

especially postcolonial rereadings and the identification of Robinson Crusoe with the evangelical conversion narrative, Freeman argues that the text's 'surplus of meaning' is evidence of an unstable conjunction between political and religious dissent.

Freeman's previous works included a number of collections of Baptist sources which are clearly the fruits of a concerted commitment to a Baptist canon: *A Company of Women Preachers* (Baylor University Press, 2011), and *Baptist Roots* (Judson Press, 1999). With its careful concern to introduce and explicate the most significant political and historical debates surrounding early modern cultures of dissent, and to provide summaries of plot and character to aid readers in engaging Bunyan's and Blake's complex allegory, this new, highly accessible book can serve as a counterpart to those anthologies, and as a model for sensitive reading of such sources. Such work enables a conversation of great scope which crosses literary and theological disciplinary boundaries.

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Andrew Ter Ern Lok, *The Origin of Divine Christology*, Society for NT Studies Monograph Series 169 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. xvi + 249. £75.00.

At some point between 111 and 112 CE, a Roman governor in Asia Minor wrote to the Emperor Trajan to seek some clarification about an edict forbidding the profession of the Christian faith. Pliny the Younger informed Trajan that former Christians had been subjected to questioning, and he had learned that their custom had been to recite an antiphonal hymn 'to Christ, as to a god'. Just as this development was a source of some perplexity to Pliny, the origin of the cultic veneration of Christ 'as a god' in the first centuries of the early church has long exercised historians of Christian origins: how did a human Jewish preacher come to be regarded as a god?

This is the question addressed by Andrew Ter Ern Loke. Beginning with the representatives of the 'History of Religions School', Loke presents a survey of the different theories about the origin of divine christology. He groups them together as follows: the first group, the 'Evolutionary Theories', associated with Bousset, suggest that divine christology was not a characteristic of early Palestinian Christian belief. The 'deification' of Jesus was due largely to the influence of the veneration of a wide variety of divine figures in Greco-Roman paganism. For others, these christological

developments were a later unfolding of trends within Second Temple Judaism. But whatever the influence, ideas about Christ's 'pre-existence' and other divine attributes emerged towards the end of the first century.

The second group are described in terms of 'Explosion Theories'. The recognition of Jesus as divine was not an evolving cumulative development which took place in the course of the first century but an insight which "'exploded" right at the beginning of Christianity' (p. 5), within the primitive Palestinian Christian community. The proponents of these theories share George Caird's insight that 'the highest Christology of the NT is also its earliest'. For Larry Hurtado, the recognition of Jesus as divine was stimulated by the religious experiences of early Christians and their visions of the risen Christ. By contrast, in different ways, Bart Ehrman and April DeConick attribute belief in the divinity of Christ to a series of theological deductions from belief in the resurrection.

Loke is unconvinced by these explanations: in attributing such a radical innovation to early Christian communities, these scholars underestimate the controversy and argument that such novelty would have provoked. He sees no evidence of such controversy in the earliest texts of the New Testament. Instead, he suggests that a more plausible explanation is that Jesus himself taught his followers that he was divine. A bold claim, it is nevertheless, for Loke, the only compelling way of explaining how a human Jewish preacher came to be regarded as a god in spite of the pervasive influence of monotheism. Ehrman's suggestion that Paul's writings reflect just one perspective among early Christians and that the Ebionites embraced a much lower christology is dismissed: 'there is inadequate evidence' (p. 132) to substantiate this claim.

One of the perennial challenges in the search for Christian origins is that so much can rest on 'arguments from silence'. As Hurtado concedes, such arguments are 'almost impossible to avoid'. Loke is quick to alert readers to the occasions when a good number of his conversation partners appeal to such arguments, and yet the paradox is that Loke's own argument rests on an argument from silence. In claiming that Paul's writings betray no real controversy about his christology, he finds himself caught out by precisely the same criticism that he levels at some of his dialogue partners, namely that the 'absence of evidence is not always evidence for absence'.

Loke acknowledges this weakness and insists that his argument is not based entirely on silence, 'for we have positive evidence that Paul considered the Jerusalem saints to be fully Christian, which would be unlikely if they held to a non-divine Christology contrary to Paul's. This implies that Paul's Christology was also the Christology of the Jerusalem Christians, and

there are passages in the Gospels which portray members of the Twelve recognizing that Jesus was truly divine as well' (p. 132). And yet, the problem is that there is a substantial body of modern scholarship which indicates that the gospels do betray evidence of considerable dispute and debate about the identity of Jesus.

Recent Markan scholarship – and speculation about the christological arguments and disagreements which the Gospel sought to address – is almost completely ignored. We may not agree with scholarly speculation about a 'Messianic secret' or the thesis that Mark wrote in reaction to others who attributed an overly exalted status to Jesus Christ, but we might at least expect these arguments to be addressed. Similarly, the Fourth Gospel appears to describe a number of disputes about christology: was John seeking to promote a 'naïve docetism' as Kasemann suggests or was his christology anti-docetic (*pace* Schnelle)? In his insistence on the silence of the New Testament witness, Loke appears to be unwilling to listen to the persistent background noise of modern New Testament scholarship.

Loke ends with some intriguing speculation about the 'deification' of Haile Selassie by members of the Rastafarian faith and the personality cult surrounding Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the popular leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. If anything, the fact that their respective followers appear to have adopted ideas about their identity which were at variance with their own teachings seems to challenge his own contention that early Christians would only have come to believe in his divinity if Jesus had sanctioned this himself. But while this work may be of interest to theologians, Loke's insistence that ideas about the divinity of Jesus originated with the historical Jesus himself should be treated with caution. Loke appears to attribute the diversity and range of New Testament christology to one simple cause. And yet, if current trends in New Testament christology have taught us anything, it is that early christological reflection in the New Testament was not simple but complex. Small wonder that Pliny was perplexed.

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W. David O. Taylor, *The Theater of God's Glory: Calvin, Creation, and the Liturgical Arts* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2017), pp. xiv + 226. \$30.00.

Taylor seeks to justify a necessary and positive place for liturgical arts in public worship. He reacts to the 'shame' of liturgical arts within