PREFACE

In many ways, this volume is an extension – and specific application – of the work of the Divine Mediator Figure Group at the Society of Biblical Literature. For seven years (1991–1997) many of the contributors for this work met annually to discuss developments and counter-developments of the phenomenon of divine mediation during the Greco-Roman period. In specific, the Group adopted three goals: (1) to integrate a variety of methods in the study of divine mediation; (2) to integrate a variety of disciplines in the study of divine mediation; and (3) to integrate a variety of sources in the study of divine mediation. I would like to thank my co-chair of that Group, John R. Levison, and its steering committee, Donald Juel, Marianne Meye Thompson, Larry W. Hurtado, Wendy Cotter, Alan F. Segal, and Paula Fredriksen, for paving the way for this work.

This volume also arises from a university course and an Internet discussion group, both led by James R. Davila. The honors module “Divine Mediator Figures in the Biblical World”, taught in the spring semester of 1998 at the University of St. Andrews, examined traditions in the biblical and para-biblical literature about exalted figures who served as mediators between God and human beings. The focus was on biblical, Jewish, and Greco-Roman traditions in the Second Temple period, but with an awareness of the larger context of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds from the second millennium B.C.E. to late antiquity. Each seminar concentrated on a particular figure, and the overarching concern of the module was to further our understanding of the cultural matrix that gave rise to the veneration of Jesus and to New Testament Christology. The last seminar was devoted to the topic of Jesus as a divine mediator.

A public discussion group on the Internet was conducted concurrently with the on-line module. The students and instructor used electronic mail to dialogue with students and scholars outside the University of St. Andrews on the subject matter of the course. The list opened for discussion in early February of 1998 and closed on 30 June 1998.

Finally, this book grows out of the The International Conference on the Origins of the Worship of Jesus, held at St. Mary’s College
in the University of St. Andrews on 13–17 June 1998. The overarching purpose of the conference, and thus of this volume, is to evaluate Christianity’s praxis of Christ-devotion in the context of Jewish monotheism. Although there are many studies of second Temple Judaism (in general) and of Christianity’s relationship with Judaism (in particular), there has not been a sustained and comprehensive investigation of the way in which Christ-devotion in the first two centuries of the common era represents a manifestation of Jewish monotheism. This volume attempts to fill this gap in three, distinctive ways: (1) by re-examining the theological force of “monotheism” during the period; (2) by retracing the historical steps of Christianity’s adaptation/mutation/re-definition of Jewish monotheism and exploring and debating the influence of non-Jewish traditions on this process; and (3) by mapping the ways in which Christianity’s unique appropriation of Jewish monotheism helps explain the intriguing relationships among emerging Christian, Jewish and g/Gnostic communities.

A number of themes emerge repeatedly in these papers. One of the best represented is the question of how Jewish monotheism gave birth to the worship of Jesus. The papers by Richard Bauckham, Michael Mach, and Larry W. Hurtado concentrate on this problem, but it arises in many of the other papers as well. The papers by Anders Aschim, Margaret Barker, and Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis focus in particular on the figure of the high priest (in both his earthly and heavenly manifestations) as a (or the) background to the early worship of Jesus. A number of contributors deal with the evidence of a particular author or text: Paul (P. M. Casey and Alan F. Segal); the Psalms, as cited in the Gospel of John (Margaret Daly-Denton); and the Ascension of Isaiah (Robert G. Hall and Loren Stuckenbruck). Other contributors explore the Greco-Roman background of the worship of Jesus (David Capes, Adela Yarbro Collins, and Todd E. Klutz). The paper by Klutz also shows how social-scientific analysis can illuminate aspects of the problem, and the paper by Capes carries the analysis of the evidence as late as the third century C.E.

Finally, April De Conick and Pheme Perkins bring the evidence of the Coptic Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi to bear on the question.

I am thankful to James R. Davila for his hard work as the co-organizer of the conference and co-editor of this volume. Jim and I are thankful to Gladys S. Lewis, whose keen editorial eye brought the essays into their present form. And all the conference participants are most grateful for the warm Scottish hospitality we received.
at St. Mary’s. In this regard, we would be remiss if we did not thank Ronald A. Piper, Professor of Christian Origins, and Head of the School of Divinity, and Professor Struther Arnott, Principal of the University of St. Andrews.

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Finally, it is the editors’ great privilege to dedicate this volume to three little ones who help make our worlds complete.

C. C. Newman  
Pentecost 1999  
Louisville, KY  
USA