Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously: The New Testament and the Roman Emperor[1]

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The figure of the Roman emperor has, until relatively recently, been of marginal interest to students of the New Testament. Even though interest has increased, it has not been the object of an extensive study since Stauffer's *Christ and the Caesars* in 1955[2] and has only played a significant part in a handful of other published works.[3] Indeed, those who have argued that the figure of the emperor is a sustained concern of any part of the New Testament have often found themselves the object of ridicule and their interest regarded as, at best, somewhat eccentric (an example of this can be seen in R. P. Martin's remarks about Karl Bornhäuser's *Jesus imperator mundi* in the former's *Carmen Christi*).[4] At first sight this general lack of concern about emperors is unsurprising. After all, the New Testament itself only directly refers to emperors in a few places, even if they do seem to cast a long shadow over some of its proceedings, albeit from the wings, as in Acts (where, in the final chapters, Nero appears to be something like Godot, often talked about but never putting in an appearance).[5] New Testament scholars are perhaps familiar with the fact that the term *euangellion* is also found in imperial propaganda at the time of the birth of Jesus or that Revelation 13 probably includes allusions to Nero and other emperors, but little beyond that.[6]

However, such a neglect of the figure of the Roman emperor is, I contend, a significant failing on the part of New Testament scholarship. *The Roman emperor was a central feature of the cultural context of the first century and must be taken consistently into account in exegesis of the New Testament.*[7]

Such a statement obviously requires justification. To do this I will need to begin by demonstrating the importance of the emperor in the lives of the inhabitants of the first-century empire. This is best achieved by examining the *content* of imperial ideology during this period,[8] and the *reception* of this ideology. It is useful to distinguish between its *public* reception (by which I mean the degree to which it contributed to the shared culture of the day) and its *private* reception (by which I mean its reception in non-public cultures, such as that of the individual, or the household or workplace).[9] Only when this is achieved can we turn back to the New Testament and demonstrate the validity of my opening claim.

Imperial Ideology

The imperial cult, the worship of the emperors, is one of the central elements in the ideology of the emperor and is a good place to start (though it is not, as is so often the case, the place to end).[10] After all, it is, as we shall see, through the images and symbols of the cult that the emperor was most regularly encountered by those he ruled. And it was in the cult that the ideology was at its most apparent and naked (often literally, as any cursory examination of its iconography will reveal).

The character of the imperial cult, at least in the eastern empire, is the subject of considerable debate at present, as can be seen by a cursory examination of the two most significant works on the subject: S. R. F. Price's *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*[11] and Steven Friesen's *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family.*[12] However, in crude terms we can say that the cult, although varying significantly in its form over time, and from location to location, claimed that the emperors, as rulers and benefactors of the world, were worthy of worship. This is illustrated by a quotation from Nicolaus of Damascus which describes the cult during the reign of Augustus:

> Because mankind addresses him thus (Sebastos)[13] in accordance with their estimation of his honour, they revere him with temples and sacrifices over islands and continents, organised by cities and provinces, matching the greatness of his virtue and repaying his benefactions towards them.[14]

Such opinions can also be found in a myriad of other literary sources, such as Horace, Seneca, Suetonius, Paterculus, and Virgil,[15] and formed the substance of numerous official inscriptions from the New Testament period.[16] For example, a famous inscription from Priene reads:

> … the providence which divinely ordered our lives created with zeal and

> munificence the most perfect good for our lives, by producing Augustus and filling him with virtue for the benefaction of humanity, sending us and those after us a saviour who put an end to war and established all things; … when he appeared he exceeded the hopes of all those who anticipated good news (*euangellion*) not only by surpassing the benefactors born before him, but not even leaving those to come any hope of surpassing him: … the birthday of the god marked for the world the beginning of the gospel (*euangellion*) of his coming.[17]

Another inscription from Cos reads: '(The) Emperor Caesar, son of god, god Sebastos has by his benefactions to all men outdone even the Olympian gods.'[18]

The *Res Gestae* of Augustus, the self-penned, public record of the achievements of that paradigmatic emperor opens in a similar vein: 'The achievements of the Divine Augustus, by which he brought the whole world under the empire of the Roman people ... '[19] Such an idea can also be observed expressed in other media. The temples of the cult itself (such as the Ara Pacis in Rome)[20] and various works of monumental and fine art, from bold triumphal arches and statues to the exquisite Gemma Augustea,[21] visually articulated this 'theology'. Nor should we overlook the coins of the period which, through their inscriptions and designs, expressed the same central message (a fact which is familiar to New Testament scholars from study of the 'Render Unto Caesar' pericope).[22] The basic ideas of the cult are easily accessible in a vast array of written and material remains from the New Testament world.

The Reception of the Imperial Cult

The picture of the emperor presented by authors of the period was well known and appears to have met with widespread approval. Although the specific levels of literacy in the Roman empire are difficult to determine, there is considerable evidence that this is the case.[23] The example of Virgil is particularly telling. Graffiti from Pompeii indicates that his readership went well beyond his own class,[24] and we are told (presumably plausibly) that some of his lines concerning the divinity of Augustus were rapturously received by a rowdy mob at an imperial games during his lifetime.[25] Indeed, there is evidence that his particular conceptualization of the divinity of the emperor continued to be influential long after his death.[26]

Inscriptions referring to the divinity of the emperor (often inscribed on statue bases and altars) were also significant in shaping public opinion; they were prominent, numerous and widely distributed throughout the empire and its cities, with thirteen such inscriptions to Augustus alone in the main market of Roman Athens, and at least one to the same emperor in virtually every significant urban settlement in the eastern empire.[27] Indeed, the *Res Gestae* was a *public* text that was put up in a number of cities. Although the original was written for Rome, three copies are in existence today from Ancyra, Pisidian Apollonia, and Pisidian Antioch, and there were, no doubt, many more. It too may therefore have been relatively well known and influential, although it should be added that the frequency of the public display of the language of the cult does not necessarily indicate that it was a well known and active component in the world-view of inhabitants. We should not underestimate the capacity for public inscriptions to be unnoticed after their initial construction even by those that lived their lives surrounded by them (it is indicative of this that in the process of destroying Alexandrian Jewish prayer halls (39 CE), a mob of gentiles seeking to promote the worship of Caligula actually destroyed dedications to previous emperors).[28]

If we turn to the non-written elements of first-century culture, and particularly those encountered in the urban environments of the eastern empire, the importance of imperial ideology in the public culture of its day becomes all the more visible. In physical terms the cult had a pervasive presence, it was the most widely and uniformly distributed of all the cults of the empire (its unique provincial administration facilitated this). Its temples were, for example, prominently displayed in most sizeable settlements (and a number of smaller, rural ones)[29] and dominated the public space of the towns and cities in which they were found. We can see this, for example, in Caesarea Maritima where the temple to Augustus was built on a raised platform overlooking the harbour and much of the city. They were impressive central features of many urban landscapes, well within the sacred boundaries (*pomerium*) of such cities. Indeed, for a first-century audience, more attuned to the 'differential charge' locations within Greco-Roman cities could possess,[30] such temples would have appeared all the more impressive, occupying, as they did, crucial sites in their symbolic geography (in Athens, for example, the cult temple was constructed in the Acropolis, near the Parthenon, in the historic and religious heart of the city). Cult buildings were especially concentrated in Rome, a place which functioned (in one sense) like Versailles or the Paris of Napoleon, as the shop-window of the regime, advertising the benefits of the *pax romana* and encouraging inhabitants of the empire to be willing and compliant participants in its maintenance.[31] It contained a number of remarkable constructions such as Augustus's Mausoleum (an enormous building, some forty metres high, topped with a bronze colossus of Augustus), the beautiful and ornate Ara Pacis, and a giant sundial (an obelisk taken from Egypt, signifying the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra which began his rule) erected in such a way as to demonstrate the cosmological significance of Augustus's birth (its shadow bisected the Ara Pacis on his birthday).[32] Numerous triumphal arches and columns also littered the city's streets and special imperial shrines marked their intersections. The importance of cult buildings, both within and outside the capital, was given further amplification through the coins of the period, which often included depictions of these in their designs.[33]

Imperial statues, associated with such buildings or independent of them, also filled up the public space of many cities and made their presence felt. The widespread and quite unprecedented standardization of the figures must also have cumulatively functioned to enhance their impact.[34] Many of these were aesthetically impressive and a substantial proportion were fashioned from precious metals.[35] The fact that many were colossi would also have added to the power of the imperial image being depicted (there are many existing examples of this, such as the colossus of Titus erected in Ephesus). Throughout the empire, such statues regularly portrayed the emperor as a god who stood (literally) head and shoulders above all others.

But the physical remains of the cult only give us a partial clue to its importance for those who actually lived their lives surrounded by its manifestations. The buildings and statues were not static but dynamic in the consciousness of the inhabitants of the first-century world, they were places about which regular public rituals, processions, sacrifices, and feasts would be centred, in which all members of the community would often to some extent be involved.[36] They were regularly the focus of community activities which could, especially upon the death of an emperor or a commemorative day associated with one of his family, become quite intense, and were unmatched by festivities undertaken for the sake of any other deities.[37] Zanker does not exaggerate when he observes that the buildings of the cult were the stage set against which the inhabitants of the empire lived their lives.[38]

Indeed, the affective quality of the material forms of the cult was heightened by legislation that helped it acquire almost numinous associations. For example, a slave fleeing from the rule of a harsh master could claim asylum by laying hold of an imperial statue, as could others in need of protection,[39] and anyone damaging a statue of an emperor or treating it with disrespect (by, for example, urinating in its vicinity)[40] could face the death penalty. The terror this last law struck into the hearts of inhabitants of the empire is demonstrated by an incident in the Acts of Peter in which a shattered imperial statue, broken in the course of a vigorous exorcism undertaken by Peter, was miraculously healed in response to the pleas of a terrified Christian, fearful of the consequences of leaving it in pieces.[41]

It should also be noted that the public dominance of the cult did not just focus upon its physical presence in the cities. It was not just the physical but also the temporal space that was transformed by imperial ideology. From early in the rule of Augustus it was suggested by the governor of Asia that each year should begin on the emperor's birthday, and this suggestion was enthusiastically taken up by the province.[42] Indeed it had already become conventional in the empire to calculate the date with reference to the number of years the divine figure had reigned (for example, a contract for the lease of a cow in Egypt reads, 'The fifth year of the dominion of Caesar, son of God').[43] Regular festivals associated with the imperial household and of course, the renaming of two of the months after Julius Caesar and Augustus respectively, helped to place the imperial stamp firmly upon the experience of time for the inhabitants of the empire.

Nor should we neglect the way that the cult clearly achieved prominence by the *negative* way that it disrupted and displaced competing focuses of religious allegiance (a significant point made by Susan Alcock).[44] The imperial god was essentially a new one; its continuity with other hero cults and the worship of Roma has been exaggerated. As Millar remarks:

> There is nothing anywhere to suggest that the scale of the cult-acts for Hellenistic kings had ever approached that which immediately appears for Augustus. Few cults of deceased Hellenistic kings lingered on, and only a modest range of evidence attest cults or games or shrines for even the major Roman figures of the late Republic. The sudden outburst of the celebration of Octavian/Augustus was a new phenomenon.[45]

But it was also, importantly, a jealous one. With the arrival of the cult of the emperor other public cults of divinized (historical) men were curtailed,[46] and even more established deities could suffer from its intolerance. Nero, for example, destroyed the oracle of Apollo by blocking up the sacred fissure with corpses of its adherents[47] whilst Caligula, rather famously, attempted (albeit unsuccessfully) to usurp the place of the Jewish god by having an effigy of himself erected in the temple (and his enthusiastic supporters successfully put statues of him in those prayer houses of the Jews in Alexandria which were too robust to be destroyed).[48] Indeed, Caligula gives us one of the most striking examples of this supercessionism (and one of the most appalling acts of artistic vandalism in the ancient world): he had the most famous cult statues from Greece shipped to Rome, where their heads were removed to be replaced by models of his own.[49]

It seems therefore fair to conclude that the ideology of the imperial cult was an influential component in the public culture of empire.

Private Reception of the Cult

Although such information allows us to *begin* to see the prominent position that the imperial cult held in the cultural experience of the first century, it is not enough to prove this conclusively to be the case. If we wish to evaluate its significance with any accuracy we must also determine whether it was an active component not just of the public, shared culture of the empire, but also the unofficial and private cultures that existed within the cities. Did it have a definite role in how the great mass of individuals conceptualized their world?

At first sight this may seem a strange question to ask. The imperial cult is often regarded as a purely public phenomenon, and a superficial one at that. After all, it is argued, the Romans themselves did not appear to take it seriously (Vespasian's famous deathbed joke, "I think I am becoming a god"[50] seems to indicate as much): it could only be believed by those who were either insane, such as Caligula, who went so far as to sacrifice to himself daily and made his beloved horse a high priest of his cult,[51] or irredeemably barbarian and by implication, stupid, such as the Britons of Colchester who built an enormous temple to the Divine Claudius.[52] The cult has often been seen as little more than a gross form of flattery, motivated by the political ambitions of provincial elites, or the consequence of crude manipulation or megalomania on the part of emperors, the best of which, it is often remarked, were reticent about its development.[53] But such characterizations are misguided and one cannot help assuming that it is, at least to a large extent, a consequence of mistaken assumptions about the nature of authentic religious belief.[54] The remarks Badian made some time ago in connection with the study of the deification of Alexander the Great are apposite in this respect: 'Modern Jews and Christians, or modern rationalists, from their different points of view, have always found it difficult to believe that the ancient Greeks took their religion seriously since it seems so patently absurd.'[55] The same could equally be said of the Romans.

However, it appears that the cult was enthusiastically practised in private as well as public, although the material demonstrating this has generally been neglected in studies to date and much more work remains to be done in this area. We find, for example, plenty of evidence that representations of emperors found their way into domestic and workshop shrines,[56] and that private shrines were dedicated to emperors from the earliest years of the cult.[57] Indeed, as Pleket has shown, from Augustus onwards, the emperors were the focus of 'mysteries' that resembled the long-established mysteries of the Hellenistic world, and drew substantial numbers of adherents.[58] Libations were poured out to the *genii* of emperors at every feast,[59] the names of deified emperors were invoked to solemnize oaths,[60] they were understood to be capable of carrying out healings,[61] and of hearing and answering prayers.[62] The appearance of the man-god himself could provoke devotion from onlookers[63] and such behaviour was not limited to non-Romans as is often supposed.[64] The figure of the emperor was clearly one about which a variety of lively and sincere religious beliefs had grown, convictions that can hardly be dismissed as superficial. Indeed, this can be seen in an array of apparently inconsequential objects that can be easily overlooked. The unmistakable symbols of the divine Caesars – for example, representations of cornucopiae (signifying the presence of the Golden Age), Capricorn (the sign of the zodiac associated with Augustus's conception),[65] the star of Julius Caesar (the first of the divinized Caesars) – can be found adorning a multitude of domestic artefacts found throughout the Mediterranean, such as oil lamps,[66] roof tiles,[67] personal medallions,[68] signet rings,[69] and even the Roman equivalent of piggy banks.[70] Of course, workshops determined the designs that were available to consumers but such evidence does reveal the significant place of imperial ideology in popular culture. An individual choosing to purchase an oil lamp decorated with imperial motifs, as so many evidently did, rather than with the perennially popular images of chariot racing, gladiators or copulation, was, in some sense, actively buying into the ideology.

Imperial Ideology: Beyond the Cult

So much for the cult. Although it would be foolish to demarcate too rigidly cultic and other depictions of the emperor, as in some way all imperial ideology was pervaded by religious conceptualizations of the imperial figure, the emperor was more than the cult, and imperial ideology was embodied in other forms and practices, many of which still require extensive examination (for example, its significance in the ideological construction of gender in the empire, and particularly of the body, is only just becoming visible).[71] Such wider manifestations of the ideology have often been overlooked in the exegesis of the New Testament because scholars specializing in its study have remained primarily interested in specifically 'religious' phenomena, and, with noticeable, and largely modern exceptions, have examined these in isolation from their wider cultural environment. Whilst it is impossible to present a comprehensive picture of the presence of the cult in this chapter, nonetheless it is useful to sketch three areas in which its presence can be seen.

1. Leisure

One of the major 'means of the transmission and diffusion of imperial ideology'[72] was the construction, throughout the empire, of buildings associated with the pursuit of specifically Roman forms of leisure: public baths, circuses, amphitheatres, and Roman-style theatres – a phenomenon recognized as one of the defining features of Roman culture (both by the Romans themselves and by others). Such buildings became inseparably associated with the figure of the emperor, and advertised the fact in a number ways, some more subtle than others. The amphitheatres, in particular, often provided an arena for celebrating imperial rule, a site for imperial pomp (sometimes of an overtly religious character).[73] Such activities allowed 'the audience to participate, however marginally, in imperial grandeur', in buildings designed to 'awe the viewer with the power of the state and its august ruler, but simultaneously to allow him [sic] his "moment of glory": a share in the pride and prestige of imperial achievement'.[74] It is unsurprising that the games had such a prominent place in his *Res Gestae* (22–23). As Toner has ably demonstrated, the practice and discourse of leisure became a vehicle for the propagation of imperial ideology.[75]

2. Moral Discourse

Another major vehicle for imperial ideology was the moral discourse of the empire, which, from the time of Augustus onwards, became dominated by an intense conservatism, bordering on archaism, particularly evident in its concern with the Roman family. The major element in this innovation was the unusual legislation that Augustus initiated that, although aimed primarily at the elite, for the first time made 'the private life of virtually every Roman ... a matter of the state's concern and regulation',[76] with the state taking upon itself the unusual role of not only arbiter but also prosecutor for crimes of immorality, crimes in which it had previously had no interest. The active dissemination of certain images of the imperial family helped support this development.[77] The depictions of Augustus himself, as the model *pater familias*, and various imperial women, such as his wife Livia, sister Octavia, or niece Antonia Augusta, as ideal Roman matrons, were particularly central in this respect.[78] Personal morality was a concern to which emperors consistently returned and became a key means by which they justified their dominance, even if, in their personal lives, they rather famously failed to practise what they preached.

3. Socio-Economic Exchange

Imperial ideology was also embodied in the closely related models of socio-economic exchange which became particularly prominent with the arrival of the Caesars: euergetism and patronage.

Although the notion of the *eueregetes*, the civic benefactor, predated Rome in the east, with the coming of the empire euergetism became far more significant and centred on the person of the emperor. The destruction of the voting assemblies of the eastern cities, which came about as a consequence of their inclusion in the empire, effectively left competition in the practice of benefactions as the only means by which the civic elites could compete for power in their localities; and success in this was dependent upon attaining the patronage of the man who sat at the top of the social pyramid. The emperor became the patron *par excellence* (as we can see in the earlier quotation from Nicolaus of Damascus) and the model for (and patron of) the local benefactors outside Rome, who were in turn patrons of others lower down the socio-economic scale (he was, however, the only *euergetes* of Rome itself – no one else was allowed to make benefactions in that city).[79] Although patronage certainly was not the all-pervasive phenomenon so often assumed by classical and New Testament scholars,[80] and was functionally insignificant for most, it was a prominent component of imperial culture and a means by which the rule of the emperors was conceptualized and sustained.

Reception

Evidence for the generally positive public reception of the ideology of leisure is clear: the sheer proliferation of the facilities, and epigraphic and literary evidence of their heavy use in the first-century period indicates as much. It is obvious also, from the appearance of sporting and acting 'celebrities' in the empire, that this element of the imperial programme became a lively component in the private lives of inhabitants of the empire.[81] Likewise, the positive public and private reception of imperial moral discourse is also confirmed by, for example, the distinctive changes in group portraiture and the style of epitaphs that are a distinguishing feature of the early empire.[82] And the same, I believe, can be demonstrated from epigraphic and papyrological evidence of eurergetism and patronage.[83]

But before we leave this analysis of imperial ideology and turn to the New Testament, I would like to make a few qualifying remarks. It should not be assumed that imperial ideology was always readily or simply accepted, either at the public or private level. Its manifestations were capable of being mocked and derided (we find, for example, the simple but telling word 'enough' scratched upon one of the numerous triumphal arches which adorned the capital during the reign of Domitian).[84] Some of its 'theological' claims could be hard for some to swallow.[85] The elements of the ideology could also be appropriated in ways that were clearly never intended by its proponents. For example, during Tiberius's rule, a woman followed the senator Gaius Cestius Gallus around Rome, hurling abuse at him whilst clutching a portrait of the emperor and thus avoiding prosecution, a practice that was far from uncommon.[86] Indeed, the figure of the emperor was not necessarily treated with respect by the general population (piss pots used by fullers in Rome were nicknamed *Vespasiani* after the emperor who introduced an unpopular tax upon them).[87] And of course, the content and form of the ideology could vary between emperors (though this should not be exaggerated; even Nero, whose departures from imperial conventions were as notorious as they were absurd, self-consciously modelled himself upon Augustus, for example, issuing coins depicting the Ara Pacis).[88]

The New Testament

In the light of the case we have presented for the significance of the figure of the emperor in the New Testament world, albeit with these final qualifications in mind, let us now turn back to the New Testament itself and examine a few of its implications.

1. Christology

In view of the central place of the emperor in the lives of the inhabitants of the empire, the figure of the Roman emperor must be given a far more significant place in any attempt to discern the nature of formative Christology than has hitherto been recognized. Indeed, its cultural significance warrants giving it a position in Christological discussion equal to that accorded to at least some of the material from the Jewish background in the analysis of the genesis and development of early Christian ideas about Jesus. If this appears a rather rash statement, it is perhaps worth recalling just how problematic some of these sources can be when questions about the dating, provenance or dissemination are asked: the *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 Enoch 37–71) which contains so many crucial references to Christological titles otherwise thin on the ground elsewhere outside the New Testament (most notably the enigmatic 'Son of Man'),[89] is first attested *only* in a fifteenth-century Ethiopic manuscript.[90] It will no longer do for New Testament scholars to place the Roman emperor amongst the ranks of divine men, gnostic redeemers, divinized heroes and other assorted and 'Hellenistic' characters and then dismiss his significance by reason of the disreputable company that he keeps. He is far too important for that to be the case. To put the matter simply: how many oil lamps or coins do we have from the first century featuring Apollonius of Tyana? How many games were held in his honour? How many temples were dedicated to him? How many tax statements were dated according to his birth? We must come to terms with the fact that the development of ideas about Christ could not have occurred independently of the influence of ideas about the Roman emperor. The alternative is to believe, in the light of the information we have just surveyed that, in the words of Deissmann, 'St Paul and his fellow believers went through the world blindfolded'.[91]

But it is one thing to say that ideas about the emperor and ideas about Christ are clearly related; it is another to say *how* they are related. It is hard to answer this without descending into unsatisfying, vague generalizations, and I apologize if what follows appears to have something of that quality about it. This is not the place to examine the nature of this relationship with any precision – although I think a more extended study is quite a feasible undertaking and may yield valuable results – rather I will make a few observations about the alternative characterizations of the relationship that have been suggested.

1) It is maintained by some that the relationship was essentially *analogical-sequential*: that is, imperial ideology did not directly shape ideas about Christ but, by virtue of the obvious analogies between some key elements of both, it made the ideas about Christ preached by the early Christians easily comprehensible and attractive to pagans. This is the position, for example, taken by Kreitzer. He suggests that somehow the apotheosis of the emperor provided a parallel to the Christian notion of incarnation (albeit in reverse), and one which made it all the more easy for Christianity to flourish amongst pagans to an extent which was impossible for Judaism, because the latter had a far less permeable barrier between the human and the divine realms.[92]

Although I cannot agree with the details of Kreitzer's argument, in general terms such a position is plausible, as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. A *sequential* understanding of the relationship assumes that individuals attracted to Christianity from non-Jewish backgrounds ceased to be influenced by pagan ideas, such as those drawn from the imperial cult – either positively or negatively – upon conversion. This seems rather problematic. The New Testament itself testifies to the persistence of pagan practices amongst the early communities and patterns of socialization by believers that brought them into contact with pagans on a regular basis (for example, 1 Corinthians 8 and 10). Such a *sequential* model, by itself, cannot describe the nature of the relationship that must have been far more dynamic than is implied by the use of such words as 'backdrop' or 'heritage', commonly used by proponents of this position to describe the place of the imperial cult in respect to the development of Christology.

2) It is also claimed that the relationship was one of *dependency* or that it was *genealogical* in its nature. I should emphasize that there is nothing methodologically wrong with this assertion, although it does go against the grain for many New Testament scholars, who, as J. Z. Smith has observed, are still dominated by the essentially apologetic (and Protestant) myth of Christian autochthony.[93] And, on a superficial level, this kind of relationship appears to be indicated by the profusion of terms which are associated with both the emperor and the figure of Christ in the New Testament,[94] such as *theos* (deus), *theou uios* (divi filius), *kurios* (dominus), *basileus* (imperator), *soter* (servator), *archiereus* (pontifex maximus), *euangellion* (evangellium), *parousia* (adventus), and others. However, I believe that this way of characterizing the relationship is also flawed.

Firstly, the philological parallels on closer examination appear rather less impressive. If we take the business of comparison seriously, we must place these terms back in their respective contexts, and then determine the meaning they have within these contexts, before looking again to see if the meanings they were intended to convey are significantly close to warrant a claim of dependency. The coincidence of terminology, however striking, is simply not enough.[95] For example, the expression 'Son of God' occurs in both the context of the imperial cult and in the New Testament but it implied radically different things in both: in the former it refers to an emperor who was, in some sense, a son of both a previously divinized emperor, and also, at the same time, of a particular god (for example, Apollo for Augustus);[96] an impressive god perhaps, but still one amongst many. Such a meaning appears quite alien to the sense of the expression anywhere in the New Testament. Of course, ultimately, the plausibility of any speculations in this regard depends upon the degree of correlation considered significant, and the degree of abstraction allowed in the analysis. But if the relationship were one of dependency we would expect more obvious resemblances than the evidence appears to give us.

Secondly, what I take to be the fundamental Christological datum, that which is generative of all subsequent Christological developments, the resurrection (Rom. 1.4, 10.9 etc.) has no parallel in imperial ideology whatsoever.[97] One would expect some acute resemblance here, if there were some genealogical link.

3) However, I believe that the relationship is neither analogical-sequential nor genealogical but can be best described as one of *polemical parallelism*. The earliest strata in the traditions indicate that ideas about Christ were recognized as usurping claims made about emperors, particularly in respect to his claims of kingship. This is especially visible in details of the passion narrative, such as the detail of Jesus's mocking[98] and the wording of the *titulus*,[99] but is also evident elsewhere. This characteristic of New Testament Christology is often overlooked by New Testament scholars who, despite the evidence from Jn. 19.15, Acts 17.7, 1 Tim. 2.2, and 1 Pet. 2.17, appear ignorant of the fact that although the Romans were adamant that they were not ruled by a king, their emperor was considered to be one by non-Romans and was popularly referred to as one (indeed, the reticence of Romans to recognize that they were ruled by a monarchy was bewildering to others).[100] The early Christians seem to have shaped their Christology, even when they were forging it out of distinctly 'unpagan' elements, with this in mind. For example, the so-called Christ hymn of Phil. 2.5–11, which may be one of the oldest pieces of Christological evidence we possess, culminates with a quotation from Isa. 45.23 ('every knee shall bow ... and every tongue confess'). These words, originally a reference to the universal rule of God, are applied to Jesus[101] but would have had undeniable resonances for anyone familiar with the articulation of imperial ideology (they have, for example, clear parallels to the language of the *Res Gestae*). The application of this text in Phil. 2.10–11 is effectively subversive of the claims of the emperors: it flatly contradicted one of the central claims made for them. Given the similarities between some of the major themes of the Philippians hymn and the chief characteristics of the emperor cult (the divine origin or pre-existence of the subject, his apotheosis by acclamation at death, his ubiquitous rule and receipt of universal homage) which have long been noted, and have received thorough attention,[102] it is likely that the original composer of these lines, whoever they were, intended to assert the superiority of Christ over Caesar. (The hymn was not *only* intended to be read in such a way though; it is fair to say, with Seeley, that 'no single background can accommodate the hymn'.)[103]

Polemical parallelism seems the most instructive way of characterizing the role of ideas about the Roman emperor in the development of

Christology.

2. Politics

A more thoroughgoing awareness of the nature of imperial ideology in the New Testament world should also lead us to think again about the political character of the early Christian communities. Too often discussion of the politics of the New Testament begins and ends with the examination of a handful of texts, such as Romans 13 and Revelation 13, which appear to be obviously pertinent to such a concern. Although some, such as Elliott[104] and Wengst,[105] have gone beyond this, and asked wider, ideological questions, the study of the relationship of early Christians to imperial ideology is still dogged by a failure to take the breadth of the encounter seriously. However, a knowledge of the extent of this ideology, and the areas of life it encompassed, will allow us to give a fuller treatment of the question. We can locate far more areas in which to discern whether the early Christians supported or critiqued the rule of Roman emperor.

A couple of examples will illustrate this:

1) Paul's advocacy of celibacy, politically innocuous to us, would have been rather less so to his contemporaries, given the character of imperial ideology. According to Cassius Dio, Augustus equated the 'unmarried life with the immoral way of life'.[106] As Fiorenza has observed, 'Paul's advice to remain free from the marriage bond was a frontal assault upon the institutions of existing law and the general cultural ethos, especially since it was given to a people who lived in the urban centres of the Roman Empire.'[107] In many ways it is even more true of the anti-family tradition which is so apparent elsewhere in the New Testament.[108]

2) Likewise, despite the claims of many New Testament scholars, the New Testament appears to be, generally, hostile to the phenomenon of patronage.[109] This is clearly expressed, for example, in Lk. 22.25, where the disciples are told not to be like the *euergetai* of the gentiles[110] but is also implied in the various traditions within the New Testament which call for a mutual ethic amongst the believers which undermines the need for patronage.[111] It is also subverted in various ways in the New Testament: Paul, for example, plays with its emotive language and conventions in a striking way (as in Rom. 16.1–2 where he rather strangely writes a letter of recommendation *on behalf of* his patron Phoebe, a shocking and rather bizarre departure from convention). It is perhaps unsurprising that the

New Testament contains such material as patronage was essentially exploitative for the person in the inferior position in the relationship. But such responses must not be understood as motivated by solely economic concerns. They must be interpreted, in part, in the light of imperial ideology, as, for example, Kraybill has argued in his reading of Revelation.[112]

3. Gender Relations

The situation of women in early Christianity has always been something of an enigma. Regardless of how such notorious verses as 1 Cor. 11.2–16, 1 Cor. 14.34, or 1 Tim. 2.12 are interpreted, it is evident that, at the earliest stages at least, women such as Phoebe, Junia, Lydia, and Priscilla held positions of authority amongst the men and women who constituted the nascent communities. Pagan criticism of Christianity corroborates this striking feature.[113] The explanation for this is hard to arrive at. However, it will not do to contrast supposedly paradigmatic, enlightened verses from the New Testament – such as Gal. 3.28 – with rather less endearing texts culled from a narrow range of pagan and Jewish sources, and maintain that one has uncovered the causal factor: the essential character of the new religion. Such an argument is arbitrary and decontextual. Other factors clearly played a part in this development, not least the unrelated growth, during this period, in the numbers of independent women who had the freedom to join a new cult such as Christianity. The explanation for this phenomenon is likewise difficult to ascertain. Changes in legal convention (the increasing dominance of non-*manus* marriage), and the increasing influence of regional traditions[114] go some way to providing an answer but the prominence given to women from the imperial family in imperial ideology is also significant: it allowed greater cultural space for some women to achieve greater autonomy and authority than had previously been the case.

Conclusions

This has been a very cursory survey of a vast subject, and the conclusions I have drawn, I concede, are rather provisional, and perhaps contentious. But I hope that my analysis will at least have brought the emperor back into focus and demonstrated the value of doing this for those who wish to scrutinize the New Testament in its context. There is much to be gained by giving due attention to this figure, particularly when awareness is shown of its ideological character and careful attention is paid to the question of its reception. Indeed, exegetes of the New Testament have much to lose if they do not do so.

Notes

1. A version of this paper was originally delivered at a number of research seminars in Oxford and Cambridge in 1997, including one at Westminster College where, for a couple of years, I was privileged to be able to work alongside Philip Budd in teaching Biblical and Hermeneutical Studies. It would not have been written without Philip's generous encouragement and interest.

   In more recent years a number of significant studies have appeared, most notably: A. Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order. Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity Before the Age of Cyprian* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); W. Carter, *Matthew and Empire. Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001); S. J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John. Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); P. Oakes, *Philippians. From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and I. Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).
2. E. Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars: Historical Sketches* (London: SCM, 1955).
3. See, for example, K. Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM, 1987).
4. Martin quotes Henry's estimate of Bornhäuser approvingly: '… imagination can hardly go to more extreme limits than in his theory'. R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 81; K. Bornhäuser, *Jesus imperator mundi* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1938).
5. Lk. 2.1 (Augustus); 3.1 (Tiberius); Acts 11.28, 18.2 (Claudius). More general references are found in Mt. 22.15–22, Mk. 12.13–17, Lk. 20.20–26; Jn. 19.12–15; Phil. 4.22; 1 Pet. 2.13, 17.
6. Rev. 13.3, 14, 18.

7. By culture I mean 'a system of shared meaning and value, and the symbolic forms (performances, artefacts) in which they are expressed or embodied'. P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), p. xi.
8. Given the debates that rage around the term 'ideology' I had better clarify what I mean by the expression 'imperial ideology': it is the cluster of interrelated, mutually suggestive ideas, practices, and their material forms, that articulated and legitimized the dominance of the Roman emperor in the Roman world.
9. There were a variety of ways that 'public' and 'private' could be conceptualized in the empire and we should be careful not to assume too close a resemblance with contemporary understandings. See, for example, Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.5. See also P. Veyne, 'The Roman Empire' in P. Veyne (ed.), *A History of Private Life* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987), pp. 205–34.
10. Though I do not mean by this to underestimate the religious nature of the cult, which some are prone to do. See, for example, A. Kee, 'The Imperial Cult: The Unmasking of an Ideology', *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, 6 (1985), pp. 112–28.
11. S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
12. S. J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).
13. Or 'Augustus' – worthy of reverence/worship.
14. F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1923–1958), 90 F 125.
15. Horace, *Odes* 1.12.49; Seneca, *De Clementia* 1.1.2; Suetonius, *Augustus* 94; Velleius Paterculus, *History of Rome* 2.126.2–5, Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.789–794.
16. A. Benjamin and A. Raubitschek, 'Arae Augusti', *Hesperia*, 28 (1959), pp. 65–85.
17. Adapted from Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 54.
18. Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 55.
19. See P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 18–19.
20. On the Ara Pacis see N. Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1986), pp. 62–74; J. Elsner, 'Cult

and Sculpture: Sacrifice in the Ara Pacis Augustae', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 81 (1991), pp. 50–61; D. Castriota, *The Ara Pacis Augustae and the Imagery of Abundance in Later Greek and Early Roman Imperial Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

21. See P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), pp. 230–3 and Hannestad, *Roman Art*, pp. 78–82. Augustus is depicted as Jupiter, the universal ruler, being crowned by Oikoumene, the personification of the inhabited world.
22. The coin which is crucial to this pericope was probably a denarius of Tiberius. It is likely to have been one from an issue in which, on the obverse, Tiberius is shown in full Olympian nakedness, adorned with a laurel wreath (a sign of divinity) and is described as 'Emperor Tiberius, August Son of the August God'. On the reverse Tiberius's mother is depicted in another Olympian pose, with a sceptre and olive branch. Above her are the words (referring to Tiberius) 'Pontifex Maximus'. As Stauffer rightly remarks, 'The coin, in brief, is a symbol of both power and of the cult' (*Christ and the Caesars*, p. 125). See also H. Hart, 'The Coin of "Render unto Caesar": A Note on Some Aspects of Mark 12:13–17; Matt. 22:15–22; Luke 20:20–26', in E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 241–8.
23. See A. K. Bowman, 'Literacy in the Roman Empire: Mass and Mode', in J. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1991), pp. 119–31. Evidence for participation in literate culture can be seen in such details as Nero's use of placards to advertise his 'triumph' following his tour of Greece (Cassius Dio 62.20).
24. H. H. Tanzer, *The Common People of Pompeii. A Study of the Graffiti* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), pp. 83–84. The remarkable popularity of Virgil may be indicated by the fragments of the *Aeneid* found in letters as far apart as Vindolanda (*Tab. Vindol.* II. 118) and Masada (*Doc. Masada.* 721).
25. Tacitus, *Dialogue* 13.
26. Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Albinus* 5.2.
27. Benjamin and Raubitschek, 'Arae Augusti'.
28. Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 133.

29. See, for example, the catalogue of imperial temples and shrines in Asia Minor in Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 249–64.
30. See R. Laurence, *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society* (London: Routledge, 1994) and A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Public Honour and Private Shame: The Urban Texture of Pompeii', in J. Cornell and K. Lomas (eds.), *Urban Society in Roman Italy* (London: UCL Press, 1995), pp. 39–62.
31. P. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 385. Rome was not, of course, the only showpiece city. See, for example, the remarks of Tiridates (King of Armenia) about the cities of Asia (Cassius Dio 63.7).
32. Zanker, *The Power of Images*, pp. 144–5.
33. See T. L. Donaldson, *Ancient Architecture on Greek and Roman Coins and Medals* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1965).
34. Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 301.
35. See Suetonius, *Caligula* 22; Cassius Dio 67.8.1. See K. Scott, 'The Significance of Statues in Precious Metals in Emperor Worship', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 62 (1931), pp. 101–23.
36. Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 280.
37. Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 114. For the funeral of Augustus see Cassius Dio 56.34, 42–47.
38. Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 299.
39. Cassius Dio 47.19.2; Tacitus, *Annals* 3.36; cf. also Suetonius, *Augustus* 17.5; Seneca, *De Clementia* 1.18.2. For statues of living emperors affording protection see Tacitus, *Annals* 3.63; Suetonius, *Tiberius* 58. See K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 124–5.
40. Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Caracalla* 5.7.
41. Acts of Peter 11. See Justinian, *Digest* 48.4.4–6. Cf. also Cassius Dio 62.23.
42. Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 61.
43. J. R. Rea, 'Lease of a Red Cow Called Thayris', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 68 (1982), pp. 272–82. Cf. Lk. 3.1.
44. S. E. Alcock, 'Archaeology and Imperialism: Roman Expansion and the Greek City', *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*, 2 (1989), p. 123.
45. F. Millar, 'The Impact of Monarchy' in F. Millar and E. Segal (eds.),

Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 53.

46. Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 49.
47. Cassius Dio 62.14.
48. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.257–305; Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 134.
49. Cassius Dio 59.28; Suetonius, *Caligula* 22. Such claims made sense within the conceptual world of paganism in which, for a god, 'the height of prestige was to dominate the others: there was no true sovereignty except in relation to other deities'. R. Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 331.
50. Suetonius, *Vespasian* 23. See also Cassius Dio 59.26 for the scepticism of a provincial shoemaker.
51. Cassius Dio 59.28. For an attempt to understand Caligula's psychology in this respect, see C. J. Simpson, 'Caligula's cult: immolation, immortality, intent', in A. Small (ed.), *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Achaeology, 1996), pp. 63–72.
52. As a god hostile to Claudius's admission to the ranks of the deities remarks in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* 8.3: 'Is it not enough that he has a temple in Britain, that savages now worship him, as if he were a god ...'
53. Suetonius, *Augustus* 52. See also Claudius's response to the Alexandrians in E. M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), no. 370.11.48.
54. See, for example, Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 15–22.
55. E. Badian, 'The Deification of Alexander the Great', in H. J. Bell (ed.), *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honour of Charles F. Edson* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1981), p. 31.
56. J. M. Santero, 'The Cultores Augustii and the Private Worship of the Roman Emperor', *Athenaeum (Pavia)*, 61 (1983), pp. 111–25. For the former see also Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 266 and the latter, T. Bakker, *Living and Working with the Gods: Studies of Evidence for Private Religion and its Material Environment in the City of Ostia (100-500 AD)* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1994), p. 207. For evidence of the popularity of imperial images, of even the cheapest and poorest kinds, see Fronto, *To Marcus as Caesar* 4.12.4. Horace, writing in the lifetime of Augustus, describes an Italian peasant placing an image

of the emperor with his household gods (*Odes* 4.5.31–32) as did Ovid (*Ex Ponto* 2.8.1 and 4.9.105–106). Such private images were evidently popular as we can tell from their presence in wills (Santero, 'The Cultores Augustii', p. 115). Emperors were also keen to include representations of other emperors in their *lararia*. See, for example, Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Alexander Severus* 29.2; 31.4–5.

57. See, for example, the altar consecrated to Augustus by Vicanus in Salacia in Spain in 10 CE (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinum* II. 5182).
58. H. W. Pleket, 'An Aspect of the Emperor Cult: Imperial Mysteries', *Harvard Theological Review*, 58 (1965), pp. 331–47. Augustus' mysteries were still celebrated 150 years after his death.
59. Cassius Dio 51.19.7; Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 304.
60. For example, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 190 (37 CE).
61. Suetonius, *Vespasian* 7. For the most comprehensive survey of this aspect of the emperor's image see G. Ziethen, 'Heilung und römischer Kaiserkult', *Sudhoffs Archiv,* 78 (1994), pp. 171–91.
62. For example, Suetonius, *Julius* 85; Virgil, *Eclogue* 9.46–49; Valerius, *Maximus* 1.6.13; Virgil, *Georgics* 1.24–46; Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.286-90; Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 4.9.127; 4.13.24. See D. Fishwick, 'Seneca and the Temple of Divus Claudius', *Britannia*, 22 (1991), p. 140.
63. Suetonius, *Augustus* 98. See also Velleius Paterculus, *History of Rome* 2.107.
64. Virgil, *Eclogue* 1.6–8; Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 236.
65. See T. Barton, 'Augustus and Capricorn: Astrological Polyvalence and Imperial Ritual', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 85 (1995), pp. 33–51.
66. Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 274.
67. Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 84.
68. See P. Veyne, 'Tenir un Buste', *Cahiers de Byra*, 8 (1958), pp. 61–85.
69. Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 84.
70. Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 275.
71. See, for example, B. Kellum, 'The Phallus as Signifier: The Forum of Augustus and the Rituals of Masculinity', in N. Kampen (ed.), *Sexuality in Ancient Art: The Near East, Egypt, Greece and Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 170–83.
72. R. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and Its Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 163.
73. See J. A. Hanson, *Roman Theatre Temples* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959). The religious nature of the games was

explicit (see, for example, from very different perspectives, Martial, *On the Spectacles* and Tertullian, *On the Spectacles*) and often rather gruesome (see K. M. Coleman, 'Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 80 (1990), pp. 44–73). The emperor often initiated and presided over such entertainments.

74. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre*, p. 189.
75. J. P. Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995).
76. K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Intrepretative Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 128. See, in particular, *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* (18 BCE) and *Lex Papia Poppaea* (9 CE).
77. For example, the reliefs featuring the imperial family found on the Ara Pacis. However, not all attempts at presenting such an image were successful (Suetonius, *Augustus* 34.1).
78. Cults to these women are also found in the empire although some of the evidence is rather less obvious than it might at first appear. See M. Hoskins-Walbank, 'Pausaunias, Octavia and Temple E at Corinth', *British School at Athens*, 84 (1989), pp. 361–94.
79. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, pp. 386–390.
80. J. J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), pp. 168–70.
81. Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome*, p. 78.
82. See D. E. Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraiture: The Funerary Reliefs of the Late Republic and Early Empire* (London: Garland, 1977); Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 292.
83. For example, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinum* VI, 21975.
84. Suetonius, *Domitian* 13.
85. For example, those surrounding an emperor's miraculous birth. See Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 7.24.
86. Tacitus, *Annals* 3.36.
87. Martial, *Epigrams* 6.93; Suetonius, *Vespasian* 23.3; Cassius Dio 65.14.
88. Suetonius, *Nero* 10.1. In many ways the cult was polymorphous with emperors defining the parameters.
89. See G. W. E. Nicklesburg, 'Salvation without and with a Messiah: Developing Beliefs in Writings Ascribed to Enoch', in J. Neusner, W. S. Green and E. S. Frerichs (eds.), *Judaisms and Their Messiahs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 49–68.
90. M. A. Knibb, '1 Enoch', in H. F. D. Sparks (ed.), *The Apocryphal Old*

Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 174.

91. A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East,* 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p. 344.
92. L. Kreitzer, *Striking New Images. Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 98.
93. J. Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (London: SOAS, 1990), pp. 45–6.
94. See Deissmann, *Light,* pp. 347–400 for examples of all the following parallels (and more): god, son of god, lord, king (emperor), saviour, high priest, good news, (second) coming.
95. It is customary to refer at this point to the influential article by Samuel Sandmel ('Parallelomania', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 81 (1962), pp. 3–13) although the point is well made in other more recent works, such as D. Hall, *Seven Pillories of Wisdom* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990) and D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996).
96. Suetonius, *Augustus* 94.
97. The traditions of Nero's return bear no resemblance to this (see Tacitus, *Histories* 2.9, John of Antioch, fr. 104; Suetonius, *Nero* 57.2; Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 21.10; Sibylline Oracles 8.157). For a discussion of these traditions see R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), pp. 384–452.
98. Mt. 27.27–31; Mk. 15.16–20; Jn. 19.1–3.
99. Mt. 27.37; Mk. 15.26; Lk. 23.38; Jn. 19.19, 21.
100. Cassius Dio 53.17.
101. Though cf. Rom. 14.11.
102. D. Seeley, 'The Background of the Philippians Hymn (2:6–11)', *Journal of Higher Criticism,* 1 (1994), pp. 49–74.
103. Seeley, 'Background', p. 51.
104. N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul. The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).
105. Wengst, *Pax Romana.*
106. Cassius Dio 56.6.6–7.2.
107. E. S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1983), p. 225. This suggestion is also extensively discussed by E. Pagels in 'Christian Apologists and the "The Fall of the Angels": An Attack on Roman Imperial Power', *Harvard Theological Review*, 78 (1985), pp. 301–25.

108. See, for example, Mk. 10.35–37; Lk. 12.53, 14.26.
109. See Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, pp. 168–9.
110. Cf. Mk. 10.42; Mt. 20.25.
111. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, pp. 169–75.
112. J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 72–80, 221.
113. See, for example, Pliny, *Epistles* 10.96; Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.55. For a useful study of this see Margaret MacDonald's work, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
114. The relative liberalism of Asia Minor and Egypt is particularly notable. See M. T. Boatwright, 'Plancia Magna of Perge: Women's Roles and Status in Asia Minor', in S. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 249–72; D. Hobson, 'Women as Property Owners in Roman Egypt', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 113 (1983), pp. 311–21 and, 'The Role of Women in the Economic Life of Roman Egypt: A Case Study From First Century Tebtunis', *Echos du monde classique/Classical Views*, 28 (1984), pp. 373–90. In Asia Minor an unusual prominence had long been given to women, a point first made by O. Baunstein, *Die politische Wirksamkeit der griechischen Frau: eine Nachwirkung Orgriechischen Mutterrechts* (Leipzig: unpublished dissertation, 1911).