This book was written as David Bernard’s PhD dissertation. But, unlike many dissertations, this book reflects the work of a mature author who has honed his theology over the years and can communicate it clearly. His is an exegetical work but one motivated by a theological issue that is core to the church’s faith, namely, the identity of Jesus Christ. In particular, his question concerns how one reconciles Paul’s recognition of Christ’s deity with Paul’s commitment to Jewish monotheism. This question is indeed potentially vast. But Bernard’s approach to it is appropriately modest and suggestive. He seeks to approach it through the small window of one Pauline text: 2 Corinthians 3:16–4:6. His strategy in opening this window, however, is clear. He wants to defend the idea that Paul’s Christology should be read through the lens of Paul’s Jewish monotheism rather than through the lens of a nascent Trinitarian theology.

To accomplish this task, Bernard takes a history of religions approach to Pauline Christology. Though he focuses on only one Pauline text, he takes considerable time justifying his monotheistic (non-Trinitarian) reading of it. He starts by surveying the debate that has raged over the historical roots of belief in Christ as divine. He moves insightfully through this debate drawing together threads that support his exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3:16–4:6. He disagrees with Daniel Boyarin’s contention that ancient Judaism so hypostasized divine wisdom as to create the possibility of belief in “two powers” or a personal distinction in God. Bernard draws rather from the scholarship that interprets divine wisdom in ancient Judaism as God’s immanent presence in the world. No departure from Jewish monotheism is necessary in this case. Though the two powers idea was co-opted by Justin Martyr and other church fathers, Bernard sides with Richard Bauckham in maintaining that there is no such compromise within the Jewish monotheism that provides the background for the faith of the New Testament. He also sides with Bauckham (and Larry Hurtado) that the church identified Jesus with God from its inception. But the question remains: Did this faith in Christ as divine alter the Jewish monotheistic faith that cradled it? Here is where Bernard finds less than satisfying Bauckham’s conclusion that the earliest church held to a “binitarian” (or “dyadic”) understanding of God. For Bernard, this adjustment to monotheism is not necessary to understanding Paul’s Christology. The “two-ish” nature of God reflected for Bauckham in the New Testament is understandable for Bernard within the framework of transcendence and immanence, namely, in the difference between Yahweh and...
Yahweh's embodiment in Jesus. Whether or not Jesus' personification of Yahweh as expressed in relation to his heavenly Father reveals interrelationality in God is the crucial question that Trinitarians will want to press in response to Bernard at this point.

Bernard then further sets the stage for his exegesis by describing Paul's thoroughly monotheistic rhetorical world. By the time Bernard gets to his exegesis, the foundation has been laid for understanding the deity of Jesus in a way that does not compromise monotheistic faith. Bernard's choice of 2 Corinthians 3:16–4:6 as the object of his exegesis is well suited for his purpose. This passage more than any other in Paul seems to make a functional equivalence between, on the one hand, the Lord of the Exodus and the risen Christ and, on the other hand, between the risen Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit. Bernard concludes on the strength of this passage that Christ is not a pre-existent person separate from Yahweh but is rather the human personification or embodiment of Yahweh in history. In the words of Bauckham, Christ is the eschatological triumph of monotheism. The strength of this conclusion for Bernard is that it does not alter but rather fulfills the monotheistic faith in which Paul was reared and remained committed. Bernard then carefully draws some conclusions for Oneness Pentecostal theology.

Rather than using 2 Corinthians 3:16–4:6 as his text, it might have been interesting had Bernard chosen Acts 2:33 instead (“Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear”). This text also speaks of Jesus as Lord and mediator of the Spirit but does so in terms that are much more interrelational than the Corinthian text that Bernard chose to exegete. For it is precisely this interrelationality involved in Yahweh's self-impartation to creation for which the Trinitarian theologians later struggled to give an account. In Bernard's exegesis of his Corinthian text, he dismisses the idea that Paul was "functionally" rather than "substantially" identifying Christ with the Spirit (“the Lord is the Spirit”, 2 Cor. 3:18), since such a distinction would have been unknown to Paul. But surely Paul still could have been thinking in a direction we would recognize as "functional." Moreover, so long as Bernard seeks to understand Paul apart from a subordinationist understanding of Christ as a pre-existent "being" other than Yahweh, his exegesis seems compelling. Problematically, he seems to assume that with this he is displacing a Trinitarian approach to Paul's Christology. Such would not be the case. What is clear throughout is that for Bernard Trinitarian faith is incompatible with monotheistic faith. As Bernard knows, Trinitarians would not agree. In fact, one could argue that the triumph of Nicene faith concerning the nature of Christ (and the Trinitarian faith that was developed afterwards) had the effect of preserving the oneness of God in the light of the obvious inter-