



Dunn, James D. G.

Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?: The New Testament Evidence

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

Introduction

In 2008 Richard Bauckham dedicated his *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* to James D. G. Dunn and Larry Hurtado, his “co-workers in early Christology,” yet strangely he didn’t interact with either scholar much throughout the course of his essays. In some sense this was understandable since most of the material in that book had been previously published, but in another sense it didn’t make any sense given that Hurtado and Dunn are two of the biggest names in the field. In *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?: The New Testament Evidence* Dunn has returned the favor by dedicating his book to both Bauckham and Hurtado, whom he calls “partners in dialogue,” but unlike Bauckham, Dunn interacts with the work of both of these authors to some extent on nearly every page. Those familiar with Dunn’s voluminous writing on Christological issues will find little surprising idea-wise, as this can be said to be a condensation of Dunn’s previous work,¹ but the payoff is the direct and sustained interaction with Hurtado and Bauckham.

¹ E.g., *Christianity in the Making, Vol. 1: Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (2nd ed; London: SCM, 1989); *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First*

Summary

The book can be roughly divided into two parts (as per Dunn's own description on 91), the first of which focuses on the *how* and *what* of worship (chapters 1-3) and the second focuses on the *whom* of worship (chapter 4). The first chapter surveys worship language in the NT, in particular the terms *proskynein/shachah*, *latreuein*, *leitourgein*, *epikaleisthai/qārā'*, *sebein*, *eusebein*, *phobein*, *ainein*, *epainein*, and *eucharistein*, noting that it is most frequently used with reference to God and occasionally with reference to Jesus. In the places where we do find the *prosky-* word group applied to Jesus, Dunn says that they "seem to move well beyond the sense of someone acknowledging the authority of someone of higher status" (11), but these uses are "surprisingly few" and "rather limited" so "there is a hint of uncertainty or hesitation as to whether this is the appropriate way to speak of the reverence due to Jesus." (12) Based on this analysis Dunn answers the title question "Did the first Christians worship Jesus?" saying, "Generally no', or 'Only occasionally', or 'Only with some reserve.'" (28)

Noting that word studies only get us so far, the second chapter goes on to examine actual devotional practices such as prayer, the singing of hymns, sacred spaces, times, meals, and people, as well as the offering of sacrifice, but not before once again surveying prayer language; here the words of focus are *proseuchesthai*, *proseuchē*, *deesthai*, *deēsis*, *aitein*, *erōtan*, *parakalein*, and once again *epikaleisthai*. Dunn admits that at times Jesus is the recipient of prayer (35-36) but these occasions are infrequent and the focus of prayer language, like worship language, is on God. Likewise, Dunn finds that early Christian hymns, while being *about* Jesus, were sung *to* God. "Christ himself functioned in effect as the Christian sacred space" (47), he "was the content of the worship" offered at sacred times (49), the host of the sacred meal, i.e., the Lord's Supper (50), and the one who opened up direct access to God. Sacrifice, by which Dunn means animal sacrifice, was not offered to Jesus and when we do find sacrificial language used metaphorically in the NT (e.g., Rom. 12:1), God is the recipient. (56)

The third chapter rehearses the issues surrounding intermediary figures in second temple Jewish literature and how they fit within a monotheistic framework. Dunn examines the ways in which angels, particularly the Angel of the LORD/GOD, personified divine attributes such as Wisdom,

Christians as Reflected in the New Testament (London: SCM, 1975; Repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); *The Christ and the Spirit, Volume 1: Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); *The Parting of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1991; 2nd ed. 2006); as well as several essays published in edited volumes.

Word, and Spirit, and exalted human beings such as Moses, Enoch, and Elijah feature in the worship of God. He sees the Angel of the LORD as well as Word, Wisdom, and Spirit as ways of speaking about God's immanence so as to avoid violating his transcendence. (74, 79) These are not to be viewed as separate beings and they certainly never received worship in and of themselves. (84) Concerning exalted human figures, Dunn sees them as diminishing the gulf between God and man from the "human side" while not infringing upon the worship that was due to God alone. (89)

The fourth chapter is perhaps the most substantial of the book covering an array of Pauline passages concerning Jesus as Lord (this includes YHWH texts applied to Jesus; 1 Cor. 8:6; 15:24-28) while offering critiques of Hurtado's arguments for pre-70 CE opposition to Christ-devotion and Bauckham's Christology of "divine identity," as well as brief excursions on Logos, Wisdom, and Spirit Christologies, and an examination of the symbolic/hyperbolic language of John's Apocalypse, as well as the references to Jesus as God throughout the NT, but not before asking a question that seems to have a rather obvious answer: Was Jesus a monotheist? Unsurprisingly Dunn concludes that he was. Brief summaries of Dunn's major points follow below:

Was Jesus a Monotheist? – The import of this question has to do with whether or not Jesus would have been comfortable being revered in the way that was appropriate for God alone. (93) Presumably, his adherence to the Shema would rule this out, as should his appeal to Deuteronomy 6:13 during his temptation, which says that God alone is to be worshipped (Matt. 4:10/Luke 4:8), and his response to being called "Good teacher" as saying that "God alone is good" (Mark 10:17-18).

Jesus is Lord – Dunn concludes that the YHWH texts applied to Jesus show that Jesus, as a highly exalted agent, uniquely manifests the saving power of God, so that "the confession of Jesus as Lord is a confession of the one God" (105-06). 1 Corinthians 8:6, for all its connection to the Shema, should be viewed in terms of source/origin and agency, so that Jesus as Lord (agent) is never confused or conflated with the Father as God (source/origin). 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, which Dunn considers the "nearest we have in the New Testament to an exposition of the crucial text, Psalm 110:1" (111) makes plain "that the *kyrios* title is not so much a way of *identifying* Jesus with God, as a way of *distinguishing* Jesus from God." (110)

Early Opposition – Dunn suggests that Hurtado comes dangerously close to begging the question by reading into the data what he'd like to get out of it, i.e., that Paul persecuted the early church for their devotion to/worship of Jesus. (113) Dunn's counterargument is twofold: 1) Paul's

silence on conflicts over devotion to Jesus is evidence that there were no conflicts; rather 2) the conflicts were over matters of Pharisaic halakha, which is evidenced in Paul's clearest statement on the subject in Philippians 3:6 where he cites his former zeal as the reason for his persecution. Dunn takes this to mean his zeal for the Law. (114-15)

Logos/Wisdom/Spirit Christologies – As with his examination of these concepts a chapter earlier with regard to intermediary figures, Dunn sees Logos/Wisdom/Spirit as ways of speaking about God's presence and activity in the world. Jesus, as embodying Logos/Wisdom/Spirit is the one who makes God known in full and "informed and enabled the worship of the one God... As early as the first Christians, it was recognized that the one God should be worshipped as the God active in and through Jesus, indeed, in a real sense as Jesus – Jesus as the clearest self-revelation of the one God ever given to humankind." (129)

John's Apocalypse – The book of Revelation's "affirmation of the deity of Christ is unqualified" (130) and "should not be played down" (132) but the "hermeneutical rule governing the interpretation of apocalypses should not be forgotten: to interpret them literally is to misinterpret them." (132)

Divine Identity – Dunn challenges Bauckham's language of "divine identity" on the grounds that it seems a novel way of speaking about the categories (functional and ontic) he eschews thus Bauckham makes a distinction without difference. Bauckham's "divine identity" also runs the risk of confusing God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in a manner akin to Modalism. There's also the issue of the language itself being confusing since "identity" can be understood in various ways (e.g., does it mean "equals" or "is identical with"?). Dunn suggests that "equation" is a better way of speaking about who and what Jesus is in relation to God and that it "allows a fuller recognition of the other emphases in the New Testament writings." (144)

The final chapter is a brief conclusion offering a final answer to the title question. Dunn says quite clearly that "No, by and large the first Christians did not worship Jesus as such." (150) Jesus is the one in whom and through whom we worship God the Father. If "Christian worship is defined too simply as worship of Jesus... [then it] can deteriorate into what may be called Jesusolatry." (147) This is a worship that falls short of the worship of the one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Critique

Dunn's examination of the NT evidence for the worship of Jesus is nothing if not thorough. Even the most casual perusal of the footnotes or indices show that Dunn is familiar with the relevant primary and secondary literature and treats most of the pertinent issues with very little passed over. Dunn also has a knack for writing clearly, by which I mean that his language is understandable, even if at times his concepts are not. Most impressive is the direct and sustained engagement with his "partners in dialogue" Hurtado and Bauckham. Until this volume interested students had to settle for book reviews² and footnotes in Dunn's other works. Despite these positive features I think Dunn's volume contains some problems, which I will enumerate below.

The Wrong Question

The title of this book strikes me as asking the wrong question for what Dunn is addressing. It's no secret that authors don't always choose the titles of their books but this isn't the case here since Dunn reiterates the question "Did the first Christians worship Jesus?" a number of times throughout the book (2, 3, 4, 27, 28, 29, 57, 60, 91, 122, 147, 150). He answers this question in various ways saying, "Generally no', or 'Only occasionally', or 'Only with some reserve'" (28); "Most of the evidence so far considered discourages an unequivocal 'Yes' and points at best to a qualified 'Yes' or perhaps more accurately a qualified No!" (59); "The most consistent answer to the question... was that Jesus was not usually worshipped as such..." (91); "No, by and large the first Christians did not worship Jesus as such." (50)³

By the end of the second chapter Dunn acknowledges that this question is "naïve" (58), "too narrow and may be misleading" (57 cf. 150) and suggests a better way to reformulate the question would be to ask:

'Given that Israel restricted its worship to God, the one God, did the first Christians include Jesus within this restricted worship, or did they somehow loosen the restrictions, or did they regard the restrictions as excluding Jesus and as in effect forbidding the worship of Jesus?' (60)

² See James D. G. Dunn, "When was Jesus first worshipped? In dialogue with Larry Hurtado's *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*," *ExpTim* 116/6 (2005): 193-96.

³ Cf. Dunn's *Christology in the Making*, xxxviii, n. 80; *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 257 for a similar judgment.

This would be an improvement but sadly Dunn doesn't proceed to address the topic with this amended question in mind; he continues to ask "Did the first Christians worship Jesus?" simpliciter. But even the more direct and detailed question(s) doesn't get at the heart of what Dunn is really worried about, which isn't whether or not Jesus was *worshipped* by the first Christians, but rather whether he was *worshipped to the exclusion of God the Father*. (58) This concern comes out most clearly in his concluding remarks on "Jesus-olatry," which to my mind is a valid concern⁴, but not one that should garner such uneven treatment of the data.

The Uneven Treatment

Dunn admits that Jesus does in fact receive worship throughout this volume. He can say that the "noun *charis*, meaning 'grace' can also be used to express 'thanks'... typically to God for his overwhelming grace..." but that "the thanks are directed to Christ is in 1 Timothy 1.12" (21); and that "Paul had no hesitation in linking 'the Lord Jesus Christ' with 'God our Father' in formally praying for blessing on the recipients of his letters" (27); or that "it is clear enough that Paul understood the exalted Christ as one who could be appealed to for help, a request or petition that can be readily understood as prayer" (35); and "To call upon Jesus (in prayer) was evidently a defining and distinguishing feature of earliest Christian worship" (36); and "the thought of singing praise to Christ was obviously seen as of a piece with giving thanks to God in the name of Christ" (38); or that "The worship of the Lamb in Chapter 5 [of Revelation] is no different in character than the worship of the Lord God Almighty in Chapter 4." (131)

These are only a sampling of such admissions and based on these admissions alone the title question can be answered with an unqualified "Yes!" Jesus *was* worshipped by the first Christians by their praying to him and invoking his name in cultic settings, in singing hymns and offering thanksgiving to him, in prostrating themselves before him, etc. But again, Dunn's real question concerns Jesus displacing God as the object of worship so every admission of the worship of Jesus is met with a "but." Jesus receives prayer *but* prayer language is typically reserved for the Father. Hymns are sung to Jesus *but* Jesus is typically the content of the hymns sung to the Father. Thanks are given to Jesus *but* on the whole they are usually given to God. The Lamb is worshipped indiscriminately from God *but* apocalyptic material is hyperbolic and symbolic. *Proskynein* is given to Jesus *but* not often enough to say that this is the right way to characterize

⁴ In the *Acts of John* we find such attitudes but no actual practice among Christian groups in contemporary times rivals anything we read about in this apocryphal text.

Jesus-devotion. Jesus is the recipient of sacrificial devotion *but* only from the perspective of ‘onlookers.’ (50) So on and so forth.

But worship as such isn’t a majority rules game. We don’t get to examine the data that says that Jesus receives worship in the same ways that God does and then conclude that Jesus did not receive worship because God receives more of it. And we can’t examine the data and conclude that because there’s no bait and switch, i.e., there’s no substitution of Jesus for God, that there’s no worship of Jesus at all or that it has to be qualified to the point where it’s treated as essentially nonexistent. And Dunn’s concerns about Jesus displacing God, no matter how valid, simply haven’t found proponents in the scholarly literature. It has long been the contention of Hurtado that “In their devotional practices as well (for example, in their patterns of prayer and worship), they characteristically sought to express a rather full veneration of Jesus in ways that also affirmed the primacy of God ‘the Father.’”⁵ Bauckham’s conception of “divine identity” is one that safeguards against such thought so that he can say “Jesus was not an alternative, competitive object of worship alongside the Father. His worship was included within the worship of the one God.”⁶

Dunn Contra Hurtado

Hurtado’s argument for pre-70 CE opposition to Christ-devotion is not without its shortcomings but the biggest problems come as a result of reading the Gospels as dramatizations of later Gospel communities.⁷ His treatment of the Pauline material is on much firmer footing and the book of Acts provides the most direct evidence, to my mind, of early opposition to the public worship of

⁵ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 3. Cf. also his statements that “Just as Jesus is regularly defined with reference to the one God in Pauline christological statements, so Jesus is consistently revered with reference to God in the devotional actions of Pauline Christians” (151) and “Jesus’ significance is always expressed with reference to God ‘the Father’ in GJohn” (390).

⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 147. Cf. his insistence that “they [the NT authors] portray him [Jesus] as accorded the worship which, for Jewish monotheists, is recognition of the unique divine identity. In this way, they develop a kind of christological monotheism which is fully continuous with early Jewish monotheism, but distinctive in the way it sees Jesus Christ himself as intrinsic to the identity of the unique God.” (19)

⁷ See Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “A New Explanation of Christological Origins: A Review of the Word of Larry W. Hurtado,” *TynBul* 60/2 (2009): 161-205, for a cogent critique.

Jesus. Ananias tells the Lord that the Pharisee Saul has been given authority to arrest those who “call upon [his, i.e., the Lord Jesus’] name” (Acts 9:14 cf. 9:21). Dunn has already admitted that calling on the name of Jesus in prayer was a “defining and distinguishing feature of earliest Christian worship.” (36) The public character of this cultic action is presupposed in Saul knowing that anyone was calling on Jesus in prayer in the first place. In his “Pre-70 CE Jewish Opposition to Christ-Devotion” Hurtado notes a plethora of data in connection to “the name” of Jesus that Dunn fails to interact with.⁸

Dunn’s argument for a lack of opposition to Christ-devotion is an argument from silence, that is, since we don’t find explicit mention of Jewish opposition to Christ-devotion in the Pauline letters or Acts then it stands to reason that there was no such opposition. But arguments from silence cut both ways. We don’t find explicit mention of opposition based on relaxed attitudes to Pharisaic halakhah either. When Luke records Paul’s interaction with Agrippa Paul says quite plainly that he was convinced that he ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus (Acts 26:9). He does not say that he was convinced that he ought to do all that was possible to enforce halakhic practices among early Jewish Christians. Likewise, to return to Ananias’ conversation with the Lord, he describes Saul as one given authority from the chief priests to arrest those that call upon the name of Jesus, not to arrest those who have failed to show “loyalty to the law and adherence to the Pharisaic halakhoth.” (114)

Dunn also expects that we’d find Paul recounting Jewish opposition to Christ-devotion in Romans and Galatians (116) since it is here that he mentions disputes over the law. What Dunn fails to mention is that these disputes are in-house debates among followers of Jesus. They do not reflect opposition from outside the Christian community. It is likely the case that there was no controversy (remember that this is Dunn’s foundational argument) concerning Christ-devotion precisely because all of the believers shared in this devotion (not because it was necessarily acceptable in the wider spectrum of predominantly Pharisaic Judaism).

Dunn Contra Bauckham

Dunn raises some valid criticisms of Bauckham’s language of “divine identity,” namely that it is not clear what advantages the term produces over “ontic” or “functional” or “agential” categories, and also that the term itself can be confusing given the different ways in which “identity” can be

⁸ See Larry W. Hurtado, “Pre-70 CE Jewish Opposition to Christ Devotion” *JTS* 50 (1999): 35-58 (here 42-44); reprinted in *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?: Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 152-78.

used. The first point resembles my own issues with Bauckham's phraseology. It seems to me that he simply wishes to affirm all the same things that "functional" and "ontic" Christology affirms without using the terms because of their alleged un-Jewishness.

The second issue rests on shakier ground. On the one hand we can recognize that "identity" can be used in different ways but on the other hand we can see that Bauckham is quite clear in the way that he uses it. By "divine identity" he simply means to speak of YHWH's relation to Israel and all other reality. His work has tended to brush the first relationship aside in order to focus on the second relationship so as to emphasize that YHWH relates to all other reality as Creator and Sovereign Ruler. The dividing line between YHWH and all other reality can be boiled down to the Creator/creature distinction.⁹ Jesus is placed on the Creator side of the divide according to the NT texts.

But Dunn fears Modalism lurking in the background of Bauckham's proposal (142) and thinks it not unfair to describe its use as "indiscriminate." (143) He strongly disagrees saying that:

The New Testament writers are really quite careful at this point. Jesus is not the God of Israel. He is not the Father. He is not Yahweh. An identification of Jesus with and as Yahweh was an early attempt to resolve the tensions indicated above; it was labelled as 'Modalism', a form a 'Monarchianism' (the one God operating first as Father and then as Son), and accounted a heresy. (142)

Any identity we do see between God and Jesus as Creator and Sovereign Ruler are only "partial" (144) and Dunn finds Bauckham's understanding of Psalm 110 problematic for his understanding of "divine identity" since "it assumes some distinction between YHWH (*ho kyrios*) and the Lord Christ." (103n24) But this evinces a misunderstanding of Bauckham's argument as perhaps not only prone to Modalism, but actually being Modalism. Bauckham has no problem admitting that the "divine identity" can accommodate distinctions, e.g., Word and Wisdom "represent Jewish ways of making some form of distinction within the unique divine identity, especially with reference to the work of creation."¹⁰ He can say that the texts that personify or hypostasize Spirit, Word, and Wisdom "are concerned for the unique identity of God, not for the unitariness of God, which became a facet of Jewish monotheism only later. In other words, there

⁹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 3.

¹⁰ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 29.

is no reason why there should not be real distinctions within the unique identity of God.”¹¹ Ironically, Dunn reaches very similar conclusions when speaking of Spirit, Word, and Wisdom as ways of speaking about God’s immanence without violating his transcendence.

Dunn’s understanding of identity seems a bit confused itself. He is not making equivalent statements when he states “Jesus is not the God of Israel. He is not the Father. He is not Yahweh.” (143) Jesus *can be* the first and the third without being the second. The NT writers certainly don’t present things in such a manner when interpreting OT texts about YHWH with reference to Jesus. John can say that Isaiah saw his [Jesus’] glory and spoke of him (John 12:39-41 cf. Isa. 6:10) when Isaiah is quite clear that he saw the Lord (*adonai*) sitting upon the throne (Isa. 6:1) and that his eyes had seen the LORD of Hosts (*YHWH Tzevaot*) (Isa. 6:5). Paul can speak of the Israelites testing Christ in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:9 cf. Num. 21:5-9) when Moses is clear that the people spoke against God (*elohim*) (Num. 21:5) and the LORD (*YHWH*) (Num. 21:7). Jude can say that it was Jesus who delivered the Israelites out of Egypt (Jude 5) when the entire OT bears witness to the fact that it was YHWH who delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery (e.g., Exod. 18:1; 20:1; et al.). The point is that the NT writers didn’t see the violation in affirming that Jesus was YHWH while at the same time denying that he was the Father.

More on Identity

It also seems that Dunn desperately wants to say that Jesus is God without saying that Jesus is God. It’s either unclear if Jesus is called God (e.g., Rom. 9:5; 1 John 5:20), or when it is clear that he’s called God (Heb. 1:8) it’s in a “transferred sense” (136), or what’s really meant is that “in Jesus is to be seen the glory of God, the glory of the divine presence” (133); “Jesus himself constitutes that divine presence” (134); or Jesus is “seen more as the visible manifestation of the invisible God, God manifesting himself in and through Jesus, [rather] than as God or a god as such” (133); “the godness of Jesus Christ is that as God’s Son he fully represents God; to be in Christ is to be in God, or to be in him is to know God; the Son has made God known and present. As such he can even be described as ‘the true God and eternal life.’” (136) “[T]o speak of Jesus as Wisdom (or Logos) is inadequate, unless we realize that Wisdom/Logos is a way of speaking about God. What these first Christian theologians were endeavouring to say was no less that in some real sense, Jesus is *God* acting and outgoing; Jesus brings to visible expression the

¹¹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 159. He can also speak of the failure of Modalism because it “neglected too much in the witness of the Bible and the tradition to the personal distinction between Jesus and the Father.” (147)

very purpose and character of God himself.” (125) Jesus is “the clearest *self*-revelation of the one God ever given to humankind.” (129, emphasis mine)

So what is Dunn trying to tell us? As clear as his language is, his concepts are muddy. Is Jesus God? Well, yes, but not “as such.” But what does “as such” mean? Does it mean that Jesus is not the Father? If so, then who other than a Modalist would argue with that? How can Jesus be the “clearest *self*-revelation of the one God ever given” without actually being the one God? Is it possible that the one God can accommodate multiple persons as Trinitarian theology has maintained from the beginning? Is it possible that Bauckham’s “divine identity,” however unhelpful the actual term, can provide an explanation for the things that Dunn seems to want to both affirm and deny about Jesus? Perhaps so, but we’ll have to wait until Dunn better explains what seem to be inconsistencies in his conceptualization of Jesus as he relates to God before we can receive adequate answers to these questions.

Jesus’ Monotheism

Finally, I want to comment on Dunn’s foray into the monotheism of Jesus. It’s no shock that he discovered that Jesus was a monotheist. What good Jew in first century Palestine wasn’t? But the implication that Jesus would have been less than comfortable receiving worship doesn’t seem to fit the evidence. Hurtado judges this point moot since he supposes that the worship of Jesus was in reaction to his resurrection and exaltation.¹² I think Hurtado, like Dunn, shortchanges the testimony from the Gospels. Dunn has already acknowledged that Jesus receives *proskynein* in the Synoptics. He simply writes it off as too infrequent to be able to say anything substantial. What is substantial, however, is that Jesus never refused *proskynein* whether it went beyond the usual reverence for authority figures or not.

More significant to the point is that the early Christian worship of Jesus was more likely rooted in the words and deeds of the historical Jesus than simply his resurrection and exaltation by the Father. In John’s Gospel Jesus says that he is to be honored *just as* the Father is honored (John 5:23). This goes beyond acceptable reverence for an agent of God. But most scholars would dismiss the historical veracity of most anything Jesus is recorded to have said in John’s Gospel. There’s another saying that’s on par with this one in the Synoptics. In Matthew 10:37 Jesus says that anyone who loves mother, father, or children more than him is not worthy of him; Luke 14:26 adds one’s spouse and own life. This is the kind of devotion that is reserved for God alone

¹² See e.g., Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 72; 113-14; 148; et al.

(cf. Matt. 22:37; Deut. 6:5) and in requesting such devotion Jesus is placing himself on par with God.¹³ Sayings such as these were very likely the impetus for the worship of Jesus while his resurrection and exaltation confirmed his words and deeds.

Conclusion

As I stated in the introduction, readers familiar with Dunn won't find much in terms of new ideas in *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?*. If you're looking for fresh insights in the main thesis of this book you won't find them. What you will find is that Dunn has kept up on the literature. His footnotes and bibliography are current and show an awareness of the discussions that have been taking place in the past decade or so. You will also find that Dunn has decided to offer vigorous critiques of his two main dialogue partners Hurtado and Bauckham. This, in my opinion, is the real value of this book. Sure, Dunn's criticisms miss the point in various places as highlighted above, but it's helpful to see him flesh out his disagreements in an extended format. It's also exciting to consider the prospect of the reactions that his book will draw from Hurtado, Bauckham, as well as the new generation of up-and-comers in the field of early Christology. This book is a welcome addition to the library of NT students everywhere.

¹³ For a brief but helpful discussion of this point see Robert M. Bowman and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007), 69-70.