creation and maintenance of

⁹⁹ See n. 76.

¹⁰⁰ τόπον...τόπον GLgI; τύπον...τύπον SA; cf. 6.2.

¹⁰¹ *Magn.* 6.1. The fact that the apostolic council is insinuated between God and Christ and is reflected in the presbytery is of little concern. Ignatius is quite free in his analogies. Note 7.1, where the Father is reflected in the bishop *and* presbyters and Jesus in the church; 13.2, where the Father is modeled in “the bishop” (cf. 3.1) and Jesus in the church. What is of concern is the larger cosmic ordering of the episcopal structure of the earthly church.

distinctively “Christian” boundaries vis-à-vis “Judaism.” He has in his own thinking already clear-cut distinctions between “Judaism” and “Christianism.” The two are differentiated for him in terms of a single criterion, their rejection of or faith in the revelation of the one God in the gospel, respectively (§1.3). Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection have historic significance for Ignatius as the fulcrum on which all human events pivot and on which “Judaism” becomes obsolete and “Christianism” becomes the continuing revelation of God in Jesus Christ. And the gospel has cosmic significance. It instantiates the unity of Jesus with his Father, and through that unity of will and obedience the universal church of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the contemporary church is constituted into a single cosmic body which participates in unity with God and with one another.

For Ignatius, “Judaism” is anti-gospel! Cultic patterns that are characteristic markers of “Judaism” (i.e., “Jewish” indicia) thus have no place in the corporate life of the “Christian” church, which prides itself on faith in the gospel. To entertain the presence of “Judaism” in the church is effectively to reject the value of the gospel, and to reject the gospel is to reject the very events that enact Jesus’ unity with the Father (§2.1)! When Ignatius encounters in Philadelphia certain patterns of scriptural exposition which read the OT apart from a gospel framework, and when he learns about cultic celebration of sabbath occurring among some in Magnesia, for him, this threatens the very unity of God, the continuing revelation of the one God through Jesus in the ongoing life of the “Christian” churches at Philadelphia and Magnesia as expressed in their harmonious social unity. The practice of “Judaism” (anti-gospel) among “Christians” undermines the project of regularly reclaiming the significance of being “Christian” (pro-gospel) in these communities.

His response to a threat that so radically undermines the manifestation of divine unity in the continuing gospel ministry of the churches is to match that threat by a program that reinforces the unity of Jesus with God and of the church’s unity with God and with one another as manifest through social solidarity with their leadership. And what better way to resist “Jewish,” anti-gospel influence than by reinforcing the very criterion that “Judaism” in the “Christian” church undermines and that identifies “Christianness”—faith in the gospel (i.e., participation in God’s unity). He exhorts these communities to meet together regularly and to participate in that cultic drama which itself reenacts the gospel, the eucharist, under the God-given authority of ecclesial leaders. In this way, their unity and harmony with their leaders and with one another is frequently reconstituted. The very cultic practice grounded in

the fundamental events of the gospel (thereby in God's unity) serves as prophylactic against "Judaism" in their midst. Through the enactment of this symbol system, God's unity, socially reclaimed and reenacted in performative cultic acts, offers a means of habitually reconstituting "Christian" identity by resisting differentiating forces of "Judaism." The symbol system of Jesus' unity with God, regularly worked out socially and ideologically, reconstitutes "Christian" identity and acts as a tool for resisting "Judaism," whose influence threatens to differentiate these communities into "Jewish" and "Christian."

Such is the logic in *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*. These epistles testify to a fervent atmosphere of claim and counter-claim among some second-century Anatolian "Christian" communities respecting the meaning of "Christianness" vis-à-vis "Jewishness." Ignatius negotiated "Christian" identity in this context by using monotheistic ideology as a tool for resisting "Judaism." By transposing the idea of Jesus unity with God to the imminent, cultic practice of these churches, he gave them a mechanism for regularly reclaiming their distinctly "Christian" identity and thereby for combatting "Judaism" in their midst.

Chapter Four

Repositioning Jewish “Religion” and “Race:” Monotheistic Classification Strategies

In the last chapter we saw how Ignatius ascribed the symbol of divine unity with social force and used it as a prophylactic against what he characterized as harmful “Jewish” influences threatening the “Christian” church from within. The image of God’s oneness offered for Ignatius neither a criterion nor indicium for distinguishing “Judaism” and “Christianism,” but a context-specific ideological basis for repentance unto social harmony and away from anomic differentiation which the presence of “Judaism” in the “Christian” church threatened. It was only as an element of resistance brought to bear on an already established divide between “Judaism” and “Christianism” that divine unity reinforced, reflexively and secondarily, a specifically “Christian” identity vis-à-vis “Judaism.” In contrast to the bishop from Antioch some Christian communities employed an alternative monotheistic strategy to shape their collective consciousness vis-à-vis Judaism. *For these groups the concept of God’s uniqueness provided an opportune **criterion** for identifying and indexing sameness and difference with Judaism (and other groups external to the Christian community).* In this chapter we offer an interpretation of two such strategies of monotheistic classification as they occur, respectively, in the texts of *Kerygma Petrou* (§1) and Aristides’ *Apology* (§2). Despite their clear differences both texts reposition Judaism within the global framework of religious and ethnic groups in order to clarify and legitimate for Christians and others the meaning of belonging to Christian identity (§3).

These roughly contemporaneous early second-century texts have been carefully selected. Above all and most importantly for the present purpose *Kerygma Petrou* and *Apology* are united by common appeal to “knowledge” of the unique God as key criterion for distinguishing and evaluating various social groupings. They share a number of rhetorical and discursive similarities and a common doctrine of God. Nevertheless, closer inspection reveals several disparities. *Kerygma Petrou* and *Apology* do not share the same organizational pattern of group classification. Their attitude and approach towards Judaism differ decidedly. Their internal logic and the manner in which they appropriate God’s uniqueness demonstrate nuanced distinctiveness. The texts manifest different permutations of interconnectivity

between monotheism and other criteria of classification, particularly respecting the role of Jesus in legitimating religion. Nor is the (ostensive) purpose for which each uses its peculiar monotheistic strategy identical. These divergences are perhaps all the more significant when one considers the oft-made proposal that *Kerygma Petrou* may have exercised some measure of direct literary influence on Aristides' *Apology*.¹ If true—a concession by no means certain—then the divergences of the latter from the former highlight an intentional, strategic shift in discursive technique. These differences reflect the different geographical settings, social *Sitze im Leben*, community-specific concerns, and intended audiences of *Kerygma Petrou* and *Apology*, as we will see. The nuanced monotheistic strategies in these two pivotal texts of the sub-apostolic period merit closer attention.²

1. *Kerygma Petrou*: Three “Ways” of θεοσέβεια

Scattered throughout Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (primarily book six) are found portions of a much earlier Christian work, which Clement designates the “Preaching of Peter” (*Kerygma Petrou* [*KP*]).³ We know very little for certain about

¹ Argued, e.g., by J. Armitage Robinson (in J. Rendel Harris, ed., *The Apology of Aristides on Behalf of the Christians* [TS 1/1; Cambridge: University Press, 1891] 86–99), Richard Raabe (*Die Apologie des Aristides aus dem Syrischen übersetzt* [TU 9,1; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1892] 29–30), and Henri Irénée Marrou (*A Diognète. Introduction, édition critique, traduction et commentaire* [SC 33; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1951] 101, 111–12, 121–22). Ernst von Dobschütz regards Robinson's attempt as misguided and avoids asserting “eine direkte Verwandtschaft” (*Das Kerygma Petri kritisch untersucht* [TU 11,1; Leipzig, 1893] 33–34, 37–38, 80; cf. Henning Paulsen, “Das Kerygma Petri und die urchristliche Apologetik,” *ZKG* 88 [1977]: 5 n. 21). Michel Cambe suggests *Kerygma* and *Apology* may have shared a common source (*Kerygma Petri. Textus et commentarius* [CCSA 15; Turnhout: Brepols, 2003] 173–74, 239–41). Wolfram Kinzig (*Novitas christiana. Die Idee des Fortschritts in der alten Kirche bis Eusebius* [FKD 58; Göttingen, 1994] 150–52) provides tabular comparisons of *Kerygma* and *Apology*.

² These texts have received some attention of late by Kinzig (*ibid.*, 147–52), Judith Lieu (“The Race of the God-Fearers,” *JTS* 46 [1995]: 488–90; *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996] 164–77), and Denise Kimber Buell (“Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition,” *HTR* 94 [2001]: 460–62; “Race and Universalism in Early Christianity,” *JECS* 10 [2002]: 429–31).

³ *KP* survives in ten fragments according to Dobschütz's enumeration (*Kerygma*, 18–27), retained in the present chapter. Erich Klostermann proposed an alternative system (“Reste des Kerygma Petri,” in *idem, Apocrypha I. Reste des Petrusevangeliums, der Petrusapokalypse und des Kerygma Petri* [KIT 3; 2nd ed.; Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Weber's Verlag, 1908] 13–16), supplemented by Henning Paulsen (“Kerygma,” 5 n. 22). All ten fragments are found in Clement's *Stromata*: 1a (*Strom.* 1.29.182.3), 1b (2.15.68.2), 2a (6.5.39.2–3), 2b (6.7.58.1), 3a (6.5.39.4–40.2), 4a (6.5.41.2–3), 5 (6.5.41.4–6), 6 (6.5.43.3), 7 (6.6.48.1–2), 8 (6.6.48.6), 9 (6.15.128.1–2), and 10 (6.15.128.3). Parallel fragments appear in Clement's *Ecl.* 58 (fr. 1c) and were used by the “gnostic” Heracleon (frs. 3b, 4b, cited in Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.17.104). For text and French translation see Michel Cambe's recent study (*Kerygma*, 150–61). *KP*'s embeddedness in *Stromata* (et al.) presents a series of difficulties related to extracting each fragment from its position within the citing text, and

KP. It is likely a product of early second-century (114–115 CE?) Egyptian Christianity.⁴ The strong emphasis on the person of Peter may suggest the work of a Petrine group or school, and this would not be inconsistent with community interests in the apostle elsewhere in the early second-century.⁵

A number of structural, thematic, and perspectival similarities with second-century apologetic works suggest *KP* belongs within (and even began) the apologetic genre.⁶ Yet this, of course, depends on how one defines the phenomenon of early Christian “apology.” If the term designates a literary genre which interprets (and defends) one’s own minority culture to the larger culture in which that group lives then the intended audience has significant functionality for understanding the text; apology is literary self-presentation and defense *to outsiders*.⁷ In Christian apology this generally involves an imperial audience. This (standard) definition does not deny an intra-group function to apologetic literature, yet it certainly attenuates the role apology takes in shaping communal self-identity. This meaning of “apology” does not, however, ring true with what we can reconstruct of *KP*, which seems quite by design to be an intra-Christian parenetic text.⁸ To all appearances *KP* records (ostensively) an apostolic discourse to Christian believers by the apostle Peter who acts as representative of the twelve apostles to transmit their tradition to the faithful

Cambe’s study represents the most thoroughgoing effort to date to clarify “le jeu du texte citant et du texte cité” (ibid., 15–137).

⁴ Heracleon used *KP* in his mid-second century commentary on John (cited by Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.17.104) as did an anonymous commentator on the first Psalm sometime prior to Clement (cited in *Strom.* 2.15.68.1–2; cf. Dobschütz, *Kerygma*, 10; Cambe, *Kerygma*, 45). Heracleon, Clement, and Origen have ties to Alexandria. Additionally, *KP* shares affinities with another work of Egyptian provenance, *Sibylline Oracles* book three (3.8–22, 29–31; Cambe, ibid., 225–26; cf. Valentin Nikiprowetzky, *La troisième Sibylle* [*EPHESE: Études Juives* 9; Paris: Mouton, 1970] 227–29), and mention of zoolatry (fr. 3) fits well in an Egyptian context. If we accept this provenance, *KP* may have been produced prior to the Trajanic revolt (115–117 CE) after which Egyptian Judaism lost substantial political clout.

⁵ Cambe, *Kerygma*, 186–87; cf. 381. On representations of Peter in the second century see Enrico Norelli («*Situation des apocryphes pétriniens*,» *Apocrypha* 2 [1991]: 31–83) and C. Grappe (*Images de Pierre* [*EHPHR* 75; Paris, 1995]; non vidi).

⁶ So J.N. Reagan (*The Preaching of Peter: The Beginning of Christian Apologetic* [Chicago, 1923]) and Robert Grant (*Greek Apologists of the Second Century* [London: SCM Press, 1988] 39–40), though the latter also notes its function as literature within the church.

⁷ Cf. Grant, ibid., 9–11.

⁸ As Paulsen demonstrates (“*Kerygma*,” 30–37; cf. 30 n. 201; cf. Cambe, *Kerygma*, 167–68, 380).

(cf. frs. 4a, 5, 9, 10). If this analysis is correct, *KP* occupies an important “rôle de transition” in the development from apostolic to apologetic Christianity.⁹

Aside from the first, the fragments may be grouped into two broad thematic types: declarations of Peter (frs. 2–5, 9–10) and *logia* of the resurrected savior (frs. 6–8), presumably set within some narrative framework now too difficult to discern or recover. We examine these in turn to see what *KP* says about Judaism, monotheism, and Christian identity.

1.1 Exhortation of Peter to the Christians (*Fragments 2–5*)

Fragments two through five comprise a literary unity¹⁰ and represent a portion of *KP* which Michel Cambe labels the *Exhortation de Pierre aux chrétiens sur la véritable religion* (hereafter *Exhortation*). In what must have constituted a key section and significant portion of the entire argument of *KP* the subject matter turns¹¹ in *Exhortation* to an explication of the doctrine of God and a program of schematizing human groups according to their cultic patterns and participation in religious knowledge. Fragment 2a introduces the fundamental topic of discussion:¹²

Peter says in the *Preaching*:

**Therefore know that there is one God,
who created the beginning of all things
and possesses authority over (their) end,**
β[and] (this is) the unseen (God),
who sees all things;

Πέτρος ἐν τῷ Κηρύγματι λέγει

Γινώσκετε οὖν ὅτι εἷς θεός ἐστιν
ὃς ἀρχὴν πάντων ἐποίησεν
καὶ τέλος (sc. πάντων) ἐξουσίαν ἔχων
[καὶ]¹³ ὁ ἀόρατος,
ὃς τὰ πάντα ὁρᾷ,

⁹ Note especially Paulsen (ibid., 30–37). Quote from F. Blanchetière (“Aux sources de l’anti-judaïsme chrétien,” *RHPHR* 53 [1973]: 356).

¹⁰ Cambe’s research has been particularly helpful in demonstrating the theological unity of *Exhortation* (*Kerygma*, 76–78, 165–280). Dobschütz juxtaposed fragments two to four yet argued that a portion of *KP* between fragments four and five is now missing (*Kerygma*, 21, 45, 79). Following him, Paulsen comments, “Das Ausgefallene kann aber nicht sehr erheblich gewesen sein, da die kompositionelle Einheit von fragm. 2 [= 2–5 Dobschütz] deutlich ist” (“*Kerygma*,” 7 n. 31).

¹¹ Initial οὖν (fr. 2a) presupposes prior material.

¹² Bold text reflects our evaluation of the scope of *KP*. We make no attempt to supply all textual variants or proposed emendations. The following signs are employed:

[] text whose inclusion in *KP* is disputed

[[] later scribal interpolation into the text of Clement

() translator’s explanatory comment.

¹³ Did Clement introduce καὶ to fuse two originally distinct portions of *KP*? Pierre Nautin’s structural argument that καὶ ὁ marks a twofold strategy is instructive (“Les citations de la ‘Prédication de Pierre’ dans Clément d’Alexandrie, *Strom.* VI.V.39–41,” *JTS* 25 [1974]: 102–03), and the theological unity of the entire argument of fragment 2a (see *infra*) suggests both halves were originally unified.

is uncontained,
 who contains all things;
 is in need of nothing,
 of whom all things have need
 and through whom they exist;
 incomprehensible,
 everlasting,
 incorruptible;
 uncreated,
 who created all things
 by his powerful word
 [[according to the gnostic writing]],
 [which is his son].

ἀχώρητος,
 ὃς τὰ πάντα χωρεῖ,
 ἀνεπιδεής,
 οὐ τὰ πάντα ἐπιδέεται
 καὶ δι' ὃν ἔστιν,
 ἀκατάληπτος,
 ἀέναιος,
 ἄφθαρτος,
 ἀποίητος,
 ὃς τὰ πάντα ἐποίησεν
 λόγῳ δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ
 [[τῆς γνωστικῆς γραφῆς]],¹⁴
 [τουτέστι τοῦ υἱοῦ].¹⁵

This highly balanced and stylistically elegant (even hymnic)¹⁶ passage opens with the call to recognize a single God, described as the master of history, who created the beginning (ἀρχή) of all things and holds authority over their end (τέλος). The close ἀρχή–τέλος pairing, common in other hellenistic-Jewish and early-Christian sources,¹⁷ suggests that these qualifiers be understood in terms of their cosmologic value as evidence of “une théologie de la transcendance.”¹⁸ The unique creator God is not contingent on the created cosmos. He remains unaffected by history and contains the beginning and end of all human life and events, which in turn depend on him for their existence.

This depiction of a single transcendent creator God surfaces just as acutely in the second half of this introduction to *Exhortation* (fr. 2aβ). The unique God is described primarily in terms of what he is not, through a series of negative qualifiers: ἀόρατος, ἀχώρητος, ἀνεπιδεής, ἀκατάληπτος, (ἀέναιος), ἄφθαρτος, and ἀποίητος.¹⁹ The text proceeds along the *via negationis* and avoids defining the supreme God in terms which might be dangerously near to delimiting or constraining

¹⁴ This difficult phrase is likely a later insertion into the margin of *Stromata* (cf. Nautin, *ibid.*, 103). On this and the following textual issue see Cambe (*Kerygma*, 70–73).

¹⁵ In *KP*: Cambe. Comment of Clement: Hilgenfeld, Stählin-Früchtel, Nautin, Dobschütz, Descourtieux, Klostermann, though the latter expresses some doubt in his apparatus.

¹⁶ Beautifully described by Paulsen (“Kerygma,” 14–15; cf. 20 n. 125, on the style of fragment 5). See also Eduard Norden (*Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956] 180–81).

¹⁷ *Sib. Or.* 8.375–76; *Wis* 7:18; *4 Ezra* 6:1, 6; *2 Bar.* 48:7; 54:1; cf. *Philo Opif.* 82.

¹⁸ Cambe, *Kerygma*, 203–208.

¹⁹ Note the frequent α -privative. Ἀέναιος (lit. ever-flowing) is actually a positive descriptor that fits nicely in the stylized text since it begins with α .

him.²⁰ The negative statements are framed in terms of the one God's absolute freedom; *he is never the object of external agency*. God is not liable to being seen, contained, rendered needy, comprehended, brought to an end, corrupted, or created. Nothing external to him can subject him to deficiency or contingency. The first, second, third, and last of the negative adjectives are structurally balanced, respectively, by a corresponding positive attribute accompanied by ὄς/οὐδὲ τὰ πάντα: the unique God is the *unseen* who *sees* all things; the *uncontained* who *contains* all things; etc. These positive descriptions highlight divine transcendence from a somewhat different direction. Whereas negative descriptors highlight divine freedom from external agency, the positive claims are framed in terms of his authority *to act as supreme subject* who effects all things. This authority is most clearly seen in his creative power. God is said to have created the totality of things "by his powerful word" (λόγῳ δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ), a statement which evokes reference to the divine creative fiat of Genesis 1 and which may have christological import (see Excursus). This closing statement parallels the opening reference to the all-inclusive creative activity of God (2αα). According to Peter the prerogative to create is an exclusive one. Emphasis on divine uniqueness reverberates throughout the passage, particularly in frequent reference to the multiplicity of "all things" (τὰ πάντα [4x]; cf. also πάντων), which stands in sharp contrast with the singular uniqueness of this God (εἷς θεός). He acts as the *only* supremely creative subject.

The introduction to *Exhortation* expresses the deity in terms of a single, unique God who is supremely transcendent and created all things. Both halves of the argument (fr. 2ααβ) are harmonious. The rhetoric and concepts are dependent on other precursors. The portrait of the divine nature emerges from the *via negationis* and the idea of the first principle in hellenistic philosophy. The concept of the single creator God who speaks all things into existence emerges from biblical tradition mediated through hellenistic-Judaism.²¹ Nevertheless the carefully stylized text indicates this depiction of God is the product not simply of inherited tradition but of a well-reasoned and thoughtfully-articulated theology of transcendence. The author(s) shapes the text in a way that demonstrates theological awareness and, as we

²⁰ On the *via negationis* see A.-J. Festugière ("La doctrine Platonicienne de la transcendance divine au II^e siècle," in *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, vol. 4: Le Dieu Inconnu et la Gnose* [Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1954] 92–140).

²¹ A.J. Malherbe, "The Apologetic Theology of the Preaching of Peter," *ResQ* 13 (1970): 205–23.

will see, consistency with the comprehensive argument of *Exhortation*. **All further references to “the God” in *Exhortation* must be understood in terms of the deity described here.**

There is still a more subtle strategy at work. If we may trust Clement’s attribution of these words to Peter, fragment 2a represents not just any “knowledge” (cf. γινώσκετε) of the true God but reflects *apostolic knowledge*. Fragment two presupposes that Peter has appropriate “knowledge” of the one true God and disseminates it faithfully to his audience. This is an important observation, for it is *this God* and particularly *the knowledge of him* against which the human collectivities are indexed in the following fragments of *Exhortation*.

Excursus: Christ—The Ἀρχὴ πάντων and Δύναμις θεοῦ?

In his recent study Michel Cambe acknowledges that fragment 2 “is perfectly legible without any christological reference.” Yet in addition to a cosmologic reading of the fragment Cambe champions an explicitly christological interpretation in which Christ is viewed hypostatically as “Principle of all things” (Ἀρχὴ πάντων; fr. 2α) and “Power of God” (Δύναμις αὐτοῦ; fr. 2β).²² *Christology* clearly holds an important relationship to *theology* elsewhere in *KP* (cf. frs. 5–7, 9). A strong connection between the two is therefore possible in fragment 2. Cambe offers the following observations regarding Ἀρχὴ πάντων:

- 1) In *Stromata* Clement offers an explanatory comment to the first part of fragment 2: “‘For **there is in reality one God, who made the ἀρχή of all things,**’ Peter writes, indicating the first-born Son and understanding exactly the phrase: ‘ἐν Ἀρχῇ God made the heaven and the earth’” (*Strom.* 6.7.58.1 = fr. 2b). Clement offers his own christological interpretation of fragment 2 (1) by identifying ἀρχὴ πάντων of *KP* with the first-born Son and (2) crediting *KP* with a correct christological reading of ἐν ἀρχῇ in Gen 1:1.²³
- 2) This christological interpretation of Gen 1:1 is older than Clement and well represented in early Christianity. Cambe notes Theophilus’ *Ad Autolyicum* (10) and Justin’s *Dialogue* (61.1.3).
- 3) The nearest parallels to *KP* are the self-designations of God and Christ (ἐγώ... ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος) in Revelation (21:6, 22:13; cf. 1:8) and Melito’s *Pasch.* 104–05. In these cases “the binomial ἀρχὴ and τέλος functions with a perfect symmetry of its two elements.” In *KP*, however, the pairing is somewhat asymmetric, with slight emphasis on the former element, since ἀρχὴ is introduced by a full verb whereas τέλος is indicated by a participle. This formal structure lends itself to ἀρχὴ as christological appellation without requiring the same of τέλος.
- 4) Revelation 3:14 uses ἀρχὴ alone as christological title in a creation context (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ) as an “actualisation de *Prov* 8,

²² *Ibid.*, 198–201; 208–21; cf. 56–60, 70–73, 386–87. Initial citation from p. 208.

²³ In *Ecl.* 4.1–2 Clement offers a similar reading (Son = Ἀρχὴ) though from LXX Hos 2:1b–2 et 1:7a.

22 et de *Gen* 1, 1.” Col 1:15–18 evinces a similar interpretation. These two texts are “des expressions similaires du «primat» du Christ en relation avec les relectures protochrétiennes de *Prov* 8, 22 et de *Gen* 1, 1.”

In ἀρχή πάντων, Cambe argues, is wedded a philosophical theology (ἀρχή–τέλος) and a christological intention (Ἀρχή πάντων).²⁴ A similar situation may exist for λόγῳ δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ (fr. 2αβ). Cambe comments:

- 1) Should λόγος be understood as an impersonal designation (“by his powerful word”) or a personal appellation (“by the Word of his power”)? Two objections are commonly leveled against the latter. First, personal agency requires διά not the dative λόγῳ, yet Cambe provides parallels where the dative marks personal agency. Second, if personal, why would the author have included δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ? Cambe objects that λόγος and δύναμις often appear together (particularly in second-century apologists), sometimes synonymously, sometimes in qualitative relation (“word of his power,” “power of his word”).
- 2) The phrase τουτέστι τοῦ υἱοῦ may be original to *KP* and qualifies the view that λόγος is the central interpretive term. Grammatical concord requires that it modify the genitive δυνάμεως (“by the word of his Power”) rather than the dative λόγῳ (“by his powerful Word”). A christological reading placing δύναμις in relief is preferable.
- 3) The Δύναμις-view offers stylistic balance and theologic synergy between the opening and closing of fragment 2, between the one “who created the Ἀρχή of all things” (fr. 2αα) and “who created all things by the word of his Δύναμις” (fr. 2αβ). The awkwardness of the last phrase in which God is said to create “by the word of his Power” when in Genesis 1 he is said to create by his own word is ameliorated by the opening phrase. God created all things by first establishing a creative principle (Ἀρχή) through which he spoke things into existence. Parallels occur in *Epist. Apost.* 3, Justin (*Dial.* 128), and Clement (*Strom.* 7.2.7.4).

Cambe’s interpretation is distinctive and refreshing, yet ultimately inconclusive. Similar phrasing to fr. 2αβ appears of Christ in Heb 1:3 within a cosmic context (φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) yet certainly not in a way that permits either ῥήματι or δυνάμεως to constitute personal appellations. And, if τουτέστι τοῦ υἱοῦ represents a Clementine addition, as so many commentators agree, it is certainly not self-evident that any member of λόγῳ δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ must be understood hypostatically.²⁵ Further, there is no clear affirmation that in ἀρχή πάντων of fr. 2αα is to be found a reference to Christ. If a christological

²⁴ Markus Vinzent also reads Ἀρχή πάντων christologically and offers a modalist interpretation (“Ich bin kein körperloses Geistwesen.” Zum Verhältnis von κήρυγμα Πέτρου, ‘Doctrina Petri’, διδασκαλία Πέτρου und IgnSm 3,” in Reinhard M. Hübner and Markus Vinzent, eds., *Der paradox Eine* [Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1999] 241–287).

²⁵ Most scholars who opt for a christological reading identify Christ with λόγος rather than δύναμις (elsewhere *KP* refers to Christ as νόμος καὶ λόγος [frs. 1a,b,c]). Paulsen offers no decision on whether λόγος or δύναμις should be favored as key christological term (“Kerygma,” 21–22). That God created the world through a hypostatized Logos-Word is a theme traditional to hellenistic Judaism (Joachim Jeremias, “Zum Logos-Problem,” *ZNW* 59 [1968]: 82–85). The mere presence of λόγος in a creation-context does not, however, necessitate a hypostatized reading, and the absence of the article before λόγος in *KP* attenuates the likelihood of such a reading. It is best to regard δυνάμεως as a genitive of quality (cf. *BDF* §165) and interpret the anarticlar λόγος in terms of the divine creative fiat.

reading underlies fragment 2 at all, it is entirely submerged, provided *τουτέστι τοῦ υἱοῦ* is a secondary Clementine addition. It seems best to acknowledge the uncertainty of Cambe's reading and content ourselves with establishing *KP*'s christology on more certain grounds. It is knowledge of the nature of the unique, supremely transcendent, creator God of fragment 2, and not christological monotheism *per se*, by which groups are indexed in *Exhortation*.

The subsequent fragments of Peter's *Exhortation* (frs. 3–5) concern the participation of different collectivities in the knowledge of the unique God. The text divides the inhabited world into three groupings—Greeks, Jews, and Christians and schematizes each party in terms of its respective *θεοσέβεια* (“piety”), conceived as the quality of their knowledge of the one God²⁶ as manifest in their manner of cultic worship.²⁷ The exercise begins in fragment 3a with an evaluation of the Greek mode of worship:²⁸

And he (Peter) adds:

^α**Worship this God not in the manner of the Greeks... for they are moved by ignorance and do not understand the God [as we (do), in accordance with perfect knowledge].**²⁹

^β**The things he gave them the right to use they worship, giving shape to wood and stones, bronze and iron, gold and silver—of the same material as themselves and for their own use—and erecting things that ought to be at their service for their well-being.**

^γ**(They worship) also things which the God gave them for food: birds of the air, things that swim in the sea, reptiles of the land, wild animals along with domesticated quadrupeds of the field, weasels and mice, cats, dogs, and apes.**

^δ**Not only do they slaughter their own means of sustenance as sacrifices to mortal beings,³⁰ but they are also ungrateful to the God**

²⁶ Cf. *ἐπίστασθαι* (frs. 3a, 4ab), *γινώσκειν* (4a), *ἀγνοοῦσιν* (4b), *μανθάνειν* (5).

²⁷ Cf. *σέβειν* (frs. 3a, 4ab, 5). BDAG, s.v. *σέβω*: “to express in gestures, rites, or ceremonies one’s allegiance or devotion to deity, worship.” Substitution of *προσκυβεῖν* for *σέβειν* in fr. 3b is the adaptation of Heracleon or of Origen’s citation of Heracleon (Cambe, *Kerygma*, 27).

²⁸ Fragment 3b (Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.17.104) reflects an obviously shortened form: “μη δειν καθ’ Ἑλληνας προσκυνεῖν, τὰ τῆς ὕλης πράγματα ἀποδεχομένους καὶ λατρεύοντας ξύλοις καὶ λίθοις.” The same obtains for fragment 4b (see n. 35).

²⁹ The portrait of *KP* is clear; the Greeks *do not know* God. The disputed qualification is Clement’s, for whom the “most excellent among the Greeks” do know the same God as Christians “by approximation” (*κατὰ περίφρασιν*), “not in accordance with certain knowledge” (*οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν παντελῆ*; *Strom.* 6.5.39.1, 4; 40.1).

³⁰ Codex L is difficult: *Καὶ τὰ ἴδια βρώματα βροτοῖς θύματα θύουσιν* seems to indicate a cult to the dead (alt. emperor veneration? Cf. Wis 14:15–20; Lactantius *Inst.* 1.15, 20), since *βροτός* refers to “mortal” *persons* in the literature (BDAG s.v. *βροτός*). If introductory *καί* (fr. 3aδ) is additive it lends credibility to this reading. However, the use of *βροτός* in fragment three is intentional. First, *βροτός* provides a useful homophonic counterpart to *βρώματα* (*ω-ο* is frequently subject to auditory confusion) in a passage stylized with homophonic pairs (*χρήσεως-χρήσιν*; *νεκρά-νεκροῖς*; *θύματα*

**when they offer dead things to dead things as if to divine beings.
Because of these things they deny he exists.**

Peter begins by exhorting his audience not to worship “this God” in the Greek manner (κατὰ τοῦς Ἕλληνας). The reason for the warning is simple enough. Greeks cannot be trusted in religious matters because they are “moved by ignorance” and “do not understand God.” Any validity to their cult is entirely excised from the text, precisely because *Greeks are envisioned as devoid of knowledge of the unique God*. If they do not have knowledge of God, how can they worship him properly? Their ignorance is observable from the very cultic practices they observe, as the remainder of the argument demonstrates.

Greeks are idolatrous (3αβ) and zoolatrous (3αγ), practicing forms of cultic worship that, in the logic of *KP*, categorically confuse the nature of created and creator. Material products are made of the same *created* matter as humans (τῆς ὕλης αὐτῶν) and are given by the creator God (ὃν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς) for human benefit (εἰς χρῆσιν; χρήσεως). Animals too are created as gifts from God (ἃ δέδωκεν αὐτοῖς) for human consumption (εἰς βρωσιν). The retooling and recasting of materials and slaughtering of animals is entirely appropriate when done in accord with their divinely-created purpose, for human benefit. Yet to reshape material products and slaughter animals for use as ritual objects (cf. 3αδ) in the worship of material things (3αβ) and animals (3αγ) is a categorical misappropriation both of the divinely-intended purpose of the “givenness” of created goods and the “givingness” of the creator as well as of the living nature of the unique God. The final summation heightens the irony (3αδ). Greeks offer animals (“given” for their own consumption and use) as sacrifices to “mortal” animals subject to death, as though these were living “divine beings!”³¹ And they demonstrate their fundamental ungratefulness to

θύουσιν). Second, it conceptually parallels νεκροῖς which closely follows—βρωτοῖς (“to beings susceptible to death”) and νεκροῖς (“to dead things”). Each homophonic pair (βρώματα–βρωτοῖς; νεκρά–νεκροῖς) references not an ostensive cult of the dead, but indicates, respectively, zoolatry and idolatry. Worship of beings subject to death (zoolatry) or of dead things (idolatry) is indexed against worship of “this [i.e., unique] God” (fr. 3αα). Admittedly, this reading represents an exceptional use of βρωτός applied not to “mortal” persons but to animals *qua* “mortal” beings. However, as *lectio difficilior* which accounts for the balanced, homophonic style of the text and retains an ideological parallel to νεκροῖς, we regard it as more probably authentic. Potter’s emendation (*Clementis Alexandrini Opera Omnia* [Oxford, 1715]; repr. in PG 8–9) to βρωτοῖς (followed by many others) eases the reading and would follow naturally on discussion of zoolatry: “And they slaughter their own means of sustenance as sacrifices to things given (them) for sustenance (sc. animals).” The emendation does not fundamentally alter the twofold reading (zoolatry–idolatry) of fr. 3αδ. Nevertheless, it attenuates the important conceptual parallel of the passage—βρωτοῖς (“to things given for food”) does not match with νεκροῖς (“to dead things”) as fluidly as does βρωτοῖς.

³¹ The text does not argue that there exist “gods” (i.e., demons) behind Greek worship nor that Greeks direct their worship to many gods (cf. *infra* n. 49). Rather, the argument reduces Greek

the unique God when they offer dead materials (particularly in the form of idols) to dead idols and elements (sc. material products) as if the objects of their worship were living deities! To sacrifice mortal, created, contingent things to mortal, created, contingent objects is to reject the ultimacy of the immortal, eternal, uncontingent nature of the creator who made all things and “of whom they have need and through whom they exist” (fr. 2a). The pervasive materiality lying behind the externals of Greek ritual culture amounts to a denial of the unique God’s existence (3aδ), and Greek piety thereby represents the grossest of errors.

The structure of fragment 3 evinces a carefully planned and executed argument, not a simple stereotyping of Greek religion:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| A | Worship not in the manner of the Greeks (3aα) | (Worship) |
| B | For they are moved in ignorance and do not know God (3aα) | (Knowledge) |
| A´ | They worship materials and animals (3aβγ) | |
| | C They worship materials (3aβ) | |
| | D They worship animals (3aγ) | (Worship) |
| | D´ They sacrifice to “mortal” animals (3aδ) | |
| | C´ They sacrifice to “dead” idols (3aδ) | |
| B´ | Thus they deny he exists (3aδ). | (Knowledge) |

The twofold AB–AB pattern in the theologically-oriented classification scheme demonstrates a fundamental relation between ritual worship and knowledge of the divine; they are interlocked. The cultic exercises of Greek worship are externalizations of the fundamentally “ignorant,” material, earthbound nature of Greek religion, the continuing practice of which only reinforces ignorance of the divine nature. This is why Peter enjoins his audience not to worship in the Greek manner. As a collective Greeks do not participate in knowledge of the unique God. To follow their religion is to share in a way of piety that is really not pious at all, for it effectively denies the existence of the one true God!

The text begs one final question. What is meant by “the Greeks?” *KP* ascribes Greek identity to a single collectivity with no explicit subdivisions. This is slightly odd, for the indictment of *zoolatry*-cum-idolatry is traditionally (with rare exception) leveled not against *all* Greeks but specifically against Egyptians in Jewish and pagan

worship to the veneration of completely material elements *as though these were divine beings* when in fact they are not (cf. frs. 3aβγ)! *KP* shows no awareness of the nuanced understanding of iconism and pagan statuary demonstrated later, for example, in Celsus’ *Ἀληθῆς λόγος*.

apologetic literature.³² Whereas the presence of animal worship may reflect *KP*'s Egyptian provenance, the skillful aggregation of idolatry and zoolatry in the logic of fragment 3a points to a broader strategy at work for constructing Greekness. The practice of idolatry and zoolatry are stylistically and discursively interwoven for the specific purpose of demonstrating the “material” commonality at the root of all “hellenistic” religion and ritual culture. In the schematization strategy of *Exhortation*, the foremost constitutive criterion of Greek identity is religious activity, not primarily ethnicity.³³ And in joining these two religious practices the entire pagan religious apparatus is in view.³⁴ All the complexity of Graeco-Roman religions and mystery cults (in Egypt and elsewhere) is reduced in *KP* to a single overarching “materialistic” religious system, whose component practices (idolatry and zoolatry) are closely integrated in ignorance of the unique God.

Peter next admonishes his audience to avoid the Jewish way of worship, described in fragment 4a:³⁵

And...he (Peter) will say again in this way:

“And do not worship (“this God”)³⁶ in the manner of the Jews. ^βFor those, while supposing that they alone know the God, do not have knowledge (of him), ^γsince they render service to angels³⁷ and archangels, to month and moon. ^δAnd if the moon does not appear they do not observe the sabbath which is called “First,” nor do they observe the new moon, nor the Festival of Unleavened Bread, nor the Festival (of Booths?/Pentecost?), nor the Great Day (of Atonement).

³² Derogatory accusations of Egyptian idol- and animal-worship are well-trodden themes in Jewish (cf. Wis 11:15; 12:24; 13:1–17; 15:18–19; *Let. Aris.* 138; *Sib. Or.* 3.29–31; 5.278–80) and pagan apologetic (cf. Herodotus *Hist.* II, 65–74; Juvenal *Sat.* XV, 1–7; Plutarch *Is. Os.* 71). *KP*, however, evidences none of the traditional lampooning of theriolatry (or idolatry), but offers instead a sober theological assessment.

³³ This does not exclude ethnoracial concerns, though one should acknowledge that ethnoracial concerns are submerged in the approach of *Exhortation*. For ethnicity and religious practice as interlocking symbol systems see the discussion of Aristides' *Apology* below (§2).

³⁴ Dobschütz (*Kerygma*, 34) and Cambe (*Kerygma*, 229) suggest that the text could just as easily have spoken of “the pagans.” The point is valid, yet neither seems to recognize that there did not exist a Greek word for “pagan” in the second century!

³⁵ Fragment 4b reads (Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.17.104): “μήτε κατὰ Ἰουδαίους σέβειν τὸ θεῖον, ἐπεὶ περ καὶ αὐτοὶ μόνοι οἰόμενοι ἐπίστασθαι θεὸν ἀγνοοῦσιν αὐτὸν, λατρεύοντες ἀγγέλοις καὶ μηνὶ καὶ σελήνῃ.”

³⁶ Note fragment 4b: σέβειν τὸ θεῖον.

³⁷ Alternative punctuation permits another reading: “while thinking they alone know this God, they do not know that they render service to angels...” The form of the text in Origen argues strongly against this (fr. 4b: ἀγνοοῦσιν αὐτὸν λατρεύοντες ἀγγέλοις).

The impetus for the opening proscription is simple. Like their “ignorant” Greek contemporaries Jews do not know the one creator God. They nevertheless distinguish themselves from pagans in both their pretensions to divine knowledge and in the precise manner of their cult. Jews are guilty of singular arrogance, for they believe they have exclusive rights to the knowledge of the unique creator God. Yet in spite of their bold presumptions Peter assures his audience that “those” Jews *actually do not know God*. This brazen estimation is deducible from Jewish ritual (fr. 4aγ). Rather than venerating the true God Jews render their cultic service directly to angelic authorities and to the month and to the moon which regulates their calendrical cycle.³⁸ The text envisions a single, comprehensive Jewish cultic system in which angelic authorities are closely coordinated with and responsible for lunar locomotion and thereby the regulation of the Jewish religious calendar.³⁹ There is no room in this model for angelic powers to be understood merely as intermediaries in a cosmic system ultimately organized and supervised by the unique, supremely transcendent, divine monarch. Such an evaluation would permit Jews to *actually* worship the unique God through mediation of secondary figures. The text, rather, implies that Jews do not worship God at all but that angels, moon, and month are themselves the recipients of Jewish worship.⁴⁰ The tightly integrated, holistic Jewish religious system does not have place for worship of the unique God.

There are similarities with the evaluation of pagan worship. Fragment 4a highlights the ultimate *materiality* of the Jewish ritual system. The feasts and festivals that comprise the external cultic apparatus are entirely dependent upon a created object (moon) and the time-cycles regulated by it (month). And if the moon in its unpredictability should not appear, Jews do not hold their primary festivals and

³⁸ The phrasing of Clement’s citation (fr. 4a) might suggest two groups of independent cultic recipients benefit from Jewish worship—angelic authorities and the moon (with its regulatory cycles). However, Origen’s citation—“rendering service to angels *and* to month *and* to moon” (fr. 4b)—more clearly demonstrates the integrated nature of the Jewish cultic system. On this see Cambe, *Kerygma*, 243–44.

³⁹ Some such system seems to be in view in Col 2:16–18 and possibly Gal 4:8–11.

⁴⁰ The dative case (ἀγγέλοις, ἀρχαγγέλοις, μηνί, σελήνη) with λατρεύειν does not indicate here the means of cultic service (sc. “by mediation of angels and archangels, by month and moon”), as it does, e.g., in Luke 2:37 (νηστείαις καὶ δεήσεσιν) and Phil 3:3 (πνεύματι θεοῦ). Rather, the dative frequently appears with λατρεύειν to mark θεός as object of worship (e.g., Acts 24:14; Heb 9:14; 12:28; Philo *QE* 2.105, LXX Exod 3:12; 10:7–8; 1 Esd 1:4; Dan 6:27) and other objects of worship particularly contrasted with God (cf. Acts 7:42 [τῆ στρατιᾷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ]; Rom 1:25 [τῆ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα]), as is the case in *KP* fragment 4a. The same obtains for fragments 3b and 4b, in which Origen qualifies Greek λατρεύειν as directed ξύλοις καὶ λίθοις and that of the Jews as ἀγγέλοις καὶ μηνί καὶ σελήνη.

celebrations, whether weekly (sabbath),⁴¹ monthly (new moon), or annually (the three great festivals; fr. 4aδ). The fickleness of the moon's waxing further contrasts with the stability of the unique uncreated God. However, there is also carefully nuanced distinction between Greek and Jewish worship. Whereas the former confines itself to the sphere of earthbound material objects and created animals, *Jewish worship has similitude of transcendence*. In the geography of the ancient cosmos, angelic beings, stars, and planetary objects occupied a level at least one step removed from the earthbound and closer to the supremely divine sphere. Yet despite this appearance of transcendence the apparatus of Jewish cult is ultimately constrained by created quantities and is excluded from "knowledge" of the "uncontained" God who contains all things!

This presentation evinces slight awareness of historical realities. Reference to Jewish suppositions about knowledge of the unique God reflects awareness of Jewish confessions epitomized in the *Shema*. Similarly, some Jewish worship of secondary heavenly agencies doubtless took place, as we observed in Chapter Two.⁴² Yet the vast majority of evidence indicates that such worship practices occurred in private, individual (rather than public, communal) ritual so that veneration of angels can hardly be said to characterize Jewish religion as a whole, which is more characteristically marked by exclusivist monotheism. Beyond this, transposing Jewish dependency on the moon in the fixing of their calendrical cycles into an image of Judaism as an essentially lunar cult is quite surprisingly removed from historical realities. The text presents a rather astonishing characterization of Judaism as a single, coherent entity characterized by the worst possible deviations from monotheistic cult. *KP*'s assessments are in every respect inappropriate when applied to *all* or even the *majority of Jews*, and it is here that the text betrays its characterization of Jews as "d'origine livresque."⁴³ Some measure of characterization is necessary when ordinating sameness and difference among groups, yet in *KP* there

⁴¹ On the difficult *σάββατον...τὸ λεγόμενον πρῶτον* see Cambe (*Kerygma*, 249–55).

⁴² Cf. also Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire. AD 135–425* (trans. H. McKeating; The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization; London: Vallentine Mitchell & Co., 1996, reprint) 339–68; "Remarques sur l'Angélolâtrie Juive au Début de l'Ère Chrétienne," in Marcel Simon, *Le Christianisme antique et son contexte religieux. Scripta Varia. Volume II* (WUNT 23; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1981) 450–64; 453–54: "L'existence d'un culte des anges peut en effet être tenue pour assurée dans certains milieux juifs ou judaïsants," though it developed "essentiellement en marge du judaïsme officiel."

⁴³ Simon notes parallels in Christian literature and highlights Stephen's discourse in Acts 7 as "la source de cette accusation d'angélolâtrie adressée aux Juifs" ("Remarques," 459).

is a complete reduction of historical diversity in contemporary Jewish religion. Assuming this fragment has not been truncated in Clement's citation, fragment four demonstrates further no awareness of the revelatory role of ancient Judaism. It offers a rather limited scope of attack against Judaism.

It is, however, a very consciously and carefully crafted attack, centered upon the dialectic between knowledge of God and cultic comportment:

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| A | Worship not in the manner of the Jews (4α) | (Worship) |
| B | For they think they know God (4αβ) | (Knowledge) |
| B' | but they do not have knowledge (4αβ) | (Knowledge) |
| A' | Since they worship angelic beings and celestial entities (4αγ) | (Worship) |

The cultic exercises and calendrical cycles of Jewish religion are mere externalizations of the cult's fundamentally "ignorant," material nature. And the perpetuation of angel veneration and lunar worship only reinforces ignorance of God. Hence Peter admonishes his audience not to worship in the Jewish manner. Like Greeks, Jews do not participate in knowledge of the unique God. However, where Greeks sacrifice to created objects as though they were living "divine beings" and thereby deny God's existence, Jewish worship at least has a pretense of divine knowledge. The Jews suppose they know "the God" of fragment 2a (fr. 4αβ) and have a semblance of transcendence to their worship. Yet in both regards they are in error, for they are arrogant in their claims and ultimately worship created things rather than the creator God. While recognizing these nuanced differences between pagans and Jews, *Exhortation* ultimately aggregates them together in shared ignorance of the God proclaimed by the apostle Peter.

Peter's program of indexing sameness and difference among religious groups continues with the introduction of a "new" and "third way" of worship in fragment five:

Then he (Peter) produces the end of his search:

αSo then, as for you, as you learn the things we are handing down to you observe⁴⁴ (them) with piety and justice by worshipping the God in a new manner (καινῶς) through Christ.

βFor we find in the scriptures how the Lord says:

"Behold I establish a new covenant (καινήν διαθήκην) with you, not like I established with your fathers on Mount Horeb."

⁴⁴ Φυλάσσετε is imperative, not indicative, as comparison with the introductory phrases of fragments two to four demonstrates.

It is a new (νέαν)⁴⁵ (covenant) **he established with you.**

Indeed (γάρ), **the cultic practices** (τὰ)⁴⁶ **of the Greeks and Jews are obsolete** (παλαιά), **but it is you Christians who worship him in a new manner** (καινῶς), **in a third way** (τρίτῳ γένει).

The text transitions to a third group, now clearly identified as the Christian audience of *Exhortation*. As in fragments three and four the opening admonition of fragment five is linked to σέβασθαι τὸν θεόν, yet with a subtle though important strategic difference. Fragment five occupies itself not with establishing Christian cultic “knowledge” of God vis-à-vis pagan and Jewish “ignorance” but is concerned to establish the epistemic basis on which “a new manner”⁴⁷ of worshipping God (1) should ever have arisen and (2) why Christians are the rightful inheritors of it. To accomplish the argument *KP* grounds (1) knowledge of God in apostolic tradition requiring a “new way” of worship through Christ (fr. 5α) and (2) the need for a “new way” of worship in the pronouncement of Christ (fr. 5β).

In light of the prior critique of pagans and Jews and the assessment that they lack knowledge of the unique God, Peter now admonishes his Christian audience to appropriate *apostolic tradition and teaching* as the only proper basis for true worship of God (fr. 5α). The force of the admonition falls on the command to “observe the things we are handing down to you.” Reference to apostolic tradition may recollect some prior moral exhortations in *KP* now no longer preserved, as the qualification “with piety and justice” might indicate. At a minimum, however, it recalls the earlier discussion of fragment 2a in which the authentic portrait of deity was disseminated through a specifically Petrine “knowledge” of God. The following phrase makes this clear. Apostolic tradition is observed “by worshipping the God in a new manner through Christ.” As representative of the twelve (“we;” cf. frs. 7, 9), Peter’s preaching constitutes correct knowledge of the unique creator God. And he does not mediate just any monotheism. The unique God must now be worshipped “through Christ.” The christological element gives apostolic (hence, Christian) knowledge of the unique God its “newness” of content but also its chronologic frame. Worship of

⁴⁵ Change from καινός to νέος “hat nichts zu bedeuten” (Dobschütz, *Kerygma*, 49 n. 1); it represents “une variation stylistique” (Cambe, *Kerygma*, 257–58).

⁴⁶ In light of the contrast between the “new manner” of Christian worship with the now antiquated “things” (τὰ) of the Greeks and Jews, it seems best to understand the plural article as referential of modes of worship or “cultic practices,” as we have translated.

⁴⁷ Variants of the concept of “newness” occur four times in this brief passage (καινῶς [bis], καινήν, νέαν) and are twice contrasted with something viewed as old (τοῖς πατράσιν ὑμῶν) or “antiquated” (παλαιά).

the unique God through Christ represents a “newly” mediated tradition recently handed down from apostles who received it directly from the Lord himself.

The second trajectory in the argument represents an explanation and further legitimation of the initial admonition to observe apostolic tradition by worshipping God “in a new manner.” Keying off the phrase “a new covenant” (καινήν διαθήκην) in Jer 31:31–32 (LXX 38:31–32),⁴⁸ fragment 5βγ lays forth further grounds (γάρ) upon which Peter’s call to worship God “in a new way” is actionable. In Jeremiah 31 the Lord Jesus himself foretold how a “new covenant” would replace the covenant made “with your fathers” on Mount Horeb. Not only did the apostles mediate directly from Jesus a new tradition of monotheistic worship, the Lord himself also testified in scripture that he would establish with Christians a new way of θεοσέβεια different from that of their predecessors (see below). There is now an incumbent obligation on all peoples to worship the unique God not in the manner of the Jews or Greeks but “in a new way through Christ.” The conclusion to the midrash—“It is a new (covenant) he established with you” (5β)—offers tight terminological relation to the first half of the Jeremiah citation:

Ἴδου διατίθεμαι ὑμῖν καινήν διαθήκην,	Νέαν ὑμῖν διέθετο
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No strict correspondence to the second half of the citation occurs. Peter’s midrash keys rather on the contrast between “establish with you” and “established with your fathers” to offer a comparison between the now antiquated cultic activity of Greeks and Jews and the “newness” of Christian worship. The establishment of a new covenant (i.e., new way of θεοσέβεια) for *KP* requires the obsolescence and invalidity of other prior forms of θεοσέβεια. Jeremiah is cited (1) to demonstrate that Christ announced in advance that he would establish a new way of knowing the one God and (2) to contrast the newness of what was promised in Christ from the oldness of other ways of relating to God. In light of Jeremiah 31 and the entire force of *Exhortation* Peter offers his final summation: “Indeed, the cultic practices of the Greeks and Jews are obsolete, but it is you Christians who worship him in a new manner, in a third way.” **All three groups are presupposed as directing their worship to the unique God**, who is the only proper object of cultic devotion.⁴⁹ Yet

⁴⁸ On the citational form see Cambe (*Kerygma*, 272–80). Dobschütz attributes the unique form of this text to the “sehr schriftkundigen” author (*Kerygma*, 48–49).

⁴⁹ That pagans attempt to direct their worship to the unique God is evident in fragment 3a: “Worship *this God* not in the manner of the Greeks” (sc. not as the Greeks attempt to worship him).

the worship practices of the Greeks (κατὰ τοὺς Ἕλληνας) and Jews (κατὰ Ἰουδαίους) are now obsolete in light of the Lord's proclamation. It is only the new (καινῶς), third way (τρίτῳ γένει) of worship that permits legitimate access to the unique God, and that is the property of Christians alone (fr. 5γ) who have received it from Jesus himself (fr. 5β) transmitted through apostolic tradition (fr. 5α).

Fragment five evinces the same attention to stylistic detail as was present in the previous fragments, though the argument is phrased somewhat differently. Peter employs a scriptural midrash keyed on the language of “you,” “new,” and “establish” in Jer 31:31–32 to legitimate the “newness” of Christian worship of the unique God through Christ. When we understand that for *KP* “covenant” describes a way of relating to the unique God, the following structure emerges:

^α**As for you**, observe apostolic tradition by worshipping God in a new way.

^βFor Christ proclaims *he establishes with you a new way of relating to God* not like [the way] *he established with your fathers*.

It was a new [way] *he established with you*.

^γIndeed Greek and Jewish [i.e., **other**] ways of relating to God are obsolete but **you** Christians worship God in a new way.

The Jeremiah citation stands at center of the argument and provides linguistic markers by which the initial call to worship God “in a new way” can be made (fr. 5α) and the final assessment of Greeks, Jews, and Christians naturally follows (fr. 5γ). The citation is essential to the polemic of fragment five and programmatic to the entire schematizing argument of *Exhortation*. From it follows the need for (1) a new way of worshipping the unique God, (2) the concomitant obsolescence of old ways of worship, and (3) a new basis on which to worship God, namely, through Christ. At the heart of the strategic framework of religious classification in *Exhortation* lies a scriptural midrash introduced by four simple words: εὐρομεν...ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς. Grounding the oppositional configuration of “us” versus “them” and legitimating Christian distinctiveness and “newness” in an authoritative scriptural text, in which Jesus himself proclaimed in advance this new movement, represents a socially-

Cambe rightly observes: “[N]i le *Kérygme de Pierre* ni Clément n’imaginent que le culte des Grecs puisse viser un autre dieu que le Dieu unique” (*Kerygma*, 67). Similarly for the Jews “this God” is the implied object of worship in fragment 4 and is confirmed in their claim that “they alone know the God.”

significant strategy for the author(s) and ostensibly the community to which he appealed.⁵⁰

In sum, *Exhortation* engages in a global indexing of sameness and difference between religious communities. Greeks, Jews, and Christians are indexed *according to the criteria of their cultic participation* (or lack thereof!) *in the knowledge of the unique creator God* (θεοσέβεια). The text everywhere presupposes that these groups share the common goal of worshipping the one God described in fragment 2a. Yet in Peter's assessment neither Greeks nor Jews "know" this God. The former misdirect their worship of him to material objects and animals and are disqualified from divine knowledge. They use created things as ritual tools in the worship of elements, idols, and animals as if those were divine beings (fr. 3a). Jews, likewise, misdirect their worship of the unique God in favor of created entities—angelic authorities, month, and moon. There is a semblance of transcendence in Jewish cult absent from Greek religion, for Jewish worship is directed to heavenly and astral objects. Yet this similitude offers no substantive escape from materialism, and Jews are therefore guilty of singular pride in claiming exclusive knowledge of the unique God. *KP* secures true θεοσέβεια as the property of Christians alone, since only they have received through authoritative channels true knowledge of the unique God and of a "new way" of worshipping him. This knowledge was revealed through apostolic preaching, presented in terms of Peter's proclamation, and Christ Jesus himself had proclaimed in advance (sc. Jer 31:31–32) the inauguration of a "new" religion in place of old ways of worshipping God. This new θεοσέβεια is conceived in terms of time and content, for the unique God may now be worshipped in true θεοσέβεια and perfect knowledge only when done "through Christ." *Exhortation* vouchsafes

⁵⁰ Norelli observes an "activité systématique de recherche, dans les Écritures" and notes that εὐρίσκειν (frs. 5β, 9) assumes "le caractère quasi-technique" ("Situation," 64; cf. Paulsen, "Kerygma," 7). The importance of scriptural interpretation for the author(s) of *KP* is particularly evident in fragments nine and ten. The former reads:

Now we [apostles], having unrolled the books of the prophets that we possess, which sometimes in parables, sometimes in riddles, sometimes expressly and with perfect clarity mention Christ Jesus, we find also his coming and death and the cross and all the remaining punishments which the Jews did to him, and the resurrection and ascension to heaven before Jerusalem is founded, just as all things have been written which it was necessary for him to suffer and which will occur after this. Knowing these things then we believed in the God through the things which have been written about this.

Fragment 10 reads: "For we [apostles] have known that God truly arranged these things [presumably scriptural prophecies], and we say nothing without the scripture."

apostolic tradition and the proclamations of Jesus as the only appropriate mediators for the dissemination of revealed knowledge of the supremely transcendent God. Inasmuch as Christians alone appropriate apostolic teaching for themselves (fr. 5α), they alone engage in true θεοσέβεια and knowledge of God. And their “new way” of worshipping the unique God is thereby legitimated and assumes a universally obligatory character, as we will now see.

1.2 Monotheism “Through Christ” and Apostolic Mission (Fragments 6–8)⁵¹

In addition to *Exhortation* we possess three *logia* of Jesus original to *KP* which further engage the subject of monotheism “through Christ,” fragments six through eight. We do not know how these *logia* relate to the discussion of *Exhortation* within the larger context of *KP*, since they are, strictly speaking, contextually detached fragments with no securely recoverable framework.⁵² Yet the picture of monotheism “through Christ” they offer finds a certain resonance with the schema of *Exhortation*. Fragment six reads:

On account of this Peter says that the Lord declared to the apostles:
“Therefore, if anyone of Israel wishes to be converted through my name to believe in the God, his sins will be forgiven him. After twelve years go out into the world lest anyone say, ‘We did not hear.’”⁵³

Fragment seven runs:

So in the *Preaching of Peter* the Lord says to the disciples after the resurrection: **“I have chosen you twelve, having judged (you) to be disciples worthy of me [—(you) whom the Lord desired—] and having regarded (you) to be faithful apostles; I send (you) into the world to preach the gospel to all persons in the inhabited world, that they might know that there is one God (εἷς θεός ἐστίν) through faith in me, [the Christ,] (and) to reveal things to come, so that those who hear and believe might be saved while those who hear and do not believe might bear witness that they do not have excuse to say ‘We did not hear.’”**

⁵¹ We mimic *KP*’s rhetoric of monotheism “through Christ” and avoid the more ambiguous “christological monotheism,” which often evokes various ontologic patterns. We resist a christological reading of fragment 2a (cf. Excursus *supra*), and the remaining fragments do not substantially clarify the ontologic relationship of “the Lord” to the unique God.

⁵² Were the *logia* independent (and precursive) of *Exhortation* (Paulsen, “Kerygma,” 5–11)? Or, were they integrated (interspersed?) into the broader apostolic discourse (Cambe, *Kerygma*, 135–36)?

⁵³ Fragment six may represent two originally non-contiguous fragments joined by Clement (Cambe, *ibid.*, 79–80).

Fragment eight reads:

But to every soul endowed with reason it is said from above: **Whatever anyone [among you]⁵⁴ committed in ignorance because he did not know the God clearly, if he converts to knowledge all sins will be forgiven him.**⁵⁵

Fragments six and seven recall declarations of the resurrected Christ to his disciples.⁵⁶ From the outset it is clear these statements strongly emphasize proclamation of belief in one God through Christ *as the centerpiece of a global apostolic mission*. In both cases the risen Jesus himself by verbal fiat ordains and legitimates apostolic mission and designs its message—“there is one God through faith in me.” The mission is universal in scope and presupposes that “all persons in the inhabited world” (i.e., Greeks and Jews) lie outside authentic knowledge of the unique God revealed in Christ and thereby require conversion. Apostolic missionary preaching is directed to all denizens of the inhabited world so that they might “know” (γινώσκειν) that there is a single God through faith in Christ and by embracing worship of this God “might be saved,” receive forgiveness of sins, and escape eschatological judgment (“things to come;” fr. 7). Parallels between the fragments suggest a parity between the concepts of “knowing” (γινώσκειν) God through Christ (fr. 7) and “being converted” (μετανοῆσαι) to God through Christ (fr. 6). Conversion to the Christian way of worship is framed as movement from a position of “ignorance” to a state of “knowledge.” This analysis comports well with fragment eight, which ostensibly reports a declaration of universal appeal by the risen savior (ἄνωθεν...ἔρηται) to the world of “ignorant” unbelievers. If this reading is correct, the conversion process envisioned in fragments six and seven is *explicitly* formulated in fragment eight in terms of a turning from pre-conversion

⁵⁴ Possible Clementine addition harmonizing fragment eight with the following two scriptural citations in *Strom.* 6.6.48.7–49.1 (Paulsen, “Kerygma,” 6). However, it may also be understood as a global pronouncement of the risen Lord to “anyone among you (unconverted)” who hears the gospel (Cambe, *ibid.*, 331; cf. 120–21). Our reading assumes the latter view.

⁵⁵ The unique citational formula of fragment eight (ἄνωθεν...ἔρηται) demarcates a saying of the resurrected (and ascended?) savior and signals that this fragment probably represents a Clementine summary of *KP*’s doctrine. The inclusion of fragment eight in *KP* is conjectural and based on internal similarities with fragments six and seven. See Cambe, *Kerygma*, 118–21, 329–34.

⁵⁶ Actually, the monotheistic message of the primitive church (e.g., 1 Thess 1:9–10; cf. Acts 19:26) was transcribed into *logia* of the resurrected savior. “La nouveauté du *KP*,” Cambe opines, “est d’intégrer au mandat du Ressuscité le message du Dieu unique et de lui donner une position tout à fait centrale...En faisant de ce message un mandat du Ressuscité, le *Kérygme* lui donnait une autorité inégalable” (*Kerygma*, 385; cf. esp. 335–36).

“ignorance” to a state of post-conversion “knowledge,” in which the convert comes to know the unique God “clearly.”

The text does not envision epistemically-oriented conversion in terms of entire groupings but of *individuals* who repent to believe in the unique God through Christ. Whatever corporate responsibility the Jews had for the crucifixion and sufferings of Christ Jesus (cf. fr. 9)⁵⁷ individual Jews are not precluded from crossing the boundary from “ignorance” to “knowledge” through faith in Christ and thereby receiving forgiveness of sins (fr. 6). Nor does the initial twelve year apostolic mission to Jews (fr. 6) preclude Greeks from sharing in missionary preaching. The call to convert to “knowledge” of God is global and obligatory for all individual Jews and Greeks. Yet to participate in “knowledge” one must have opportunity to hear about it.⁵⁸ In the logic of *KP* “knowledge” of the unique God must be made universally accessible, “lest anyone say ‘We did not hear’” (fr. 6; cf. 7). Global mission is incumbent on the apostles and also the recipient community which participates in the revelation of apostolic “knowledge.” And there is both urgency and a sense of achievability to the church’s mission. These fragments present a dialectic of obligation surrounding the message of belief in (sc. knowledge of) the unique God in Christ. Greeks and Jews must convert from “ignorance” to “knowledge,” and Christians are obligated to universally disseminate “knowledge” of the unique God through Christ. If the latter is not fulfilled, some now “in ignorance” will have excuse before the coming judgment of God.

In sum, the fragmentary *logia* of the risen Jesus offer a unified message that fits comfortably alongside that of Peter’s *Exhortation*. In the latter, Peter had confined Jews and Greeks in “ignorance” of the unique God and *ipso facto* in need of a call for conversion from “ignorance” unto “knowledge” and “a new way” of worship, revealed as the Christian way. In his *logia*, the resurrected Jesus authorized conversion to faith in the unique God through Christ as the proper content of Christian *Missionsrede*. Only through acceptance of this boundary criterion separating “ignorance” from revealed “gnosis” can the individual Jew or Greek move from their “ignorance” to Christian θεοσέβεια.

⁵⁷ Translated in n. 50. In *KP* Jewish involvement in Jesus’ death is a *scriptural necessity*. “[D]ans la première moitié du II^e siècle,” the ascription of Jesus’ passion to the Jews “se manifeste en particulier dans les écrits pétriniens” (Norelli, “Situation,” 67–69, citing p. 69).

⁵⁸ This differs from Paul’s picture of the accessibility of knowledge of the divine nature through natural revelation; cf. Malherbe, “Apologetic Theology.”

1.3 Evaluation: "Gnosis" and "Newness"

We have seen how monotheism functions in the internal logic and discursive monotheistic strategy of the fragments of *KP*. The text employs the symbol of the unique God within a framework of "cultic reasoning."⁵⁹ Yet to describe *KP*'s approach as a monotheistic "strategy" further implies analysis of why such cultic reasoning was socially useful. Can we infer from the literary shaping of the extant fragments anything about the social goals that lie behind the text? We believe two broad social functions for appealing to the unique God "through Christ" are perceptible in *KP*. Both work in synergy towards a similar end.

First, behind the fragments may be sensed a community which places high value on "gnosis."⁶⁰ The author(s) and (quite probably) the community for which he writes appear fixated on understanding and articulating the nature and accessibility of authentic "knowledge" of God. This concern is evident in the epistemically-based schematization of *Exhortation* and the epistemically-oriented missionary appeal of the *logia*. What (or who) is the proper subject matter of knowledge? Is gnosis revealed or discovered? Are there different gradations of knowledge—some more authentic than others—or a simple bifurcation of gnosis and ignorance? Where does authentic knowledge reside and how is it socially transmitted? Which religious groups participate in it and on what basis? Do mechanisms exist by which one who is ignorant may become knowledgeable? These types of questions lie subtly perceptible behind the fragments, and it is these concerns about "gnosis," we cautiously suggest, that *KP* itself addresses. *Exhortation* and the *logia* represent an attempt by some Alexandrian Christian(s) to articulate for some Christian community/ies a theology and christology rooted in a general theory of knowledge.

The answers to the above questions are framed in terms of monotheism, the resurrected savior, and apostolic traditions of the Christian religion. "Knowledge" always means "knowledge of the divine nature," specifically of the unique transcendent creator God. All general religious activity, whether Greek, Jewish, or Christian, formulates itself in terms of "knowledgeable" cultic worship of the one transcendent creator God, yet only Christians actually participate in true "gnosis." There is no division between *pneumatic* and *psychic* Christian "gnostics," only

⁵⁹ That is, the delineation of social groupings by valuation of their cultic practice.

⁶⁰ This does not, however, mean it is "gnostic" in the traditional sense of the term. See Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: University Press, 1996).

between Christian “gnostics” and Jews and Greeks (i.e., agnostics). Christians alone share in this “knowledge” of the unique God because they have received it from an authoritative source. For *KP* authentic “knowledge” of God is revealed only through Christ who himself commissioned the apostles in turn to “reveal” (fr. 7) it to others. The risen Jesus was and is the revealer of “knowledge” of the unique God and of the need to worship him “in a new way!” He disseminated this “knowledge” to the apostles and sent them out on a mission to declare it to all humanity. Because authentic knowledge of God is revealed and transmitted by tradition, it is not universally accessible through natural revelation but must be further transmitted by missionary activity. Christians, having received the apostolic message of the one God, are thus in turn obligated to reveal the knowledge of God to the world of Jewish and Greek religion in universal mission. Inasmuch as the one God created and bounds “all things” (fr. 2a), “knowledge” of him must be made universally accessible. Thus *KP* classifies and evaluates the world of religious groupings on the basis of their participation in “knowledge” of God (as manifest in cultic practice), and legitimates and authorizes a universal mission for disseminating that “knowledge.”

In its concern to articulate “knowledge” in terms of cultic worship of the unique God, to classify religious groupings on the basis of participation in that “knowledge,” to authenticate the proper basis for “knowledge” in the revelation of the risen Jesus, to fix the proper channel for its transmission in apostolic teaching, to substantiate the need for universal accessibility to “knowledge,” and thereby to authorize a universal mission for its dissemination, we are in the presence of more than an incoherent series of haphazard fragments. We are witnessing firsthand an intellectualist attempt to encode a universal “theory of knowledge” that legitimates specifically Christian worship, traditions, and mission in the revelation of God through the risen Jesus.⁶¹ We do not wish to overstate the matter. One should not envision a scribal collective pontificating in a scriptorium where literary production of epistemic theories is churned out. The interests of *KP* reflect those of an outward-looking community which greatly emphasizes the revelation of knowledge of the

⁶¹ The following demonstrate an educated writership and justify the label “intellectualist:” (1) the literary texturing of fragments two to five; (2) the author’s ability to articulate theology in philosophical terms and hymnic form; (3) the polemic establishment of the “material” nature of Jewish and Greek religion vis-à-vis the immaterial transcendence of the divine nature; (4) programmatic appeal to scriptures (frs. 5, 9–10); and (5) stark contrast throughout between “knowledge” and “ignorance.”

unique God through Christ in lively cultic life and manifests a missionary zeal, wishing to see “others” (Jews and Greeks) share in that knowledge. This is no group concerned with retaining secret gnosis. Knowledge of the God who contains “all things” cannot be hidden and must be proclaimed.

A second function for appealing to the one God “through Christ” emerges. The literary texturing of *Exhortation* evidences great rhetorical skill and manifests an intentionality (§1.1). This must be taken seriously as a window to the concerns of the author(s). When, in fragment five, the concept of the “newness” of Christian worship emerges strongly (καινῶς [bis], καινήν, νέαν) and directly in opposition to Jewish and Greek cultic activity characterized as “obsolete” (παλαιά), we must ask what social concerns this evokes. Behind the juxtapositioning of “newness” and “obsolescence” operates *a fundamental revaluation of the nature of tradition respecting knowledge of the unique God*. The rootedness of Greek and Jewish cult in antiquity—a traditionally honorable association—is recast in *KP*’s monotheistic classification strategy as antiquated. Revaluation takes place because of the new revelation of the Christian revealer figure. Jesus prophesied the nascence of “a new manner” of worshipping the one God (fr. 5α), proclaimed a monotheism “through himself,” and commanded his apostles to transmit this message to the inhabited world (frs. 6–8). Because of the revelation of God in Jesus, traditional valuations of “newness” and “oldness” are now renegotiated. There is powerful interplay here between the themes of “newness” and the “theory of knowledge” in *Exhortation*. *Revealed* gnosis of the unique God through Christ now trumps all ancestral claims to inherited knowledge! The argument on “newness” is deeply integrated rhetorically and thematically with the entire “theory of knowledge.”

We may safely assert that the synergy of these motifs in the monotheistic classification strategy of *KP* acts to socially legitimate the newness of Christian religion and its claims to “know” the true God vis-à-vis pagan and Jewish claims to ancestral tradition as the base of their “knowledge” of the divine nature. That the text characterizes the universe of religious groupings **oppositionally**—two “ignorant,” “obsolete” religions alongside a “knowledgeable,” “new” religion—plausibly mimics accusations encountered by the textual community in its monotheistic mission to Jews and Greeks: How do you Christians “know” that you alone “know” God? How can your way of worshipping God be trustworthy since it is “new” and

not grounded in ancestral traditions?⁶² *KP* provides answers by discursively reassigning the value of revelatory knowledge in the quest for God, in light of the historical event of the resurrected Jesus: We Christians “know” the unique God and worship him in “a new way” because he has been revealed to us through Jesus whose message we received from the apostles. *The monotheistic classification strategy of KP provides an answer to a series of internal questions confronting this missions-minded community, which may have arisen directly from interaction with pagans and Jews, and certainly was envisioned within the context of monotheistic mission.* This reading suggests the important semiotic role which a monotheistic classification schema provided for an early second-century (Egyptian?) Christian community in claiming and proclaiming its own peculiar identity as a religious community vis-à-vis Jewish and pagan recipients of their mission.

2. The *Apology* of Aristides: Four “Races” of Worshippers

The *Apology* of Aristides provides a second example of a monotheistic classification strategy used in shaping Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism.⁶³

⁶² Accusations of “newness” were frequently leveled against second-century Christians. See esp. Adolf Harnack (*The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* [2 vols.; London: Williams and Norgate; New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1908] 1.266–78) and Kinzig (*Novitas Christiana*, 186–98).

⁶³ We are fortunate to possess *Apology* in four textual traditions—papyrological, Greek, Syriac, and Armenian—representing three distinct recensions—Egyptian (Π¹, Π²), Oriental (Sy[riac], Ar[menian]), and Greek (preserved in two metaphrases in the medieval *Life of Barlaam and Joasaph* [*Ba(rlaam)*—the discourses of Barlaam [*DiscBa* = §§45–56 *Ba*] and of Nachor [*DiscNa* = §§239–55 *Ba*]). The Armenian is extant for the dedication and 1.1–2.5; Π¹ preserves portions of 4.3–6.1; and Π² records the end of 15.4 through most of 16.1. *DiscBa* and *DiscNa* are available in J.F. Boissonade (*Anecdota graeca. Vol. IV* [Paris, 1832] 45–56; 239–55) or in G.R. Woodward and Harold Mattingly (*John Damascene: Barlaam and Ioasaph* [LCL 34; London: Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967, repr. 2006] §§45–56; §§239–55).

This relative wealth of evidence comes at a price, for the representations of the Jews in *Barlaam* and the Syriac (chapters two and fourteen) could hardly be wider apart, and the differences depend on the shape of the text itself as preserved in the extant manuscript testimony. The relation of these witnesses has been debated from the earliest manuscript discoveries (cf. Robinson in Harris, *Apology*, 67–80; Raabe, *Apologie*, 56–57; and J. Geffcken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten* [Leipzig und Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1907] XXXIV–XXXVIII). For bibliography of the important literature immediately following the publication of the *editio princeps* see Edgar Hennecke (“Zur Frage nach der ursprünglichen Textgestalt der Aristides-Apologie,” *ZWTh* 36/2 [1893]: 42–43). In an article as yet unpublished the author argues that the Syriac translation of *Apology* 2, 14, and 15.1–3 best preserves the earliest recoverable form of the work (Will Rutherford, “Judaism as Friend or Foe? An Attempt to Reconstruct Aristides’ Portrayal of Judaism”). The textual issues are too burdensome for the present thesis, and **the following discussion assumes the priority of the Syriac in chapters 2, 14, and 15, as well as chapter 1** (see n. 73).

Translations from Greek and Syriac are ours and were made in consultation of D.M. Kay (“The *Apology* of Aristides the Philosopher,” in *ANCL* add. vol. [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897]),

According to Eusebius, *Apology* was composed by “our philosopher” Aristides and delivered to emperor Hadrian on the occasion of his first stay at Athens where he was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries (124–125 CE).⁶⁴ The claim that Aristides was a philosopher from Athens is repeated across historiographic and textual traditions.⁶⁵ Yet it is difficult to know how much stock to place in this observation and how it should be interpreted. Is the author a native Athenian philosopher still resident in Athens or expatriated elsewhere (perhaps Asia Minor)?⁶⁶ Do traditional reference to Athens and designation as “philosopher” reflect literary fabrication in *Apology*, providing no substantive historical value for determining provenance? Association with the epicenter of Greek thought would prove quite a useful polemic device for an author wishing to inscribe a philosophically-oriented defense of Christian faith! These ambiguities urge caution. Athenian provenance should be regarded only as *probable* given the independent witness of historiographic and textual traditions. A date of 124–125 CE may be fixed with slightly more certainty, placing *Apology* within a decade or so of *KP*.⁶⁷

Harris (*Apology*), and Bernard Pouderon with Marie-Joseph Pierre (*Aristide: Apologie* [SC 470; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2003] 107–41, 143–72, 401–13). We follow Pouderon’s enumeration.

⁶⁴ *Chron.* CCXXVI. There is a discrepancy between the Latin (125–126 CE) and Armenian versions (124–125 CE; cod. N places the event a year later) of *Chronicon*, yet Eusebius’ clearly intends to locate production of *Apology* during Hadrian’s first stay at Athens. It is, however, Jerome’s reading of Eusebius that *explicitly* links (in cause-and-effect) production of Quadratus’ and Aristides’ apologies with the emperor’s visit (*Epist.* 70.4; cf. *Vir. ill.* 20).

⁶⁵ The author self-styles himself “philosopher of Athens” (ded. Sy, Ar). The historiographic and textual claims ostensibly possess independent value, for Eusebius does not have a copy of Aristides’ *Apology* to hand. References to Aristides in the remaining historiographic tradition (Jerome and martyrologies) simply repeat and expand on Eusebius.

⁶⁶ Harris argued *Apology* was delivered to Antoninus Pius at Smyrna (*Apology*, 16–17), and Lieu cautiously suggests Asia Minor (*Image*, 164–65).

⁶⁷ The dedicatory address in the Armenian version (“To the autocratic Caesar Hadrian, from Aristides, Athenian philosopher”) is consistent with historiographic tradition, as is the Syriac title (“The Apology of Aristides the philosopher to king Hadrian concerning the fear of God”). Confusion arises, however, because the dedicatory address of the Syriac (following the title) directs *Apology* to Antoninus Pius (“To the all-powerful Caesar Titus Hadrian Antoninus”). The subsequent *plural* descriptors (“august” [ܐܘܓܘܨܬܐ = Augustus] and “merciful” [ܡܪܥܘܦܐ = Pius?]) represent not two recipients (Hadrian, Antoninus) but the plural of majesty (cf. 2.2 Sy: ܐܘܓܘܨܬܐ ܡܪܥܘܦܐ). In its present form the Syriac (tit. + ded.) envisions both Hadrian (117–138 CE) and Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE). However, Eusebius’ testimony, the Armenian title, and papyrological witness (note singular ὁ βασιλεῦ; *Apology* Π² fol. 1^v l. 44) argue very strongly against reference to *plural* recipients, thereby excluding the brief coregency of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius (February to July, 138 CE). In this light the Syriac title appears to be a later addition to harmonize the earlier dedicatory address (Antoninus Pius) with historiographic tradition (Hadrian). The witness of historiographic tradition and the Armenian version (Hadrian) compete with the Syriac address (Antoninus Pius). The burden of proof lies slightly with the Syriac (cf. Robinson in Harris, *Apology*, 75 n. 2). **Regarding the date of *Apology*, there is little reason to reject Eusebian tradition a priori since it also carries the support of the Armenian version.** Cf. Pouderon, *Aristide*, 32–37, 317; *Les apologistes grecs du I^{er} siècle* (IPE; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005) 121–23.

Should we regard with equal skepticism Eusebius' claim that *Apology* was presented (*dedere*) to emperor Hadrian? Despite being addressed to Hadrian, *Apology* presents not a single request to the emperor on behalf of the Christians save calling for his repentance (17.3 *Ba*; or, for that of all pagans: 17.3 *Sy*). *Apology* differs considerably from the genre of formal request present in Justin's *First* (1; 68) and *Second Apology* (14) as well as the embassy genre (πρεσβευτικὸς λόγος) of Athenagoras' *Legatio* offered in response to specific accusations leveled against Christians (1–3; 32). It should then be regarded as improbable that *Apology* ever received an audience with Hadrian. Bernard Pouderon's suggestion that *Apology* is an *epideictic* discourse (ἐπίδεικτικὸς λόγος) has strong appeal. According to Pouderon, *Apology* is a "lettre ouverte"—"an apologetic work of oratory form or, more strictly speaking, epistolary, occasioned by the visit of Hadrian to Athens, intended for the widest diffusion possible (just as much within the Christian community as before the pagan public), from which one would also hope it would be read by the king to whom it was supposed to be addressed and to whom one doubtless tried hard to hand it over."⁶⁸ In this sense *Apology* differs from *KP* and should be regarded as directed both *ad intra* and to a wider public.

2.1 *The One God and the Four "Races" (Apology 1–2)*

Like *KP*, *Apology* begins with a depiction of the unique God. Aristides frames the discussion of God in terms of his own personal search for truth, which he paints in philosophic fashion as a rational process of observing and scrutinizing (θεωρήσας; ἰδὼν; συνήκα) the natural universe and its orderly arrangement (1.1). Our philosopher describes how his observation of the structured motion of all things led him to conclude that this natural arrangement could only have resulted from an orderly mover, namely, God, and that this God is necessarily supremely transcendent and superior to the world, for "that which causes movement is stronger than that which is moved" (1.1).⁶⁹ This God has established and arranged the universe of

⁶⁸ On genre and occasion see Pouderon (*Aristide*, 39–43; quote from pp. 42–43).

⁶⁹ This concept of God is similar to that of Aristotle's Prime Mover, "an actualization rather than a potentiality, a mind thinking itself." It had been adopted as the dominant theology (physics) in Middle Platonism and in the period of history in general with which we are dealing (cf. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism. 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* [London: Duckworth, 1977] 13). It is echoed in Christian theologians as well (cf. Spanneut, *Le stoïcisme des pères de l'Église: de Clément de Rome à Clément d'Alexandrie* [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957] 307ff.). Minucius *Oct.* 19.2; Tertullian *Prax.* 5; Hippolytus *Ref.* 10.33.2; Origen *Cels.* 7.38)

things for human benefit (1.2).⁷⁰ From this naturally-accessible knowledge of God, Aristides concludes, is enjoined a certain religious and ethical response. “It seems certain to me,” he says, “that it is necessary that each person fear God and in consequence thereof it is reasonable that he not harm anyone” (1.2 Sy; cf. Ar).⁷¹ Yet knowledge that arises from this cosmological argument is partial and incomplete, for the divine nature is essentially hidden (cf. 1.1 Sy, Ar)⁷² as the *via negationis* teaches us. God is without beginning, without end, immortal, perfect, incomprehensible, without limit, etc., descriptors which the texts of the Oriental recension clarify at some length (1.2).⁷³ Conspicuously, the prologue provides no *explicit* reference to the absolute uniqueness of God! Nevertheless, *his uniqueness is implicit*,⁷⁴ since he is envisioned *sui generis* as creator of “all things.” Consequently, humans need worship and obey this God, whose nature is such that customary cultic dictates of sacrifice and libation, or, indeed, any of the sensibles are hardly appropriate (1.2).

Three motifs interlock in the prologue of *Apology*, (1) a naturally-revealed and incomplete rationally-accessible **knowledge** of a single, transcendent, personal first principle to whom humans must (2) offer **cultic worship** and (3) obey in manners of **ethical practice**. The confluence of these elements anticipates the logic in the remainder of *Apology*, where the Athenian philosopher offers his version of a monotheistic classification strategy. “Let us proceed to the human race,” he urges,

⁷⁰ This last qualification is absent from *Barlaam*. Its authenticity is assured from the discussion on the elements (5.1–3), where both the Syriac and *Barlaam* envision water, fire, and winds as created “for the sake of humans.”

⁷¹ Though absent from *Barlaam*, this deduction is authentic. It is present in both independent Oriental witnesses and comports well with the significance of ethic throughout *Apology*.

⁷² This assessment on the limits of human knowledge is absent from the epitome of *Apology* 1 in *Barlaam* (cf. the following footnote). In accordance with typical Middle Platonic doctrine, no human obtains fully to the truth of the divine (1.1; 2.1 Sy; cf. 2.1 *Ba* which can be read this way). Cf. Plato *Tim.* 28C; Alcinoüs (=Albinus) *Did.* 10.1. References to the former are abundant among early Christian and Middle Platonic writings; see A. D. Nock, “The Exegesis of Timaeus 28 C,” *VC* 16 (1926) 79–86. Note further Festugière’s helpful comments (“La doctrine Platonicienne,” 92–140).

⁷³ There are discrepancies in the length of the prologue between Greek and Oriental recensions. Though the Oriental witnesses evince some embellishment, the bulk of material missing from 1.1–2 *Ba* was secondarily expunged from a fuller *Vorlage* (by the editor of the *Barlaam* romance?). This includes the qualification on the limits of human knowledge attested in the independent Oriental witnesses (1.1 Sy, Ar). Chapter one of *Apology* shares a common (Jewish?) source with two “gnostic” works (*Eugnostos*; *Tripartite Tractate*), which also contain the expanded explanations found in *Apol.* 1.2 Sy, Ar (Roelof van den Broek, “Eugnostos and Aristides on the Ineffable God,” in idem, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld, eds., *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* [Leiden; New York: Brill, 1988] 202–11; cf. Pouderon, *Aristide*, 93–97. W.C. van Unnik’s attempt to locate a source for *Apology* 1 is disappointing [“Die Gotteslehre bei Aristides und in gnostischen Schriften,” *TZ* 17 (1961): 166–74]).

⁷⁴ Explicit in 13.3–4; 14.3a; 15.3b.

“so that we might perceive which among them participates in truth and which in error” (2.1 *Ba*, *Sy*, *Ar*; cf. 3.1). **On this fundamental procedural point both Oriental and Greek recensions agree.** *Apology* engages in a program of schematizing sameness and difference among various human collectivities based on their participation or lack of participation in cultic and moral knowledge of the unique God.

To begin, the Syriac subdivides “the race of humans” into four “races of humans”—barbarians, Greeks, Jews, and Christians (2.2).⁷⁵ Despite formulaic particularities, each ethnicity is introduced by a brief genealogy tracing “the origin of their race/religion from” a particular progenitor(s) (2.2–4). Each ethnic group is constituted by shared participation in a peculiar genealogical stemma replete with its own racial head(s) from whom derives their particular form of cult (and to which corresponds a peculiar ethic; see below).⁷⁶ In the discursive pattern of *Apology* the symbols of race and religion are integrated and mutually constitutive.⁷⁷ To each ethnicity corresponds a religion and vice versa. To participate in Greekness is to practice Greek religion, and to observe Greek forms of worship is to claim Greek

⁷⁵ *Barlaam* parcels the “human race” into a *tripartite* division—“they who worship those called ‘gods’ among you [sc. pagans],” Jews, and Christians. Pagans are further subdivided into Chaldaeans, Greeks, and Egyptians. Alpigiano labels this “[l]e principali differenze” between the versions (*Aristide di Atene. Apologia* [BPatr; Firenze: Centro Internazionale del Libro, 1988] 29). Comparable three- and fourfold divisions are attested elsewhere: Rom 1:14; 1 Cor 1:22–24; 12:13; Gal 3:28; Ps-Hipp. *Elench.* 10.30.6.8; 31.4.6; *CII* 62–63 no. 680a. On the superiority of the fourfold structure in the Oriental witnesses see n. 91; Pouderon, *Aristide*, 150–56, 322–27.

⁷⁶ In each case, the origin of a form of religion is linked to a pattern of ethnic descent from a progenitor. Barbarians trace “the origin of their sort (or, race) of religion from Kronos and from Rhea and the rest of their gods” (ܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ; Armenian reads “the origin of their race”). Though no reference to “their religion” is present for Greeks, the continuation of the idea of ethnoreligious source (as in the barbarians) is clear from the repetition of the ablative preposition (ܗܘܢܘܢ) before the names of Greek ethnic heads beginning with Hellen, who is purportedly born of Zeus (2.2; cf. 9.1), and from the patrilineal connections (cf. ܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ; 2.2). Christians trace “the beginning of their religion from Jesus the Messiah” (ܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ; Armenian reads “the origin of their race”). Only the Jewish genealogy seems at first not to follow this formal ethnoreligious pattern, since it is expressed in terms only of ethnicity (ܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ ܕܩܪܘܢܘܣܘܢ; “the origin of their race from Abraham;” 2.3). However, a religious logic underlines this overt ethnic claim by means of a clear linking of Jewish and Christian ethno-religions through the figure of the Hebrew Messiah, Jesus (on this see below §2.3). The considerably extended treatment of Christian genealogy (2.4) is harnessed to inform the presentation of the Jewish race *and* religion rather than vice versa. The Armenian version consistently classifies the four as “races,” and this may better reflect the original Greek of *Apology*.

⁷⁷ This observation has long been undervalued by scholars of *Apology*. Raabe, for example, relates the Jewish genealogy entirely to the *Volksabstammung* (*Apologie*, 30–31). Alpigiano, on the other hand, overstates the opposite claim, believing the groups are categorized “secondo un criterio esclusivamente religioso” (emphasis added; *Aristide* 18, 137). Such either/or simplifications fail to grapple with the mutually constitutive character of race/ethnicity and religious practice in Graeco-Roman discourse. Recently this has received attention in the works of Denise Kimber Buell, particularly in “Rethinking.”

2.2 Polytheistic Ethnicities: Barbarians and Greeks (Apology 3–13)

Apology 3–13 reviews the polytheistic ethnicities. Aristides begins his program of monotheistic classification with the barbarians, who, “since they did not understand God, went astray after the elements (στοιχεῖα) and began to worship created things instead of their creator” (3.1). He preemptively concludes that barbarian veneration of material elements could only have resulted from ignorance of the true God (3.1; cf. 7.2), and as proof he lambastes (1) the irrationality of barbarian idolatry (ch. 3) and (2) the inherent incompatibility of the natural elements with the divine nature (chs. 4–7).

First, in order to worship deified elements barbarians fashioned images. Herein, Aristides claims, is the great irony of their popular cult, for they subsequently take these images, place them in shrines, and set guards over them lest they be stolen! The barbarians, he clarifies, “did not perceive that whoever guards is greater than that which is guarded and that anyone who creates is greater than that which is created” (3.1).⁸¹ Nor are the errors of popular barbarian religion resolved by their philosophers, who attempts to ground popular idolatry in rational investigation of the elements. The sages fail to understand the fundamentally reducible nature of the elements and thereby err in ascribing deity to images made in honor of the elements (3.2). At the root of this critique lies a categorical confusion in barbarian religion between created and creator, between that which is inferior and the one who is supremely superior, between unstable and reducible elements and the one who is stable and irreducible.

Chapters four through seven are occupied with demonstrating this category confusion. Aristides turns to a discussion of the elements proper “in order that we may demonstrate regarding them that they are not gods, but corruptible and changeable, produced from that which does not exist by the command of the true God, who is incorruptible and unchangeable and invisible. Yet he sees all things and as he wills they change and turn” (4.1 *Ba*). The nature of each element—earth (4.3), water (5.1), fire (5.2), and wind (5.3)—along with that of the planetary objects (sun, moon, stars; 6.1–2; cf. 4.2 *Ba*) and of human beings (7.1) are sequentially articulated as incompatible with the nature of true deity. Some, like earth, water, and fire, are

⁸¹ The logic echoes that of 1.1, where knowledge of a prime Mover was posited because “that which causes movement is stronger than that which is moved.”

subject to the control of man. Others, like wind and the astral objects, are subject most clearly to the command of God. *Yet they are all subject to the dictates of some external agency.* The true God is not! The elements are *ipso facto* disqualified from participating in the divine nature, a point repeated again and again at the end of each paragraph (4.2 *Ba*; 4.3–5.1; 5.2 *Ba*; 5.3–7.1).⁸² The singular barbarian error is the deification and concomitant idolatrous worship of dead elements as though these were gods (cf. 7.2). Both popular and philosophic strands of barbarian religion participate in “great error” (3.1–2).

In chapters eight through twelve Aristides investigates the Greeks “so that we might see what they think concerning God” (8.1). The polemic strategy, spelled out in the opening argument of chapter eight, is more complex than it was for barbarians. Though they regard themselves as wise Greeks have erred more than their barbarian contemporaries because they have (1) “introduced the birth of many gods” and (2) portrayed them in their myths as subject to all manner of passions and transitory conditions such as death, suffering, and debilitating illness (8.1),⁸³ thereby (3) legitimating and perpetuating human immorality and social discord (8.2).

The first two accusations involve the production of mythic ethnographies, to which Aristides appeals in chapters nine to twelve to demonstrate multiplicity of error in Greek religion. Following a terse account of Kronos and Zeus (9.1–2) a series of Greek gods are introduced in turn (10.1–11.6). In nearly every case the text reveals a stereotyped argument corresponding, respectively, to the first two points of his argument set out in chapter eight. After Kronos, the Greeks “introduced”⁸⁴ Zeus “in second place”⁸⁵ and then they “introduced” yet “another god”⁸⁶ and “another god” and “another god” alongside the ones already mentioned (**point 1**). Each newly introduced god possesses some moral or physical defect or performs some action or profession regarded as immoral or inadequate (**point 2**). The first and second points are then discursively linked and each god is declared to be incompatible with the

⁸² This pattern of reasoning is further substantiated for *Apol.* 5.3 and 6.1 in Π¹.

⁸³ 8.1b *Ba* is restored from *DiscBa* §49b, which parallels 8.1 *Sy*.

⁸⁴ Παρεισάγειν in 9.1–11.4 and 11.7 *Ba* is a deliberate echo of 8.1–2 *Ba* where Greeks are chided for introducing (παρεισάγειν) the birth of many gods in their myth-making.

⁸⁵ Δεύτερος. Kronos is god πρὸ πάντων, understood temporally (first) and positionally (primary), though his positional authority was later assumed by Zeus.

⁸⁶ ܠܘܟܝܢ ܠܘܟܝܢ. The Syriac alone phrases the addition of a new god with “another god” (9.2; 10.1–4; 11.1). *Barlaam* harnesses simple additive phrases (δεύτερος, σὺν τούτῳ, εἴτα; the majority are linked by δέ) for a similar non-exclusivity function.

divine nature of *Apology* 1. The connection is made via a question—How is it possible that a “god” be characterized by the aforementioned condition, quality, or behavior?—or statement—It is not possible, etc.⁸⁷ Add to this the absurdity that a “god” should ever have been “introduced” as having an origin, and it is clear the “gods” of Greek historiography are no “gods” at all.

In a second integrated movement, our philosopher points to the power of mythic production (**points 1 and 2**) for informing human ethic (**point 3**). For Aristides, myths are productive sources of human ethic and Greek mythologies are particularly insidious, “for if their gods did such things,” he asks, “how will they not also do such things” (8.2)? Stories of the gods legitimate the perpetuation of human immorality. Yet the issue is further complicated, for mythic accounts are not only productive of human behavior but are themselves the product of human ingenuity. Like the gods they purport to narrate, Greek tales “have been introduced...in accord with the Greeks’ evil lusts, so that having them [sc. gods] as advocates of vice they may commit adultery, robbery, murder and do terrible things” (8.2). Greek myths and the gods they portray are fabrications, products of human imagination constructed with sinister intent to legitimate immoral behavior.

This intricate dialectic begins at the fount of Greek mythopoeic activity, with the epic shortcomings and struggles of their first gods, Kronos and Zeus. The narratives recount the production of children from Kronos (by Rhea), the tale of his consumption of them, and the account of his emasculation, immurement, and overthrow by his son Zeus, so that the latter assumed primacy as king of their gods (9.1–2).⁸⁸ Greek ingenuity does not cease with the brutality “they advance against their god” Kronos (9.1). Zeus’ improprieties extend even further, for the myths recount how he metamorphosed into animal form and sexually exploited women for the production of offspring (9.2). “If he who is said to be the chief and king of their gods does these things,” Aristides asks, “how much more should his worshippers imitate him” (9.3 Sy; sim. *Ba*)? The same obtains in the rest of their mythic accounts, so that Aristides concludes his entire critique as follows: “All these things, King, the Greeks have introduced about their gods, and many similar, even much more obscene and degenerate, things of which it is not right to speak or call to memory at

⁸⁷ Πῶς ἐνδέχεται θεὸν εἶναι τοιοῦτον; πῶς ἂν εἴη θεός; οὐκ ἐνδέχεται θεὸν εἶναι τοιοῦτον; κτλ. At the end of every paragraph from 9.3–11.6!

⁸⁸ There is no discrepancy with Greek genealogy (2.2); cf. nn. 78, 85.

all. Whence humans, taking impulse from their gods, practiced all lawlessness and licentiousness and impiety, defiling earth and air with their brutal acts” (11.7 *Ba*; sim. *Sy*). The miasma engendered by these myths has spawned all manner of wars, slaughters, and captivities (8.2). According to Aristides the socially-ascribed introduction of multiple gods and goddesses, each with his or her own shortcomings, reflects and legitimates human immorality and social discord. And mythopoesy itself is suspect, for with introduction of many “gods” inexorably comes increased occasion for immorality!

Aristides saves his harshest calumny for Egyptians, who beyond the insanity and impiety of Greek and barbarian religions and their gods, “have even introduced” still others. Because they are “more stupid and foolish” than Greeks and barbarians (τούτων),⁸⁹ they did not content themselves with “the deities of barbarians and Greeks” but felt it necessary to deify and worship animals and plants (12.1). Hence, in Aristides’ analysis, Egyptians are “more base” (sc. less moral) and “more stupid” (sc. possessing less knowledge of God) than every nation on earth (12.1; cf. 13.1 *Sy*).⁹⁰ The following critique (12.2–5) augments this analysis and harnesses the same formal structure used against Greek religion. Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris were unable to prevent Tryphon’s fratricide of Osiris, and Tryphon was unable to defend himself against his nephew Horos. Being unable to save themselves, they are unable to save others and cannot be “gods” (12.2–3). Egyptians further “introduced” irrational beasts as gods, animals which daily are unable to prevent their slaughter upon Egyptian cultic altars and are impotent to avoid decay and death (12.4)! They too cannot be gods. A subtle logic underlies the singling out of Egyptians in the broader critique against Greek ethnoreligion (*Apol.* 8–13). *Chapter twelve demonstrates the moral and cultic extremes to which Greek mythopoeic activity can lead.* Greek ingenuity in myth-making spawned continued myth-creation and the “introduction” of even more gods among their consanguine hellenic cousins. And the more “gods” multiply, the more a people’s moral and religious fabric is characterized by error. Egyptians offer the most acute version of Hellenic ethnoreligion⁹¹ and manifest the gravest type of ignorance and immorality (13.1 *Sy*).

⁸⁹ Kataphoric pronoun, pointing to πάντων τῶν ἔθνων immediately following.

⁹⁰ The evaluation against knowledge (μανία; ܡܢܝܐ) and morality (ἀσέλγεια; ܐܫܠܝܓܝܐ) appears in *Barlaam* and the Syriac and comports well with the argument against Greeks.

⁹¹ In the argument of *Apology* 12 Egyptians are treated as a third entity *alongside* barbarians and Greeks. Some claim the threefold subdivision of pagan religion in 2.2 *Ba* (Chaldaeans

Yet what is truly surprising is not the stupidity of the base Egyptians but that Greeks, who surpass all other people in manner of life and reason, have failed to understand the incompatibility of idolatry with true worship (13.1), for the unique God does not require sacrifice or libation as if he had deficiency (cf. 1.2; 13.2). Despite seeing their idols constructed and destroyed the rationally and morally superior Greeks do not recognize the fundamental incompatibility of dead idols with the living deity. Greek poets and philosophers,⁹² too, err in claiming that those idols fabricated in honor of the Most High God (ܘܠܘܗܝܗܘܢ ܘܠܘܗܝܗܘܢ) are gods. Their ignorance is apparent when they attempt to represent their idols in the form of the unseen God and present him as though he had deficiency and was in need of ritual structures like offerings and temples (13.2). Also, their erudite claims that “the nature of all their gods is one” is also in error (13.3–4). Though the text of *Apology* 13.3–4, “sans doute mal conservé, est assez obscur,”⁹³ the force of the argument remains clear. “For if the human body,” Aristides asks, “while consisting of many parts, does not reject any of its own members but, possessing a seamless unity among all its parts, is harmonious with itself, how will there be such strife and discord in the divine nature” (13.3 *Ba*; sim. *Sy*)? Like the human body, the divine nature represents a harmonious unity that cannot accommodate internal strife. And the divine unity offered by Greek intellectuals can hardly be designated “harmonious.” “For if the

[=barbarians], Greeks, and Egyptians) better suits the pattern of *Apology* 3–13 than the Syriac division of barbarians and Greeks (2.2). This is not the case. First, *Apology* permits multiple ascriptive identities, and utilizes a particular ascription in a given context for a variety of reasons. One can be a member of “the race of mankind” (ܘܠܘܗܝܗܘܢ ܘܠܘܗܝܗܘܢ) for contrast with the divine nature (2.1 vs. ch. 1) while simultaneously belonging to one of the four “races of mankind” (ܘܠܘܗܝܗܘܢ ܘܠܘܗܝܗܘܢ) for the purpose of human differentiation. As regards Egyptians and Greeks, we have seen that one may be both Egyptian *and* Greek, since a consanguinity through Hellen is presupposed by *Apology* 2.2 *Sy* (cf. *supra* n. 79). Second, the same logic employed against Greeks is used against Egyptians: they (1) add more gods (Isis, Osiris, animals), (2) each with its own defects, (3) leading to more base defilements. Third, no comparable introductory section heading (e.g., “let us proceed to the Egyptians...”) prefaces the discussion as it does for all other extra-Christian races (3.1; 8.1; 14.1). **In the logic of chapter twelve, Egyptians remain a subset of Greek ethnoreligion.** Why then is Egyptian identity specifically harnessed *alongside* Greek identity for the argument? The text identifies Egyptian religion as *the most extreme example of polytheism* and presents it as the most ignorant and most unethical of systems. Egyptian identity enhances the larger argument that multiplication of gods accompanies more extreme levels of foolishness and ignorance. **Egyptians are separated as an extreme example, not a separate ethnic entity.**

⁹² Does the summation in chapter 13 envision barbarians, Greeks, and Egyptians (13.1 *Ba*) or only Greeks (13.1 *Sy*)? It is difficult to see how the phrase “who surpass all other peoples in their manner of life and reasoning” attributed to Greeks alone in the Syriac, *if authentic*, could be reconciled with *Barlaam*’s approach. *Barlaam* may represent an epitome of chapter thirteen (cf. Pouderon, *Aristide*, 281 n. 1).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 366.

nature of their god was one, one god would not want to pursue or kill or mistreat [another] god. If then gods are pursued, eaten, and kidnapped, and struck down with lightning by [other] gods, there is no longer a single nature but divided wills, all ready to mistreat, so that not one among them is god” (13.3–4 *Ba*; sim. *Sy*)! This argument harnesses the social disjunction among gods of Greek myth (**point 2**) against the quality of their “godness” (**point 1**). Mythic genealogies introduce no real “gods!”

One final point of disparity emerges between Greek mythic production (**points 1 and 2**) and the content of the laws ordering Greek society. “For if their laws are righteous their gods are wholly unrighteous since they have contravened the law..., but if they (gods) were right in doing these things, then their (Greek) laws are unrighteous, since they are framed contrary to their gods” (15.5). By positioning the body of Greek jurisprudence against the social morality engendered by their mythic ethnographies Aristides can argue for disparity at the very heart of two defining structures of Greek ethnicity, their ancestral ethnography and their legal corpus! Greek myths can be of no value, however one chooses to interpret them (13.6). The ethic which their myths produce is fundamentally at odds with the social harmony Greeks seek to create through production of laws.

Apology excludes barbarian and Greek races from knowledge of the unique God. Greeks are particularly singled out in the discursive logic because of the formative and universal influence of their myth-making activity. Through human ingenuity Greek poets “introduced” mythic tales and developed an entire polytheistic historiographic stemma beginning with Kronos, their god $\pi\rho\delta\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\nu$ (9.1),⁹⁴ and Rhea. Barbarians inscribed their collective identity into the myths of this stemma through Kronos, Rhea, and other gods (2.2), though they developed their religion in the direction of deifying the elements. Into this stemma Greeks and Egyptians also inscribed their ethnoreligious identity from Hellen through Zeus. Aristides harnesses a discursive approach to critique the entire polytheistic stemma by attacking the very ethnicity of those who framed the stemma. At the base of Greek ethnicity, he claims, lies a fundamental incoherence in the constitutive social structures that define their peoplehood—ancestral ethnography, cultic system, and body of law. Surely an alternative stemmatic structure exists on which the ideal race, its cult, and morality may be constructed!

⁹⁴ See n. 85.

2.3 Monotheistic Ethnicities: Jews and Christians (*Apology* 14–16)

Apology 14–16 reviews the monotheistic ethnicities, though discussion of Jews and Christians begins with the genealogies of chapter two. After initially producing a polytheistic ethnography, the Syriac sets forth the ethnographic foundations for the monotheistic races (2.3–4). Jews stem from the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their twelve sons, and their lawgiver from whom they received the title “the race of the Hebrews” (ܘܚܘܪܝܢܐ) and were eventually called Jews (2.3). The overview of (Hebrew-)Jewish origins is strikingly odd in the context. There is no mention of “their religion” as we have for barbarians, Greeks,⁹⁵ and Christians, and even more striking, no reference to their God! No religious framework is established on which recipients of *Apology* could be, even briefly, introduced to Jewish *religious* claims (ancient or contemporary). Granted, chapter two is preparatory to the lengthier discussion on the respective theologies of the races later in *Apology*, yet absence of even cursory mention of these elements for the Jews is surprising though simply enough explained. The considerably extended treatment of Christian genealogy (2.4) is harnessed to inform the presentation of the Jewish race rather than vice versa.

The Syriac attests *explicit* connections between (Hebrew-)Jews and Christians through the figure of “Jesus the Christ,”⁹⁶ the eponymous head of the Christian race and Son of the Most High God. These are subtly present already in 2.4, where the elements “taught in the gospel” are set out. The gospel comprises a collection of motifs common to early Christian kerygma and creedal expressions—the title “the Messiah” (ܡܫܝܚܐ; cf. 17.3 Sy) applied to Jesus, his birth “from a Hebrew virgin” (ܘܡܝܢ ܘܝܪܝܢܐ ܗܘܪܝܢܐ; Isa 7:14; cf. Matt 1:23), his origin “of the tribe of the Hebrews” (ܘܡܝܢ ܘܚܘܪܝܢܐ; Gen 49:10; Mic 5:2), his being pierced by the Jews (Zech 12:10; 13:3),⁹⁷ as well as his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (themes related to OT prophecy/events in primitive

⁹⁵ Cf. n. 76.

⁹⁶ Lit. “Jesus the Messiah” (ܝܫܘܥ ܡܫܝܚܐ), a translation which retains the primitive nature of the reference (cf. 15.7–8: “their Messiah”). The Syriac represents a translation from Greek (ὁ) Χριστός (cf. 15.7 Π²; 15.1, 7 Ba); see further Harris (*Apology*, 54–55 n. 20) and Pouderon (*Aristide*, 328).

⁹⁷ Cf. John 19:37; Acts 2:36; Rev 1:7; Justin *Dial.* 16.4; Harris, *ibid.* 13–15, 55–56 n. 6.

Christian kerygma).⁹⁸ Here we see a mixture of bioethnic and religious elements, which serve to establish an early distance from the Jewish race, while simultaneously providing subtle elements of religious proximity between Jews and Christians.

Proximity first becomes apparent in the application to Jesus of the specifically Jewish religio-political titular “the Messiah.” The term is not simply absorbed into the name of Jesus but focuses overtly on his messianic role and fulfillment of explicitly Jewish messianic expectation. It is further reported that Jesus’ nativity was “from a Hebrew virgin” and again that he was “born of the tribe of the Hebrews.”⁹⁹ Claims to Jesus’ Hebrew lineage are intentional and overt, coming as they do immediately on the heels of the (Hebrew-)Jewish ethnography. They highlight the connection of the Christian ethnic head to the Jewish race. Another link comes in reference to Jesus’ death. Though himself a Hebrew, Jesus was “pierced” by the Jews (see below). Further conceptual contact may be drawn between the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve disciples of Jesus. Like the Jewish patriarchs, Jesus too “sired” his own twelve sons who became the basis for the Christian race.¹⁰⁰ There is then no simple biogenetic description of Jesus’ pedigree (as we have for the Jewish race). His birth, ministry, and death are connected to the (Hebrew-)Jewish race and are quite clearly interpreted theologically in terms of messianism (“the Messiah”) and christology (“assumed and clothed himself with flesh,” “the Son of God,” etc.). Not all of these genetic and theological links are positive with respect to the Jews, yet their combined value is to establish the ethnic identity and consequently the *ethnoreligious heritage* of Jesus as Hebrew (sc. of the same patrilineage as those called Jews). *Ipsa facto* Christians are located as offspring of Jewish ethnoreligion. This historiography portrays both Christians and Jews as adherents to the same God, “the Most High God” (cf. 2.4), joining them in a monotheistic genealogical stemma (see further below).

Regardless of these proximate connections, chapter two still establishes an early distance between Jews and Christians. The text ascribes Jews and Christians as

⁹⁸ Luke 24:25–27; 1 Cor 15:3–4; ascension: Acts 2:34; cf. John 6:62; 20:17. Harris, *ibid.* 24–25; Pouderon, *Aristide*, 66–68, 382–85.

⁹⁹ The phrases occur in the Armenian too and are likely original (cf. Robinson in Harris, *Apology*, 78–79). Pouderon’s suggestion that “Hebrew” bears ethnic value while “Jew(s)” connotes religious affiliation (*ibid.*, 327–28; cf. 58) is unconvincing. The distinction fits 2.4 Sy yet is unclear in 2.3 Sy, where “Hebrew race” assumes religious significance since it is so named by its “lawgiver” (a religio-political term in antiquity).

¹⁰⁰ “Hebrews,” “Jews,” and “twelve” provide the only explicit lexical connections between 2.3 and 2.4.

different “races.” The application of the boundary term “race” to both groups demarcates Jews and Christians as distinct, yet, as we observed, importantly related to the same God. It is Jesus who stands at the center of all Christian-Jewish disjunction. Indeed the seemingly harshest evaluation of Judaism in the Syriac is the almost fleeting comment that the head of the Christian religion was “pierced” by his own people—without reference to the Romans.¹⁰¹ Attribution of Jesus’ death to the Jews occurs in Oriental (2.4 Sy, Ar) and Greek recensions (14.2b; 15.1 *Ba*) and must have been present in *Apology*. There is no question that the “piercing” of Jesus cannot be a simple, disinterested recapitulation of historical events, since the whole of 2.4 constitutes a theological interpretation of the life of Jesus and his disciples. In the context of chapter two it serves as the clearest boundary sign demarcating the two ethno-religions, and this delineation centers specifically on their respective response to the person of Jesus. Viewed in light of the entirety of the work, however, any inherently anti-Jewish force to the Jewish homicide of the Syriac is mollified by the prior admission of Jesus’ own Jewishness (2.4) and by a rather favorable portrait of Jewish monotheism and ethic which we will see in chapter fourteen.¹⁰² The motif does not represent a necessarily hostile evaluation of the Jewish race but is best understood as a primitive interpretation of Jesus’ death at the hands of Jews couched in terms of accommodation to the prophetic and messianic language of Zech 12:10 and 13:3.¹⁰³

The ethnographies of *Apology* 2.3–4 inscribe Christians and Jews into a single monotheistic family tree, while carefully distinguishing them as regards their relation to the person of Jesus. After description of barbarians and Greeks (chs. 3–13) *Apology* turns again to Jews and Christians in chapters fourteen through sixteen. The text is surprising in its approbation of much contemporary Jewish religion. In 14.3a Jewish monotheistic ideology and confession is lauded—belief in

¹⁰¹ Was Aristides remiss to have Jesus condemned by a civil tribunal? Cf. Pouderon, *Aristide*, 190 n. 1.

¹⁰² Particularly, ethical similarity between Jews and Christians (14.3b; 15.4–9) renders it more plausible to understand the attribution of Messiah’s “piercing” to the Jews (2.4g Sy) not as a necessarily negative moral valuation of the Jews in terms of a single corporate entity but as implicating a particular group of Jewish homicides acting unknowingly in accordance with prophetic fulfillment.

¹⁰³ Cf. MT (ךקך: Zech 12:10; 13:3) and *Apology* Syriac (ܘܩܪܝܢܘܢ). The Syriac probably reflects Greek ἐκκεντέω, common in Christian tradition (cf. John 19:37; Rev 1:7; Justin *Dial.* 14.8; 32.2; 64.7; 118.1) and attested in LXX “revisions” building on earlier traditions (α’, θ’, σ’ [ἐπεκέντεω]); Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, vol. 13: Duodecim Prophetiae* [3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984] 319, apparatus).

the one Almighty God who created all things and the call to exclusive devotion to that one God rather than to his works. The presentation demonstrates awareness of two key Jewish religious markers—the confessions (...ܘܥܘܠܘܢ ܘܥܘܠܘܢ ܘܥܘܠܘܢ) of the *Shema* (ܘܥܘܠܘܢ ܘܥܘܠܘܢ ܘܥܘܠܘܢ; Deut 6:4) and of exclusivist monotheistic worship (cf. Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7). “In this,” he opines, the Jews “are much nearer to the truth than all the peoples, in that they worship God more exceedingly and not his works.”¹⁰⁴ This sympathetic admission is startling in light of Aristides’ stated goal of evaluating the human race “in order to know which of them participate in the truth” (2.1)! Jewish religious confession and obligations of exclusivist monotheism contrast directly with pagan religions whose materialistic worship precludes them from worshipping the unique creator! Jewish participation in truth also extends to their ethic. The Syriac provides a favorable commentary on Jewish morality (14.3b).¹⁰⁵ Jews “imitate God” by their beneficence and compassion towards humanity, things which are “acceptable to God” (!) and “well-pleasing also to men.” They provide for the poor, ransom the captive, bury the dead, and other like acts. This superior morality they received from their ancestors (cf. 2.3). Jewish morality contrasts directly with that legitimated in the mythic structures of the pagan religions!

In the Syriac, Jewish monotheistic belief and ethical practice prove powerful elements of discontinuity with pagan religions. In this regard contemporary Jews are adopted as monotheistic coreligionists and coparticipants in truth with Christians. Jews and Christians share the ideal of exclusivist monotheistic devotion, for Christians too believe in one creator God “to whom there is no other god as companion” (15.3b). The element of ethical continuity between Christians and Jews is unmistakable, as the particularities of Christian ethic presented in 15.4–9 are strikingly parallel to and modeled upon the lineaments of Jewish ethic in 14.3b.¹⁰⁶ Scholars have described the attitude towards Judaism in the Syriac text as “surprising,” “Jewish-friendly,” “very favorable,” bearing “no trace of ill-feeling to the Jews,” “rather mild,” and lacking “every severity of tone, every anti-Jewish polemic.”¹⁰⁷ This favorable valuation is evident in 14.3 where *Apology* presents a

¹⁰⁴ This concept is altogether absent from *Barlaam*, in which the Jewish people have excised themselves entirely from the truth (14.4a).

¹⁰⁵ Unparalleled in *Barlaam*.

¹⁰⁶ G.C. O’Ceallaigh, “‘Marcianus’ Aristides, On the Worship of God,” *HTR* 51 (1958): 249–50; Geffcken, *Apologeten*, XXXIX–XL; Harris, *Apology*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Respectively, Harris, *ibid.*; Raabe, *Apologie*, 57; Hennecke, “Zur Frage,” 94; Kay, “Apology,” 261; Geffcken, *ibid.*, 82; and Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-*

fundamental coherence between the ideals of Jewish **exclusivist monotheism** and Jewish **moral law**.¹⁰⁸ The Jewish race shares with the Christian race the coherence of these motifs. Jewish *and* Christian **ethical worship** is regulated by moral precepts which they received, respectively, “from their fathers of old” (14.3 Sy) and from Jesus the Messiah (15.8 Sy). The ultimate origin of these precepts is the one God, who requires “neither sacrifice nor libation” nor any cultic dictate involving sensible elements (1.2) but rather spiritual service and concern for fellow persons (1.2 Sy, Ar).¹⁰⁹ Charity and philanthropy towards others is the form of worship most consistent with the transcendent, self-sufficient nature of the unique God. Shared Judeo-Christian ethic is necessarily *a monotheistic ethic*. In following the moral law of “their fathers” Jews “imitate” the unique God through their philanthropy and thereby participate with Christians in true knowledge of him (14.3; cf. 15.3–9).¹¹⁰

Even within an aggregative ethnic strategy, however, some difference between aggregated groupings must be maintained. According to the Syriac what differentiates Jews from Christians is the incoherence of the ideals of Jewish **exclusivist monotheism** and Jewish **ritual law**. Jewish participation in truth is only partial. In actual **ritual worship** Jews have “gone astray from accurate knowledge” (14.4a). When they practice their ritual laws, the text claims Jewish service is directed towards angels (14.4b). We are not informed as to how observance of time-honored Jewish religious institutions such as sabbaths, feasts, festivals, fasts, circumcision, and dietary laws is related to heavenly mediator figures.¹¹¹ *Apology* simply assumes the two motifs interface and further states that Jews do not observe ritual obligations perfectly (14.4b). These qualifications place a check on the approbation of Jewish ethical worship in 14.3,¹¹² and there is an underlying logic to

Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.-11. Jh.) (2 vols.; EuH: Reihe 23, Theologie; Band 172; 4th rev. ed.; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999) 1.179.

¹⁰⁸ *Apology* itself partitions Jewish worship into “imitation of God” (morality; 14.3b Sy) and “the methods of their practices” (cultic ritual; 14.4b Sy). Only the former is “acceptable to God and well-pleasing to men.”

¹⁰⁹ The nature of true worship must agree with the creative munificence of God who made all material things “for the sake of humanity” (n. 70). Material culture serves humans, not God, who has no need of oblations and temples (13.2 Sy).

¹¹⁰ For Aristides ethics occupies a more significant portion of his description of Christians than does theology. Pouderon speaks of a “primauté des actes” and notes, “ce qui forme la caractère propre de la religion d’Aristide, c’est son fondement moral” (*Aristide*, 71, 69).

¹¹¹ This probably refers to the continued observance of Mosaic (ritual) law and Jewish cult understood as mediated by angels; cf. Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2.

¹¹² Pouderon’s comment is apropos: 14.4 “permet de relativiser la portée d’*Apol.* 14.3a Sy+Ba, qui attribue aux Juifs la connaissance et le culte du Dieu unique, en insistant sur le fait que

them. Jewish cultic regulations impose the restrictions and trappings of material culture (i.e., temporal regulations, bodily restrictions) on the worship of God and are fundamentally incompatible with the self-sufficient divine nature which requires service of a more spiritual and ethical quality. A ritual system so materialistically encumbered simply cannot be directed towards the one true God, who has no need of created things, but must be addressed to another figure(s). Along these discursive lines Aristides had already excluded the objects of pagan ritual from participating in the divine nature. The same applies here. The object(s) of the Jewish style of ritual worship cannot be the unique God. Yet Jews participate in the monotheistic stemma and cannot worship the “many gods” of pagan ethnographies. The claim that they worship angels is then *a necessary one* in the logic of *Apology*. Aristides admits as much, for even Jews themselves are unaware they direct their worship to angels! They confess “that God is one” (14.3a Sy) and “suppose in their minds that they are serving God, but in the methods of their [cultic] practices,” in the observance of materially-bound ritual imposed by their legal code, Aristides himself knows that “their service is to angels and not to God” (14.4a Sy). Jews are not chided for *knowingly* venerating angels but for misrepresenting the nature of the unique God through the material apparatus of their ritual law and thereby *unknowingly* misdirecting their worship of the unique God to angels.¹¹³ At the interface of these constitutive elements of Jewish ethnicity, ritual law and monotheistic ideals, Jews “have gone astray from accurate knowledge” (14.4a Sy).

Not so Christians, who “have found the truth,” or rather, “have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations” (15.3). In his messianic role¹¹⁴ the Christian lawgiver, Jesus, revealed from God a new system of precepts regulating Christian monotheistic worship (15.3). Messianic law harmonizes **ritual worship** and **ethical worship** in a manner consistent with the self-sufficient nature of the unique God. Material objects exist “for human benefit” and are incompatible

certaines de leurs pratiques sont erronées, témoignant ainsi de l'imperfection de la connaissance qu'ils ont de Dieu” (“Aristide et les Juifs. À propos d'*Apol.* 14,2 Ba.,” StPatr 36 [Leuven: Peeters, 2001] 83).

¹¹³ Reference to “their (ritual) service” directed to angels *in contrast to* God (لصلاة الملائكة) indicates angel veneration. Yet far from providing evidence of actual angel-veneration, the logic of *Apology* infers the opposite. Jews themselves seem quite content in their monotheistic confessions and their intent to worship the unique God, blissfully ignorant of the fact they *actually* worship angels in their ritual practice! *Apology*'s acknowledgement that Jews worship (سجدوا) God “and not his works” (14.3a) refers to their monotheistic confession and intent but also to their ethical worship, which is *consciously* in “imitation” of God.

¹¹⁴ Note repetition of “the Messiah” in 15.4–16.3 Sy.

with the self-sufficiency of the creator who has no need of being worshipped by means of calendrical, food, and bodily regulations.¹¹⁵ The “law of the Christians” (16.1 Sy) contains no ritual strictures regulating such material worship of God. The text makes no mention of Christian *ritual practices* which might be comparable to those of the Jews (15.3–9).¹¹⁶ Rather, Christians daily offer service to God by meeting the needs of others. They reappropriate material objects to their rightful place within the scope of monotheistic worship, for meeting human insufficiency. Philanthropy (love of neighbor) alone becomes the new law which fuses ritual and ethic in pure, undifferentiated worship of the unique God, proceeding from the heart in eschatological hope (15.3). Christians are then the only ones to truly worship the one God alone with a worship that rightly harmonizes morality *and* ritual (cf. 17.3)!¹¹⁷

2.4 Evaluation

In his *Apology* Aristides engages in a strategy of monotheistic classification. He investigates four “races” of people “to perceive which among them participates in truth and which in error” regarding the unique God (2.1). This is no simple empirical exercise. Aristides recognizes the power of literary ethnographic production in constructing a people’s collective identity (cf. esp. *Apol.* 8–13), and *he inscribes his own polemically-useful ethnographies*. Harnessing a mode of “ethnic reasoning,” he ascribes three different symbol systems with constitutive power in the production of a people’s collective identity *qua* ethnos: myth of shared descent, cultic worship, and

¹¹⁵ See nn. 70 and 109.

¹¹⁶ Christian fasting is no exception, for it is repatriated from the mandates of Jewish ritual law to messianic ritual-moral code! Christians fast only “two or three days” at a time, as need requires, “to supply to the needy their lack of food” (15.7 Sy)! Christian food restrictions (15.4: “they do not eat food sacrificed to idols”) is repositioned away from the rigors of Jewish “purification” laws (ostensively in service of God) and joined with the prohibition against idol worship, as an explicit statement of the unique God’s self-sufficiency vis-à-vis the insufficiency of pagan “gods” (chs. 3–13).

¹¹⁷ In the Syriac Jesus is nowhere *explicitly* stated as object of Christian cultic devotion as he is in *Barlaam* (15.3b). His heavenly origin is affirmed (2.4 Sy; 15.1 *Ba*). He is once declared to be God (2.4b Sy), yet the absence of this latter qualification in the Armenian and the parallel passage in *Barlaam* (15.1) make it likely the attribution represents a later expansion. Lack of emphasis on Jesus in cultic connection is consistent with the monotheistic program of Christian apologists (Joseph Lortz, “Das Christentum als Monotheismus in den Apologien des zweiten Jahrhunderts,” in A.M. Koeniger, ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte des christlichen Altertums* [Bonn and Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder, 1922] 301–27). Christian worship is directed exclusively to the one God (in accord with messianic law). The Syriac makes no attempt to reconcile the second figure, Son of the Most High God, with confession of God’s uniqueness (15.3b). Mentioning devotion to Jesus might have been, after all, too similar to the rebuke against Jewish angel devotion (14.4b)!

legal code. He then indexes sameness and difference between Christians and other races on the basis of these mutually constitutive ethnic criteria as they interface with the criteria of knowledge of the unique God (*Apol.* 1). The more these interlocking ethnic systems tangibly cohere within a society's social structures, the closer that group (*qua* ethnos) participates in "knowledge" of God. Conversely, the greater their incoherence, the greater a people's "ignorance" of God. Monotheism (divine unity *and* uniqueness) proves an important criterion for ethnic comparison because a people's belief about the divine nature is intertwined (reflectively and productively) with ethnographic accounts of their shared origin as an ethnos, from which their laws and cult are established.

The Syriac text of *Apology* separates barbarians and Greeks, on one side, from Jews and Christians, on the other. The former participate in devotion to many "gods," whether elements, idols, or animals. They ascribe their ethnoreligious heritage from Kronos and Rhea in a genealogical stemma produced through human mythopoeic activity. Their myths have "introduced" many gods each with his or her own moral or qualitative failings, excluding them from the divine nature.¹¹⁸ Further, strife among the gods is incompatible with divine unity. These "gods" are no "gods" at all, and cult to them is illegitimate. Pagan theogonies legitimate human immorality, which in turn contradicts the people's own civic laws. Pagan ethnicities are then constructed on polytheistic mythic systems incompatible with true "knowledge" of the divine nature. Pagans and Greeks are "ignorant" and "in error." By demonstrating the incoherence between their ethnic foundation myths and their cultic practices and legal codes, the Athenian philosopher offers a comprehensive ethnic argument against polytheistic races. Their status as harmonious and coherent peoples is compromised by the very myths that shape and reflect their ethnic identity.

Jews and Christians participate in shared descent from Abraham, confess a single creator God, and practice a common philanthropy based on essentially identical systems of moral law revealed through their respective lawgivers and consistent with the self-sufficient divine nature. Both participate (to differing degrees) in true knowledge of God. Yet what distinguishes Christians and Jews is the character of their ritual worship as it interfaces with their juridical code. Unbeknownst to themselves Jews worship angels because their ritual regulations,

¹¹⁸ Against barbarians *Apology* harnesses only this aspect of the larger argument, yet barbarians are inscribed into the theogonies fabricated by erudite Greeks and are subject to similar indictments.

performed ostensibly in service to (i.e., on behalf of) God, cannot actually be directed to the self-sufficient God who requires no such materially-based worship. **Only Christians possess a harmonious fusion of cult and law consistent with the character of the unique God revealed by the eponymous head of their race.** Christians “have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations” (15.3).

Apology invokes a twofold strategy vis-à-vis the Jewish race. First, Aristides aligns or **aggregates** Christian and Jewish peoples in an ethnographic account of shared kinship. The lawgiver and founder of the Christian race was himself a Hebrew, and his birth, ministry, and death are interwoven with the story of the Jewish people (2.4 Sy, Ar). Writing to as large an audience as possible, the Athenian philosopher situates the emergence of Christianness within a long-standing, explicitly monotheistic historiography. The “new” Christian people (16.3 Sy: *ἡ ἀλλοτρίη...ἐκείνη*) are not so new after all, for they share with Jews a wider kinship. Identification with a well-known ethnic community with respectable ancestral traditions represents a bid to enhance Christian social respectability as a recognized ethnicity among the world’s races. The creation of an ethnographic history enfranchises Christians within a recognizable monotheistic historical tradition, entirely separate from that of the polytheistic races. An aggregative ethnic strategy allows Aristides to construct Christian peoplehood in terms of the specifically superior elements of the Jewish ancestral tradition, their moral law and their monotheistic cult, as these were grounded in a shared account of consanguinity. In qualifying only the moral aspect of Jewish monotheistic worship as *ancestral* (14.3b Sy: “from their fathers of old”), Aristides can identify Christians with the best of Jewish heritage (monotheism and moral law).

The point at which ethnic difference most clearly emerges between the monotheistic races is the intersection of their monotheistic ideals (embedded in their ethnography) and ritual code. By inscribing Christian identity under a new lawgiver whose messianic role involved the perfect fusion of moral and ritual worship of the unique God in eschatological hope, Aristides can repudiate that aspect of Jewish ethnicity which he regards as jeopardizing divine uniqueness and self-sufficiency (Jewish ritual law). Precisely at this point Aristides harnesses a **universalizing** strategy. He distinguishes the Christian ethnos as the race *par excellence*, the ideal ethnos, to which all other peoples should aspire to participate (17.3 Sy; sim. *Ba*). Only Christian society governed by messianic law perfectly fuses worship of the

unique God in service of humanity under a harmonious account of shared descent. Hence, only through the prayers of the Christian race does human society not descend into chaotic disarray (16.6 Sy). He dissociates Christians from well-known Jewish practices with little appeal to outsiders (e.g., circumcision!) and highlights the most appealing aspect of Christian ethnicity, monotheistically-oriented philanthropy and social harmony. By harnessing a category crucial for Jewish and pagan identity (ancestral law)¹¹⁹ and invoking important Graeco-Roman aspirations for social harmony, Aristides constructs Christian identity in immanently attractive terms. *Apology* appeals to as large an audience as possible, exhorting outsiders to adopt a new peoplehood, to forsake the polytheistic family or Jewish monotheism in favor of Christian ethnicity by adopting Christ as one's lawgiver and ethnic head.¹²⁰

3. Classification Strategies and Repositioning Jewishness

KP and *Apology* employ monotheistic classification strategies to schematize human groups. Both explicit categorization schemas begin by describing the nature of the one God (*Exhortation* fr. 2; *Apology* 1). Only then are human collectivities indexed against the same fundamental criterion—"knowledge" of that God. Yet in both cases this important criterion interacts in differing permutations with other constitutive criterion/a. For *KP*, knowledge of God is measured in relation to a group's manner of cultic worship. The two criteria are mutually constitutive of a group's θεοσέβεια, their cultic participation in knowledge of the unique creator God.¹²¹ In *Apology*, knowledge of God is interlinked with ethnoracial criteria—a group's myth of shared descent, cultic worship, and legal code. The more harmonious these interlocking ethnic symbols cohere as integrated social structures

¹¹⁹ Cf. Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (HCS 31; Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1999) 91–92.

¹²⁰ Description of Christianness along ethnoracial lines is a rhetorical strategy attested elsewhere in second-century Christian sources (*Diogn.* 1.1; *Barn.* 13.1–3; *Melito Apol.* [Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.5]; *Mart. Pol.* 3.2; 14.1; 17.1; *1 Clem.* 29.1–30.1; *Herm. Sim.* 9.17), likely developed in conversation with pagan (pejorative) depictions of Christians as a new or third "race" (Suetonius *Nero* 16.2; Origen *Cels.* 5.35; Tertullian *Nat.* 1.8; Harnack, *Mission*, 1.240–78). Religious practice constituted a marker *inter alia* for articulating ethnoracial (and civic) affiliation in the Graeco-Roman world. For many "race" was considered fixed (given, stable) yet potentially fluid (mutable) and not inherently tied to biology. Consequently, alternative ethnic identity could be acquired (or constructed) by adopting new religious beliefs and practices, a point on which Aristides capitalized. Buell has highlighted the importance of reclaiming "ethnic reasoning" for reimagining early Christian identity construction ("Rethinking;" "Race and Universalism;" *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2005]).

¹²¹ See nn. 26–27.

in a society, the closer a group (*qua* ethnos) can be said to participate in knowledge of the unique God. In both texts, the multivalent term γένος holds a specific taxonomizing import, yet couched within distinctive modes of discursive reasoning. *KP* manifests a specifically “cultic reasoning” with Christians presented as a “third way” of worshipping (τρίτῳ γένει) the unique God.¹²² *Apology*, on the other hand, invokes a mode of “ethnic reasoning” with Christians presented as one of “four races” (ἑξ ἑσθῶν ἡρώδου... ἑσθῶν [=γένη]).

These discursive strategies each masks its own distinct social concerns for using the symbol of the unique God in construction of Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism.¹²³ *KP* employs “cultic reasoning” in an **oppositional, universalizing** strategy with respect to Jewish religion. It encodes for an Egyptian (?) Christian audience a distinct cultic identity as the ideal religion most consistent with the nature of the unique God vis-à-vis the universe of Jewish angelo-lunar religious practices and the idolatry and zoolatry of Greek religion. The text roots Christian identity in a comprehensive epistemology which reassigns the relative values of revelatory knowledge versus ancestral tradition in the quest for authentic understanding of God. This theory of knowledge legitimates the “newness” of Christian faith so that the recipient community is emboldened in its monotheistic mission to Jews and pagans, and can counter Jewish and pagan claims to “know” the unique God through established ancestral traditions. Christian faith is the ideal cult to which all others should aspire, since it is based on revealed religious practices from the distinctly authoritative revealer figure, Jesus. Jews and Greeks may escape “ignorance” and embrace “knowledge” of God through the revelation of Christ Jesus mediated through apostolic tradition.

Apology harnesses “ethnic reasoning” in an **aggregative, universalizing** strategy with respect to the Jewish race. By aligning Christian and Jewish races in a myth of shared descent from the one God, *Apology* can separate revealed monotheistic traditions from the common mythic origins of the polytheistic races and can identify the best of Jewish monotheistic tradition (specifically its theology and

¹²² As Harnack (*Mission*, 1.247), Kinzig (*Novitas Christiana*, 146–47), and Cambe (*Kerygma*, 266–69) correctly observed. The groupings are described as modes of worship: “σέβεσθε κατὰ τοὺς Ἕλληνας,” “σέβεσθε κατὰ Ἰουδαίους,” and “οἱ καινῶς αὐτὸν τρίτῳ γένει σεβόμενοι Χριστιανοί.”

¹²³ Collective identity is necessarily constituted in reference to “other” identities. See Jonathan Z. Smith, “What a Difference a Difference Makes,” in Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., “*To See Ourselves as Others See Us*”: *Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985) 3–48.

moral law) with Christian tradition. Alternatively, by distinguishing Christian descent from that of the Jews through a new messianic lawgiver-revealer figure, Jesus, who brings about a convergence of ritual and ethical worship, Aristides is able to present Christians not only as the best of the monotheistic tradition but as the *ethnos par excellence*. *Apology* offers appeal to a wide Jewish and pagan audience to forsake Jewish monotheism and pagan polytheism, respectively, in favor of a new myth of shared descent from the Most High God through Jesus, the one who accurately revealed him.

These strategies reveal some of the schematic variety employed by early Christian communities vis-à-vis Jewish groups in ordinating Christians within their social world, and they share one important similarity. Whether negotiating the meaning of Christianness oppositionally (*KP*) or aggregatively (*Apology*) with respect to Jews, Christian literary production of monotheistic classification strategies situates Christian collective identity within the global framework of cults and ethnicities in a way that necessarily repositions the meaning of Jewishness along specifically monotheistic lines.

In the Second Temple era and beyond some Jewish communities were engaged in their own programs of literary production to construct their corporate identity (*qua* ethno-religion) vis-à-vis “hellenism.” In this process they too used discursive processes of cultic and ethnic reasoning.¹²⁴ And claims to exclusivist monotheism played an important role in the bid to assert Jewishness in terms of both cult and ethnicity.¹²⁵ By insinuating Christianity alongside already-extant Jewish strategies of identity production by means of ethnic and religious discursive reasoning, these Christian texts reposition Jewish identity and its monotheism within these broader patterns of discourse.¹²⁶ In the case of *KP*, Jewish cultic identity is realigned *away from their own* public and apologetic claims of exclusivist monotheistic worship *to a Christianly constructed schema* in which they are regarded as worshippers of a comprehensive religion joining angels, moon, and month. No longer encoded as consistent with true monotheistic worship, materially-based Jewish religion is repositioned as incompatible with true “knowledge” of the

¹²⁴ Lieu, “Race of God-fearers;” Cohen, “Beginnings,” 109–39.

¹²⁵ *Infra* ch. 2 §§2–3.

¹²⁶ Production of ethnic and religious identity in terms of mythologic ethnographies was an important discursive technique in second-century Greek milieux and polemic (Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 65–66).

unique creator God, whose authentic nature was revealed by Jesus Christ. In *Apology*, Jewish public and apologetic claims of exclusivist monotheism and harmonious peoplehood are upheld as ideals shared by Christians. Yet at the same time the Jewish race is repositioned *away from their own* monotheistic cultic ideals *to a Christianly constructed schema* in which their ritual practice is revalued as inconsistent with the true self-sufficient nature of the unique creator God, who was revealed by the messianic lawgiver. *Apology* repositions the only monotheistic race which existed prior to Christians into second place among monotheistic ethnicities.

Christian monotheistic classification strategies are bids to develop collective Christian identity by repositioning Jewishness along the lines of one of its most treasured symbol systems, confession and cult of the unique creator God! These strategies realign Jews *away from their own* ascriptive identity as participants in true “knowledge” of God *to a Christianly-constructed* schema which images Jews as “ignorant” of the unique God (*KP*) or as less-knowledgeable of his nature than Christians (*Apology*). In both *KP* and *Apology*, Jesus played an important role in this repositioning of Judaism as the revealer of the unique God. Jesus was constitutive in both strategies for separating Christian “knowledge” from Jewish lack of knowledge. In the next chapter we will see how the person of Jesus was even further an important symbol in Christian “two powers” rereadings of Jewish monotheistic scriptural traditions.

Chapter Five

Rereading Jewish Traditions: The Emergence of “Two Powers” Hermeneutic Strategies

In the previous two chapters we examined two distinctive strategies in which the symbols and rhetoric of monotheism are harnessed as powerful tools in the construction of distinctively Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism. For Ignatius (ch. 3), divine unity is a weapon for resisting “Judaism.” Frequent participation in the eucharist under divinely-authorized episcopal authority regularly reconstitutes the harmonious fabric of “Christian” life, lived as reflection and imitation of the unity shared by God and Jesus in the gospel. Participation in unity with God and one another through the sacramental meal is socially effective for producing specifically “Christian” identity vis-à-vis the anti-gospel influences of those who preach or practice “Judaism” in the church. Monotheistic classification strategies (ch. 4) invoke monotheistic ideology and rhetoric in a literary process which lays claim to Christian identity by repositioning Judaism within the global ethnoreligious framework. *KP* and *Apology* use strategic discursive strategies to ordinate Christians in the religious and ethnic universe alongside Jews and others. By distinguishing human groupings on the basis of their “knowledge” of the one God, these texts secure the place of monotheism as a constitutive element in the production and perpetuation of Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism.

This chapter examines a third strategy of monotheistic identity construction. We investigate two texts that invoke creative, hermeneutic approaches to reread Jewish scriptural traditions of exclusivist monotheism in new, specifically Christian ways. Aristo of Pella’s *Disputation of Jason and Papiscus* (hereafter *JP*; §1) and Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* (§2) maintain confessions of exclusivist monotheism, yet they also evince a (pre-interpretive) worldview in which a second heavenly figure, Jesus, stands in some cooperative relationship to the almighty creator God of OT scripture. Through creative hermeneutical efforts, Aristo and Justin shape and integrate their “two powers”¹ worldview into the text of OT

¹ The phrase does not imply that all such “two powers” readings designated Christ or God as “power” (though, see Mark 14:62; 1 Cor 1:24; Herm. *Vis.* 1.3.4; cf. Herm. *Sim.* 5.6.1, 4; Justin *Dial.* 61.1–3; Clement *Strom.* 7.2.7.4). The phrase mimics rabbinic usage. The rabbis polemicized against certain *minim* who posited “two powers in heaven,” whether those powers were conceived cooperatively or oppositionally. By using a rabbinic phrase we are not implying that “two powers” designates only Christians. It was “a catch-all term for many different groups—including Christians,

scripture, specifically by insinuating Jesus into OT narrative texts alongside the creator God.

These efforts, however, are much more than mere readings. They represent conscious strategies to create a specifically Christian interpretive identity by rereading traditionally Jewish texts (§3). Both *JP* and *Dialogue* demonstrate awareness that the Hebrew scriptures (*qua* Jewish scriptures) are the only proper locus for Christian–Jewish dispute. Their “two powers” readings are positioned within a dialogic framework of polemic disputation with Jews. There is a clear sense in both cases that what the text presents as “traditional” Jewish readings are being supplanted (i.e., reread) by more authoritative readings. Additionally, *JP* and *Dialogue* occupy pivotal moments in the story of second-century Christian literary production. Though some “two powers” texts had already entered the tradition as inherited *testimonia*, the shape of “two powers” textual encoding in these two works is anything but standard. In their own unique ways, *JP* and *Dialogue* evince a certain literary creativity in using “two powers” texts. This suggests their strategies were creatively developed at important historical moments for the establishment of Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism. In the following discussion, we show how each text represents a creative moment of “two powers” rereading of Jewish scriptural traditions for the purpose of producing a Christian interpretive identity.

1. “Two Powers” Wisdom Christology: *Disputation of Jason and Papiscus*

JP represents the earliest example of a Christian literary genre newly emerging in the second century, the Christian-Jewish dialogue.² In this section we examine extant evidence for this early source and suggest that it was dedicated in part to scriptural proofs of a christological nature (§1.1). Constitutive to this proof-

gnostics and Jews” (Alan Segal, “Judaism, Christianity, and Gnosticism,” in Stephen G. Wilson, ed., *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity. Volume 2: Separation and Polemic* [SCJ 2; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986] 141). Our use of “two powers” explicitly foregrounds the polemic character of these types of arguments that occurred between Jews and Christians in the second century (Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* [Leiden: Brill, 1977]).

² A portion of another early Jewish-Christian work, the *Anabathmoi Jakobou*, contains dialogic material and may be contemporary with *JP* (= Ps.-Clementine *Rec.* 1.44, 55–71; cf. Robert E. van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989] 80: “While any time between 135 and 260 is therefore possible as the date of the *AJ*, its similarities with the thought of Aristo indicate that the *AJ* could fit very well into the middle of the second century”).

from-prophecy, *JP* harnessed a series of interrelated “two powers” texts—Gen 1:1 (§1.2) in combination with Gen 1:26 and Prov 8:27, 30 (§1.3)—to demonstrate the preexistence and divinity of Jesus. This convergence of “two powers” proof-texts employed at a pivotal, creative moment in Christian literary production renders *JP* particularly interesting as a specimen of monotheistic “two powers” strategies of rereading Jewish scriptural traditions (§1.4).

1.1 Narrative Framework and Christology

JP is reportedly the work of a Jewish Christian, Aristo of Pella,³ and was composed in Greek⁴ between 135–160 CE, quite plausibly in the earlier half of that range since it was very likely used by Justin in the composition of his *Dialogue with Trypho*.⁵ The text of *JP* no longer survives and what little we know of it comes from a few brief citations and descriptions.⁶ Among these, we learn something of *JP*’s basic genre and framework from a brief assessment in Origen’s *Contra Celsum* and from the epitome of Celsus Africanus in the letter prefacing his Latin translation of

³ So John of Scythopolis (*Sc. my. th.* 1.3 [PG 4 col. 422C]; misascribed to Maximus the Confessor; cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Das Scholienwerk des Johannes von Scythopolis,” *Scholastik* 15 [1940]: esp. 27–28). According to John, Clement, in book six of his *Hypotyposes*, attributed *JP*’s composition to Aristo (ἐν τῇ συγγεγραμμένῃ Ἀρίστωνι τῷ Πελλαίῳ διαλέξει Παπίσκου καὶ Ἰάσονος), while claiming further that saint Luke described the work (ἦν Κλήμης ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεὺς... τὸν ἅγιον Λουκᾶν φησιν ἀναγράψαι). The latter represents perhaps a confused reference to the Jewish Christian Jason of Acts 17:1–9. Aristo evinces knowledge of Hebrew (Jerome *Qu. hebr. Gen.* 1.1 [PL 23 col. 937] and *infra* n. 12), is identified with a Palestinian milieu, cis-Jordanian Pella (*Hist. eccl.* 4.6.3), and his own ethnoreligious identity may be reflected in that of *JP*’s protagonist, whom Celsus Africanus labels *Hebraeus Christianus* (Ps.-Cyprian *Ad Vig.* 8 [PL 6 coll. 54–55]).

⁴ Jerome *Comm. Gal.* 3.13 [PL 26 col. 361].

⁵ The *terminus a quo* is emperor Hadrian’s proscription of Jews from Jerusalem (135 CE), an event explicitly referenced by Aristo in *JP* (if Eusebius’ citation of Aristo comes from *JP*). The *terminus ad quem* is 178 CE, since Celsus mentions *JP* (*Cels.* 4.52). A number of scholars propose that Justin was in some measure dependent on *JP* when he inscribed his *Dialogue* (155–160 CE); so F.C. Conybeare (*The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and Timothy and Aquila edited with Prolegomena and Facsimiles* [AOCS 8; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898] xxxv–xxxvii, xlvii–l; cf. li–lvii), and Pierre Nautin (“Histoire des dogmes et des sacrements chrétiens” in *Annuaire de l’EPHESR* 75 [Paris: Sorbonne, 1967/68] 162–67), followed by Pierre Monat (*Lactance et la Bible: Une propédeutique latine à la lecture de la Bible dans l’Occident constantinien* [2 vols.; Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1982] 1.272–73). Oskar Skarsaune argued the point most forcefully and skillfully in his masterful study of *Dialogue*. He suggested the “recapitulation” source behind *Dialogue* “might be identical with” the lost *JP* (*The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition* [NovTSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987] 234–42; cf. 380–91). If true, this situates *JP* before *Dialogue*.

⁶ Collected in C.T. Otto (ed., “Aristo,” in *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum Saeculi Secundi: Volume IX* [Jena: Libraria Maukii (Herm. Duft), 1872] 349–63); cf. also PG 5.1277–1286.

JP. Origen labels the work a “little text”⁷ and recounts that “in it a Christian has been described conversing with a Jew from the Jewish scriptures and demonstrating that the prophecies concerning the Christ (τοῦ Χριστοῦ) fit Jesus.”⁸ According to Celsus Africanus, the Christian protagonist (Jason) is himself a Hebrew, and the Jewish disputant (Papiscus) an Alexandrian.⁹ The African Celsus offers still further insight into the narrative framework. He relates that Jason’s teaching “prevailed in Papiscus’ heart,” so that the latter came to believe that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God” and promptly requested “the seal” (*signaculum*; sc. of baptism) from Jason.

These terse yet informative descriptions reveal *JP*’s dialogic character and the significant place which the figure of Jesus assumes in the Christian-Jewish discussion and eventual conversion of the Jewish disputant. The composition invoked claims and counterclaims pursued within the locus of “Jewish scriptures.”¹⁰ If we may place stock in the literalness of Celsus’ assertion that Papiscus came to believe “Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” then the nature of the disputation may be somewhat clarified. The dispute regarded at least two rubrics: proof of (1) Jesus’ messianic status (sc. Jesus, the *Christ*) and (2) his divinity (sc. Jesus, *Son of God*).¹¹

Arguments of the former type are attested in a reference from book three of Jerome’s *Commentarium in Epistulam ad Galatas*. Jerome “recalls” (*memini me*) that *JP* involved a discussion of the disputed phrase from Deut 21:23—λοιδορία θεοῦ ὁ κρεμάμενος (“a reproach *against* God is the one who is hung”). Given the peculiar phrasing of the passage, Deut 21:23 was probably quoted by Papiscus rather than the Christian Jason.¹² In this case, Papiscus would have claimed from Deut

⁷ *Cels.* 4.52: Τὸ συγγραμμάτιον; cf. τὸ βιβλίον (bis), which retains diminutive force. Hence, the irony in Celsus’ statement: “and especially if anyone should be patient enough to endure listening to the treatises themselves!”

⁸ The copy of *JP* with which Origen is familiar was apparently inscribed Ἰάσονος καὶ Παπίσκου ἀντιλογία περὶ Χριστοῦ.

⁹ *Ad Vig.* 8.

¹⁰ Τῶν ἰουδαϊκῶν γραφῶν. Origen’s phrasing is not at all haphazard. Aristo situates the debate of *JP* in the confines of Hebrew scriptures, which he regards as traditionally Jewish texts yet as shared sacred tradition (§1.4).

¹¹ “Son of God” is a royal messianic title (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7, 12), apart from implications about messiah’s divinity. If only this royal element were in view in *JP*, however, the confession “Jesus the Messiah is the divine son” is redundant. This suggests claims to Jesus’ deity were at stake.

¹² The objective genitival reading of מְלִיצָה מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים agrees with that of the rabbis and Aquila and differs from the subjective genitival reading of LXX Deut 21:23 (κεκατηραμένος ὑπὸ θεοῦ πᾶς κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου) which Paul also employs (Gal 3:13: ἐπικατάρατος [sc. by God] πᾶς ὁ κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου); cf. Skarsaune, *Proof*, 238.

21:23 that the messianic role is strictly *incompatible* with the status conferred on a crucified person as a “reproach against God.” Alternatively, if spoken by Jason, then Aristo must have resisted applying the passage to Jesus.¹³ This brings us to proofs of the second type.

1.2 *Genesis 1:1*—“*In the Beginning*”

The surest evidence that *JP* made an argument on behalf of Jesus’ divinity, and more specifically a “two powers” argument, also comes from a recollection of Jerome. In *Quaestionum hebraicarum liber in Genesim*, Jerome observes:

In the beginning (*in principio*) God made heaven and earth. Many reckon—just as has been written (*scriptum est*) in the *Disputation of Jason and Papiscus* and [as] Tertullian in the book against Praxeas discusses (*disputat*), and [as] even Hilary in the explanation of a certain Psalm asserts (*affirmat*)—that in Hebrew is contained (*haberi*): In the Son (*in filio*), God made heaven and earth. But the reality of the actual matter (*res ipsius*) proves [this] to be false.¹⁴

Jerome notes some measure of popular support for the opinion that the Hebrew text of Gen 1:1 **explicitly** reads “In the Son, God made heaven and earth,” though he himself rejects the textual reading. As evidence he cites Aristo, Tertullian, and Hilary. How should we understand Jerome’s assertion? Does he intend simply that Aristo, Tertullian, and Hilary mimic his own assertion, namely, that many think the Hebrew contains a reading “in the Son” for Gen 1:1? Or, does Jerome mean that these witnesses themselves actually lay claim to such a reading? Do they invoke a

In *Hodegos* 14, Anastasius the Sinaite recalls an earlier second-century dialogue between Mnason (“the disciple of the apostles”) and the Jew Philo (undoubtedly identified with “the philosopher” from Alexandria) “over the divinity of Christ.” He attributes to *the Jew* an allusion to Deut 21:23: “What kind of God becomes a curse (κατάρα), as Paul says about Jesus?” This is all the more intriguing because J. Edgar Bruns suggests the dialogic excerpt of *Hodegos* draws on *JP* (“The *Altercatio Jasonis et Papisci*, Philo, and Anastasius the Sinaite,” *TS* 34 [1973]: 290–94; on the ascription Philo for Papiscus and Mnason for Jason, see Lawrence Lahey [“The Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century (excluding Justin),” in Oskar Skarsaune and Reider Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus: A History from Antiquity to the Present. Volume 1* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007; forthcoming) 8–9 nn. 34, 36]. Our thanks to the author for a pre-publication copy, to which the page numbers correspond). Bruns opines, “[I]t would be reasonable to suppose that the passage Anastasius is attempting to recall read ‘What sort of God becomes a curse, which is what Paul says of Jesus? Does not the Scripture say that he who is hanged is the reproach of God?’ (i.e., λοιδορία θεοῦ).

¹³ Jesus can be vicariously cursed by God (so Paul) but cannot be a reproach against God.

¹⁴ *Qu. hebr. Gen.* 1.1.

Hebrew text (or midrash)¹⁵ of Gen 1:1 which reads or interprets בְּבִן in place of בְּרֵאשִׁית? Alternatively, does he simply report that these three authors offer a Greek or Latin translation of בְּרֵאשִׁית as ἐν ἀρχῇ or *in principio* and that they subsequently interpreted this translation as “in the Son” via the formula Ἀρχὴ θεοῦ/*Principium Dei* = Christ, the Son of God?

When Jerome claims that Tertullian “discusses” a textual reading of Gen 1:1 which purports that the Hebrew explicitly reads *In filio fecit Deus caelum et terram* (= בְּבִן בְּרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ), he is partly correct. Tertullian does “discuss” a christological reading of Gen 1:1, yet the phrasing of the text he offers is different than that recalled by Jerome. “Some even allege,” Tertullian claims, “that Genesis begins in Hebrew: In the beginning God made the Son.”¹⁶ Though dismissing this textual reading out of hand, Tertullian gives credence to the claim that some regarded the Hebrew of Gen 1:1 to include explicit reference to “the Son.” It is interesting to note that in the form of Gen 1:1 which Tertullian recalls, an interpretation in which “the Son” equates with *Principium (Dei)* is precluded, for “the Son” appears *alongside*, not *in place of*, the phrase “in the beginning.” As for Hilary, Jerome is again slightly mistaken. Hilary does indeed register the claim that the Hebrew makes (implicit) reference to “the Son.” “*Bresith*,” he says, “contains three significations: *in principio*, *in capite*, and *in filio*.”¹⁷ However, this is a much more interpretive approach to Gen 1:1 than Jerome’s claim would lead us to believe. It hardly substantiates his assertion that “the Son” existed in the Hebrew text. Hilary does demonstrate how christological “in the Son” readings of Gen 1:1 could be exploited by Christians from what they regarded as the polysemy of the opening word of Gen: בְּרֵאשִׁית. Neither Tertullian nor Hilary give evidence of a Hebrew reading of Gen 1:1 corresponding precisely to Jerome’s suggestion.

¹⁵ A christological midrashic reading of Gen 1:1, for example, seems to be presupposed in Irenaeus *Epid.* 43, preserved only in Armenian. J. Payne Smith believes Irenaeus’ Greek translation of the Hebrew can be reconstructed from Armenian as “ὕϊὸν ἐν ἀρχῇ ἔκτισεν ὁ Θεός, ἔπειτα τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.” From Irenaeus’ corresponding Hebrew transliteration (*Baresith Bara Eloim Basan Benuam Samenthares*), Smith reconstructs the Hebrew as follows: בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרֵא אֱלֹהִים (ברוך) בֵּן וְאַחַר אֶת שָׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ (שָׁמַיִם) (“Hebrew Christian Midrash in Irenaeus *Epid.* 43,” *Biblica* 38 [1957]: 24–34). Pierre Nautin argues for a slightly different order in Irenaeus’ Greek text (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς ὑϊὸν, ἔπειτα τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν), which he claims the bishop owed to direct dependence on the reading of Gen 1:1 in *JP* (“Genèse 1,1–2, de Justin à Origène,” in *In Principio. Interprétations des premiers versets de la Genèse* [EPHESR 152; Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1973] 84–86).

¹⁶ *Prax.* 5.1.

¹⁷ *Comm. Ps.* 2.

In light of these notes, we may with confidence project from Jerome's claims only that in *JP* "has been written" some christological reading of Gen 1:1 that insinuates "the Son" into the verse. The precise discursive mechanism invoked in the argument of *JP*'s dialogue and whether the phrase "the Son" was present textually (as in Tertullian) or only potentially (as in Hilary) cannot be recovered with any certainty.¹⁸ **Yet we may safely conclude that Aristo did use a "two powers" argument from Gen 1:1.** We cannot confidently assert whether *JP* contained a Hebrew or Greek text of Gen 1:1 corresponding to the Hebrew counterpart of Jerome's textual claim (*In filio fecit Deus caelum et terram*). Nor are we able to assess whether *JP* replaced בְּרֵאשִׁית with ἐν ἀρχῇ and midrashically transformed the resultant translation *via* ἐν ἀρχῇ = *in Filio*. We are secure only in claiming that *JP* utilized Gen 1:1 in a christological manner, in a way which insinuated Jesus as a second authority alongside the one God in the very act of creation. Both Tertullian and Hilary are aware that the christological invocation of Gen 1:1 is a Christian argument designed to locate Jesus "the Son" as necessarily prior to the creation of the world (i.e., preexistent) and as unique agent in the creative act (i.e., divine). We should assume no less for the reading present in *JP*. Aristo's dialogue harnessed a *quintessential* passage from Jewish creation myth in a manner which insinuates Jesus, the Son of God, alongside the one God of the OT in the act of creation and thereby demonstrated that the Son of God (1) was present with God at the act of creation and (2) was necessarily preexistent and divine.

The importance of the mediation of a second figure in the act of creation for the argument of *JP* may also be hinted at from the critique which the pagan Celsus levels against the writing in his Ἀληθῆς λόγος. He comments:

I know a work of this type, a *Disputation* (ἀντιλογία) of a certain Papiscus and Jason, deserving not of laughter but rather of pity and hatred. Therefore, **it is not my concern to refute these things** (ταῦτα); for it is evident to everyone, and especially if anyone should be patient enough to endure listening to the treatises themselves. **But** (ἀλλ') **I prefer to teach this** (ἐκεῖνο) **in conformity with nature** (τὴν φύσιν):¹⁹ God makes (ἐποίησεν) nothing mortal; but whatever beings are immortal are works of God (θεοῦ... ἔργα), and mortal beings are their works. And the soul is the work of God (θεοῦ ἔργον), but the nature of the body is

¹⁸ Adolf Harnack, *Die Überlieferung der griechischen Apologeten des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (TU 1/1–2; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1882) 119: "Möglich ist es freilich, dass in der Altercatio von Jason gesagt worden ist, die hebräischen LA [=Lesart] sei: „In filio fecit etc.“, ...aber ebenso möglich ist, dass Jason den Anfang der Genesis lediglich so interpretirt hat."

¹⁹ On the accusative of reference, see BDF §160.

different. In this respect, nothing will differ between the body of a bat, a worm, a frog, or a human. For [their] material is the same, and their corruptibility is similar.²⁰

Rather than refute “these things” Celsus prefers to teach “this” in accordance with nature. What are “these things” and “this” to which he refers? “These things” clearly bears some relation to the text of *JP*, which Celsus has just reviled as “deserving not of laughter but rather of pity and hatred.” Does the pronoun refer to writings of the same type as *JP* or perhaps to arguments of the type contained in *JP*? The latter solution is preferable.²¹ “These things” is closely contrasted (ἀλλ’) with “this,” which Celsus prefers to teach. The proximity suggests that “these things” and “this” are both doctrinal in nature. By identifying the content of “this,” we can perhaps unlock the content of *JP*’s teaching to which Celsus refers.

In his subsequent argumentation, Celsus makes claims about the creation of the world, the nature of God and humans, and the involvement of secondary agency in the creative act. The divine nature is “immortal.” God, he therefore claims, fabricates only “immortal beings” (sc. heavenly agencies) in accordance with natural law. By extension God also forms that immortal part of the human, the soul. The world of mortal things and earthly bodies is, in turn, manufactured through the mediation of secondary created agencies. All “mortal” bodies are composed of common material and bear a similar nature, subject to corruptibility, unlike the “immortal” God. Celsus advocates a certain devolution of agency in the creative act, in accordance with natural law. It is now clear that “this” to which he refers is a doctrine of creation, creative agency, and the natural law according to which all things are organized.

We may presume that “these things” of *JP*, with which Celsus closely linked “this” of his teaching, include *inter alia* reference to arguments in *JP* about the divine nature, secondary mediation in the act of creation, and the ordered structure of the natural universe. Further, rather than refute “these things” as *JP* teaches them, Celsus pursues “this” argument from a different tack, according to natural law (τὴν φύσιν). This suggests that *JP* makes its demonstrations from scriptural proofs rather than natural law. We do know that *JP* mentions the traditional Jewish teaching of

²⁰ *Cels.* 4.52.

²¹ This much is later confirmed by Origen. Speaking directly of *JP*, he comments, “Therefore Celsus says that it is not his ‘concern to refute these things (ταῦτα; i.e., the arguments of *JP*),’ because he thinks these things (αὐτά) ‘are evident to everyone,’ even before the production of a reasoned refutation, that they are ordinary and ‘deserving of pity and hatred’” (*Cels.* 4.53).

“seven heavens” (ἑπτὰ οὐρανοῦς), and thus contains some discussion of the cosmic structure.²² This is very much in keeping with what Celsus seems to claim about *JP*. We have also seen that themes of creation and secondary agency were involved in *JP*’s “two powers” argument from Gen 1:1. The overlap with Celsus is surprising! He provides additional confirmation that the idea of God’s creative activity through external agency (i.e., Jesus) and the structure of the cosmos constituted important aspects of Jason’s proof to Papiscus. Indeed, Celsus’ rebuttal on this topic and the prominence of similar issues in the extant fragments of *JP* indicate that the themes of creation, secondary agency in creation, and cosmic structure and order held a highly important place in the overall argument of the “little book.” *JP* must have harnessed an even lengthier discussion of secondary agency in creation than the christological reading of Gen 1:1 alone would suggest. In the next section, we offer evidence that the “two powers” argument of *JP* was closely aligned with additional “two powers” proof-texts, Gen 1:26 and Prov 8:27, 30.

1.3 Remnants of *JP*’s “Two Powers” in Later Dialogues

We may yet be able to recover remnants of *JP*’s structure and argument from several later Christian-Jewish dialogues,²³ the Greek Dialogues of *Athanasius and Zacchaeus* (*AZ*; late fourth–early fifth c.) and of *Timothy and Aquila* (*TA*; fifth–sixth c.; extant in a long [LR] and short recension [SR]), as well as the Latin *Simon and Theophilus* (*STh*; early fifth c.).²⁴ Fred Conybeare speaks of these three as “independent recensions” of some older dialogue, which he supposes to be *JP*.²⁵ He

²² *Sc. my. th.* 1.3 (cf. *supra* n. 3). On the Jewish nature of this motif, see Otto (“Aristo,” 363).

²³ More than two centuries separate Justin’s *Dialogue* and the next intact dialogue, *AZ*. We possess fragments of a third-century dialogue (POxy 2070); other (possibly dialogic works) are lost entirely (*Pros Joudaiou*s of Miltiades and of Apollinaris [cf. *Eccl. hist.* 5.17.5; 4.27]).

²⁴ Conybeare, *Dialogues*; “A New Second-Century Christian Dialogue” (*Expositor* 5, 5th series [1897]): 300–20, 443–63 [trans. of *AZ* from Armenian]. Lawrence Lahey, “The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: Critical Greek Text and English Translation of the Short Recension with an Introduction including a Source-critical Study” (unpublished PhD thesis; Cambridge, 2000); Adolf Harnack, *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani* (TU 1/3; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1883). William Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues: Athanasius and Zacchaeus, Simon and Theophilus, Timothy and Aquila. Introductions, Texts, and Translations* (SBEC 58; Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

²⁵ Anticipated in “Second-Century Dialogue,” 300–01, but developed at greater length in *Dialogues* (xxxiv, li–lviii).

is followed by others²⁶ amid some dissenting voices.²⁷ The question of dependency on *JP* remains debated, and William Varner rightly warns against “dogmatism about the conclusions of source-critical study.”²⁸ Nevertheless, we find the initial arguments of Lawrence Lahey presented in his Cambridge doctoral thesis intriguing and in part convincing. Lahey takes up Conybeare’s proposal and prepares a series of three tables comparing shared material within these later dialogues. He obviates any suggestion that this shared material was derived from Tertullian’s *Adversus Iudaeos* or Cyprian’s *Testimonia* by omitting elements which might have come from these two stores. Lahey comments:

This material extends beyond shared Bible testimonies; it includes incidents, arguments, order, and small remarks. *AZ* and *STh* share some different and some of the same material as *TA* and *AZ*, showing that *AZ* and *STh* share the same *contra Iudaeos* dialogue source. Because of the great amount of material shared between *TA* and *AZ*, perhaps it could be argued that *TA* is dependent upon *AZ*. But *TA* has strong resemblances with *STh*, which show that they shared a dialogue source independently of *AZ*. This probably indicates that *TA* independently obtained the material shared with *AZ* from the same source *AZ* and *STh* share.²⁹

Lahey believes these “close resemblances” offer sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the shared source behind these dialogues “almost certainly is *Jason and Papiscus* since the source is a *contra Iudaeos* dialogue, probably quite early, and *Jason and Papiscus* existed in a Latin translation.”³⁰ It does not appear to have been

²⁶ Lahey, “Short Recension,” 74–89. The suggestion of dependence has received greatest attention in regards to *STh*: Vacher Burch (“The Altercation Between Simon the Jew and Theophilus the Christian,” in J. Rendel Harris, *Testimonies* [2 vols.; Cambridge: University Press, 1916] 1.94–96) and Harnack (*Altercatio*, 115–30), who later (in his review of Corssen’s *Altercatio* [TLZ 15 (1890) coll. 624–25]) sympathized somewhat with Peter Corssen’s conclusion that *STh* depends on Tertullian’s *Adversus Iudaeos*, Cyprian’s *Ad Quirinum*, and *JP* (*Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani auf ihre Quellen geprüft* [Jever: C. L. Mettcker u. Söhne, 1890]). More cautiously, Bernd Reiner Voss (*Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur* [STA 9; München: W. Fink, 1970] 24 et esp. n. 10).

²⁷ A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Iudaeos: A Bird’s-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: University Press, 1935) 30, 117 n. 2. Eduard Bratke, “Epilegomena zur Wiener Ausgabe der *Altercatio legis inter Simonem Iudaeum et Theophilum Christianum*” (SPHKAW 148; Wien: Carl Gerold’s Sohn, 1904) 131–33, 158–78. Patrick Andrist (*Le Dialogue d’Athanasie et Zachée: Étude des sources et du contexte littéraire* [PhD thesis; Université de Genève, 2001] 289–91).

²⁸ *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues*, 11–12.

²⁹ “Short Recension,” 74.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Justin's *Dialogue*.³¹ The presence of the Jewish disputant requesting baptism at the end of all three post-Constantinian dialogues is particularly conspicuous³² and indicates that they derive from a precursor within the dialogic tradition. It further suggests *JP* as that source since this comports closely with Celsus Africanus' description of the baptism of Papiscus.³³

If Lahey's identification of the "shared source" of these dialogues as *JP* is correct—we grant it here—then we have some substantive basis on which to make additional claims regarding lost material in *JP*. Specifically, material contained in all three later dialogues stands a chance of being original to the source behind them, presumably *JP*. Fortunately, Lahey catalogued eleven examples of triple tradition material, the first five of which are particularly interesting. We quote him here:

1. Quite near its beginning, *Jason and Papiscus* prominently featured the Jewish objection that Christians violate the unity of God by worshipping Christ, and thus two Gods. Isa 44:6 and some other scriptures treating the unity of God are given as proof. Minor Christian denials. (LR 1.5–6 [SR II.4–6], 1.8; AZ 1, 2b; *STh* 2a–4a, 6a–b.)
2. The Jewish objection is countered with Christian proofs from Genesis ch. 1, especially 1:1, showing the Son is the Beginning by whom God created heaven and earth, and 1:26 where 'Let us make' shows God addressing the Son...(LR 4.10–14 [SR VII.1–3]; AZ 3c, 4d–5b; *STh* 8b.)
3. Jewish objection that Gen 1:26 was spoken to the angels, and sarcasm noting that the Son is not mentioned alongside the Father in Genesis. (LR 4.19–20 [SR VII.8–9]; AZ 6a, 12c; *STh* 8a, 9a.)
4. Further Christian proof of the Son with the Father during creation based on Prov ch. 8. (LR 5.5 [SR VIII.3; X.4–5]; AZ 13a; *STh* 11b.)
5. Jewish objection that Prov 8 speaks of God's Wisdom. (LR 5.21; AZ 13b, d; *STh* 12a.)³⁴

The standardized form in all three independent dialogues renders it likely that *JP* comprised something approximating this basic pattern.³⁵ Table 1

³¹ AZ does not depend directly on *Dialogue* (Andrist, *Le Dialogue*, 199–201, 274). *STh* is more directly related to Tertullian's *Adversus Judaeos*, Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum*, and a collection of allegorical interpretations of scripture (possibly Origen's *Tractatus de libris Scripturarum*; Pierre Battifol, "Une source nouvelle de l'Altercatio Simonis Judaei et Theophili Christiani," *RB* 8 [1899] 337–45; cf. Bratke, "Epilegomena," 109–58; Harnack, *Altercatio*, 110–15) than to *Dialogue*. The later dialogues conclude with a baptismal scene and begin with a discussion on divine unity containing common order and elements (*vide infra*) not shared by *Dialogue*, suggesting a source other than *Dialogue* for their framework.

³² AZ 130a–b [Armenian]; *STh* 29–30; LR 57.5–6 [SR XXVI.1–2], 16–17 [XXVII.2, 4].

³³ *Ad Vig.* 8.

³⁴ "Short Recension," 87–89.

³⁵ The argument for a "two powers" reading from Gen 1:1, 1:26, and Prov 8:27, 30 in *JP* is perhaps further substantiated from Maximus of Turin's *Contra Judaeos*, which Conybeare suggests depends on *JP* (*Dialogues*, xliv). Maximus' work links Gen 1:1 with Prov 8:22 (and additional verses? Three illegible lines follow in the MS) and Gen 1:16–17, 26.

compares the placement of the relevant “two powers” texts (Gen 1:1, 1:26, and Prov 8) within these later dialogues.

Table 1. Dialogic Proof-texts

“Two Powers” Proof Text	<i>AZ</i>	<i>STh</i>	<i>TA LR [SR]</i>
Gen 1:1		<i>8b</i>	4.6, 10; 6.5a [VII.1; IX.42; cf. VIII.9]
Gen 1:26	3, 5, 7–9, 11–12	<i>8c</i>	4.12, 14, 20; 6.4, 7; cf. 19.14 [VII.2–3; IX.40–41]
Prov 8:22–31	13: Prov 8:27, 30	11: Prov 8:22–31	5.5: Prov 8:27–30 [VIII.3: Prov 8:25, 30] [X.4–5: Prov 8:27, 30]

Despite minor variations in order, the bolded passages are closely clustered within their respective arguments. In the argument of *STh*³⁶ and both long and short recensions of *TA*³⁷ a *christological interpretation* (not *textual attestation*) of “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1) is closely integrated with a reading of Gen 1:26 in which the Christian interlocutor capitalizes on syntactic plurality within the majestic fiat—“Let *us* make man in *our* image”—to demonstrate that there preexisted alongside the one God a second personal, divine agent at creation. Though *AZ* makes

³⁶ 8b: Nam si velles credere, poteris et **in principio eius** invenire, **quis est Christus**, dei filius. Sic enim **in principio**, ait, *fecit deus caelum et terram*, hoc est in Christi arbitrio et ad eius voluntatem et ad cuius imaginem hominem facere dignatus est; dicit enim: **Faciamus hominem**, et rursus infra dicit: *Fecit deus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem dei; masculum et feminam fecit eos*.

³⁷ LR 4.10, 14: εἰπόντος τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ· **Ἐν ἀρχῇ** ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ πάντα τὸν κόσμον αὐτῶν...καθὼς προείπαμεν, περὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ εἶπεν γενηθήτω, ἀλλὰ· **ποιήσωμεν** ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα **ἡμετέραν** καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν. **τίνι ἔλεγεν;** 6.5a: εἰς δὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπον **ποιήσωμεν** εἶπεν. ἔλεγεν δὲ τῷ θαυμαστῷ συμβούλῳ **τῷ ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντι**, οὐ αἱ ἔξοδοι ἀφ’ ἡμερῶν αἰωνος, οὐ τὴν γενεάν οὐδεὶς δύναται διηγῆσασθαι.

SR VII.1: ὁ δὲ Τιμόθεος...εἶπεν· **Ἐν ἀρχῇ** ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς, καὶ ἐπάγει ἡ γραφὴ λέγουσα: **Ποιήσωμεν** ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα **ἡμετέραν** καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν. **τίνι ἔλεγεν...**; IX.41–42: Εἶπεν ὁ Θεός· **Ποιήσωμεν** ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα **ἡμετέραν** καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν. ἐὰν τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ εἶπεν πῶς οὐκ εἶπεν Ποιήσατε ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα ἐμόν; ἀλλὰ **τίνι ἔλεγεν:** τῷ Ἀγαθῷ καὶ Συμβούλῳ **τῷ ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντι**, οὐ αἱ ἔξοδοι ἀφ’ ἡμερῶν αἰώνων, καὶ τὴν γενεάν αὐτοῦ οὐδεὶς δύναται διηγῆσασθαι.

no reference to Gen 1:1, Gen 1:26 is heavily invoked to the same end. Proverbs 8 follows on the heels of this closely integrated argument from Genesis 1 as further proof of this second figure. The texts manifest variation in the extent of the textual citation from Prov 8. At a minimum they share verses 27 and 30. Here, too, the Christian disputant harnesses some inherent grammatical plurality in the text to insinuate a second figure into the act of creation. “When *he* [sc. God] prepared the heavens, *I was with him* (συμπαρήμην αὐτῷ)...*I was beside him* (ἦμην παρ’ αὐτῷ).” Each text pursues its argument somewhat differently, though in every case, the second agent is demonstrated to be a personal counselor to God (hypostatized Wisdom, Logos, Advisor) at creation who is to be identified with Jesus. And in every dialogue the Christian interlocutor appropriates a certain nuance in the syntax of the scriptural text which is then read quite literally in a christological fashion. These are “two powers” texts from Jewish Wisdom traditions.

The mounting congruence of evidence from these later dialogues suggests that near the beginning of *JP* was developed an argument for the preexistence of Jesus alongside the one God as his counselor and assistant in creation. This argument appealed to certain “two powers” texts from Jewish Wisdom traditions, including Gen 1:1, 1:26, and Prov 8:27, 30, probably in that order.³⁸ The “two powers” demonstration was probably constructed in response to a preemptive Jewish objection from Isa 44:6.³⁹

1.4 Observations

Precise details of *JP*’s argument are no longer recoverable, yet, we believe, the broad framework of *JP* and the general discursive flow of its “two powers” polemic are. If our previous observations are correct, then this “two powers” argument was embedded within a narrative frame in which Jason and Papiscus dispute *inter alia* the precise nature of biblical monotheism, the presence of secondary mediation in creation, and the order of the natural world. Papiscus claims

³⁸ The discursive order from Gen 1 to Prov 8 may be due to rhetorical constraints in each dialogue. *AZ* and the long recension of *TA* begin their scriptural demonstration from Genesis expressly as a matter of principle (cf. *AZ* 3; *LR* 4.7), and though no explicit parallel program is found in *STh* or the short recension of *TA* (cf. *SR* VI.6–7) the practice of beginning from “in the beginning” remains.

³⁹ Alongside this verse is sometimes included Deut 6:4 (*AZ* 1; *LR* 1.5–6; cf. the complex conflation of elements from Deut 6:4, LXX Ps 81:10, and Isa 44:6 in *SR* II.6 [“Hear, Israel, I am the Lord your God, and besides me there is no God”]) and Deut 32:39 (*STh* 4).

that the divine self-proclamation of Isa 44:6—“besides me there is no God”—evidences a biblical doctrine of God’s unity as numerical singularity (i.e., uniqueness), which precludes any complex unity of persons in the godhead. All textual plurality must submit to this overarching truth. When God says therefore, “Let *us* make” (Gen 1:26), the plural is, for sure, to be respected, yet it is also to be read in a manner consistent with the grand self-predication claim of Isa 44:6. The one God created, *with the angels* present and involved! This is for the Jew the biblical doctrine of creation and mediation in Genesis 1. And Christian *worship* of a second figure, Christ, in addition to the one God violates the simple unity of God, which scripture teaches, because it implies that a second figure participates in the divine nature.⁴⁰ Jason, on the other hand, argues that the confession of God’s unity (Isa 44:6) must be regarded in terms of a complex of two divine entities operating as one, and this is nowhere clearer than in the act of creation. For him, belief in “two powers” in heaven is demanded by a series of scriptural texts that acknowledge the preexistence and divinity of Jesus, precisely at the point of his involvement with the one God in creation. Gen 1:1 and 1:26 demonstrate a plurality of two and only two divine persons at creation. God enlisted not the assistance of angels but of a personal aide-de-camp. The “us” of Gen 1:26 cannot be the multitude of heavenly angels, because we learn from Prov 8:27, 30 that it is God’s Wisdom, a single heavenly counterpart, that cooperatively aids the one God at creation! The monotheistic demands of Isa 44:6 must therefore be subjected to the clear reality of divine duality in the chief creation passages. God’s unity and uniqueness are understood in terms of a complex unity of two persons who operate in unison of will. After all, how can God’s Wisdom do anything other than God himself? Papiscus’ “traditional” Jewish reading of Isa 44:6 and Gen 1 has been overturned, reread, in a way that Aristo classifies as particularly compelling. For in the structure of the dialogue, Papiscus finally concedes to the logic of Jason’s scriptural polemic. He consents to the will of scripture to believe that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” and he is subsequently baptized. The following observations help us assess the social function of *JP*’s “two powers” approach in shaping Christian interpretive identity.

First, the types of claim and counterclaim very likely used in *JP* bear semblance to the realities of second-century Jewish-Christian debate. *JP*’s probable

⁴⁰ This is consistent with our observations on Jewish angel devotion and exclusivist monotheism in ch. 2 §2.2.1.

mention of Jewish appeal to Isa 44:6 has an air of authenticity. In section three of Chapter Two, we witnessed the important role which Deutero-Isaianic passages (Isa 44:6, a favorite among them) assumed in rabbinic Jewish arguments to resist “two powers” claims that threatened the rabbinic understanding of God’s unity.⁴¹ In the argument of *JP*, it was very likely invoked by the Jew to demonstrate that scripture precludes the Christian understanding that a personal, divine advisor preexisted alongside the one God at creation. Origen also attests the verisimilitude of Papiscus’ assertions. Commenting on *JP*, he observes, “and indeed as for the reply which the other [sc. Papiscus] raises, it is neither vulgar nor inconsistent with the character of a Jew.”⁴² Having participated in several (third-century) debates with Jews himself, Origen was intimately familiar with Jewish scriptural arguments, and his testimony to Papiscus’ approach is therefore all the more important. With the inclusion of Isa 44:6 in *JP* as a quintessential Jewish argument, we are in the presence of an authentic second-century strategy used by Jews to counter Christian appeals to plurality in the divine nature. Christian appeals to scripture to demonstrate “two powers” also have verisimilitude, for by the end of the first century Christians were already using certain “two powers” proof-texts in debates with Jews (see below). Christian use of “two powers” texts against Jews thus adds to *JP*’s authenticity as witness to the types of second-century claims and counterclaims that Jews and Christians employed against one another specifically respecting the nature of the one God.

Second, though use of “two powers” proof-texts is hardly novel in its own right, with Aristo’s production of *JP* we witness *a doubly innovative moment* of early Christian literary production. In the first instance, his combination of Gen 1:1, 26 and Prov 8:27, 30 into a coherent argument for “two powers” in heaven is distinctive. Many “two powers” passages had already entered into Christian tradition as *testimonia* (see further §2.2 below). As early as the mid-first century, the apostle Paul had designated Christ “God’s Wisdom” (1 Cor 1:24: θεοῦ σοφίαν), linking him ideologically to Jewish Wisdom traditions, such as Prov 8. Several later works demonstrate the early Christian discovery of an auspicious phraseology in Prov 8:22—κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ—that permitted Christians to designate Christ (sc. God’s Wisdom) as the “Beginning/Principle”

⁴¹ See Segal (*Two Powers*, esp. ch. 2, and “Judaism, Christianity, and Gnosticism”).

⁴² *Cels.* 4.52.

(Ἀρχή) of all things.⁴³ This further allowed christological appeal to Gen 1:1, as most clearly epitomized in John 1:1–3. Early on then, Prov 8:22 and Gen 1:1 were productive in christologically creative rereadings as a way to insinuate Christ into the quintessential moment of creation.⁴⁴ In his positioning of Christ in the creative act of Gen 1:1, Aristo, it seems, stands on some traditional ground, yet he appeals to an altogether different portion of Prov 8 (vv. 27, 30) than is traditional. Other “two powers” texts were also employed by early Christians to support the motif of Christ’s preexistence and involvement in creation, including Gen 1:26. *Barn. 5.5*, for example, invokes the latter in demonstration of Christ’s copresence with God at the founding of the world. Yet *proving* Christ’s preexistence is not the focus of his argument but is made to subserve a much larger polemical purpose. Barnabas wishes to highlight the depth of Christ’s condescension (i.e., submission to God) in becoming incarnate and suffering and, thereby, to heighten the extent of his obedience to God in saving Christians and in bringing to completion the totality of Jewish sins (5.10–11). Aristo, however, in appealing to Gen 1:26, makes *demonstrating* a plurality of “two powers” operative in the creative act the very point at stake. He singles it out as an explicit proof-text. In this he is distinctive.

Thus we see that Aristo involves himself in a highly creative moment of “two powers” discursive production. In *JP*, we witness the blooming of three traditional precursors from Gen 1 and Prov 8 into a confluence designed to make a coherent demonstration of the preexistence and creative power of Christ at God’s side. *JP* is the first time these proof-texts are explicitly referenced together as textual stores to demonstrate the existence of “two powers” in heaven. Among earlier works that use traditional precursors from Prov 8 and Gen 1, the gospel of John offers the most conspicuous counterpart to *JP* and is its nearest ideological forerunner. From the opening verses, the gospel explicitly insinuates the preexistent Word of God into the act of creation in a “two powers” claim from Gen 1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This one was in the beginning

⁴³ Cf. Col 1:15–18; Rev 3:14; 21:6; 22:13; Theophilus *Autol.* 2.10; Justin *Dial.* 61.1, 3; and possibly *KP* fr. 2 (cf. *supra* ch. 4 Excursus).

⁴⁴ On “les relectures protochrétiennes de *Prov* 8,22 et de *Gen* 1,1” see Michel Cambe (*Kerygma Petri. Textus et commentarius* [CCSA 15; Turnhout: Brepols, 2003] 209–16), who mentions Col 1:12–14 [*sic*; 1:15–18]; Rev 3:14; 21:6; 22:13, C.F. Burney (“Christ as the ARXH of Creation. (Prov. viii 22, Col. i 15–18, Rev. iii 14.),” *JTS* 27 [1926]: 160–77), A. Feuillet (*Le Christ Sagesse de Dieu d’après les Épîtres pauliniennes* [EBib; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1966] 188–91, 195–96, 198–99), and Pierre Prigent («In Principio. A propos d’un livre récent» *RHPR* 54 [1974]: 391–97). John 1:1–3 should also be mentioned.

with God. All things were created through him, and apart from him nothing was created that has been created.” Christ preexisted and was personally active in creation as God’s Logos. And John’s gospel plays out this claim specifically in the context of a dispute between the Christian community and Jewish leaders over the social and cosmic significance of this divine Word. Even here, however, Aristo remains distinctive. The gospel of John does not invoke the three texts together, nor does it do so explicitly, nor as part of a demonstration, as does *JP*. Rather, God’s Word is projected into the act of creation as part of the gospel’s *a priori* claim.

The comparison with John allows us to see yet another instance of Aristo’s creativity. When Aristo encodes his debate vis-à-vis Jews, he does so in a way that does not pit the Christian community against the Jewish leadership (as the gospel of John), but he envisions an individual Jew and Christian in theological debate, at the end of which the Jew converts. Aristo is the first to inscribe these “two powers” texts into a literary genre known as the Christian-Jewish dialogue.⁴⁵ By developing this genre, he directly juxtaposes the Jew and Christian in specifically polemic dialogue, and engages them in a discussion that lies at the very core of Jewish and Christian religion, on the meaning of exclusivist monotheism. The dialogue genre directly positions Christian “two powers” readings of scripture vis-à-vis Jewish monotheistic readings! This ties closely with our next observation.

Third, in *JP* both Jason and Papiscus recognize that the proper locus for debating the nature of monotheism is the Hebrew scriptures. If the surviving reports are reliable, both interlocutors are descendants of the Jewish race. Jason was a Hebrew Christian and Papiscus, an Alexandrian Jew. This is certainly plausible, for though *JP* is written in Greek, it evidences knowledge of readings derived specifically from Hebrew textual traditions.⁴⁶ In none of the extant testimony to *JP* does a NT verse surface, and the polemic context over the divine nature, secondary personal agency, and the nature of the created order lends itself particularly well to those portions of Hebrew scripture that discuss these topics, namely, Genesis 1, Proverbs 8, and Deutero-Isaiah. The value of the Hebrew text itself for establishing monotheistic doctrine is not at stake.⁴⁷ For both parties, it is sacred scripture. Only the interpretation of the shared tradition is disputed. This is further intimated from

⁴⁵ See *supra* nn. 2 et 5.

⁴⁶ See *supra* nn. 3 et 12.

⁴⁷ Contrast this with Celsus, who appealed to the natural order for his cosmologic arguments (§1.2).

the order of the later dialogues (*AZ*, *TA*, and *STh*). If these later dialogues retain (as respects the argument over monotheism) the original order of *JP*'s structure, as Lahey suggests, then Jason's appeal to Gen 1:1, 26 follows an initial Jewish objection from Isa 44:6. In this case, it is the Jew who initially positions the debate in terms of *his* (sc. *Jewish*) scripture. **The debate takes place then on grounds of shared sacred tradition, which are acknowledged as traditionally *Jewish* texts.**

Fourth, these observations have direct implications on *JP*'s involvement in constructing a specifically Christian interpretive identity vis-à-vis a Jewish one. In his novel use of somewhat traditional "two powers" texts and in his positioning these proof-texts within a newly created genre that explicitly juxtaposes Jew and Christian in debate on the grounds of shared scriptural traditions, Aristo engages in a highly creative moment of early Christian exegetical and literary production. This creativity implies a highly conscious and intentional effort and thus a peculiar *strategy* with respect to Judaism. For Aristo to construct arguments from Jewish scripture was to explicitly establish Christian identity vis-à-vis Jewishness. There is a conscious strategy to oppose Jewish accusations with traditional Jewish texts, precisely by rereading those texts in a creative Christian way. *JP* demonstrates at this mid second-century stage of Christian-Jewish debate the importance of appeal to Jewish (Hebrew) scriptures (rather than LXX) as a way of convincing Jews of the existence of a second power alongside God and of legitimating this belief for Christians!

And Aristo's act of literary production did not fall on deaf ears. In contrast to the pagan Celsus' scathing remarks, when he lambastes *JP* as "deserving not of laughter but rather of pity and hatred,"⁴⁸ we may compare the more sensible and less *ad hominem* response of Origen. The latter questions why, "from all the writings which contain allegories and interpretations in a respectable⁴⁹ style," Celsus would ever have singled out *JP* for ridicule. Indeed, *JP*, he describes, is "worthless" (τὸ εὐτελέστερον) for convincing more erudite readers such as Celsus, and it should never have found place in his respectable argument from philosophy. Yet Origen does not disassociate himself entirely from the work but describes it as "able to contribute grace of faith (πίστεως χάριν) to the simple-minded masses."⁵⁰ In this

⁴⁸ *Cels.* 4.52.

⁴⁹ Εὐκαταφρονήτου; lit. not contemptible.

⁵⁰ Lahey, "Christian-Jewish Dialogues," 7: "These descriptions seem to point to a function *JP* had as missionary literature. Neither writer says to whom *JP* might be directed beyond 'the more

respect, he requests a more sympathetic attitude from his audience, encouraging them “to be patient and to listen to our books and to make every effort towards [understanding] the purpose, the conscientiousness, and the disposition of the authors.”⁵¹ It is perhaps the book’s simple utility that resulted in *JP*’s continued durability and popularity in the coming centuries.⁵² Written in Greek, translated into Latin, it was available to East and West, and became a model for many later Christian-Jewish dialogues.⁵³ *JP*’s production of a distinctly “two powers” Christian interpretive identity by rereading Jewish textual traditions was sustained long after the book was written.

2. “Two Powers” in Scriptural Theophanies: Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue*⁵⁴

In his description of OT theophanies as narratives portraying pre-incarnate appearances of a “second God” (ἕτερος θεός)⁵⁵ who exists alongside the Maker of the Universe and is named Jesus, Justin Martyr formulates a second innovative moment in the story of emergent Christian “two powers” strategies (§2.1).⁵⁶ To make the case, Justin invokes in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (155–160 CE) several *traditional* “two powers” proof-texts, yet his attention to textual detail in treating extended theophanic passages reveals a highly creative hermeneutic strategy, free from stringent dependence on *any traditional interpretive* precursor, Jewish or Christian (§2.2). It has been suggested that the initial creative impulse for the development of his “second God” argument from theophany may well have been conflict with

simple’, but *JP*’s audience seems likely to have included Jews, either directly, or indirectly by preparing Christians for discussion with them.”

⁵¹ *Cels.* 4.53.

⁵² Especially relative to the meager reception history of Justin’s *Dialogue*.

⁵³ As we have seen with *AZ*, *TA*, and *STh*. The reception of *JP* in later dialogues has been best noted by Lahey (“Christian-Jewish Dialogues”).

⁵⁴ Sections 2.1 and 2.2 adapt and expand a portion of our contribution to the International Conference on Justin Martyr and His Worlds, held in July, 2006, at the Centre for the Study of Christian Origins, New College, University of Edinburgh (see Will Rutherford, “*Altercatio Jasonis et Papisci* as Testimony Source for Justin’s ‘Second God’ Argument?” in Paul Foster and Sara Parvis, eds., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* [Fortress Press, 2007, forthcoming]).

⁵⁵ Or “another God.” Justin also prefers ἄλλος θεός. As a matter of course he interprets all OT theophanies christologically (cf. *Dial.* 127.1–3).

⁵⁶ Justin references theophanies in the following passages: *Dial.* 56–60; 62.5; 125.3–128.2; *I Apol.* 63; cf. *Dial.* 37.4–38.1; 75; 86.2–5; 113.4, 7; 114.3.

Marcion.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, from the distinctive literary context and framework in *Dialogue*, Justin clearly positions his “second God” argument within a discursive strategy directed against Jewish accusations and queries in scriptural debate (§2.3). His argument instantiates a truly original reading of OT theophany which legitimates specifically Christian “two powers” interpretations as rereadings of traditional Jewish texts, thereby producing a distinctively Christian interpretive identity.

2.1 The “Second God” Argument and Justin’s Proof-Texts

Justin develops his most extended and involved treatment on the “second God” in *Dialogue* 56–62, which is structurally divisible into two segments, chapters 56–60 (cf. 126–128.2) and 61–62 (cf. 128.2–129).⁵⁸ The first segment invokes theophanies; the latter augments the theophanic proofs with arguments from Wisdom traditions (particularly Prov 8:21–36), and will not be discussed here.⁵⁹ In the theophanic portion Justin expounds on the appearances of God to Abraham at Mamre and again at Sodom (56–57; cf. Gen 18–19), to Jacob at Bethel, Peniel, Luz, and Haran (58; cf. Gen 31–32; 35; 28), and to Moses at the burning bush (59–60; cf. Exod 3). The desideratum of the extended argument from theophany is clear—to prove that “another God” existed alongside the supreme Maker of the Universe and manifested himself in human form to the patriarchs. In this section, we briefly examine the logic of Justin’s “second God” theophanic argument and isolate the key “two powers” proof-texts.⁶⁰ For reasons which will become evident shortly the discussion focuses only on the theophanies to Abraham at Mamre and Sodom (56–57), which advances in three stages.

⁵⁷ The argument may already have appeared in Justin’s lost *Syntagma*, as Pierre Prigent (*Justin et l’Ancien Testament* [EBib; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1964] 11–13, 117–33) and Oskar Skarsaune (*Proof*, 210–12) propose.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Dial.* 61.1: μαρτύριον ἄλλο. Form and source-critical readings confirm distinguishable types of material in these passages (Prigent, *ibid.*, 121; Skarsaune, *ibid.*, 388), yet the inclusion of the Joshua theophany in 62.4 and Trypho’s response to the entire “second God” proof (63.1) indicate these units constitute a cohesive demonstration.

⁵⁹ *Dial.* 61.1–62.4 is concerned with demonstrating the emission, preexistence, and creative activity of the second God, whose existence was demonstrated from theophanies. Justin does not evince the breadth of interpretive creativity in the second segment that he does in the first (see *infra* n. 83).

⁶⁰ Benedict Kominiak treats the material extensively (*The Theophanies of the Old Testament in the Writings of St. Justin* [SSTh 14; 2nd ser.; Ph.D. Diss.; Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1948]).

The argument begins quite boldly. “Now Moses, the blessed and faithful servant of God,” Justin asserts, “reveals that the one who appeared to Abraham at the oak in Mamre is God, sent along with two accompanying angels for the judgment of Sodom by Another, who ever remains in the supercelestial sphere, is seen by no one, and never personally converses with anyone, whom we regard as Maker and Father of the Universe” (56.1). As proof he offers a lengthy citation of Gen 18:1–19:28.⁶¹ The Jews with whom Justin converses fail to see how the passage demonstrates that “a certain other is or is called by the holy spirit ‘God’ or ‘Lord’ besides (παρὰ) the Maker of the Universe” (56.3). Speaking on their behalf, Trypho claims, rather, that God appeared to Abraham under the oak tree and was later followed by three anthropomorphic angels, two of whom were sent to judge Sodom and another commissioned to tell Sarah of her impending pregnancy (56.4b–10). The text *presents* this reading of the theophany at Mamre as traditionally Jewish,⁶² and so it is Justin’s first task to refute it. He counters from a larger scriptural context. The text of Genesis, he observes, records that one of the three who appeared to Abraham (and who proclaimed Sarah’s imminent pregnancy) promised to return at a later date (Gen 18:10), and when that one eventually did return, scripture explicitly designates him “God” (Gen 21:12). Trypho concedes (albeit too quickly) the impossibility of the “traditional” Jewish interpretation of the Mamre theophany and admits that it must, rather, have been the creator God who appeared to Abraham along with two angels (i.e., sent to judge Sodom; cf. 56.5). This concludes the first stage of the demonstration, and Trypho delights in reminding Justin that he has yet to actually show “there is *another* God besides (παρὰ) this one who appeared to Abraham, who also appeared to the other patriarchs and prophets” (56.9).

Dial. 56.11–14 advances the argument and represents *the* central passage of the entire “second God” theophanic polemic. Justin now proposes to prove there exists “another God” *numerically distinct* from the God who made all things yet who is united with him in will,⁶³ for, Justin claims, “he has never done or spoken anything

⁶¹ There is a gap in the text of 56.2 where Justin cites Gen 18:3–19:26. The intervening καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ μέχρι τοῦ is evidently a scribal addition (see Miroslav Marcovich, *Iustini Martyris. Dialogus cum Tryphone* [PTS; Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997] 161 app.) added subsequent to the extraction of Gen 18:3–19:26 to shorten the lengthy citation. A similar addition occurs at 59.2. Apparently Justin offered the extended citation (cf. *Dial.* 56.4 [ἀνιστορῶν πάλιν τὰ προλεχθέντα]; 56.12 [ἡ γραφή ἢ προλελεγμένη: Gen 19:23–25]; 126.5).

⁶² The traditional nature of this reading is acknowledged by Justin (ὅπερ τὸ πᾶν ἔθνος ὑμῶν νοεῖ) and Trypho (οὕτως γὰρ καὶ μέχρι τοῦ δεῦρο εἶχομεν; 56.10).

⁶³ “Ἐτερός ἐστι τοῦ τὰ πάντα ποιήσαντος θεοῦ· ἀριθμῶ <δὲ> λέγω, ἀλλὰ οὐ γνώμη.

other than what the one who made the world—above (ὑπὲρ) whom there is no other God—desired that he do or say” (56.11).⁶⁴ Trypho is intrigued by Justin’s claim and shows fresh willingness to engage him in this next stage of the demonstration.⁶⁵ At this point Justin adduces his first foundational proof-text, Gen 19:24: “And the Lord caused to rain down on Sodom fiery sulphur from the Lord out of heaven.” The passage is conspicuous for the double occurrence of the word “Lord,” as even one of Trypho’s Jewish companions acknowledges. The textual anomaly, this Jew opines, “necessarily” indicates that there exists besides (παρὰ) the creator “God” who appeared to Abraham *another* “Lord” who judged Sodom and who must therefore be one of the two angels (56.13). Granted Trypho’s earlier deduction from the first stage of Justin’s demonstration, the deduction of his Jewish companion is entirely consequent.⁶⁶ From Justin’s first proof, the Jews had deduced that the creator God appeared to Abraham. Only a single position among the three visitors to Abraham therefore remains viable for the second “Lord” introduced by Gen 19:24, namely, that of one of the two angels sent to judge Sodom.

For now, Justin does not directly address the Jew’s particular interpretive turn, but simply acknowledges the appropriateness of his deduction from Gen 19:24 that scripture demands the existence of “two powers.” One “must” (ἔδει) indeed confess that “a certain other is also called ‘Lord’ alongside the one who is considered the Maker of the Universe” (56.14). This is not only demanded by Moses from Gen 19:24. Other texts, too, from David show the existence of two “Gods” or “Lords.” Justin cites LXX Pss 109:1 and 44:7–8, which read, respectively: “The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I set your enemies as a footstool for your feet,” and, “Your throne, God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is the scepter of uprightness. You love righteousness and hate lawlessness. Therefore, God,

⁶⁴ The “second God” exists alongside (παρὰ) the Creator, does nothing contrary to (παρὰ) the Creator’s will, is not above (ὑπὲρ) him and yet is more exalted than a mere angel (see *infra* n. 69).

⁶⁵ 56.12: ἵνα καὶ τοῦτο συνθώμεθα!

⁶⁶ This Jew does not offer “a veiled objection” (*pace* Kominiak, *Theophanies*, 36) but a logical deduction. We cannot follow Kominiak when he suggests that the Jew’s proposal, “if inadvertently admitted by the apologist, would destroy his entire demonstration. For in that case, the Lord on earth, who is distinguished from God the Father in heaven, would no longer be the one whom Scripture explicitly calls God, as Justin wants to prove” (*ibid.*). Rather, the Jew graciously anticipates Justin’s logic from the double “Lord” of Gen 19:24, yet simply draws a faulty interpretive conclusion because he is working from a position developed only after Justin’s first argument. Further, the Jew has not yet granted Justin’s distinction between God *in heaven* and God *on earth* (a conclusion that does not develop until the third of Justin’s arguments), and he actually argues that both Gods appeared on earth simultaneously. Nor does he distinguish between “God” and “Lord.”

your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions.” Like Gen 19:24, both Davidic psalms contain double reference to “God” or “Lord,” and Justin capitalizes specifically on this grammatical nuance. These supplementary texts help seal the conclusion to the second argument.⁶⁷

These Davidic psalms further intimate a third and final stage in the argument (56.15–23), for they fortuitously aid Justin in countering the Jew’s prior proposal. Justin offers a challenge, “If then you say that the holy spirit designates a certain other as ‘God’ or ‘Lord’ besides (παρὰ) the Father of the Universe and his Christ [as you do, it seems, when you refer Gen 19:24 to one of the two angels],⁶⁸ defend yourself to me” when we make our next (third) argument from Genesis (56.15). Appealing to the royal, messianic genre of these psalms, Justin deduces that the only correct attribution of the terms “God” and “Lord” in them can be to the Father of the Universe and his Christ, not to a mere angel.⁶⁹ The Jew who suggested one of the two angels was “Lord” must answer for his proposal,⁷⁰ for Justin now demonstrates in a final stage of proof how the text of Genesis demands that the “Lord” who judged Sodom and the “God” who appeared to Abraham be identified as the same individual (56.15b). To do this he cites extended portions of Genesis 18 and 19, yet the

⁶⁷ The messianic connection in 56.15 linking LXX Pss 109 and 44 to “Christ” is also anticipatory of the extended argument in 63.5, 68.3, and 75.

⁶⁸ First class conditional sentence, with the protasis granted for argument’s sake.

⁶⁹ The question of Justin’s christology is too complex to engage here. Clearly, he capitalizes at times on the fact that scripture designates the “second God” as “Angel” (56.4, 10; 58.3, 10; 59.1, 3, etc.), yet by this “not nature but office is signified” (Kominiak, *Theophanies*, 29). Thus in several cases where he refers to the “second God” as ἄγγελος, Justin takes pains to offer immediate qualification to his pre-incarnate *role* as messenger to men (ἀγγέλλεται) and minister of the supercelestial God (cf. 56.4, 10; 58.3; 128.2). His capacity as Angel appears to have been an assumed pre-incarnate *function* of the “second God,” while he was operative as God’s Power (cf. 128.1). Yet he is also “Lord” of the angels (56.22) who participates in the Father’s divine substance (61; 128.4; cf. 58.9: θεός καλεῖται καὶ θεός ἐστὶ καὶ ἔσται), a point which the argument from Wisdom christology demonstrates. Though scripture designates him “Angel” in function, he is not simply an angel in nature (as are the two who went to judge Sodom). For Justin, Christ occupies a liminal position between the supreme creator God and all other created beings (angels and humans). The title of “Angel” for Justin best encapsulates that mediatory function (75.3). Justin is quite comfortable juxtaposing multiple ascriptions of the “second God” (i.e., God, Lord, Angel, Man, Minister, etc.; cf. esp. 126.1–2), without clarifying the diverse functional and ontological capacities of these terms for his theology. By so doing, he develops a christology that preserves the transcendence of the creator God while reserving for God’s Angel-Power a revelatory function to men. Finally, to argue that Justin manifests a highly subordinationist angel christology contravenes the very logic of his “second God” argument (see §2.3).

⁷⁰ Trypho’s companion is a literary foil safeguarding Trypho’s own respectability. This is evident from 56.16 where Trypho, in light of his companion’s foolhardy suggestion, replies: “Continue your proof. For as you see...we are not prepared [sc. with our own answer] for such dangerous answers [sc. like yours], since we have never heard of anyone who examines, investigates, or proves these things.”

underlying logic of this third argument depends on a *prior interpretive reading of Gen 19:24*. Justin draws a distinction from the passage between a God “in heaven” who commissions fiery judgment and a God who carries out that commission on earth.⁷¹ This distinction logically requires the existence of only a *single, distinct* divine figure who appeared in both theophanies at Mamre and Sodom. He summarizes his final conclusion:

So now, have you not understood that one of the three, who is called God and Lord and who ministers to him who is in heaven, is Lord of the two angels? For when they proceeded to Sodom he remained behind and spoke with Abraham the things recorded by Moses. And when he himself had departed after the conversation, Abraham went back to his place. And when he had come to Sodom the two angels no longer spoke with Lot but he himself, as the scripture makes clear. And he is Lord who received these pronouncements from the Lord who is in heaven (i.e., the Maker of the Universe) to inflict on Sodom and Gomorrah. The scripture describes these things, speaking thus: ‘And the Lord caused fiery sulphur to rain down on Sodom from the Lord out of heaven.’⁷²

Trypho concedes, “The scripture, it seems, compels (ἀναγκάζει) us to confess this” conclusion (57.1; cf. 60.3). He raises one further question regarding how the “Lord” could consume a meal (57.1; cf. Gen 18:8),⁷³ which Justin handles by appealing to a different (i.e., less literal) “mode of expression” (57.2). At this point, Trypho is evidently convinced by Justin’s “second God” argument⁷⁴ and asks him to move on to demonstrate that “this God who appeared to Abraham” was born as a man from a virgin (57.3). Justin, however, wishes to offer further proofs on the “second God” rubric, “so that you [Jews; pl.] might also be persuaded about this [i.e., forthcoming argument in *Dial.* 58–60].” Trypho acknowledges that further

⁷¹ The phrase “out of (ἐκ) heaven” in Gen 19:24 grammatically modifies the fiery rain (which came from the sky), yet Justin takes advantage of its syntactic position alongside “the Lord” to infer that one “Lord” remained “in (ἐν) heaven” (56.22–23; 60.5; 129.1; cf. 56.1) while another “Lord” carried out his orders on earth. This reading also corresponds happily with Justin’s theology of divine transcendence (cf. 60.2).

⁷² 56.22–23.

⁷³ This is no objection. Given his prior Jewish reading (sc. that God appeared to Abraham followed by three angels), Trypho formerly did not encounter this issue, for it was the three angels who consumed food, and not God. Having abandoned his former Jewish reading (based on Justin’s first discursive stage) to follow Justin’s new Christian reading of the Mamre event, Trypho now encounters this new difficulty: How is it that “God” (ontologic claim!) could physically eat a meal (Gen 18:8)?

⁷⁴ 58.3 (ὡς ἤδη συνέθεσθε, καὶ διὰ πλείονων πεπεισμένοι βεβαίως μένητε) and 60.3 (ἐπειδὴ ἤδη προαποδέδεικται). Cf. Skarsaune, *Proof*, 210: “There is, in fact, no other topic in the *Dialogue* concerning which Trypho declares himself so fully convinced by Justin’s argument.”

demonstration on this topic would be agreeable, so Justin discusses the appearances of God to Jacob (58) and Moses (59–60).

The argument from Genesis 18–19 pivots around a very literal reading of the double occurrence of the word “Lord” in Gen 19:24. This programmatic passage is cited initially in *Dial.* 56.2,⁷⁵ positioned in verse 12 as the key “two powers” text demonstrating the existence of “another” God alongside the Maker of the Universe, and emphatically repeated at verses 21 and 23 in conclusion of the third argument. Gen 19:24 is constitutive in both second and third stages of Justin’s “second God” argument! And it reappears in a later demonstration (129.1; cf. 60.2–3).⁷⁶ The psalmic proof-texts are somewhat abstracted from the overall argument from theophany,⁷⁷ being primarily adduced to demonstrate a point previously confirmed by the directly theophanic text of Gen 19:24 (i.e., existence of “two powers”) and to confirm an assumption made already on the basis of Gen 19:24 (i.e., God in heaven/on earth). The one substantive element they add is the presence of not only a “two Lords” passage but also a “two Gods” passage (Ps 44:7–8). They strengthen the scriptural claim to “two powers” by reference to that teaching “not only by Moses but also by David” (56.14). The logic of the entire discourse on the theophanies at Mamre and Sodom is constructed then around Gen 19:24, which harmonizes well with and is supplemented by the messianic “two powers” proof-texts of LXX Pss 109:1 and 44:7–8. The “second God” argument is secured for Justin and Trypho (!) in the treatment of the incidents at Mamre and Sodom.⁷⁸

Further demonstration from theophanies to Jacob and Moses (chs. 58–60) presupposes the presence of the “second God” already proven from the Mamre-Sodom events. Justin uses similar arguments and “two powers” strategies to show that the “second God” who appeared to Abraham also appeared to the patriarchs Jacob and Moses, yet a reading of the theophanies to Jacob and Moses and of the relevant parallels in *Dial.* 126–128.1 establishes no new proof-texts in the theophanic argument.⁷⁹ Rather the conclusions already secured from the discussion of the Abraham episode recur repeatedly in the following sections, where the

⁷⁵ Now missing in *Dialogue* (cf. *supra* n. 61).

⁷⁶ Gen 19:24 appears no less than six times in *Dialogue*!

⁷⁷ “[*Dial.* 56.14] semble bien être une petite parenthèse” (Prigent, *Justin*, 123).

⁷⁸ *Supra* n. 74.

⁷⁹ Later theophanies are simply “some other proofs on this rubric” (*Dial.* 57.4; cf. 58.2).

argument is designed to demonstrate that the “same” figure⁸⁰ who appeared to Abraham and was called “God” also appeared to other patriarchs and was called by various names, “Angel,” “Lord,” “God,” and “Man.”⁸¹

A final supplement to the entire “second God” argument from theophany appears in chapter 75.⁸² In *Dial.* 56.15a, Justin had intimated from “two powers” psalmic texts that the two ascriptions “God” and “Lord” only properly apply to the Father and his Christ. In the discursive strategy of chapter 56 these texts had provided a segue to the third stage of Justin’s “second God” argument and were not primarily constitutive in the proof from theophany. In chapter 75, however, Justin builds on this earlier intimation from the psalms that the designations “God” and “Lord” apply to the Christ. He reveals from the book of Exodus that “the name of [the “second”] God himself was also Jesus,” that is, the Christ. This name was not revealed to Abraham or Jacob (cf. Exod 6:3), but only to Moses, as Exod 23:20–21 makes known! Thus Justin supplements the argument that there exists “another God” alongside the Maker of the Universe by adding that this “God” who appeared to the patriarchs is named Jesus.

2.2 Traditional Testimonia and Creative Rereading

Justin’s proof-texts bear the imprint of traditional, forensic *testimonia* collected around the theme of demonstrating the existence of “two powers” in heaven, whether designated “God” or “Lord.”⁸³ As early as the final decades of the

⁸⁰ *Dial.* 58.3; 59.1, 3; 60.2, 4–5.

⁸¹ On these terms, see n. 69.

⁸² The supplementary proof occurs on the subsequent day of dispute (cf. Marcovich, *Iustini*, 62–63), as a summarization of the previous day’s conclusions. It is not technically part of the “second God” proof, but is the coup de grâce linking the “second God” argument (56–62; note reference of appearances to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses in 75.1, 4) with that on virgin birth (63–74; cf. 75.4). Nevertheless, the argument of 75 is invoked specifically within the context of theophanies in Justin’s summary at 128.1, indicating a close thematic linkage between those two (Skarsaune, *Proof*, 206–09).

⁸³ Wilhelm Bousset, *Jüdisch-Christlicher Schulbetrieb in Alexandria und Rom: literarische Untersuchungen zu Philo und Clemens von Alexandria, Justin und Irenäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915) 304–08. In his landmark study of Justin’s exegesis Skarsaune demonstrated that in addition to biblical manuscripts Justin relied upon two written *testimonia* anthologies which carried great authority for him—a “kerygma” and a “recapitulation” source. He regarded *Dial.* 61.1–62.4 as “obviously traditional” and linked it to the “recapitulation” source. Skarsaune tantalizingly proposed that the “recapitulation” source behind *Dial.* 61–62 “might be identical with” the lost *JP* (*ibid.* 234–42; cf. 380–91; see *supra* n. 5 for others who suggest dependence. We are not entirely convinced by this proposal [see Rutherford, “*Altercatio*”). The argument on the theophanies of chapters 56–60, however, he claimed “was not met with prior to Justin” and is “quite singular in the whole *Dialogue*” (*Proof*, 206–13).

first century Christians were aware of such “two powers” proof-texts and utilized them in debates with Jews.⁸⁴ The most common among these was LXX Ps 109:1.⁸⁵ It is present in parallel in all three Synoptic gospels (Matt 22:43–44// Mark 12:35–37// Luke 20:42–43) as demonstration of Christ’s post-resurrection installment alongside God. These preserve the memory of some early Christian communities’ debates with Jewish leaders towards the last decades of the first century. It reappears as a key messianic testimony in Peter’s speech on Pentecost (Acts 2:32–36) and in the epistle to the Hebrews (1:13), where it follows additional “two powers” texts, LXX Ps 44:7–8 and an ingenious reading of LXX Ps 101:26–28,⁸⁶ alongside other royal, messianic psalms (Ps 2:7) to combat an angel christology.⁸⁷ It further receives the force of a christological proof-text in an anti-Jewish setting somewhere on the border of the first and second centuries in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (12:10–11) where it is joined to a christianized form of Isa 45:1,⁸⁸ apparently from a tradition independent of the Synoptics.⁸⁹ None of these sources demonstrates direct literary dependence upon another, helping substantiate the claim that already in the first century Christians gathered certain “two powers” texts into various *testimonia* collections—whether written or oral—for the purpose of messianic debate with Jews and fellow Jewish-Christians. Connections between these traditional “two powers” texts and Justin’s use of Pss 109:1 and 44:7–8 within his extensive exegesis of christophany are too weak to posit direct literary dependence upon any one of them (though contact with Hebrews 1 arouses interest). Yet without doubt, the two psalmic proof-texts are traditional.

⁸⁴ J. Rendel Harris (*Testimonies* [2 vols.; Cambridge: University Press, 1916] 1.1–4), B.P.W. Stather Hunt (*Primitive Gospel Sources* [London: James Clarke, 1951] vii–viii, 3–13), and Barnabas Lindars (*New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1961] 13, 23–24) noted the apologetic context with Judaism as key impetus for early Christian collections of *Schriftbeweis*.

⁸⁵ Martin C. Albl, “*And Scripture Cannot be Broken*”: *The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections* (NovTSup 96; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 216–36, esp. 232–33.

⁸⁶ T.F. Glasson, “‘Plurality of Divine Persons’ and the Quotations in Hebrews 1.6FF.,” *NTS* 12 (1965–66), 271–72.

⁸⁷ Albl, *Scripture*, 190–207.

⁸⁸ Reading “Lord” (κυρίῳ) for “Cyrus” (Κύρω; LXX Isa 45:1).

⁸⁹ Albl, *Scripture*, 232 n. 98. In *Barn.* 12.10–11, LXX Ps 109:1 counters specifically Jewish claims that Messiah is merely scion of David (cf. 12:10b: Ἐπεὶ οὖν μέλλουσιν λέγειν ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς υἱὸς Δαυιδ ἐστίν) and not Son of God.

Gen 19:24 is, however, more enigmatic. It is *the* primary text for Justin's "second God" argument, inasmuch as it represents the *single* "two powers" proof-text native to the theophanic material of Genesis and Exodus. Skarsaune posited the possible existence of an earlier Christian testimony-tradition for Gen 19:24 rooted in Judaeo-Christianity,⁹⁰ yet to our knowledge no such reference to this passage exists in any extant "two powers" text before Justin. The passage is so smoothly integrated into Justin's argument as to demonstrate his full command of it within the larger scriptural context. This suggests it may not have been part of his received *testimonia* tradition but was "discovered" by Justin himself. In this case he supplemented his thorough reading of the Genesis-Exodus theophanies with two already traditional "two powers" *testimonia*, Pss 44:7–8 and 109:1. On the other hand, its proximity to the "two powers" texts ascribed to David might indicate it was part of an inherited tradition that already catalogued these three texts under nominal rubrics ("Moses says," "David says"). One cannot be dogmatic from an analysis of *Dialogue* as to whether Justin received Gen 19:24 from a traditional store.

At any rate, with respect to his use of *proof-texts* Justin stands on traditional footing,⁹¹ yet with respect to his *christological exegesis of theophany* Justin is at his most creative. The early Christian witnesses for a christological interpretation of OT theophany are few and far between and certainly not of the character of Justin's treatment of this material. Seeming parallels between Justin's account of theophanies and that offered by the Alexandrian Jew, Philo, have suggested to some a strong dependence of Justin upon this key representative of Hellenistic Judaism.⁹² Philonic influence on Justin's exegetical development of a "second God" cannot be altogether excluded given the similarities. Yet in light of recent rebuttals to this thesis it now seems doubtful at best to suppose Philo as key conceptual source for Justin's "second

⁹⁰ *Proof*, 412–13; cf. 209 n. 62.

⁹¹ Even if Justin already developed his christophany theory in *Syntagma* (cf. n. 57), this only transposes the problem of sources (so Demetrius Trakatellis, *The Pre-existence of Christ in the Writings of Justin Martyr: An Exegetical Study with Reference to the Humiliation and Exaltation Christology* [HDR 6; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976] 59), and there is no reason to suspect the "two powers" proof-texts there were different from those in *Dialogue*.

⁹² Philo *Mut.* 15; *Abr.* 107–66 (Abraham); *Somn.* 1.120–32 (Jacob); and *Mos.* 1.65–84; *Agr.* 51; *Migr.* 174 (Moses). Philo does not mention the theophany to Joshua. Paul Heinisch, *Der Einfluss Philos auf die älteste christliche Exegese* (ATA 1/2; Münster: Aschendorff, 1908) 195–211; Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena: Verlag Frommannsche Buchhandlung, 1923) 141–47; Trakatellis, *ibid.*, 53–92.

God” proof,⁹³ and there has been a general move away from this position.⁹⁴ *Justin is thus no slave to prior interpretive traditions but is involved in his own creative moment of scriptural reading.*⁹⁵ Indeed, at least two textual indicators confirm Justin’s own sense of creativity in this literary endeavor.⁹⁶ And, like Aristo, this creativity suggests that he has a specific literary strategy in view when producing *Dialogue*.

2.3 Literary Framework and Strategy

The literary shaping of Justin’s “second God” argument suggests that a much broader social strategy is at work for Justin when he encodes his creative “two powers” theophanic reading. We argue that Justin appeals to categories of the one God and his “second God” in order to constitute a specifically “Christian” interpretive identity by rereading what he claims are “traditional” Jewish monotheistic interpretations of scripture. The following observations substantiate this claim.

First, Justin has *the Jew*, Trypho, frame the entire “second God” discussion. Trypho asserts:

So even now resume your discourse and **demonstrate to us that another God besides the Maker of the Universe is acknowledged to exist by the prophetic spirit.** Take care not to mention the sun and moon, which, it is written, God has granted to the nations to worship as

⁹³ Justin never explicitly cites or references Philo, draws entirely different conclusions, utilizes theophanic passages in an altogether different manner, has a much more literal approach to theophanic material, and has an unabashedly personal Logos. The Jewish interpretations of theophany of which Justin is aware know only the appearance of God the Father and/or his angels, never the Logos (*1 Apol.* 63.1; Jules Lebreton, *Histoire du dogme de la Trinité* [2 vols.; Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1928] 2.672–73).

⁹⁴ Skarsaune, *Proof*, 409–24; Lebreton, *ibid.*, 2.667–72; R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture* (Louisville; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002) 107–08; L.W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967) 92–96; Willis A. Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr* (London: SPCK, 1965) 45–47, 96–100.

⁹⁵ Skarsaune believes Justin makes “an original contribution to OT exegesis.” “He may have started,” Skarsaune claims, “from traditional testimony nucleus, but he has developed an impressive exegetical argument transcending the simple »testimony« approach” (*ibid.*, 211).

⁹⁶ Justin shows awareness that he is fabricating new, creative proofs in his “second God” argument from theophany. His claim that these “two powers” proofs “**will seem foreign to you** [Jews], even though they are read by you everyday” (55.3) is matched in a subsequent admission by Trypho. The latter expresses the ill-conceived response of his Jewish companion (cf. *supra* n. 70) in the following way, “We are not prepared [sc. with our own answer] for such dangerous answers [sc. like yours], since **we have never heard** of anyone who examines, investigates, or proves these things” (56.16). Cf. Trakatellis, *Pre-existence*, 53–60; Kominiak, *Theophanies*, 4.

gods, even as prophets who employ this concept often say: 'Your God is God of gods and Lord of lords,' often adding, 'the great and powerful and terrible.' For they do not say these things as though these were really gods, but because the scripture teaches us that **the true God**, who made all things, **is alone Lord** of those commonly regarded as gods and lords. Now, so that the holy spirit might expose this, he said through holy David: 'The gods of the nations—those regarded as gods—are idols of demons, and not gods.' He also places a curse on those who make and worship them.⁹⁷

Justin has the Jew establish the ground rules for the “second God” demonstration. Justin, Trypho requests, should show that the prophetic spirit acknowledges (sc. in scripture) the existence of “another” who is really (sc. ontologically) God and not simply one of the so-called “gods” frequently mentioned elsewhere in scripture and which are not actually divine but “idols of demons.” And Justin must carry out his demonstration (1) by reasoning from scripture (2) in a way that preserves the uniqueness of the creator God as “*alone* (μόνος) Lord of those commonly regarded as gods and lords.” By having his interlocutor strategically voice these points, Justin frames them literarily as discursively-significant *Jewish* parameters. For Christian claims to Jesus’ divinity as “another God” to carry any validity with Jews, Justin supposes, he recognizes that those claims must be demonstrable *from Jewish scripture* in a manner consistent with *the uniqueness of the creator God*, which he regards (and presents) as an unmistakable *sine qua non* of Jewish tradition.

In response, Justin claims that he will reason in a manner he regards as foolproof, while taking great pains to safeguard Trypho’s suggested constraints. He replies:

I am not, I said, about to adduce proofs of this type, Trypho, on account of which I know that those who worship these and similar things are condemned, but [I will adduce] those which no one will be able to counter. They will seem foreign to you, even though they are read by you everyday, so that even from this you understand that because of your wickedness God has hidden from you the ability to discern the Wisdom which is in his scriptures, except for some, to whom according to the grace of his great mercy, as Isaiah said, ‘he has left a seed’ for salvation, lest your ‘race be destroyed’ completely ‘like [that] of the Sodomites and Gomorrites.’ So then, **pay attention to the things I am about to recall from the holy scriptures**, which do not need to be explicated, but only heard.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ 55.1–2; cf. Deut 4:19; Ps 95:5 (LXX).

⁹⁸ 55.3.

He adopts Trypho's polemic controls and vows to adduce proofs (1) from scripture (2) not about "gods" but about "God," that is, in a way that preserves divine uniqueness. With this response, Justin fully consents to make his demonstration within the criteriological confines specifically established by his *Jewish* counterpart. Both disputants begin on the same methodological page.

Second, though he himself regards the existence of a "second God" as self-evidently demonstrable from a mere reading of the theophanic texts themselves,⁹⁹ for the sake of convincing his Jewish disputants, Justin offers carefully articulated arguments which (to him) make the demonstration foolproof from even a *Jewish* perspective! *He begins with what he portrays as "traditional" Jewish readings of OT theophanies, and at every stage he appeals to some scriptural nuance to carefully draw his counterparts from their own "traditional" reading of the Mamre-Sodom event to alternative conclusions and ultimately to a new Christian rereading of Gen 18–19.*

We have noted earlier the tripartite sequence of Justin's "second God" argument (§2.1). Justin opens the proof with what he presents as the traditional *Jewish* interpretation of the Mamre-Sodom theophany—the creator God manifest himself to Abraham prior to the appearance of *three angels*, two to judge Sodom and another who appeared to Abraham to announce Sarah's pregnancy. Justin offers his first proof. It was "God" who appeared to Abraham *as one of the three*. This forces an altered *Jewish* interpretation—the creator God appeared *with two angels* who judged Sodom. Justin offers his second proof, namely, that there exist two *distinct* Gods. This leads to another logical alteration in the *Jewish* reading—the creator God appeared to Abraham and *one of the two angels* who judged Sodom was another "Lord." Justin now provides his third proof, by identifying the "Lord" who appeared to Abraham with the "Lord" who judged Sodom. The Jews finally conclude with Justin that the creator God did not appear at all, but another "Lord" did! Only in the third discursive stage is there complete resolution of the textual phenomena and an overall coherence in the logic which moved from an initial *Jewish* theophanic reading to a Christian christophanic reading of the Mamre-Sodom event. Strategically, each sequential stage of argumentation moves logically from a prior *Jewish* reading or altered conclusion about theophany by way of *Jewish* criteria to a

⁹⁹ Justin cites and recites scriptural texts quite frequently in his "second God" proof, as though these themselves are sufficient for the argument. According to him, the scriptures in this regard "do not need to be explicated, but only heard" (55.3).

distinctively *Christian* solution. Justin's disputants are gradually transposed from "traditional" Jewish monotheistic readings of theophany to Christian christophanic rereadings of theophany.

Third, this interpretive transposition does not occur unwillingly. One of the striking elements of the argument from the Mamre-Sodom theophany is the fact that Justin has his *Jewish* interlocutors punctuate his own scriptural and logical fastidiousness and his safeguarding of the specifically Jewish polemical controls established for the proof. Throughout his "second God" argument Justin meticulously scrutinizes the text of scripture and subjects it to a reasoned approach, paying careful attention to textual details at times chapters apart. Further, he offers a surprisingly literal interpretation throughout the argument from the theophany of Mamre-Sodom. His supererogatory concern for textual detail is epitomized in his very literal use of the nuanced two "Lords" language of Gen 19:24, the coup de grâce of his argument from theophany. Yet it is his peculiar practice of invoking the responses of his Jewish disputants in order to highlight (1) the logic of his scriptural reasoning and (2) his own attention to preserving the uniqueness of the supreme, creator God that particularly stands out. At every step of his argument, a Jew acknowledges Justin's faithfulness to the two previously agreed upon polemical parameters.

After his first proof, Justin asks whether he has sufficiently demonstrated the first point by a juxtapositioning of Gen 18:10 and 21:12. Trypho responds, "That's correct. But you have not proven from this that another is God alongside (παρά) this one who appeared to Abraham... **You have proven**, however, **that we were wrong** in thinking that the three who were in the tent with Abraham were all angels" (56.9). The first point has been proven *from scripture* to Trypho's satisfaction, so that he alters his traditional reading. Indeed, if the point had not been satisfactorily proven from scripture, then Trypho should carry on believing in Jewish interpretive traditions. "If then I could not prove from the scriptures [this first demonstration]," Justin concedes, "it is reasonable for you to think the very thing which your entire race thinks" (56.10). It is Justin's specifically scriptural reasoning that leads Trypho from proof one to two. Further, this initial proof in no way threatens the doctrine of divine uniqueness, the second polemical parameter. In his previous, traditionally Jewish interpretation, Trypho is content to have the creator God appear to Abraham alongside three angels. Having now altered that belief, his reformed interpretation still has the creator God appearing to Abraham, this time alongside only two angels.

It is unnecessary then for Trypho to affirm or highlight Justin's careful preservation of the creator's uniqueness at this point. The first discursive argument has been adequately demonstrated (1) from scripture (2) in a way that does not endanger the uniqueness of God the creator.

At this point Justin introduces the second demonstration. He will prove that the "second God" is distinct in number, though not in will, from the creator God. And then, something quite interesting occurs. Rather anxious to have Justin demonstrate the point, Trypho encourages him, "Prove now that this is [the case], so that we may agree with this. For **we acknowledge** that you do not say that he affirms or has done or spoken anything contrary to (παρά) the will of the Creator of the Universe" (56.12). The Jew effectively concedes that Justin's forthcoming proof, provided it advances logically from scripture, may not actually endanger the creator's uniqueness. This is an astonishing admission, to be sure, for it indicates a willingness in Trypho to grant the possibility that the creator's uniqueness might not be compromised by the numerical presence of a "second God," as long as this "second God" (obediently) unites his will with that of the supreme creator God. If demonstrable, the presence of a "second God" would require a subtle nuanced shift in the meaning of the creator's uniqueness. No longer indicative of numerical singularity, divine uniqueness would essentially indicate the supreme transcendent incomparability of the creator God *above* the "second God," who, in turn, obeys and is subject to the will of the supreme creator God. The complex unity of divinity would be preserved through a complex uniting of wills. Trypho seems entirely prepared to make this theological adjustment in his own understanding of divine uniqueness, provided that Justin successfully demonstrates that scripture *necessitates* the existence of "two Gods!" And Justin does just this to Jewish satisfaction, for after he cites Gen 19:24, one of Trypho's Jewish companions asserts, "**Therefore it is necessary** (ἀνάγκη) to affirm that he whom the scripture through Moses designates as Lord and as one of the two angels who went down to Sodom, this very one is alongside the God himself who appeared to Abraham" (56.13). It is Justin's use of scripture that mandates for this Jew the compulsory distinction of "one Lord" and "one God." In this second stage, Justin has again adequately confirmed another step of his demonstration by proceeding (1) from scripture (2) in a way that, though it altars the meaning of divine uniqueness, does not endanger the creator's uniqueness.

It is so crucial for Justin to properly navigate these two polemic controls at this pivotal second stage of the argument that he has Trypho further confirm his own

fastidiousness in this step. After the second proof is established, Trypho urges Justin on to his third demonstration by observing, “**And we would not have put up with your discourse if you had not referred everything to the scriptures. For you are anxious to adduce proofs from them, and you declare that there is no God above (ὕπερ) the Maker of the Universe**” (56.16). The ground rules for debate are secured to this point even to the satisfaction of his primary *Jewish* dialogue partner. Trypho is willing to follow Justin into the third stage of proof precisely because at the key point where Justin demonstrates the existence of a distinct “second God,” (1) he has constantly referred to scripture and (2) has acknowledged the central confession of the creator God’s uniqueness (now, incomparable transcendence), the very points Trypho had demanded from the outset.

At this point, all that remains for Justin to demonstrate in the third stage is how the text of Genesis demands that the “Lord” who judged Sodom and the “God” who appeared to Abraham be identified as the same individual (56.15b). Following his third point, Justin asks whether he has convincingly demonstrated the final proof. Trypho responds, “That **scripture compels us to confess this is evident**. Yet even you would confess that there is something worthy which remains in doubt, concerning what is said: He ate what was prepared and was placed before him by Abraham” (57.1). To this point, Justin has made convincing arguments from scripture, as even his Jewish counterparts affirm, and he has safeguarded the uniqueness of the creator God, when, that is, the nature of the creator’s uniqueness is somewhat altered. Yet one thing remains for Trypho precarious and disturbing. If Justin’s “second God” argument is correct, and scripture seems to demand it, then does not this jeopardize the divine transcendent nature of the “second God,” for how can that which is divine be said to eat, as scripture claims? The “traditional” Jewish reading of the Mamre-Sodom theophany circumvents this problem, for the creator God is never said to have eaten, only the three angels who appeared to Abraham.¹⁰⁰ Justin easily surmounts the difficulty by allegorical reference to manna as the heavenly food. At any rate, this last stage does not threaten the uniqueness (sc. supreme incomparability) of the creator God, since the question concerns the “second God.”

¹⁰⁰ On divine eating in Jewish and hellenistic texts, see Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins* (WUNT 65; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992) 99–105.

At this point, all polemic controls have been met to *Jewish* satisfaction in every stage of the debate, and Trypho declares that Justin is engaged in a discussion “that is entirely pleasing to me” (57.4). The Jew will not only tolerate Justin’s continued proof on this topic, but gladly welcomes it. It is rather humorous to witness Justin’s demure response in 58.1 to all this Jewish confirmation: “I propose to investigate scriptures with you. I am not eager to show off with peculiar skill my own rhetorical prowess. For I do not possess any such faculty, but God’s grace alone has been given me for understanding his scriptures” (58.1). Yet even here his exegetical skill is reaffirmed once again by Trypho. “And in this you act¹⁰¹ in a manner worthy of piety,” Trypho responds, “but you seem to me to be pretending when you say you do not possess facility in the rhetorical arts” (58.2). Such is the solidity of Justin’s “second God” argument from the Mamre-Sodom theophany. It surpasses all Jewish scrutiny and meets Jewish satisfaction!¹⁰²

Justin’s approach, as witnessed in the above observations, cannot be merely incidental. Surely it is not insignificant that he has a Jew establish the terms of debate; he begins with what he regards as the traditional Jewish interpretation of the Mamre-Sodom theophany and alters that Jewish conviction; and finally he has Jews substantiate his own polemical rigor in respect of following the Jewish controls for the debate. These important observations harken back to the literary creativity that we briefly witnessed in section 2.2 above, as Skarsaune describes:

In no other part of the *Dialogue* is the exegetical debate so much a real dialogue as in the main section on the theophanies. Trypho is very co-operative, poses only relevant questions, makes valuable summaries of previous argument, and declares himself satisfied with Justin’s exposition. One gets the impression that Justin here has gained more freedom and independence in the handling of his exegetical argument than elsewhere in the *Dialogue*. This corresponds to the fact that he is obviously working directly with the Genesis and Exodus LXX, as his long LXX excerpts demonstrate.¹⁰³

Without doubt, Justin’s “second God” argument from theophany represents a highly conscious literary strategy, an attempt at rereading specifically Jewish monotheistic textual traditions in a distinctly Christian way! Justin’s “second God” argument from theophany moves the Jews from their initial theophanic reading of the text to a christophanic rereading. By establishing the parameters for the argument

¹⁰¹ Lit. “and you do this”

¹⁰² Cf. 60.3; 63.1.

¹⁰³ *Proof*, 208.

along specifically Jewish lines, beginning with Jewish traditional readings, and having the Jews recognize that he reasons within the confines of established Jewish parameters, Justin has effected a rereading of Jewish traditions along Jewish discursive lines! And he fundamentally positions the argument within a category socially significant for both Jews and Christians, Hebrew scripture as authoritative tradition. Both disputants agree that knowledge of God must be derived from scripture. The very structure of the “second God” argument pits Jewish monotheistic reading of scripture against Christian “two powers” rereadings.

Justin indicates this “second God” reading has been granted him by God’s grace, and he informs his Jewish interlocutors that it is “because of your (pl.) wickedness God has hidden from you the ability to discern the Wisdom (τὴν σοφίαν) which is in his scriptures, except for some, to whom, according to the grace of his great mercy, as Isaiah said, ‘he has left a seed for salvation, lest your race be destroyed’ completely ‘like [that] of the Sodomites and Gomorraites’” (55.3). “Wisdom” doubtless anticipates the “second God,” Christ, whom Justin will soon align with God’s Wisdom in *Dialogue* 61–62.¹⁰⁴ Justin claims that, as a race, the Jews have missed the authentic “two powers” meaning of God’s scriptures because of their wickedness. God alone reveals this authentic meaning in a gracious act, and that reading has been revealed to Christians! To accept the christophanic “second God” reading of theophany (and Wisdom traditions) is to align oneself with God’s grace and to participate in a distinctly Christian way of reading. Indeed, some ethnic Jews (i.e., Jewish-Christians) have even been granted the grace of God’s mercy to participate in “second God” readings of scripture as Christians. These ethnic Jews, as Christians, reread their ancient textual traditions in a new, divinely-authenticated way. This claim legitimates and authenticates in God’s grace the creativity of Christian “two powers” rereadings of Jewish traditions!

Yet in this strategy, Justin actually engages himself in an even more ambitious project. This textual “two powers” rereading of theophany and the Christian interpretive identity it engenders reinforce *a totalizing monotheistic Christian identity*. By his rereading of theophany, Justin restructures the entire cosmic order away from traditional Jewish monotheistic cosmology to a new

¹⁰⁴ Cf. 61.1: Μαρτύριον δὲ καὶ ἄλλο ὑμῖν, ὦ φίλοι, ἔφην, ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν δώσω, ὅτι ἀρχὴν πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ θεὸς γεγέννηκε δύναμιν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικὴν, ἥτις καὶ δόξα κυρίου ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου καλεῖται, ποτὲ δὲ υἱός, ποτὲ δὲ σοφία, ποτὲ δὲ ἄγγελος, ποτὲ δὲ θεός, ποτὲ δὲ κύριος καὶ λόγος, ποτὲ δὲ ἀρχιστράτηγον ἑαυτὸν λέγει.

Christian cosmology that involves “two powers” in heaven. By fortifying this totalizing Christian worldview, he inevitably reinforces every area of Christian life and identity. In the flow of *Dialogue*, the theophanic rereading specifically fortifies Christian (1) monotheistic belief and (2) cultic practice.

In this regard, it is interesting first to observe the subtle shifts in Trypho’s own thinking respecting the uniqueness of the creator God. Prior to the argument, Trypho presents the uniqueness of the creator in terms of numerical singularity. The creator is “*alone* (μόνος) Lord of those commonly regarded as gods and lords.” He exists as **the true God** (ὁ τῷ ὄντι θεός) in an entirely separate category of being from all other existants, “for [the prophets] do not say these things as though [those commonly regarded as ‘gods and lords’] were really (ὄντων) gods” (55.2). Through Trypho, Justin presents the traditional Jewish conception of divine unity as simple and equivalent to numerical singularity (sc. uniqueness).¹⁰⁵ By the beginning of the second discursive step, however, Trypho expresses a willingness to shift his traditional understanding of divine uniqueness to allow for a complex unity of wills between “two Gods,” in a way that does not jeopardize the supreme incomparable transcendence of the creator God, if Justin can convince him that scripture *demand*s the existence of two distinct Gods. At the beginning of the third stage, we see that Trypho, though he declares Justin’s conclusion “dangerous,” has actually made the theological alteration to divine uniqueness, precisely because he does not know how to refute Justin’s second argument about the existence of “two Gods,” which Justin established in line with Trypho’s polemical parameters.¹⁰⁶ According to this new frame of reference, the creator God is unique for Trypho because he remains incomparably transcendent. He is the one “above” (ὑπέρ) which no other God rules, but “alongside of” (παρά) which scripture demonstrates there exists a “second God,” who does nothing “contrary to” (παρά) the supreme creator’s will, since he is functionally united with him in purpose. As part of this unity of wills, it is this “second God” who manifests himself to the patriarchs on earth in theophany. *Trypho has gradually adopted Justin’s Christian view of monotheism!* Justin involves himself in nothing short of a program to alter the most cherished of Jewish beliefs,

¹⁰⁵ This coincides with Aristo’s presentation of traditional Jewish understandings of divine unity as simple and corresponding to numerical uniqueness (see *supra* §1.4). Together these witnesses further confirm that Jewish monotheism was understood by those outside that tradition in terms of “exclusivist monotheism” (*supra* ch. 2 n. 52).

¹⁰⁶ 56.16: καὶ ἡμεῖς πρὸς τὰς οὕτως ἐπικινδύνους ἀποκρίσεις οὐκ ἔσμεν ἔτοιμοι, ἐπειδὴ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ταῦτα ἐρευνῶντος ἢ ζητοῦντος ἢ ἀποδεικνύντος ἀκηκόαμεν.

the unique existence of a single creator God, by insinuating a “second God” alongside the creator God and demonstrating this from OT theophanic texts!

In the second instance, Justin’s argument powerfully reconstitutes Christian monotheistic “cultic practice of devotion to ‘two Gods’” which regularly recurs among Christian communities. This is a very central practice that distinguishes Christianness from Jewishness. It is not insignificant that the Jew Trypho explicitly formulates the problem which the existence of “another God” poses in terms specifically of the threat that *cultic worship* of a “second God” poses to the exclusive worship rightly belonging to the creator God alone (55.1).¹⁰⁷ *Dialogue* 56–60 attempts a scripturally-based, theological solution to the difficulties which Christian devotion to Jesus posed for the category of divine unity.

It is this confluence of monotheistic belief and cultic practice which lies at the heart of Justin’s rereading. His creative approach to OT theophanies permits the development of a distinctively Christian interpretive identity that reestablishes a Christian monotheistic theological and cultic identity on the basis of authoritative scriptural texts. In *Dial.* 56–60 is concealed a deeper social strategy involving the production of distinctly Christian interpretive identity, which reinforces a new cosmic structure. Justin’s response to the “Jesus problem” provides an effective means of hermeneutically reconstituting Jewish traditions in a new, Christian way, thereby shaping specifically Christian ways of “two powers” reading, monotheistic belief, and cultic worship vis-à-vis Jewish practices. *Justin has moved his Jewish counterpart from a traditional Jewish reading of theophany to a Christian rereading, while simultaneously transmuting the traditional Jewish cosmos (sc. understanding of God’s uniqueness) into a Christian understanding!* In so doing, his theophanic literary strategy legitimates specifically Christian identity vis-à-vis Jewishness. Reasoning from pentateuchal traditions which his Jewish dialogue partner, Trypho, also grants as authoritative, Justin’s formulation of the “second God” represents one of the more inventive, early Christian theological and exegetical rereadings of Jewish textual traditions.

¹⁰⁷ Προσκυβεῖν appears twice in 55.1 (cf. also 55.2–3), both times in reference to the *worship* of “those commonly regarded as gods and lords” vis-à-vis that due to the “true God.” Cf. *supra* ch. 2 §§1, 2.2.1.

3. Rereading Jewish Traditions: Producing Christian Interpretive Identity

Both *JP* and *Dialogue* reread Jewish textual traditions by capitalizing on some inherent plurality within the text of Jewish scriptures to prove the existence of a personal agent alongside the one God. In *JP*, when the Son of God is closely related to (or, perhaps, identified with) the Ἀρχὴ of creation and Σοφία θεοῦ, a duality of persons emerges in Gen 1:1, 26 and Prov 8:27, 30. For Aristo, the Son of God is present with God at the very act of creation. Yet, for Justin, he is also the “other God” that presented himself in OT theophanies to the Hebrew patriarchs. The presence of two “Gods” or “Lords” in the single, programmatic passage of Gen 19:24 confirms this. Justin found supplemental support for the distinct existence of this “second God” alongside the supreme creator God from a similar “two powers” textual phenomenon in LXX Pss 44:7–8 and 109:1. By creatively injecting into Jewish scriptures a second figure, Jesus, alongside the creator God, Aristo and Justin effectively reread Jewish textual traditions in a distinctively Christian way. Their “two powers” rereadings are then sophisticated, strategic moments of early Christian monotheistic identity construction. There are, of course, other creative ways in which Christians envisioned a second figure alongside the supreme God,¹⁰⁸ yet *JP* and *Dialogue* share much in common and enlighten particularly well the value of “two powers” readings as monotheistic identity strategies. Consider the following brief points which highlight their comparative value in this regard.

Both *JP* and *Dialogue* embed their “two powers” readings within a literary genre (the Christian-Jewish dialogue) that explicitly pits Christian readings against Jewish readings in a polemical context of Christian-Jewish debate that plays out on a

¹⁰⁸ For example, the post-resurrection exaltation of Christ to God’s right hand in the Synoptic gospels (Matt 22:43–44// Mark 12:35–37// Luke 20:42–43) and Acts (2:34–35) represents a “two powers” enthronement rereading of a traditionally-messianic Jewish text LXX Ps 109:1. Heb 1:5 has a similar exaltation pattern in view and uses, in addition, other messianic passages, Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14. Along with Justin, these rereadings presuppose the cooperation of the creator God and the second figure, Jesus.

The “two powers” theologies of Marcion and of Valentinian myth, however, envision a strong separation between the one supreme Christian God (i.e., Father) and the creator (i.e., demiurge) God of Jewish tradition. Marcion viewed the relationship between these “two powers” entirely oppositionally, while Valentinian myth portrayed the second demiurge as ignorant (for a season) of the supreme Father. Marcion and Valentinian myth thus provide very different modes of adopting the “two powers” motif, in ways which have profound importance for understanding Christian monotheistic identity construction vis-à-vis Jews.

For reasons of space, we have been unable to analyze these additional types of “two powers” strategies in this thesis. We plan to evaluate these elsewhere at a future date.

battleground of commonly shared tradition, the Jewish scriptures. In these dialogues, both Jew and Christian grant that these (traditionally-Jewish) scriptural texts are authoritative sources upon which any dispute over the nature of the one God must be resolved. In the course of that debate, it is the Jew (Papiscus and Trypho, respectively) who first objects that Christian worship of a “second God” threatens the unity of God and the exclusivist dictates of monotheistic worship. *JP* and *Dialogue* answer this concern by rereading traditional Jewish interpretations of creation and theophanic texts, respectively, to introduce a second, divine personal agent alongside the one creator God of Jewish tradition. In the process of proof, the traditional Jewish understanding of divine unity as numerical uniqueness is redefined.

Ultimately, these “two powers” rereading strategies are attempts to legitimate, authorize, and perpetuate a particularly Christian cosmology within the scope of authoritative texts. There is no sense in the “two powers” interpretive strategies of *JP* or *Dialogue* that the Jewish God of OT scriptures is anything other than the same God which Christians worship. *JP* and *Dialogue* acknowledge that Jews and Christians worship the “same God,” the unique creator revealed in the OT scriptural traditions. Yet by introducing a second divine, personal agent into the cosmic order of things, an entire reconstruction of the traditional symbolic universe of monotheism can take place and be substantiated in explicitly Christian terms! No longer does divine unity simply mean numerical uniqueness, as Jews have long claimed. “Two powers” scriptural texts demand that the concept of God’s uniqueness be redefined to enfold a complex unity of two agencies, operating harmoniously with each other. The simple Jewish cosmology of a single creator God is shifted to a more complex Christian cosmology of “two powers” in heaven. And this seismic shift corresponds to a shift in collective identity. These strategies of rereading Jewish traditions are socially effective in the continual process of negotiating and indexing Christian monotheistic identity vis-à-vis Jewishness. Both *JP* and *Dialogue* are involved in explicitly creative and instrumental strategies of shaping Christianness vis-à-vis Judaism.

Chapter Six

Observations and Conclusions

The eventual cultural disentanglement in the fourth century of (rabbinic) Judaism and (orthodox) Christianity depended in large part on the ability of Christian leaders of earlier generations to craft for themselves cultural (and textual) discourses that engaged shared Judeo-Christian symbols in distinctive “Christian” ways. Our self-proclaimed Christian texts are complicit in that process. We have seen how Christians of the second century actively engaged the symbol of “one God” in diverse literary strategies as a powerful ideological tool for resisting, repositioning, and rereading “Judaism” and “Jewish” traditions in order to shape and articulate their own peculiar “Christian” identities. By harnessing the symbol of “one God” from the broader Judeo-Christian discursive culture and using this in various combinations with constructed images of Judaism, our texts could create new worlds of meaning and identity, identities that were at once marked by belief in “one God” and were “Christian” in a way that was distinctively not “Jewish.”

1. Textual Constructions and Existing Identities

Each of our texts acts as a vehicle for voicing a particular construction of “Christian,” “Jewish,” and “one God” identities in ways that either contest or reinforce existing senses of communal identity. In the case of the Ignatian epistles of *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*, one senses that the textually constructed identities of opposition—Judaism and Christianity—actually run in the face of the blurred categories of overlap which characterized Jewish and Christian interactions in the communal life of these two cities. Behind the rhetoric of the text lies a hidden reality. *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* contest the fuzziness of negotiated Christian-Jewish identities in Philadelphia and Magnesia, respectively, by positing a sharp contrast between “Judaism” and “Christianism.” Jews are not Christians, Christians are not Jews, and never the twain shall meet. In this case, the text of these epistles presents the world not as it is, but as it could (or rather, should) be. And the way to make reality conform to textually-constructed identity, the text proclaims, is through regular participation in the unity of God through the eucharist. By reaffirming again and again the unity of God and Jesus Christ through collective participation in the eucharist under the authority of a single bishop, a new less-fuzzy, distinctively

“Christian” identity can emerge that will more clearly articulate the difference (as the text constructs it) between Jews, as those who reject Jesus, and Christians, as those who accept him.

For *KP* and Aristides’ *Apology*, the idea of “one God” is constructed in a very different way than with Ignatius. The sacramental monotheism of Ignatius that closely united God, Jesus, and “Christians” in the eucharist now gives way to the idea of “one God,” conceived along (Middle Platonic) philosophical lines as the supremely transcendent creator, without reference to Jesus (*KP* fr. 2; *Apol.* 1)!¹ “Jews” and “Judaism” are not primarily those who reject Jesus (as for Ignatius), but those who do not have “knowledge” of the one creator God (as the text portrays his nature). For *KP*, Jews worship angels and participate in a lunar cult and are thereby excluded from knowledge of the “one God,” *even though* they desire to do so and claim to do so (fr. 4aβ). Similarly, for Aristides, Jews confess “that God is one” (14.3a Sy) and “suppose in their minds that they are serving God, but in the methods of their [cultic] practices” Aristides himself knows that “their service is to angels and not to God” (14.4a Sy). In both cases, “Jewish” identities (as “Christian” ones) are constructed and indexed against an equally constructed idea of “one God.” In this way, Jews are artificially excluded (*KP*) or distanced (*Apology*) from the very indicator that the text itself presents as fundamental, namely, accurate knowledge of the one God. Jewish cult cannot therefore represent the highest, most enlightened form of worship (*KP*) or the most harmonious form of ethnic society (*Apology*).

We may sense something disingenuous behind the textual rhetoric and constructions in these monotheistic classification systems. If we listen closely, we hear the silenced voices of those Jews and their multiple monotheisms that we discovered in Chapter Two. We sense the moves of power being made by these texts to wrest away from the Jews their public claims to know the “one God” and to place it in the hands of Christians. There is a displacement of Jewish identities. With these classification strategies we are involved then in a larger internecine dispute over the nature of true monotheism taking place among the discourses of Jews and Christians. Yet there is also a sense that already extant Christian communal identities are being confirmed or perhaps more firmly established. In the one case, the Christian sense of being “true worshippers” of the “one God” is bolstered through the development of

¹ We have argued that the ambiguous fr. 2 of *KP* should not be understood christologically (see ch. 4 Excursus).

an explicitly “Christian” epistemology (*KP*). In the other case, Christian sense of being a different “race” of people is confirmed by an ethnoracial classification schema (*Apology*). In both cases, the figure of Jesus (so removed from the presentation of the “one God”) becomes the bearer of revelatory tradition. In this way, only Christians are privy to “accurate knowledge” of the “one God.”

In Aristo’s *JP* and Justin’s *Dialogue*, once again, an altogether different picture of the “one God” appears, now surprisingly constructed as “two.” Through repetition of proof-texts from Hebrew scripture, both texts claim that the Jewish scriptures themselves teach the existence of a “second God,” which they identify with Jesus. The texts have the Jews begin the argument by invoking such passages as Isa 44:6 (*JP*) and Deut 4:19 and Ps 95:5 (LXX) (*Dialogue*). In so doing, they present as “traditional” to Judaism a belief in the absolute uniqueness of God that would exclude any possibility of the existence of “two powers” in heaven. Our texts claim the belief in a second divine figure exclusively for Christians. Jews, who are presented in both texts as not believing in the existence of this *deuteros theos*, have thereby jettisoned the proper interpretation of their scriptural heritage.

There is an air of authenticity to these “two powers” arguments from scriptures, for we have seen how the rabbis inveighed against certain *minim* who believed in “two powers in heaven.”² *JP* and *Dialogue* thus collude (from the very opposite direction) with rabbinic arguments that those who believe in “two powers in heaven” are not Jewish. For the former, they are Christian; for the latter, *minim*. Yet there is also a sense in which the plurality of Jewish monotheisms on the ground is not being accurately represented by these texts and indeed has been altogether lost in this dialectic of mutual exclusion.³ In particular, the voices of certain para-rabbinic Jewish groups that did believe in the existence of “two powers in heaven” are discursively squelched in these textual strategies.⁴ If the arguments of *JP* and *Dialogue* are read in the context of this historical plurality, their claims to a specifically “Christian” monotheism can be seen really as discursive strategies within

² Ch. 2 §3.

³ In Chapter Two we argued that there is a sense in which we can speak of Jewish “monotheism” as the predominant form of early and second-century Jewish religion. We do not imply by this that Jewish monotheism was either (1) a monolithic entity, (2) always had the same expressions, or (3) that it could not include diverse representations of the one true God, including the addition of a secondary personal agent alongside that God (see Ch. 2 §3). Jewish religious belief and practice and Jewish conceptions of God were diverse, yet the overwhelming evidence is that they directed their *worship* to one God alone as a peculiarly Jewish religious standard.

⁴ Justin hints at this diversity (*Dial.* 48.4).

ongoing debates over the nature of the one God in relation to secondary heavenly figures that was taking place in the broader Judeo-Christian culture. Behind these textual voices that so clearly distinguish Christian from Jewish monotheism may be perceived a certain interpenetration and sharing of Christian and Jewish ideas about the one God. These are voices somewhat lost to history but which may perhaps be reconstructed in part by reading our monotheistic texts “against the grain.”

Through our six texts we have grasped a sense of how second-century textual productions of monotheistic strategies represent bids at staking claim to communal identities by contesting and/or confirming existing senses of identity. Our monotheistic identity strategies all too often create false senses of unity, as though there were a single, reified version of Christianity, Judaism, or the idea of “one God.” We have seen how behind these texts, however, may be perceived a more complex discursive settings of disentangling Judeo-Christian sub-cultures.

2. The “Jesus Problem” Revisited

If, as we have shown, these textual strategies are constructions of power, then we may ask finally about them, “Why did many Christians use monotheistic ideologies *as a tool for identity construction*?” What underlying social concerns seemed so pressing that Christians felt the most appropriate response was to reclaim a sense of who they were as monotheists by means of highly-conscious literary strategies that resisted, repositioned, and reread Judaism and Jewish traditions? Alternatively, we may intonate the question slightly differently and ask, “Why did many Christians use *monotheistic* ideologies as a tool for identity construction?” Why articulate Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism through a series of literary exercises expressed in specifically *monotheistic* ways, that is, in terms of a quintessential Jewish identity marker (as demonstrated in Chapter Two)? Why not select some other constitutive Jewish symbol(s) to delineate Jewish and Christian identities, perhaps a symbol some Christians could more easily repudiate?⁵

Quite serendipitously, the answer to these queries was already incipient in the initial framing of our investigation. Early on, we observed that Christian devotion to

⁵ The brief answer to this question is, of course, that Christians often did select other symbols as areas of self-definition vis-à-vis Judaism; the Mosaic Law and its observance are particularly prominent in this regard. Yet, for many communities no symbol was more important for shaping Christian identity than the idea and confession of one God and the concomitant cult of exclusivist monotheism that ties in with that belief.

Jesus alongside the one God seemed to present a social and rational incongruity with more traditional presentations and practices of Jewish monotheism and pagan polytheism. We labeled this incongruity the “Jesus problem” (ch. 1 §1). Two issues inhere to this problematic, namely, the *worship of a second*—no more, no less—*heavenly figure*,⁶ Jesus, and the significance of the *newness* of that cultic practice vis-à-vis more well-established cultic modes in the Empire. These motifs recur throughout our literature as interlocking themes, suggesting that the “Jesus problem” itself constitutes the broader social (and not merely theological)⁷ context against which the crafting of Christian literary strategies of monotheistic identity was deemed necessary. The best way to demonstrate the social significance of the “Jesus problem” is to rehash the logic of our texts with a view to highlighting the elements of Christian “newness” and the importance of Jesus in this regard.

Ignatius explicitly frames “Judaism” and “Christianism” in terms, respectively, of something “old/antiquated” versus something “new” in Christ.⁸ For him, Jesus Christ reveals the one God in a new way. His faithful obedience to God in the gospel instantiates his unity with God and becomes paradigmatic for the “Christian” community founded by him. The gospel itself renders “Judaism” antiquated and useless (*Magn.* 8.1; 9.1) and ushers in something profoundly “distinctive” (ἐξάριετον) in “Christianism” (*Phld.* 9.2) through the creation of a cosmic ecclesia consisting of believers of all ages—prophets, patriarchs, apostles, and church—harmoniously united with God and with one another. To participate in the gospel is to participate in unity with God and Jesus. The gospel thereby becomes the dividing line between antiquated “Judaism” and authoritative “Christianism.” At the same time, it becomes the quintessential paradigmatic expression of Jesus’ unity with God. This is why “Judaism” is to be avoided, especially when its influence extends into the practice of the “Christian” churches. If the gospel effects social harmony, it is equally true, for Ignatius, that “Judaism” (sc. the anti-gospel) leads to social differentiation. By turning towards certain interpretive (*Philadelphians*) and cultic (*Magnesians*) patterns associated with “Judaism,” some so-called “Christians”

⁶ Jews question why a second figure was worshipped at all (cf. above n. 3); pagans, why only a second figure was worshipped.

⁷ Eric Osborn clearly demonstrates the important theological and philosophical concerns that Christian devotion to Jesus raised amidst confessions of one God. Though he does not label this the “Jesus problem,” it is evident that similar phenomena are involved in his description of second-century Christian theological development (cf. our discussion of his work in ch. 1 §2.1.1).

⁸ *Magn.* 8.1; 9.1; 10.2; *Phld.* 9.2; cf. ch. 3 §1.1–3.

in Philadelphia and Magnesia effectively abandon the new revelatory, unifying, cosmic value of Jesus in the gospel in favor of what is now outmoded, obsolescent, and alienating.

For bishop Ignatius, there can be but one response. “Christians” must perpetually reclaim their distinctive “Christian” identity⁹ vis-à-vis “Judaism” through a series of cultic practices designed to actualize afresh the unity of God worked out in social harmony with the designated leadership. The communities of Magnesia and Philadelphia must resist “Judaism,” the antiquated anti-gospel system, in their midst by repeatedly actualizing through the eucharist, the reflection of Jesus’ unity with God in the gospel and of the church’s ongoing unity with God through Jesus. In sum, Ignatius constructs a response to those so-called “Christians” who would backtrack into an antiquated system of practices associated with “Judaism,” from which the “Christian” church had decisively emerged through the gospel, the expression of Christ’s unity with God. **“Christians” must regularly embrace and reenact afresh the “newness” of their identity in Christ, an identity that came about specifically through the revelation of the one God in Jesus Christ which rendered “Judaism” obsolete.** To resist the antiquated, anti-gospel influence of “Judaism” in the church, Christians at Philadelphia and Magnesia must regularly reactuate the unity of God in their midst by maintaining social harmony and frequently participating in eucharist on the Lord’s Day under the appropriate leadership. Christian “newness” of Jesus-devotion is not herewith only legitimated in a theology of divine unity based in the revelation of God in Jesus! It is embraced as part of “Christian” identity established through Jesus’ unity with the one God through the gospel, an event which has rendered “Judaism” outmoded. In his own way, Ignatius offers a response to the “Jesus problem” through the construction of a monotheistic identity grounded in the worship of the one God in a new way through Jesus.

The repositioning strategies of *KP* and *Apology* broker solutions to the “Jesus problem” from a very different angle of attack than witnessed with the bishop of Antioch, yet in a way that constructs and legitimates a new “Christian” community in an identity grounded in authentic “knowledge” of the one God because of the recent revelation of that God in Jesus. *KP* specifically legitimates the “newness” of Christian faith by reassigning the relative value of revelatory knowledge versus

⁹ *Magn.* 4.1: “It is right not only to be called ‘Christians’ but to actually be [Christians].”

ancestral tradition for transmitting authentic understanding of the true God (ch. 4 §3). To do this, *KP* articulates a comprehensive epistemology based on the supreme value of Jesus for revealing “knowledge” of the one true God. The recent revelation of the one God in Jesus trumps all appeals to the value of ancestral traditions in revealing the one God. In this way, Christian faith becomes the ideal cult to which all others should aspire, since it is based on religious practices revealed from the distinctly authoritative revealer figure, Jesus. Through this newly-established framework of “knowledge” grounded in the revelation of God in Jesus, a distinctly Christian identity emerges and the “newness” of Christian faith is socially legitimated. The recipient community is emboldened in its monotheistic mission to Jews and pagans, and can counter Jewish and pagan claims to “know” the unique God through established ancestral traditions. Jews and Greeks may escape “ignorance” and embrace “knowledge” of God by submitting to the novel revelation of God in Christ Jesus mediated through apostolic tradition. In so doing, they assume a Christian identity.

Apology aggregates Christian and Jewish races in a myth of shared descent from the one God, and distinguishes them as revealed monotheistic traditions fundamentally different from the common mythic origins of the polytheistic races. In this way, Aristides legitimates monotheistic races vis-à-vis polytheistic ones. By further identifying the best of Jewish monotheistic tradition (specifically its theology and moral law) with Christian tradition he is able to legitimate the latter with reference to a community with respectable ancestral traditions. Yet Aristides is also aware that he is involved in mapping a new community which derives its claims to authority from Jesus, the progenitor of a “new people” (16.3 Sy: $\text{ܟܪܝܫܬܐ} \dots \text{ܟܪܝܫܬܐ}$). By presenting Jesus as a superior lawgiver-revealer figure who harmonizes the dictates of Christian ritual and ethical worship with the transcendent, self-sufficient nature of the one true God, Aristides encodes Christianity not only as the best of the monotheistic tradition but as the *ethnos par excellence*, which all should aspire to join. *Apology* offers appeal to a wide Jewish and pagan audience to forsake Jewish monotheism and pagan polytheism, respectively, in favor of a new myth of shared descent from the Most High God through Jesus, who alone accurately revealed him and harmonized authentic “knowledge” of the one God in the cultic worship and ethical practice of a new race.

The rereading strategies of *JP* and *Dialogue* likewise share a concern to frame Christian monotheistic interpretive identity in terms of something “new” in

Jesus vis-à-vis traditional interpretive stances of Judaism. Both *JP* and *Dialogue* situate their Jewish interlocutor as the one who first raises the problem which Jesus-devotion presents vis-à-vis traditional biblical monotheism as understood by the Jewish community.¹⁰ The dialogues respond to the accusation by challenging what they present as the “traditional” Jewish understanding of divine unity (i.e., unity is equivalent to numerical uniqueness). They point to Jewish scriptures of creation and theophany, respectively, and reread them, in order to demonstrate that these actually demand the existence of a second power in heaven, a personal divine agent figure who acts on behalf of the one God by mediating in the act of creation or by revealing the will of God to OT saints in theophanic appearance. More universally, these “two powers” rereading strategies legitimate, authorize, and perpetuate a particularly Christian “two powers” cosmology and worship practice within the scope of authoritative texts. By introducing a second divine, personal agent into the cosmic order of things, an entire reconstruction of the “traditionally”-Jewish symbolic universe of monotheism can take place and the worship of a second figure can be substantiated in explicitly Christian terms! This “two powers” cosmology is “new,” yet only in the sense that it had been veiled prior to the coming of Jesus. Though latent in the texts of the Hebrew scriptures, the Jews missed these “two powers” texts (*Dial.* 55.3), and thus the traditional ideas of one creator God must now be modified in light of the Jesus-event. The polemic of *JP* and *Dialogue* is shaped in terms of traditional readings versus newer rereadings. Christian rereadings are productive of a distinctly Christian interpretive identity, and they unveil the previously hidden “two powers” nature of the cosmos. They substantiate and authenticate the novelty of Christian scriptural readings and its monotheism through this very interpretive identity.

Our texts agree then. With Jesus, a fundamentally new way of relating to the one God of Jewish monotheistic tradition has come. And a new community has entered the human drama, which, though it bears some historic relation to Jewish monotheism and faith, perceives itself as mediator of a “new” way of worshipping God through Jesus.¹¹ In every strategy the relation of Jesus to this “newness” is

¹⁰ Cf. ch. 5 §§1.3–4 (*JP*); *Dial.* 55.1.

¹¹ In our examples, Christian “newness” is always indexed against traditional Jewish monotheism. Jonathan Z. Smith brilliantly demonstrates how questions of identity are always worked out vis-à-vis an “other” (“What a Difference a Difference Makes,” in Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., “To See Ourselves as Others See Us”: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985] 3–48).

conceived differently and expressed in varying permutations, yet it is always fundamentally constitutive to the entire endeavor of constructing “new” monotheistic identities. In crafting and exercising these strategies, Christians engage in nothing shy of reenvisioning in a fresh way the entire traditional cosmic order in heaven and on earth!

Those whose voices are preserved in the works we studied show no sense of shame or embarrassment about the historical novelty of their community vis-à-vis the licit and even esteemed quality of ancient Jewish traditions. They evince no desire to capitulate to the accusations of pagans or Jews who would mock the nascence of their communal identity. Rather, the Christians who gave shape to these monotheistic strategies embrace the innovate character of their movement and of their version of monotheism. They harness the newness of the revelation of God in Jesus to their social advantage, giving voice to an alternate reality. Hand-in-hand with embracing their “newness,” these Christians innovate. They craft new modes of discoursing, reasoning, and interpreting in respect to the one God of Jewish tradition, as a way of establishing Christian identity as worshippers of the one God in a “new” way through Jesus. And they innovate strategies to legitimate their novel belief in the one God by means of a more comprehensive, authoritative framework. For Ignatius, that frame of reference was the unity of Jesus with God in the gospel regularly reactualized in the new community through the eucharist. For *KP*, it was a new epistemology grounded in the revelation of God in Jesus. For *Apology*, it was Jesus, perceived, like a Solon of old, as the founder of a new society, who harmonizes the Christian people’s “knowledge” of the one God with their ritual and ethic and thereby creates an ethnos *par excellence*. For *JP*, Jesus is God’s personal assistant who mediates in creation, while in *Dialogue* he is the manifestation of the one God to the Jewish patriarchs, thus requiring “new” ways of envisioning the one God and the cosmic order. In every case, these texts articulate in different permutations the motif of the “newness” of Christian worship in Jesus. They are all actively involved in giving voice to a “new” myth in which the one God is revealed in some novel, authoritative way in Jesus. In so doing, these authors and their monotheistic strategies give to ordinary Christians a voice by which to embrace the novelty of their peculiar monotheistic identity in a culture that esteems traditional structures like Judaism. These monotheistic strategies articulate answers to the “Jesus problem!” It is against this larger social issue that these Christian texts reconstitute and actualize a Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism along specifically monotheistic lines.

Appendices

Appendix A

“Thick(er) Description:”

Reading and Reconstructing the Ignatian Opponents

This Appendix suggests a distinctive approach to understanding the nature and teaching of the opponents resisted by Ignatius in his epistles (§1). The nuanced method proposed here regards each Ignatian epistle as a carefully articulated literary work consciously tailored to address the peculiar historical circumstance of the community to which Ignatius sends that missive (§2). Applying a “thick(er) description” to each of the epistles allows a window into recovering a somewhat distorted yet not altogether inaccurate historical context for the churches of Anatolia and Rome to which Ignatius wrote his missives (§3).

1. Interpretive Questions

Along his journey to Rome, where Ignatius (quite eagerly!) anticipated becoming “food for beasts” (*Rom.* 4.1), the bishop of Syrian Antioch probably around 113 CE passed through a series of communities in western Asia Minor. While there, he had occasion to stop for some duration in Philadelphia and later Smyrna, where he received delegates from churches at Ephesus (*Eph.* 1.3–2.1), Magnesia (*Magn.* 2), and Tralles (*Trall.* 1.1). Prompted by firsthand experience with certain “false teachings”¹ at Smyrna and Philadelphia and presumably by circumstantial reports to a similar tune from the emissaries from Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, coupled with his concern for peaceful resolution to some conflict that had engulfed his community at Syrian Antioch, Ignatius undertook a program of correspondence with these churches of western Anatolia. Why not capitalize on the honor accorded an impending martyrdom?² From Smyrna he dictated letters to the churches in Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome, and upon arriving at Troas he had three additional letters inscribed to Smyrna and Philadelphia and to Polycarp bishop of Smyrna. If there is a leitmotif to the collective group of Asian letters, it is the concern for social harmony established through common cultic participation in the

¹ Ἐτεροδοξί*: Cf. *Smyrn.* 6.2; *Magn.* 8.1; ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω: *Pol.* 3.1; κενοδοξία: *Magn.* 11.1; *Phld.* 1.1.

² *Rom.* 9.3. Honor was granted him even by his “opponents” (*Smyrn.* 5.2).

one eucharist. This appeal for communal harmony is expressed against the backdrop of “false teachings” which Ignatius perceived as threatening the social fabric of the Asian Christian communities, and in two of the letters, *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians*, these threats are categorized in terms of “Judaism” and once in terms of “judaizing.”³

This summary conceals a complex web of seemingly intractable problems.⁴ It is widely debated, for example, whether Ignatius has in mind in the Asian letters two deviant “groups” (“trajectories,” “tendencies”) of opponents, one which propounded a docetic christology and another which “judaized,” or does he have in his field of view some single complex, syncretistic heresy which combined both docetic and “judaizing” tendencies?⁵ Furthermore, what is the precise nature of the opponents

³ The single reference elsewhere to “the Jews” (*Smyrn.* 1.2) is of little significance for our analysis. It is situated in a passage which “is semi-credal” and Ignatius “significantly fails to develop [the formula] in his understanding of the church” (Judith M. Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996] 27).

⁴ Paul J. Donahue comments, “The nature of the evidence makes conclusive proof impossible at almost every point” (“Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch,” *VC* 32 [1978]: 81).

⁵ This does not include Christine Trevett’s proposal. She envisions a *tertium quid*, an anti-episcopal “phenomenon different from the erroneous practices associated with Docetists and Judaizers” (“Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: a Third Error Combated by Ignatius?” *JEH* 34 [1983]: 13). James Moffatt also speaks of “anti-episcopalians” (“An Approach to Ignatius,” *HTR* 29 [1936]: 11–15), though he does not distinguish them as sharply as Trevett. For an overview of the proposals see C.K. Barrett (“Jews and Judaizers in the Epistles of Ignatius,” in Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs, eds., *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity. Essays in Honor of William David Davies* [Leiden: Brill, 1976] 220–32).

Among those distinguishing two groups are Cyril Charles Richardson (*The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1935] 51–54), Virginia Corwin (*St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960] 52–87), Hans-Werner Bartsch (*Gnostisches Gut und Gemeindefradition bei Ignatius von Antiochien* [BFCT 2/44; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1940] 34–39: two “Strömungen”), Donahue (“Jewish Christianity,” 81–93), Robert M. Grant (*The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary. Volume 4: Ignatius of Antioch* [Camden, N.J.; Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1966] 22), and C.P. Hammond Bammel (“Ignatian Problems,” *JTS* 33 [1982]: 81–83, 88–89: two “tendencies” [Judaizing, docetic] “not entirely separate”). William Schoedel is carefully nuanced and recognizes distinctions between “the Judaizers” at Philadelphia and at Magnesia (“Ignatius and the Archives,” *HTR* 71 [1978]: 101–06).

Among those envisioning a single group (or trajectory) are Theodor Zahn (*Ignatius von Antiochien* [Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873] 356–99: “eine einzige häretische Richtung”) and J.B. Lightfoot (*The Apostolic Fathers, Part II: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* [2 vols.; 2nd ed.; London: MacMillan, 1889] 1.373–88: “the heresy is one”), Walter Bauer (*Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarpbrief* [HNT Ergänzungsband, Die apostolischen Väter 2; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1920]; *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* [BHT 10; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1934] 92), L.W. Barnard (“The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch,” *VC* 17 [1963]: 198–203), Pierre Prigent (“L’Hérésie Asiate et l’Église confessante: De l’Apocalypse à Ignace,” *VC* 31 [1977]: 7), and Barrett (*ibid.*, 241; well-nuanced). Einar Molland regards this view as “the *communis opinio* since Theodor Zahn’s and Lightfoot’s masterly contributions” (“The Heretics Combated by Ignatius of Antioch” *JEH* 5 (1954): 1–6; cf. Donahue, *ibid.*, 82: the “common opinion”).

involved and the content of their teaching? And does Ignatius' portrayal of his opponents predominantly reflect the situation familiar to him from Antioch and/or western Asia Minor?⁶

2. Contextual Observations

We offer a few methodological observations. First, **there are elements in the Ignatian letters reflective of the bishop's Syrian background** and which demonstrate his ongoing profound concern for the church at Antioch. The circumstances surrounding his arrest had left a void in leadership at Antioch, and the community was evidently embroiled in some type of social strain. This much is certain. But was this tension foisted upon it from without (persecution) or from within (internecine strife)? The former is usually presupposed,⁷ yet the latter is not without its advocates.⁸ Ignatius' leadership status in Antioch may not have been without question, and it may well have been his failure to maintain unity in the congregation that precipitated the situation that ultimately led to his arrest. This reconstruction, if correct, goes a long way in explaining Ignatius' frequent self-effacement (and his uncertainty of "attaining God")⁹ characteristic of the early missives from Smyrna. Whether this interpretation is accurate or not, the bishop does continue to express deep concern over the ongoing situation of instability at Antioch (*Rom.* 9.1). He had sent messengers from Syria to Rome as vanguard to announce his imminent arrival (*Rom.* 10.2) and had commissioned liaisons from Antioch—Philo and Reus Agathopous—to update him on the situation back home (*Phld.* 11.1;

⁶ Antioch: Corwin (*St. Ignatius*), Donahue ("Jewish Christianity"), Trevett ("Prophecy"), and Robert R. Hann ("Judaism and Jewish Christianity in Antioch: Charisma and Conflict in the First Century," *JRH* 14 [1986/87]: 341–360). Asia Minor: Zahn (*Ignatius*), Lightfoot (*S. Ignatius*), Jakob Speigl ("Ignatius in Philadelphia: Ereignisse und Anliegen in den Ignatiusbriefen," *VC* 41 [1987]: 360–376), and Peter Meinhold (*Studien zu Ignatius von Antiochien* [Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979]). Henning Paulsen is nicely nuanced, allowing for aspects of both contexts (*Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Brief des Polykarp von Smyrna. Zweite neubearbeitete Auflage der Auslegung von Walter Bauer* [HNT 18, Die apostolischen Väter 2; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1985] 29–31).

⁷ Already defended at some length by Zahn (*Ignatius*, 242–50).

⁸ P.N. Harrison (*Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936]), followed by William R. Schoedel ("Theological Norms and Social Perspectives in Ignatius of Antioch," in E.P. Sanders, ed., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. Volume 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* [London: SCM Press, 1980] 36–44; also, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985] 13–14) and approached from a somewhat different direction by Willard M. Swartley ("The Imitatio Christi in the Ignatian Letters," *VC* 27 [1973]: 90–103).

⁹ Cf. *Rom.* 9.2.

Smyrn. 10.1–2). He further urges in his earlier letters from Smyrna that prayers be directed on behalf of the restoration of the Syrian community (*Eph.* 21.2; *Magn.* 14.1; *Trall.* 13.1; *Rom.* 9.1). When Philo and Reus Agathopous finally caught up with him at Troas, the news from Antioch was favorable. The formerly tense situation had been diffused and order restored (*Phld.* 10.1–2; *Smyrn.* 11.1–2; *Pol.* 7.1), and a growing confidence in the tone of our bishop is tangible in the letters from Troas. Upon hearing this good news Ignatius requests that embassies be sent to Antioch from those churches he had personally visited, Philadelphia and Smyrna (*Phld.* 10.1–2; *Smyrn.* 11.1–2; *Poly.* 7.1; cf. *Pol. Phil.* 13.1). *All this activity points to an intentional, well-coordinated diplomatic program of sending and receiving emissaries from Antioch (doubtless at great expense to the churches!)¹⁰ and demonstrates his profound ongoing concern for the tense situation there.* The bishop, it seems, milked his “mission” to Rome for all it was worth!

To his concern for the Syrian context we may also note the web of symbols that pervades his epistles and reflects consistent patterns of thought shaped by his experiences in the hellenistic city (quite probably Antioch).¹¹ Othmar Perler has demonstrated that Ignatius’ compositional style bears the imprint of “Asiatic” rhetoric and shows strong points of contact with the thought of the very Jewish 4 Maccabees.¹² The bishop’s indebtedness to Antioch extended (perhaps unconsciously) to his own contacts with Jewish influence there!¹³ William Schoedel has noted the influence on Ignatius of civic and political ideologies from the hellenistic city.¹⁴ Hermann Josef Sieben has firmly situated the Ignatian letters within the literary form of hellenistic letter-writing.¹⁵ The cumulative evidence points to a rootedness within the hellenistic world, and to the extent that we may combine this

¹⁰ On the “staged” nature of Ignatius’ mission see Schoedel (“Are the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch Authentic?” *RelSRev* 6 [1980]: 200; *Ignatius*, 12).

¹¹ Trevett observes the conditioning of Ignatius’ Antiochene experiences and demonstrates conceptual connections with other Syrian literature (“Prophecy,” 4 n. 10 et passim). Cf. Barnard (“Background,” 196–97) and Robert M. Grant (“Scripture and Tradition in St. Ignatius of Antioch,” *CBQ* 25 [1963]: 333).

¹² “Das vierte Makkabäerbuch, Ignatius von Antiochien und die ältesten Märtyrerberichte,” *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 25 (1949): 47–65; cf. H. Riesenfeld, “Reflections on the Style and the Theology of St. Ignatius of Antioch,” *StPatr* IV (TU 79; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961): 315–18.

¹³ Grant nevertheless appears hasty when he concludes, “The principal features of his thought come to him from the apostolic faith as interpreted in the Jewish Christian circles of Antioch” (“Scripture,” 334).

¹⁴ “Theological Norms,” 47–49; *Ignatius*, 7–10; cf. Riesenfeld, “Reflections,” 316–17.

¹⁵ “Die Ignatianen als Briefe: Einige formkritische Bemerkungen,” *VC* 32 (1978): 1–18.

with Ignatius' care for the Syrian church we may speak of a "mode of thought" reflective of and shaped by that context. *The application of similar linguistic patterns and shared imagery to his opponents across the Asian letters*¹⁶ may point then not to the singular nature of an Anatolian "heresy"¹⁷ as much as to Ignatius' own rootedness in urban Syrian Antioch and the singular mode of thought and symbolic apparatus he had developed through his circumstances and life there. This is certainly the case with the emphasis on social harmony and divine unity, which represents a semiotic pattern embedded in Ignatius' mode of hellenistic thought and theology developed already in Syria (see Appendix B).

Second, **particularities from the Anatolian context emerge in the letters.** This is not surprising given the fact that Ignatius writes to no community there with which he does not have some personal contact, whether through visit (Philadelphia, Smyrna) or reception of emissaries (Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles).¹⁸ Sensitivity to the historical situation is particularly apparent from the résumé of Ignatius' encounter with opponents during his stay in Philadelphia¹⁹ as well as from the mention of his run-in with unnamed opponents at Smyrna.²⁰ He appears, for example, genuinely nonplused by the presence of conflict in Philadelphia, and his inability to persuade his opponents from OT scripture evinces a certain polemic spontaneity for which he was unprepared and seemingly had to improvise.²¹ This is all the more surprising considering that he hails from an urban area in Syria with a significant and well-

¹⁶ Cf., e.g., "weeds" or "evil plants" (*Eph.* 10.3; *Trall.* 6.1; *Phld.* 3.1), "false teachings/worthless opinions" (*Phld.* 2.1; *Magn.* 11.1), "division" (*Phld.* 2.1; 3.1; 7.2; 8.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1), etc. It is preferable to regard this language as a patterned response modeled on Ignatius' preexisting thought process and pre-formed vocabulary.

¹⁷ Pace Prigent ("L'Hérésie," 1–7), many of whose observations are misguided on this very point.

¹⁸ Schoedel refers to Ignatius' "special sensitivity to the needs of the churches" ("Theological Norms," 37).

¹⁹ *Phld.* 6.3–8.2. Note also 3.1 (οὐχ ὅτι παρ' ὑμῖν μερισμὸν εὖρον); 6.3 (καὶ πᾶσι δὲ ἐν οἷς ἐλάλησα); 7.1 (μεταξὺ [you] ὧν); 7.2 (ὡς προειδόμενα τῶν μερισμῶν τινῶν); 8.2 (ἐπεὶ ἤκουσά τινῶν λεγόντων).

²⁰ *Smyrn.* 5.3. Note also ἐνόησα at *Smyrn.* 1.1 and the final greetings by name (13.2).

²¹ Pace Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 11 n. 62. Ignatius' ability to engage OT scripture polemically seems very limited. He introduces only two OT passages both from Proverbs with the formula "it is written" (*Eph.* 5.3; *Magn.* 12), possibly quotes a third text (cf. *Trall.* 8.2), and makes few additional allusions from OT (cf. Swartley, "Imitatio," 88 n. 31). Cf. the comments of Theo Preiss ("La mystique de l'imitation du Christ et de l'unité chez Ignace d'Antioche" *RHPR* 18 [1938]: 222–23), Paulsen (*Briefe*, 65: "die Art und Weise des ign[atius] Umgangs mit dem AT bleibt erstaunlich schmal [nur zwei Zitate sind aufweisbar!]",) and Grant ("Scripture," 323: "[T]hese allusions suggest that Ignatius knew something of the OT though it cannot be said that his mind was steeped in it.").

respected Jewish colony.²² Due diligence should be given this observation. Any simple literary transference by Ignatius from some hypothetical situation in Antioch onto Anatolia should not be assumed *a priori*, certainly not with respect to *Smyrnaeans* and *Philadelphians*. He does not dictate these missives without some regard to the actual context of his recipients. Any false reference to the actual situations he experienced in Philadelphia and Smyrna would discredit his authority to be heard by those very communities.

The remaining letters, too, evince a certain contextual-distinctiveness which urges caution against too readily importing a Syrian context onto the situations reflected in the letters inscribed in Anatolia. The letter of *Romans*, for example, written from Smyrna has a very different, contextually-distinct interest from the missives directed to the Asian churches. Ignatius' desire to stave off any lobbying efforts by the Roman Christians which might have prevented his martyrdom pervades almost every paragraph of *Romans* and offers a striking contrast with the letters to Asia Minor with their concern for "heresy" and "false teaching."²³ In *Ephesians*, Ignatius notes his awareness of a group of itinerants whose "false/evil teaching" (κακὴν διδασχίην), apparently involving a "gnosis" related to heavenly mysteries,²⁴ had been previously rebuffed by the church at Ephesus (9.1). The wandering nature of this group suggests missionary activity, which would have fostered the spread of their teachings in different urban settings of Anatolia, and it is possible that Ignatius encountered the same (or similar) "heretical" group in Smyrna.²⁵ At any rate, whether or not Ignatius personally encountered this "heretical" group from Ephesus while he stayed at Smyrna, he is indebted to the direct, firsthand report by the Ephesian delegation, and we must take seriously his claim to have heard directly from their bishop Onesimus that "no heresy was found

²² Carl H. Kraeling, "The Jewish Community at Antioch," *JBL* 33 (1932): 130–60; cf. Lieu, *Image*, 23–24.

²³ Zahn correctly concluded, "Die Gefahr...muss eine örtlich begrenzte sein, und Rom liegt weit ab von dem bedrohten Gebiet" (*Ignatius*, 356).

²⁴ The emphasis on special knowledge is also evident from 17.1b–2a where the "teaching of the ruler of this age" is contrasted (cf. δὲ) with a wisdom available to every Christian "λαβόντες θεοῦ γνῶσιν." Cf. *Eph.* 19, perhaps countering similar claims to "gnosis" by his opponents.

²⁵ As Zahn proposed (*Ignatius*, 356–60). How should we interpret ἔγνω δὲ παροδύσαντάς τινας ἐκεῖθεν (*Eph.* 9.1): "But I came to know certain people who had passed by [Smyrna] on their way from there [=Ephesus]," or "I have learned that certain people from there [=Ephesus] had passed by [you at Ephesus]?" These itinerants had likely not arisen within the context of the Ephesian church, since they were given no hearing (cf. 6.2; 9.1) and bishop Onesimus reported that "no heresy has found a home" among the church (6.2). This favors the former reading.

among” them (6.2). His address to the Ephesians is further marked by locale-specific imagery attested in his reference to the miniature temples carried about in the religious processions in honor of the Ephesian Diana (9.2).²⁶ Similar context-specific particularities are manifest in the letter to Tralles, which was also written while their bishop, Polybius, accompanied Ignatius (1.1; 3.2), and anything the latter communicated by letter would likewise have been subject to the scrutiny of the head of the Trallian community. We will not belabor the point, except to say that we must take seriously these literary references to direct reports by the delegations from Ephesus and Tralles and, as we will see, Magnesia. Our bishop, it seems, knew how to tailor-make his missives.

3. “Thick(er) Description:” A Nuanced Approach

The Ignatian letters evince a profound concern for the situation in Antioch and reflect a mode of thought deeply-rooted in the hellenistic city and even in its Judaism (probably Antioch), **yet their subject matter is in many ways context-specific to the Asia Minor communities.**²⁷ This suggests that a letter-specific nuanced approach is the most appropriate method for uncovering the nature of “heresy” and “false teaching” in Asia Minor. In this endeavor to reconstruct the identity of Ignatius’ opposition, the letters written to Philadelphia (*Philadelphians*) and Smyrna (*Smyrnaeans*, *Polycarp*) should be prioritized, since Ignatius had personal, firsthand experience with these two communities.²⁸ Jakob Speigl has argued for the programmatic importance of the events and experiences which Ignatius encountered at Philadelphia for the remainder of his epistolary program to the Asian churches.²⁹ We suggest the same may be said of his time at Smyrna.

²⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 67.

²⁷ Any debate couched in terms of Ignatius’ epistles reflecting the historical situation of Antioch or western Asia Minor is therefore a red-herring. A better way to frame the problem is to inquire into the extent to which Ignatian concepts, literary patterns, depictions of opponents, polemic responses, etc. are reflective of the *Sitz im Leben* at Antioch and to what extent that in Anatolia.

²⁸ They have the added advantage of being the last of the letters Ignatius composed.

²⁹ The importance of *Philadelphians* as a heuristic starting point was recognized by Zahn (*Ignatius*, 261–72; 373–78), Barrett (“Jews and Judaizers,” 232–38, 240), and Speigl (“Ignatius,” 360). Speigl places fundamental weight on the events (*Ereignisse*) and experiences (*Erfahrungen*) Ignatius had with a single docetic-Judaizing group at Philadelphia for the remaining letters in Asia Minor: “Die warnenden Äußerungen in den Briefen an die Epheser und ausdrücklicher in denen an die Magnesier und Trallianer können als Anliegen aufgefaßt werden, die sich ihm seit den dortigen [i.e., in Philadelphia] Erfahrungen (erstmalig oder erneut) aufgedrängt hatten;” this includes *Smyrna*, as well (*ibid.*, 372; cf. 368–69). He speaks of a request, “das unterschiedslos alle Briefe durchzieht und ebenso in den Briefen an die Konfliktgemeinde Philadelphia begegnet wie in den Schreiben nach

Only by first mapping the contextual-directedness of the individual letters and the differences in the letter-specific literary portraits of Ignatius' opponents can we reasonably come to conclusion about the number and nature of opposition groups/trajectories that Ignatius may have encountered (firsthand or by word of mouth) in Asia Minor.³⁰ Such letter-specific "thick(er) description"³¹ might also help resolve the individual literary portraits of the Ignatian letters into some broader framework. We might, for example, describe a holistic pattern of response or description that may well point back to Ignatius' Antiochene context. And then the hermeneutical cycle reiterates. Such a dialectic approach allows for both the intentionality of a programmatic epistle-writing mission (with Antioch partly in view) and the spontaneity of the Anatolian *Sitze im Leben*. This approach takes the diversity of the epistle-specific literary shaping of the "opponents" seriously as a window into historical context.

Smyrna, Ephesus, Magnesia und Tralles. Das ist das Anliegen, das am konkretesten im Wunsch sich ausspricht, daß die richtigen Eucharistieversammlungen gehalten werden" (ibid., 372–73).

³⁰ A similar approach has been pursued by Moffatt ("Approach") for *Trallians* (though too methodologically restrictive) and by Jerry L. Sumney ("Those Who 'Ignorantly Deny Him': The Opponents of Ignatius of Antioch," *J ECS* 1 [1993]: 345–65) for *Smyrnaeans*, *Magnesians*, and *Philadelphians*.

³¹ "Thick(er) description" plays upon the well-known phrase coined by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz ("Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* [New York: Basic Books, 1973, 2000 repr.] 3–30; cf. E. Silverman, "Clifford Geertz: Towards a More 'Thick' Understanding?" in C. Tilley, ed., *Reading Material Culture* [Oxford, 1990] 121–59). We have argued elsewhere for "thick(er) description" of early Christianity in an unpublished paper (Will Rutherford, "'Thick(er) Description' of the Shaping of Early Christian Identities: Case Studies in Judaizing at Philadelphia and Magnesia") presented at a conference on Graduate Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Biblical World at Trinity College Dublin, February 24, 2007.

Appendix B

Divine Unity in Ignatius: Provenance, History of Research, and a Proposal

This Appendix locates the provenance of Ignatius' peculiar belief about divine unity (§1) and overviews the history of research into the theme with particular reference to proposed religio-historical backgrounds (§2). We conclude by suggesting a more nuanced approach to the motif of God's unity in the Ignatian epistles (§3).

1. Antiochene Provenance of Ignatius' Unity-Motif

The Antiochene development of the all-important Ignatian unity-motif is quite easily observed from the personal résumé of the bishop's experience at Philadelphia (his first official stop in Asia Minor), particularly the parenetic section of *Phld.* 7.1–2. Ignatius had offered a charismatic utterance, which he claimed reflected the divine spirit speaking through him: “Do nothing apart from the bishop. Guard your flesh as the temple of God. Love unity; flee divisions. Become imitators of Jesus Christ even as he is of his father” (7.2). All contextual indications argue that these exhortations occurred *prior to* Ignatius having learned of the situation of “division” that had earlier occurred in Philadelphia. “To be sure,” he writes, “there were those who suspected me of saying these things *as having known beforehand* about the division caused by some, but the one in whom I am bound as prisoner is my witness that I did not come to know [this] from any human being. Rather, it was the spirit who proclaimed.”

There are in these exhortations several characteristically-Ignatian leitmotifs: the call to social harmony under proper episcopal authority (cf. the infamous *χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου*-motif), emphasis on flesh (*σάρξ*-motif), on embracing communal solidarity (*ἔνωσις*-motif) and resisting divisive influences (*μερισμός*-motif), and especially the appeal to imitate Christ (*imitatio Christi*)—to ground Christian behavior (*Abbild*) on analogy between the unity of the divine father and son

(*Vorbild*).¹ In this brief snippet of historical event the fundamental christocentric nature of Ignatius' theology surfaces and with it the equally-emphatic notion of social harmony and participation in the church's communal life. **The theological-grounding of Ignatius' doctrine of unity was already deeply ingrained in his thought patterns from the Syrian context well before his trip through Anatolia.**² These elements of his theology were not developed *ad hoc* from Anatolian circumstances. Nevertheless we believe they were applied to the Anatolian context in a contextually-sensitive manner.

The shared nature of imagery and rhetoric across the Anatolian epistles does not indicate the singular nature of the opposition in Asia Minor but rather the singular mode of Ignatius' thought which developed through his circumstances and life at Antioch.³ Particularly, the circumstances surrounding his arrest in Antioch were perceived by him to threaten the unity, solidarity, and stability of the community there, and it is likely this situation that was so fresh on his mind when he encouraged unity at his first stop in Anatolia (sc. Philadelphia) without any prior knowledge of "division" there. And it must have been in light of the ongoing situation at Antioch which when combined with the perception of threats native to Asia Minor, led the bishop to dictate his letters.⁴ Harrison's suggestion that Ignatius' arrest was the result of some inner-Christian discord seems plausible and goes a long

¹ Cf. Henning Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Brief des Polykarp von Smyrna. Zweite neubearbeitete Auflage der Auslegung von Walter Bauer* (HNT 18, Die apostolischen Väter 2; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985) 85.

² Similarly, Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen (*Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* [BHT 14; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1953] 105–16), William R. Schoedel ("Theological Norms and Social Perspectives in Ignatius of Antioch," in E.P. Sanders, ed., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. Volume 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* [London: SCM Press, 1980] 36–44; *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985] 13–14), and L.W. Barnard ("The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch." *VC* 17 [1963]: 195: "The essence of his thought springs out of his experience as Bishop of Antioch in spite of his concern for the Churches of Asia Minor").

³ Failure to give this due weight is often the fundamental error of those who see a single docetic-Judaizing heresy in Asia Minor (e.g., Pierre Prigent, "L'Hérésie Asiate et l'Église confessante: de l'Apocalypse à Ignace," *VC* 31 [1977]: 1–22). By focusing on common rhetorical elements in the letters (which, we argue, point to the bishop's singular mode of thought established in Syria) and then projecting this common rhetoric too hastily onto the diversity of religious expression in Asia Minor, scholars too often reduce the manifold Anatolian religious tendencies actually reflected in the Asia Minor letters.

⁴ Schoedel, "Theological Norms," 30–56.

way in explaining why the unity-motif assumes such preeminent importance in Ignatius' encounters with "heresy" and "false teaching" in Asia Minor.⁵

Whether the *development* of this uniquely Ignatian motif was the result of some discord at Antioch, and whether that discord involved an anti-episcopal group, the substantial Antiochene Jewish community, "judaizers," and/or docetists, is certainly possible but simply cannot be proven. All scholarly attempts to reconstruct a particular Antiochene *Sitz im Leben* which ostensibly gave rise to this unity-motif are (indeed, must be) highly speculative.

2. Religio-Historical Sources and Their Significance

Scholars posit a number of conceptual frameworks with which Ignatius may have dialogued to construct his peculiar understanding of divine unity. The various frames of reference they propose often have direct bearing on how they interpret the social significance of Ignatius' unity-motif. We review key proposals here.

Heinrich Schlier was the first scholar to systematically locate Ignatius' thought on unity within a "gnostic" milieu. He advocated that Ignatius developed his thought on unity in conversation with a specifically pre-Valentinian, "gnostic" Mandaean myth of the ascending-descending redeemer.⁶ Schlier appealed to seemingly "gnostic" language ("unity," "silence," etc.) and imagery (particularly in *Ephesians* 19) of Christ's descent and ascent, of Christians as *pneumatikoi* united to the savior, and of martyrdom as "participation in God" (θεοῦ ἐπιτύχω) to assert that Ignatius held to an Iranian myth of the redeemer-redeemed. In essence Schlier proposed that the point of contact between Ignatius and "gnosis" was a shared mythology of redemption grounded in the myth of the savior-saved and the re-assimilation of the fallen souls. In this mythic context, Ignatius' unity-motif represented the re-assimilation of fallen souls to the savior in a cosmic redemptive drama.

⁵ Cf. Willard M. Swartley, "The Imitatio Christi in the Ignatian Letters," *VC* 27 (1973): 101-03.

⁶ Heinrich Schlier, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Ignatiusbriefen* (BZNW 8; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1929). Richard Reitzenstein had earlier briefly intimated a Mandaean *Vorbild* behind *Ephesians* 19 (*Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* [Bonn: A. Marcus & E. Weber, 1921] 86 n. 3 et 234, 236). For a brief and helpful summary of Schlier consult Virginia Corwin (*St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960] 11-12).

In an extensive article Theo Preiss enthusiastically appropriated Schlier's proposal nearly a decade later.⁷ Preiss argued that Ignatius reduced the Christian message entirely to one of redemption expressed in a personal quest for immortality by means of the imitation of Christ's death.⁸ Ignatius, he claims, conceives immortality in a rather "gnostic" way, in terms of an entire mysticism of ultimate union with the divine. The quest to rejoin the divine is the goal of the Christian life, and as Christ represents "the perfect model of the union of the divine and of the human" the imitation of Christ becomes the means by which to achieve immortality.⁹ Preiss detects in Ignatius a radical recentring away from Pauline soteriology of "participation in" Christ's death, the latter being understood as the central redemptive event in a grand sweeping portrait of salvation history. Rather, the Ignatian emphasis on a "mysticism of imitation" has its own distinctive christological and martyrological implications. Jesus' death was not redemptive *sui generis*,¹⁰ for "the 'passion' of the martyr has its value in itself, *parallel to that of Christ*."¹¹ Ignatius' understanding of martyrdom and christology are mutually constitutive.¹² At their base lies a mythology of cosmic redemptive unity, "belief in the similarity, and, in sum, in the identity of the future condition of the savior and of the believer saved."¹³

This leads to what is for Preiss the central problem of Ignatius' thought. In this soteriological recentring *humans* arrive at the core of the Christian message, which may then be called "theocentric" only insofar as it has God as the *object of an individual's redemptive quest*, not as the active and all-powerful *subject*.¹⁴ Ignatius has shifted soteriology in an anthropomorphic direction, such that one would

⁷ "La mystique de l'imitation du Christ et de l'unité chez Ignace d'Antioche," *RHPR* 18 (1938): esp. 208–17; cf. 238–39.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 207–10, 218–21; p. 234: "la rédemption consiste surtout à délivrer l'homme de la matière et de ces puissances adverses, et à l'intégrer dans l'unité divine où il trouvera l'immortalité."

⁹ Quote from *ibid.*, 214. For Ignatius this involved imitating Christ's passion through martyrdom. Martyrdom is, however, not required of all: "le simple croyant s'assure par la participation à l'unité de l'Eglise et à l'eucharistie une immortalité véritable" (p. 215).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 211: "[I]l n'attribue *jamais* à la mort de Jésus la valeur d'un sacrifice... [I]l ne s'intéressait guère à la valeur rédemptrice que la mort de Jésus pouvait avoir en elle-même."

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 212, emphasis added.

¹² *Ibid.*, 213: "Il y a bien plutôt entre sa martyrologie et sa christologie une sorte d'endosmose."

¹³ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 206–07.

inevitably anticipate in his theology “a certain attenuation of the sense of the transcendence and of the sovereignty of God and of Christ.”¹⁵ Such a *reduction of divine transcendence*, Preiss argues, occurs in the Ignatian letters. Unlike Paul, Ignatius lacks a sense of the grand sweep of salvation history. There is no doctrine of creation nor eschatology,¹⁶ and the bishop preserves of Paul only “what is necessary to assure to man his full immortality,” that is, the mysticism of Christ.¹⁷ It is this collapse of traditional soteriology (i.e., of history expressed redemptively in terms of creation and eschatology) that leads in Ignatius to an attenuation of God’s sovereignty. In its place the bishop has elevated a redemption of mystical union with God, who is described in the letters only in terms of redemption and *ipso facto* in relation to the church.

The importance of divine unity for Ignatius’ ecclesiology is now unlocked. “Nothing is more characteristic of the theology of Ignatius,” Preiss opines, “than the manner with which he understands the monotheistic affirmation: it appears *only when it is a matter of insisting on the unity of the church* (Magn. 7,2; 8)... Would we not say that the monotheistic doctrine is above all the superstructure, the replica of (*la réplique sur*) the divine plan of unity which ought to exist in the entire spiritual world and in the church in particular?”¹⁸ The monotheistic doctrine is that which is visible (i.e., the superstructure), yet the divine plan of unity Preiss interprets in strikingly mystical tones in light of Ignatius’ “gnostic” view of redemption. Ἐνότης/ἔνωσις θεοῦ “above all does not mean only the unity commissioned or given by God, but also ‘the unity of divine things.’ Perhaps we would sometimes need to translate ‘the unity of God’, God designating no longer only a personal being, but a sort of divine substance, the parts of which it is the goal of redemption to gather together.”¹⁹ *It is in light of its cosmic significance that Preiss interprets not only the language of unity, union, harmony, and participation in the Ignatian letters but also the perceived threats of division.* Earthly division threatens the stability of

¹⁵ Ibid., 218.

¹⁶ Ibid., 221–226. Preiss correctly dismisses *Eph.* 15.1, though he has not observed *Rom.* inscr. (ἐν θελήματι τοῦ θελήσαντος τὰ πάντα ἃ ἔστιν). It is specifically the “positive side of primitive eschatology”—Christ’s return, God’s seizing power over the entire world, the resurrection of the believers—which Ignatius replaces with “une autre eschatologie, étrangère à l’histoire, l’idée hellénistique de l’ascension de l’âme vers l’immortalité” (ibid., 226).

¹⁷ Ibid., 219.

¹⁸ Ibid., 227, emphasis added.

¹⁹ Ibid., 228.

the cosmic order (perhaps even the divine unity itself!), and Ignatius' developed "a theory of the unity and authority of the church" (including episcopal monarchy) to counter this threat to the metaphysical order.²⁰

In sum, Preiss portrays "the mysticism of imitation"—the believer's redemptive ascension towards God *through* imitation of Christ—as playing the central role in Ignatius' thought.²¹ It is the key organizing principle which galvanizes the bishop's thinking about martyrdom, Christ, and the church. And there is an integral dialectic between "la mystique de l'imitation du Christ" and the unity-motif. The former is conceived of entirely in terms of the latter, so that Preiss speaks even of the presence of "toute une mystique de l'unité" within Ignatius' thought.²² The interpenetration of the ideas is quite natural, for the bishop's "entire theory of redemption is centered on the realisation of the union and integrity of the divine sphere."²³ Because of its integral role in the image of "mystic" union with the divine, we see why for Preiss unity (ἐνότης) or union (ἔνωσις) represents "a fundamental category of Ignatius' thought."²⁴ The concept of unity is "active on every level of his mysticism; from his ethic, passing by his ecclesiology and his christology, it leads to his theology in the strict sense of the word." And, it is so profound in Ignatius' thought that "the problem of unity places that of the sovereignty of God entirely in the background."

Not everyone was as anxious as Preiss to so wholeheartedly adopt Schlier's thesis. Only two years after Preiss, Hans-Werner Bartsch critiqued and modified Schlier's work in his *Gnostisches Gut und Gemeindefradition bei Ignatius von Antiochien*.²⁵ As the title suggests, Bartsch was interested in delineating the material Ignatius had inherited from the traditions of the Christian community (*Gemeindefradition*) from that which was his own peculiar property, which he

²⁰ Ibid., 230.

²¹ Even despite his best intentions (cf. *ibid.*, 198: "Naturellement nous ne prétendons pas ramener à ce seul motif toute la pensée d'Ignace").

²² Ibid., 229.

²³ Ibid., 234; cf. 237: "Ignace est certes trop chrétien pour partager cette notion mythique, impersonnelle et substantialiste du sauveur et de Dieu. Néanmoins le primat de cette ἔνωσις donne à toute sa mystique une forte tendance à voir en Dieu, dans le Christ, dans les membres de son corps et dans tout ce qui concerne l'Eglise une seule et même substance plus ou moins divine."

²⁴ Ibid., 229, for the following quotes too.

²⁵ (BFCT 2/44; Gütersloh: Verlag C. Bertelsmann, 1940).

received (our author argues) from “gnosis” (*Gnostisches Gut*).²⁶ Bartsch identified three layers of tradition in Ignatian thought—a primitive kerygmatic core uninfluenced by gnostic ideas and mythologies²⁷—and two strata of gnostic material—an indirect gnosticism which settled onto traditional material²⁸ and a direct gnostic influence, which Bartsch specifically saw in Ignatius’ concept of God (*Gottesbegriff*).²⁹

According to Bartsch, Ignatius was not primarily dependent on the tradition of biblical monotheism for his idea of God, as von der Goltz had earlier asserted.³⁰ Rather, his was an image of God consistent with the larger cultural atmosphere of hellenism, particularly the rationalistic philosophic idea of (cosmic/world) unity popularly mediated through the oriental cults in terms of divine unity—most appropriately called *Henotheismus*.³¹ In Ignatius, such common hellenistic ideas about God are accompanied by certain “gnostic” elements that come quite strongly to the fore. These can be seen particularly clearly in Ignatius’ idea of the unity of God, to which is bound a “circle of mythological images”—those of the church as the

²⁶ By “gnosis” (*die Gnosis*) Bartsch indicates a pre-Christian world-view, “die unabhängig vom Christentum entstanden ist, dieses aber wie jede ihr begegnende Religion erfaßte und nach ihrer Weltanschauung umbildete. *Wir haben die Gnosis also primär als Weltanschauung zu verstehen*. Ihr Charakteristikum ist der radikale Dualismus, der zum erstenmal nicht innerweltlich ist, sondern die gesamte Welt, den griechischen Kosmos mit seinen Göttern, wie die orientalische Welt mit ihren Planeten, auf die Seite des Bösen rückt und von dem einen fernen Gott trennt...*Der weltanschauliche Charakter der Gnosis bringt es mit sich, daß sie nicht als eine Religion, die zu einem Zeitpunkt entstanden ist, von diesem Zeitpunkt an in der Welt wirksam ist, sondern in allen Religionen dieser Zeit als umbildende Kraft mit in Rechnung gestellt werden muß, ohne daß charakteristische mythologische Züge in Erscheinung träten*” (ibid., 6–7, emphases added).

²⁷ Ibid., 167: “Es ist die Tradition vom Leben, Leiden und Auferstehen Christi” and which is closely linked with Paul.

²⁸ Ibid., 76: “so vor allem der Logosbegriff und die Charakteristik des Erlösers als Gesandter und Offenbarer,” transmitted from Johannine circles. Cf. ibid., 61–71, 167.

²⁹ Ibid., 76–77, 166–68. Cf. Corwin (*St. Ignatius*, 12–13) and the review of her work by Herbert Musurillo (“Ignatius of Antioch: Gnostic or Essene? A Note on Recent Work” *TS* 22 [1961]: 103–10).

³⁰ Particularly in relation to Pauline material and the gospel of John (Eduard Freiherr von der Goltz, *Ignatius von Antiochien als Christ und Theologe: Eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung* [TU 12/3; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1894]). Bartsch, ibid., 8–11, 17–18, 21, and esp. pp. 34–52. According to Bartsch, excepting Ephesians, the NT stresses *die Einzigkeit Gottes*, while Ignatius’ *Gottesbegriff* stresses *die Einheit Gottes*.

³¹ Bartsch, ibid., 17–23. Bartsch did not deny a role for biblical monotheism in Ignatius’ thought, yet he significantly mollified it to the extent that the latter entered Ignatius’ thought-world only through contact with hellenistic-Judaism, particularly the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo, who “combined Old Testament monotheism with the ideologically-grounded monotheism of Hellenism.” Thus OT biblical monotheism “nicht das treibende Element in der Diskussion des Ignatius ist” (ibid., 21). And though Ignatius demonstrates ideological contacts with other “hellenistic” NT writings—Eph 4:5–6 and 1 Tim 2:5—one should not envision literary dependence, for they all inhabit the same thought world of hellenistic-Judaism (ibid., 22–23).

body of Christ (σῶμα-Begriff), of believers as plants, and of a cosmic building.³² Interesting for the present thesis is the fact that Bartsch appeals specifically to *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* to isolate the concept of divine unity as Ignatius' own intellectual property to be differentiated from the stratum that belongs to Christian tradition and which includes *inter alia* the superiority of Christ and the salvific-historical significance of the prophets.³³ In these two missives, Ignatius reflects a concept of divine unity external to that of OT tradition, one which Bartsch previously identified with *die Gnosis*. In addition to divine unity, Bartsch points to other characteristically “gnostic”-elements in Ignatius' concept of God—the idea of silence (σιγή; ἡσυχία) and of height and grandeur (ὑψιστος-Begriff) as characteristics of God.³⁴ For these concepts as well Bartsch attempts to demonstrate that Ignatius is dependent not on traditional Christian material but on extra-Christian ideals common especially in *die Gnosis*.³⁵ Ignatius, he argues, has inherited directly from “gnosis” a comprehensive world-view of the concept of God and especially of divine unity, a world-view mediated to him through hellenistic-Judaism (and Philo in particular).³⁶ In his analysis Bartsch has shifted the question of Ignatius' gnostic influence from “a fixed point within gnostic speculation” (i.e., Schlier's soteriology) to “the total context of the gnostic world-view” (i.e., *theology*);³⁷ or, to say it another way, he has relocated the point of Ignatius' contact with “gnostic” thought from soteriology to *theology*.³⁸

³² Ibid., 24–34. Yet these three characteristically-gnostic images for Ignatius “ihren mythologischen Gehalt verloren haben und zu Bildern, zu Allegorien geworden sind” (ibid., 31).

³³ Cf. *Phld.* 9.1–2; 5.2; *Magn.* 8.2. Ibid., 39–52; cf. p. 34: “Die Fremdheit der Gottesidee des Ignatius gegenüber dem Gottesbegriff der Tradition, d.h. dem biblischen Gottesbegriff, wird sich besonders dort zeigen, wo Ignatius sich mit den jüdischen Lehren auseinandersetzt, die den Gottesbegriff des Judentums vertreten.”

³⁴ Ibid., 53–61, 71–75, respectively.

³⁵ Ibid., 74: “[W]ie wir gesehen haben, sind alle anderen Ausdrücke, wie der eine Gott, der höchste Gott und die Ruhe Gottes aus der Gnosis und den orientalischen Einflüssen zu erklären.”

³⁶ I.e., a hellenistic-Judaism through which “gnostic” thought has penetrated. In this sense Bartsch recognizes Philo as “Mittler der gnostischen Gedanken” and comments, “Es ist aber wichtig, daß wir bei jedem Begriff eine Verbindung zu Philo herstellen konnten; denn einmal sind wir so der Annahme einer direkten Abhängigkeit vom Griechentum enthoben, und zum anderen wird die Tatsache damit erklärt, daß der Begriff ὑψιστος sowohl im AT als auch in außerchristlichen Zeugnissen seine Parallelen hat” (ibid., 74; cf. 20–23, 72–74).

³⁷ Ibid., 166.

³⁸ Ibid., 33–34, 56, 76–77, 166–67, et esp. 78–132.

Bartsch and Schlier have been followed by a number of others,³⁹ though not by all.⁴⁰ Preiss, in particular, was critiqued by E. J. Tinsley, who argued that Ignatius “is a good early example of Christian ‘incarnational’ mysticism in which the historical life of Jesus has a central place.” “He is concerned,” Tinsley continues, “to warn his readers of the dangers of a vague amorphous ‘spiritual’ mysticism which he sees is bound to result from devotion to a ‘docetic’ Christ.”⁴¹ To repeat Tinsley’s arguments would be burdensome, especially since they are summarized and addressed elsewhere.⁴² It is sufficient to note that though Tinsley rightly draws attention to the incarnational nature of Ignatius’ thought, he does not sufficiently undercut Preiss’ central contention that Ignatius reduces the gospel to an essentially *ahistorical* message of redemption and in so doing deemphasizes the transcendence and sovereignty of God and Christ.⁴³

More recently a number of counter-voices to the traditional proposals of Schlier and Bartsch have emerged. Noting the “conundrum in which Tinsley can pose as a sharp critic of Preiss and yet unwittingly concur with Preiss’ portrayal of the leading motifs of Ignatius’ thought,” Willard Swartley reexamines the *imitatio Christi* in Ignatius. Casting reasonable doubt on elements of Preiss’ presentation, especially that “Ignatius’ theology was abortive in historical consciousness,” Swartley posits a different approach to the problem. “Since it is now apparent,” he notes, “that one can read Ignatius with different kinds of glasses and observe different emphases, it becomes essential to carefully analyse, not systematize, the letters, paying special attention to the concepts which dominate Ignatius’ thought and their specific inter-relationship.”⁴⁴ From a reading of the Ignatian epistles Swartley

³⁹ Peter Meinhold (“Die Anschauung des Ignatius von Antiochien von der Kirche” in idem, *Studien zu Ignatius von Antiochien* [VIGM 97, Abteilung für abendländische Religionsgeschichte; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979] 57–66) and Campenhausen (*Kirchliches Amt*, 106–09). Joachim Rogge (“Ενωσις und verwandte Begriffe in den Ignatiusbriefen,” In *...und fragten nach Jesus: Beiträge aus Theologie, Kirche und Geschichte* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1964] 48, esp. 50–51) is somewhat too enthusiastic when he notes, “H. Schlier und H.-W. Bartsch...haben erstmalig eine so erdrückende Fülle religionsgeschichtlicher Parallelen beigebracht, daß auch dann, wenn man geneigt ist, das Gewicht dieses Materials nicht so schwer wiegen zu lassen, die teilweise Verwurzelung des Ignatius in der Gnosis unabweisbar ist” (ibid., 45).

⁴⁰ Corwin offers a dissenting voice (*St. Ignatius*, particularly chs. 5 and 9; cf. also pp. 175–88).

⁴¹ E.J. Tinsley, “The *imitatio Christi* in the Mysticism of St. Ignatius of Antioch,” in *StPatr* 2 (TU 64; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957) 554–55.

⁴² In Swartley’s “Imitatio.”

⁴³ Cf. ibid., 84–85.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 90.

identifies four “clusters of thought” (ethical, christological, unity, and obedience), each of which depends on a number of consistent lexical terms. He proposes a statistical analysis: “If one could discover; (*sic*) first, *which* cluster is *essentially* primary in Ignatius’ thought; then secondly, which cluster-member is *essentially* primary to the other cluster-members; and third, how each cluster (and the members thereof) functions in relation to the others, then one should be able to authentically describe Ignatius’ concept of *imitatio Christi*.”⁴⁵ Unable to carry out such a complex analysis at length, Swartley contents himself with uncovering first “the frequency of these concepts in the letters (without any *prima facie* critical regard to contexts)” and then analyzing “certain interrelationships which are crucial to any conclusions even of a tentative nature.”⁴⁶ Among other conclusions Swartley finds that:

imitation is never directly associated with attaining God or even with discipleship...Rather imitation and discipleship, although they both express aspirations of dedication, are oriented to different sets of terms...

Examination of the imitation-texts clearly shows that imitation is oriented primarily to *suffering*, not to the cross specifically but to suffering as the inevitable consequence of loving like God loves...

From this point of view it is difficult to see why Ignatius’ imitation is to be associated at all with mysticism (whether Preiss’ mystical quest for immortality or Tinsley’s mystical meditation on the cross). Further, since the concept of imitation is used *only once* (*Rom.* 6,3) with reference to Ignatius himself, how can this concept be regarded as the ‘key’ to understanding Ignatius? This term is used rather to describe a simple historical reality (fully Pauline and Petrine, esp. I Pet. 2,20–23) of what it means to be Christian. Associated with the ideas of suffering, love, and unity, Ignatius’ use of the term imitation is radically historical, not metaphysical or mystical.

For Ignatius then, *imitatio Christi* means shaping one’s historical life, especially in love’s willingness to suffer and in love’s quest for unity, by the paradigm set forth in Jesus Christ...Further, his pressing concern that he be worthy, be found in him, and attain unto God, puts the distinctive Ignatian emphasis not on the general point of *imitatio Christi*, (since the imitation-terms are never associated with these concepts) but on the specific point of Ignatius’ *own discipleship*...For the key to understanding Ignatius is not his view of imitation *per se* but his understanding of his own distinctive role as a disciple who must first be a *bona fide* bishop of the church in Syria, then (with no problem) a worthy martyr, and conclusively a *true disciple*. The key which opens

⁴⁵ Ibid., 90–91.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 91.

Ignatius certain way (attainment) to God as bishop and martyr is the *unity of the church*.⁴⁷

Furthermore, Swartley observes:

ἔνωσις is a distinctive Ignatian concept, connected with his relation to the church in Syria. Further, because the ἔνωσις-concept occurs only once in Romans (and there refers to the church at Rome, *Rom. Ins.*) and is thus *never* in this letter associated with Ignatius' frequently expressed concern of being worthy, being a true disciple, attaining God, etc., Preiss' thesis that Ignatius refers to the unity of flesh and spirit *via* the incarnation as external support for his quest for immortality is contradicted by the evidence. The phrase, σαρκικῶς and πνευματικῶς, does not occur outside the Inscription, even though there are appropriate occasions for it (5,3; 7,3; 8,3), especially if this unity were the background of Ignatius' *imitatio Christi*. Moreover, the uses of unity-terminology in *Philadelphians* shows that the concept is connected with *church* unity, not the unity of the flesh with the spirit *vis à vis* Ignatius' [*sic*] attaining immortality.⁴⁸

Using word-cluster statistics Swartley provides a countervailing voice to typical "gnostic" readings of Ignatian imitation- and unity-motifs and reemphasizes the immanent, earthy nature of Ignatius' unity-concept.

What Swartley accomplished through statistical analysis another scholar has more recently accomplished by identifying an alternative *religionsgeschichtliche* schema whereby unity language could have entered Ignatius' thought-world. In an article on scripture and tradition in Ignatius, Robert Grant steers away from gnostic ideas and seeks to locate Ignatius more closely with traditional/scriptural Christian material.⁴⁹ He suggests that the idea of *episcopal unity* (i.e., ecclesial unity through conformity to the authority of the monarchic episcopate) is essentially modeled on Johannine elements (with a touch of Ephesians) adapted under the influence of imitation/hierarchy ideas already present in hellenistic-Judaism (Josephus, Paul, and *Didache*). Similarly, the concept of *sacramental unity* (i.e., ecclesial unity through participation in a shared sacrament) was developed in interaction with Pauline material again interpreted "in language related to Judaism."⁵⁰ "The principal features of his thought," Grant concludes, "come to him from the apostolic faith as interpreted in the Jewish Christian circles of Antioch."⁵¹ Grant's attempt to shift the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 99–101.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 101–02.

⁴⁹ "Scripture and Tradition in St. Ignatius of Antioch," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 328–35.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 332.

⁵¹ Ibid., 334.

discussion of religio-historical sources in a more hellenistic-Jewish direction, while laudable, is not wholly convincing, if only because he did not have the necessary space to provide a detailed treatment such as Bartsch's. The links to hellenistic-Judaism which he makes are somewhat haphazard and unclear.

In his impressive commentary on the Ignatian letters, William Schoedel has assumed the mantle of drastically vitiating gnosticizing claims for Ignatius, arguing instead for "a minimalist interpretation of the theme" of mystical participation in God.⁵² "A major purpose of this commentary" on Ignatius, Schoedel notes, "is to show the extent to which he had absorbed elements of what may be loosely called popular Hellenistic culture."⁵³ Schoedel moves away from earlier attempts to situate Ignatius within a primarily "gnostic" milieu to posit an alternative vision, an Ignatius affected by a spiritual climate of "a widely diffused otherworldliness that variously affected forms of mystical and semi-mystical movements of the period," of which "the Gnostic religion" [*sic*] is one "distinctive articulation."⁵⁴ "[W]e are doubtful," he claims, "that some important themes in Ignatius apparently of mystical provenance—that of unity, for example, or that of silence—are as deeply rooted in this soil [sc. "spiritual climate of otherworldliness"] as may at first seem likely. At any rate, the emphasis in this commentary is on the extent to which potentially mystical or marginally Gnostic images and ideas have been made to subserve more concrete religious and social concerns."⁵⁵ Schoedel's research shows the likelihood that Ignatius' references to "unity" imitate contemporary hellenistic and hellenistic-Jewish rhetoric and metaphors of concord and social harmony,⁵⁶ whether portrayed variously through musical⁵⁷ or biological metaphors,⁵⁸ Stoic imagery of cosmic

⁵² Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 53.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ E.g., *Philo Virt.* 35; *Mut.* 200; *Migr.* 220. Schoedel, *ibid.*, 51–55, 74, 104–05, 116–17, 202, 206.

⁵⁷ As, e.g., in *Eph.* 4.1–2; *Rom.* 2.2; *Phld.* 1.2. Schoedel, *ibid.*, 51–53: musical imagery is "close in spirit" to that in "Gnosticism," yet "is more specific and concrete and can be illustrated more adequately from the central cultural tradition of Hellenism."

⁵⁸ *Eph.* 4.2; *Trall.* 11.2; cf. *Philo Her.* 242; *Fug.* 112; 4 Macc. 14:6; Plutarch *Frat. amor.* 2,478f.

unity,⁵⁹ or more predominantly modes of political discourse popular in the hellenistic city.⁶⁰ Social concord, Schoedel helpfully reminds us, is “a dominant theme in the discussion of relations between cities and between citizens in cities of Asia Minor in this period,”⁶¹ and Ignatius demonstrates awareness “that in calling for unity and harmony he was building on standard rhetorical practice.”⁶² What Schoedel has done is to shift the *purpose* and *importance* of this language within the Ignatian letters by providing a less-mystical, more concrete religio-historical discursive context. The result of his approach has been to suggest an immanentization of one’s reading of Ignatius, so that by “unity,” specifically concrete social interaction “is what is primarily involved.”⁶³

3. Reimagining Ignatius’ Unity-Motif

From the above survey we see that to inquire into the religio-historical sources of Ignatius’ unity-motif and the socio-religious function(s) of that concept has been to ask much the same question. The two are closely linked. Depending on the conceptual framework one uses different images and social meanings for the unity-motif in the Ignatian letters emerge. Preiss represents an extreme example of how “gnostic” readings may influence interpretation. He rigorously applies Schlier’s thesis to Ignatius’ ideas about martyrdom, christology, and ecclesiology, noting that the three find their point of contact in a larger “mysticism of imitation” conceived in terms of redemptive unification with the divine. His elevation of the *individual* in redemptive “union with God” is completely consistent with the “gnosticism” portrayed in the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* with its focus on the salvation of self.⁶⁴ Though taking a different point of contact with “gnostic” influence, Bartsch

⁵⁹ *Magn.* 7.1–2; cf. Eph 4:5–6; Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 7.9; Josephus *Ant.* 4.200–01; *C. Ap.* 2.193; Philo *Conf.* 170; *Opif.* 171; *Spec.* 1.67, 70. Cf. Martin Dibelius, “Die Christianisierung einer hellenistischen Formel,” *NJahrb* 35/36 (1915): 224–36.

⁶⁰ *Eph.* 13.1–2; 4.1–2; *Magn.* 6.1; 15; *Trall.* 12.2; *Phld.* inscr.; 11.2. On the use of *ὁμονοία* as a political metaphor see Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 74).

⁶¹ See Schoedel (“Theological Norms,” 50–51 and relevant endnotes) for literary and numismatic evidence. Antioch was a major hellenistic city, and we cannot therefore exclude it as the place where Ignatius received this rhetoric (see *supra* §1).

⁶² Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 8; cf. 105.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

⁶⁴ Particularly Rudolf Bultmann’s existentialism (*Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* [trans. R.H. Fuller; New York; London: Thames and Hudson, 1956] 162–71: “redemption, the ascent of the Self”).

similarly allows the ideological “gnostic” world-view and specifically the concept of God to inform his reconstruction of the historical situation in Philadelphia and Magnesia (and elsewhere). He reconstructs the historic conflict in terms of a cultic division played out in the celebration of private mysteries (*Privatenmysterien*) in which union with the divine is reenacted and reconstituted.⁶⁵ Scholars have now cast sufficient doubt on the “gnostic” models of Schlier and Bartsch, so that these may no longer be *a priori* presumed as the driving thought-world behind the Ignatian unity-motif. Alternative models and approaches (Swartley, Grant, Schoedel) have been helpful correctives in this regard. Schoedel, for example, reflects a countervailing opinion, especially to the individualist reading of Preiss. Developing his understanding of the motif from hellenistic-rhetoric about social and political “harmony” he points decidedly to the *corporate, collective* and earth-bound, social importance of the Ignatian unity-motif. While not denying the element of communion with God and of divine unity he tends to minimize them.⁶⁶ These two ways of reading represent alternative ideas about the ideological and social function of Ignatius’ unity-motif. The former envisions it as “union *with* God;” the latter as “union *from* God.” Ultimately none of these approaches sufficiently accounts for the diversity of Ignatius’ thought on this matter, and it is now doubtful whether any single religio-historical model can adequately inform our interpretation of Ignatius’ unity-motif.⁶⁷

There seems little doubt in light of Bartsch’s research that Ignatius’ divine unity concept did come from somewhere outside the shared traditions of the Christian church,⁶⁸ yet to identify this as “gnosis” is unnecessary. The linguistic and ideological connections Bartsch has noted with “gnosis” are not convincingly specific to demonstrate contacts with any specific “gnostic” movement of which we are aware. Nor is his case furthered by his lack of definitional specificity. Bartsch

⁶⁵ *Gnostisches Gut*, 13–17, 78–132.

⁶⁶ *Ignatius*, 21–22: “A sense of communion with God is not missing from Ignatius and is no doubt presupposed whenever he speaks of union or unity. For the latter are conferred by God. But since Ignatius apparently avoids using the term union when he speaks of communion with God, we may assume that union has to do with the solidarity of the community in social and cultic terms and lacks deeper mystical significance.” Quite simply, “the bishop builds on ideas of concord and unity drawn from Greek political thought, but he orients them to a conception of the church as a transcendent reality” (*ibid.*, 116).

⁶⁷ We do not wish to apply this analysis too harshly to Schoedel, whom we believe to be rather balanced in approach.

⁶⁸ His argument in *Gnostisches Gut*, 42–52, is convincing, if not in every detail, at least on the whole.

can discover “gnosis” in Ignatius precisely because he defines “gnosis” so broadly: it is not a specific movement but an ideology, inseparable from hellenism, transmitted to Ignatius by hellenistic-Judaism, and penetrating every religious movement of the time.⁶⁹ With a definition so nebulous and plastic how could one not find “gnosis” in Ignatius?

Some contact with hellenistic-Judaism and ideas of divine unity now seems certain, though no one source can be definitively proven to be the transmitter. This was proposed by Bartsch, Grant, and Schoedel, and it has been convincingly demonstrated in the case of Ignatius’ contacts with 4 Maccabees by Perler. If Allen Cabaniss is correct in his (less well-known) assessment of a relation between *Ephesians* 19 and Wisdom of Solomon (18:14–15; cf. 7:29–30),⁷⁰ then a hellenistic-Jewish context is evident even in this most “gnostic” of Ignatian passages on which Schlier based so much of his argument! Nevertheless, whatever contacts and borrowings the bishop owes to hellenistic-Judaism are certainly unconscious on his part. He rails so strongly against what he perceives as alien “Jewish” influence in the churches of Philadelphia and Magnesia that his aversion to things “Jewish” would certainly have prevented any conscious borrowing from overtly “Jewish” sources.

All-in-all, identifying a specific extra-Christian text, set of texts, or ideology from which Ignatius gleaned his idea of divine unity, and subsequently reading the Ignatian letters in light of that reconstructed model, remains highly suspect. It is preferable to retain the ambiguity of the unknown and to envision Ignatius as generally influenced by the larger rhetorical and ideological milieux of hellenism and hellenistic-Judaism.

Another option is available. Rather than allow a reconstructed religio-historical context to drive our interpretation of Ignatius’ theology, we should first evaluate the form and function of divine-unity within the specific literary shaping of each individual letter and within the historical context presupposed by that letter.⁷¹ This will reveal why Ignatius himself perceives (sc. phenomenologically) the concept of unity to be socially important across a range of specific historical

⁶⁹ *Supra* nn. 26 et 36. Cf. *ibid.*, 23: “Dies ist darin begründet, daß die Gnosis...Weltanschauung ist und als solche in ihren Einflüssen vom Hellenismus nicht rein zu trennen ist.”

⁷⁰ “Wisdom 18:14f.: An Early Christmas Text” *VC* 10 (1956): 97–102.

⁷¹ Appendix A proposes a method for recovering historical context from the literary shaping of the Ignatian letters.

contexts. Only then, out of the diversity of its context-specific applications, should we attempt a synthesizing reconstruction of his theology of unity. Whatever “contextually-independent value” the unity-concept held for Ignatius can only be articulated through a close “thick(er) description” of the texts themselves. These texts demonstrate how the concept functions for him in specific historic contexts. A holistic understanding of divine unity in Ignatius will not emerge through some *a priori* presumed ideological context from his religio-historical environment. Only by evaluating its function in the individual letters (sc. its “contextually-specific value”) can we identify the extent to which the unity-motif bears “independent value.” Several reasons make this letter-specific approach attractive in the case of the Ignatian epistles.

First, in those areas where Ignatius almost certainly used traditional sources there is clear evidence that he applied them rather freely.⁷² We must assume that any religio-historical ideologies he adopted were likewise adapted relatively freely. How those ideas functioned in their native extra-Ignatian context must not be permitted to drive the interpretation of motifs within the Ignatian letters. Interpretation of Ignatian motifs must arise from Ignatius’ own texts, not hypothetically reconstructed mythological or conceptual backgrounds. Our proposed approach refocuses on the letters themselves.

Second, by examining the place of Ignatius’ unity-motif in each letter individually, the proposed tack does justice to thematic, rhetorical, and lexical diversity *between* the Asian epistles and *Romans*.⁷³ In *Romans* neither ἔνωσις nor ἐνότης appears, and exhortations to be united with the bishop are entirely absent. The idea of unity, however, is not entirely absent. The verb ἐνόω occurs in the inscription, where Ignatius addresses the missive “to those who are united (ἡνωμένοις) in flesh and spirit (κατὰ σάρκα καὶ πνεῦμα) to his (sc. Christ’s) every commandment.” Yet here it does not break beyond stereotyped epistolary forms.⁷⁴ In one other passage Ignatius mentions hellenistic-imagery of social harmony. He asks the Roman Christians to remain silent (sc. not to intervene on his behalf, but instead to pray; cf. 1.2; 3.2), so that he may become a divine word and “attain God” (θεοῦ

⁷² Cf. Grant, “Scripture.”

⁷³ Swartley, “Imitatio,” 91–94, esp. Tables A and B.

⁷⁴ References to harmony, unity, “common life,” “physical and spiritual life,” or the like appear throughout the openings and closings of Ignatius’ missives. Cf. esp. *Eph.* inscr.; 21; *Magn.* 1.1; 15; *Phld.* inscr.; 11.2.

ἐπιτυχεῖν) through martyrdom. Only through their collective silence and concerted prayer can the contingency of the event itself (cf. 3.2) be turned to certainty, and only through his martyrdom may their silence finally be broken with the result that they “may form a chorus in love and sing to the Father in Jesus Christ” (2.1–2). The collective, harmonious praise anticipated when the bishop “attains God” through martyrdom is contingent on the community’s present harmonious silence (sc. non-lobbying efforts on his behalf). An idea of mystical participation may be present (i.e., through their collective efforts at silence the community too mystically participates in God through Ignatius’ own “attaining God”), yet such a motif is implicit and certainly suppressed in the rhetoric. Precisely in *Romans* then, where the motif of martyrdom and rhetoric of “attaining God” is most prominent,⁷⁵ we find only the slightest of links to unity rhetoric and images, and that expressed in distinctly social (not mystical) form. Conversely, ἕνωσις, ἐνώω, ἐνότης, and ὁμόνοια (sc. unity-terms) populate in an otherwise unprecedented way the missives of *Philadelphians* (10x) and *Magnesians* (7x),⁷⁶ and these are precisely the works where the rhetoric of “attainment” (ἐπι[τυγχάνω]) is least frequent.⁷⁷ This suggests that the link between the unity- and “attaining God”-motifs often appealed to by advocates of “gnostic” influence is not as certain as once thought.

Third, the proposed approach does justice to thematic, rhetorical, and lexical diversity *within* the Asian letters themselves. For example, the motifs which Bartsch musters to support a “gnostic” understanding of Ignatius’ divine unity-motif (σῶμα-Begriff, believers as plants, cosmic building) are simply not present in *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*. Bartsch may successfully demonstrate from *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians* that Ignatius’ unity-motif comes from outside the sphere of biblical traditions, yet when he attempts to define that motif in terms of “gnostic” divine unity he is forced to appeal to *Ephesians*, *Trallians*, and *Smyrnaeans*!⁷⁸ Additionally, the images to which Bartsch appeals to demonstrate the

⁷⁵ [ἐπι]τυγχάνω appears 9x in *Romans*; cf. Swartley, “Imitatio,” 92.

⁷⁶ The word frequency is 8.2 and 5.3 per 1000 words, respectively (obtained from Accordance). The nearest ratio occurs in *Ephesians* with a frequency of 3.59, followed by *Polycarp* (3.01), *Trallians* (1.64) and *Smyrnaeans* (1.36). In *Romans* the ratio is 0.74/1000 words.

⁷⁷ The word frequency is 0.82 and 1.51 per 1000 words, respectively (obtained from Accordance). The nearest ratio occurs in *Ephesians* with a frequency of 1.79, followed by *Smyrnaeans* (2.04), *Polycarp* (3.01), and *Trallians* (2.46). In *Romans* the ratio is 6.69/1000 words.

⁷⁸ Bartsch, *Gnostisches Gut*, 24–34; cf. *Trall.* 11.1–2; *Eph.* 4.2; 9.1; 10.3; *Smyrn.* 1.2. His parenthetical reference to *Phld.* 3.1 “als eine bewußte Zitierung des Begriffes von Mt 15,13” only

concept of the height and grandeur of God (ὑψιστος-*Begriff*) outside the biblical tradition come from *Ephesians* (19; 9.1; 2.2).⁷⁹ The “gnostic” motif of “silence” as a divine characteristic, in addition to appearing in *Ephesians* (19.1; 15.1–2), does occur in *Magn.* 8.2, yet Bartsch is able to describe the motif almost entirely without reference to its appearance in *Magnesians*.⁸⁰ Ignatius may well owe his idea of silence as a divine characteristic to wider religio-historical ideas purveyed in the early second century. That, however, is another (less-important) question than asking what role the motif actually plays in the argument of *Magnesians*. In the case of the latter, it takes a relatively minor rhetorical place in the overall argument.⁸¹ All-in-all, the mythological images which Ignatius supposedly borrowed from “gnosis” are entirely absent from *Philadelphians* and with the exception of the “silence” motif are absent from *Magnesians*. This raises serious questions about whether there may have been a phenomenologically-significant reason for Ignatius to employ such “mythological” language much more frequently when writing to the churches in Ephesus, Tralles, and Smyrna—where docetic influence seems to have been problematic—while not to those at Philadelphia and Magnesia—where “Jewish” influence was the problem. Inversely, the language of unity is less frequent in the former than in the latter.⁸² Does this indicate a phenomenologically-distinct significance for Ignatius in using the divine unity-motif when he combats “Jewish” versus “docetic” influence? The approach proposed here can address this question.

These observations suggest that a detailed, “context-specific” analysis of unity rhetoric on a letter-by-letter basis as it functioned within the historical context of each community (reconstructed through “thick[er] description;” Appendix A) will yield better results for understanding the importance of the unity-motif (*inter alia*) in Ignatius’ overall “independent” theology. Only by the difficult task of wading through the individual material can we begin to reconstruct Ignatius’ holistic theology, quite independent of presumed religio-historical influences.

attests similar horticultural imagery and can hardly (by appeal to *Trall.* 11.1) be seen to support similar mythological background.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Rom.* inscr.

⁸⁰ *Gnostisches Gut*, 59–60.

⁸¹ See *infra* ch. 3 §1.2.

⁸² See *supra* n. 76.

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