

Christology, History of

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I. New Testament

1. The Earthly Jesus. Notwithstanding the Gospel of John and some passages in the Synoptics, Jesus seemingly referred to his self-perception only indirectly. His proclamation and deeds evoked reactions in both supporters and opponents, which in their beginnings can hardly be considered conceptual. For the pre-Easter period, then, many scholars speak only of an implicit Christology involving the conviction that God's claim to Israel has become manifest in Jesus to its fullest extent.

2. Gospels and Acts. The tradition of Jesus' words and deeds enlarged and intensified the implicit Christology of the pre-Easter period. The beginning of Jesus' ministry was related early to the words and activities of John the Baptist (Q, pre-Mark tradition), and Christology became firmly embedded in the horizon of a forthcoming divine judgment (Q). Subsequently, Christology became explicit. Later traditions enlarged christological ideas by adding the accounts of Jesus' birth in Israel (Matthew and Luke) and speaking of his pre-existence (cf. John 1: 1–5, 18).

From the pre-Mark tradition onwards, Jesus' words and activities were construed as evidence of his holiness and divinely authorized proclamation, thought to be corroborated by his mighty deeds (Mark 1: 22, 24). While the narratives of the passion added to Christology the numinous necessity of suffering (Mark 8: 31) and the affliction of the righteous/innocent (Matt 27: 19; Luke 23: 47), the Easter accounts confirmed Jesus' overcoming of death. The resurrection was often understood as elevation, thereby highlighting his importance for the entire world (cf. Matt 28: 16–20 in contrast to Matt 10: 5–6).

The evangelists developed this trajectory in various ways. By means of an open ending (Mark 16: 7–8), Mark provoked his audience to interpret a Son of God Christology over against the failure of the first disciples, while Matthew elaborated the "God with us" motif (Christ as Immanuel) by expanding it from Israel to (after Easter) all humanity. Luke/Acts deepened this universal Christology by

focusing on the work of the Holy Spirit (from Luke 1:15 on; cf. Acts 1:2), and John reflected upon the interrelation of God (the Father) and Christ (the Son; see e.g., John 17), thus influentially integrating monotheism and divine Christology.

3. Paul. Paul was aware of some traditions about the pre-Easter Jesus, including the theory of his Davidic descent (Rom 1:3), yet his Christology did not evolve out of reflection on the earthly Jesus (cf. 2 Cor 5:16), but from his own conversion experience (Phil 1:7–11) as well as from brief christological formulas dating back to the first years after Easter. In this way, he preserved very old christological material (e.g., the tradition of the burial and resurrection appearances in 1 Cor 15:3–5 and the prayer, Maranatha, in 1 Cor 16:22) as well as valuable christological argumentative patterns. In addition, he attests to the association of high Christology with visions (Gal 1:15–16). The traces of visions seem to have been of major importance in early Christianity (cf. Mark 9:1–8).

Paul's reflection on the paradox of the cross against the background of Deut 27:26 is outstanding. It holds that in Christ both human wisdom (1 Cor 1:18–31) and the curse of the law (Gal 3:11–14) must end. In this respect, the focal points of his soteriology, his frequent "for us" statements, and references to reconciliation, salvation, atonement, and justification all tie in with his Christology (2 Cor 5:18–21; Rom 3:24–26; 5:1–11).

Like the rest of early Christianity, Paul preserved a strict monotheism. (In 1 Cor 15:23–28 a slight tendency toward subordination appears.) At the same time, he spoke of Christ's glory (2 Cor 4:4) and emphasized the universal importance of Christ from creation (in Phil 2:6 via preexistence or "Adam Christology") to the Parousia (from 1 Thes 4:15). Therefore, the concept of monotheism had to be interpreted against the background of Christology (1 Cor 8:5–6 contrasts that to polytheistic thoughts). Occasionally, this led to triadic formulations involving God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:4–13; 2 Cor 13:13).

The so-called pseudo-Pauline epistles further developed facets of Pauline Christology (1 Tim 2:5–6; 3:16 etc.). In Col 1:15–20 motifs such as the image of God, the mediation of creation, and a *Shekhinah* Christology culminate in a universal soteriological Christology, while Eph 1:3–14 formulates an extensive triadic eulogy referring to God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

4. Other Attestations in the New Testament. Regarding the remaining NT, the christological concepts of Hebrews and Revelation prove especially noteworthy. The former develops a Christology that depends upon an exceptional number of HB/OT references (Pss 2:7; 110:1, 4; Heb 1; 5; 7) and depicts Christ as high priest. The latter attempts to renew a visionary Christology (leaning on the Easter

epiphany in 1:12–18). While Hebrews elaborates cultic motifs in Christology, Revelation highlights the eschatological horizon (Christ's mighty coming).

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