

Firstborn of Many Brothers: A Pauline Notion of Apotheosis

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Over the past one hundred years specialists in New Testament and historians of religions of the Hellenistic period have put forth an enormous effort in investigating the origin and development of what is usually termed the "Christology" of earliest Christianity. How is it that the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth, executed by the Romans around 30 C.E., within two or three decades is viewed by adherents of the new cult as a pre-existent divine figure who becomes a human being, dies, is raised from the dead and exalted to the level of the highest heavenly glory as Christ, Lord, and Son of God.¹ Are there analogies in the ancient world which might serve as parallels or even sources for such an evaluation of Jesus? The possibility of a pre-Christian gnostic redeemer myth, the notion of the *theios anēr*, Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom speculations and the dying and rising gods of the mystery religions have all been proposed and extensively debated as possible keys to solving this problem. In this paper I would like to focus on what might be called the other side of this "Christology" question, namely, Paul's notion of *many* "sons of God," who expect a similar transformation from mortal to immortal life and an exaltation to heavenly glory, to that of Jesus. In this regard I will stress two points: (1) the close link between a select group of "sons of God" with the status of Jesus as Son of God; (2) the cosmic role and function of such a group as God's agents in the culmination of history. In this portion of my paper I have limited my investigation to six letters which are recognized by most scholars as undoubtedly from Paul's hand: 1 Thess, Gal, 1-2 Cor, Rom and Phil. I then turn to ask how such a notion of what I would call "mass apotheosis" might be set in the context of various Hellenistic ways of understanding divinity.

SON OF GOD—SONS OF GOD

In the letters mentioned above Paul refers to Jesus as Son of God (*υἱός*) 15 times.² On the other hand, he speaks of believers in the cult as sons of God (using the plural *υἱοί*) 10 times.³ Two of the clearest descriptive passages are Rom 8:14 and Gal 3:26:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are *sons of God*.

¹Of the many works one might cite I would mention here Martin Hengel's recent collection of essays, *Between Jesus and Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) which is up to date and contains extensive notes and bibliography.

²Rom 1:3, 4, 9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32; 1 Cor 1:9; 15:28; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 1:16; 2:20; 4:4, 6; 1 Thess 1:10.

³Rom 8:14, 19; 9:26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 1:26; 4:6, 7; 1 Thess 5:5.

... for in Christ Jesus you are all *sons of God* through faith.⁴

I am interested here in the connection between the one and the many, particularly in terms of cosmic destiny. Paul's most programmatic statement is in Rom 8:29-30. Here we have a sequential outline of what he calls the plan or purpose (πρόθεσιν—v 28) of God:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined (προόρισεν) to share the image (συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνας) of his Son, that he might be the first-born (πρωτότοκον) of many brothers, and the ones he predestined he also called, and the ones he called he also justified, and the ones he justified he also glorified (δόξασεν).

I want to take some of the key vocabulary from this text and trace it through other texts which appear to be closely related in general theme.

Προορίζω also occurs in 1 Cor 2:7:

But we impart a secret (μυστήριον) and hidden wisdom of God, which God determined (προόρισεν) before the ages for our glorification (εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν).

What is particularly striking about this passage is that προορίζω is directly connected to the idea of δόξα/δοξάζω here, as well as in Rom 8:30, even though the vocabulary and context of this section of 1 Cor are quite different.⁵ In both texts Paul speaks of God's predetermined plan which involves the heavenly glorification of a select group. Further, this plan is hidden from the ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος (1 Cor 2:8), which I take as a reference to hostile spirits who rule the cosmos.⁶ I would also note that Paul's use of μυστήριον here should be compared with 1 Cor 15:51 (which I will take up below) where he speaks directly of the transformation (i.e., glorification) of the group of believers as a "secret."⁷

Σέμιωσις occurs elsewhere only in Phil 3:21 which seems to directly parallel the thought of Rom 8:29-30:

⁴Unless otherwise indicated the translations of N.T. texts and emphases therein are my own.

⁵On the special vocabulary and complexities of 1 Cor 1:18-2:16 see Ulrich Wilckens, *Welsheit und Torheit: eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1 Kor 1 und 2* (BHT 26; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959) and Birger A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology* (SBLDS 12; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1973).

⁶See Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909) 90-96. On the position that the reference is to human rulers see André Feuillet, "Les 'Chefs de ce siècle' et la Sagesse divine d'après 1 Co. II, 6-8," *Le Christ Sagesse de Dieu d'après les épîtres pauliniennes* (Paris: Gabalda, 1966) 25-36.

⁷He also uses μυστήριον for the historical purpose of God in initiating his Gentile mission and its function for the salvation of Israel (Rom 11:25-56; 16:25-26). Cf. also 1 Cor 4:1; 13:2; 14:2 and the deutero-Pauline materials (Eph 1:19; 3:3-9; 6:19; Col 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3).

For our commonwealth exists in the heavens from which we expectantly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform (μετασχηματίσει) our lowly body into the same form (σὴμορφον) as his glorious body (τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ), by the power with which he is able to subject everything to himself.⁸

Here we have a more descriptive commentary on this central Pauline notion of glorification. It is something which is to occur at the *parousia* of Jesus from heaven (cf. 1 Thess 1:9-10; 1 Cor 15:51). The identification of the exalted heavenly state of Jesus with that expected by believers is exact. It involves a transformation (μετασχηματίζω) from ταπεινότητος to δόξα. Also involved is Jesus' power to subject "all things" (τὰ πάντα) to himself, a concept Paul elaborates in 1 Cor 15 when he deals with this identical notion of heavenly glorification.

The transformation, taking the entire phrase of Rom 8:29, is a "sharing of the image of his Son" (συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ). This use of εἰκών seems parallel to that of 2 Cor 3:18:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into his image (εἰκόνα) from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

The precise meaning of this verse and its context is extremely difficult,⁹ however, I do not think one finds here, nor in the following section of 5:1-10, any shift from Paul's idea that full or final transformation/glorification is at the *parousia*. The thought is essentially the same as that of Rom 8:29 and Phil 3:21, indeed the verb μετασχηματίζω in the latter text is parallel to μεταμορφοῦμαι here in 2 Cor 3:18. The connection of εἰκών and δόξα occurs further on in 2 Cor 4:4. There Paul speaks of the "god of this age" (i.e., Satan) blinding the minds of unbelievers that they may not see the light τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκών τοῦ θεοῦ. Then in verse 6 he says that God's illumination of the hearts of believers brings about the φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ. Paul's gospel message is a gospel of the glory of Christ, i.e., a γνῶσις of the glory of God seen in the exalted figure of Christ who is the εἰκών of God. My point here is that all which is included in the idea of "Christ as the image of God" is applied in the most direct way to the anticipated future of those who "believe" the message.

Paul further clarifies what he has in mind with the phrase εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς (Rom 8:29), which stands as an explanation of συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. Πρωτότοκος occurs only here in Paul.¹⁰ Again, the

⁸I cannot agree with Erhardt Güttgemanns (*Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr: Studien zur paulinischen Christologie* [FRLANT 90; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966] 240-47) that Phil 3:20-21 is pre-Pauline. See the discussion and critique of this position by Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (SNTSMS 29; Cambridge: University Press, 1976) 177-83.

⁹See Dieter Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2 Korintherbrief: Studien zur religiösen Propaganda in der Spätantike* (WMANT 11; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964) 258-89.

¹⁰Since the language and thought of Rom 8:29 are so closely linked to 1 Cor 15:20-28; 42-58, where the phrase ἀπαρχὴ τῶν κεκοιμημένων is used in v 20 as a basis for argu-

identification of Jesus the Son of God with the many glorified sons of God which follow is direct. The idea is that God is bringing into existence a family (i.e., "many brothers") of beings, the Sons of God, who share his heavenly δόξα. Jesus, then, stands at the head of a new genus of cosmic "brothers" who now await their own exaltation at his *parousia*.

The verb δοξάζω in Rom 8:30 stands for both of these phrases in verse 29, i.e., "to share the image of his Son" and "the firstborn of many brothers." Thus, in these two verses, 29 and 30, Paul summarizes the important notion of the ἐλπίδος τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ which he introduced in Rom 5:1 and develops in 8:17-25. To be a υἱὸς θεοῦ according to 8:17 is to be a co-heir (συγκληρονόμος) with Jesus. Such a relationship involves a suffering with him, which in turn leads to a "co-glorification" (συνδοξάζω). Paul frequently uses the various forms of the word κληρονόμος.¹¹ There is a close connection between the terms κληρονόμος and δόξα and his idea of participating in the "Kingdom of God" (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10; 15:50-53; Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 2:2). A summary of his thought in this regard might run like this: what one inherits is the Kingdom of God; when it is inherited is at the *parousia* of Jesus; how one enters this Kingdom is through a transformation to immortal heavenly glory.

In Rom 8:18-25, the section which precedes vv 29-30, Paul expands upon his vision of the future. Without trying to deal with this complex passage as a whole I would note here the following verses:

For I think that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is about to be revealed in us! (v. 18)

For the creation expectantly longs for the revealing (ἀποκάλυψιν) of the sons of God. . . . (v 19)

. . . we ourselves . . . groan inside waiting for our sonship (υιοθεσίαν), that is, the redemption of our bodies. (v. 23)

The use of υιοθεσία in 8:23 to refer to the *parousia* expectation is significant. Several manuscripts (chiefly Western) omit the word, probably because it appears to contradict 8:15.¹²

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship (πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας) in which we cry out "Abba! Father!"

ing that Jesus' resurrection and glorification will be followed by the transformation of those "in Christ" at the *parousia*, the central idea of πρωτότοκος in Paul seems to be anticipatory, pointing toward recapitulation. Thus "firstborn" implies more than preeminence, it points to those "later born." In Heb 2:10 the phrase ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας is juxtaposed with πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα (an expression which is certainly "Pauline" in meaning). The point appears to be the same, i.e., Jesus as the preliminary figure of God's plan is representative of the many to follow.

¹¹ κληρονομέω occurs in 1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal 4:30; 5:21; κληρονομία once in Gal 3:18. κληρονόμος occurs in Rom 4:13, 14; 8:17; Gal 3:29; 4:1, 7. Cf. Eph 1:11, 14, 18; Col 3:24.

¹² See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) 517.

In Gal 4:4-7 Paul expresses the identical thought:

But when the fullness of time arrived, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive sonship (υιοθεσία). And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir (κληρονόμος).

There is a certain tension here between present realization and future consummation, something common in Paul.¹³ The believers now receive the *spirit of sonship* (Rom 8:15) and are sons and heirs of God. Gal 4:4-7 parallels this thought: the reason for the "sending of the Son was that they might receive υιοθεσία. But this "sonship" is precisely defined in Rom 8:23 as τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν. This is what Paul meant by the "revealing" of the sons of God, their transformation, glorification, exaltation at the *parousia* of Jesus. This is his "hope" which he says is not yet seen (8:24-25).

Beginning with Rom 8:29-30 I have strung together this rather complicated web of passages (1 Cor 2:7; Phil 3:20-21; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4-6; Rom 8:17-25) to demonstrate that Paul is very single-minded about this central idea, even in disparate contexts. The key terms (δόξα/δοξάζω; σύμμορφος; μετασχηματίζω; μεταμορφομαι; εἰκών; κληρονόμος; υιοθεσία) show a strikingly consistent interconnection.

I now turn to a brief consideration of portions of 1 Cor 15 where Paul defends his notion of "resurrection of the dead" (plural) on the basis of faith in Jesus' resurrection. What I would emphasize here is that while the occasion of Paul's discussion was some type of denial of the resurrection of the dead (v 12), the chapter as a whole deals not so much with resurrection per se (which for the community would apply only to the minority who had died) as with *transformation* to immortality of both living and dead at Jesus' *parousia*. In other words, the lines of his discussion in vv 20-28 and 35-58 apply to those alive at this expected *parousia* as much as to those who have died. Thus he writes:

Lo! I reveal to you a secret! We shall not all sleep, but we shall *all be changed* (ἀλλαγησόμεθα), in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the final trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised *imperishable* and we shall be changed. (vv 51-52)

In this context, then, affirming the resurrection of the dead is Paul's way of affirming the *participation* of those who had died in the events of the *parousia* (the same point is made in 1 Thess 4:13-18; 5:9-10). "All shall be made alive" (πάντες ζωοποιηθῶσονται) he declares (v 22), but clearly ζωοποιέω does not refer merely to the *dead* being raised but is equivalent to ἀλλάσσω in vv 51-52 (compare ζάω in 1 Thess 5:10). The crux of his argument involves his idea of the two Adams. He declares in verse 21:

For as by a *man* came death, by a *man* has come also the resurrection of the dead.

¹³See the recent study of A. T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology* (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge: University Press, 1981).

Then further in verse 45:

Thus it is written, "The first man Adam *became* a living being" (ψυχὴν ζῶσαν), the last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν).

Paul uses the phrase "resurrection of the dead" to refer to a new phenomenon in the cosmos—the transformation of a mortal human being to immortal, glorified, heavenly life. That Jesus is *human* is crucial to Paul's argument since his transformation is representative for all those "brothers" to follow. In this chapter he lists seven contrasts which specify his understanding of this move from a mortal human state to that of glorified Son of God:

<u>First Adam</u>	<u>Last Adam</u>
1. ψυχὴν ζῶσαν	1. πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν
2. φθορά	2. ἀφθαρσία
3. ἀτιμία	3. δόξα
4. ἀσθένεια	4. δύναμις
5. σῶμα ψυχικόν	5. σῶμα πνευματικόν
6. ἐκ γῆς χοῦκος	6. ἐξ οὐρανοῦ.
7. εἰκόνα τοῦ χυλοῦ	7. εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανοῦ

Transformation involves a change from the existence characterized under "First Adam" to that under "Last Adam." The point I would emphasize here is that the terms under "First Adam" apply *equally* to the man Jesus and to all humankind, while those under "Last Adam" apply *equally* to Jesus as exalted Son of God and to the heavenly destiny of the many "sons of God." One is reminded here of the pattern expressed by Paul in Rom 1:3-4:¹⁴

The gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and *appointed Son of God in power* according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The text stands as a short statement of the content of Paul's "gospel," i.e., Jesus as human being/Jesus as exalted Son of God.

COSMIC RULE OF THE SONS OF GOD

The notion of Jesus being appointed "Son of God in power" (ἐν δυνάμει) implies a cosmic rule and subjugation of the hostile powers of the heavenly world. I have already noted Phil 3:21 which speaks of the "power with which he is able to subject all things to himself" (ἐν ἐνέργειᾳ τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν . . . ὑποτάξαι). This idea of "subjecting all things" is an important one to Paul. He deals with it in some detail in the complicated

¹⁴Most scholars have concluded that this text contains an early, pre-Pauline confession. See the massive list of studies in Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer*, (HNT 8a; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1974) 2 and the special study of Klaus Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (SNT 7; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1972).

pericope 1 Cor 15:22-28. Here Paul offers an extended midrash on Ps 8:6 which is in turn related to Gen 1:26.¹⁵ God has placed "all things under his feet" (v 27). His role is to destroy "every rule (*ἀρχήν*) and authority (*ἐξουσίαν*) and power (*δύναμιν*) (v 24). The use of *πάγμα* (v 23), followed by *ἐπειτα* and *εἶτα* (v 24) seems to imply an interval between the *parousia* and what he calls the "τέλος" in which the sons of God share in this role of rule and subjugation.¹⁶ In 1 Cor 3:21-23 and Rom 8:32 he assures the believers that "all things" (*τὰ πάντα*) belong to them. He chides the Corinthians for going to law courts to settle their internal disputes and reminds them of their cosmic destiny:

Don't you know that the saints are going to judge the world (*τὸν κόσμον*)? If the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to handle petty cases? Don't you know that we will judge angels? How much more things pertaining to this life! (6:2-3)

Earlier in the letter he sarcastically taunts those who viewed themselves as *already* exalted:

Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you are reigning as kings! I wish that you were ruling so we could share the rule with you! (4:8)

The very notion of "inheriting the Kingdom of God" (especially see 1 Cor 15:50) has to do with participating in a role of cosmic rule and judgment. In summary, Jesus heads a group of participants, glorified, exalted Sons of God who have been given power over "all things" to bring about the final goal of history (1 Cor 15:28).

HELLENISTIC CONTEXTS

I now want to ask what analogies to this idea of many sons of God one might find in the Hellenistic period. I would propose first a broad, then a narrower context for Paul's thinking in this regard.

Broadly I would relate the Pauline concept to what Nilsson calls a "new cosmology" which emerges in the Hellenistic period.¹⁷ This cosmology involves a fundamental shift

¹⁵Heb 2:5-18, also based on Ps 8, offers a fascinating parallel to 1 Cor 15:20-28 as well as Rom 8:29-30. The emphasis there is that the future "world" (*οἰκουμένην*) belongs not to angels but to humankind, and that Jesus is the "pioneer" (*ἀρχηγόν*—v 10) man who has inherited "all things" and offers the same to the "many sons" that God is bringing to glory.

¹⁶This interpretation hinges on the use of *ἐπειτα/εἶτα* (vv 23-24) and whether the verbs of v 24 with the double use of *ὅταν* refer to what is to be accomplished in a time period *between* the *parousia* and what he calls *τὸ τέλος*. I am inclined to translate *ὅταν καταργήσῃ* as "after destroying" (see RSV and NEB).

¹⁷A convenient summary of Nilsson's thesis in this regard is found in *Greek Piety* (trans. H. J. Rose; New York: W. W. Norton, 1969) 92-185, which is based on his *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 5,2; 2 vols.; Munich: Beck, 1967). Also see his masterly survey article, "History of Greek Religion in the Hellenistic and Roman Age," *HTR* 36 (1943) 251-75 and "The New Conception of the Universe in Late Greek Paganism," *Eranos* 44 (1946) 20-27. Also see the important article

in the perception of human place. In such a cosmology the earth is the center and lowest level of a vast and expanded universe. It is surrounded by planetary spheres or "heavens," usually seven in number, each dominated by its respective powers.¹⁸ Above the highest sphere is the pure dwelling of God. God and humankind are thus separated by an interminable distance filled with intermediate, often hostile, powers. Humans, dwelling at the lowest level of this vast cosmos, are no longer at home. They are out of place. Human destiny is to dwell with God in the highest heaven, free from the bonds of death and the mortality of the body. One often encounters the language of exile—humans are strangers and pilgrims in this sensible world. Salvation comes to mean "getting out" or "going home," i.e., to be released from the earthly condition and obtain immortality in heaven. Whether one is dealing with a dualistic notion of humans as intrinsically immortal but somehow imprisoned in a mortal condition, or the idea that mortal humans have the potential to obtain immortality through some kind of transformation, the fundamental perception is the same—the proper destiny of mortal humanity is immortal heavenly life. Guthrie's rubric of Greek religion—gods are immortal; humans are mortal—remains, but the great gulf is increasingly transcended by a more general idea of *apotheosis* as potential not only for heroes, emperors and rulers, but for anyone and everyone.¹⁹

More specifically I would relate Paul's concept of many sons of God to a host of Jewish texts in and around the Second Temple period which speak of the destiny of both individuals and select groups in terms of heavenly transformation, glorification, or even enthronement.²⁰ I have in mind texts like Dan 12:3 which speak of those resurrected to eternal life as shining "like the brightness of the firmament" and "like the stars forever and ever." This theme of an immortal, celestial, or astral glory is common (2 Esdr 7:97; 2 Enoch 66:7; 2 Baruch 51:10; 1 Enoch 104:2; 4 Macc 17:5). Many texts speak of mortals being transformed like "angels," (i.e., "sons of God"; "hosts of heaven," et al.). 2 Baruch 51:13 promises that the glory of the righteous "will surpass that of the angels" (cf. 2 Enoch 23:10; 1QS XI 7b-8; 1 Enoch 104:7). The idea of enthronement is often included in such heavenly exaltation. Enoch (1 Enoch 71), Abel (T. Abraham 12), Job (T. Job 33:2-9), most of the Patriarchs (T. Benj. 10:6-7), and the righteous in general (1 Enoch 108:13)

by Jonathan Z. Smith, "Birth Upside Down or Rightside Up?" *Map is Not Territory*, SJLA 23 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978) 160-66.

¹⁸The usual order was Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon. See Cicero, *Republic* 6.17 and *Polmandres* 26. In Jewish materials as in Paul these spheres are controlled by various angels, cf. b. *Hagigah* 12b. For a full study see Hans Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum* (WUNT 2; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1951).

¹⁹See W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950). Also the classic studies: Lewis Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921); Franz Cumont, *Afterlife in Roman Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923); Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks* (trans. W. B. Hillis; 8th ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925).

²⁰On this material see the studies of George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr., *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1972) and H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life After Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Cor. 15: Part I: An Enquiry into the Jewish Background* (CBNT 7:1; Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1974).

are seated on thrones, usually at the right hand of God, performing functions of judgment. Even in the Markan-Synoptic tradition the resurrected are spoken of as immortal, angelic-like "sons of God" (Luke 20:36). This specific kind of language, set against the general background of a Hellenistic understanding of *apotheosis* sheds the best light on the Pauline concept I have briefly set forth in this paper.

Finally, it seems to me that the more specific aspects of Paul's expectations stem from two sources. First, there is his own visionary experience. Twice he declares that he has "seen" Jesus (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8). Whatever the nature of this experience he becomes convinced that the glorified Son of God, enthroned in heaven (Rom 8:34), is indeed the crucified Jesus.²¹ He further relates that he has been raptured up to the "third heaven" and entered "Paradise" (2 Cor 12:1-4). This language reminds one of a whole host of ascent texts in which the visionary sees or even experiences the "glory" of the heavenly world. In the same context he reports having received messages from Jesus (2 Cor 12:9). These kinds of experiences, of both epiphany and ascent, are characteristic of religions of the period.²² I think there is a necessary relationship between Paul's message and his perceived experience of the heavenly world. Second, Paul seems to develop his ideas from texts in the Hebrew Bible. We know that such key texts were fundamental to earliest Christian interpretations of Jesus.²³ I suggest that the same holds true for Paul's notion of many glorified sons of God. The major ones appear to be Gen 1:26; 2:7; Psa 8:3-8 which is particularly crucial, Psa 2:7 and Psa 110:1.

²¹See the recent study of Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (WUNT 2nd Series, 4; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981).

²²See the fine article by Jonathan Z. Smith, "Hellenistic Religions," *New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Macropedia, vol. 8, pp. 749-51.

²³On the *peshar* and *midrashic* techniques in early N.T. texts see especially Norman Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) especially chap. 2, pp. 10-22.

VIRGINIA TECH (VPI)

Journal:
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papers.

Volume:
Issue:
Month/Year: 1984
Pages: 295-303

Author: Society of Biblical Literature. Tabor,
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