



New Testament Christological Hymns: Exploring Texts, Contexts, and Significance
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Exploring New Testament Christian Hymns

New Testament scholars have long debated whether early Christian hymns appear in the New Testament. And where some see preformed hymns and liturgical elements embossed on the page, others see patches of rhetorically elevated prose from the author's hand.

Matthew Gordley now reopens this fascinating question. He begins with a new look at hymns in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world of the early church. Might the didactic hymns of those cultural currents set a new starting point for talking about hymnic texts in the New Testament? If so, how should we detect these hymns? How might they function in the New Testament? And what might they tell us about early Christian worship?

Gordley writes: "'The Christian church began with song.' So claimed Ralph Martin, and from the witness of the New Testament, we may readily agree. The songs sung by Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, and the angelic host in Luke's Gospel and the hymns recited before the throne in Revelation mark the advent of Christ and the exaltation of Christ, respectively, as events that were generative of hymnic praise. The importance of the Psalms of the Jewish Scriptures to the early Christians is also widely known, and their significance to the writers of the New Testament can readily be seen from the frequency with which they are quoted. The practice of the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is likewise clear to any reader of the New Testament (see Col 3:16). But the idea that some of the newly composed hymns of the early Christians may be preserved in whole or in part in certain New Testament passages is a relatively recent one that has only become widely discussed in the last one hundred years. This book is a study of those New Testament passages that have captured the attention of biblical scholars and that have been identified as christological hymns – hymns in praise of Christ."

"Drawing on an impressive breadth of scholarship, Gordley offers a mature and careful study of an important field of research, with implications for early Christology, liturgy, and much more besides. He is to be congratulated for producing such a useful, learned, and constructive work that also makes important and pointed criticisms of recent scholarship. Gordley has written a book that will need to be consulted by all engaged in these and related debates."

— **Chris Tilling**, graduate tutor and senior lecturer in New Testament studies at St. Mellitus College

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