



Open Access



Check for updates

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Theology & Religious Studies*

Jewish Monotheism, Jesus' Divinity and The Trinitarian Analogy

Gideon Y. Tambiyi

Department of Religion and Philosophy, University of Jos, Nigeria

Email: tambiyig@unijos.edu.ng

ORCID: 0000-0001-5209-4916

ABSTRACT

The Trinity has been a subject of debate over the years within both Christian and non-Christian circles. Many have not been able to see the dichotomy between Jesus and the Father and the oneness as emphasized by Jesus in the Gospels and the apostles in the Epistles. This understanding, as presented about the unified nature of the Godheads, seems to conflict with the Jewish monotheistic understanding, which has, in its entirety, given birth to Christianity. This paper investigates such positions within the Jewish and Jesus studies in search of a meeting point for understanding the trinitarian analogy. Through careful analysis of the biblical records, we can deduce that the early Christians, who were predominantly Jews, invented the understanding of the Trinity, considering reflections from the teachings of Jesus. This was intensified when Jesus' deity was formalized at the First Council of Nicaea in AD 325, making the Trinity an important Christian doctrine, even though the word 'Trinity' does not have a biblical appearance. Whether the doctrine of the Trinity is accepted or not, inquisitive ability would leave us to decide, despite the orthodox understanding of Jesus and the Trinity in a typical African Christian society.

KEYWORDS: Jewish Monotheism, Jesus, Trinity, early Christianity, and Nicaea.

African Journal In Advanced Arts And Humanities

Volume 4, Issue 2, 2026

ISSN: 3005-4540 (Online)

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: 17 March 2026

Accepted: 18 May 2026

Published: 28 May 2026

HOW TO CITE

Tambiyi, G. Y. (2026). Jewish Monotheism, Jesus' Divinity and The Trinitarian Analogy *African Journal of Advanced Arts and Humanities*, 4(2). Retrieved from <https://journals.evonexpublishers.com/index.php/AJAAH/article/view/81>



Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Evonex Global, an imprint of Evonex Publishers Limited

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Introduction

The Trinity has been a most complicated, undefined, and unimaginable doctrine of the church today. While many claim to understand it, explaining its reality has always been throwing a rowboat into the Atlantic. The deification of Jesus to an equal role with God the Father, even though playing a different role, has created the entire dilemma. Christians believe that the almighty God exists as three coequal and consubstantial, even though distinct personalities. This has sharpened the Christian trinitarian doctrinal ideology over the centuries.

It is safer to say that the concept of the Trinity is one of the early inventions of the early church. One can see that the concept conflicts with the original of Jewish monotheism, where God wrote through Moses, *שמעו ישראל יהוה אחד יהוה אחד* “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6:3; Mk 12:29, 32; Gal. 3:20). This has guided the Jewish people and their children. In light of the biblical teachings, Jacob Neusner states that “Judaism believes God is one, unique, and concerned for us and our actions. Thus, Judaism is ‘ethical’ monotheism.”¹ Within such a strong Jewish life in tandem with God’s direction, “The Jewish people are known for three major things: they are identified as Israel, their main book is the Torah, defining their worldview, and their commandments defining their way of life.”² These have shaped Jewish life and affected the formation of early Christianity, in which the trinitarian conception is formed.

This work evaluates the understanding of Jewish monotheism as derived from the Law and the Prophets and how such has affected the placement of Jesus in the entire trinitarian analogy during the early church. The coming of Jesus, his ministry on earth, his death and resurrection have all been categorised in the synoptic Gospels and, predominantly, in the Gospel of John, the Jesus divine-human construct has been rooted. These have also been developed in the epistles and promoted by the early church fathers.

Jewish Monotheism and the Concept of the Godheads in Early Christianity

To understand Jewish monotheism, one needs an understanding of Judaism in its historical context. Even though some people feel Judaism cannot be detached from the historical existence of the Jewish people, merely rooting the religion of the Jews on a theoretical basis should not be separated from the cultural experiences of the people. Neusner has this to say: “Judaism cannot be studied, or even defined, outside the historical experience of the Jewish people. But it also cannot be studied solely within that experience - as if there is no such thing as Judaism, but merely the this-worldly culture of the Jewish people.”³ But whether such a culture defined all Jewish people, it can be stated that “Not all Jews practice Judaism or any other religion.”⁴

Judaism has several important sects. Grabbe states that “Judaism is often seen in terms of the various sects – the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Although this way of understanding the religion is misconceived, these sects were important.”⁵ The core framework of the religion was characterized by the Second Temple, where the “people meet weekly or even more frequently in synagogues to pray, worship, and hear the Bible read. The written scripture and its reading and study are assumed to be the focus of

¹ Jacob Neusner, *The Way of Torah: An Introduction to Judaism* (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), 3

² Neusner, *The Way of Torah*, 21-22.

³ Neusner, *The Way of Torah*, 17.

⁴ Neusner, *The Way of Torah*, 7, 11.

⁵ Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 130.

Judaism at all times.”⁶ It is safer to say that Rabbinic Judaism created diversity among the people with its main tool, the study of the Torah, as its integral component. This can be seen to have replaced the Temple. Grabbe elaborates: “Study was an act of worship. Study had taken the place of the sacrificial cult. Any religious movement develops diversity, and rabbinic Judaism was no exception. It also took time – centuries – for the rabbis to establish their authority and impose their views on the Jewish community.”⁷

Despite that, one finds that the Jerusalem temple became the centre of Jewish worship, and blood sacrifice was the main activity as they were required on a “daily, weekly, and monthly basis, and also at the major religious festivals.”⁸ The priests were granted the responsibility of offering these sacrifices on behalf of the people. All Jewish men were expected to show up to worship at the temple and participate in the ritual activities, which included tithes of agricultural produce, first fruit offerings, and burned sacrifices. While some see Judaism as the religion of the written book, it is safer to state that Judaism had its roots before the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, and it remained a Temple religion until the destruction in AD 70. Even before the Jewish canon, the Qumran community adopted sacred books beyond those of the Old Testament and ignored the Book of Esther, and perhaps Alexandrian Jews had a different variety of sacred books. There are also questions surrounding books such as Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs in the rabbinic literature.⁹ The Jewish people had access to the Torah in one form or another. Many writings show evidence of knowledge as they intensely interpreted the Law. In later times, this became the role of the Pharisees and the priests, who understood the monotheistic notion of God for the religion.

There have been attempts to underscore the Jewish religion within the context of not being monotheistic. Such enquiries have been propounded to generate arguments from both sides. Hurtado sees that effort as generating confusion, inaccuracy, and insufficiency of adequate methods from both arguments.¹⁰ Arguments against can be seen to have been captured by Peter Hayman, who claimed that the Jewish people have some adaptation of the Canaanite religions and some forms of Judaism mixed together with the belief in two gods.¹¹ But Hurtado believed that such information was scanty.¹² While Hayman supports his arguments with the absence of the doctrine of ex nihilo at the beginning, mystical unity of God and humans into the realms of angels, prominence of angels and the prohibitions to worship them, Jewish magical practices using heavenly figures and God as sources and the alleged mutilation of Yahweh in postexilic Jewish references to Wisdom and Logos, Hurtado does not see them fitting into such ditheistic pattern in Roman-era Jewish religion.¹³ Also, Hurtado cited Margaret Barker, who postulated the adaptation of the so-called theology of two deities (Elyon/Elohim and Yahweh) from preexilic Judaism to the postexilic periods.¹⁴ To Barker, the possibility for monotheistic Jews to worship

⁶ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 40.

⁷ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 137-138.

⁸ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 40.

⁹ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 131-135

¹⁰ Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), 32.

¹¹ Peter Hayman, "Monotheism - a Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *JJS* 42 (1991): 1-15.

¹² Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 32.

¹³ Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 32.

¹⁴ Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992). Margaret Barker, "The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. C. C. Newman, J. R. Davila, and G. S. Lewis, *JSJSup* 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 93-111.

Jesus was a false dilemma, and she considered the practice to be a later inclusion from the pagan practices or Christians adopting that against authentic Jewish religious traditions.¹⁵

With this, Hurtado argued that there could be other possibilities of the dilemma that Barker did not foresee. To him, religious traditions could also encounter some aspects of syncretism with other traditions and cultural forces, which could result in the infusion of a variant religious tradition.¹⁶ He inferred that neither Hayman nor Barker has shown the devotional pattern involving Jewish corporate and public worship practices during the Roman era, and to whom and how the Jewish people prayed and offered sacrifices.¹⁷ The closest of all is the prohibition of angelic worship, which is found in the rabbinic texts, and the lack of veneration of angelic worship, which is developed by Struckenbruck.¹⁸ While Hurtado concurred with the likely fusion of syncretistic worship with the worship of Yahweh, such can be seen in the stemming process of a rival Jewish movement with a cultic veneration of figures with the God of Israel. Antiochus IV's merger of the identification of God with Zeus and Dionysius within such a Hellenization process was closely related to the problem at hand.¹⁹

Richard Bauckham also made an important contribution to this study and argued that the motif of angelic refusal of worship is found in Jewish and Christian works.²⁰ It was evident that only God was to be worshiped as angels in Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9, providing ample witness to the Christological worship. With this, Hurtado concurred that God was to be worshipped, and worship was to be withheld from any of these figures," the angels."²¹

The radical break from Judaism by some of the Jews to Christianity created a vacuum as they ceased to be an integral part of the ethnic Jewish community. Within the confines of monotheism, there was a shift that initiated the trinitarian conception, even though they adopted the scriptures of the Jewish people. Neusner states that "Christianity, monotheist as is Judaism, reaching back to the same Scriptures, viewing the history of humanity within the same structures, sharing much in traditions of ethics, is a competing religion."²² The difference between such a practiced Jewish religion and the newly invented faith, Christianity, is seen to centre on Jesus Christ. Neusner states that "Christianity encompasses a remarkably diverse set of religious systems that have some qualities in common -belief in Jesus Christ - but also differ deeply, especially about matters on which they seem at first glance to concur."²³ For example, the place of Christ has been defined by different people, especially the Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Methodists, Mormons, and Lutherans, all having their unique systems of beliefs and behaviour. "Just from the very beginning, when Peter and Paul contended about absolutely fundamental issues of faith, as the world knows Christianities, but no single Christianity, so the world has known, and today recognizes, diverse Judaisms, but no single Judaism."²⁴ One sees the Judaism of Palestine to be more diverse culturally. The Jews travelled between Diaspora locations and Palestine steadily, and at the time of the origin of Christianity, Jews frequently moved from Diaspora locations to Palestine, bringing with

¹⁵ Barker, *The Great Angel*, 1.

¹⁶ Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 33.

¹⁷ Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 34.

¹⁸ Loren Struckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology*, WUNT 2/70 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995), 200-203.

¹⁹ Elias Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 93-111; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in the Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols. (London: SCM Press, 1974), 1:267-303.

²⁰ Richard Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 322-41.

²¹ Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 47.

²² Neusner, *The Way of Torah*, 14.

²³ Neusner, *The Way of Torah*, 15.

²⁴ Neusner, *The Way of Torah*, 15.

them the use of the Greek language and other aspects of their Diaspora culture.²⁵ But the bone of contention between these two religions is the place of Jesus, particularly in his dual nature as developed by the early church and sanctioned by the church fathers.

The Divine-Human Construct of Jesus

Judaism and Christianity believe in the monotheistic understanding of God. In other words, they are monotheistic religions because they all believe in one God. However, the role of Jesus in the Christian trinitarian understanding has left many wondering whether Christianity still adheres to such inherited monotheistic qualities from the mother religion, Judaism. As a result, Jesus has become a subject of modern scholarly discussions, particularly in his divine-human relationship. Some works discuss Jesus as he was perceived by the people of his time, with titles such as:

prophet, messianic claimant, exorcist/healer, holy man/Hasid, shaman, magician, teacher/rabbi, sage, peasant spinner of tales, clever wordsmith, revolutionary, establishment critic, friend of social outcasts, a liberal Jew ahead of his time), and whatever one posits as Jesus' message - and intention (e.g., to found a new religion/religious movement, to reform Judaism, to call for national repentance of Israel, to announce God's eschatological kingdom, to promote the overthrow of Roman colonialism in Jewish Palestine, to encourage new patterns of social interaction, to articulate a more carefree lifestyle), it is clear that he quickly became a figure of some notoriety and controversy.²⁶

There have been other cases of Jesus being described as a prophet, a herald of eschatological events (Elijah), or someone likened to John the Baptizer. Jesus was also seen as a messiah, an arrogantly dangerous agitator, a false teacher, and a magician.

Within the context of being a magician, such an understanding is developed in the m. Sabb. 12:4 where Jesus is described as a magician who has had encounters with magical powers and the Egyptian idolatry and heresy, a second-century understanding, particularly in Origen's reply to Celcius.²⁷ Also, a common work and an important piece worth citing is by Morton Smith. In this work, Smith in *Jesus the Magician* has this to say about the place of Jesus in the early church:

'Jesus the magician' was the figure seen by most ancient opponents of Jesus; 'Jesus the Son of God' was the figure seen by that party of his followers which eventually triumphed; the real Jesus was the

²⁵ Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*. Third edition (with a new Epilogue) (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2015), 8.

²⁶ Larry W. Hurtado, "A Taxonomy of Recent Historical-Jesus Work," in *Whose Historical Jesus?* ed. W. E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins, ES Q 7 (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 272-95. The works I discussed there were E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985); three Jesus books by Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), and *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); the first of a multivolume set by John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, *Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Marcus Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); and John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991). Further studies particularly worth noting that appeared after my essay are the second volume from John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994); Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Marius Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997; German ed., 1990); and Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

²⁷ Craig A. Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources" in Bruce Clinton and Graig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1998), 445-6.

man whose words and actions gave rise to these contradictory interpretations. 'Jesus the Son of God is pictured in the gospels; the works that pictured 'Jesus the magician' were destroyed in antiquity after Christians got control of the Roman empire. We know the lost works only from fragments and references, mostly in the works of Christian authors. Hence, modern scholars, trying to discover the historical Jesus behind the gospel legends, have generally paid no attention to the evidence for Jesus the magician and have taken only the gospels as their sources.²⁸

Smith concluded that:

Therefore, in the gospels' picture of Jesus, prophetic traits, like Old Testament traits and Pharisaic traits, are *ipso facto* suspect... Presumably, Jesus did know something of the books now in the Old Testament, of the synagogue prayers, and common pious practices of the Judaism of his time, and of the apocalyptic literature then popular. He may even have encouraged the belief that he was a prophet or messiah; perhaps he affected some appropriate traits.²⁹

Smith added that if we look for a figure that could account for the rise of the tradition preserved in the gospels, we find three pictures to guide us. One is the official portrait of 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God', one is the 'Jesus the magician' given by the hostile tradition, and the third is the primitive Christian picture of 'Jesus the god' which, as we have seen, lies behind the present gospel portrait.³⁰ To Smith, all three portraits of Jesus above are expressions of propaganda and are incredible since they explain the phenomena of Jesus' life.³¹

Such a high level of veneration (as God and the Son of God) is connected to the messiahship of Jesus. And within such understanding, Nils Dahl vehemently argued that Jesus' messiahship was discussed during his death. Dahl sees Jesus as a royal messianic pretender,³² a claim one can find in the Gospels (Mark 15:1-26; Luke 23:1,32-38; Matt. 27:11-14,20-23,37; John 18:33-37; 19:12). For such a crucifixion to take place, it is possible that Jesus must have made a huge claim of his messiahship or be one of his followers to warrant him being crucified with those serious criminals. Graham Stanton stated that Jesus was probably held by some such contemporaries to be a false teacher/prophet, a religious deceiver, in terms of Deuteronomy 13 and 18.³³ This is because "death by execution indicates a seriously negative construal of one's behaviour and execution by crucifixion indicates a clear intent to humiliate and eliminate an offender by the strongest measure in Roman judicial usage."³⁴ Also, crucifixion was seen as a capital punishment that was inflicted on the poor and slaves, and the most savage and shameful form of torture and death.³⁵

While Christians feel Jesus was and is still the Messiah to come, non-Christians do not feel such urgency of belief to be relieved with the son of Joseph, the Carpenter. These "non-Christians" can be a term used for both the opponents of Jesus, whom Smith exposed, and even non-Christians in modern times. However, Jesus is seen to be the Messiah, and the term messiah in modern world usage for the term

²⁸ Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper and Collins, 1978), vii.

²⁹ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 148.

³⁰ Smith, *Jesus the magician*, 149.

³¹ Smith, *Jesus the magician*, 149.

³² Nils A. Dahl, "The Crucified Messiah," in his *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. D. H. Juel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 27-47.

³³ G. N. Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?" in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Carlisle: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 164-80.

³⁴ Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 57. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

³⁵ Richard A. Horsley, "The Death of Jesus" in Bruce Clinton and Graig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1998), 410.

the ancient term as used in the first century can be seen to adhere to some precautions. Such a term (Greek *Christos*, anointed) was not used for Jesus during his ministry, a clear picture that his opponents could not best explain until decades after the death of Jesus, when Christians were compiling Christian literature. While some Gospel passages tend to enquire whether Jesus was ‘the Christ’ in respect to a Jewish belief in the coming of a Messiah, scholars believe that the Gospel writers had their own purported agenda, which was clearly to portray and present a Jesus and Christology among the Jewish people; hence, there was already such a perception among the Jews and their literature. For the Jews, this word is from the Hebrew word *Mashiah*, meaning anointed and used for kings and priests, though God used such a word for King Cyrus (Isa. 45:1) in promising the Jewish people deliverance from the hands of their Babylonians. This word later got developed as evidently used within the context of Jewish literature, whereby the word Messiah is seen repeatedly for king-priest and king-judge, both usages from the priestly and kingship traditions.³⁶ With this understanding on dual messianic themes, Grabbe stated that “we need to recognize the variety of views about the Messiah which do not form a coherent whole, which cannot be reduced to a single ‘Jewish messianic expectation’ in the late Second Temple period.”³⁷ Grabbe also vehemently stated that “One of the methodological failings in so many treatments is to speak of ‘messianism’ or ‘messianic expectations’ in texts which do not use the word Messiah in any way. Some of these passages may be relevant, but this is very much a subjective judgement.”³⁸

With all these understandings about Jesus in the early Church context, as stated in one of my works, it became clear that the early church thought highly of Jesus as Jesus thought of himself. In fact, the early church said much of Jesus even more than Jesus said of himself during his ministry in the available documents.³⁹ Morton Smith stated that:

No interpretations of Jesus will show us the man as he saw himself. All are outside views. This is inevitable. How many of our friends do we know as they know themselves? None. Even our knowledge of ourselves is mostly incommunicable. Personality is so complex and changeable that even a good autobiography is a high-speed photograph of a waterfall: it imposes a fixed form on a process falsified by fixation.⁴⁰

The great biblical and early church scholar Larry W. Hurtado observed:

I do not think it is necessary for Jesus to have thought and spoken of himself in the same terms that his followers thought and spoke of him in the decades subsequent to his crucifixion in order for the convictions of these followers to be treated as valid by Christians today. A good many may disagree, both among those who assert and among those who oppose traditional Christian beliefs. Most Christians will likely think that some degree of continuity between what Jesus thought of himself and what early Christians claimed about him is at least desirable and perhaps necessary for these claims to have religious validity.⁴¹

Monotheism, the Trinity, and the Modern Christians

The modern Christian is left with a dichotomic view of God, depending on which part of the Bible he reads. Centralising on the Old Testament means that God is seen in his monotheistic splendour, even though some Jews violated the code by embracing pluralistic Judaism. Despite the monotheistic nature of Judaism, there have been traces of a pluralistic Judaism, which conflicts with orthodox Judaism. One

³⁶ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 80.

³⁷ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 80.

³⁸ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 80.

³⁹ Gideon Y. Tambiyi, “Did Jesus really Say *ερχομαι ταχυ* ‘I am Coming Soon’? Interrogating the Usage of *ταχυ* ‘Soon’ in the New Testament,” *Humanity: Jos Journal of General Studies*. Vol. 16, No. 1 (2025), pp. 95-103.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 8.

⁴¹ Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 9.

finds magic and the other esoteric arts (astrology, divination, exorcism, healing), ‘miracle-working’, and Gnosticism, even when God insisted that only he deserves worship (Exo. 20:5; 23:25; 34:14; Jer. 25:6; Matt. 4:10; Lk 4:8; Jn 4:23-24). Grabbe argued that “The source of these traditions seems to be Judaism itself, yet the Gnostic texts in their present form are generally hostile to Judaism. This suggests a portion of Judaism which reinterpreted the Old Testament and Jewish traditions in such a way that it finally led – no doubt, through various stages – to a world view which was anti-Jewish.”⁴²

Similarly, when the Christian focuses on the New Testament, there is a tendency to see God as one yet plays diverse roles as reflected in the divine trinity, God being three heads and three being one. Jesus Christ becomes the centre of attention. His role in the divine-human construct has been challenging, explainable even though not understandable to both Christians and non-Christians. Jesus replaced the Jewish Temple. Grabbe states that “The Christians had Christ and did not need a temple. They survived and eventually flourished, first as a stream within Judaism but ultimately becoming a separate religion.”⁴³ Such a replacement of Christ for the Temple has led the early church to inculcate Jesus within the trinitarian construct as the second head of the Triune God. Whether the second person (Jesus) of the Trinity is to be worshipped would become a genuine concern in the divine-human construct of Jesus, a position clearly argued elsewhere.⁴⁴

We see Jesus in the Gospels as the sent one who came to execute the bidding of the Father who is in heaven (Matt. 10:40; Mk 9:37; Lk 4:18; 9:48; 10:16; Jn 4:34; 5:37; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 11:42; 12:44, 45, 49, 20, 24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21). As Christianity advances, Jesus, who is the sent one, is gradually being considered equal to the one who sent him (God), even though he didn’t claim it (Phil. 2:6). Such thought kept developing during the church fathers and was formalised at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, making the trinity an important Christian doctrine, even though the word ‘trinity’ does not have a biblical appearance. We can now say that the development of the concept of the Trinity by the early Christians has succeeded in hampering the traditional and orthodox monotheism within the Jewish society. While there was pluralistic Judaism that affected the monotheistic Judaism, some people tend to see this also applicable within the Christian era in the Trinitarian construct.

Apart from that, you still have Christians today who have multiple sources of strength, and they believe in several ‘supreme beings.’ Africa is known to be a pluralistic society, and the belief about Jesus has been held in tandem with the belief in spirits and some forms of juju practices, which Thelma called “Jesus in the morning and voodoo in the evening.”⁴⁵ This lifestyle has encroached into our daily lives, primarily with a few who genuinely rely on God alone for salvation and deliverance.

Conclusion

This work has argued that the trinitarian concept, which is unbiblical, is a development of the early Christians who were Jews and lived under strict Jewish monotheistic beliefs about God. It has always been stated that God is one and must be worshipped alone. Whether Jesus fits into that supreme level has been questioned on many counts. The elevation of the post-easter Jesus by the early Christians to a divine status despite Jesus denying such in the Synoptic Gospels has deepened the trinitarian construct, making it complex in the midst of Judaism, the mother religion. Perhaps the reason Jesus was killed by the religious leaders was because of the attempt to equate himself with God, which was considered an intense attack on the monotheistic nature of Judaism. Christians should note that the doctrine of the trinity might be seen to have conflicted with the Jewish monotheism held in both ancient and rabbinic Judaism to the time of Jesus. But whether it is doctrinally accepted in the *shamar*, שמר אלהינו יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6:3; Mk 12:29, 32; Gal. 3:20), relying on it would leave us to decide despite the orthodox understanding of Jesus and the Trinity in a typical African Christian society.

⁴² Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 136-137.

⁴³ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 137-138.

⁴⁴ Gideon Y. Tambiyi, “Should Jesus Be Worshipped? Evangelical Monotheism and the Jesus-Worship Pedestrian in African Christianity,” *Josuga: Jos Journal of Humanities* Vol. 7, No. 2 (2025), pp. 147-166.

⁴⁵ Thilo Thielke, “Christianity in Africa: Jesus in the Morning, Voodoo in the Evening” <https://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/christianity-in-africa-jesus-in-the-morning-voodoo-in-the-evening-a-463787.html> Accessed 30th April 2026.

Bibliography

- Allison, Dale C. *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998.
- Barker, Margaret. "The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. C. C. Newman, J. R. Davila, and G. S. Lewis, *JSJSup* 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 93-111.
- Barker, Margaret. *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*. London: SPCK, 1992.
- Bauckham, Richard. "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 322-41.
- Bickerman, Elias. *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*. New York: Schocken Books, 1962.
- Borg, Marcus. *Jesus: A New Vision*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Crossan, John Dominic. *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991.
- Dahl, Nils A. "The Crucified Messiah," in his *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. D. H. Juel. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- Evans, Craig A. "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources" in Bruce Clinton and Graig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1998.
- Evans, Craig A. *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Freyne, Sean. *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
- Grabbe, Lester L. *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus*. London: T&T Clark International, 2010.
- Hayman, Peter. "Monotheism - a Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *JJS* 42 (1991): 1-15.
- Hengel, Martin. *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in the Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols. London: SCM Press, 1974.
- Hengel, Martin. *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.
- Horsley, Richard A. "The Death of Jesus" in Bruce Clinton and Graig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1998.
- Horsley, Richard A. *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Hurtado, Larry W. "A Taxonomy of Recent Historical-Jesus Work," in *Whose Historical Jesus?* ed. W. E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins, ES Q 7. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997.
- Hurtado, Larry. *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Hurtado, Larry. *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*. Third edition (with a new Epilogue). London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2015.
- Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, *Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. New York: Doubleday, 1991.
- Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- Neusner, Jacob. *The Way of Torah: An Introduction to Judaism*. Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997.
- Reiser, Marius. *Jesus and Judgment*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997; German ed., 1990.
- Sanders, E. P. *Jesus and Judaism*. London: SCM Press, 1985.
- Smith, Morton. *Jesus the Magician*. San Francisco: Harper and Collins, 1978.
- Stanton, G. N. "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?" in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner. Carlisle: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Stuckenbruck, Loren. *Angel Veneration and Christology*, WUNT 2/70. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995.
- Tambiyi, Gideon Y. "Did Jesus really Say *ερχομαι ταχυ* 'I am Coming Soon'? Interrogating the Usage of *ταχυ* 'Soon' in the New Testament," *Humanity: Jos Journal of General Studies*. Vol. 16, No. 1 (2025), pp. 95-103.

- Tambiyi, Gideon Y. "Should Jesus Be Worshipped? Evangelical Monotheism and the Jesus-Worship Pedestrian in African Christianity," *Josuga: Jos Journal of Humanities* Vol. 7, No. 2 (2025), pp. 147-166.
- Thielke, Thilo. "Christianity in Africa: Jesus in the Morning, Voodoo in the Evening" <https://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/christianity-in-africa-jesus-in-the-morning-vooodoo-in-the-evening-a-463787.html> Accessed 30th April 2026.
- Vermes, Geza. *Jesus and the World of Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.
- Vermes, Geza. *Jesus the Jew*. New York: Macmillan, 1973.
- Vermes, Geza. *The Religion of Jesus the Jew*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Witherington III, Ben. *The Christology of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.