

Chapter Two

Solomon and Jesus—Two Sons of God, and of David?

Domine Fili unigenite

Iesu Christe.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,

Filius Patris (Gloria)¹⁵⁰

“Solomon was a laughingstock,

since he thought he was Christ”

The Second Treatise of the Great Seth (vii, a2)¹⁵¹

Solomon's presence in the polemic regarding Jesus' divinity as the Son of God can be traced to a single act of rhetoric in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The authorship of that text, which dates to the second century, was attributed to Paul¹⁵² first by Eastern and later by Western Christianity, and this remained a commonly accepted view until the Reformation.¹⁵³ Some of the Church Fathers addressed the stylistic disparities between that epistle and others attributed to Paul with the explanation that he had composed the former in Hebrew rather than in Greek, or that Paul strove to conceal his authorship for reasons of modesty.¹⁵⁴ The fact that many citations from the Bible are found throughout Hebrews has given rise to various hypotheses regarding the identity of its audience, which I

150 “O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father”, from the Christian hymn *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (English translation taken from the *Book of Common Prayer*, 1662).

151 Translation by Joseph A. Gibbons and Roger A. Bullard in J. M. Robinson (1988, p.363).

152 The existence of the *Epistle* was first documented in Alexandria in the second century; it was added to the Christian canon only several centuries thereafter.

153 In Luther's translation, the *Epistle* is relegated to the end of the canon to denote its scant importance in Protestant doctrine. Luther (and Calvin) believed the *Epistle* was not written by Paul or the other apostles. It has been attributed to various authors, including Apollos, a Jewish-Christian preacher from Alexandria who may have been influenced by Philo, and who arrived in Ephesus in 52 or 53, met Paul in Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:6), and apparently clashed with the latter on several matters. There were those who cast doubt on the Pauline authorship of the *Epistle* long before the Reformation. See K. Hagen (1974, pp. 19–30). The first annotated Hebrew translation of the *Epistle* was by Raphael Hirsch-Johann Heinrich Biesenthal (1800–1886), a converted Jew who worked in the service of the German mission (Berlin, 1853, with additions in 1858 and 1882).

154 See J. W. Thompson (2008, pp. 3–10).

will not present here.¹⁵⁵ But its audience was apparently thought to be well-versed in the Old Testament, and biblical quotations would not have been foreign to them.¹⁵⁶ Let us assume that it was indeed Paul, or Saul—a native of Tarsus in Lycia, formerly a Pharisee and a pupil of R. Gamliel the Elder who after a revelation in the mid-first century B.C.E. embarked upon a missionary journey in Asia Minor to spread Jesus' message among the Jews and the pagans to serve God, in his own words, "with my spirit by announcing the gospel of his Son".¹⁵⁷

When addressing a Jewish audience, Paul injected verses from the Bible into his speech¹⁵⁸: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law".¹⁵⁹ On the Sabbath, in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, for example, he preached that Jesus had been brought into the world by God as a descendant of David: "Of [David's] seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus", and continued: "he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'".¹⁶⁰ Here, in other words, Paul employed the same phrase that begins the Epistle to the Hebrews, following it with an assertion that God had raised Jesus from the dead, "no more to return to corruption".¹⁶¹ While the congregants at the synagogue first welcomed his words, urging Paul to return and teach the following Sabbath, they ultimately rejected his words. Upon their departure, Paul and Barnabas declared they were taking their message to the Gentiles.¹⁶²

155 Attridge (1989). For a comprehensive discussion of the *Epistle* and a summary of the various views reflected in the research literature, see Ruzer and Zakovitch (2016). To accept that the Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by Paul one need only compare it to the other epistles. The Epistle to the Galatians claims that "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (4:4).

156 Reading in public from the Holy Scriptures was one of the duties of community leaders (1 Timothy 3:13) and quoting from the Bible became easier with the adoption of the codex. See Gamble (1995, pp. 42–81).

157 Romans 1:9.

158 See Troiani (2017). In his second epistle to Timothy, whom Paul appointed Bishop of Ephesus in 65, he writes: "and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:15–16). According to Snyder, Paul served as a mediator between the Bible and his audiences (Snyder 2001, pp. 194–195).

159 1 Corinthians 9:20.

160 Acts 13:33.

161 Acts 13:34.

162 Acts 13:42–47.

In the course of his third journey Paul arrived at Ephesus,¹⁶³ and there too he “spoke out boldly”, preaching for three full months “about the kingdom of God”.¹⁶⁴ To convince skeptics, he posed the rhetorical question that would connect between a onetime king and a new Messiah: For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you”?¹⁶⁵ The intended answer is clear: only to his son Jesus did the ‘Father’ (God) inform him of his birth”, while his latter quote “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son” claims only that God will be a father to Jesus, and not that God has begotten him.

Here, Paul is referring to Psalm 2:7–8: “I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession”—a verse that Paul maintains refers not to Solomon but to Jesus. One may, of course, wonder why a father should inform his son of the fact of his birth on that very day; the answer is that Paul’s choice to open his appeal with a biblical reference was the rhetorical device that allowed him to claim Jesus’ sole sonship to God, but in doing so, he unintentionally evoked the question of “double sonship”.

Regardless of whether Paul or a later author composed the Epistle to the Hebrews,¹⁶⁶ it was unquestionably directed at Jews rather than pagans; only the former could have recognized its biblical references and ascertained “whether these things were so”.¹⁶⁷ One may also assume that Paul’s listeners, when told that after Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan a voice from Heaven called forth “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased”,¹⁶⁸ would not have found these words incongruous, since they are nearly identical to those of the prophet Nathan about Solomon. Nor would it have seemed out of place that when his disciples suggested to Jesus that he erect three tabernacles on the mountain—“one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—a voice spoke from within a cloud saying “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”¹⁶⁹ they would not have been fazed by the use of the word “son” (υἱός) but they would certainly have understood it metaphorically as a reference to Nathan’s tidings concerning God’s

163 Trebilco (2004).

164 Acts 19:8. Acts 17 tells of Jews from Beroea (Aleppo) who were able to refer to the Bible and evaluate the reliability of Paul’s quotations from it.

165 Hebrews 1:5.

166 Richards (2004). In Larry W. Hurtado’s view, “it is particularly significant that Paul describes his religious re-orientation as caused by a divine revelation to him of Jesus as God’s unique ‘Son’” (Gal 1:15). Hurtado (2005, p. 34).

167 Acts 17:11.

168 Mark 1:11.

169 Luke 9:35.

promise to David: “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me”.¹⁷⁰

The promise of fatherhood is repeated in Chronicles, where David states: “And of all my sons, for the Lord has given me many, he has chosen my son Solomon to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. He said to me, ‘It is your son Solomon who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be a son to me, and I will be a father to him’”.¹⁷¹ This assertion is repeated in Psalm 2:7: “I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have begotten you’”.

The Epistle to the Hebrews’ “I will be to him a father” (Ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα) may certainly be interpreted as referring to adoptive fatherhood (“I will be,” rather than “I am”). Moreover, Hebrews refers to Israel as a collective son: “And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—‘My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; [...] for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts’”.¹⁷² Thus, all those baptized as Christians become the children of God. The Gospels provide a similarly expansive vision of the divine family—“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”.¹⁷³ It would be possible, then, to interpret the Epistle to the Hebrews as describing two types of paternity: corporeal (“today I have begotten you”, though here ‘begetting’ [*Ego semeron gegenneka se*] may also be viewed as a metaphorical personification)¹⁷⁴ and adoptive—a relationship between a father and his

170 2 Samuel 7:12–14. See Sergi (2010); Avioz (2005); Chae (2006). Josephus does not repeat the words of the prophet Nathan that Solomon will be as a “son” to God, nor his words regarding David. He writes that Solomon is the heir “chosen by God”, while the designation “my son” refers to the fact that he is the son of David (*Antiquities* VII: 373–74).

171 1 Chronicles 28:5–6.

172 Hebrews 12:5–6.

173 Matthew 5:9.

174 See Lakoff and Johnson (2003). Maimonides’ objection to the metaphorical perception of God probably stemmed from the understanding that a metaphor could easily become concrete. I should note here that Mary’s virgin birth is not the only miraculous birth mentioned in biblical sources (See Kara-Ivanov Kaniel 2014). The writers of the Gospels required a woman’s womb so that Jesus might be born of it, although the omnipotent God could have “created” a “human” son without such a need. (That, indeed, is what the Quran claims.) On an early polemic in relation to a virgin birth, see Chapters 63–79 of Justin Martyr (2003).

chosen, beloved son(s).¹⁷⁵ Thus, we may assume that a Jew would not have been disoriented by Hebrews' use of the terms 'father' and 'son',¹⁷⁶ but would have understood them as a metaphor for the biblical ideal code of rights and duties that exists between a people (or a king) and God (though in ancient Israel the perception of the kings as sons of God did not exist.¹⁷⁷ Biblical phrases such as "on holy mountains, from the womb of the morning, like a dew your youth will come to you"¹⁷⁸ make reference to a messianic future and the metaphoric nature of the God's choice of Solomon as David's heir is very clear from the language used: "Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God".¹⁷⁹

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*"Nothing may hinder us from confessing the absolute equality
of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"*

Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, Book VI:10.¹⁸⁰

Is it possible that God had two sons—that both Solomon and Jesus of Nazareth were granted sonship? Perhaps Jesus' description as the son of God, like that of Solomon, was intended at first merely to invoke a prevalent metaphor, whose nature would change radically over time. (Pursuing this question would lead me deep within high Christology and I leave it to other studies to do so.) The figure of Jesus in the New Testament comprises several aspects, and in the four Gospels and the Epistles, these aspects are given different emphases and meaning,¹⁸¹ just as differing versions exist of the story of the nativity. This multiplicity resulted from the various views contained in the New Testament itself and from the polemic on the true nature of Jesus that took place early in the process of Christian-

175 Matthew 10. The Syriac monk Aphraat (c. 280-c. 345) writes in his *Denomstrationes* 17: "On Jesus the Messiah who is the Son of God"; "While we grant them that he [Jesus] is a human being, however we also honour him and call him God and Lord. It was not strange to call him [so] and it was not a strange name that we have conferred on him, which they [the Jews] themselves have not made use of. But it is certain for us that Jesus our Lord is God, Son of God, King, Son of the King, Light from Light, Creator.... He is called with many names". Trans. from Syriac and Introduced by Valavanolickal (2005, p. 141). And see Gavin (1923).

176 On the concept of "sonship" in general and in the Kabbalah in particular, see Idel (2007).

177 On this matter A. Yarbro Collins (1999) disagrees. See also Cooke (1961).

178 Psalms 110:3.

179 Nehemiah 13:26.

180 Schaff (1995, Vol. 3, p. 102).

181 See the review by Ruzer (2016).

ity's development during the establishment of the Christian canon; the polemic was settled by the Nicene Creed (*Symbolum Nicaenum*) in 325.¹⁸² However, in the New Testament, Jesus appears as the son of God, is identified with God,¹⁸³ and is nonetheless at once a flesh-and-blood Messiah.¹⁸⁴

Diverse meanings attached, in ancient Christology and onwards, to the idea of God's "divine paternity" and of Jesus as the "son of God"; this was a source of controversy and a cause for schism. Jesus was seen as, *inter alia*, the primordial son of God—"the firstborn of all creation", "He is the image of the invisible God".¹⁸⁵ According to the Gospel of Mark: "Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!'"¹⁸⁶ And in John: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known".¹⁸⁷ And, moreover: "The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath".¹⁸⁸ According to John, Jesus told the Jews that the Father teaches the Son, who does as he does: "The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. Indeed, just as the Father raises

182 On conflicts in the canon see, e.g., Theophilos (2013). The First Council of Nicaea stated that "Christus is the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages [...]". It rejected Arianism as a heresy (and established the dogma that Jesus' nature is identical to that of God the father (*homoousios*), i.e., consubstantial. *Documents of the Christian Church*, Selected and Edited by Henry Bettenson, Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 36–37. The western Church had added the word *filioque* ("and [from] the Son"): "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son..." The Byzantine Church regarded this addition "as illicit and possibly heretical". Pope Benedict XVI wrote that the word *homoousios* was "the only philosophical term that was incorporated into the creed" (Pope Benedict XVI 2007, p. 320).

183 Romans 1:1–4; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 1:15–20. Pliny the Younger (c. 61–113) testified that he heard Christian congregations singing psalms about Jesus as a god: *carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum inuicem* (they were in the habit of meeting before dawn on a stated day and singing alternately a hymn to Christ as to a god" trans. J. Lightfoot. See R. P. Martin (1964). See also Dunn (2010).

184 This subject, on which there is a vast literature, is beyond the purview of this book.

185 Colossians 1:15.

186 Mark 9:7–24. On the use of "son of God" in John, see Dunn (2015, p. 77). Also see Hurtado (2005); Hengel (1976); Allen et al. (2019); Kofsky and Ruzer (2018, p. 13–34).

187 John 1:18.

188 John 3:35–36. In Ode 3, attributed to Solomon: "I have been united to Him, because the lover found the Beloved, because I love Him that is the Son, I shall become a son" (trans. James Charlesworth 1985, p. 735).

the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes”.¹⁸⁹ And, furthermore: “For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man”.¹⁹⁰ Peter, addressing the skeptics, exclaims: “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased’”.¹⁹¹ Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, wrote in his epistle *De decretis* that the word “son” possessed two meanings in the holy scriptures: sonship by adoption and grace applied to any who adhered to God’s commandments, while the second sense is that of “natural sons”.¹⁹² In any case, Athanasius wrote, it is impossible to ascribe a human nature to God.¹⁹³

Jesus was also hailed as a “son of God” for his ability to work miracles and exorcise demons. After he walked on water and calmed a storm, “And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’”.¹⁹⁴ He was further perceived as the divine son by men under an evil spell, one of whom called out to him, saying: “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me”.¹⁹⁵ On yet another occasion, Jesus met two men possessed by devils; they called to him: “What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?”¹⁹⁶ The demons Jesus exorcised likewise acknowledged him: “You are the Son of God!”¹⁹⁷ The claim of divine paternity led the Jewish High Priest in Jerusalem to state that

189 John 5:20–21.

190 John 5:26–27.

191 2 Peter 1:16–17. Luther maintained that there can be no redemption without faith in Jesus, son of God, and that Mary was truly the mother of God and yet remained a virgin (*theotokos*). As to Solomon, God does call him his son, but he will be his father, but this promise is dependent on the condition that he remain pious. Luther (2015, p. 73). It is worth noticing that the question here is not one of fatherhood, but rather of a promise to a grown man.

192 Young (2002, p. 31).

193 Young (2002, pp. 30–36). In the *Epistle to Diognetus* (c.1300?) by unknown Greek writer, Jesus is referred to as “son” and “child” of God. God sent him to reveal himself as man or the Designer and Maker of universe. See Lienhard (1970).

194 Matthew 14:33.

195 Mark 5:7.

196 Matthew 8:29.

197 Luke 4:41.

Jesus “ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God”.¹⁹⁸ Paul, meanwhile, expanded on the notion of paternity: “for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith”.¹⁹⁹ In place of the Torah came faith in the son, who was sent by God “in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children”.²⁰⁰

Pagan polemic

“Pagan” philosophers of the time argued that Christianity’s claim regarding Jesus’ sonship referred to corporeal paternity. Nor did they have reason to wonder at such a claim, since the notion of divine paternity of corporeal persons was not alien to pagan culture and may be found in far earlier Assyrian prophecies.²⁰¹ In *The True Word*, Celsus derided not the idea of Jesus’ divine paternity but rather the “foolish quarrel” between Christians and Jews about the identity of the Messiah. He had a Jewish character voice the assertion that the Christian claim of virgin birth was hardly different than the various tales in Greek mythology of women who gave birth to Zeus’ offspring. Jesus, then, was but one of many followed by disciples who collected “a means of livelihood in a disgraceful and importune way”,²⁰² and went on asking “Could not the Great God, who had already sent two angels on your account, His own son, at the very place?” Familiar with the Bible, he quoted Moses in Deuteronomy 4:35: “To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him”, as well as in 6:4: “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone”. Two hundred years later

198 John 19:7.

199 Galatians 3:26.

200 Galatians 4:5. On the Jewish background to the terms “son of God” and “sons of God” in Paul and their meanings, see Byrne (1979). Here “sonship” is a metaphor.

201 See Parpola (1997, pp. XXXVI–XLIV).

202 Origen (1965, p. 65); Celsus (1987, pp. 57–59); Wilken (1979, pp. 117–134); and Rokeah (1982, pp. 16–19). Mythological stories may have prepared the ground for the acceptance of the story of Jesus’ birth by the pagans, who did not reject that type of narrative as Alexander the Great did (when a resident of Thebes tried to gain mercy for the city by saying that the king was a son of the god like Hercules and Dionysus, sons of Zeus, Alexander replied, “Do you believe you can deceive Alexander by concocting a myth?” Stoneman (1991, pp. 80–83). Plutarch recorded that Alexander wrote to his mother about a meeting in Egypt with a priest of the god Amun, who called him *O paidion* (son of the god), and afterwards the god addressed him as *O pai Dios* (O Son of Zeus; Plut. *Alex.* 27.5). In a Hebrew version of the book, Alexander was the son of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra and Amun-Dionysus (Dan 1969, p. 130) A fragment of Apollonius of Tyana, cited in “The Life of Pythagoras II Porphyry”, describes Pythagoras as the son of Apollo and of Pythais, “most beautiful of the Samians”.

the Roman Emperor Julian would write in a similar vein that “Moses taught that there was only one God, but that he had many sons who divided the nations among themselves”; nothing in the words of the Prophets, he maintained, suggested that Jesus was “the only son of God” or “the first born of all creation”,²⁰³ In his *Adversus Christianos* (Against the Christians), Porphyry, a Neoplatonic philosopher and scholar who slightly predated Julian, mused as follows:

What use is the Son of God for us who have become flesh on earth? And why was he placed on the cross, and had to suffer, and was punished with another penalty? And what is the didactic purpose of the cross? Why did the Son of God, Christ, leave the body after a brief time? And since he is not capable of suffering, how did he come under suffering?²⁰⁴

In addition, in the first centuries of the common era, the Church Fathers found themselves confronting not only pagan philosophers but also—and primarily—heretical movements within Christianity itself. In opposition to the Arian “heresy”, according to Arius of Alexandria (c. 256–336), Jesus’ divinity stems from the divinity with which the Creator, who was not himself created, endowed him. This claim is based on, among other things, Acts 2:36: “know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified”.

The proselyte priest Nestor also offered outspoken critiques, inquiring why Christians were not ashamed to claim that Jesus had spent nine months in a place as repugnant as the womb: “And God said to Isaiah [66:1]...’What is the place that can contain Me, when the heaven is My is my throne and the earth is My footstool, so which place can contain Me.’ The Lord says no house can contain Him, and you say that a woman carried him in her womb, in confinement and in the darkness of menstrual blood, in the place of filth....”²⁰⁵

The Sages’ polemic

Apparently, Jews would have objected the idea of God’s paternity.²⁰⁶ When the author of the pseudo-Danielic fragment found in Qumran²⁰⁷ wrote that “He

203 Julian (1980, p. 403, 290E-291 A).

204 Berchman (2005, p. 134, and see note 10). Porphyry, also known by his Syrian name Malchus, was a native of Tyre and lived circa 234–305 B.C.E. The fact that he was familiar with the Gospels and the Acts and pointed out internal contradictions in them predating the Jewish polemical literature, led the Emperor Theodosius II to order those books burned in 448. On Celsus see Berchman (2005, pp. 85–93).

205 “The Account of the Disputation of the Priest”, in Lasker and Stroumsa (1996, p. 73).

206 John 5:18. See Lucas (1993, pp. 19–21); Klausner (1955, pp. 204–217).

shall be called son of God, and they shall designate him son of the Most High", he certainly meant it to be understood as a metaphor.²⁰⁸ Moreover, in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in the literature of the Sages, God's "paternity" relates primarily to the entire Jewish people. When Simeon ben Shetaḥ, head of the Pharisees, is told that Honi the Circle-Drawer appealed to God saying: "Master of the Universe, Thy children have turned to me because [they believe] me to be a member of Thy house. I swear by Thy great name that I will not move from here until Thou hast mercy Upon Thy children", ben Shetaḥ replies forgivingly: "Were it not that you are Honi I would have placed you under the ban... But what shall I do unto you who actest petulantly before the Omnipresent and He grants your desire, as a son who acts petulantly before his father?"²⁰⁹ According to R. Akiva, of the second century C.E., "Beloved are the Jews that they are called sons to God; an extra love is made known to them that they are called sons to God, as it was said: 'You are children of the Lord your God'" (Deuteronomy 14:1).²¹⁰ In prayer, Akiva turned to "our father, our king".²¹¹ Jews furthermore had the examples of Abba Hilкия and Ḥanina ben Dosa, who spoke of their relationships with God as that of a son with his father.²¹² Yet, in contrast, we have the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 4:8: "the case of solitary individuals, without sons or brothers". Jewish theology did not reject the anthropomorphism of God, or more precisely the idea that the boundaries between anthropomorphization, materialization, and metaphor are blurred, and that God exists not alone but rather accompanied by mythological figures, such as Enoch and Metatron.²¹³

Such supernatural entities may have been the inspiration for the Christian depiction of Jesus as supernatural. Unlike them, however, Jesus was depicted as human—as a man born of a woman, living an earthly life rather than rising from mythology or the distant past. It was consequently necessary for Christians both to explain how Jesus could be a son of God and to elucidate the Christological polemic about his divine nature. The Sages contended over the idea of this duality with heretics (whom they called *minim* (heretics)) while the Church itself

207 4Q246 [4QpsDan^d] 1:8–9.

208 Vermes (1987, p. 275).

209 *Ta'anit* 3:8

210 *Avot* 3:18.

211 *Ta'anit* 25b. In the literature of the Sages, "the son" is often not a singular but a plural reference to the people of Israel. Jewish prayer addresses "our father who art in heaven"—a father to the entire people of Israel. See Goshen-Gottstein (1987).

212 A. Yarbro Collins and Collins (2008); Flusser (2009, pp. 153–163).

213 See the detailed scholarly discussion in: Schäfer (2012, pp. 103–159); Hurtado (2005, pp. 111–133); and Alan F. Segal (1977).

did not address it, nor did it use the argument that Jesus' "sonship" was confirmed by the Jewish (mythic) eschatological literature about 'lesser gods' existing alongside God. However, in response to Christianity's claims and to the fact it posited the actual "corporeality" of God's "son" rather than employing it as a metaphor, the Sages—particularly in the Jerusalem Talmud—denigrated the Christian story of Jesus' birth, the attribution of divine sonship to a man, and the perception of Jesus as a manifestation of God". Thus, when one of the *minim* asked R. Simlai²¹⁴ (a second-generation Palestinian *Amora* of the late third or early fourth century) how many gods had created the world, he encouraged the heretic to read Psalm 149:9: "The Lord of Hosts, it is not written but 'the Lord of Hosts is the God of all' and when the Holy One Blessed be He created Man in His image and His figure, the angels erred, thinking that he was like God, so the Holy One Blessed be He put man to sleep 'so that they all would know that he is man'".²¹⁵ In *Pesikta Rabbati* (a collection of Aggadic *midrashim* recorded in Palestine between the fifth and ninth centuries),²¹⁶ R. Ḥiyya bar Abba (a Babylonian *Amora* who spent most of his life in Palestine around the same period as R. Simlai) is said to have taught "If the whore's son should say to you, 'They are two different gods', reply to him, Scripture does not say 'The gods have spoken ... face to face' but *The Lord has spoken with you face after face*".²¹⁷ The reference here is to Deuteronomy 5:4—"The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire"—where the grammatical subject is clearly singular. In *Exodus Rabbah* 29:5, bar Abba employed Isaiah 44:6 ("Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god") to address the question without explicitly referring to Christology: "I am the Lord thy God, thus said R. Abahu: An example would be an earthly king, who rules and has a father, brother, and son. God says: 'I am the last' [which means] I have no brother. And besides me there is no God' [which means] that I have no son".²¹⁸ Elsewhere Rabbi Abahu is said to have taught that "If man says 'I am God', he lies; if he says 'I am the Son of Man' he shall rue it; I will go to heaven' he saith, but shall not perform it".²¹⁹

²¹⁴ *y.Berakhot* 9:1 12d.

²¹⁵ *Genesis Rabbah* 8:9, ed. Theodor-Albeck (1936, p. 62).

²¹⁶ The collection was sealed around the ninth century; it would appear in print in Prague in 1653.

²¹⁷ *Pesikta Rabbati* (1968, 1:422).

²¹⁸ *Exodus Rabbah* 29, 5, trans. S. M. Lehrman.

²¹⁹ *y.Ta'anit* 2:1 65b.

In contrast, the Sages makes no reference to Solomon as a corporeal son of God, nor as a messiah; certainly, he does not “ascend to the heavens”. Nowhere do they claim that Solomon is God’s only son, and his role in Jewish polemic is not that of a counter-example to Jesus as the ‘true son’ of God; instead, he is used to repudiate thoroughly the concept of sonship. Solomon is accused of having failed to express himself with sufficient clarity upon this point: “R. Aḥa [a fourth-century *Amora*] said: God was angry with Solomon when he uttered the above verse. He said to him: ‘Why do you express a thing that concerns the sanctification of My Name by an obscure allusion, [when you say] ‘and meddle not with them that are given to change’? Thereupon immediately Solomon expressed it more clearly [as follows:] *There is one that is alone, and he hath not a second; yea, he hath neither son nor brother* (Eccl. 4:8); ‘*He hath neither son nor brother*’, but HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD [[IS]] OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE”.²²⁰

Christian polemic

Unlike the Sages, Christianity engaged, from its inception, in an intensive polemic that is revealing of the extent to which the question of the “dual sonship” of Jesus and Solomon troubled Christian apologists.

220 *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 2:33, Soncino transl. Deut. 62–63. According to a medieval *midrash* attributed to R. Eliezer Hakapar, a *Tanna* who lived at the turn of the third century: “God gave strength to his [Balaam’s] voice so that it went from the one end of the world to the other, because he looked forth and beheld the nations that bow down to the sun and moon and stars, and to wood and stone, and he looked forth and saw that there was a man, born of woman, who should rise up and seek to make himself God, and to cause the whole world to go astray. Therefore, God gave power to the voice of Balaam that all the peoples of the world might hear, and thus he spake: ‘Give heed that ye go not astray after that man, for its written ‘God is not a man that he should lie’. And if he says that he is God, he is a liar; and he will deceive and say that he departed and cometh again at the end. He saith and he shall not perform. See what he took to his parable and said: ‘Alas, when God doeth this’. Balaam said, alas, who shall live—of what nation which hearth that man who made himself God”. *Yalkut Shimoni Numeri* § 765, ed. A. Hyman, Jerusalem 1986, 485 [Salonica sec. 725 on Num. 23:7, according to Midrash Yelammedenu Aaron (Adolph) Jellinek (1873, pp. 207–208). Quran 4:171 (Women) states: “The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah... So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, “Three”; desist—it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth”. Quran 19:35 (“Mary”) states: “It is not [befitting] for Allah to take a son; exalted is He!” These two verses are inscribed on the inner octagonal face of the Dome of the Rock. See Bowersock (2017, pp. 140–159).

Jesus' sonship is discussed at length in Justin Martyr's second-century apologetics *Dialogue with Trypho*. Trypho, whom Justin describes as a Jewish refugee from the Jewish war against the Romans and as learned in Greek philosophy, negates the idea of divine fatherhood. Justin then invokes Solomon as a counter-witness, having him explain that the "king of glory" in Psalm 24:1–10 refers to Christ because he rose from the dead, went up to heaven, and sat at the right hand of the father (Psalm 110:1). Christ was the "son of God", descended through virgin birth from the *genos* of Abraham and the tribe of Judah and David²²¹; he "submitted to become incarnate, and be born of this virgin" Justin further cites the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:14–15, interpreting "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" as referring to Jesus: "Christ is the Lord, and God the Son, that in times gone by appeared by his power as man and angel, ..." ²²²

In his *First Apology*, addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, Justin's aim was to prove that the Christians were neither atheists nor rebelling against the monarchy. To do so, he employed a dual strategy. On the one hand, he argued that the idea that Jesus was the first begotten son of God the Father, and not conceived as the result of sexual relations, was hardly novel or particularly different from the descriptions of several births in Greek mythology. Furthermore, even if Jesus had been born entirely "by common generation", he was still worthy of his divine sonship because of his great wisdom. On the other hand, Justin presented the Emperor with a series of "testimonies" from the Bible to persuade him that Jesus was indeed the "son of the living God, God himself". He quoted from, among others, Psalm 2:7: "you are my son; today I have begotten you",²²³ on the naïve assumption that the pagan Emperor of Rome acknowledged the authority of the Jewish holy scriptures.

Origen (c. 185–254), for his part, rejected totally Solomon's status as God's "son," arguing that Jews could not have known the "Father" for there cannot be a "Father" without the existence of a "son". Lactantius (c. 240-c. 325), basing his interpretation on the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, wrote that the divine message in 2 Samuel 7:7–13: "I will raise up your offspring after you [...] He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever", could not have referred to Solomon, as his reign was not eternal; Solomon was the son of David, not of God.²²⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 339) similarly maintained that Solomon could not be the son of God since he was the son of a

²²¹ Justin Martyr (2003, pp. 176–177, 193–195). See also Barnard (1997).

²²² Justin Martyr (2003, p. 193).

²²³ See Falls (1965, pp. 33–111).

²²⁴ Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 4, 13.

human.²²⁵ Origen wrote that Solomon failed to attain an eternal throne because he succumbed to the passions of the flesh and to idolatry²²⁶; and according to Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem (313–386), Jesus was “[God’s] only begotten Son, our Jesus Christ, by whom He made all things visible and invisible.” He is not “an adopted but a naturally only begotten son, having no brother”.²²⁷ Augustine invoked Solomon himself as a harbinger of sorts: “Solomon himself in his own person merely gave notice of the coming of Christ, by a foreshadowing of the future [...] in Solomon there is a kind of shadowy sketch, while in Christ the reality itself is presented to us”. Solomon was “the son of David, not the Son of God”,²²⁸ and all prophecies of the future were fulfilled in Christ.

*The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*²²⁹ describes a “dispute” between a Christian named Timothy and a Jew called Aquila in which the Christian, naturally, has the upper hand and Aquila ultimately is baptized. Among other things, their dispute revolves around the correct interpretation of Psalm 2:7 (“[...] I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have begotten you’”), of Nathan’s words to David in 2 Samuel 7, and of the prophecies of Isaiah. Timothy interprets these as referring to Jesus, and to establish the claim that the intended reference is not to Solomon, he emphasizes the distinction between Jesus and Solomon, reminding his Jewish interlocutor that Solomon succumbed to the temptations of demons while Jesus, in turn, overpowered them and controlled them for all eternity, and thus demonstrated that he was “greater than Solomon”. To bolster his argument, Timothy cited Solomon himself, or at least a text attributed to him—the pseudo-epigraphical *Testament of Solomon*, which was written in Egypt between the first and fourth centuries C.E. and declares the supremacy of Jesus. Timothy did not deny that God regarded Solomon as a beloved son (*Jedidiah*), but he argued that God had revoked his love for this wayward “son” as punishment for not having adhered to his commandments; the true son of God was therefore Jesus. Aquila the Jew responds: “Then how do all the scriptures wish to call this Jesus the Son of

225 *Quaestiones Evangelicae* 5.2.

226 Origen (1921, p. 192).

227 See Cyril (1995, xi). Jesus had two fathers: “one David, according to the flesh, and one, God”. As a son of David, He is subject to time but as son according to the Godhead, He is not subject to time nor to place.

228 Augustine (1984, XVIII:8). And see the detailed discussion in *Contra Faustum (Reply to Faustus the Manichaean)*, where he writes that Christ is “the true and truthful Son of God and the true and truthful Son of David” (Augustine 1984, p. 735).

229 See Pastis (1994). In Pastis’ view, the Jews and Judaism function as heuristic devices in the Christian catechesis.

David, but also in your Gospels we find the blind men crying out to him and also the Canaanite woman saying ‘O Son of David’.”²³⁰ To this Timothy replies that the evil spirits that were expelled called out: “What have you to do with us, Son of God?”²³¹ Aquila is not satisfied, and Timothy adds that Jesus is said to be the son of David because it was necessary “for the things written in the law and the prophecies to be fulfilled”.²³² Hence David’s description as the father of Jesus and, moreover, as the harbinger of the latter’s appearance and his status as the Messiah.²³³

The question of Jesus’ sonship persisted in Christian polemics even after Christianity became ascendant, by which point the three-hundred-year long debate with the pagans had drawn to an end and Judaism was more an imagined rival than a real one. Nonetheless, Augustine, for example, felt compelled to remark that “the Jews realize that the son promised, as they read in this passage to King David, was not Solomon; but so amazing is their blindness that they profess their hope for another even when the promised Son has clearly manifested”.²³⁴ Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1149), for his part, inquired how the words in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews could refer to Jesus if the source of the quote in question was 2 Samuel 7:14. He concluded that the literal reference was to Solomon, while the hidden, more mystical reference was to Jesus.²³⁵ Another example was Alfonso Tostado Ribera, Bishop of Avila (1400 – 1455), who asserted that Solomon was “an adoptive son. Christ was a son by nature”.²³⁶ Luther wrote: “And although God does call Solomon his son [...] and says that he will be his father, this promise is dependent on the condition that Solomon will remain pious [...] It is not at all rare that God calls his saints, as well as the angels, his children. But the son mentioned in 2 Samuel 7:14 is a different and special son who will retain the kingdom unconditionally and be hindered by no sin”.²³⁷

230 Matthew 9:27; 15:22.

231 Matthew 8:29.

232 Varner (2004); Robertson (1986, p. 219).

233 Psalms 72:1. The verse continues: “Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment [...] In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace [...] Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him”.

234 Augustine (1984, XVII: 8, p. 735).

235 *Quaestiones in Epistolas Pauli, in Epist. ad Hebraeos*, 14:11.

236 OPERA. In secundum librum, Regum Commentaria, Venice: Balleoni, 1728. (Reprints exist, as well as a digital edition).

237 Luther (2015, p. 73).

Medieval Jewish Polemic

In the Middle Ages, the Jewish response to these arguments was not intended to defend the depiction of Solomon as the chosen son of the “Father,” i.e., God, but rather to deride the sacrilegious Christian belief in the virgin birth and in Jesus as “son of God”. Neither in rabbinical literature nor in the Jewish “disputation” literature from the twelfth century onwards was any attempt made to disguise the out-and-out rejection of Christian dogma. Yet, in Jewish polemical literature, Solomon is not pitted against Jesus in this context.

In the *Kuzari*, Judah Halevi wrote that the first man (Adam) was created a whole, perfect creature; hence, “We call him God’s son, and we call all those who were like him also sons of God”.²³⁸ In his *Bitul Iqqarei Dat ha-Notzrim* [A Refutation of the Principles of Christianity], Ḥasdai Crescas (c.1340–1410), a philosopher and teacher of Jewish law, pointed out contradictions and illogic in ten principles of the Christian faith and in Jesus’ biography, including the concepts of the Trinity and of Jesus as a son of God. To Jesus’ declaration that “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me”,²³⁹ Crescas responded by asking “Is the messenger not equal to he who sent him?” He also wondered why it was necessary for Jesus to turn to his Father for aid if he himself were possessed of the same divine powers. Crescas claimed furthermore that verse 4:6 in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians—“one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all”—actually reiterates the Jewish belief, expressed in Deuteronomy 4:39 that “the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other”.²⁴⁰ In other words, God was “Father of all, and Father to no other god”.

Advancing a different argument in the summary to his commentary on Psalm 72, the grammarian and biblical exegete R. David Kimhi, also known by the acronym Radak (1160–1235), overturned Christian claims: peace did not predominate during Jesus’ lifetime, sinners and evil men did not vanish from the land, Jesus did not reign over all the people. As for Jesus’ divinity, he wondered how it could be possible to pray that a man live, for there was no reason to pray for a divine being’s life; “[...] if they (the Christians) said: the son will pray to the father for all who believe in the son, to whom will he pray? For he is the son of God”, and later, “if you [Christians] say: the son will pray to the father for the

²³⁸ *Kuzari* 1:95.

²³⁹ John 7:16.

²⁴⁰ R. Ḥasdai Crescas, *Sefer Bittul Iqqarei ha-Notzrim*, trans. into Hebrew from Catalan in 1451 by Joseph Ben Shem Tov, ed. Daniel J. Lasker (1990). There were several Church Fathers who claimed the Sages knew of the triune nature of God but chose to hide that knowledge from the masses. R. Hasdai cites as an example Hippolytus, *Adversus haereses*, 100, n. 97.

sake of his believers, to what purpose will he pray? Is not the son himself meant to be God?”²⁴¹

Similarly, Leone Modena (Judah Aryeh), in his *Clipeus et Gladius* [Sword and Shield], asserted that if God had wished to appear in the flesh, he would have done so by means other than a human birth—just as he created Adam and Eve by other methods. He went on to perform a linguistic analysis: the Hebrew root yod-lamed-dalet (יָלַד—“begat”) actually meant *yatzar* (יָצַר—“created”); in other words, God created Solomon but did not physically beget him. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, was grammatically singular despite seeming to possess a plural suffix, and in those places where multiple names of God appear (“the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel”) no allusion exists to a trinity. Modena repeated the main arguments of Nestor the Priest, namely that if God had desired a son, he surely would not have resorted to the unclean vehicle of the female womb but would have created him in purity as he did the angels or Eve. He also pointed out the contradictions in Matthew and Luke: if Jesus was not the son of Joseph, then perforce he was not of the seed of David. He further denied that the words in the Epistle to the Hebrews (which he attributed to Paul) refer to Jesus.²⁴²

The Dominican friar Raimundus Martini responded to such arguments in a book titled *Capistrum Iudaeorum*, written around 1267. To answer the claim, for example, that Jesus did not “have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth”,²⁴³ he quoted from the Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishmael²⁴⁴ on Exodus 12:6 that “a man’s agent is like the man himself”, and from the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 99b, that “he who causes his neighbour to fulfil a precept, is regarded by Scripture as though he had done it himself”. Jesus’ disciples and apostles fulfilled the psalmic prophecy and disseminated Christianity “from the great sea in the south, where the Cushites live, to the great sea to our north”.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Kimhi (1967, p. 62).

²⁴² Arye Yehudah of Modena, *Magen vecherev*, 27–30 and 47–49. In his polemic work *The Reproach of the Gentiles*, Profiat Duran, a rationalist philosopher, points to the errors, lack of logic, and contradictions in Christology, among them the concept of sonship and the divinity of the son. Thus, for example, Jesus’ words on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) show that Jesus did not regard himself as God (here I will add: Jesus cried out: ‘My God, my God’ and not ‘my father, my father’). Duran also cited the differing versions of Jesus’ genealogy. See Talmage (1983).

²⁴³ Psalms 72:8.

²⁴⁴ *Mekhilta de R. Yishmael Pisha* 5 (Horovitz–Rabin 1960, p. 17).

²⁴⁵ Jeremy Cohen regards the book as a manual for Christian preachers and missionaries. Cohen (2001, pp. 279–294).

Medieval Jewish biblical commentators responded to the Christian allegorization of the Bible not with a counter-allegorization of their own but rather with a literal interpretation. In other words, they disputed what they perceived as the distortion of biblical sources by the Christian camp²⁴⁶ and the lack of historical truth in Christology. It is particularly noteworthy that they did not cite Nathan's prophesy to David as proof that Solomon was a son of God; this was because they did not attribute sonship to Solomon and because such a claim might indirectly have bolstered the Christian claim of Jesus' sonship. I should mention here that Islam, too, regarded the "corporealization" of the term *ben* (son) as evidence of Christianity's "polytheistic" nature and as a denial of the monotheistic principle. The Quran itself addresses the matter; in Quran 19, we find: "Such was Jesus, son of Mary: (this is) a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt. It becometh not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should take unto Himself a son". God ordered the birth of Jesus but surely was not his parent.²⁴⁷

The Broken Dynasty: Solomon and Jesus—two sons of David?²⁴⁸

Jesus' divine sonship is a theological dogma, while his sonship in the genealogical sense is a historical matter.²⁴⁹ The latter conception poses an inherent difficulty since the New Testament describes Jesus as a descendant of David. The belief in a "Messiah born of David", made David—rather than Solomon—the fitting candidate to be Jesus' "father according to the flesh".²⁵⁰

Solomon is mentioned only a few times in the New Testament: (a) in the story about the Queen of Sheba's visit to "a greater than Solomon"; (b) in Jesus' parable on humility: "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these"²⁵¹; (c) in the Gospel of John relating that several men, amid a crowd in the courtyard of the Temple, once called out that the Messiah would

246 On this matter, see Chapter Three.

247 Quran 19:34–35 ("Mary"). See also Parrinder (2013, pp. 126–132).

248 Many scholars have dealt with this subject. See, *inter alia*, Charlesworth (1995); Hanig (1993); Fisher (1986); Green (1982); Burger (1970); Oeming (2007); Trotter (1968, pp. 82–97); Chilton (1982); Bock (1991); and Perkins (1988).

249 There may have been groups within early Christianity that were skeptical of David's messianic status. See Ruzer (2007).

250 Romans 1:1–4.

251 Luke 12:27.

rise from the seed of David and out of Bethlehem but, since Jesus was from the Galilee, a controversy then broke out.²⁵² Solomon's most important appearance is in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, which begins with Abraham and continues on to David, Solomon, and their descendants.²⁵³ This is in contrast to the Gospel of Luke, where Solomon is absent from Joseph's family tree and Jesus is the only "son of David" and heir to David's messianic role. In Luke, for example, the angel Gabriel informs Mary: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end".²⁵⁴

Furthermore, the Gospel of Mark relates that when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem astride a donkey, those following him called out: "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! *Hosanna* in the highest heaven!"²⁵⁵ The scene is described similarly in Matthew: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! *Hosanna* in the highest heaven!"²⁵⁶ Upon reaching the courtyard of the Temple, Jesus is again received as the "son of David".²⁵⁷ Matthew relates that Jesus himself asked the Pharisees, "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" To which their reply was "The son of David".²⁵⁸ "How is it then," Jesus continued in Matthew's telling, "that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions".²⁵⁹

In other words, the Gospels present David as the father of Jesus in his earthly incarnation as a "son of man", leaving no role for Solomon.²⁶⁰

252 John 7:40–44. Yet see in the same Gospel: "the scripture said that Christ came of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem" (7:42).

253 Matthew 1:1–16. See Eusebius polemic against the "alleged discrepancy in the gospels as to Christ's genealogy" in *The History of the Church* (Eusebius, 1989, pp. 20–22).

254 Luke 1:30–33.

255 Mark 11:10.

256 Matthew 21:9.

257 Matthew 21:15.

258 Matthew 22:42.

259 Matthew 22:43–46.

260 Augustine explains that the Pharisees were unable to reply because they did not understand that Jesus appeared before them as a man while remaining hidden from them as the

Thus, Jesus is both “son of God” and “son of David. As “son of David” he is the mortal, earthly Jesus, while as “son of God” he is atemporal and eternal. According to Luke, Jesus is typologically the “son of God” *because* he is the true “son of David” (in other words, the Messiah)²⁶¹: “When he had removed him [King Saul], he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes’. Of this man’s posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised”.²⁶² And again: “Our father David,” who was a prophet, had foretold the resurrection of the Messiah; since David did not himself ascend to the heavens, the words in Psalm 110:1—“The Lord says to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool’”—must be intended for Jesus, the Lord and Messiah.²⁶³ Further, Paul’s Epistle to the Romans refers to the gospel concerning his (God’s) who descended from David Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh²⁶⁴; and Timothy is told: “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead”.²⁶⁵ David, moreover, exemplified an ideal king and at the same time heralded the coming of Jesus and his teachings: “Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus”.²⁶⁶

When Peter spoke to the inhabitants of Jerusalem on the festival of Pentecost, he assured them that “ancestor David [...] both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day” and that God had resurrected Jesus, the Messiah: “Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption’. This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear”.²⁶⁷

son of God—in other words, the mystery that Jesus was both son and lord of David, and that one might be both man and God. Sermon XLI.

261 Ruzer (2006).

262 Acts 13:22–23.

263 Acts 2:24–36.

264 Romans 1:3.

265 2 Timothy 2:8.

266 Acts 1:16.

267 Acts 2:29–34.

In addition, in the Book of Revelation, Jesus is depicted as a lion: “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered”,²⁶⁸ and in *Psalms of Solomon*, Solomon undergoes a transfiguration into Jesus:

*Lord, you chose David to be king over Israel
And swore to him about his descendants forever
that his kingdom should not fail before you.
See, Lord, and raise up for them their king
A son of David, to rule over your servant Israel*²⁶⁹

This is a fulfillment of Amos’ prophecy: “On that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old”.²⁷⁰

The *Blessing of Jacob*, a text preserved in the Dead Sea scrolls, draws a similar connection between David and the Messiah: “Whenever Israel rules there shall [not] fail to be a descendant of David upon the throne. For the *ruler’s staff* is the Covenant of kingship [and the clans] of Israel are *feet* until the Messiah of Righteousness comes, the Branch of David. For to him and to his seed was granted the covenant of kingship over his people for everlasting generations [...]”.²⁷¹

David was assigned an additional role as the herald of the coming of Jesus, as seen in Psalm 72—“Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king’s son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice”—and in other psalms referring to the son of David and depicting his eternal reign on earth. Psalm 110:1 (“The Lord says to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool’”) is seen in this way: “Of this man’s posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised”. Justin Martyr asserted that Psalm 72 could not have referred to Solomon, since the future it described was never fulfilled during his lifetime: “[...] that none of these things mentioned in the Psalm happened to him is evident. For neither did all kings worship him; nor did he reign to the ends of the earth; nor did his enemies, falling before him, lick to dust”. On the contrary, Solomon flouted God’s commandments, violated the covenant, took pride in his wealth, and committed grievous sins of the kind that “Gentiles who know God, the Maker of all things through Jesus the crucified, do not venture to do, but abide every torture and vengeance

²⁶⁸ Revelation 5:5.

²⁶⁹ *Psalms of Solomon*, Psalm 17. Charlesworth (1985, pp. 189–197).

²⁷⁰ Amos 9:11.

²⁷¹ 4QPBless. in Vermes (1987, p. 261).

even to extremity of death, rather than worship idols, or eat meat offered to idols". In contrast, Jesus was the "king of glory", "the eternal king" foreseen in the psalm, whose kingdom spread over the entire globe and would endure for all eternity.²⁷²

Others took a similar approach. Origen similarly found that Psalm 72 referred to the "true Solomon"—that is, to Jesus—while Solomon himself merely symbolized the vacuity that derives from ostentatious wealth, rather than humility and the supremacy of the soul over the body. And Tertullian, in his *Divinae institutiones*, wrote that Nathan the Prophet's prophecy was realized not in Solomon, whose kingdom failed to endure even though he was the son of David, but rather in Jesus. Eusebius too declared that Psalm 72 and the promise in 2 Samuel could not refer to Solomon,²⁷³ while, similar to Origen, a work attributed to Athanasius (*Expositiones in Psalmos*) described Jesus as the "true Solomon" (Psalm 72:1). Regarding Psalm 45:6–7, Augustine wrote: "No one, however slow of wit, could fail to recognize in this passage the Christ whom we proclaim and in whom we believe, when he hears of 'God, whose throne is for ever and ever', and to recognize God's anointed, to be understood as God's anoints—not with visible oil but with the spiritual and intelligible chrism".²⁷⁴ According to Augustine, Nathan's prophesy²⁷⁵ refers to Jesus—"We may be sure that 'the blessing of the words' on David's line is not something to be hoped for a limited period, like that which was seen in the days of Solomon; it is something to be expected to last for all eternity"²⁷⁶—while Psalms 45, 72, 89, and 110 show that "it is in Christ that we see the fulfillment of these words".²⁷⁷ Hence, "the Jews realize that the son promised, as they read in this page, to King David, was not Solomon; but so amazing is their blindness that they go on to profess their hope for another, even when the promised son has been so clearly manifested".²⁷⁸ It was only owing to Christ that the house of David was "destined to become eternal".²⁷⁹

272 See Chapter 34 in Justin Martyr (2003, pp. 51–53).

273 Eusebius, *Quaestiones Evangelicae* 5:2.

274 *City of God* 17:16 (Augustine, 1984, p. 746).

275 2 Samuel 7:12–16.

276 *City of God* XVI:2 (Augustine, 1984).

277 *City of God* XVII:8 (Augustine, 1984).

278 *City of God* XVII:8 (Augustine, 1984). The Benedictine nun, poet and musician Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1170) writes that the meaning of "Behold, the lion of the Judah, the root of David, has prevailed" is this: the son, splendour of the Godhead, is like a root, He also roars like a lion when he casts the first angel with his followers into the abyss (Revelation 5:5), Letter to the Abbess of Altena, before 1173 (Letter 49R) in Hildegard of Bingen (2001, p. 164). According to Luther, Jesus was of the seed of David but not of Solomon, and was furthermore the "renewer of

Most of the Sages attributed the authorship of Psalm 72 to the Messiah, the descendant of David, and believed that the subject of the psalm, likewise, was not Solomon, though he was David's son, but the Messiah.²⁸⁰ Similar beliefs held true for Psalm 122, which tells of "thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David" in Jerusalem. Solomon did not satisfy the description in Psalm 72—"He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy"—and thus could not be the future Messiah. David, then, was the formative father of the Jewish people; the Messiah would be a son of David, but not Solomon. The Sages ignore Solomon and speak of the "House of David" without mentioning him²⁸¹; Solomon plays no role in Jewish messianic expectations and is instead subsumed, as we saw in Chapter One, into the general term "House of David",²⁸² or "the booth of David that is fallen"²⁸³ (but which will one day rise again).²⁸⁴ When the Roman Emperor Julian considered the prophesy "the scepter

the covenant" (*promissio Gratiae*): "Thus the dear Son of David, Jesus Christ, is also our King and Messiah, and we glory in being his kingdom and people..." (Luther 2015, p. 212).

279 *City of God* XVI:12 (Augustine 1984, p. 742). And on this matter, see Chapters 8–15, pp. 734–744. Calvin, for his part, was opposed to the exclusion of Solomon from David's line: "If Jesus was not descended from Solomon, he was not the Christ". (Radak) Kimhi, as we have seen, countered this idea with an observation that while various prophecies remained unfulfilled by Solomon, neither did the prophecies regarding universal peace, an end to evil, and more come to pass during the time of Jesus Christ. Kimhi (1967, p. 160).

280 Zakovitch (1982).

281 Duling, based solely on the evidence in the Gospels, claims that early Judaism preferred to mention Solomon not by name but rather as "son of David". Duling (1975).

282 Because of Christian censorship, this interpretation was omitted from printed documents. See Grossman (2012). The Qur'an describes Solomon as "David's heir" (Sura 26:16), and he is counted among the prophets. Al- Kisā'i's *Tales of the Prophets* relates that when Satan (Iblis) hears a divine voice declaring that Bathsheba is pregnant, and that the fruit of her womb will bring him much sorrow, he gathers all his sons and demons (genii) from all corners of the earth to investigate. They return and tell him that Bathsheba is carrying Solomon in her womb, who will rule over all the kings of the world; when Satan asks the angels assigned to guard the tower of David "Who is this Solomon?" he is told: "He is the son of David who will be the cause of your disaster and that of your offspring. al-Kisā'i (1997, p. 289).

283 Amos 9:11. Mireille Hadas-Lebel suggests that the four parallel sayings attributed to Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai (head of the school of Yabneh) on his death bed, which referred to King Hezekiah as the "Son of David", i.e., the Messiah, are an echo of the first exegetical polemic between Jews and Christians concerning the Christian argument drawn from the Bible on the identity of the "true Messiah". See Hadas-Lebel (1999).

284 In Jewish practice, the *Mi-She Berakh* prayer is recited on festivals and Sabbath mornings to the person called up to the reading of the Torah: "He who blessed our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob". When the blessing is for a sick person or a woman who has just given birth, the names of Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon are added.

shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet",²⁸⁵ he wrote that it was as clear as the sun that it did not relate to Jesus.²⁸⁶ His attempt to revitalize Greek polytheism and ground it in a philosophical foundation, however, was doomed to failure. Even before the first Council of Nicaea in 325 adopted the creed that the Christian faith was based on belief in "one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father [...], true God from true God, begotten, not made", the title "son of David" had largely given way to "son of God",²⁸⁷ though it did not vanish entirely. The "House of David" became a symbolic "house" in triumphant Christianity and continued to occupy an important place both in the ascending Christology and in Christian biblical commentary throughout the generations. In contrast, Jewish polemics against the sonship of Jesus made no mention of that of Solomon, as they saw no resemblance between the two instances of fatherhood attributed to God. Nor am I aware of any Jewish source that rejected God's fatherhood with respect to Jesus by arguing that Solomon was God's "true son".

The correspondence between Solomon and Jesus on the subject of sonship exists, therefore, primarily on the Christian side; it was Christianity that strove to defend the uniqueness of Jesus' status as son of God and to claim, in doing so, that Jesus, as the one true son, was thus also the "true Solomon".

285 Genesis 49:10.

286 Julian, 243E.

287 Burger (1970).