

CHRIST IN THE THEOLOGIES OF PAUL AND JOHN: A STUDY IN THE DIVERSE UNITY OF NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

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The foundational experience underlying Paul's Christology is the call and conversion that led him to focus his Christology on the death and resurrection of Christ. The foundational experience underlying the Christology of the Fourth Gospel is the witness of the Beloved Disciple to the incarnate Word, an experience that focuses the Gospel's Christology on the Incarnation. These different starting points clarify the diverse ways that Paul and John understood God's revelation, the human condition, and salvation.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CONTAINS a number of witnesses to Jesus Christ, but it is the testimonies of Paul and John that have most influenced the history of Christian theology. Paul, like a laser beam, relentlessly focuses on the redemptive moment of Christ's death and resurrection to explain how God justified and reconciled humanity to himself in and through Christ. John, with equal intensity, focuses on the incarnation of the Word to show how the Son revealed the Father to the world in order to save the world. Paul's Christology draws attention to the scandal of a crucified messiah, John's to the scandal of the Word made flesh. The former is a Christology of the redemption, the latter a Christology of the Incarnation.

In this article, I shall first discuss the origin and structure of Paul's, and then John's, Christology in the light of what I shall call their foundational

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experiences of Christ.¹ Then, after summarizing the Christologies of Paul and John, I shall explore three ways their different views of Christ witness to the same reality (their understanding of God, the human condition, and salvation). In this way, I hope to show how the unity of New Testament theology is paradoxically rooted in its diversity.²

SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Before proceeding, it is important to acknowledge that there are at least three difficulties when comparing Paul and John with each other. First, whereas Paul wrote letters occasioned by the problems that arose in his congregations,³ John composed a narrative that recounts the story of Jesus for a community of believers that found itself in a hostile world.⁴ In this

¹ This article will limit itself to the those letters whose Pauline authorship is not disputed (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon), and to the Fourth Gospel since the Johannine letters may have been written by an author, or authors, other than the Fourth Evangelist.

² While nearly all New Testament scholars recognize and appreciate the rich diversity of theology in the various writings of the New Testament, the theological unity of the New Testament has become problematic. This makes the quest for the underlying unity of the theology in the New Testament an urgent task. Attempts to recover this unity can be seen in a number of recent New Testament theologies: G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, completed and edited by J. D. Hurst (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1, *Die Vielfalt des Neuen Testaments: Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*; vol., 2 *Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments: Thematische Darstellung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002); I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004); Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1, *Grundlegung: Von Jesus zu Paulus*; vol. 2, *Von der Paulusschule bis zu Johannesoffenbarung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992, 1999); François Vouga, *Une théologie du Nouveau Testament* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001). For a review of the current landscape in New Testament theology, see Frank J. Matera, “New Testament Theology: History, Method, and Identity” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 67 (2005) 1–21.

³ Paul, of course, was not the founder of the church at Rome, but there is a growing consensus among New Testament exegetes that Romans was occasioned by a number of specific issues that affected the congregations at Rome. See *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried, rev. and exp. ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991); A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

⁴ Some scholars have attempted to describe and chronicle the history and growth of the Johannine community. See, e.g., John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and the Hates of An Individual Church in The New Testament* (New York: Paulist, 1979); and J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in The Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

narrative, John provides a detailed account of Jesus' ministry that culminates in his death as the moment of his glorification and return to the Father. In contrast to John's Gospel, Paul's letters focus on the event of Christ's death and resurrection but have little to say about Jesus' life and ministry.

Second, although we know a great deal about Paul, we know relatively little about John who has been traditionally viewed as John, the son of Zebedee, one of the Twelve, the Fourth Evangelist. This John, in turn, is often identified as the Beloved Disciple, "the one whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).⁵ Contemporary Johannine scholarship, however, has called this traditional view into question, arguing that the Gospel is the result of a complex editorial process that involved several significant figures. Raymond Brown, for example, distinguishes between the Beloved Disciple "who was responsible for the basic testimony/witness that was incorporated into the Fourth Gospel," the Evangelist (probably a disciple of the Beloved Disciple) "who gave shape to the stories and discourses now found in the Fourth Gospel," and the Final Redactor (also a disciple of the Beloved Disciple) who "completed the Gospel by adding Johannine material, some of it ancient, that had not been included by the evangelist" (199).⁶ I have adopted Brown's hypothesis so that when I speak of "John" in this essay, I have in view the Beloved Disciple (a disciple of Jesus) and his disciples (the Evangelist and Final Redactor) who enshrined in the Fourth Gospel the Beloved Disciple's foundational experience of Jesus.⁷ At times, then, I shall speak of the Beloved Disciple, the Evangelist, and the Final Redactor, as well as of John.

Finally, because John and Paul have alternate starting points, they portray Christ and his benefits differently. Paul begins with Christ's death and resurrection and presents him as the crucified Messiah, the risen Lord, the image of God, the eschatological Adam, the one who will come again. John begins with the preexistence and incarnation of the Word and presents Christ as the Son whom the Father sent into the world to reveal the Father to the world. This does not mean that John is uninterested in Christ's death and resurrection or that Paul is ignorant of Christ's preexistence and in-

⁵ Scriptural quotations are taken from *The New American Bible*, including the revised New Testament.

⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, edited, updated, introduced, and concluded by Francis J. Moloney (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

⁷ Brown (*An Introduction to the New Testament* [New York: Doubleday, 1996] 369) speculates that the Beloved Disciple "was a minor figure during the ministry of Jesus, too unimportant to be remembered in the more official tradition of the Synoptics. But since this figure became important in Johannine community history (perhaps the founder of the community), he became the ideal in its Gospel picture, capable of being contrasted with Peter as closer to Jesus in love."

carnation. These events, however, play different roles in their Christologies. For example, whereas Jesus' death is the final unfolding of the Incarnation in John's theology, the Incarnation is the presupposition for Paul's *theologia crucis*.⁸

THE STRUCTURE OF PAUL'S CHRISTOLOGY

Paul's Christology is rooted in his call and conversion, that moment when God revealed his Son to him.⁹ Although Paul never describes this experience, he frequently alludes to it. For example, he refers to it in his greeting to the Romans: "Paul . . . called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1). He recalls the moment of his call and conversion, when he asks the Corinthians, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor 9:1). He makes yet another allusion to his call, when he writes, "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of [Jesus] Christ" (in 2 Cor 4:6).¹⁰ The

⁸ Hahn (*Theologie des Neuen Testaments* 1:612) makes this point: "Während bei Paulus die in Gal 4,4f und Röm 8,3f aufgegriffenen Sendungsaussagen eine Art Prämissen für das zentrale Thema der *theologia crucis* sind, wird die johanneische Christologie von der Inkarnation her entfaltet." Lucien Cerfaux (*Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* [Freiburg: Herder and Herder, 1959] 161) long ago made a similar point about Paul's theology of the Incarnation: "In Paul's language the incarnation would be Christ's entry into the state of mankind, with particular attention paid to the humiliation of Christ who is seen in the nature of man, deprived of all the prerogatives to which he has a legitimate right." Although Paul does not present the preexistence and the Incarnation as explicitly as John does, he presupposes the preexistence (and so the need for the Incarnation) of Christ in the following texts: Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 8:6; 10:4; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6–11. The Resurrection continues to play a central role in the Fourth Gospel, but it is now collapsed into Jesus' death in a way that it is not in Paul's theology. Consequently, whereas Paul develops a future eschatology that anticipates the parousia and the general resurrection of the dead, John develops a more realized eschatology that emphasizes the believer's present experience of resurrection life.

⁹ This point has been made by Seyoon Kim in two works: *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). Kim (*The Origin of Paul's Gospel* 267) writes: "Paul saw the exalted Christ as the eikōn tou theou and as the Son of God on the Damascus road. This perception led him to conceive of Christ in terms of the personified, hypostatized Wisdom of God (together with his realization at that time that Christ has superseded the Torah) on the one hand, and in terms of Adam, on the other. Thus both Paul's Wisdom-Christology and Adam-Christology are grounded in the Damascus Christophany" (italics in the original).

¹⁰ Here, in 2 Corinthians, Paul is referring to what he saw at the moment of his call. He saw the risen Christ bathed in God's glory. Because the glorified Christ

most important text, however, is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians, where he refers to his call in the following way: "But when [God], who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; rather I went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus" (Gal 1:15–16).

The Foundational Experience

Prior to his call, Paul had persecuted Jesus' followers because their claim—that the Crucified One was God's Messiah—stood in stark contrast to what the Law proclaimed in Deuteronomy, "God's curse rests on him who hangs on a tree" (Deut 21:23).¹¹ For the pre-Christian Paul, then, the concept of a crucified messiah could only be a contradiction in terms. But when, in an experience that Paul calls "a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12), God revealed that the Crucified One was his Son, Paul could no longer deny that Jesus was the Messiah, the one whom God raised from the dead.¹²

Paul's call/conversion caused him to rethink in several ways his understanding of Christ and the Law. First, if the Crucified One has been exalted

perfectly reflected God's glory, Paul now identifies him as "the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4). This understanding of Christ as the image of God led Paul to view Christ as the eschatological Adam, the one who had already attained the status God intended for humankind, as outlined in Psalm 8.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 21:22–23 refers to the practice of hanging the corpse of a criminal, who had committed a capital offense, on a tree in order to disgrace the corpse of the condemned person. Deuteronomy, however, insists that the corpse must not remain on the tree overnight lest it pollute the land, "since God's curse rests on him who hangs on a tree." During the New Testament period, the expression "to hang on a tree" designated crucifixion (see Acts 5:30; 10:39). Therefore one could argue, in light of Deut 21:22–23, that anyone who was crucified ("hung on a tree") was under God's curse. Paul is aware of this possibility as is evident from Gal 3:13 where he writes, "Christ ransomed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree.'" It is likely that, before his call, Paul viewed the crucified Jesus as one who died a shameful death on the cross, which put him under God's curse, because he led Israel astray. If this is true, it explains Paul's vehement opposition to the early Christian movement. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "Crucifixion in Ancient Palestine, Qumran Literature, and the New Testament," in *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 125–46; Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

¹² The Greek, *apokalypseōs Iēsou Christou*, can be taken either as a subjective genitive (a revelation from Jesus Christ) or as an objective genitive (a revelation about Jesus Christ). Paul's statement in Gal 1:16 (that God revealed his Son to him) suggests that it should be taken as an objective genitive.

to God's right hand, then he enjoys an intimate and unparalleled relationship with God; he is God's Son, the exalted Lord, the enthroned Messiah. Second, if the Crucified One has been glorified, then he enjoys the glory that Adam lost; he is the very image of God; he is the new human being, the eschatological Adam. Third, if the Crucified One has been raised from the dead, then the general resurrection of the dead has already begun in God's Messiah, and Christ will come again as the agent of God's final victory over sin and death. Finally, if the crucifixion was not after all God's penalty on Jesus for violating the Mosaic Law, Jesus' shameful death must have played a decisive role in God's redemptive plan.

Paul's Christology was also indebted to the preaching of the early Church and its many kerygmatic formulas.¹³ Moreover, his missionary experience and his rereading of Israel's Scriptures led him to think about Christ in new ways. But it was his call and conversion through which God revealed the Crucified One as his Son—the one so bathed in God's glory that Paul now identifies him as the very image of God—that remained the experience that most informed Paul's understanding of Christ. The Christology that Paul developed in the light of his call, the Church's kerygma, his missionary experience, and his rereading of Israel's Scriptures can be viewed through the prism of Christ's death, resurrection, and parousia.¹⁴

Christ's Death

If the Crucified One was truly God's Son, what was the significance of his death? In answering this question Paul learned from, and built upon, the Church's kerygmatic formulas that were already proclaiming the soteriological significance of Jesus' death.¹⁵ Paul quotes such a formula in

¹³ Paul's insistence in Gal 1:11–12 that his gospel is not of human origin, since he did not receive it from a human being nor was he taught it, does not mean that Paul did not receive or learn from the early traditions of the Church. In Gal 1:11–12, Paul is referring to the essential content of the gospel: God's revelation that the crucified Jesus is his Son. It is clear, from other statements, that Paul received and benefited from the traditions of the early church. See his use of the eucharistic tradition in 1 Cor 11:23–26 and the tradition he received and handed on to the Corinthians about the Lord's death and resurrection in 1 Cor 15:3–5.

¹⁴ For a systematic presentation of Paul's Christology, to which this essay is indebted, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 163–315. Other helpful presentations can be found in the New Testament theologies of Hahn and Stuhlmacher noted above, as well as in the recent works of Joachim Gnilka, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament Supplementband (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), and Georg Strecker, *Theology of the New Testament*, ed. and compl. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

¹⁵ See Martin Hengel. *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 34–39.

1 Corinthians when he writes, “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins (*apethanen hyper tōn harmartiōn hēmōn*) in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3–4). Employing and building upon formulas such as this, Paul speaks of Christ as the one who died for us (*hyper hēmōn apethanen*; Rom 5:8; 1 Thess 5:9–10); the one who gave himself for our sins (*tou dontos heauton hyper tōn hamartiōn hēmōn*) that he might rescue us from the present evil age (Gal 1:4); the one who ransomed (*exēgorasen*) us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (Gal 3:13); the one who died for all (*heis hyper pantōn apethanen*; 2 Cor 5:14); the one whom God set forth as the place of atonement or expiation (*hilastērion*) for sins (Rom 3:25); the one who was handed over for our transgressions (*paredothē dia ta paraptōmata hēmōn*; Rom 4:25); the one who died for the ungodly (*hyper asebōn apethanen*; Rom 5:6); the one who loved “me” and gave himself up for “me” (*hyper emou*; Gal 2:20).¹⁶

In the light of his call/conversion and the kerygma of the early church, then, Paul understood that Jesus was God’s Son and that his death was redemptive. This understanding of Christ’s death as redemptive led Paul to portray the death of Christ as the crucial event in a divine interchange,¹⁷ whereby Christ assumed the human condition so that in him humanity could stand before God. For example, Paul writes that Christ ransomed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (Gal 3:13). He affirms that God made Christ “to be sin”¹⁸ so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). And he writes that God sent his own

¹⁶ The structure of these formulas can be summarized in this way: Christ is the subject; the verb is in the aorist (died, handed over); there is a prepositional phrase governed by *hyper* (“for,” “on behalf of”). On this point, see Arland J. Hultgren, *The Benefits of Christ: Christology and Redemption in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 48–50. Paul also makes use of and develops what can be called “sending formulas” that indicate his understanding of the Incarnation: “this God has done by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the sake of sin” (Rom 8:3); “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption” (Gal 4:4). And, in a formula that combines the language of a death “for us” and the language of “handing over,” Paul speaks of God “who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all . . .” (Rom 8:32), once more pointing to his understanding of the Incarnation.

¹⁷ Morna Hooker developed the concept of divine interchange in an important article entitled, “Interchange in Christ,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971) 349–61.

¹⁸ This difficult phrase does not mean that Christ became a sinner or was sinful; Paul insists the Christ was without sin (2 Cor 5:21). The sense here is either (1) that Christ fully entered into the human condition, which was under the power of sin and which he overcame, or (2) that Christ’s death was an offering for sin.

Son “in the likeness of sinful human flesh” so that “the righteous decree of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom 8:3–4).¹⁹

Paul’s missionary experience further enriched his understanding of Christ and what God had accomplished in him. In dealing with those who confused eloquence with wisdom and the present experience of the Spirit with the fullness of resurrection life, Paul presented Christ, in light of the weakness and folly of the cross, as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24) who has become for us “wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). In his controversies with those who would have required his Gentile converts to be circumcised and do the works of the Mosaic Law in order to be justified before God, Paul argued that God had already justified and reconciled humanity to himself through Christ’s redemptive death on the cross; otherwise, Christ died for nothing (Gal 2:21). For Paul, then, Christ is the one “whom God set forth as an expiation” (*hilastērion*; Rom 3:25),²⁰ the one in whom God manifested his righteousness in order to effect the forgiveness of sins.

Paul’s most creative understanding of Christ and his death, however, is evident in how he portrays Christ as the eschatological Adam, the progenitor of a new humanity, arguing that just as Adam unleashed a history of sin and death by a single act of disobedience, so Christ inaugurated a history of grace and life by his obedient death on the cross (Rom 5:12–21). Paul’s soteriological understanding of Christ’s death, then, allows him to present Christ as redeemer, justifier, reconciler, the power and wisdom of God, the eschatological Adam through whom God overcomes humanity’s history of sin.

Christ’s Resurrection and Parousia

As important as Christ’s death was for Paul’s Christology, it would have had little meaning if God had not raised Jesus from the dead.²¹ Conse-

¹⁹ These three statements (Rom 8:3–4; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13) point to Paul’s understanding of the Incarnation, even though he does not develop this teaching in the explicit manner that the Fourth Gospel does.

²⁰ In writing that God set forth Christ as a *hilastērion* (“expiation”), Paul draws upon the imagery of the Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16, when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to expiate for his own sins and the sins of the people by sprinkling blood over the cover of the ark of the covenant, the “mercy seat” or “the propitiatory” (*hilastērion*). Thus Paul is implying that God has set forth Christ as the new “mercy seat” or “propitiatory,” the new place where God effects atonement for sins, but now by Christ’s own blood. The Epistle to the Hebrews also employs the imagery of the Day of Atonement to show that there is no further need for sacrifice (Heb 9:1–10:18). 1 John speaks of Christ as an “expiation” (*hilasmos*) for sins (2:2; 4:10).

²¹ Note the interesting formula of Rom 4:25, “who was handed over for our

quently, when the Corinthians called into question the general resurrection of the dead, Paul reminded them that “if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:16–17). It was the exaltation of Christ into resurrection glory that revealed the power of his saving death and presented him as the one whom God had “established as Son of God in power” (Rom 1:4).²²

Paul’s understanding of Jesus’ resurrection is intimately related to his hope for the parousia: that moment when the risen Lord will return and the dead will be raised (1 Cor 15:20–23; 1 Thess 4:14). A Pharisee by choice, Paul believed in, and hoped for, the general resurrection of the dead. Consequently, when he saw the risen Christ, he understood that the general resurrection of the dead had already begun in one man, God’s Messiah, leading Paul to understand Christ in new ways.

First, the Resurrection enabled Paul to confess the Crucified One as the risen Lord, the enthroned Messiah who presently reigns at God’s right hand. Paul testifies to this in 1 Corinthians 15, in the midst of a discussion about the general resurrection of the dead, when he applies Psalm 110 to Christ: “For he [Christ] must reign until he [God] has put all his enemies under his [Christ’s] feet” (1 Cor 15:25). To be sure Paul usually employs “*Christos*” as if it were a proper name, but it is difficult to imagine that he has forgotten the significance of *Christos*, either here or elsewhere, even when he employs it as if it were a proper name.²³ For example, when he writes, “Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:22–23), Paul is not simply saying that he preaches someone named *Christos* who was crucified; he is proclaiming a crucified messiah. It is in the light of the Resurrection, then, that Paul knows that the Crucified One is presently enthroned as Lord and Messiah at God’s right hand.

Second, the Resurrection allowed Paul to see Christ as the first fruits of

transgressions and was raised for our justification.” The purpose of this literary parallelism is not to limit the work of Christ’s death to the forgiveness of transgressions and the work of his resurrection to justification but to show that both the death and resurrection of Christ played an indispensable role in the work of redemption.

²² This establishment of Jesus as Son of God does not mean that he became the Son of God at the Resurrection. Rather, it signifies his messianic enthronement as the Son of God, as the phrase *en dynamei* (“in power”) indicates. Previous to his resurrection, Jesus was, as the Markan Gospel insists, the hidden Messiah. But once raised from the dead, he is enthroned as God’s royal Messiah, the Son of God, so that who he was is now apparent. The creedal-like statement of Rom 1:3–4 appears to be an early christological formula that Paul adopted for his own purpose.

²³ Dunn (*Theology of Paul* 197–99) makes a similar point.

the general resurrection of the dead. Paul understands that Christ's resurrection was not an isolated event that only affected him. Rather, it was the first in a series of like resurrections that will occur at the parousia when the Lord returns and the dead will be raised incorruptible. Thus Paul identifies Christ as the *aparchē* ("firstfruits") of a greater harvest (1 Cor 15:20, 23). Aware that the firstfruits have already been reaped in Christ, Paul reasons that the parousia and the general resurrection of the dead are close at hand.

Third, the Resurrection allowed Paul to view Christ as the eschatological Adam from yet another vantage point. In the light of the Resurrection, he presents Christ as the counterpoint to Adam, arguing that just as all died in Adam, so all are brought to life in Christ (1 Cor 15:22). But whereas Adam was a *psychēn zōsan* ("a living being"), Christ has become a *pneuma zōopoiooun* ("a life-giving spirit," 1 Cor 15:45), the heavenly Adam whose image humanity is destined to bear (see 1 Cor 15:49). Christ, then, is the one in whom God's plan for humanity, foreshadowed in Psalm 8 (see 1 Cor 15:27), has already been fulfilled so that to see the risen Lord is to see the destiny of humanity.²⁴

To summarize, Paul's Christology is rooted in his call/conversion experience in which God revealed his Son to him. On the basis of that experience, the kerygma of the early church, his missionary work, and his re-reading of Scripture, Paul presents Christ in terms of death, resurrection, and parousia (1) as the crucified Messiah whose death was redemptive; (2) as the Risen Lord whose resurrection has inaugurated the general resurrection of the dead; and (3) as the image of God, the eschatological Adam, who stands at the head of a new humanity that will be revealed when Christ returns and the dead are raised incorruptible.

THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN'S CHRISTOLOGY

Paul and John develop different Christologies, in part, because their originating experiences differ. Paul's foundational experience was his call and conversion, that moment when God revealed his Son to him. In the light of that revelation, Paul rethought his understanding of the Crucified One in the light of Christ's death, resurrection, and imminent parousia. Paul's focus, then, was on the redemptive moment of the cross and what results from it. In contrast to Paul's writings, the Fourth Gospel witnesses

²⁴ Psalm 8 describes the God-intended status of humanity. The Epistle to the Hebrews employs the psalm to affirm that Jesus has already reached this destiny (Heb 2:5–9). In 1 Cor 15:27 Paul employs Psalm 8 to show how this destiny has been fulfilled in Christ. On this point, see Francis J. Moloney, "The Reinterpretation of Psalm VIII and the Son of Man Debate," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981) 656–72.

to an experience of the earthly Jesus enshrined in the witness and testimony of the Beloved Disciple, and in the light of the Resurrection, the Gospel now testifies that Jesus truly came from God, that he came “from above” (John 3:31). He came from the realm of God because in him the Word was made flesh. Thus, whereas the revelation of the risen Lord led Paul to reinterpret the cross and anticipate the parousia, it led the Johannine tradition to reflect on the preexistence and incarnation of the Word. It has now become apparent that what the original witnesses heard, saw, and touched was the enfleshment of God’s Word—the perfect revelation of God to a world that dwells in a darkness of which it is not aware. With this insight comes a new understanding of Christ and a Christology of the Son whom the Father sent into the world to reveal the Father to the world—a Christology rooted in the Incarnation.

The Foundational Experience

It is more difficult to uncover the foundational experience that underlies John’s Christology since we cannot point to a particular dramatic experience in the life of the Beloved Disciple, or of those who enshrined his witness/testimony, in quite the same way as we can for Paul. Nevertheless, I propose that we can speak of a foundational experience, albeit in a broader sense, which lies behind the Fourth Gospel; namely, the witness and the testimony of the Beloved Disciple that assures the Johannine community that its faith is ultimately rooted in Jesus himself. We hear echoes of this experience in the Passion Narrative where the Evangelist comments, “An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may [come to] believe” (19:35).²⁵ We hear further echoes of this experience when the Evangelist comments, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name” (20:30–31). And we hear echoes of this experience when the Final Redactor of the Gospel comments about the Beloved Disciple, “It is this disciple [the Beloved Disciple men-

²⁵ The identity of this witness is problematic. The text would seem to refer to the Beloved Disciple, who is mentioned a few verses earlier (19:26–27). This, in turn, would suggest that the Evangelist is this Beloved Disciple. Brown (*An Introduction to the Gospel of John* 192–94), however, rejects this “surface meaning of the passage” because of “*the difficulty of reconciling the body of the Gospel with the writing by an eyewitness of Jesus’ ministry*” (193, emphasis in the original). Thus the witness to which the Gospel refers is that of the Beloved Disciple, but the Beloved Disciple is neither the Evangelist nor the Final Redactor.

tioned in 21:20] who testifies to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true.”²⁶

This emphasis on the foundational experience of the Beloved Disciple is not meant to downplay the importance of the Resurrection for either the Beloved Disciple or for the Johannine community which treasured his testimony. All to the contrary, the Resurrection gave this experience of Jesus a new depth of meaning and clarified things that could not be understood during the period of Jesus’ ministry. For example, at the end of the episode of the cleansing of the Temple, the Evangelist notes, “But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken” (2:22). Likewise, after describing Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, the Evangelist writes, “His disciples did not understand this at first, but when Jesus had been glorified they remembered that these things were written about him and that they had done this for him” (John 12:16). But if the Resurrection clarified this foundational experience for Jesus’ original disciples, the foundational testimony and witness of the Beloved Disciple to Jesus confirmed that the community’s resurrection faith was rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus.

The Sending of the Son

The most fundamental claim Jesus makes in the Fourth Gospel is that he comes from, and is returning to, God. He calls God his Father, and he openly identifies himself as the Son whom the Father sent into the world to reveal what he has seen and heard in the presence of the Father. Everything within the Gospel revolves about a single claim: that the Father sent the Son into the world (3:17). Because this claim is so important to Jesus’ revelation, those who refuse to obey and honor the Son do not honor and obey the Father who sent him (5:23). Conversely, those who believe in Jesus believe in the one who sent him (12:44). The christological claim of the Fourth Gospel, then, has become so identified with its theological claim that it is no longer possible to speak of Jesus apart from the one who sent him, and it is no longer possible to speak of God apart from the Son whom the Father sent into the world.

This relationship between the Gospel’s claims about God and Jesus is rooted in the fundamental claim of the prologue, “And the Word became

²⁶ I am aware that there were other experiences that led to the growth of the Fourth Gospel, as suggested by Brown in *Community of the Beloved Disciple*. But the point I wish to make is that John’s foundational experience was an encounter with Jesus himself, witnessed and testified to by the Beloved Disciple.

flesh” (1:14). On the basis of this claim, the prologue makes yet another statement that is foundational for the narrative that follows: “No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God (*monogenēs theos*), who is at the Father’s side has revealed him” (1:18).²⁷ Moses and the prophets stood in God’s presence and saw God’s radiant glory, and even heard God’s voice,²⁸ but only the Son preexisted with God before the foundation of the world (1:1–2; 17:5). In this sense, then, no one but the only-begotten Son has seen God. The sending of the Son into the world, therefore, is not to be confused with a prophetic call whereby God would have commissioned him. Nor is it a metaphor that identifies Jesus as one chosen and elected to bring God’s message to the world. The sending of the Son points to the Gospel’s central claim that the Son of Man, whom the world knows as the son of Joseph (1:45; 6:42), is the incarnate Word. Consequently, Jesus comes with a claim that scandalizes his contemporaries: he reveals what he has seen and heard in the presence of his Father (8:40).²⁹

The Fourth Gospel uses two verbs to describe the sending of the Son: *apostellō* and *pempō*. It usually employs *apostellō* in the aorist tense, with God as the subject and the Son as the object. Here the focus is on Jesus as the one whom God sent into the world. For example, the Gospel’s programmatic statement is “For God did not send (*ou gar apêteilen ho theos*) the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (3:17). Then, in a recapitulation of the prologue (3:31–36), the Evangelist notes, “For the one whom God sent speaks the words of God. He does not ration his gift of the Spirit” (3:34). In the rest of the Gospel, Jesus identifies himself as the one sent by God, the God whom Jesus calls his Father.

For example, Jesus knows God because he is from God, and God sent

²⁷ A number of important manuscripts read *ho monogenēs huios* (“the only son”), which is an easier reading. But the witness of a number of significant early papyri (P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵) favors the more difficult reading adopted by *The New American Bible*.

²⁸ Some examples of Old Testament theophanies can be found in Gen 6:5–9:17 (God speaks several times to Noah before the flood); Gen 17:1–22; 18:1–15 (appearances to Abraham); Exod 3:1–4:17 (God appears to Moses at the burning bush); Exod 19:3–31:18; 32:31–34:28 (Moses receives the covenant code from God); 1 Kings 19:9–18 (God appears to Elijah in a tiny whisper rather than in the earthquake); Job 38:1–41:26 (God speaks to Job from the storm); Isa 6:1–13 (God appears to Isaiah in the temple); Ezek 1:1–28 (Ezekiel’s throne-chariot vision).

²⁹ Whereas for Paul the “scandal” is the cross, for John the “scandal” is the Incarnation. Vouga (*Une théologie du Nouveau Testament* 272) writes: “[L]e paradoxe de l’incarnation, selon lequel Dieu s’est fait chair (Jn 1, 14), est l’équivalent du paradoxe de la ‘croix’, selon lequel Dieu s’est révélé dans le personne d’un crucifié.”

him (7:29). He did not come of his own but was sent by God (8:42). Because he is the one whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, he does not blaspheme when he says that he is God's Son (10:36). Eternal life is to know God and the one whom God sent into the world (17:3). Therefore, the one work God requires is that people should believe in the one whom God sent (6:29). Jesus' disciples are those who believe that God sent him into the world (17:8, 25). Therefore, after completing the work the Father has entrusted to him, Jesus sends them into the world as the Father sent him into the world (17:18; 20:21). The ultimate goal of Jesus' revelation, therefore, is that the world should believe that the Father sent him (11:42). Only then will the world receive the life the Son brings from the Father (6:57). If the world accepts the testimony of Jesus' works, it will see that his works testify that the Father has sent him into the world (5:36).

When, on the other hand, the Fourth Gospel employs the verb *pempō*, it is usually in a participial phrase that describes God as the one who sent the Son. In most instances the phrase consists of an article, the aorist participle, and an accusative pronoun that describes God as the one who sent Jesus; for example, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me (*tou pempantos me*) and to finish his work" (4:34). Here, and in other instances, the participle describes God as the sending one. Jesus came to do the will of the one who sent him (4:34; 6:38), and the will of the one who sent him is that he should lose nothing of all that God has given him but raise it up on the last day (6:39). Because the Son comes from God, those who do not honor the Son do not honor the Father who sent him (5:23), whereas those who believe in the one who sent him have eternal life and do not come under judgment (5:24). Jesus insists that what he teaches is not his own but the teaching of the one who sent him (7:16). If "the Jews" do not know who Jesus is, it is because they do not know the one who sent him (7:28). The one who sent Jesus testifies on his behalf (8:18). The one who sent him is true (8:26), and he is always with him since Jesus does what is pleasing to him (8:29). To believe in Jesus is to believe in the one who sent him (12:44), to see him is to see the one who sent him (12:45), and to receive him is to receive the one who sent him (13:20). Jesus never speaks on his own because the Father who sent him has commanded him what to say and what to speak (12:49; 14:24). If the world hates Jesus' disciples, then, it is because it does not know the one who sent him (15:21). Therefore it does not know that Jesus, by his death, is returning to the one who sent him into the world (7:33; 16:5).

These two verbs that the Gospel employs for "sending" are complementary in their function. The first, *apostellō*, points to Jesus as the one whom God sent into the world, whereas the second, *pempō*, points to God as the one who sent him into the world. John's language about the sending of the Son into the world, then, is a christological and theological statement:

christological because it identifies Jesus as the Son whom the Father sent into the world; theological because it identifies God as the Father who sent the Son into the world. The sending formula is also profoundly soteriological because it explains why the Father sent the Son into the world: not to condemn but to save the world by revealing the Father to the world. If the world is to be saved, it must believe that Jesus—in all of his humanity—is the one whom God sent into the world. To see and hear the Incarnate One is to hear and see the Father who sent him.³⁰

There are other dimensions to John’s Christology that could be explored. But everything Jesus says and does in this Gospel ultimately rests on his claim that the Father sent him into the world to reveal the Father to the world. This claim, in turn, depends on the Gospel’s proclamation that “the word became flesh.” All christological titles and statements are now measured by the preexistence and Incarnation of the eternal Word of God.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

The task of New Testament theology is not only to observe and describe the diverse theologies of the New Testament but to ask how they witness to God’s revelation.³¹ In the final part of this essay, therefore, I shall briefly explore three ways in which Johannine and Pauline Christologies witness to the common reality of God’s revelation.

Christ as the Revelation of God

I begin with the assumption that the New Testament tells us something about God so that Christology is ultimately language about God.³² In this

³⁰ For a more detailed discussion of these verbs, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 97–107.

³¹ Stuhlmacher (*Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* 2:287) insists on the exegete’s responsibility to seek such a unifying vision when he writes, “Die Aufgabe einer Biblischen Theologie des Neuen Testaments erschöpft sich nicht in der Analyse von neutestamentlichen Teiltraditionen, sondern schließt die Verpflichtung ein, die Einzelüberlieferungen zusammenzusehen und das ihnen theologisch Gemeinsame herauszuarbeiten.” Hahn (*Theologie des Neuen Testaments* 1:770) makes a similar point: “Mit dem Nachweis einzelner theologischer Konzeptionen und ihres theologiegeschichtlichen Ortes ist die Aufgabe einer neutestamentlichen Theologie noch nicht hinreichend durchgeführt. Es bedarf, wie schon angedeutet, einer Antwort auf die Frage nach der inneren Einheit.”

³² For a helpful summary of the theology of God in John and Paul, see Francis J. Moloney, “Telling God’s Story: The Fourth Gospel,” and Richard B. Hays, “The God of Mercy Who Rescues Us from the Present Evil Age: Romans and Galatians,” in *The Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology*, ed. A. Andrew Das and Frank J. Matera (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 107–22, 123–43.

regard, Paul and John have a great deal in common. John is emphatic that the one who sent Jesus into the world is the Father, and that Jesus is the Son who reveals the Father to the world. Jesus, however, does not come into the world to reveal that God is like a Father—something Israel already knew from its own experience—but to reveal that God is *his* Father apart from whom Jesus can do nothing.³³ Consequently, to hear and to see the Son is to see and hear the Father. Within the world of the Fourth Gospel, there is no access to God apart from the revelation of the Son; for Jesus and the Father are one (10:30). Whoever has seen the Son, has seen the Father (14:9). John makes such claims because he begins with the incarnation of the Word, and this starting point allows him to say that no one has ever seen God except “[t]he only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side” (1:18). This is the one who has revealed the Father to the world.

Jesus’ revelation, however, is not to be confused with new information about God, as if Jesus came down from heaven to reveal hidden mysteries of the deity. In this regard, Rudolf Bultmann was quite correct when he wrote, “Jesus’ words never convey anything specific or concrete that he has seen with the Father.”³⁴ Rather, this revelation is disclosed in an encounter with Jesus by which one learns that God is the source of all life, and there is no access to this life except through the Son who is the bread of life, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the way, the truth, and the life. To believe in the Son is to pass from death to life.

Whereas John’s Christology presents Christ as the one who reveals the Father to the world, Paul’s Christology presents Christ as the one in whom God reveals himself to the world.³⁵ This redemptive act of God in Christ is an act of revelation. In the weakness and folly of the cross, God reveals his power and strength (1 Cor 1:22–24). In the gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection, God reveals his righteousness (Rom 1:17). In the saving death and resurrection of Christ, God reveals himself as the one who reconciles

³³ God is compared to an earthly father in Deut 1:31, 8:5; Ps 103:13; Prov 3:12. In Deut 32:6; Isa 63:16 (twice), 64:7; Jer 31:9; Mal 1:6, 2:10, God is described as father in relationship to the people of Israel. In 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13, 22:10, 28:6; Ps 2:7, 89:26, God is called or described as the father of the Israelite king. See the entry of O. Hofius, “Father,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1975) 1:614–21. Hofius (617) writes, “The basic difference between this and the views of the fatherhood of God held by Israel’s neighbors is that in the OT God’s fatherhood is not understood in a biological or mythological sense, but in a soteriological one.”

³⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1952–1955) 2:62.

³⁵ Hultgren (*Benefits of Christ* 41–44) distinguishes between “redemption accomplished in Christ,” which is represented by the theologies of Mark and Paul, and “redemption mediated by Christ,” which is represented by the theology of John.

a sinful world to himself (2 Cor 5:19). In Christ's death on the cross, God reveals his love for humanity (Rom 5:8).

God is revealed in both Johannine and Pauline Christology. But whereas John begins with the scandal of the Incarnation and presents Christ as the Son who reveals the Father to the world, Paul starts with the scandal of the cross and presents Christ as the Crucified One in whom God reveals himself to the world.

Christ as the Revelation of the Human Condition

In revealing God to the *kosmos* (understood as the world of humankind), Christ reveals the world to itself.³⁶ In the Fourth Gospel, the Son comes into the world to reveal the Father to the world so that the world may know the truth and dwell in the light that is life. But in revealing the Father to the world, the Son also discloses the world to itself. This is not a two-step process, however, as if the Son first reveals the Father to the world and then, in a second act of revelation, discloses the true condition of the world to itself. Rather, in the very act of revealing the Father to the world, the Son discloses that the world dwells in a darkness and falsehood of which it is not even aware. For just as one becomes aware of the darkness only when the light shines, so the world becomes aware of its sinfulness only when the Son of God comes as the light of the world to reveal the Father to the world. The true condition of the world, then, is that it dwells in darkness and sin, confusing truth with falsehood.

The pre-Christian Paul thought of himself as having attained a righteousness on the basis of legal observance (Phil 3:5–6), but when God revealed his Son to him Paul realized that his former righteousness was not the righteousness that comes from God and depends on faith (Phil 3:7–11). In the light of Christ, Paul understood his true situation before God. In the light of Christ's death and resurrection, he realized that humanity, alienated from God and under the power of sin (Rom 3:9) unleashed by Adam's transgression (Rom 5:12), is in need of reconciliation (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:17–21). Because sin's power frustrates every human attempt to fulfill God's Law, humanity finds itself under the Law but without the power to do the Law; for the power of sin ultimately frustrates every attempt to do what the Law requires (Rom 7:7–25).

Again, their distinctive starting points explain the differences between John and Paul. Because Paul begins with the scandal of the cross, he views

³⁶ For a helpful discussion of the concept of "the world" in the Fourth Gospel, see Stanley B. Marrow, "Kosmos in John" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (2002) 90–102. For a presentation of Paul's anthropology, see Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* 1:190–352; Gnilka, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* 40–77.

Christ's death and resurrection as the event in which God reveals that humanity is under the power of sin. Because John begins with the scandal of the incarnate Word, he sees the Son as the one who reveals that the world dwells in the darkness of sin of which it is not even aware. Although they express it differently, John and Paul agree that there is something awry in the human condition that cannot be understood apart from Christ.

Christ as the Revelation of God's Salvation

If Christology is the key to understanding God and the human condition, it is also the key to unlocking the meaning of soteriology.³⁷ Indeed, for John and Paul Christology is preeminently soteriology, since their understanding of Christ is so intimately related to his benefits. In Johannine Christology, the benefits of Christ can be summarized in a single word—*zoē* (“life”), the life that the Son brings from the Father. This life is eternal because it cannot be destroyed. Ultimately, this life comes from God who is the source of all life. But since the Father has given the Son the authority to give life and exercise judgment (5:21–22), it is the Son who grants this life to those who believe that he comes from the Father. The one work God requires, then, is faith in the one whom God sent into the world (6:29). Those who believe that Jesus is the one whom the Father sent into the world have already passed from death to life, and they will not be judged (5:24). Those who refuse to believe that Jesus comes from the Father are already condemned and do not have life. For John this life is so real that it can, even now, be called eternal life.³⁸

Paul's soteriology can be summarized in this way: through Christ's death and resurrection, God has already justified and reconciled humanity to himself; therefore the justified and reconciled will be saved (Rom 5:9–10) at the general resurrection of the dead. At present believers enjoy the life of the Spirit as the “first installment” (*arrabōna*, 2 Cor 1:22) of God's final salvation that is yet to come, the “firstfruits of the Spirit” (*aparchēn tou pneumatōs*; Rom 8:23) of a harvest that will be reaped at the general resurrection of the dead, when the dead will be raised and conformed to

³⁷ For a summary of the soteriologies of Paul and John, see Hultgren, *Christ and His Benefits* 47–57, 145–56; Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* 1:245–67; 638–57.

³⁸ Although this emphasis on the present experience of life tends to collapse the future into the present, the Fourth Evangelist still anticipates the resurrection of the dead. He affirms that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth from their tombs (5:28–29). Jesus will raise up everyone who believes in him, on the last day (6:40, 44, 54). Unlike Paul, however, John never describes the bodily transformation that will occur at the resurrection (see 1 Cor 15:35–57), perhaps because the life that believers already enjoy is eternal life. Resurrection life, then, will be the continuation of a life believers already experience.

the image of Christ, the eschatological Adam. As in the Johannine scheme, faith plays the primary role. The justified must rely on what God has already done in Christ and live according to this faith. Salvation, then, is something God accomplishes in Christ, and it is appropriated by trusting faith rather than by doing the works of the Law. The eschatological judgment, however, has not yet occurred, and everyone will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) and God (Rom 14:10).³⁹

Again, the differences between these soteriologies can be explained by their starting points. Because Paul begins with Christ's redemptive death and resurrection, he expresses the benefits of Christ in terms of justification, reconciliation, and the final salvation that will come at the general resurrection. Because John begins with the Incarnation, he expresses the benefits of Christ in terms of the life that the Son has already communicated to those who believe in him. Consequently, although there are elements of future eschatology in John's Gospel, the emphasis is on the present reality of salvation, whereas Paul's eschatology looks to the future. It is interesting to note, however, that whereas the Johannine letters begin to emphasize a future eschatology (1 John 2:18, 28; 3:2), the Deuteropauline letters begin to move in the direction of a more realized eschatology, viewing the baptized as not only buried with Christ into death, as Paul writes in Rom 6:4, but raised up with him (Col 2:12; 3:1) and even "seated with him in the heavens" (Eph 2:6).⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

Paul and John represent two Christologies, one that focuses on the scandal of the cross and the power of the Resurrection, the other on the scandal of the Incarnation and the life-giving revelation that the Son brings from the Father. The two cannot be harmonized, nor were they meant to be. They are the results of unique experiences of Christ. Each Christology reveals something about God, the human condition, and the benefits of

³⁹ In contrast to Paul, John suggests that there is a sense in which the final judgment has already taken place. There is no condemnation for those who believe in Jesus because they have passed from death to life (5:24), whereas the one who does not believe has already been condemned (3:18). Nonetheless, John is aware there will be a final judgment (5:29), although he does not emphasize it in the way that Paul does because, in John's view, the outcome of that judgment has already been determined on the basis of whether or not one believes that Jesus came from the Father.

⁴⁰ On the eschatology of Colossians, see Todd Still, "Eschatology in Colossians: How Realized Is It? *New Testament Studies* 50 (2004) 125–38. He correctly notes that, while there is a shift in the eschatology of Colossians, the eschatology of this letter is not completely unlike the eschatology found in the nondisputed Pauline letters.

Christ, which the other does not, and perhaps cannot reveal. These differences remind us that the mystery of Christ is multifaceted and cannot be explained in only one way.

These diverse Christologies of John and Paul also raise a question that was not addressed in this essay but is surely of interest to the readers of this journal: What is the starting point for developing a contemporary Christology? Should Christology begin with a historical investigation of Jesus of Nazareth or with the theological witness of the New Testament? Both approaches have their strengths, as well as their weaknesses. An approach that begins with an investigation of the historical Jesus has the advantage of grounding itself in history but runs the risk of constructing its Christology on constantly shifting historical reconstructions. An approach that begins with the Christologies already embedded in the New Testament has the advantage of rooting its Christology in the theological vision of the New Testament but runs the risk of detaching itself from history. This essay suggests that by focusing on the foundational experiences that underlie various New Testament theologies, there may be a way for contemporary Christology to respect the demands of both history and faith.