These pages are offered as a small token of friendship and admiration to a scholar who never forgets that scholarly involvement in ancient religious traditions is also a way to recover their meaning and implications for our own times. Indeed, for him, ancient religion represents the very backbone of our cultural heritage, which is made of the complex interactions between Athens and Jerusalem.¹

Since the publication of Erik Peterson’s *Monotheismus als politisches Problem,*² written as a valiant attempt to counter, in dark times, Carl Schmitt’s ‘political theology’, the political implications of early Christian beliefs, doctrines and attitudes have been carefully scrutinized. Christian political theology is nowhere more clearly present, in Antiquity, than in the Constantinian revolution. In that respect, the panegyrics of Constantine written by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, provide particularly rich material.³ As is well-known, the Christianization of the Empire in the fourth century also meant the neutralization, for all practical purposes, of early Christian eschatological beliefs: the Roman Empire could not anymore be perceived as an evil kingdom to be radically swept away at the time of the Saviour’s Second Coming. In early Christian literature, Jerusalem, both the earthly city and the heavenly one, played a central role. In the following pages, I shall probe the transformation of

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¹ See for instance the essays collected in J.N. Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).
perceptions and images of Jerusalem with the waning of early Christian eschatology. While the historian should beware of slipping from ancient images to modern conceptions, a better understanding of the mental mechanisms ruling the neutralization of eschatological hopes might shed some light on aspects of our present predicament, and of the passage from Jerusalem as the latter-day battlefield between Satan and Christ to the ‘etymological’ conception of Jerusalem as the City of Peace.

While the faith in Jesus Christ was born in Jerusalem, it very soon reached new and distant horizons. The Apostles, and Paul in particular, sought to preach the Gospel to the world at large. The first direct contact between Athens and Jerusalem in Christianity is of course Paul’s speech to the Athenians on the Areopagus, just after his meeting with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, as reported in Acts (17:19–31), a text written by Luke, a few decades after Paul’s death.

Flattering the Athenians on their intense religiosity, Paul offers to enrich them with the new message from Jerusalem, revealing to all and sundry the creator of the universe. For him, Athens was ready to recognize the religious truth coming from Jerusalem, which completed its own spirituality in a natural way. The proclamation of religious truth smoothly integrates a culture of religious and cultural pluralism, which was actually waiting, perhaps not quite consciously, for this addition. For Paul, Athens needs Jerusalem, as much as Jerusalem needs Athens.

This complementing between Athens and Jerusalem, inscribed as it is in the very beginnings of Christianity, does not reflect, however, the traditional perception of the relationships between the two cities. For most early Christian sources, references to Jerusalem are highly charged, as the holy city invokes powerful (and contradictory) feelings. Athens, on its side, is not a very significant city for either intellectual or religious history in the first centuries CE, and in early Christian literature, references to Athens are almost always metaphorical.

In the locus classicus, Tertullian’s De praescriptione haereticorum (7.9–12), this relationship is defined as being essentially one of radical conflict. For Tertullian, Paul had learned in Athens to recognize in Greek philosophy, ‘this poor human knowledge which pretends to search for truth’, and which is basically responsible for the existence of heresies:

Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?—For what do Athens and Jerusalem have in common? Or the Academy and the Church? Or heretics and Christians? Our doctrine comes from the portico of Solomon, who himself had taught that it is in the simplicity of the heart that one must search for God. Too bad for those who have promoted a Stoic, a Platonic, or a