

Two Case Studies in Earliest Christological Readings of Biblical Texts

L. W. Hurtado (University of Edinburgh)

In this paper I focus on two key biblical (OT) texts that figured significantly in earliest christological developments. For each text I will survey evidence of how it was read previously to, and roughly contemporary with, earliest Christianity, to see how earliest Christian usage compares. As we will see, this Christian usage seems innovative, even remarkable, and also appeared surprisingly early, so I also wish to consider what prompted this novel reading of these scriptural texts.

In the main, the many studies of the use of the OT in the NT have tended to focus on what we might call the mechanics of early Christian reading/use of scriptural texts, and the theological meanings/uses derived from them as attested in early Christian writings. So, for example, scholars often have compared early Christian use of given OT texts with their use in the second-temple Jewish context, and even with later rabbinic references to them, noting similarities and differences in the way the OT texts are handled and what interpretative use was made of them. Scholars have also probed whether and how more generally early Christian use of scripture reflects the techniques of exegesis attested in Jewish circles of the time.¹ In this paper, however, I wish to focus on the cognitive processes involved in the earliest Christian exploration and appropriation of particular OT texts to understand and articulate Christological convictions. That is, I want to ask *when*, *why* and *how* earliest believers came to see in certain OT texts the new (even somewhat revolutionary) meanings that they ascribed to them. What moved them

¹ E.g., Daniel Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975); David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE*, TSAJ 30 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); and, more briefly, Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 31-57. For a recent discussion of Qumran “*peshet*” exegesis, see Timothy H. Lim, “Biblical Quotations in the Pesharim and the Text of the Bible—Methodological Considerations,” in *The Bible As Book*, ed. E. Herbert and Emmanuel Tov (London: British Library, 2002), 71-79; *id.*, *Pesharim* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). On the relevance of Qumran texts more generally for use of OT in the NT, see, e.g., J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in the Qumran Literature and in the New Testament,” in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), 3-58, and now George J. Brooke, “Shared Exegetical Traditions Between the Scrolls and the New Testament,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 565-91.

to reading these texts in this radical new way, and when did this radical development commence?² Given the limits of this study, I will focus on the earliest evidence.

My main contention is that earliest Christian use of these two (and other) OT texts was not simply the result of the application of certain exegetical techniques/practices, but instead reflects a approach to the scriptures that was based on a combination of key religious convictions characteristic of second-temple Jewish tradition, and radical new convictions that arose from profound religious experiences that distinguished early Christian circles.

The two scriptural texts I focus on here as case studies are Psalm 110 and Isaiah 45:22-25. As we will see, the earliest Christian interpretation of these texts is novel and noteworthy, and, I contend, cannot be accounted for except as the product of profound and distinctive Christological convictions. As already indicated, I propose that the earliest and initial Christian use of these and other OT texts was likely as a key part of the process of trying to understand for themselves the meaning of events and experiences. The biblical texts were scoured in the confidence that the divine plan could be discovered in the scriptures. Thereafter, these and other OT texts were deployed to justify to others these convictions in evangelistic and apologetic efforts. As Donald Juel urged, prior to the use of biblical texts in polemic and apologetic occasions, for the earliest believers, “The Bible [OT] provided the data for reflection on the gospel and its implications, as well as the language of prayer and praise. Exegesis was the matrix for theologizing.”³

Psalm 110 (LXX 109)

Psalm 110 is rightly judged to be a key biblical text in earliest Christian circles, cited or alluded to an impressive number of times in the NT.⁴ As William Loader observed about the opening verse of the psalm,

² For an earlier study addressing similar questions and focused on Psalm 110, see Martin Hengel, “Psalm 110 und die Erhöhung des Auferstandenen zur Rechten Gottes,” in *Anfänge der Christologie: Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Henning Paulsen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 43-73.

³ Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 140.

⁴ Key previous studies include David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973); Michel Gourgues, *A la Droite de Dieu. Résurrection de Jésus et actualisations du Psaume 110, I dans le Nouveau Testament* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1978); William R. G. Loader, “Christ At the Right Hand--Ps. CX.1 in the New Testament,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 199-217; Martin Hengel, “Setze dich zu meiner Rechten!”, in *Studien zur Christologie: Kleine Schriften IV* (WUNT 201;

No other passage of scripture recurs so frequently in allusion or quotation in the christological expressions of NT times as Ps. cx. 1. In this expression we stand in continuity with christological thought from the very early beginnings of its development.⁵

In the latest (28th) edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, the index of OT citations and allusions lists six citations of Psalm 110:1 and another nine identifiable allusions to the verse.⁶ If we also include all of the NT references to Jesus' exaltation to, or status at, God's "right hand" we have seven more indications of the likely influence of this text.⁷ In addition, the Nestle-Aland list shows three citations of Psalm 110:4, plus four allusions to it, making some twenty-nine instances of use or influence of Psalm 110 overall.⁸

Moreover, the evidence of the use/influence of Psalm 110 is found in NT writings ranging in date from Paul's epistles in the 50s through to the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, Hebrews, and the "deutero-Pauline" epistles (e.g., Ephesians). This rather clearly indicates that the Christian use of Psalm 110 began early and was widespread. That Paul chose to allude to the psalm (or at least used phrasing/imagery that derives from it), apparently feeling no need to cite it explicitly, suggests that by the time he wrote to

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 281-368, originally, in *Le Trône de Dieu*, ed. Marc Philonenko (WUNT 69, 1993), 108-94, English trans. "'Sit At My Right Hand!' The Enthronement of Christ At the Right Hand of God and Psalm 110:1," in Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 119-225 (which I cite here); Donald H. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 135-50.

⁵ Loader, "Christ at the Right Hand," 199. Similarly, Juel (*Messianic Exegesis*, 136), noted that Psalm 110:1 in particular "decisively shaped hymnic and confessional language" in the early years of the young Christian movement.

⁶ Citations: Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:13. Allusions: Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Luke 22:69; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12. In addition, there are citations in *1 Clem.* 36:5 and *Barn.* 12:10, and further allusions in *1 Clem.* 36:5; *Pol. Phil.* 2:1; *Apoc. Pet.* 6; *Sib. Or.* 2:243; *Apcr. Jas.* 14:30.

⁷ Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22.

⁸ Citations: Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21. Allusions: Rom. 11:29; Heb. 6:20; 7:3, 11. Two allusions listed in the 27th edition of Nestle-Aland no longer appear: Col. 3:1 (referring to Christ "seated on the right hand of God") and Heb. 3:15 (which refers to another priest in the likeness of Melchizedek). Both arguably could be included, however, as instances where the influence of Psalm 110 is likely. We should also note the frequent citations of and allusions to other OT texts. E.g., the Nestle-Aland list shows ten citations of various verses in Psalm 118, and another eight allusions to it.

Christians in Corinth and Rome (mid/late 50s) Psalm 110 had been read and appropriated by believers for some time, its effects already familiar to Christians in various locations.⁹

Scholarly recognition of the importance of Psalm 110 in early Christianity is reflected in the several valuable studies devoted to the matter (especially, those by Gourgues, Hay, Hengel and Loader). Thanks to the intensive work done in these studies, it is possible to be brief here, drawing on them particularly in surveying the pre-Christian use of this text and the pattern of usage in earliest Christian circles.

Pre-Christian Usage

It is widely thought that Psalm 110 originated as a celebration of the Judean king, and is classed as a “royal psalm”.¹⁰ So, the invitation given to “my lord” by *YHWH* in v. 1, “Sit at my right hand,” is to be taken as originally a powerful metaphorical reference to the Judean king as having divine authorization to act uniquely as “the viceregent [or vicegerent] of God” upon the earth.¹¹ In the original setting, the statement “probably meant that the king was seated to the right of the ark, on which God was invisibly enthroned.”¹² These royal psalms could later be read as messianic psalms by those who regarded the Messiah as a royal figure (as, e.g., in *Psalms of Solomon*, and in the NT).

It is the more noteworthy, thus, that there is scant evidence that Psalm 110 was used much in second-temple Jewish tradition.¹³ In particular, there is no direct evidence that it figured in Jewish messianic hopes of that time.¹⁴ Hay cited a passage in the

⁹ Hengel made this point earlier, noting that by the date of 1 Corinthians and Romans, “The time of its [Psalm 110:1] effectiveness in forming and influencing christology was already past” (“Sit at My Right Hand!,” 137).

¹⁰ This has been the dominant view for some time now. See, e.g., the discussion by Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1962; German original 1959), 692-97.

¹¹ So, e.g., Weiser, *The Psalms*, 694; also Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 19-20.

¹² John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 142. He also observed (151 n. 32) that the proposal by Bernard Duhm (*Die Psalmen* [2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1922], 398-400) that Psalm 110 originated as Maccabean propaganda “is now universally rejected.”

¹³ Cf. Bradley H. McLean, *Citations and Allusions to Jewish Scripture in Early Christian and Jewish Writings through 180 C.E.* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 77, who lists allusions to Psa. 110:1 in *IQS* 3:17 and *T.Reu.* 6:8. But I can see no basis for positing an allusion in either text. McLean posits an allusion to Psa. 110:4 in *T.Mos.* 6:1, presumably based on the reference to kings who will rule over the Jewish people and who will be called “priests of the Most High God,” commonly thought to refer to the Hasmonean rulers.

¹⁴ Cf., however, Rikk Watts, “The Psalms in Mark’s Gospel,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: TY&T Clark, 2004), 38 (25-45), who posits influence of Psa. 110 in *11QMelch* and the Similitudes of *1 Enoch*. But any such influence is hardly obvious. Of course, the enthronement scene in Dan. 7:10-14 may also be relevant for the Similitudes.

Testament of Job (33:1-3), as an allusion to Psalm 110:1 (or indication of its influence), where Job claims to have a throne “in the upper world [τῷ ὑπερκοσμίῳ]” whose “glory and splendour are at the right hand of [ἐκ δεξιῶν] God,” the latter phrasing likely drawn from the biblical text.¹⁵ Along with a number of others subsequently, Hay took *Testament of Job* as coming from a Jewish provenance sometime in the first century BCE to first century CE, thus offering a possible precedent-use of Psalm 110. Indeed, on this view *Testament of Job* would give us the only clear pre-Christian use of Psalm 110. But, more recently, James Davila has judged the work as more likely stemming from Christian circles (perhaps Egyptian), “by the early fifth century CE.”¹⁶ So, although *Testament of Job* 33:1-3 may well reflect phrasing from Psalm 110:1, it is actually not so clear that it is evidence of pre-Christian/Jewish use of the Psalm.¹⁷

Hay also pointed to the several places in the Similitudes of *I Enoch* where the Elect One is enthroned by God (esp. 51:3; 55:4; 61:8; 69:29; cf. 45:1-3), noting “no strong verbal parallelism,” but nevertheless urging that “the possibility of allusion is undeniable.”¹⁸ This possibility cannot be discounted, but it is also difficult to move beyond the realm of mere possibility.¹⁹ There is no use of actual phrasing from Psalm 110, and the portrayal of the royal-messianic Elect One as seated on a throne (upon the earth) that carries divine-like status is an idea echoed in various OT texts (e.g., Psa. 45:6; 89:36-37), hardly requiring Psalm 110:1 to account for it.

¹⁵ Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 23. “God” is one of several variants here, however, along with “the Father,” and “the Saviour.” For the Greek text and variants, see Sebastian P. Brock, *Testamentum Iobi* (PVTG 2; Leiden: Brill, 1967), and Robert A. Kraft (ed.), *The Testament of Job* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature & Scholars Press, 1974).

¹⁶ James R. Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?* (JSJSup 105; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 195-99, citing 199. Certainly, the variants cited in the preceding note seem to reflect Christian vocabulary. The recent study by Maria Haralambakis, *The Testament of Job: Text, Narrative and Reception History*, LST 80 (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), focuses on reception-history of the text and offers no firm view of original provenance.

¹⁷ Cf. Robert A. Kugler, “Testaments,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1295-97, who notes “a weak consensus at best” for a first-century CE date, goes with that view.

¹⁸ Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 26. Hengel (“‘Sit at My Right Hand!’,” 179) referred to the Similitudes as the only unambiguous witness to the messianic reading of Psalm 110 in second-temple Judaism, judging (186), “The influence of Ps. 110 and Isa. 11:1ff. upon the Similitudes cannot be overlooked.” Nevertheless, he concluded that Psa. 110 had “only a limited impact upon the content of the preserved Jewish apocalyptic texts from Hellenistic Roman times.”

¹⁹ The references to *2 Enoch* 11 (24:1) and *3 Enoch* 10:1; 48C.5 are not clearly allusions to Psalm 110, and in any case take us far too late to be of any use in mapping pre-Christian usage of the text.

As for the Qumran texts, these give us no clear evidence of the reading/use of Psalm 110.²⁰ There is the interesting but fragmentary text known as *11Q Melchizedek* (*11Q13*) sometimes proposed. Although this text has no clear allusion to Psalm 110 or to the Melchizedek vignette in Genesis 14:18-20, Hay urged that anyone familiar with these texts and reading *11Q Melchizedek* could not fail to think of them.²¹ Perhaps. But this Qumran text is hardly *direct* evidence that Psalm 110:1 was drawn upon by its author, or how the psalm was interpreted more widely at the time *11Q Melchizedek* was composed. The idea of a priest-king Melchizedek could have come as readily from Genesis 14, and we have other indications of an avid interest in Genesis reflected in the Qumran scrolls.²²

In fact, the earliest direct references to Psalm 110:1 in Jewish texts are in rabbinic writings, which date from a few centuries after the NT.²³ To be sure, these texts ascribe references to Psalm 110:1 to rabbinic figures who may date to the early second century CE (e.g., R. Ishmael). But *messianic* interpretation of the psalm is not attached to figures who can be dated earlier than the late third century CE. Nevertheless, after reviewing the rabbinic evidence many years ago, Billerbeck concluded that the messianic interpretation of Psalm 110:1 was already familiar in first-century Jewish circles.²⁴ Hay rightly noted that Billerbeck's view rested heavily on an inference based on the use of the psalm in the NT (esp. Mark 12:35-37/parallels); nevertheless, he echoed Billerbeck's position, urging that "the argument of Jesus about David's son is most easily understood if a messianic interpretation prevailed." Essentially resting on this inference, Hay then concluded, "On

²⁰ David L. Washburn, *A Catalog of Biblical Passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), lists no citation or allusion. Collins (*The Scepter and the Star*, 151 n. 34) claimed echoes of Psalm 110 in the *Apocryphon of Levi* (4Q540-541), but he does not specify them and I cannot detect any. Cf. Hengel ("Sit at My Right Hand!," 184): "Unfortunately we know nothing about the interpretation of Ps. 110 and Dan. 7 in Qumran."

²¹ Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 27.

²² Washburn (*A Catalogue of Biblical Passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls*) has eight and half pages of references to Genesis, and the Qumran texts include portions of commentaries on Genesis (4Q252, 4Q254) multiple copies of Genesis, and "rewritten" material from Genesis (1QApGen).

²³ Esp. *Midr. Pss*, 18 §29 (which likely dates to the eighth century CE), cited in Matthew Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah language in Ancient Judaism* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 146 n. 39. The rabbinic evidence is gathered in H. L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1922-1928), 4/1: 452-65. For a more recent attempt to use rabbinic texts critically, see David Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis From the Era of the New Testament, Vol. 1: Prayer and Agriculture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); but cf. also reviews, which pose questions about the success of his venture: http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/4659_4763.pdf; http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/4659_4764.pdf.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 458-59.

balance, then, it seems fair to suppose that in the NT era a messianic interpretation of Ps 110 was current in Judaism, although we cannot know how widely it was accepted.”²⁵

But the argument that the reference to Psalm 110:1 in the Gospels shows that a messianic reading of the psalm must have been current in Jewish circles at the time surely ought to be recognized as the *non sequitur* that it obviously is.²⁶ All that Mark 12:35-37 requires is familiarity with a view that Messiah is son of David, and that David wrote Psalm 110. As Adela Yarbro Collins observed, if there is any prior messianic reading of the psalm presupposed in Mark 12:35-37, it is probably early Christian christological reading of it.²⁷ To be a bit more generous to them, the argument offered by Billerbeck and Hay can pose little more than an unconfirmed possibility.²⁸ In any case, there is scant basis for thinking that a messianic reading of Psalm 110 was prevalent, or any more than one of a number of interpretations of the figure addressed in v. 1. Juel’s more cautious judgment is preferable, proposing, “We may speak at best of interpretive possibilities available to Christian exegetes,” and noting that Psalm 110:1 did not apparently attract a great deal of attention in ancient Jewish circles.²⁹

The Early Christian Reading

In short, if Psalm 110 was read as a messianic text in second-temple Jewish tradition there is scant evidence of this, and in any case it was apparently not very common. So, taking account of the frequent citations and allusions to the psalm in the NT, the first thing we notice is how much more important and prominent Psalm 110 seems to have been in christological thinking and discourse from the outset. This alone is a significant distinguishing feature of earliest Christian usage of the psalm. That is, the focus and the weight placed upon Psalm 110 as an important christological text marks off earliest Christian reading of the psalm rather strongly. But there is more to say.

²⁵ Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 30.

²⁶ On the same logic, we would have to presume that the citation of Exodus 3:6 in Mark 12:26 presupposes that the Exodus text was already understood in second-temple Jewish circles as a reference to the resurrection of the dead, but this is neither attested nor asserted by scholars.

²⁷ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 579-80.

²⁸ In his review of Hay’s book, Joseph A. Fitzmyer (*CBQ* 36 [1974], 594-5) likewise expressed doubt that the messianic reading of Psalm 110 can be affirmed with any confidence.

²⁹ Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 139. Yet, although he granted that “[t]here is little direct evidence in extant texts for a messianic interpretation of Psalm 110:1,” Juel also judged that the reference to Psalm 110:1 in Mark 12:35-37 “seems to presume widespread agreement that the psalm speaks of the Davidic Messiah” (138 n. 10).

It is also noteworthy how early this intense usage of the psalm began. To reiterate a previous observation, the influence of Psalm 110 is already apparent in the earliest body of extant Christian texts, the undisputed letters of Paul.³⁰ The earliest clear allusion is in 1 Corinthians 15:25, “ἄχρι οὗ θῆ πάντα τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ.” Even though Paul’s phrasing does not conform exactly to the LXX of Psalm 110:1 (the phrasing from Psalm 8:6, ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, used instead of ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου), it is clear (and commonly accepted) that he draws on the language and imagery of Psalm 110:1 in expressing Jesus’ exaltation as the divinely-appointed king over all.³¹ Moreover, Paul’s somewhat free re-phrasing of Psalm 110:1 here can be taken as an indication that it was already such a familiar christological text that allusion to it was sufficient for the original readers of 1 Corinthians, and that reference to Jesus as “at God’s right hand” was already a familiar christological trope and affirmation.³²

Granting this, Lambrecht contended, however, that Paul in fact adapted the wording of the verse to assert a still stronger christological point. Whereas in the LXX wording of Psalm 110:1 God is the one who puts all enemies in subjection to the enthroned figure, Paul’s re-wording in 1 Corinthians 15:25 can be read as making Jesus the subject of the verb θῆ, and so the one who secures the subjection of “all things,” and to himself.³³ In support of this reading, Lambrecht pointed to Philippians 3:21, where Paul explicitly portrays Jesus as exercising “his power by which he will subject all things

³⁰ Hengel (“‘Sit at My Right Hand!’,” 137-63) stresses this as well in a much more detailed discussion of all the NT references than I can provide here.

³¹ Paul’s combination of wording from Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 8:6 (which is also alluded to in 15:27) is noted by many, e.g., Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1234; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 84. Because this is an allusion in 1 Cor. 15:25 and not an exact citation, it is not discussed in Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, SNTSMS 74 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), which I consider an unfortunate decision, precisely because Stanley sought to portray the various direct and indirect ways that Paul (and ancient authors more generally) cited and/or alluded to familiar texts.

³² Given that these two psalms are also linked in other NT texts (Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 1:13—2:9), it is often suggested that Paul and other NT writers draw on an early Christian “testimony” tradition/collection: e.g., Martin C. Albl, *“And Scripture Cannot Be Broken”: The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimony Collections*, NovTSup, 96 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 221-28.

³³ Jan Lambrecht, “Paul’s Christological Use of Scripture in 1 Cor. 15.20-28,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 502-27, esp. 508-11.

to himself” (and which also likely alludes to Psalm 8:6).³⁴ Similarly, though noting that Paul’s discussion in this passage is complex and that it is not always easy to decide who is referred to, Gordon Fee concluded, “Almost certainly we must go with the grammar here and see Christ as the subject” (of the verb in v. 25).³⁵

But, however one views the intended subject of the verb in 1 Corinthians 15:25, it is clear that Paul’s statement here reflects a radically innovative and remarkable use of Psalm 110:1. In the original context of the psalm, the Judean king is promised rule over his earthly enemies, and his earthly throne is declared to be set and backed by God. This is strong imagery, but in the early Christian usage of the psalm reflected in this Pauline passage things are taken to a wholly new level, literally. Jesus’ enthronement is clearly in heaven, comprising a quite literal and direct participation in God’s own rule, exceeding any original meaning of Psalm 110, and the scope of what is included in “all things” also goes cosmically beyond anything the author of Psalm 8 might have imagined, including here even death itself (v. 26), the resurrection-hope now anchored “in Christ” (v. 22). This also radically surpasses even the august position of the “Elect One” of the Similitudes of *1 Enoch*, whose glorious throne apparently will be set on the earth, where he can receive the obeisance of earthly rulers (*1 Enoch* 62:1-9). As Hengel noted, there is no notion of an equivalent “*session ad dexteram*” in pre-Christian Jewish tradition.³⁶ We have references to heavenly ascents of humans, e.g., Enoch, Moses on Mt. Sinai and the unnamed figure of the Qumran “Self-glorification Hymn” (4Q491^c), who claims “a mighty seat in the congregation of the gods, above which none of the kings of the East shall sit” (1:5).³⁷ But the exaltation of some of these figures is often in comparison with other human/earthly authorities, whereas Jesus is portrayed as exalted above all things on

³⁴ Ibid., 511.

³⁵ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 756.

³⁶ Hengel, “‘Sit at My Right Hand!’,” 207. See his wide-ranging examination of various traditions about heavenly thrones, pp. 185-212. Cf. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 136-53. The unnamed figure of 4Q491^c (4QSelf-Glorification Hymn) makes claims of having “a mighty throne in the congregation of the gods,” being exalted above all others, etc. (and note also 4Q427/4QHodayot, in which a figure claims uniquely exalted insights and status). If these texts refer to a human being (Messiah? The Teacher of Righteousness?), they would give us an interesting comparator for the exalted claims for Jesus in the NT. On these texts, see Martin G. Abegg, Jr., “Who Ascended to Heaven? 4Q491, 4Q427, and the Teacher of Righteousness,” in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 61-73.

³⁷ I cite the translation of 4Q491 in Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition, Vol. 2* (Leiden: Brill, 1998; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 981.

a cosmic scale, even sharing God's throne.³⁸ Moreover, and more significantly, none of the other exalted human figures became a recipient of the sort of devotional practices that so quickly characterized early Christian circles.

In his epistle to the Romans, written only a year or so later, Paul again draws upon the imagery of Psalm 110, here referring to Jesus as “at the right hand of God,” and as also interceding for believers before God in heaven (8:34).³⁹ Although the Greek phrasing (ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ) is again not exactly that of Psalm 110:1 (ἐκ δεξιῶν μου), it seems clear that this reference to Jesus at God's “right hand” reflects the influence of this psalm text.⁴⁰ This is the earliest reference to Jesus in this position in extant early Christian texts. But, as Hengel noted, here and in 1 Peter 3:22 we find almost identical expressions, ὅς καὶ ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ (Rom. 8:34), ὅς ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Pet. 3:22), and this plus the four-part structure of Paul's statement (“Christ who died, and moreover was raised, and who is at the right hand of God, and who intercedes for us”) make it likely that Paul here draws on (and perhaps adapts) an earlier Christian traditional formulation in which Psalm 110:1 was already influential at the time he wrote.⁴¹

Indeed, if (as seems probable) this is correct, then the influence of Psalm 110 likely extended beyond its opening verse, the reference in 110:4 to the enthroned king as also “priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” interpreted as expressive of Jesus' heavenly intercessory role. That is, it appears that, at least in the case of Psalm 110, early believers did not simply cite v. 1 in an “atomizing” manner, but mined perhaps

³⁸ Cf the dream of Moses in *Exagōgē of Ezekiel*, where Moses is seated on a throne and seems to receive obeisance and rulership over earthly and heavenly things. For further discussion of this and other traditions of exalted biblical figures, see L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (London: T&T Clark, 1998; orig. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 51-69.

³⁹ Cf. Hengel, “Psalm 110,” 45-51; and his fuller/later discussion of Rom. 8:34 in “‘Sit at My Right Hand!’,” 137-63.

⁴⁰ I return to the Greek phrasing in this and other NT confessional references later in this essay.

⁴¹ So, e.g., Hengel, “Psalm 110,” 46; Gourgues, *A la droite de Dieu*, 53-57, 210-12. See also the analysis of the verse and the rhetorical structure of the larger context by Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 532-34. Though critical of some proposals that an early catechetical tradition underlies a large part of Romans 8 or that vv. 31-34 reflects a two-strophe hymn, Jewett (532-33) judges it “quite likely” that “early kerygmatic material” is cited in v. 34, citing also Henning Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung in Römer 8*, WMANT, 43 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 171.

the entire psalm, finding in it multiple stimuli and resources for articulating christological convictions.

To be sure, this priestly/intercessory emphasis in Psalm 110:4 is developed more fully in Hebrews, which should probably be dated perhaps a couple of decades later than Romans. But I repeat that Romans 8:34 seems to me to offer good evidence that the basic conviction and the creative reading of Psalm 110:4 (Jesus as heavenly priest-intercessor) go back to earlier years. Paul's rather matter-of-fact and compressed statement of Jesus' intercessory role is best accounted for on the inference that he expected his original readers to be acquainted with the notion. This likely means that it did not originate with Paul and circulated far wider than the churches that he founded and influenced.

Moreover, noting here that Paul designates Jesus as "Christ" in his heavenly intercessory role, once again we see a remarkable escalation in messianic claims.⁴² As Jewett observed, the word used in Romans 8:34, ἐντυχάθει, "belongs in 'the conceptual world of the ruler's court,' where accusations and requests are heard and the person closest to the throne usually has the most influential word."⁴³ In the context here, Jesus' exaltation to the unique position next to God (NB: ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ) means that his intercession for believers will carry such force at the highest level that "it is utterly preposterous to fear that anyone can impeach their status."⁴⁴

In some second-temple Jewish texts, Moses' intercession for Israel is highlighted (*Jubilees* 1:19-21; *4QApocryphon of Joshua*^a/*4Q378*), apparently in reference to Moses' intercession on earth in the biblical narratives (Exod. 32:11-14; 33:12-16), and later in rabbinic texts after his death Moses sometimes intercedes for Israel in heaven.⁴⁵

Sometimes angels as well are portrayed as interceding for Israel or the righteous (e.g., *I*

⁴² In Rom. 8:34 some manuscripts (e.g., **Ⲙ** A *et al.*) have "Christ Jesus" and others (e.g., B D 1739 *et al.*) have "Christ." But on either reading Paul clearly refers to Jesus as Messiah. On Paul's messianic christology and his use of "Christ," see now Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴³ Jewett, *Romans*, 542, citing Horst Balz, "ἐντυχάθει," *EDNT* 1:461 (461-62).

⁴⁴ Jewett, *Romans*, 542.

⁴⁵ E.g., *Num.R.* Hukat 19.33; *Esther R.* 7.13; *Lam.R.* Introduction, 24, these and other texts given in C. G. Montifiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1960), 76, 99, 247-49. For a survey of Moses traditions in ancient Jewish texts, the NT, and rabbinic Judaism, see now Daniel K. Falk, "Moses," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 967-70.

Enoch 9:3; 40:6).⁴⁶ But in Jewish texts early enough to provide a precedent or analogy there is no depiction of a human figure, messiah or OT worthy with a comparable heavenly status and role to that of the exalted Jesus in Romans 8:34.⁴⁷ There is also no indication that Psalm 110:4 itself generated any previous notion of a heavenly intercessor, whether Messiah or other type of figure. Even if we regard *11Q Melchizedek* as influenced by Psalm 110, the Melchizedek in this text is more of a heavenly/angelic figure who acts as eschatological leader of the elect, and he seems not to have an intercessory role.

I noted a bit earlier that Paul’s phrasing in Romans 8:34, ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, is slightly different than the LXX of Psalm 110:1, ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, and it is now worthwhile to take a closer look at the matter.⁴⁸ Not only is ἐκ δεξιῶν the phrasing used in the LXX of this psalm text, it is also by far the more frequently preferred expression throughout the LXX to portray someone or something as “at/to the right side” of another, including particularly depictions of persons standing/sitting on the right of a king.⁴⁹ Only twice in the LXX do we find ἐν δεξιᾷ to describe someone either standing (1 Chron. 6:24) or sitting (1 Esdras 4:29) next to another, compared with twenty-one uses of ἐκ δεξιῶν for this, rendering several Hebrew prepositional phrases, e.g., מימינו (2 Sam 16:6), למיני (Psa. 110:1), על ימיני (Psa. 110:5).⁵⁰ In other Koine Greek evidence as well, ἐκ δεξιῶν is overwhelmingly the preferred construction for describing a person on the right of another.⁵¹

⁴⁶ R. Le Déaut, “Aspects de l’Intercession dans le Judaïsme Ancien,” *JSJ* 1 (1970): 35-57.

⁴⁷ Paul’s reference in Rom. 8:27 to the Spirit interceding (ὑπερεντυχάνει) for believers seems particularly to do with the difficulty believers may face in knowing how to pray, the Spirit assisting or interpreting their inarticulate groanings (στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις).

⁴⁸ See also Hengel, “‘Sit at My Right Hand!’,” 141-43, which includes analysis of the comparative frequency of the two expressions in several bodies of Koine Greek texts.

⁴⁹ E.g., ἐκ δεξιῶν used in portraying the Solomon with Bathsheba seated on a throne “on his right” (3 Kgdms 2:19); and in Psa 44:10 the queen is standing “on your right.”

⁵⁰ A person on the right (ἐκ δεξιῶν) of another in the LXX: Gen:13-14; Deut 33:2; 2 Kgdms 16:6; 3 Kgdms 2:19; 2 Chron 18:18; 1 Esd 9:43; 2 Esd 18:4; Psa 15(16):8; 44(45):9; 90(91):7; 108(109):6, 31; 109(110):1, 5; Sir 12:12; Zach 3:1; 12:6; Ezek 16:46; 21:16. In addition, there are another twenty instances where ἐκ δεξιῶν describes something as on/to the right of something/someone. But cf. 1 Macc 9:11, where Bacchides is “on the right flank” (ἐν τῷ δεξιῷ κέρατι), and 1 Macc 9:14 (ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς). The construction ἐν δεξιᾷ is also used several times in LXX to refer to something in the right hand of someone (Heb = בימיני). E.g., Gen 48:13; Psa 15:11; Prov 3:16; Sir 47:5; Isa 44:20; Ep Jer 13-14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 141 n. 52. Hengel surveyed the Greek pseudepigrapha and Apostolic Fathers, and on Greek papyri referred to Edwin Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit*, II/1 (Berlin: de

If we look at the usage of these two expressions in the NT an interesting pattern appears. First, let us consider instances where someone is positioned at the right side/hand of another, and where no reference to, or influence of Psalm 110 is in view. In all these cases, in keeping with what appears to be the preferred expression, ἐκ δεξιῶν is used.⁵² If we then look at the places where Psalm 110:1 is cited or clearly alluded to in describing Jesus as at God’s right hand/side, the phrase in the LXX, ἐκ δεξιῶν, is likewise consistently used/retained.⁵³ But, in the numerous other places where we seem to have confessional statements simply declaring Jesus to be seated at God’s right hand/side, the preferred form is ἐν δεξιᾷ.⁵⁴ In two additional instances, Acts (2:33; 5:31) has the dative form without a preposition, τῇ δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ.

So why do we have this apparent preference for ἐν δεξιᾷ in these confessional or kerygmatic expressions? They all surely show the influence of Psalm 110:1, the only biblical text that refers to a figure seated at God’s “right side/hand,” and yet they all have this variant prepositional phrase, not the LXX wording. Loader allowed that ἐν δεξιᾷ may have originated “in the Aramaic-speaking communities” where the Greek text was perhaps not consulted, Psalm 110:1 there adapted in early confessional statements, and Hengel similarly considered whether the expression in question might be “a variant translation of the Hebrew text [of Psalm 110:1] which was independent of the LXX” and that goes “back to the Jerusalem congregation.”⁵⁵ That these confessional statements were already traditional by the time of Paul’s letters is clear, and that they reflect

Gruyter, 1926), 23; and Vol. II/2 (1934), 37, 147, 224, 384. I have done my own survey of NT, LXX and Apostolic Fathers and confirm Hengel’s findings. More widely, *LSJ* (s.v. δεξιός) gives examples of ἐκ δεξιῶν, ἐπὶ δεξιά, and ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς as well as a few other phrasings for “on the right hand/side.” Per *PGL* (s.v. δεξιός), the usual phrase referring to the position of Christ/the Son in relation to the Father in Patristic texts is ἐκ δεξιῶν. But cf. the Greek form of the Apostles’ Creed, which has καθεζόμενον ἐν δεξιᾷ θεοῦ πατρὸς. In the several creedal statements cited in Athanasius, *De Syn.* 22-25 (Migne, *PG* 26, col. 720) as presented at the Council of Antioch (341 CE), one (Bishop Theophronios) refers to Christ as seated ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ πατρὸς, whereas the others all have him ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ πατρὸς.

⁵² Mark 10:37-40/Matt. 20:21-23; Mark 15:27/Luke 23:33; Matt. 25:33-34; 27:38; Luke 1:11.

⁵³ Matt. 22:44/Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Matt. 26:64/Mark 14:62/Luke 22:69; Acts 2:34; 7:55-56; Heb. 1:13; and also Mark 16:19. Likewise, the citation of Psalm 16(LXX 15):8-11 in Acts 2:25 follows the LXX in using ἐκ δεξιῶν.

⁵⁴ ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ (Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 10:12; 1 Pet. 3:22); ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης (Heb. 1:3); ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θρόνου τῆς μεγαλωσύνης (Heb. 8:1); ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ (Heb. 12:2).

⁵⁵ Loader, “Christ at the Right Hand,” 212-13; Hengel, “‘Sit at My Right Hand1’,” 141, 173. Similarly, Gorgues, *A la droite de Dieu*, 54-55.

convictions and confessions that emerged first among earliest circles of believers is also entirely probable. But is the phrase ἐν δεξιᾷ simply the artefact of some early variant translation of Psalm 110:1, or was there some purpose involved that led early Greek-speaking believers to prefer this expression in these early confessional statements?

I propose that ἐν δεξιᾷ may have been preferred over the LXX phrase in early confessional statements because it offered a particular nuance, perhaps connoting a closer proximity and a closeness of relationship, a personal connection, not simply a positioning of someone in relation to another. Perhaps this stronger sense of closeness may not come through quite so much in ἐκ δεξιῶν.⁵⁶ Consider the two instances in the LXX where a person is referred to as ἐν δεξιᾷ of another. In 1 Esdras 4:29, the speaker refers to Apame, the king's favourite concubine, as sitting "at the king's right hand" (καθήμενη ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ βασιλέως), close enough that she is able to take liberties that demonstrate her intimacy and great favour with the king. Sometimes, she playfully takes the diadem from the king's head and puts it on herself, and even slaps the king (teasingly?) with her left hand, yet the king, besotted with her, permits it all with no offence. Did the writer here prefer ἐν δεξιᾷ to describe the position of Apame precisely because it was more suitable for characterizing her familiar and close relationship with the king? It is interesting to compare this statement with another in the same writing, 1 Esdras 9:43, where Ezra reads the Law out to the assembled people, and named officials stand beside him (παρ' αὐτοῦ) "on his right" (ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ).

The other instance is perhaps not so obviously further support for my proposal, but may be. In 1 Chronicles (LXX Paralipomenon I) 6:24, Asaph is referred to as the one who stood next to his brother "on his right" (ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ). To be sure, this statement does not depict the sort of intensely familiar relationship described in the previous text. But it is curious that this phrase is used here, whereas ἐκ δεξιῶν is elsewhere rather consistently preferred in the LXX for describing someone or something as "on/at the

⁵⁶ Perhaps there is a similar slight distinction in English between referring to someone as "to the right (side)" of another and saying that someone is "at the right side" of another.

right side” of someone/something else (e.g., Deut 33:2.⁵⁷ Indeed, just a bit later in the list of names in 1 Chronicles 6, the author refers to one group in relation to another as standing “to their left” (ἐκ ἀριστερῶν, v. 44). Did the writer prefer ἐν δεξιᾷ in v. 39, not simply to refer to Asaph’s physical position in relation to his brother, but also because it seemed more appropriate in light of their fraternal relationship?

I recognize that these texts do not comprise a clinching case for my proposal, but I hope that they suffice to make it at least worth considering, perhaps even plausible. I suggest that the early (and subsequently influential) preference for ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ in confessional/kerygmatic statements was because this phrasing connoted more adequately the claim that the exalted Jesus was not only positioned next to God but also had a close relationship with God. That is, although these statements obviously reflect the influence of Psalm 110:1, specifically the image of a figure seated next to God, the ἐν δεξιᾷ phrase may have been preferred in declaring the relationship of the exalted Jesus with God because it connoted better than the ἐκ δεξιῶν of Psalm 110:1 the intimate nature of that relationship.

If this hypothesis is correct, then in these early confessional statements we see the interaction between the strong convictions of earliest believers and the scriptural text, in this case Psalm 110:1. The NT writers retain the LXX wording when citing the psalm, e.g., for apologetic purposes, and the confessional statements show also that they saw in the psalm confirmations of their christological convictions and resources for articulating them. But these confessional statements also show a creative appropriation of scriptural texts such as Psalm 110, drawing upon its imagery but preferring phrasing that more adequately expressed their profound convictions about Jesus’ relationship to God.

In any case, the christological reading/appropriation of Psalm 110 is certainly a remarkable phenomenon. It demonstrates the boldness of earliest Christian convictions and the resulting creativity in their use of their scriptures.

Isaiah 45:22-25

⁵⁷ Note, e.g., Gen 48:13, where Joseph takes Ephraim “in his right hand but on Israel’s left” (ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ ἔξ ἀριστερῶν δὲ Ἰσραηλ), and takes Manasseh “in his left hand but on Israel’s right” (ἐν τῇ ἀριστερᾷ ἐκ δεξιῶν δὲ Ἰσραηλ).

I turn now to consider the early Christian appropriation of Isaiah 45:22-25. Though not evidenced as much in the NT, the christological use of this text is attested as equally early as for Psalm 110, and the particular way it is read is perhaps even more remarkable; yet it has not been given nearly as much attention. The earliest and most significant christological use of the passage is, of course, in the well-known “Christ hymn” passage, Philippians 2:6-11, in a letter that again takes us back to sometime in the 50s CE.⁵⁸ This NT passage has certainly received a massive amount of scholarly discussion, but the focus has often been on the first few verses (vv. 6-8), which present several phrases that have occupied many.⁵⁹ Particularly in the last few decades there has been a good deal of debate about whether these verses allude to Adam and whether an early “Adam christology” is reflected in them, but this remains hotly disputed.⁶⁰ The more remarkable and the readily identifiable biblical allusion in the Philippians passage, however, is to Isaiah 45:22-25. Also, in Romans 14:11, Paul gives an explicit citation of the passage, specifically Isaiah 45:23, confirming the place of the Isaiah passage in earliest Christian thought.

Pre-Christian Readings

⁵⁸ Since the influential study by Ernst Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil. 2,5-11* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1928; reprinted Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961), many (most?) NT scholars have judged Philip. 2:6-11 to derive from an early Christian hymn/ode and have proposed various reconstructions of it. This has been challenged by a number of scholars recently, however, e.g., Gordon Fee (“Philippians 2:5-11: Hymn or Exalted Pauline Prose?,” *BBR* 2 [1992]: 29-46; *id.*, *Philippians*, 192-94 n. 4, citing there others as well who share his doubts). The question is not vital to my discussion here. Whether appropriated or composed by Paul, Philip. 2:6-11 reflects and presupposes a profound and boldly innovative reading of Isaiah 45:22-25 that is likely earlier than the date of the epistle.

⁵⁹ Ralph P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983; 1st ed. 1967) is wholly given to assessing the vast body of scholarly publications on the passage, and Martin notes the preoccupation with the first few verses. The discussion continues, as reflected, e.g., in the more recent multi-author volume: Ralph Martin and Brian Dodd, eds., *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998). I have addressed the passage in two earlier publications: Larry W. Hurtado, “Jesus As Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5-11,” in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, ed. P. Richardson and J. C. Hurd (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 113-26; Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 83-107. But one of the most important studies has never been published, the PhD thesis by Takeshi Nagata, “Philippians 2:5-11. A Case Study in the Contextual Shaping of Early Christology” (PhD., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981).

⁶⁰ Perhaps the most well-known advocate of Adam-allusion in Phil. 2:6-11 is probably J.D.G. Dunn. See, e.g., his recent defence of this view: “Christ, Adam, and Pre-existence,” in *Where Christology Began*, ed. R. P. Martin, 74-83. Cf. my own view in Hurtado, *How on Earth did Jesus become a God?* 96-102. John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism*, JSPSupp 1 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988) dealt a rather serious blow to previously-frequent claims about a supposedly cohesive and influential body of “Adam speculation” in ancient Judaism.

As the case with our discussion of Psalm 110, before we consider the use of Isaiah 45:22-25 in the NT, we should inquire about any prior usage in pre-Christian Jewish circles/texts. The result, once again, is meager, even more so.⁶¹ Although Isaiah was copied, read and mined exegetically in second-temple Jewish tradition (as reflected in the copies among the Qumran scrolls), it is hard to find any indication that 45:22-25 was particularly prominent or interpreted in any special way. This contrasts, for example, with the well-known importance of Isaiah 40:3 in Qumran (*IQS* 8; *4QS^c/4Q259*), where the biblical verse seems to have taken on special meaning as predictive of the Qumran community. Isaiah 45:22-25 was surely read, e.g., in synagogues, and studied as part of the prophetic text (e.g., in Qumran), and its affirmations about the uniqueness of the biblical deity were surely important to devout Jews of that time. But there is no evidence that the passage played any special role beyond this, or that there was any interpretation of it comparable to what we find in the NT.

Early Christian Reading

That the Philippians passage incorporates phrasing from, and alludes to, Isaiah 45:22-25 is commonly recognized by commentators and other exegetes; and that v. 23 is cited/quoted in Romans 14:11 is obvious. Both Philippians and Romans are early, indeed among the earliest Christian texts extant.

So, the first thing to note is that, as the case with Psalm 110, Isaiah 45:22-25 also figured early in Christian use of the OT to articulate christological claims. Indeed, that Paul draws on Isaiah 45:22-25 allusively and without explanation in Philippians suggests again that this Isaiah passage was already a familiar part of earliest christological reflection and discourse by the time he wrote this epistle.

But this reading of the Isaiah passage is utterly novel and even astonishing. Whereas the original thrust of the passage was unquestionably to affirm the absolute uniqueness of *YHWH*, in Philippians 2:9-11 the passage is drawn on (and probably interpreted) to declare the universal Lordship of Jesus as the manner in which the one

⁶¹ E.g., for the passage McLean, *Citations and Allusions*, lists as citations only Rom. 14:11 and Justin, *I Apol.* 1:52, and for allusions only Philip. 2:10-11.

God will be supreme and be glorified.⁶² After recounting that God (ὁ θεός) exalted Jesus and gave him “the name above every name” in v. 9 (which I take to be “Κύριος,” and which here means that Jesus now shares in the divine name itself), the text then gives the purpose to this, which is the universal submission and acclamation of Jesus, Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (vv. 10-11), this in turn redounding “to the glory of God the Father” (v. 11). Some scholars have characterized this text as connoting a transference of the divine name to Jesus; but that could suggest that “God” has handed it over to him. Instead, it seems to me that the text reflects God’s sharing of the divine name with the exalted Jesus, and an accompanying inclusion of Jesus with God as rightful recipient of the universal obeisance depicted.⁶³ Likewise, and of great importance, the risen Jesus was included with God programmatically in the devotional pattern of early Christian circles as rightful co-recipient of their cultic devotion.⁶⁴

It is, of course, in the reference to the universal acclamation of Jesus as Lord in vv. 10-11 that we have wording drawn identifiably from Isaiah 45:22-25. It is not an exact quotation, but instead a creative appropriation of phrasing, specifically from Isaiah 45:23, in the statement that “every knee” is to bend/bow and “every tongue” is to confess Jesus’ supreme status. Scholars have described variously the use of the Isaiah passage here.⁶⁵ For example, in his impressive commentary on Philippians, Fee refers to “the clear ‘intertextuality’” here, seeing in vv. 10-11 “a direct borrowing of language from Isa 45:23.”⁶⁶ The formal differences from the LXX of Isaiah 45:23 include word-order, and subjunctive verb-forms instead of future-indicatives: πᾶν γόνυ κάμψει (κάμψει πᾶν

⁶² On the passage, see David B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul’s Christology* (WUNT 2/47; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 157-60; and Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 393-401.

⁶³ As indication of this, Paul uses κύριος sometimes in reference to God and at other times in reference to Jesus. See, esp. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 90-148.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Larry W. Hurtado, “The Binitarian Shape of Early Christian Worship,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, eds. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 187-213, also published in my book, *At the Origins of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 63-97.

⁶⁵ J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1913; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953), 114, characterized Philip. 2:10-11 as “modelled on Isaiah xiv.23 . . . the text being modified to suit St Paul’s application to the Son.” G. F. Hawthorne, *Philippians. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 43* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 92, referred to the Isa. 54:23 as “woven here into the structure of vv 10-11.”

⁶⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*. NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 222.

γόνυ), and πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἔξομολογήσεται (ἔξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα).⁶⁷

But two more substantial differences demand further attention.

First, the universal submission represented in the Isaiah statement that “every knee” will bow is expanded radically and cosmically to include all spheres of reality (reflecting the “three-story universe” of the time): things (or beings) in heaven, on earth, and subterranean.⁶⁸ Fee proposed, however, that this expansion is “in keeping” with the reference to *YHWH* in the larger context of Isaiah 45 (v. 18) as creator of heaven and earth.⁶⁹ In any case, whether part of a “pre-Pauline” hymn or Paul’s own composition, this phrasing makes emphatic the multi-dimensional universality of the submission, including spiritual as well as physical spheres and beings.

Secondly, and still more remarkably, in Philippians 2:9-11 the universal submission to *YHWH* predicted in Isaiah 45:22-25 undergoes an astonishing “mutation” (in comparison with pre-Christian understanding of the text), with Jesus as the direct/immediate recipient of it, and the acclamation, Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (“Lord Jesus Christ” or “Jesus Christ is Lord”) the way that this submission is to be registered and, apparently, the manner in which Isaiah 45:22-25 is now to find its fulfilment.⁷⁰ As often noted by exegetes, Isaiah 45:18-25 is unexcelled in its forthright (even strident) declaration of the uniqueness of *YHWH*. But the appropriation of the phrasing from Isaiah 45:22-25 in Philippians 2:9-11 reflects a radically new reading of the passage in which two figures are seen, God and Jesus (as Lord), Jesus incorporated centrally in the

⁶⁷ A number of important witnesses have ἔξομολογήσεται in v. 11, and opinion is divided over whether the subjunctive or this future form is the earlier reading. The subjunctive form could be an assimilation to the form of κάμψη (v. 10), or the future form may have been introduced influenced by the verb-form in Isaiah 45:23. N-A28 prefers the subjunctive form, but cf. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 115. The Alexandrinus text of Isaiah 45:23 has ἔξομολογήσεται (supported also by Q ^α), whereas Vaticanus (also ^κ) has ὁμείται. Fee judged the latter “almost certainly created by Origen in his Hexapla as a ‘correction’ toward the Masoretic text,” noting also that in Paul’s explicit citation of Isa. 45:23 in Rom. 14:11 he has ἔξομολογήσεται, which suggests that the Alexandrinus reading was the one that he knew, and that he did not create it (*Philippians*, 223 n. 28).

⁶⁸ Exegetes differ over whether “every knee/tongue” in vv. 10-11 includes inanimate things as well. Cf., e.g., Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 115 and Fee, *Philippians*, 224 n. 34. The issue is not important for my purpose here.

⁶⁹ Fee, *Philippians*, 224.

⁷⁰ Cf. the discussion of Phil. 2:6-11 by Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: ‘God Crucified’ and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2008), 197-210, who urges that the text presents Jesus as participating in “the unique divine sovereignty over all things” (199), and thereby “included in the unique identity” of God (209).

obeisance that is to be given to God.⁷¹ It seems that the wording of Isaiah 45:23-25 (LXX) in particular was taken as expressive of a duality, e.g., ἀπὸ κυριόν in v. 25 taken as referring to Jesus, and ἐν τῷ θεῷ as referring to “God the Father,” resulting in what Nagata called “a bold reinterpretation of the traditional *kyrios*-acclamation.”⁷²

Nagata posited “a bold reinterpretation” of what he saw as a prior and less radical “traditional *kyrios*-acclamation formula of the Christian community” (citing Rom 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3).⁷³ That is, he assumed that the reading of Isaiah 45:22-25 reflected in Philippians 2:9-11 was a secondary development subsequent to some prior “traditional” acclamation of the risen Jesus in early Christian circles that did not quite comprise the sort of christological claim reflected in the Philippians passage. Moreover, he seems to have imagined that this interpretation of Isaiah 45 arose as part of an early defence of Christian claims about Jesus against external, Jewish charges of endangering God’s uniqueness.⁷⁴ But there are both logical and historical problems with his assumptions.

⁷¹ Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, “Psalms, Philippians 2:6-11, and the Origins of Christology,” *BibInt* 11 (2003): 361-72, who proposed that the passage is “a prose hymn or a brief encomium in rhythmic prose” that “compares Jesus favourably with typical rulers” (371), composed by Paul “to instruct the Philippians in cultural terms familiar to them” (372). A somewhat similar view is expressed by Samuel Vollenweider, “Der ‘Raub’ der Gottgleichheit: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vorschlag zu Phil 2.6(-11),” *NTS* 45 (1999): 413-33. But, although it is obviously true that Philippi was a Roman colony and that ruler-cults were a ubiquitous feature of the religious environment, there is, in fact, no overt reference in Philippians to ruler-cults (Roman or other), and the immediate textual context clearly indicates that the focus of the passage in Philippians is on Jesus as the “Lordly example” for believers, especially in their relationships with one another (Larry W. Hurtado, “Jesus As Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5-11,” in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, ed. P. Richardson and J. C. Hurd [Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984], 113-26). Whatever the merits of this proposal (and I find it of limited cogency), Yarbro Collins ignores entirely the remarkable re-reading of Isaiah 45:22-25 reflected (and presupposed) in the Philippians passage. I am also bound to mention that the classic essay by Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13, may still be instructive in assessing such proposals about putative analogies. Cf., e.g., Otfried Hofius, , *Der Christushymnus Phil. 2, 6-11*, WUNT 17 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1976).

⁷² Nagata, “Philippians 2:5-11,” 287. And see also his characterization of what he called the early Christian “midrashic” engagement with the Isaiah text reflected in Philip. 2:9-11: “It is quite plausible that the peculiar inconsistency between the use of the first person pronoun ἐμοί and the regular noun τῷ θεῷ (i.e., third person), as the object of homage in one and the same direct speech in Isa 45:23, provides the occasion for a midrashist to distinguish the name YHWH=*kyrios* which is the name of the speaker . . . referred to in v. 23 by ἐμοί and the figure designated by θεός in v. 23. It is this name, YHWH=*kyrios*, that provides the connection between *kyrios*-acclamation and Isa 45:23, whereas τῷ θεῷ in Isa 45:23 is expanded to εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς in Phil 2:11.” See also pp. 298-301. I do not find “midrashic” a particularly appropriate term for the process, however.

⁷³ See esp. Nagata, “Philippians 2:5-11,” 279-80.

⁷⁴ Nagata, “Philippians 2:5-11,” 298-301.

First, if early believers needed to defend themselves against charges that christological claims endangered God's uniqueness, then already they must have been linking Jesus with God in christological claims and in devotional practices in such a manner as to generate such charges. That is, the "traditional *kyrios*-acclamation" of Jesus in early Jewish-Christian circles that Nagata refers to must have been viewed as problematic by fellow Jews prior to the supposed apologetic appropriation of Isaiah 45:22-25 that he assumed.

Second, the time-frame seems far too brief to posit the discrete stages required in Nagata's proposal. The time-frame was dubiously brief to allow for a *kyrios*-acclamation to become "traditional" before the "bold reinterpretation" of that acclamation that was supposedly effected through creatively reading the Isaiah passage.

Thirdly, do we in fact have any evidence of such a radical reinterpretation of some less radical acclamation of Jesus as *kyrios* within the early "post-Easter" period?⁷⁵ Do the other references to the acclamation of Jesus as *Kyrios* in the NT (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3) really suggest some more modest view of his status than that reflected in Philippians 2:9-11? I think not. Indeed, the earliest artefact of the acclamation of Jesus, the well-known "*maranatha*" (1 Cor. 16:22; and *Did.* 10:6), which must derive from early Aramaic-speaking circles of believers, surely reflects Jesus invoked as Lord of the cultic gathering.⁷⁶

Finally, why should we imagine that Isaiah 45 was first turned to by early believers for apologetic resources against objections to their faith? It seems to me much more likely that this and other OT passages were pored over and searched by believers in the first instance to try to understand *for themselves* their religious experiences, and for resources to correlate their daring new convictions about Jesus with their scriptures and their traditional religious commitment to the one God.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ If, as seems entirely likely, Jesus' followers referred to him as "master" during his ministry, there was certainly a radical and extremely rapid escalation in their sense of his status as "lord/master" in the "post-Easter" period. See, e.g., Larry W. Hurtado, "Homage to the Historical Jesus and Early Christian Devotion," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1, no. 2 (2003): 131-46, republished in Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 134-51.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Martin Hengel, "Abba, Maranatha, Hosanna und die Anfänge der Christologie," in *Studien zur Christologie, Kleine Schriften IV* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 496-534.

⁷⁷ As Hengel put it with reference to Psalm 110:1 ("Sit at my Right Hand'!", 210), and so I think also was the case with Isaiah 45:22-25, the biblical text "must have immediately jumped out and helped [Jewish]

In turning now to Romans 14:11, we have a direct quotation of Isaiah 45:23 that confirms the early significance of the Isaiah passage in various Christian circles, Pauline and non-Pauline.⁷⁸ Again, there are relatively minor formal differences between Paul’s citation and the LXX text. The opening words, ζῶ ἐγῶ, λέγει κύριος, are not a part of Isaiah 45:23, but instead a “typical prophetic oath formula” found in various OT passages, the most proximate instance in Isaiah 49:18.⁷⁹ Also, Paul has πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἔξομολογήσεται, in contrast to the word order of Isaiah 45:23, the syntactical effect being to put the emphasis on the universality of the confession.⁸⁰ But, unlike the adaptation of Isaiah 45:23 in Philipians 2:10-11, here he preserves the future tense of both the verbs, “shall bow” and “shall confess.” The future tense of the verbs also happens to fit the emphasis in Romans 14:1-12 on a future accounting to be given by all.

The more substantial question, however, is how Isaiah 45:23 was likely read by Paul here. As noted in our analysis of Philipians 2:10-11, in the Isaiah passage there is an interesting combination of first-person and third-person references to the one(s) to whom universal accounting/submission is to be given: “to me every knee shall bow” and “every tongue will acknowledge God.” Moreover, Paul’s use of the introductory formula, “As I live, says the Lord,” has the effect of placing in his citation both “the Lord” and “God” as key terms. So, are we to see these terms simply as two designations of the one biblical deity or as designating two figures, God and Jesus? Is Jesus the κύριος in the introductory formula here in Romans 14:11? And shall we take the obeisance given “to me” and “to God” as reflecting the sort of duality that we see in the use of Isaiah 45:23 in the Phlippians passage?

In the preceding verses of 14:1-12 Paul repeatedly refers to “the Lord” and “God”, rather clearly having Jesus and God in mind, and interweaving these references

Christians not only to interpret and thus to proclaim the phenomenon of the appearances of Jesus, the crucified Messiah, but also *just to understand it*.”

⁷⁸ See also the analysis in Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 123-30; Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 259-67; and, more briefly, Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 685-86 (607-94).

⁷⁹ Jewett, *Romans*, 851. Other instances of the formula include Num. 14:28; Zeph. 2:9; Jer. 22:24; 26:18; and eleven cases in Ezekiel.

⁸⁰ As observed by Jewett, *Romans*, 851-52.

such that the human behaviour in view is addressed with reference to both.⁸¹ In v. 3, we have God's acceptance, and in v. 4 the ability of the *kyrios* to uphold his servants.⁸² In vv. 5-8, whatever the choices on matters of days or diet, says Paul, the choices are all made "to the Lord", with thanks given "to God," followed by a generalizing statement that living or dying "we are the Lord's." Then, in v. 9, there is the statement that "Christ died and lived again that he might be Lord [κυριεύση] of the dead and the living."⁸³ This in turn leads to Paul's warning in v. 10 that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God."

In short, the *kyrios* of 14:1-12 is rather clearly the risen/exalted Jesus, who is paired with God throughout these verses like two strands of a rope.⁸⁴ This then makes it likely that the κύριος in the introductory formula also designates Jesus.⁸⁵ So, to answer the key question posed earlier, Paul probably presents Isaiah 45:23 here as referring to a universal submission both to Jesus as Lord ("to me shall every knee bow") and to God ("every tongue shall acknowledge God").⁸⁶ Here, as in Philippians 2:9-11, Paul likely saw in the Isaiah text essentially the same duality involving obeisance and accountability to Jesus and to God.⁸⁷

That Paul cites Isaiah 45:23 in this manner and without explanation or justification must mean that he presumed that the Roman believers (who were not his own converts) were already acquainted with this reading of this Isaiah passage as

⁸¹ In these verses Jesus is referred to as "Lord" at least seven times: vv. 4b, 6 (3x), 8 (3x), not counting λέγει κύριος in v. 11. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 260, must have included the *kyrios* in v. 4a in his total of eight, but I am not so sure of this.

⁸² The variant-reading, θεός, in v. 4 supported by a number of witnesses is probably an assimilation of this statement to v. 3, and κύριος has better witnesses.

⁸³ The variant ἀνέστη, instead of ἔζησεν is probably an assimilation to the more frequent terms used for Jesus' resurrection, esp. perhaps 1 Thess. 4:14, as judged by B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994), 468.

⁸⁴ Noting the duality throughout Rom. 14:1-10, J. Ross Wagner wrote, "In this way, Paul boldly places the risen Jesus within the bounds of the identity of the God of Israel . . ." ("Isaiah in Romans and Galatians," in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken [London: T&T Clark, 2005], 127 [117-32]). Wagner here draws upon Bauckham's emphasis on Jesus being included within "the divine identity".

⁸⁵ So esp. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 123-30, and the weighing of arguments by Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 263-67, who also comes down in favour of a reference to Jesus.

⁸⁶ So also, e.g., Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 209. He contends also that "Jesus is not added alongside the one God of Israel but included in the unique identity of that God." I cannot here engage the latter category, and content myself with observing that Paul read a duality in the Isaiah text.

⁸⁷ In Rom 14:10, the likely reading is "βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ," but in 2 Cor. 5:10 Paul also refers to a universal accountability "ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ," further reflecting this duality.

referring to God and the risen Lord Jesus. That is, he was hardly deploying here some new or idiosyncratic interpretation of the text. Instead, it is most likely that Romans 14:11 reflects a creative reading of Isaiah 45:22-25 that emerged so early and circulated so widely that Paul could presume it to be known already, even among Christian circles with whom he had no prior contact or influence.

What Produced this Creative Exegesis?

What we see in the two case studies considered here is an altogether remarkable and apparently novel reading and use of the biblical texts in question. In the case of Psalm 110:1, we have a radically escalated view of what is meant in God inviting the *kyrios* there to sit “at my right hand.” Well beyond the original sense of the Judean king as the earthly vice-gerent of God, and even beyond the grand vision of the future exalted status of the “Elect One” of the Similitudes of *1 Enoch*, early Christians saw in Psalm 110:1 a heavenly exaltation and rule of universal and cosmic dimensions bestowed on the risen Jesus. In their view, the text spoke of Jesus as effectively *sharing God’s throne*, not figuratively, but literally, and so sharing in the full dimensions of God’s sovereignty. As noted earlier, this goes beyond any prior (or later) reading of Psalm 110:1 in the Jewish tradition of these earliest believers, and the status ascribed to Jesus seems to go beyond that of any other figure in ancient Jewish thought.⁸⁸

When we consider the earliest Christian treatment of Isaiah 45:22-25, we probably see a still more astonishing phenomenon, this passage taken as presenting two figures, the “Lord” Jesus and God, distinguishable but also linked uniquely as co-recipients of the universal obeisance depicted in the text. This surely would have raised Jewish eyebrows of the time, to put it mildly! To be sure, taking account of the flow of thought in the immediate context, the point of Philippians 2:6-11 is to depict Jesus’ exemplary obedience and self-humbling to God’s purposes and the spectacular divine

⁸⁸ See, e.g., John J. Collins, “Powers in Heaven: God, Gods, and Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 9-28. He observes (27) that, although the Qumran texts posit many heavenly beings as part of God’s retinue, “we do not find any figure in the Scrolls who exercises judgment on a throne of glory like the Son of Man in the *Similitudes of Enoch*, still less any one exalted above the angels as Christ is in the New Testament.” See also L. W. Hurtado, “Monotheism, Principal Angels, and the Background of Christology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 546-64.

exaltation of him that followed, Paul urging the Philippians to have a similar mindset of love and concern for one another (vv. 1-5, 12-18). But, whether adapted from an early Christian ode or freshly composed by Paul, the final verses of Philippians 2:6-11 also draw on and presuppose a reading of Isaiah 45:22-25 that emerged much earlier, as is also presupposed in Romans 14:11. In this novel reading, a passage that had likely served to assert the absolute uniqueness of the biblical deity is taken as asserting the remarkable claim that the exalted Jesus rightfully shares in the obeisance due God.

This use of the Isaiah text along with the final doxological phrase in Philippians 2:10-11 likely reflects an origin of this reading of the Isaiah passage in a context shaped by traditional Jewish religious concerns. In this kind of setting the christological claim that Jesus shares the divine rule and name was probably startling, even troubling, to believers who shared the traditional Jewish concern for God's uniqueness. Moreover, as noted earlier, the claim would also likely have been offensive to many in the larger Jewish community of the time, perhaps even taken as threatening that traditional Jewish confession.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, given the early date and trans-local distribution of the evidence, this dyadic reading of Isaiah 45:22-25, and the distinctive use of Psalm 110 must have arisen initially among circles of Jewish believers. So, how might this have happened? How did Jews who affirmed the uniqueness of the one God come to see in these biblical texts the astonishing sense reflected in the NT citations and allusions that we have considered here? That no equivalent reading of these texts can be found in Jewish circles prior to or contemporary with the early Jesus-movement surely indicates that the early Christian reading of them did not arise either accidentally or through application of exegetical principles of the time.

⁸⁹ Cf. Maurice Casey, "Christology and the Legitimizing Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J.L. North*, ed. Steve Moyise (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 42-64, who seems to me to be virtually "tone deaf" to the astonishing view of Jesus reflected in the reading of Isaiah 45:22-25 in the Pauline texts. That there is no objection to it reflected in Paul's letters tells us nothing about what non-Christian Jews thought of it. As should be obvious, Paul's letters address issues of belief and practice *within* the churches to which he wrote, and only give a few glimpses of what outsiders thought of Christian beliefs. But such glimpses as we have, e.g., 1 Cor. 1:18-25 indicate that the gospel and its claims were treated with disdain. And Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1-13; 2 Cor. 3:12—4:6 rather clearly indicate that the "blindness" and "hardness" of Paul's fellow Jews was centered on their refusal/inability to recognize the significance of Jesus.

Before I attempt an answer, it will be helpful to take account of what may be a somewhat similarly novel reading of some other OT texts. Perhaps the closest that we get to an analogy for the dyadic reading of the biblical texts treated here is in the remarkable (albeit fragmentary) Qumran text, *11QMelchizedek (11Q13)*. In this text a mysterious figure named Melchizedek appears to be identified as the “*Elohim*” who arises “in the assembly of El” in Psalm 82:1 to “carry out the vengeance of God’s judgments” in the eschatological day of wrath and salvation (*11QMelch 2:9-13*).⁹⁰ This figure also seems to be identified with the statement in Isaiah 52:7, “your God [*Eloheyka*] reigns,” and thus he will act as the agent through whom God’s eschatological rule comes to earthly expression. Here, a figure is distinguished from God and yet also linked with God as the unique agent of divine purposes. Still more remarkable and directly relevant to this discussion, he is also “read” as the “*Elohim*” of certain biblical passages.

Scholars widely judge that the Qumran community texts reflect a strong interest in “mystical” experiences, revelation of eschatological secrets, communion with angels (especially in worship), and heavenly ascent.⁹¹ These texts also reflect a strong belief that the scriptures could be mined to reveal and confirm eschatological truths. In this religious context (“micro-climate”) biblical texts were searched for eschatological meaning, and the sort of novel and remarkable interpretations of biblical passages represented in *11QMelchizedek* (and in the *Pesharim* texts) emerged.⁹² It is also thought that this mystical interest was practiced in a communal setting, perhaps one in which prayer, singing of hymns/psalms, and other worship acts featured, and revelations were hoped for and expected, including revelations of the meaning of scripture. That is, an

⁹⁰ See my discussion in Hurtado, “Monotheism, Principal Angels, and Christology,” 554-56. Note also the unnamed figure in *4Q491^c (4QSelf-Glorification Hymn^b)* who claims “a mighty throne in the congregation of the gods” (1:5) and in related terms a uniquely high status.

⁹¹ See, e.g., James R. Davila, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Merkavah Mysticism,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context*, ed. Timothy H. Lim (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 249-64; and *id.*, “Exploring the Mystical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 433-54.

⁹² Timothy H. Lim, *Pesharim* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Bilhah Nitzan, “The Continuity of Biblical Interpretation in the Qumran Scrolls and Rabbinic Literature,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 337-49, includes a good bibliography on Qumran biblical interpretation.

important mode of Qumran scripture-interpretation was what David Aune called “charismatic exegesis.”⁹³

In previous publications I have proposed that a crucial factor in the eruption of the “high christology” reflected in the earliest NT texts was the effect of powerful religious experiences that struck recipients with the force of revelation.⁹⁴ These experiences, which included visions of the risen and exalted Jesus, generated the remarkable convictions that God had raised Jesus from death to heavenly glory, and that Jesus was now the rightful co-recipient of the devotion of believers. In early circles of Jesus-followers in which an excitement and even a certain bewilderment likely obtained, believers also searched biblical texts, initially to comprehend better what they believed was happening, and probably hoping for further revelations of divine purposes. They believed that God knew all things from the beginning, and that the events they experienced were the fulfilment of divine plans. They also believed that their scriptures offered resources for understanding God’s purposes. But they knew very well that their experiences reflected new divine acts, giving a new standpoint from which to approach their scriptures in the hope of perceiving things anew (e.g., 1 Pet. 1:10-12).

In the Lukan scenes where the risen Jesus interprets the scriptures to reveal his glory (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47), we probably have a dramatized reflection of the phenomenon I am trying to describe. In these scenes, the scriptures are (suddenly) opened to reveal new truths that Jesus’ followers had not imagined before, this happens to them in groups, and is connected to experiences of the risen Jesus.

In sum, I propose that the remarkable and novel readings of Psalm 110:1 and Isaiah 45:22-25, and other biblical texts as well, likely emerged early, quickly, and typically in settings of group prayer and worship where the sense of the Spirit’s presence and power was strong. Early believers came to their scriptures with convictions shaped by powerful religious experiences that opened the sacred texts for them in new ways,

⁹³ David E. Aune, “Charismatic Exegesis in Early Judaism and Early Christianity,” in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 126-50; and the earlier study by Otto Betz, *Offenbarung und Schriftforschung in der Qumransekte*, WUNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

⁹⁴ Larry W. Hurtado, “Religious Experience and Religious Innovation in the New Testament,” *JR* 80 (2000): 183-205, republished in Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 179-204; *id.*, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 64-74; *id.* “Revelatory Experiences and Religious Innovation in Earliest Christianity,” forthcoming in *ExpTim*.

particularly experiences of the risen and exalted Jesus, and continuing revelations from the Spirit. Gathered in corporate prayer and worship, they searched their scriptures in the fervent expectation that new understanding and even further revelations would come in this context.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Paul's brief description of actions characteristic of group-worship in 1 Cor. 14:26-33 reflects the type of lively and spiritually fervent situation that I describe.