

JESUS AND MARY REIMAGINED
IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

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JESUS AND MARY REIMAGINED
IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Edited by

Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter

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ABBREVIATIONS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1QS	Rule of the Community
Acts Pet.	Acts of Peter
AJohn	Acts of John
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
Apoc. El.	Apocalypse of Elijah
Apoc. Pet.	Apocalypse of Peter
<i>Arch.</i>	Vitruvius, <i>On Architecture</i>
b.	Babylonian Talmud
CD	Damascus Document
<i>Cher.</i>	Philo, <i>On the Cherubim</i>
<i>Def. med.</i>	Pseudo-Galen, <i>Medical Definitions</i>
<i>Det.</i>	Philo, <i>Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat (That the Worse Attacks the Better)</i>
<i>Deus</i>	Philo, <i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis (That God Is Unchangeable)</i>
<i>El.</i>	Euripides, <i>Electra</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistle(s)</i>
<i>Fab.</i>	Aesop, <i>Fables</i>
<i>Frag.</i>	<i>Fragment(s)</i>
Frg. Tg.	Fragmentary Targum
<i>Fug.</i>	Philo, <i>De fuga et inventione (On Flight and Finding)</i>
<i>Geogr.</i>	Strabo, <i>Geography</i>
Git.	Gitin
GJohn	Gospel of John
Gos. Mary	Gospel of Mary
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses (Against Heresies)</i>
<i>Her.</i>	Philo, <i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit (Who Is the Heir?)</i>

<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
Jdt	Judith
J.W.	Josephus, <i>Jewish War</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	Philo, <i>Legum allegoriae (Allegorical Interpretation)</i>
m.	Mishnah
<i>Mem.</i>	Xenophon, <i>Memorabilia</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	Philo, <i>On the Migration of Abraham</i>
<i>Morb.</i>	Hippocrates, <i>De morbis (On Diseases)</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>On the Life of Moses</i>
<i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi (On the Creation of the World)</i>
P.Oxy	Oxyrhynchus papyri
<i>Parm.</i>	Plato, <i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Phileb.</i>	Plato, <i>Philebus</i>
PJ	Protevangelium of James
<i>Probl.</i>	Pseudo-Aristotle, <i>Problems</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	Philo, <i>On Providence</i>
QE	Philo, <i>Questions and Answers on Exodus</i>
QG	Philo, <i>Questions and Answers on Genesis</i>
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
<i>Stoic. rep.</i>	Plutarch, <i>De Stoicorum repugnantiiis</i>
<i>Subl.</i>	(Pseudo-)Longinus, <i>On the Sublime</i>
t.	Tosefta
Ta'an.	Ta'anit
Tg. Neof.	Targum Neofiti
<i>Theaet.</i>	Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Theog.</i>	Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i>
T. 12 Patr.	Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs
T. Benj.	Testament of Benjamin
T. Jos.	Testament of Joseph
T. Levi	Testament of Levi
T. Reu.	Testament of Reuben
T. Sim.	Testament of Simeon
y.	Jerusalem Talmud

SECONDARY SOURCES

AB	Anchor Bible
ANRW	Temporini, Hildegard, and Wolfgang Haase, eds. <i>Auf-</i>

- stieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.* Part 2, *Principat*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–
- ANTC Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
- BBR *Bulletin for Biblical Research*
- BDAG Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
- BIS Biblical Interpretation Series
- BTS Biblical Tools and Studies
- BJS Brown Judaic Studies
- BTB *Biblical Theology Bulletin*
- BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
- CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
- CCSA Corpus Christianorum: Series Apocryphorum
- E-P Ehrman, Bart D., and Zlatko Pleše. *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011
- ESEC Emory Studies in Early Christianity
- GRBS *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
- HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*
- ICC International Critical Commentary
- IPM Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- JSNT *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
- JSNTSup Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
- JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
- LSJ Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
- NA²⁸ *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
- NETS *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007
- NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament

<i>NPNF1</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1</i>
<i>NPNF2</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PG	Patrologia graeca
PL	Patrologia latina
PMS	Publications in Medieval Studies
<i>R&T</i>	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
<i>RCT</i>	<i>Revista catalana de teologia</i>
RRA	Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity
SAAA	Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles
ScholBib	The Scholars Bible
SP	Sacra Pagina
SRR	Studies in Rhetoric and Religion
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
TLG	<i>Thesaurus linguae graecae</i>
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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INTRODUCTION

Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter

A majority of the essays in this volume developed from a PhD seminar titled “Luke, John, and Emerging Gospels” at Emory University during spring 2013. After some intensive sessions on the Gospels of Luke and John, everyone began to work through the Infancy Gospel of Thomas and the Prot-evangelium of James (PJ). Some of the highly detailed work the students were posting electronically each week on PJ caught the instructor’s eye, and he started to envision the possibility of a collection of essays that might emerge from the seminar. He also noticed a keen interest among some of the students in the Gospel of John (GJohn) and its legacy, so he decided to focus for a series of weeks on the Acts of John (AJ) with them, rather than spending extended time on the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary, and the Gospel of Judas, as had originally been planned for the seminar.

As the seminar moved along, the participants experienced a major challenge to move beyond traditional literary-historical criticism into comparative sociorhetorical exegesis of canonical and extracanonical gospels and gospel-like writings in emerging Christianity. The seminar was a remarkable exhibition of the evolving face of the study of the New Testament during the early decades of the twenty-first century. The students in the seminar were well advanced in their ability to produce literary-historical exegesis. The question for many of them was why they should engage in anything beyond good literary-historical exegesis of the extracanonical writings in relation to the New Testament gospels.

The students began to see how dramatically, in relation to canonical biblical literature, the extracanonical writings relocated biblical verses and/or reconfigured entire biblical scenes. And usually this meant a significant shift from the discursive mode in which one or more biblical writings presented the stories. In this context, the instructor emphasized how important it is to become explicitly aware of what “rhetorlect” a writer is

foregrounding and the resultant “blend” of rhetorolects that results from the particular “shift” of discourse.¹ To uncover such discursive shifts and to recognize the fascinating and sometimes surprising reconfiguration of resources, the students were deeply engaged in “textural” analysis. In particular they used the heuristic tools of identifying repetitive texture and opening-middle-closing texture, procedures that proved highly productive (some of this work remains in the essays).²

As the final seminar papers took shape, the instructor consulted with the rest of the students to see if it might be possible to generate a volume of essays that exhibited significant coherence. An essay the instructor had published on Luke and Sirach in 2005,³ plus an unpublished essay on priestly discourse in Luke and Acts completed in 2008, emerged as important for the papers the students were writing in the seminar. Thus the volume gradually took shape, with two essays of the instructor at the beginning, followed by essays written by the participants in the seminar.

The result is a volume that begins with two essays by Vernon Robbins on priestly rhetorolect in Luke and Acts. The first essay is a programmatic discussion of priestly statements and emphases through both Luke and Acts. Observing that Irenaeus called Luke the “priestly” gospel, Robbins proposes that there were six major rhetorical dialects, which he calls “rhetorolects,” within early Christian discourse: wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, precreation, miracle, and priestly. This sets the stage for his

1. Vernon K. Robbins, “Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination,” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro, BIS 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 161–95; Robbins, “Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text,” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson, SRR 8 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–106; Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, vol. 1, RRA 1 (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, 2009); Robbins, “Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 192–219; Robert H. von Thaden Jr., *Sex, Christ, and Embodied Cognition: Paul’s Wisdom for Corinth*, ESEC 16 (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, 2012).

2. The analysis of inner texture, including repetitive texture and opening-middle-closing texture, is outlined in Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 7–39.

3. Vernon K. Robbins, “Bodies and Politics in Luke 1–2 and Sirach 44–50: Men, Women, and Boys,” *Scriptura* 90 (2005): 724–838. The editors of this volume are grateful for the permission granted to reprint this article here in slightly updated form.

observation that there is substantive blending of priestly rhetorolect into a dominant prophetic storyline in the Gospel of Luke. A key to the presence of priestly rhetorolect in Robbins's approach is attention to the "rhetography" of the text, namely, rhetoric in the text that prompts graphic images and pictures in the mind.⁴ For priestly rhetorolect, imagery of places like altars and temples, people like priests, and activities like offering sacrifices and praying are central.⁵ This means that the opening chapter of Luke, with its emphasis on the priestly lineage of both Zechariah and Elizabeth, and its portrayal of Zechariah offering incense in the temple while people outside are praying, starts Luke with special priestly emphases. Then the Jerusalem temple as a special place of blessing on the infant Jesus, followed by Jesus's return to the temple at twelve years of age, continues a focus on priestly places and activities in the context of the prophetic emphases in the opening chapters of Luke. After this, in a context of observing that Jesus's ministry is punctuated by regular times of prayer, Robbins observes how often Jesus forgives people's sins, tells others to forgive, and prays even for those who have hung him on the cross in Luke. Then before ascending into heaven, Jesus blesses his disciples and tells them to return to the Jerusalem temple, where they are continually blessing God as the Gospel ends. The priestly emphases in Luke continue in Acts, where there is special emphasis on prayer and forgiveness of sins, plus the law of Moses and the Jerusalem temple. This is especially interesting, since throughout Luke and Acts there is no assertion that Christ's death is a sacrifice for sins or that Jesus's death was a ransom for many.

After this opening essay, another essay by Robbins focuses on bodies and ritual actions in Luke, using Sirach 44–50 as an intertext that portrays vivid priestly imagery in the Jerusalem temple. Robbins observes especially how ritual actions and pronouncements of blessing, which are especially appropriate in a temple context, occur in Luke also in family households. In this context, Robbins explores how Luke produces distinctly different guidelines for "inclusion" and "exclusion" in households that are new "holy locations" for God's activity in the world.

After these two essays, the volume turns to the Protevangelium of James, which begins with circumstances around the birth of Mary, the future mother of Jesus, and ends with the martyrdom of John the Baptist's

4. Robbins, "Rhetography," 81.

5. Robbins, *Invention*, xxvi, 190–207, 499–504; von Thaden, *Sex, Christ, and Embodied Cognition*, 138–47, 233–92.

father Zechariah. A remarkable feature of PJ is its focus on the Jerusalem temple during both the first half of the story and the concluding events. Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, have a priestly heritage, and after a miraculous pregnancy despite their childlessness, they dedicate Mary to the Jerusalem temple. Even before they take Mary to the temple, however, they keep Mary pure by making her bedroom a holy sanctuary, only allowing young, pure Hebrew girls to play with Mary, and never allowing Mary to walk on the ground. After Mary is taken to the Jerusalem temple at age three, she is watched over and fed by angels until age twelve. When priests decide she must be taken out of the temple, a time of bewilderment and challenge begins for Mary through a hastily arranged process by which Joseph is chosen by lot and a special sign to take her into his home and become her guardian. Mary miraculously becomes pregnant while Joseph is away on a building project, and this creates a time of testing for Mary as she is accused first by Joseph and then by the temple priests of inappropriate behavior. After she successfully defends herself, her pregnancy comes full term while she is traveling with Joseph for the enrollment at Bethlehem. When Joseph finds a cave as a place for Mary to give birth, Jesus comes forth from her body in the form of light and gradually becomes a suckling baby. After two midwives see that Mary's virginity remains even after her child is born, circumstances around King Herod's concern about news of the birth of a savior of Israel lead to the flight of both Mary, with the child Jesus, and Elizabeth, with the child John. The unsuccessful search for John leads to Herod's emissaries' coming to the Jerusalem temple and murdering John's father, Zechariah, who at the time is high priest of the Jerusalem temple. After Jerusalem priests find blood, but not the body, of Zechariah by the altar in the inner holy of holies, they appoint Simeon as Zechariah's successor as high priest in the Jerusalem temple.

Focusing on Mary's visit to Elizabeth after she has miraculously become pregnant in Luke and PJ, Christopher Holmes's essay discusses the different function of the topos of blessing in the prophetic discourse of the opening chapters of Luke compared to the priestly discourse in PJ. Observing that the prehistory in Luke focuses on a promised political kingdom, he perceives that the prehistory in PJ focuses on the activation of divine benefits in a priestly context around the sacred space of the temple and its personnel. This reconfiguration of discourse in PJ results in the repetitive texture of blessing in PJ 1–12 being focused on Mary with no reference to Elizabeth or her conception in the exchange between Mary and the angel of the Lord who visits her. Instead of any reference to Eliza-

beth's being filled with Holy Spirit, there is focus on both Elizabeth and her unborn child blessing Mary, without mention of Mary's own unborn child. At this point Mary forgets what the angel of the Lord had previously said to her and wonders why all the women on earth will bless her, rather than bursting into praise to the Lord with the Magnificat, as she does in Luke. Holmes concludes that this almost exclusive focus of blessing on Mary emphasizes not only her status as pure virgin but also her role as blessed mother of Jesus. This leads to a second observation, namely, that praise in PJ is not focused almost entirely on God, as it is in Luke, but on Mary as the means or instrument of praise to the God of Israel. In addition, the temple priests ask that God give Mary an illustrious name, everlasting in all generations, which Holmes perceives to be a reconfiguration of the Abramic blessing of Genesis 12 that applies it to Mary. This leads to the conclusion that the great name of Mary comes from her function as mother of Jesus, rather than her function solely as virgin of the Lord.

Mandy Hollman's essay, building on insights in Holmes's essay, argues that Mary is the central character in PJ in contrast to Jesus, who is the central character in the canonical gospels. Mary's chief characteristic is her absolute virginity, and this establishes the context for the rest of her functions in the story. Focusing on the opening-middle-closing texture of the movement of Mary into the temple (7.1–8.1), Hollman compares the story of Mary in PJ with the story of Samuel in 1 Sam 1:21–2:11. Comparing and contrasting these two “toddlers in the temple,” she concludes that the story of Samuel functions as a resource text for PJ that is reconfigured to focus on Mary as the holy vessel of Jesus rather than a prophet-priest who anoints the ancestor of the Messiah, king of Israel. In this context, she observes the passiveness of Mary, which transcends the Hellenistic moralist's ideal for women, to point to her role as “God-bearer” (*theotokos*). This role signals her function as a new “moving temple,” like the tabernacle or ark of the covenant. At this point Hollman introduces the opening-middle-closing texture of the moving of the ark of the covenant from the house of Obed-Edom to a tent in Jerusalem and Solomon's movement of the ark from the tent into the Jerusalem temple. Hollman sees similarities between the movement of the ark to Jerusalem and to the temple and the movement of Mary from the temple to Joseph's house and to the cave where she gives birth to Jesus. The dark cloud that descends on the cave and then disappears as Jesus is born as light that becomes flesh in a suckling baby leads her to conclude that in PJ Mary becomes a “moving tabernacle,” a holy vessel of Jesus who comes into the world as the true

light who becomes flesh to dwell among humankind. In this way, the virgin body of Mary mediates a new mode of divine presence on earth.

An essay that was inaugurated by Michael Suh comes next in the volume. In the seminar itself, he worked in detail on the prophetic nature of the four well-known hymns in the first two chapters of Luke—the Magnificat, Benedictus, Gloria, and Nunc Dimittis—with the knowledge that none of these four hymns is present in the Protevangelium of James. The question was why PJ does not contain them when they seem to be such an appealing part of the Lukan presentation of the birth of John and Jesus. As Suh developed his detailed interpretation of the prophetic dimension of these Lukan hymns, he became convinced that the foregrounding of priestly rhetorolect had led to their omission in PJ. In the process, however, the presence of one fragment of the Magnificat intrigued him. Protevangelium of James contains a noticeable reconfiguration of Mary's statement in Luke, "My soul magnifies the name of the Lord," into a magnification of Mary herself in PJ: "Mary, the Lord God has magnified your name" (7.7; 12.2). Suh began to wonder if perhaps fragments of the other three hymns might also exist in PJ. As he searched, he became convinced that fragments of the other three hymns existed in the very final scenes of PJ, which focus on the death of Zechariah, and these observations formed the conclusion of his seminar paper.

When the instructor read Suh's final paper, he considered the identification of the fragments of three of the hymns in the final events of the story to be an amazing discovery. Near the beginning of the seminar, the instructor had admitted to the students that he was puzzled with the focus on the death of Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, at the end of the story. He wondered what the significance of this conclusion might be. Since the presence of fragments of the Lukan hymns is very suggestive for new ways we might think about the ending of PJ, the instructor agreed to join Suh in a substantive revision of the second half of the paper to show, in the best way we know how at present, some of the things Suh's discovery might imply for PJ. This led to the coauthored essay in the volume.

It is important to know that the three essays on PJ in this volume were written without knowledge of Lily C. Vuong's *Gender and Purity in the Protevangelium of James*, which appeared in 2013.⁶ When this excellent

6. Lily C. Vuong, *Gender and Purity in the Protevangelium of James*, WUNT 2/358 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

work became known during the editorial process, a few revisions along with some footnotes were added to the essays. However, it would have been ideal if we had all had access to Vuong's book from the outset, since it supports many insights in the essays but also pursues issues that could have produced dialogue and added some welcome nuances to certain emphases and discussions. One interesting proposal is Vuong's view that PJ 8.4 is a "narrative pivot in the text."⁷ For Vuong this means that 1.1–8.3 presents Mary as ritually pure in relation to the temple and sacrifices,⁸ while after 8.4 there is an emphasis on sexual purity where Mary is "first identified as a virgin and designated the title 'virgin of the Lord.'"⁹ In addition, Vuong's emphases that Mary's purity follows her wherever she goes and that she functions as "Jesus' prenatal sanctuary," "symbolic temple," and "sacred temple suitable for the Son of God"¹⁰ have an important relation to Hollman's view of Mary as a moving tabernacle. Beyond this, Vuong's argument for a Western Syrian provenance for PJ on the basis of its emphases on ascetic practices, menstrual purity laws, virginity, and both antidoceitic and anti-Marcionite rhetoric has an important relation to the queries about the implications of the focus on Zechariah's martyrdom at the altar of the temple in the conclusion of the Suh and Robbins essay.

The third part of the volume contains two essays on the Acts of John, which presents Jesus as a precreation being whose death on the cross exhibits the suffering and death of the Logos, which "is suffering and death but really is not suffering and death." In AJohn, the "real" Jesus is divine light with a voice, but this Jesus appears to humans in multiple earthly forms. To some the earth-form of Jesus looks at times like a child, to others at times like a handsome young man, and still to others at times like an old man with white hair. Also, sometimes the earth-form of Jesus may have a solid, dense body, and at other times it may be soft and immaterial. Thus, while the earth-form of Jesus is dying on the cross, the divine Logos voice of the suffering and dying one speaks to John while he is in a cave on the Mount of Olives. Acts of John, therefore, elaborates and reconfigures meanings of the "glorification-death" of Jesus in GJohn with an expanded precreation conceptuality that includes substantive aspects of Middle Platonism.

7. *Ibid.*, 146.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 147.

10. *Ibid.*, 187–91.

Beginning with an overview of AJohn, Jonathan Potter uses the designation of “the Testimonies” to refer to AJohn 87–105 and discusses multiple metamorphoses that occur in a series of twelve testimonies in 88–93. The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain, which occurs in the three testimonies in the very middle of the unit, is just one instance among many, then, where people experience the changing appearance of the Lord. Through specific comparison of the transfiguration events in AJohn with the Lukan account, with all the Synoptic versions in the background, Potter interprets the special emphasis on the “nakedness” of the Lord, by which the “true” identity of Jesus as wholly divine is revealed. In particular, he traces the way the singular transfiguration scene in the Synoptic Gospels is reconfigured in AJohn’s Johannine discourse such that in the conceptuality of AJohn, the earthly Jesus is always being “transfigured.”

The final essay, by Jared Farmer, explores the function of the Lord as cosmic priestly mediator in AJohn. Farmer begins with an overview of AJohn that leads to a special focus on its opening-middle-closing presentation of the crucifixion. The remarkable thing is that instead of focusing on the earthly form of the Lord dying on the earthly cross, AJohn presents the divine Logos appearing to John in a cave as a divine voice with no shape, above a cross of light that is surrounded by a multitude having no one form. The divine Logos voice explains that the nature of the cross of light in human terms alternates among *topoi* the reader recognizes as major *topoi* in GJohn: Word, Jesus, Christ, Door, Way, Bread, Seed, Resurrection, Son, Father, Spirit, Life, Truth, Faith, or Grace. Farmer observes that AJohn adds a *topos* that is not in John but is prominent in Middle Platonism, namely Mind. This leads to an examination of the principle of separation in Platonism that generates the concept of “one among many,” which explains the one form and one likeness of the cross of light in the context of the multiple *topoi*. It also explains the marking off of all things as well as the harmony amid multiple transient things on the right and the left. This leads to the middle of the explanation by the divine Logos voice of the cross of light: the cross has united all things by the Word, marked off all things transient and inferior, and compacted all into one. This explains why all earthly things have multiple forms, rather than only one united form. The important thing for John, then, is that he ignore the many and listen only to the voice of the divine Logos so that he be united with it and be as the Logos is, namely, wholly with the Father and with the Logos. The conclusion of the scene in AJohn then presents the Logos voice explaining to John that the slaying, piercing, bloodying,

wounding, hanging, suffering, nailing, and death of the Logos are things John hears that the Logos suffered but did not suffer. From an earthly perspective, all of these things happened to the Logos, but from a divine perspective, none of these things really happened to the Logos. This is a mystery, the Logos voice says, that is being told only to John, and if he understands it he will truly understand the nature of the Logos in relation to all earthly things. Farmer interprets this discussion to mean that the Lord is priest and Logos who sustains the cosmos, “standing as mediator between humanity and divinity, making possible the return to unity with God through the sacrifice of the cross.” In other words, the cosmos is restored through the suffering of the Logos, which is the priestly moment of sacrifice that is actually beyond human comprehension.

The fourth part of the volume contains three response essays. The response by Ronald Hock reviews and critiques the first two essays, on priestly rhetorlect, by Vernon Robbins and the essays by Christopher Holmes, Mandy Hollman, and Michael Suh and Vernon Robbins on the Protevangelium of James. Since Hock has worked so thoroughly with PJ, it is gratifying to see his response page by page to the two essays that set up the focus on priestly rhetorlect and the foregrounding of priestly rhetorlect in PJ that causes such substantive configuration of biblical stories related to it. In addition, it is a pleasure for the authors of the essays to have Hock’s invitation to submit the volume for publication in the series he edited at the time, *Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement* series. The response by Susan Hylen reviews and critiques the essays by Jonathan Potter and Jared Farmer on the Acts of John both from the perspective of its relation to GJohn and the nature of the content within it. Her intimate knowledge of GJohn yields well-informed responses to the different world that AJohn creates for Jesus when John tells the Ephesians the story of his time with Jesus. The response by Gregory Bloomquist comes from intimate knowledge of the use of topoi and rhetorlects in sociorhetorical interpretation as it is applied by members of the Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity research group. Bloomquist emphasizes major differences in discourse between AJohn and GJohn, with the proposal that AJohn interacts more with literature written after GJohn than the Gospel itself.

Taken together, these essays explore the diverse character of emerging Christian narratives. From priestly beginnings at the temple in Luke to the enigmatic figure of the cross of light in Acts of John, early Christians found a variety of ways to interpret and express the storylines of Jesus,

Mary, and other important figures. By reconfiguring and relocating existing resources of texts and topoi, each of the works examined here creates new images and stories within the discursive framework of unique blends of emerging Christian rhetorolects. This volume thus offers readings that attempt to account for this richly creative and complicated process.

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