Christ & Empire

From Paul to Postcolonial Times

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To R., H., and A.,
who are making
their own history

CHRIST & EMPIRE
From Paul to Postcolonial Times

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Resisting and Reframing Lord

Christology and the Roman Empire

"Jesus is Lord" is one of the earliest christological confessions. In the context of the Roman Empire this title is ambivalent. The Roman emperors claimed the title *lord* and thus made it part of the empire. At the same time, Christians took up this term and used it for Christ in a way that would at times produce uneasiness in the empire. In some cases, this ambivalence about the matter of lordship would amount to a full-fledged challenge, for the early Christian confession that Jesus is Lord could be taken as a denial of the emperor's claim to be lord. Seen this way, Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection represent a logic that diametrically opposes empire and redefines the notion of lordship.

This chapter explores the christological confession that Jesus is Lord, contained in the earliest writings of the New Testament: the letters of the Apostle Paul. Written as early as two decades after Jesus' death, Paul's letters make use of Christian traditions that were already in existence at that time. These letters, as is well known, predate all of the Gospels. While Paul's letters have often been read in support of the status quo, a challenge to empire seems to be reflected, for instance, in his comments about the foolishness of the cross (1 Cor. 1:22-25). If it is true that "God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:28-29), the empire is in trouble.

And yet, in the long history of effects, the challenges that Paul poses to empire have often been ignored if not repressed.[1] Even in modern interpretations of Paul there is little awareness of Paul's broader challenges. Paul is often seen as the creator of a universal and spiritual religion, sometimes couched in opposition to the parochial spirit of Judaism.[2] This Paul is considered a religionist with

little interest in nonreligious matters; even his ethics are limited to religion. This misapprehension of Paul is consistent with the most critical problem in regard to the lordship of Christ: the almost complete absence of discussion of the difference between the nature of Christ's lordship and the nature of the emperor's lordship. Only in more recent research have the conflicts between Paul's theology and the Roman Empire been identified.[3]

Although the main focus of this book is theological, historical research plays an important role in the following chapter, as it will throughout the book. As Richard Horsley has poignantly stated, "trying to understand Jesus' speech and action without knowing how Roman imperialism determined the conditions of life in Galilee and Jerusalem would be like trying to understand Martin Luther King without knowing how slavery, reconstruction, and segregation determined the lives of African Americans in the United States."[4] The fundamental concern of this chapter, however, is not the search for the "historical Jesus" or the "historical Paul,"[5] but an investigation of how the earliest references to Jesus were developed in the context of empire, in ways that interfered with empire and ultimately subverted or at least resisted it. History shapes theology and vice versa, and for this reason we will deal with it critically and self-critically (see the introduction, above).[6] Such critical and self-critical reflection should help us to draw out some lessons for the present as well.

A caveat: theologians often shy away from such questions, not because they would be of no interest to theology but because we are afraid of encroaching on the territory of so many other specialists—scholars of the New Testament in particular, but also historians. Although a broad spectrum of scholars has begun to focus on the question of the relation of Paul's theology and empire,[7] the study of New Testament and empire is very recent; the goal of this chapter cannot be to resolve the scholarly debates but to learn from them in order to develop a genuinely theological framework for considering empire.

The Early Church and the Theology of Empire

Jesus was born, lived, and died under the rule of the Roman Empire and its vassals in Palestine. In the years preceding Jesus' birth, Rome had moved from being a republic to being an empire. The emperor at the time of Jesus' birth was Augustus, only the second Roman emperor after Gaius Julius Caesar; both were considered either divine or "sons of God." Augustus's rule was widely regarded as the "Golden Age." From Jesus' birth until the death of Paul in the latter part of the first century the Roman Empire was at a peak of its power.

As Christianity moved beyond Palestine and westward, across the Roman Empire and toward Rome itself, encounters with empire intensified. While the Roman Empire's presence was well established in Palestine—Jesus' crucifixion displayed the authority of the empire—it was even more strongly felt in the cities of the eastern Roman Empire into which Christianity moved. In this context, empire was present at all levels of life—including the political, the economic, the cultural, and the religious, framing the development of early Christianity. As Catherine Keller has pointed out, "There is no pre-colonial Christianity."[8] From this observation follows the question to be pursued in this chapter and in the rest of the book: How is Christianity different from empire? Or, as Keller puts the question, "Is there a postcolonial Christianity?" She continues that "the postcolonial contribution properly comes from the peripheries, diasporas, and boundary zones of empire,"[9] and this is where we will have to look for the answer.

In Jesus' and Paul's times, the presence of empire was clearly visible to all. The image of the emperor could be seen on the coins (even Jesus, far away from Rome, knew this image [Mark 12:13-17]). Other visible representations of empire included statues, the architecture of public buildings, and the construction of new temples that celebrated the emperor and the goddess Roma, the official deity of the empire. These visible images were joined by other expressions of empire in rhetoric, literary production, and song, which further helped to envelop people in the spirit of empire.[10] Lavish festivals were yet another manifestation of empire, attracting large portions of the population and pulling the inhabitants of the empire together.

The presence of empire could also be felt in the communal and political structures of the cities. Not only did the local rulers adapt their personal style to the demands of the empire (instituted by Rome, their task was to please Rome), but the empire gave new shape and emphasis to the institutions of the people, such as the *ekklesiae*, the assemblies of male citizens of a Greek city-state. In this context, the Christian practice of admitting women to the Christian *ekklesia* introduced a certain ambivalence, if not an altogether different spirit. No wonder the empire sought to reduce the level of popular participation in government issues by groups who were not directly related to the rulers, such as the early Christian communities.[11]

It is easily overlooked today that in none of these manifestations of empire could the political, the economic, the cultural, and the religious be separated; separating the realms of politics, economics, culture, and religion is a modern

idea, which would have been foreign to inhabitants of the ancient world. A sense of this integration is only now returning to our understanding in the context of cultural studies.[12]

Of particular importance in this world that was so suffused by the reality of empire is what has become known as the emperor cult; the titles used for Christ must be understood on this backdrop. The Emperor Octavian (later called Augustus) proclaimed the divinization of Caesar on January 1, 42 BCE, and, as his successor, was thus able to call himself *Divi filius*, translated into Greek as *hyos theou*, "son of God."[13] At the same time, these early emperors still acknowledged some limits. Augustus seems to have been careful not to present himself directly as God[14] and his successor, Tiberius, was even more reluctant to present himself as divine—although this made no difference to the fact that people honored him like a god. It was only the next emperor, Caligula, who was more emphatic about his divinity, as was Nero, who was emperor when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans.[15] In general, it was the eastern parts of the Roman Empire, where early Christianity outside of Palestine first developed, that were more saturated with the emperor cult,[16] posing a challenge for the churches' emerging understanding of Christ.

As we are becoming more aware of the all-encompassing nature of the Roman Empire and its ability to integrate all aspects of life, the emperor cult needs to be taken more seriously. Rather than being just a thinly veiled instrument of political propaganda, as has often been assumed,[17] the emperor cult touched a nerve and expressed deeply held sensitivities of the people. Starting with Augustus, emperors were revered as divine and gave orders to build temples and altars for themselves, often together with the goddess Roma. When Augustus died in 14 CE, the Roman Senate even decreed his ascension into heaven. Emperor worship ultimately took on a life of its own, independent of the self-presentation of individual emperors.[18] In this context, the proliferation of imagery and lavish festivals played an important role.[19]

The emperor was not only the object of the cult but also its subject—people saw him as a savior[20] who had healing powers and who brought "peace and security" (this was the formula introduced after Augustus's victory at Actium at the beginning of his career) and "good news" (literally: "the gospel"—*euanggelion*) to the world. Priests of the emperor cult came from the elite, the wealthiest and most influential families. The role of these priests provides a telling example for how the emperor cult cannot easily be grasped by modern categories of "religion"; they were among the most influential political figures.[21] The overall importance of the emperor cult and the fact that it transcends narrow categories of religion can

also be seen in spatial terms: imperial temples and sanctuaries occupied the most prestigious locations of a city.[22]

We can now see more clearly that in this world the realms of politics, economics, culture, and religion, which are routinely separated in modern scholarship, all flow into each other. It is not possible to separate religion and politics or religion and economics, and sometimes even the modern analytical habit of making distinctions seems impossible. If the ethos of the Roman Empire thus includes all of life—this is one of the basic marks of empire throughout history—the emperor cult cannot simply be regarded as a secondary "superstructure." This cult was not just the legitimization of the emperor and his empire; it played an active role in the construction of empire. It was an integral part of the network of power and created a space for the influence "of local elites over the populace, of cities over other cities, and of Greek over indigenous cultures."[23] In the words of John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, it was the "glue" that held the "civilized world together"[24]; and even if it was not the only unifying element, it was a crucial one. If this is recognized, the ways in which Christian communities adapted or resisted this cult—and their thinking about Christ is a major indication of the degrees of adaptation or resistance—gains in importance and appears in a new light.

Nevertheless, the emperor cult was not received in the same way by all social classes and ethnic groups, nor was it an entirely uniform phenomenon since the Roman Empire did not directly regulate all its manifestations and there were no official doctrines.[25] The emperor cult was considered mutually beneficial for rulers and ruled, and thus no direct coercion to enforce participation in the cult seemed necessary. Those who had most to gain from pursuing and maintaining the emperor cult were, of course, the groups in power. They were eligible for the prominent and powerful positions of priest of the emperor in the important cities. But common people were also attracted to the emperor cult; the festivals in honor of the emperor were high points in the life of the community, and the people participated in large numbers. The cult even provided a certain opportunity for upward social mobility in an otherwise highly structured society.[26]

Even though Augustus and other emperors did not make personal claims to divinity, the connection between the emperor and the gods is at the heart of this cult. As P. A. Brunt has pointed out, "what was most novel in the Roman attitude to their empire was the belief that it was universal and willed by the gods."[27] This tradition was foreshadowed by an older belief that the empire was based in the laws of nature. In the words of Cicero: "Do we not observe that dominion

has been granted by Nature to everything that is best, to the great advantage of what is weak?"[28] Grounding empire first in nature and then in the divine had significant political consequences: since the divine is present in the world and concentrated in the person of the emperor, he does not need the affirmation by the people.[29] This is reflected in the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire, from an earlier appreciation for democratic principles to an ever-stronger emphasis on the authority and power of the emperor. Nevertheless, although popular affirmation was required less and less, the empire was still seen as beneficial for its subjects. The belief in the beneficial nature of the empire is expressed, for instance, by Plutarch (45–120 CE), who argues that "an essential difference between [the Roman Empire] and other ancient empires is that the Romans govern free men, not slaves."[30] The Romans came to believe that the gods favored them because of their piety and justice and that an empire based on those values could only be a good thing.

This is the fabric of the society in which early Christianity developed its own reflections on Christ. Empire was everywhere, a part of life so essential and normal that it was frequently taken for granted. What is particularly interesting is not that Christians were influenced by the logic of empire—after all, the empire was like the air they breathed; what is remarkable is that some of them were able to recognize the ambivalence of empire and to develop resistance. Without achieving complete independence from empire—an illusionary goal then as now—some of the earliest theologies and Christologies managed to refuse conforming to the expectations of the empire. Does the theology of the Apostle Paul, despite the fact that he has often been considered a social conservative,[31] belong to this group?

Nevertheless, even if they initially developed as a critique, these earliest theologies and Christologies have also been used in the support of empire. References to Christ, who refused to go along with empire, were subsequently grafted onto other theologies that promised to be more supportive of the status quo. Paul's radical statements about unity and equality in Christ, for instance, as found in Galatians 3:28 and elsewhere, were later "balanced" by Deutero-Pauline comments on the necessary submission of women to men. In the history of interpretation up to the present, Paul's statements about freedom and equality were often read through the lens of other statements, also attributed to Paul, that promoted hierarchy or at least "complementarity." Complementarity in this context is a more insidious concept because, like the idea of hierarchy, it naturalizes differences but, unlike hierarchy, it tends to hide power differentials.

If women and men are seen in hierarchical relationships, the power differential is clear; if women and men are seen in complementary relationships, however, each appears to fulfill an important role as part of a larger whole and even the most subservient roles of women are justified. The question of power is thus covered up. A Paul domesticated along those lines could often be employed directly in the justification of empire.

Even where Paul was not domesticated in those more obvious ways, however, a widespread reading of Paul as merely interested in "religious" matters has led to the support of empire as well. This type of support of empire is hidden for the most part and thus even more difficult to identify: after all, if Paul is seen as having little interest in political statements, why should he be in support of empire? Yet empire in Paul's times, not unlike in our own, was all-encompassing and omnipresent. The empire thus represents the political, economic, cultural, and religious default position, and could not be avoided even if Paul were only interested in "religious" matters. Not putting up resistance, therefore, amounts to an implicit endorsement of empire.

With the same logic it can be argued that to question the ethos of such an all-encompassing empire at any one point might well amount to resistance of the whole reality of empire. One must seriously wonder why Paul would have been persona non grata in the Roman Empire, spending much time in its prisons and enduring constant harassment and repression including torture (not a thing to take lightly in any context), if he did not pose a challenge to empire and if all he wanted was to address some of the more intricate points of intra-religious discourse.[32]

That the Roman Empire was held together not simply through military control or imperial bureaucracy is one of the most crucial insights when it comes to understanding Paul and his Christology. Military conquest was primarily a means of expanding the empire and of controlling unrest that threatened to get out of hand. While in Judea military force was a constant threat that often found expression in mass crucifixions, in Asia Minor, where Paul was at work, the governors employed only a small military staff and the cities usually governed themselves.[33]

The Roman Empire was thus held together by cultural, political, and socioeconomic mechanisms. The emperor cult and rhetoric, both cultural phenomena, went hand in hand with the system of patronage, a socioeconomic phenomenon. The power of the empire was most secure when it was backed up both by the emperor cult and by the patronage system.[34] The patronage system provided a socioeconomic hierarchy where the property owners, who enjoyed

higher social status, dispensed power to be received by the lower classes. Some historians have argued that this bond of loyalty between the classes was another cohesive force that held the Roman Empire together. This system was even more powerful due to the fact that, unlike in the contemporary United States, rich and poor did not live in separate neighborhoods but in contiguous areas.[35]

As the older democratic and republican ideals that had a broader base in the population vanished, the propertied oligarchies gained more and more control.[36] In this situation, "politics" proper became the domain of the powerful and was no longer in the reach of most people. This might help explain why we find little interest in matters of direct political engagement in Paul; common people had to find other outlets for contributing to the common good.[37] We are beginning to understand better why Paul, as Horsley notes, "was hardly a rabble-rousing revolutionary, fomenting provincial rebellion against Roman rule."[38]

Another reason for a certain lacuna in the realm of politics at the time of Paul had to do with the prominence of the emperor cult. Horsley offers a caricature of the situation in which the cult gained prominence at the expense of traditional political structures: "mystifying pomp and ceremony make administration (and an administrative apparatus) unnecessary."[39] A better way to think about this phenomenon, however, might be that the emperor cult provided an alternative way of producing order and of ordering social relationships and thus an alternative to traditional politics. Without awareness of this context, Paul's writings might indeed be seen as nonpolitical. Paul is political in a different way, however, not by challenging the administration and official politics but by resisting three of the most powerful mechanisms of control of the Roman Empire: the emperor cult, the system of patronage (built on Latin notions like *pietas*, trusting a father figure; and *fides* [Greek: *pistis*, "faith"], loyalty between rulers and people[40]), and the prominent themes of the empire's rhetoric. One of these prominent themes is the assertion that peace and security are established by the emperor.[41]

Paul seems to have taken each of these topics very seriously. One of his disagreements with a faction in the church of Corinth was precisely that the worship of other gods and participation in sacrificial meals were dangerous. Rather than "harmless social gatherings,"[42] these worship events were at the very heart of what held the empire together. Furthermore, Paul refused to enter into patronage relationships with Corinthian elites; the system of patronage is problematic because it destroys the horizontal bonds of the common people—their solidarity with each other—and ties them to the powerful and the wealthy.[43] In all these cases, there is

a close connection between cult and political power: the elites exercise their power by sponsoring the emperor cult. What is often classified as "religion" was therefore inextricably tied up with political power. In Horsley's words, "the fusion of the religious system of sacrifices and emperor cult with the social-economic system of patronage served to veil as it constituted the imperial network of domination and power relations."[44] No wonder that those who had a sense of what was going on perceived Paul's theology as politically dangerous; he seems to have lifted at least the edges of the veil of empire theology.

The main problem that would have made Paul so dangerous to the empire was not that he proclaimed alternative religious ideas. Other religious alternatives were available in the Roman Empire, and the emperor cult did not presuppose monotheism; while the emperors were counted among the gods, there was room for other gods. Thus, merely worshiping another god was not a problem. The Roman Empire was not unfamiliar with religious tolerance.[45] Greek and Roman thinkers even had a certain appreciation for Jewish monotheism and its emphasis on a transcendent God. Likewise, other non-Roman gods and goddesses, such as the Egyptian goddess Isis who did not challenge the theology of empire (a fact that did not make her "more religious" and "less political"), were easily integrated into the Roman pantheon and into popular piety.[46]

If seen through the lens of the modern category of religion, Paul's discourse does not stand out at first sight. To the contrary, some of his theological concepts are suspiciously close to those of the empire. But there are differences in his usage that make us suspect that there is no easy harmony of Christianity and empire. It is in the midst of the resulting ambivalence that we find the kind of theological surplus that points us beyond empire. Ambivalence and surplus arise from Paul's use of terms like *ekklesia* ("church," used for the gathering of citizens), *euanggelion* ("the gospel," used for the imperial good news), *savior* (an official title of the emperor since Augustus), *dikaiosynē* ("justice," attributed to Augustus), *eirēnē* ("peace," used to describe the peace established by Augustus), and especially the christological *kyrios* ("lord," used for the emperors after Augustus). Even a seemingly harmless "religious" notion like the idea of Jesus' ascension into heaven might pose political problems: If only select emperors ascended into heaven—only those the Roman Senate considered deserving—could the proclamation of the ascension of Jesus have been harmless? The religious terms that Paul chooses come as another surprise. Religious and cultic terms that were used in Hellenistic-Roman religions of the time are mostly absent, particularly the usual language for

worship. According to Johan Christaan Beker, what remains of cultic-sacrificial language is "transformed metaphorically and applied to the daily life-style of the Christians."[47] As Wayne Meeks has noted, "these Christian groups would not have looked like a *religious* movement at all to their contemporaries, for one did not go to cultic places and occasions to hear this kind of moral advice."[48] The fact that they met in ordinary houses, not seeking to imitate religion and cult, might tell us something important about the self-understanding of those early Christians. Meeks's reference to "moral advice" given in these settings points in the right direction, as it takes us beyond the narrowly cultic and religious, but why should the matter be limited to morality? Why not think of even more comprehensive expressions of life that include politics and economics as well?

While the terminology of Paul's theology and the theology of the Roman Empire are quite similar, Paul tends to turn this terminology on its head. What sounds like purely religious terminology to modern ears could be heard as a subtle challenge of the Roman Empire. There must have been some tension, and Crossan and Reed bluntly state the extent of the potential challenge, "to proclaim Jesus as Son of God was deliberately denying Caesar his highest title and to announce Jesus as Lord and Savior was calculated treason."[49] Nevertheless, there remains a very fine line: Paul can also be read as conforming to the empire (although he explicitly resists conformity in Romans 12:2), particularly if he is read through the Deutero-Pauline literature and the often-quoted passage in 1 Peter 2:17: "Fear God. Honor the emperor." This happened frequently enough in the history of the church and the reasons are quite understandable.

First, Paul often had to use coded language so as not to endanger the congregations,[50] and thus, for the uninitiated, there seemed little difference between his theology and the theology of empire: perhaps Christ's lordship was modeled after the lordship of the emperor after all? It is telling that the difference between Christ's kind of lordship and the emperor's kind of lordship has not been discussed much by mainline theology in two thousand years. Even today, neither liberal nor conservative Christians seem to worry about this matter, as I will demonstrate in the next part.

Second, Paul's theology is often adapted to empire theology by default if the deeper problem with empire is not understood. The problem with the Roman Empire is not first of all a moral one—that it was somehow more evil than all other empires. The problem with the Roman Empire is that it follows a different logic than

the faith in Christ. As Crossan has pointed out, Roman logic assumes that the normal order of the world lay in the sequence of "piety, war, victory, and peace." Paul, on the other hand, follows a different logic according to which the sequence is "covenant, nonviolence, justice, and peace."[51] Whatever the more detailed differences between the two forms of logic, if those differences go undetected, one of the major features of Paul's theology is lost. Empire theology is, therefore, not always immediately obvious as a theology that justifies the empire. In a situation where the empire determines what is "normal" and what logic to follow, failure to identify this normalcy and to resist it means to support the empire. In other words, any theology in a highly politicized situation that claims to be nonpolitical deceives itself. In this context, the supposed "universalism" of biblical studies, claiming universal applicability and failing to distinguish between the two diametrically opposed perspectives of Paul and the Roman Empire, has only made the problem worse.[52]

In sum, while it is commonly known that the theology of the early church and the writings of the Bible were produced in the midst of empire, the deeper theological connections are usually not drawn out, apart from ubiquitous critiques of the later church after Constantine. But in order to come to a clearer understanding of the lordship of Christ as envisioned by Paul we need to ask to what degree the categories of these early theologies are different from the categories of empire.

Resistance to empire of many of the texts in the Bible is mostly hidden; if there is ambivalence and a surplus that points beyond empire, it is not always clear on the surface. The Gospels, for instance, do not openly blame the Romans for the crucifixion of Jesus. To a certain degree, they even seem to defend the Romans and blame a less powerful group, the Jews. We need to keep in mind, of course, that the political situation is always changing and that the Roman Empire had become more threatening toward the end of the first century when the Gospels were written.[53] Paul, too, has at times been read in those terms and identified as a social conservative, promoting at best a "love patriarchalism."[54] This view is borne out particularly in the post-Pauline literature, that is, the Deutero-Pauline 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Ephesians, and even Colossians.[55]

There is no need to portray early Christianity and the New Testament in unambivalent terms. It is not necessary to claim that everyone was clearly opposed to empire or that Christians all came from one particular social class, even though this latter issue is still being hotly debated.[56] Our question is whether there is a surplus that points us beyond empire.

Lord of the Empire

The title *Lord* is one of the oldest titles of Christ in the New Testament and one of the central notions in Paul's Christology.[57] It can be found in all of the introductions of Paul's letters. But why is it the favorite title for so many Christians even today? One reason might have to do with a widespread emphasis on personal relationships with Christ and the related confession that declares that Jesus is Lord over one's personal life. But what does that mean and how does that use of the title relate to the strong political connotations of the title? One of the central questions for ordination candidates in the United Methodist tradition is: "What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is Lord?" A typical answer in the Bible Belt is that Jesus "saves" me and "takes care" of me. Most answers tend to stay at the personal and what we might think of as the "religious" level; few note that Jesus' lordship might have wider implications. Fewer yet realize that Jesus' lordship might somehow be related to the lords who are in charge of the empires. Such domestications of Jesus' lordship are not uncommon in the church. But what is the problem?

Native American theologians have been most acutely aware of problems with the confession of Christ's lordship. Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George Tinker have argued that the statement "Jesus is Lord" is "the one scriptural metaphor used for the Christ event that is ultimately unacceptable and even hurtful to American Indian peoples."[58] Because Native American cultures had egalitarian characteristics, they point out, even a chief had limited authority. From this perspective, the term *lord* is closely tied to the history of colonization and the resulting hierarchies of power; these hierarchies are reflected even in ecclesial structures and in their "bishops and missionaries (both male and female) to whom Indians have learned as conquered peoples to pay lordly deference."[59] The contemporary lack of awareness of the relation of Jesus' lordship to structures of power does not do away with this problem. Even if Jesus' lordship is seen in narrowly religious terms, common imperialistic assumptions about lords return through the back door and shape Christology by default. Any reference to Christ as Lord that does not reflect these unconscious political and economic connotations of the term that are a central part of our history shores up the powers that be. Empire theology does not have to be a conscious enterprise; many of its oppressive tendencies are produced by default.

These reflections need to be seen in light of the fact that Paul has often been used for the purposes of empire. Examples include justifications of slavery, of the subordination of women, of the Holocaust in retribution for the belief that Jews

killed Jesus, and even of low-intensity warfare in Central America. In the words of Neil Elliott, "the usefulness of the Pauline letters to systems of domination and oppression is . . . clear and palpable." He is right when he concludes that "this observation must be our starting point."[60]

It is striking that New Testament references to Jesus as Lord are often read as if the title *lord* would need no special consideration or interpretation. Evangelical Christians who commonly emphasize the lordship of Christ, for instance, have debated whether or not Christ should be worshiped as lord, but there is hardly any discussion of the meaning of this title. This lack of a sustained theological debate of the meaning of *lord* is true, strangely enough, even for expositions of the title itself. When the title *lord* is described, the fact of Christ's lordship is noted but little consideration is given to its particular shape. Things are hardly different for the representatives of liberal Christianity. Liberal theologians, too, may debate the lordship of Christ (for instance, in terms of the question whether Christ is necessary for salvation[61]), but once again there is not much debate about what the term *lord* means once it is applied to Jesus.[62] The one exception seem to be some debates concerning the masculinity of the term in liturgical studies, resulting in its omission in certain hymns.[63] Only very recently has the nature of Jesus' lordship been considered in different terms. The scholars involved in the debate represent a spectrum of different opinions, including Richard Horsley, John Dominic Crossan, and N. T. Wright, the latter two well known for their opposing positions on questions of the historical Jesus.

Under the conditions of the Roman Empire the identification of Christ and emperor is a constant temptation, and the title *lord* symbolizes it. Christ and emperor have been identified at various stages throughout history. The church under Constantine is, of course, the prime example; another example is the medieval church under the emperors of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." In more recent history, the theologians who wrote and signed the Barmen Declaration in Germany in the 1930s suspected that the church was in fact putting Hitler and Christ on equal footing. Even today, many Christians identify the presidency of George W. Bush with a divine purpose—in the 2004 election two-thirds of all Christians in the United States voted for him. Nevertheless, in none of these settings has the parallel between Christ and empire ever been made as blatantly explicit as one might expect. In most cases it takes a closer look and a way of reading between the lines before the connections can be identified.

Sometimes theologians draw distinctions between how Christ's lordship is manifested in the world and in the church. Evangelical theologian Donald Bloesch, for instance, suggests that Christ rules through "suffering love" in the church and "in the overthrow of the powers of the world by the sword." In his thinking, Christ's power in the world has to do with power that "is imposed," while Christ's power in the church has do to with "grace offered"; the two images of Christ never meet since they are divided into two separate realms, and Christ as emperor goes unchallenged by Christ as love.[64] As a result, the lordship of the emperor goes unchallenged as well.

Nevertheless, there is another way of proclaiming Christ as the lord of the empire that is often more dangerous because it is less visible. Often Christ and emperor are seen as completely unrelated and thus there appears to be no need to bother with distinctions. Christ is seen as a religious figure and the emperor as a political one.[65] This is a contemporary temptation that was not an option in the ancient world where religion and politics were not seen as separate realms. No doubt, Paul himself could affirm a dual perspective of Jesus as judge ("putting all under his feet") and Jesus as loving. But it is hard to see how these roles could be bifurcated or split up according to "religion" and "politics" or "church" and "world."

If only by default, this bifurcation of the lordship of Christ and the lordship of the emperor eventually leads to the same problem as a position that explicitly takes over the commonly accepted definitions of lordship and applies them to Christ, because the lordship of Christ is not allowed to reconstruct the lordship of the emperor that ultimately determines our understanding of what a lord is. If a lord is defined as what is commonly understood by the term—namely a ruler, whether a monarch, an oligarch, or a democratically elected leader of a modern country; in short, anybody who has "power over"—the theological consequences are significant. An early example of the adaptation of Christ's lordship to "power over"—the power of the empire—can be found in the Deutero-Pauline letters, which proclaim spiritual transcendence while copying the social patterns of empire in the church. Here, as Horsley puts it, "Paul's representation of the exalted and reigning Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior would be used to consolidate the imperial order."[66] In addition, there are ambivalences and rough edges in the argument of Paul's own letters. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul endorses subordination with a rather odd argument: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ." The idea of the subordination of Christ under God should be as troublesome to

trinitarian theologians as the idea of the subordination of women under men is for progressive Christians. What does Paul have in mind? Is he promoting a problematic trinitarian theology coupled with problematic social advice? Likewise, in the famous passage of Romans 13:1-7, Paul argues that Christians "be subject to the governing authorities" (13:1). Is he asking the Roman Christians to support the Roman Empire, as this passage has often been interpreted? What about the difference of Christ and Nero—the emperor who came to power in the year before this passage was written? Has Nero, too, been "instituted by God" (Rom. 13:1)? It has been noted that there is no specific reference to Christ in this passage, and we may have to keep in mind that the context of these passages is persecution and martyrdom.[67]

Nevertheless, in this light Paul's own references to Jesus as Lord might be read in support of the Roman Empire. In 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 Paul talks about Christ's handing over "the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and every power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." Horsley argues that such language could easily be used to reinforce subordination within the Christian community itself.[68] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza goes further, wondering whether Paul himself is reproducing structures of empire. She finds that Paul engages in practices of "othering," that is, creating polar opposites.[69] This leads to a particular distortion of lordship: the problem of "kyriarchy," that is, "the governing dominance or supremacy of elite propertied men."[70] The other side of the coin is obedience, which is the "essence of patriarchy," meaning "dependence on and control by men in power."[71] Schüssler Fiorenza is right when she identifies parallels between the hegemonic discourses of the empire and Paul's discourse—but the question is whether we are dealing with exactly the same dynamic when approached "from below." While we do need to wonder whether Paul completely overcomes the structures of empire in his own communities—here Schüssler Fiorenza's point is well taken[72]—the strategy of "othering" may not exclusively be the strategy of empire. Could it not also be a mechanism of resistance for minority groups struggling to resist empire?[73] This matter throws new light also on the egalitarianism that is often claimed for these early Christian communities.[74] Is it not the case that egalitarianism in the midst of a situation of oppression and empire can only emerge out of a determined and consistent struggle against inequality—to the point of condemning empire and its representatives and thus "othering" them?

With this in mind we need to take a closer look at the background of the term *lord*. Four possible sources have been identified: First, in Palestinian-Jewish culture, "lord" was a secular formal address, like the contemporary "sir." Second, also in Palestinian-Jewish culture, "lord" could be used in a religious sense. Both Palestinian Jews and Palestinian Jewish Christians called God "*Lord*" (based on *adonai*, one of the Hebrew pronunciations for the tetragrammaton YHWH). Third, Hellenistic Jews called God "*Lord*" as well since the Septuagint translates the tetragrammaton as *Lord*. Finally, in Hellenistic-pagan culture gods and emperors were called "*lord*."[75] In the eastern Mediterranean world the term *lord* was applied to Roman emperors from Augustus on, the first verifiable inscription of the title dating to Nero's time.[76] Representing a different perspective, evangelical scholar Larry Hurtado claims three contexts for *kyrios* in Paul, all having to do with "religious" phenomena; one is in regard to the practical life of Christians, another is in regard to the future return of Jesus, and the final one is in regard to the worship setting.[77] Hurtado makes no reference at all to political or other connotations.

Unfortunately, nowhere in this debate about sources and contexts is the actual meaning of the title and its function reflected. What particular resonances does this title produce in the setting in which this term is used? It seems that each of the researchers gets hung up on their own presuppositions. Joseph Fitzmyer, for instance, does not want to endorse the fourth source of the title (Hellenistic-pagan culture) as the only influence, because he feels that *kyrios* could not have been "just" a political term; consequently, he shows that there were "also" religious applications for the title.[78] But this strict separation of a political and a religious sphere can no longer be maintained. As we have seen, the emperor cult was not only political but also religious, and what has been considered as the religious use of the title *lord* is also political. In search for a more "religious" option, Fitzmyer dismisses the Hellenistic Jewish background in order to emphasize the second option, rooted in Palestinian Jewish culture.[79] Theologically important, he argues, is the respect of the Palestinian Jews for the name of God; applied to Jesus, the title *lord* is said to stress "a transcendence," due to the implied parallel between Jesus and God.[80] Unfortunately, Fitzmyer does not reflect on the meaning of "lord" in the Aramaic original; neither does he ask what the early church wanted to express with the term besides the religious emphasis on transcendence. In the end, Fitzmyer's approach does not even mention the Roman emperors' claim to lordship and thus imperial lordship is not challenged at all. As a result, Jesus as Lord has nothing to say to the emperor as

lord. If Fitzmyer would give up his modern presupposition of a strict separation of religion and politics, he might be able to recapture the deeper implications of his own reference to transcendence: What if Jesus as Lord did not represent abstract religious notions of transcendence but had to do with "transcending," and thus challenging, the politico-religious claim that Caesar is lord?

More recent research has begun to point out the political connotations of the Palestinian references to lord, implied, for instance, in the Aramaic phrase *maranatha*. In the Nabataean culture, which is contemporary with the events of the New Testament and in close geographical, linguistic, and cultural proximity to Palestine, the term relates directly to the king.[81] Once again, however, the political implications of Paul's use of the term are left open. Only N. T. Wright is clearer about the challenge of the term *lord* when he points out that it needs to be seen in light of "its Jewish roots on the one hand and its pagan challenge on the other."[82] But the undertone is still religious: there seems to be a (pure) Jewish religious origin that somehow challenges the pagan misuse of the term. But why would the challenge be only for the pagans? Did not Paul, in his own way, wrestle with Jewish political support of empire, thus posing a challenge to the Jewish side as well?

As we have seen, in the world of the earliest Christians who began to apply the title *kyrios* to Jesus, the term itself had clear political connotations, and it is hardly conceivable that it was used in a "purely religious" way—particularly since an understanding that makes clear-cut distinctions between religion and other expressions of life (including politics) is a modern one.[83] The use of the title *lord* for the emperor is no doubt complex. While not all Roman emperors in the times of Jesus and Paul preferred to call themselves lord, the term becomes more and more popular, designating an ever-stronger monarchy and pointing to an emperor who is in control of the world.[84] Parallel to this process, the title *lord* increasingly acquires divine connotations. The growing popularity of the title indicates a shift in the empire: under the cover of a republican constitution, the monarchy grows stronger and more absolute. The occasional rejection of the title by an emperor could well have to do with the desire to maintain the cover of the republic. In the Eastern traditions, however, where Christianity first took root, the situation was clearer: there the title *lord* was typically attributed to the absolute monarch.[85] If Paul decided to use the title *lord* in this context, he was either naïve and completely aloof to the political developments in the empire (unlikely for someone who lived in constant conflict with the law), or he had a particular purpose for using it, either in support of or in resistance to the Roman Empire.

Gerd Theissen adds an important clue when he argues that the title *kyrios* can be seen as "the most far-reaching innovation after Easter." The Jesus portrayed in the Gospels did not want to be venerated. Thus, in order to remain true to Jesus, the title *lord* would need to be used in a particular way. The title *lord*, as Theissen points out, is "bound to the Galilean and Judean Jesus, to the friend of toll collectors and sinners, the critic of the self-righteous, the one who proclaimed the grace of God, the victim of priestly hostility and state power."[86] Unless this is kept in mind, Jesus is easily identified with absolute and top-down power.

In the Old Testament, as Gottfried Quell has pointed out, the name of God and the divine title *Lord* are "terms of experience" (*Erfahrungsbegriffe*); that is, what is understood as "Lord" is defined by the experience of God's history with Israel.[87] The same is true in the New Testament. In the letters of the New Testament and in the book of Acts, "Lord" refers sometimes to the "historical" Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 7:10).[88] "Lord" is a term of experience because it reflects the early church's growing understanding of who Jesus was. During his earthly ministry Jesus was not usually called Lord, but somehow the early church experienced him as Lord. While most scholars agree on this issue, it is commonly assumed that this is a "purely religious" development, unrelated to the Roman Empire.[89]

With a few exceptions, most biblical scholars have not given much thought to the fact that Jesus' being Lord might be qualitatively different from Caesar's being lord. The work of Werner Foerster, providing one of the most influential contributions, is only one example. Evangelical scholarship once again deserves special mention because there is such strong emphasis on Jesus as Lord. Evangelical scholar Stephen G. Hatfield provides statistics for the use of the term. While he tells us that the term *lord* appears 717 times in the New Testament and 275 times in the Pauline corpus, that "his kingdom and authority are ever present," and that it takes an "intentional act of will" to respond to Jesus' lordship, there is no mention of the type of lordship that Jesus exercises.[90] The question of whether Jesus' lordship is similar to or qualitatively different from the lordship of the Roman emperors is not even in view. Likewise, in the numerous evangelical debates around "lordship theology," there is little reflection about the character of Christ's lordship. The question is whether belief in Jesus as Savior is enough or whether commitment to Jesus as Lord is also required for "salvation" (a term that invariably seems to mean "going to heaven"). The only definition that can be gleaned from the debate is that the title *lord* implies the divinity of Christ and "must mean sovereign master."[91] As a result, "Christ, being the Lord, comes into the heart of the believer as Lord and

Master."[92] But what kind of mastery is implied here? If that question had been left open in Paul's own mind, the mastery of the Roman lords and emperors would have provided the model for the mastery of Christ by default. Unfortunately, today the problem is no different. If the mastery of Christ is left undefined, the mastery as defined by the prevailing empires will provide the model. Christ is thus most certainly the lord of empire unless explicitly defined otherwise.

Another issue that is frequently brought up in this context is the exclusive nature of the lordship of Christ. Once again, the debate shows some influences of the totalitarian logic of empire. This issue, too, could be addressed differently if we were clearer about the actual nature of Christ's lordship. Is the power of Christ the Lord a zero-sum game—like in the Roman Empire where any power not accountable to the emperor had to be seen as contradicting the empire—or are there other forms of power that might be shared and that would not diminish when shared? We need to ask ourselves how much our theological perspectives and terms are indeed shaped by the logic of empire.

While mainline theology, whether evangelical or liberal, rarely draws out the lines from Christ to empire, other theologies have done so more explicitly. Vice President Dick Cheney, for instance, has brought out into the open the connection of empire and God that is usually present only in hidden form. In a 2003 Christmas card to his supporters he quoted Benjamin Franklin: "And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?"[93] Even the work of those theologians who would disagree with this statement is easily co-opted unless there is a clear indication of how Jesus as Lord is different from the forms of lordship promoted by empire.

A few decades earlier, statements about Jesus' lordship had a similar ring. In 1935, two years after Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, German theologian Karl Heim talks about the *Führervollmacht* of Jesus—Jesus' authority/power to be the leader.[94] The German title *Führer*—that is, "leader"—was of course claimed by Hitler himself. Leadership can only emerge from one place, Heim argues, since no one can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). What this means, he says, is clear to the Christians in Nazi Germany: there is an experience of a strong leader who demonstrates what leadership means and that we are not able to lead ourselves. Heim sees his position as superior to German Idealism and the Enlightenment since progress is no longer driven by ideas but by a person; true leadership is rooted in the personality of the leader. Heim's argument builds on a basic assumption of evangelical Christianity: the personal relationship with Christ. Leadership, he

argues, is built on an I-thou relationship. Moreover, the authority of this *Führer* is unlimited: "If we live our life under the leadership of another, we have put in his hand even our knowledge of ultimate things."[95] In sum, Heim finds that Paul uses the ancient emperor cult to create a bridge between Christianity and empire. The difference between Christ and the *Führer* is quantitative, not qualitative: the style of leadership is the same, although Christ as *Führer* transcends the limitations of being human. Paul, affirming the lordship of Christ, is thus seen as an explicit supporter of the Roman Empire. Ellen Meiksins Wood, not a theologian, sees a straight line from this kind of Paul to Augustine, in whose hands "Christianity became not a politically rebellious sect of a tribal religion but a 'universal' spiritual doctrine that sought salvation in another realm and 'rendered unto Caesar' his unchallenged temporal authority."[96]

One of the oldest traditions of the New Testament that invokes Jesus as Lord may help to test these presuppositions. In Philippians 2:5-11, Paul refers to an even older Christian tradition, which makes this one of the very oldest passages in the New Testament. Once again, the typical modern interpretations of this passage focus on the "religious" implications, emphasizing the equality of Jesus and God and the image of religious power reflected in the statement that "every knee should bend."[97] It should be clear by now that these seemingly religious interpretations are tied up with the political; not only do they fail to identify the latent presence of the Roman Empire and thus support empire by default, they mirror the moves of the power of empire.

Even when the potential political challenge of Jesus' lordship is realized, however, is it still often unclear what kind of lord Jesus is. John White points to the imperial character of the use of the term *lord* in Philippians 2:5-11: "the image of universal prostration required of subjects underscores his role as imperial ruler."[98] White's interpretation is typical, as he sees no further need to explore the differences between Christ's lordship and the Roman emperors' lordship. Even where the challenge to empire is clearer, however, a certain romantic notion of Jesus' lordship remains. German New Testament scholar Georg Eichholz emphasizes the real power of Jesus as Lord in the passage of Philippians 2. He realizes that Jesus' power has implications for other powers: "As the powers acclaim [Jesus] as *kyrios*, they attribute all power to him, they give up their own power to him, they agree to their *disempowerment*."[99] What is still not clear, though, is what kind of power we are talking about. Furthermore, that the powers give up their power voluntarily, without a struggle, does not correspond to any real experience, whether inside or outside the church.[100]

The tension between the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus in Philippians 2 might give us a hint of the different sort of power promoted by Jesus: a power that is in diametrical opposition to the power of the emperor. Yet many scholars resolutely reject the idea that this passage refers to anything other than a mysterious transaction within Godself. Gerhard Friedrich finds in Philippians 2 merely a description of God's mysterious way of salvation.[101] Ernst Käsemann (following Barth) rejects the idea that Christ is an example for the ethical life, which could only be "ethical idealism." This pre-Pauline hymn needs to be seen "in isolation from its immediate parenetic context."[102] Others find that Christ can indeed be an ethical example, but they miss the political challenge.[103]

Other interpreters, less inhibited by German Lutheran theological categories, realize the potential challenge. Antoinette Clark Wire sees in Philippians 2:5-11 "the voluntary downward plunge of the divine" in which Paul himself participates—through his own loss of status.[104] Robert Hamerton-Kelly finds "the antidote to sacred violence" in the "identification with the victim."[105] The task of the apostles is to imitate the self-emptying process. Stanley P. Saunders points out that "the hymn clearly models the denial of self-interest, as well as the divestment of divine (and human) status and privilege." In Philippians 2:8 Paul does not simply praise humility; the word that he uses "signifies the act of placing oneself in solidarity with the humiliated, that is, complete identification of oneself with those who huddle together on the broken, bottom rungs of the human ladder."[106] Paul is here talking about life-and-death issues; after all, his own life is hanging in the balance as a prisoner.

Crossan and Reed raise the key question in regard to Philippians 2. How this question is answered decides whether Christ is the lord of empire or not: "Did that downward kenosis forever change the upward exaltation in its type, its mode, and its practice?"[107] If the downward movement does indeed make a difference, the result is a very different kind of "high Christology" than the one that is commonly proclaimed by the church,[108] decisively resisting the top-down hierarchies of the empire.

The proclamation of Christ as Lord is thus constantly appropriated by the empire, even though this does not always happen on purpose. Keep in mind, too, that empire does not always have to be seen in a morally negative light; some scholars explicitly emphasize the benevolent nature of empire. John White, for example, finds Paul's use of the title *lord* for Christ to be parallel to the understanding of the rule of Augustus, as "political leader, beneficial head

of the communal family, and priestly Lord." White follows Suetonius's idealized description of Augustus as a benevolent and pious ruler who "desired public welfare rather than self-glory or personal popularity."[109] What is missing in this account, however, is a sense that empire can be problematic even when it appears to be morally correct and benevolent. What is wrong with the following picture? Augustus did much to revive traditional piety and ancient rites, and he reinstated priestly offices. He put great emphasis on what we might call "family values." Marriage was promoted to such an extent that men between twenty-six and sixty had to be married or remarry; divorced or widowed women between twenty and fifty had to find another husband within six months. Those with multiple children were granted special benefits. Belief in the moral basis of the empire is not a new phenomenon.[110] What is wrong with this picture can, however, be seen in the tensions of empire. In a fictional conversation Crossan and Reed have Pilate wonder why the Judean people oppose the Roman Empire. "We have brought them law and order. We have brought them peace and prosperity. We have brought them culture and civilization. We have brought them free trade and international commerce. Why do they hate us so?"[111] Similar questions continue to be asked by benevolent promoters of other empires as well, most recently in the United States in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. The answers are not hard to find if one considers that large groups of people do not benefit from empire and that even the most benevolent efforts are often directly geared not to the needs of the people and their self-expression, but to the expansion of top-down powers and economic interests.

One of the odd things about empire in our own time is that many people have no sense for the pressures produced by empire and do not perceive empire at work. As a result, there is no context for observing the difference between Christ as Lord and the emperor as lord. This may explain the otherwise strange attraction to "purely religious" and depoliticized language. Yet when Christians in a context of empire are unaware of the political implications of their faith, their Christ is likely to be co-opted by empire by default.

Empire is thus the proverbial "elephant in the room" when it comes to the lordship of Christ. Nevertheless, even some who are aware of this elephant have made efforts to play it down. New Testament scholar Wayne Meeks explains that "like any immigrant group, the Christians wanted to be seen as leading a 'quiet life,' causing no trouble and needing nothing, in short, 'behaving decently toward the outsiders' (1 Thess. 4:11-12)." Meeks does not stop there: "True, a prophet

of the lowest social class might receive in a trance a 'revelation of the Lord' and with it the right to speak and give direction to the household assembly—but everyone still knew to whom the house belonged."[112] In other words, there is no need to worry about challenges that might come from calling Christ "*Lord*," since there was no way in which Christians would or could step outside the boundaries of their ecclesial isolation and thus step up against the powers that be. Any christological surplus is thus immediately domesticated. Likewise, British church historian Henry Chadwick is eager to explain that the mission to the pagans was not at all concerned to resist the government. In this perspective, the book of Acts justifies the idea that the Roman Empire could be a useful tool in spreading the gospel—but what about the fact, also mentioned in Acts, that Paul spent quite a bit of time in its prisons? The only thing that Christians did not like about the empire, according to Chadwick, was its "old paganism." Chadwick sees no reason for a conflict of Paul with empire: he was a dual citizen and considered the Romans as servants of divine justice who resisted evil deeds. The first conflict with the Roman Empire was, therefore, merely a matter of coincidence, as Emperor Nero needed a scapegoat and happened to pick on the Christians.[113] According to this logic, there is little need to make a distinction between Christ as Lord and the lords of the Roman or other empires.

The Resisting Lord

The purpose of interpreting Paul's Christology in light of the politics of empire is not to politicize Paul but to save him from being depoliticized.[114] As we have seen, the depoliticized Paul is the one that is—paradoxically—more political in more dangerous ways because he ends up on the side of empire by default and without our being aware of it. One of the biggest mistakes in reading Paul is, therefore, to read him in a political vacuum. Paul needs to be understood as a man of his own time, engaging the powers of his time. Daniel Boyarin, a Jewish scholar, has read Paul as an internal critic of Jewish culture, rather than as the founder of another religion who initiated a clean break.[115] On the backdrop of our growing awareness of empire, we need to ask whether Paul can also be understood as an "internal critic of the Roman Empire," rather than as someone who sought to escape into an otherworldly religious ether.

It has been argued that in Romans Paul's emphasis on God's justice (usually translated as "righteousness," a more religious-sounding term) is a challenge to the justice of the Roman Empire. In response, those who argue for a nonpolitical

reading of Paul can point out that one of the first things he addresses in the beginning of the letter to the Romans is sexual perversion—usually seen as a moral rather than a political issue. Throughout much of its history, the church has picked up this concern and focused on morality instead of politics. Everything changes, however, if we realize that we are presented here with a false dichotomy, now as then. In Paul's world, it would have been understood that sexuality was tied up with power since one of the prerogatives of the powerful was sexual penetration. Certain homosexual activities in Paul's time could thus be considered displays of the inequality of power. Equally important, the sexual escapades of the emperors were well known to the people. In Romans 1:31 Paul reproaches rebelliousness against parents; most of his readers would have been aware of Emperor Nero's incestuous relations with his mother.[116] Not even sexuality and politics can easily be separated in Paul's thinking.

Another false dichotomy of religion and politics has often been introduced into the interpretation of Paul's take on the crucifixion. In the world of Paul it was highly unlikely that anyone would fail to recognize the political meaning of the cross. The cross was a common form of Roman punishment for the lower classes, particularly for political rebels in unruly provinces such as Judea, where tens of thousands of people were crucified; in the year 4 BCE, two thousand rebels were crucified together at one time. The cross was a well-known political tool for breaking the will of the people. Broad popular awareness of the cross and the atrocious agony it imposed was key to large-scale social control and, as such, was a very distasteful thing for the upper classes.[117] Making the message of "Christ crucified" central, as Paul did, could not have failed to raise some political eyebrows; here is a christological surplus that most theologians throughout the long history of the church would not have expected. The crucified Christ is indeed a strange lord. N. T. Wright is correct: "Perhaps Paul should be taught just as much in the politics departments of our universities as in the religion departments."[118]

The reasons for Jesus' crucifixion are, of course, still hotly debated. Theologians have often settled the debate by assuming that the crucifixion was God's will and that it does not really matter therefore who killed Jesus. But this theological shortcut is misleading; it shortchanges not only the historical search for evidence but the theological debate as well. We know that crucifixion was a Roman method of capital punishment, and Roman interests were well established in Palestine. But why would the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate have bothered to crucify Jesus? Certainly not just because of a "religious" quarrel or because he

was a wisdom teacher.[119] In the Gospel reports, the political logic of Jesus' death seems obscured: Pilate is portrayed as giving in to the Jewish high priests and people, who pressure him to put Jesus to death. Thus, the Gospels can indeed be read as blaming the Jews for Jesus' death and thus as depoliticizing the cross, that is, letting the real political players off the hook. Religious differences seem to be at stake when attention is directed toward this other group involved in Jesus' death, often referred to with the general term "the Jews." Yet, when seen in the light of the all-encompassing nature of the Roman Empire, it becomes clear that the lines of division are not between "Romans" in general and "Jews" in general, but between those who benefit from empire and those who do not; those who clearly benefited were the Romans in power, the Herodians, and the priestly class.[120] Not all Jews, the majority of whom were peasants, would have been equally interested in getting rid of Jesus; the Gospel of Mark reports that some agitation was required and that the "chief priests stirred up the crowd" (Mark 15:11). In Mark 3:1-5, the Pharisees and Herodians are the ones who plot to destroy Jesus early in his ministry. The Gospel of Luke, on the other hand, seeks to exonerate both Herod and Pilate (Luke 23:15). Nevertheless, Luke also reports that Herod treated Jesus "with contempt and mocked him" (Luke 23:11) and that somehow Herod and Pilate became friends over this matter (23:12). There is no doubt that Herod and the Herodians would have had a political interest in the matter, but it must not be overlooked that the religious leaders, especially the higher priests, were also political players. The Jewish high priests were integrated into the Roman Empire in their own ways; they collected the tribute to Rome, and they were selected by Herod, the vassal of Rome. The Roman governors also could appoint their own nominees to the office of the high priest. Accordingly, Caiaphas, the high priest when Jesus was crucified, must have had a good working relationship with both Herod and the Romans.[121] Considering who was involved, the crucifixion of Jesus and the empire cannot easily be separated.

Keep in mind also how already the beginning of Jesus' life is framed by empire: Augustus is the emperor, Herod is his vassal, and the registration mentioned in Luke 1 was not for statistical purposes but for the sake of taxation. While the Roman Empire was secured through cultural strategies in the more central parts of the empire, in Palestine the Romans governed through economic control backed up by military terror, often through warlords such as Herod (who was instituted by the Roman Senate) and Antipas. Crucifixion of thousands, enslavement of tens of thousands, and mass slaughter were quite common; even child slaughter

was not unheard of, as narrated in the childhood stories in Matthew.[122] In this context, even Jesus' "religious" actions—for instance, the challenge to the Temple, cleansing it and threatening to tear it down (Mark 11:15-19; 13:1-8)—had political connotations: from its origins under the Persians to its eventual destruction by the Romans in 70 CE, the Temple itself was part of the imperial order.[123] Jesus presented a threat to the Roman Empire and to those who benefited from it, and so it is no wonder that the empire's methods for getting rid of such threats were used against him. At the same time, this does not mean that the crucifixion was merely a political plot; images of God were at stake in all of this, but, as we now see more clearly, religion and politics cannot easily be separated.

Even seemingly apolitical theological reflections on Jesus' death can be seen against a broader backdrop. N. T. Wright points out, for instance, that the statement "Jesus died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3) initially referred to God's bringing Israel out of its long exile, dealing with the sins that had kept Israel enslaved, and initiating the return from exile.[124] This process cannot possibly be interpreted as purely religious. Likewise, the expiatory theology of the cross, part of Christian thinking since before Paul and referred to in Romans 3:21-31 (justification by grace through Christ "put forward as a sacrifice of atonement"), needs to be seen in a broader context of affirming God's justice over against the justice of empire.[125]

In 1 Corinthians 2:8 Paul is even more openly political when he asserts that "the rulers of this age" crucified "the Lord of glory." The good news in this context is that this is no ultimate victory because, according to 1 Corinthians 2:6, those rulers are doomed to perish; later, things are put more strongly yet when it is announced that the rulers will be destroyed—by Christ (1 Cor. 15:24). According to Neil Elliott, Paul's indictment of the rulers for the crucifixion is not limited to Pilate but includes all powers hostile to God.[126] Of course, Paul's own challenge to the empire has repercussions, expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:30-31, another passage that will be misunderstood if seen only in terms of a religious struggle: "And why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour? I die every day!"

In the midst of this struggle in which Christ's crucifixion is real enough to become the potential fate of his followers as well, hope is found in the resurrection. Christ's resurrection from the dead poses yet another challenge to empire in that it confirms the overthrow of the rulers and promises life beyond the empire (1 Cor. 15:20-25; 32).[127] In Romans 14:9, crucifixion and resurrection are seen together as the basis of Christ's rule as Lord. Jon Sobrino draws out the practical consequences of this view of cross and resurrection in relation to the lordship of Christ: "Christ's

lordship is exercised by his followers in the repetition in history of God's deed in the raising of Jesus; it is exercised in giving life to history's crucified, in giving life to those whose lives are threatened. This transformation of the world and history in conformity with God's will is what gives actual form to Jesus' lordship—and incidentally, what renders it verifiable."[128] In other words, Christ's lordship has to do with a real transformation of the world in ways that go against the grain of the empire and that the empire cannot envision.

Some of the roots of Paul's resistance to the Roman Empire can be traced back to Judean apocalypticism; since the Babylonian conquest of Judea, the people have been dominated by one empire after another, and so the apocalyptic tradition is decidedly antiempire.[129] Its focus is on God's intervention by which oppressive rulers are judged or destroyed, the people delivered, and the martyrs vindicated. These motifs can also be found in Paul's letters, although, for the most part, he does not use the same terms. Paul, however, develops these concerns further, arguing that God has already intervened in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that God's deliverance is for all people.[130] Jesus as Lord overcomes all other lords that build their empires on the backs of the people. In this context, a dualistic worldview may not be as wrongheaded as some current interpreters claim;[131] after all, the struggle with empire is a struggle of life and death, and it needs to be clear who is on which side. Of course, there are different kinds of dualism, a dualism of the powerful, who build themselves up on the back of other people, and a dualism of those who make up the resistance, who need to stand firm in order to survive. When, in the history of the United States, the African American slaves affirmed their faith in Christ as Lord and King, they affirmed that their masters were not lord and that Christ would set them free.[132]

Read in this mode, the title *lord* undergoes a dramatic shift. Jesus is a Lord unlike other lords, including the emperor. "Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not"; this is how N. T. Wright reads Philippians 3:20: "Our citizenship is in heaven, it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."[133] "Savior" and "lord" are Caesar's titles, and the association of those titles with Jesus introduces a fundamental ambivalence that destabilizes the commonly accepted meaning. In another passage, Romans 1:3-4, Paul once again uses key terms of the Roman Empire, like *gospel*, *son of God*, and *lord*, and applies them to Jesus: "The gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." This passage was written for use

in Rome in the year after Nero became emperor, and so it is not hard to imagine that something more is at stake here than purely religious terminology.[134] Under Nero, who was no friend of the Christians, the title *lord* must have received new urgency; the Roman Christians would have been painfully aware that Nero as lord could not easily be reconciled with Christ as Lord. But even before Nero, there are indications in Paul's writings that Christ the Lord challenges other lords.

In various passages of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians God is portrayed as the one who defeats the rulers (1 Cor. 1:18—2:5 and 2:6—3:4; 15:24-28). Even Werner Foerster, under no suspicion of seeking to challenge empire, points out that the powers of those defeated rulers are real political powers.[135] In 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 the direct confrontation is hard to miss: "Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." Even the famous passage dealing with the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 reflects a similar confrontation. While the church has always remembered Paul's language about "the cup of blessing" as a "sharing in the blood of Christ" and about "the bread that we break" as a "sharing in the body of Christ," there is little memory of Paul's challenge of the emperor cult in this same passage: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." Paul does not mince words here, and in his context the message would have been clear. Horsley emphasizes the strong "political realism" of this passage.[136] After a long history of spiritualizing readings of this passage—as if Paul was merely talking about some ethereal supernatural entities—the passage must now be seen in its full political implications. What is rejected here seems to be the "demonic" emperor cult. This political realism does not need to be played off against the so-called sacramental realism that is often identified with this passage; we simply need to keep in mind that these two realisms are connected.

Paul's "high Christology" and his "high and strong ecclesiology" (N. T. Wright) are tied together in the challenge of the Roman Empire. As Wright has argued, recycling the language of empire, this ecclesiology is substantial enough to envision the church as forming "colonial outposts of the empire that is to be,"[137] that is, God's coming kingdom as a completely different kind of empire and as an alternative to all other kingdoms. Paul's mission, according to Wright, is therefore not primarily that of a religious evangelist, promoting religious experience, but

that "of an ambassador for a king-in-waiting, establishing cells of people loyal to this new king, and ordering their lives according to his story, his symbols, and his praxis, and their minds according to his truth."[138] This sort of "high ecclesiology" is, of course, very different from the way the term is usually understood, but it parallels a kind of "high Christology" according to which Christ's lordship is second to none. The crucial difference is that in these cases the adjective *high* does not correspond to the top-down flow of power of the Roman Empire but runs counter to it. Paul's image of the church as Christ's body says as much: when he discusses the "weaker" and "less honorable" members of the body, he points out that "God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member" (1 Cor. 12:24). This amounts to nothing less than a revolution. "High" is "low," and, as the Jesus of the Gospels used to proclaim, "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (Mark 10:31).

With this in mind, we can now go back to Philippians 2:5-11. Crossan and Reed emphasize the difference between "the normalcy of *imperial*, or self-glorifying, divinity and the challenge of *kenotic*, or self-emptying, divinity." Divinity, along the lines of commonsense theism, is generally defined as being "in charge, in control, above, dominant, and on top. But, as Paul learned under capital charges in prison and hymned in Philippians 2:6-11, Christ received exaltation by crucifixion."[139] This *kenosis* (that is, self-emptying) is part of Paul's own story. Paul's own life modeled authority and power in stark contrast to the authority and power of the Roman Empire. He became a fool, weak, poor, victim of torture, and homeless (2 Cor. 11:21-27). If Paul came from the upper strata of society, he did not remain there; likewise, Paul may have had some political protection derived from his status as a Jew (the Roman Empire recognized the right of Jews to honor Caesar through prayers to their own God) but he gave that up as well (Phil. 3:4-11).[140] Paul's comments in 2 Corinthians 8:9-15, challenging those who have more to share with those who have less in order to achieve a "fair balance" (8:13), can now be seen as advice to practice *kenosis* in the community. This attitude is foreshadowed in the verse that precedes Philippians 2:5-11, namely, verse 4: "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." This is not a typical empire move. Christ as Lord models a kind of power that is diametrically opposed to the power of the empire. No wonder that it takes a special spirit to confess that Jesus is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3): "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit," and no wonder that confessing this particular Jesus as Lord is the key to salvation (Rom. 10:9).

Recently, Erik Heen has shown that the notion of Christ's equality with God in Philippians 2:6a (Christ is pronounced *isa theō*, "equal to God") also challenges the Roman emperor and his elites. If the Roman emperors claimed "divine honors" (*isotheoi timai*), attributing equality with God to Christ was no harmless move in a city like Philippi where the emperor cult was particularly well developed.[141] Yet the challenge is not only at the level of who gets to claim God, the challenge is also at the level of the meaning of lordship. Jesus' lordship is tied to a life of submission, rather than to a life of dominance over others. How can this not be a critique of top-down powers?[142] Of course, submission may not be the right word in this context, because Jesus does not model yet another form of subordination or defeat but a new form of power that moves from the bottom up.

Related to this reversal of power, Paul can even be said to have developed his own preferential option for the margins. In Romans 12:16 he advises the Roman Christians, "do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly." In 1 Corinthians 1:28 he states that "God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not to reduce to nothing things that are." His famous concern to "remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10) is, of course, geared to the church in Jerusalem but expresses nevertheless a similar spirit.[143] Unfortunately, those statements are often seen merely as ethical admonitions, and thus the basic theological issue at stake is overlooked. But the deeper theological issue should now be clear: God in Christ is a different kind of lord who is not in solidarity with the powerful but in solidarity with the lowly. To be more precise, Christ's way of being in solidarity with the powerful is by being in solidarity with the lowly; the powerful are not outside of the reach of Christ's lordship, but their notions of what it means to be lord are radically reversed. This position—at the heart of the new world proclaimed by Paul—directly contradicts the logic of the Roman Empire. In Roman law, there was an "inbuilt disposition" to "respect and favour the propertied classes."[144] This is not unlike contemporary logic today, where a CEO's primary responsibility is to the stockholders rather than to the workers. The inbuilt connection of authority and power needs to be noted here as well: Christ the Lord's power, which does not flow from the top down, is built on a different kind of authority.[145]

Not surprisingly, Paul himself was persecuted and most likely eventually executed by the Roman Empire, not because of a refusal to sacrifice to the emperor (as many of the later Christians) but because he was suspected of political aggression. Dieter Georgi identifies this as one possible reason for the silence of Luke about Paul's death in the book of Acts. If Paul was indeed accused of treason, this would

have been too troublesome for the early church and perhaps also too dangerous.[146] Yet even in the book of Acts there remains some memory of the tensions when the following accusation is pronounced against the early Christians: "They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor [*tōn dogmatōn Kaisaros*], saying that there is another king named Jesus" (Acts 17:7).

And even in the Gospels, despite their more cautious stance in matters of empire, Jesus the Lord is different from all other lords. The Lord is the servant: "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all" (Mark 10:42-54). What is more, this reversal is not optional or something that could be attached as an afterthought to other more basic understandings of power; this reversal clearly excludes certain kinds of power and wealth. Jesus appears judgmental precisely at one of the few places where the churches usually refrain from judgment: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). Even Mary, the mother of Jesus, rarely seen as a revolutionary, praises God because "he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:51-53). There is a messianic trait in Jesus' lordship that refuses to legitimize the status quo; Jesus the Lord can only relativize the status quo of lordship and replace it.[147]

In subsequent histories, this spirit of the resistant Lord was never completely forgotten. In the year 180 CE seven men and five women died as martyrs at Scillium in North Africa because they upheld Christ as "king of kings." This confession clearly meant, both to the martyrs and their persecutors, an opposition to the Roman emperor's claim to be the highest king. Such confessions were dangerous enough that some of the apologists (among them Irenaeus) felt they had to tone things down and to maintain that the confession of Christ as king did not make Christians disloyal to the emperor.[148]

In sum, Christ the Lord differs dramatically from the Roman emperor as lord. We find here the old theological principle of *via negativa* rather than the *via eminentiae*. The lordship of Christ is not to be understood as a higher form of (but similar to) the lordship of the Emperor (*via eminentiae*). The lordship of Christ is the contradiction of the lordship of the Emperor (*via negativa*). Crossan

and Reed try to capture this contradiction in the following statement: "What better deserves the title of a new creation than the abnormality of a share-world replacing the normalcy of a greed-world."[149] While this statement expresses the challenge to a certain degree, it reduces the matter to a moral issue that does not do justice to the real difference, which goes much deeper. Greed may be one symptom of empire, but what we are up against are not moral failures (like greed) but a logic according to which the structures of empire are endorsed as the ones that are ontologically superior and will bring happiness and peace to the world. The fundamental problem with empires, including the Roman one, is not that they happen to endorse morally reprehensible behavior but that they pursue their own logic of top-down power and thus are built on the back of the weakest; what Crossan and Reed reject as "greed," the empire would endorse as economic common sense that leads to improvements for everyone. If this is clear, Crossan and Reed's image of a "share-world" pushes us to a deeper reality and helps us expose contemporary efforts to promote top-down power and to build empires on the back of the weak; even seemingly democratic and nonhierarchical models of lordship, exercised by elected officials that appear to reflect the will of the majority such as bishops, presidents, and CEOs, need to be seen in the new light of Christ's own lordship.

The challenge is now clear: Christ the Lord does not fit easily within the categories of empire. It took a long process of assimilation to come to a point where the title *lord* could be used for Christ and the emperor in the same breath and without ambivalence, and where invoking the power of Christ would no longer be in tension with invoking the power of empire. Christian religion had to undergo a radical transformation, as Meiksins Wood notes: "It had to be transformed from a radical Jewish sect, which opposed the temporal authority of the Empire, into a doctrine amenable to, and even encouraging, imperial obedience."[150] But as Jesus himself reminds us, "no one can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). The christological surplus of Jesus' lordship needs to be reckoned with.

Notes

1. This can even be seen in the translations. In English, the Greek word *dikaiosyne* has for instance been translated as "righteousness" and not as "justice." The former term was often read in a modern "religious" sense, which separates religion from other spheres of life and relegates it to the private sphere.
2. This problem has been pointed out, for instance, by Wayne A. Meeks and Dale Martin in

Troles Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

3. See the history in Richard A. Horsley, "Introduction," in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2004), 3–6.
4. Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 13. In the United States it is hard to imagine that in Germany the spirituals of the African American slaves are sometimes used without much knowledge of the context of slavery, mainly because people like their style.
5. As Neil Elliott has pointed out, the search for the historical Paul has suffered from similar problems as the search for the historical Jesus: people tend to recreate Jesus or Paul in their own image. *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), 84–86.
6. In this context, the findings of the Jesus Seminar and other modern historical critical scholarship provide some help, even though they are not embraced uncritically. One of the basic differences to the older failed quests for the historical Jesus can be perceived in the advice of *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993), 5: "Beware of finding a Jesus entirely congenial to you." In his attack on the Jesus Seminar, Luke Timothy Johnson fails to grasp the significance of this: "What this seems to mean in effect is that a Jesus conformable to the perceptions of Christian faith must be disallowed in favor of a Jesus who is a cultural critic." *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospel* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 24. Johnson seems to understand his own work in terms of "disinterested scholarship" (ibid., 6). Yet the following comment, pronounced only three pages later, dispels the myth of disinterested scholarship: The "natural tendency [of religion] is to celebrate the created order more than to subvert the social order"; ibid., 9.
7. Even N. T. Wright declares that the most exciting developments in the contemporary study of Paul are not about Paul's theology (to which he himself has contributed) but about the exploration of the juxtaposition of Paul's gospel and Caesar's empire. "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 160.
8. Catherine Keller, *God and Power: Counter-Apocalyptic Journeys* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 115.
9. Ibid.
10. Horsley points out the close relation of rhetoric and politics in the Roman Empire. "Rhetoric and Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 75.

11. Paul Petit, *Pax Romana* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 157–58: "The imperial regime, as a personal monarchy, no longer puts facts before the public: there was no more public politics, no electioneering, no interventions by tribunes." In this situation, the people find their outlet in the streets and in the arena.
12. The concept of "religion" as it is used today has its roots in modern European thought. Talal Asad notes that in the nineteenth century religion was seen as an early human condition from which politics and other areas emerged and then became detached. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27. While twentieth-century anthropology, with Clifford Geertz and others, does not emphasize this detachment anymore, there is still an assumption that religion is conceptually separate from power (ibid., 29). Asad's own project seeks to bring these realms back together again.
13. See Günther Hansen, "Herrscherkult und Friedensidee," in *Umwelt des Urchristentums*, vol. 1, ed. Johannes Leipoldt and Walter Grundmann (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1967), 139; and John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 11. *Divus* is a deified human, *deus* is a god like Jupiter.
14. See Hansen, "Herrscherkult und Friedensidee," 139; there is some disagreement among scholars on this matter.
15. See Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 148–52. It is interesting to note, as an aside, that those Roman emperors of the first and second century who became "drunk with power" were, in the words of Paul Petit, not "the veterans of long public careers, but princes brought up in the purple." *Pax Romana*, 155.
16. Hansen points out the parallels in the history of religion that make the Hellenistic parts of the empire more susceptible to the emperor cult. "Herrscherkult und Friedensidee," 138. But we might also wonder about how their nature as colonies contributed to this issue.
17. Hansen assumes that "rational politicians" like Caesar and Augustus made use of these religious sensitivities in order to support their political aims and claims that living cults were (mis)used for the "*Loyalitätsreligion*" (ibid., 140). While Hansen admits "genuine religious yearnings and feelings of gratitude" (ibid.), he doubts that "real religious feelings" were at the basis of this cult (ibid., 141).
18. This is an important qualification. See ibid., 141.
19. Paul Zanker has explored the impact of the images of the emperor cult on the distribution of power during a particular period of the Roman Empire. In his view, these images contributed to making the emperor cult a main vehicle of the expression of the

power of local aristocracies. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

20. The title *soter*, also used of Jesus, was commonly used of the emperor. See the "Inschrift aus Halikarnassos," in *Umwelt des Urchristentums*, ed. Johannes Leipoldt and Walter Grundmann, vol. 2 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1967), 107; this document is from the time of Emperor Augustus.
21. See, for instance, Petit, *Pax Romana*, 104. Petit, listing areas that deserve more research, also mentions that the Julio-Claudian emperors were trained in "literary culture without (surprisingly enough) any political training" (ibid., 154). This cannot be a mere accident—the more effective politics appear to have been located in the realms of what we today might consider the esoteric.
22. See S. R. F. Price, "Rituals and Power," in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 61.
23. Ibid., 71.
24. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 142.
25. See ibid.
26. See ibid., 20, 47.
27. P. A. Brunt, "*Laus Imperii*," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 25.
28. Cicero, *De re publica* 3:37, quoted by Neil Elliott, "Paul and the Politics of Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 30.
30. Werner Foerster emphasizes the "Hellenistic" background of this idea, which plays off against each other the affirmation by the gods and the affirmation by the people. "Kyrios," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938), 1047.
30. Elliott, "Paul and the Politics of Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 31.
31. Elliott exposes the false presuppositions that led to mistaking Paul for a conservative (*Liberating Paul*, 31–54). One example is the translation of 1 Cor. 7:21 and the implications for slavery. Most English Bible translations, except the NRSV, read something like: "Even if you have the opportunity to become free, make use of your slavery instead." The same passage can also be read as "if you have the opportunity to become free, by all means take it." This alternative translation corresponds to German translations based on Luther.
32. These connections are obscured even in some of the earliest reflections on Paul's ministry. The New Testament book of Acts, for instance, emphasizes the greed of the pagans and the jealousy of the Jews as reasons for the persecution of Paul, but it plays down the

interests of the Roman Empire. In Acts as well as in the Gospels, the Roman authorities generally find Paul innocent. See Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 30–34.

33. See Price, "Rituals and Power," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 48.
34. See also Horsley, "Rhetoric and Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 75–78.
35. Paul encountered this problem particularly in Corinth; see Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 308–11. As they have noted: "Patronal relations were the ethical mainspring and moral bedrock of the Roman world"; ibid., 297.
36. The Roman strategy was to organize the empire by placing private property in the hands of wealthy landowners. Creating landed aristocracies became an important instrument of empire and extended Roman citizenship beyond Rome itself. As a result, the empire could present itself as geographically and ethnically inclusive. See Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Empire of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2003), 28.
37. Elliott points out that Paul may not have expected much from the political forum dominated by the powerful; what matters instead is "what contours he expected their life together to assume as they lived in anticipation of God's coming triumph" (*Liberating Paul*, 184). This limitation of political action also applies to Jesus' ministry under empire. As Ched Myers has pointed out, the Gospel of Mark's narrative about Jesus "concentrates more upon subversivity than constructive politics." *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), 435–36. Jesus is presented as a "rival authority, challenging the hegemony of the powers who hold sway over the dominant political order."
38. Horsley, "Introduction," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 3.
39. Horsley, "The Gospel of Imperial Salvation: Introduction," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 13.
40. See ibid., 16. See also Dieter Georgi, "God Turned Upside Down," in ibid., 149.
41. Cf. Paul's use of those terms in 1 Thess. 5:3, in resistance to the empire. While Helmut Koester finds a possible parallel ("Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 162), Traugott Holtz denies any relationship of Paul and empire. *Der Erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testatment, vol. 13 (Zürich, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger Verlag, Neukirchener Verlag, 1986), 215 n.363. For no clear reason, Holtz feels that Paul could not possibly have had in mind a situation outside of the church or a political subtext.
42. Horsley points out the naïveté of the Corinthian *pneumatikoi* in this matter. "Rhetoric and Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 89–101.
43. See Horsley, "Patronage, Priesthoods, and Power: Introduction," in Horsley, ed., *Paul*

and Empire, 90. Elliott puts it this way: "Much like 'trickle-down' economics in our own day, the patronage system effected a massive evaporation of wealth toward the upper strata while masquerading as the generous 'benefaction' of the rich for the poor." *Liberating Paul*, 188.

44. Horsley, "Patronage, Priesthoods, and Power," 95.
45. See Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 250. Nevertheless, those gods all had to be approved by the state.
46. See ibid., 25, 68.
47. Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 320; Beker also states that "early Christian self-description provides little evidence for describing early Christianity as a 'cult'" (ibid.). On this matter see also Horsley, "Building an Alternative Society: Introduction," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 208.
48. Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 102.
49. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 11.
50. See also N. T. Wright in reference to Paul's statement in Phil. 3:1: "To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard." "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 175.
51. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, x–xi.
52. Horsley argues that "in claiming universal applicability, Western biblical studies unreflectively disguised its own distinctive identity." "Krister Stendahl's Challenge to Pauline Studies: Introduction," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 11. Claiming a universal position, Pauline scholarship has overlooked its own connections to empire. As a result, the interests of the elites have gone unchecked and have infiltrated the debates at the level of the unconscious.
53. Tyron L. Inbody states that "Luke wanted to demonstrate to Theophilus that the development of Christianity under Domitian should not be seen as a threat to the Empire." *The Many Faces of Christology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 174. See also Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 159.
54. This is the famous notion of Ernst Troeltsch, taken up by Gerd Theissen in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, trans. John Schütz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). This position affirms love and equality, according to Troeltsch, which are seen as inner religious qualities but not in regard to the secular world. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Churches*, vol. 1, trans. Olive Wyon

(Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 69–79. Theissen thinks this position accepts social differences, ameliorates them through an obligation of love and respect, and imposes those obligations on those who are stronger; the weaker are expected to be subordinate, and display fidelity and esteem (*The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, chap. 3). The underlying assumption is that Paul seeks to protect the status of his congregations, which were seen as socially privileged.

55. Other passages in Paul's own letters that display a similar spirit—for instance, the call for the subordination of women in 1 Cor. 14:34-36 and the pronouncement of God's judgment on the Jews for killing Jesus in 1 Thess. 2:14-16—might be later interpolations into Paul's letters by others. Elliott points out that these writings are intentional corrections, emerging from rival interpretations of Paul (*Liberating Paul*, 29–30). These Deutero-Pauline moves include Christianity's increasingly negative attitudes against women and slaves. Crossan and Reed discuss an early Christian picture of St. Thecla, preaching together with the Apostle Paul, noting that her eyes and outstretched hand have been obliterated by later generations. *In Search of Paul*, xiii.

56. As Averil Cameron has pointed out, "it is clear even in the very imperfect state of our knowledge that from immediately after the death of Jesus, if not in his own lifetime, Christian groups included people from a wide social spectrum. The myth of early Christianity as the resort of the poor and underprivileged is precisely that." *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 37. Horsley disagrees, stating that "claims that the participants of Pauline churches represent a cross-section of various classes do not match with our knowledge of sharp class divides in Roman society." Horsley, "Unearthing a People's History: Introduction," in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *A People's History of Christianity: Christian Origins*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 10.

57. See Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, vol. 1, trans. John Bowden, 2d rev. ed., (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 15.

58. Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, George E. "Tink" Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001), 6. For an example of ongoing problems with the term, see also ibid., 68.

59. Ibid., 68.

60. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 9. Elliott presents the background of the misuses of Paul, ibid., 3–19.

61. See, for instance, Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981).

62. Ibid. This debate about the lordship of Christ would change dramatically if the nature of Christ's lordship were to be considered!
63. The United Church of Christ's *New Century Hymnal* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1995) eliminated the term "Lord" in many of the hymns, in particular those translated from other languages, rejecting especially the emphasis on male gender. Also removed were male pronouns for Christ. While the power and authority expressed by the term seem to be an issue, gender is seen as more problematic, indicated for instance by the instruction in the context of "Orders for Worship" that "the word 'Sovereign' may be said instead of the word 'Lord'" (on an unnumbered page before p. 1). The male connotations of the term "Lord" are also at the heart of Brian Wren's critique. *What Language Shall I Borrow? God-Talk in Worship: A Male Response to Feminist Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 55.
64. Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 224–26.
65. See Grillmeier, who interprets worship of Christ as *kyrios* as a purely religious matter: *kyrios* exclusively opposes other Hellenistic cult-deities. *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 16.
66. Horsley, "Rhetoric and Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 101–02.
67. Crossan and Reed argue that Paul picks up a standard advice of the Jewish synagogue for survival as there is no specific reference to Christ (*In Search of Paul*, 394). Elliott notes that this represents not a suggestion for the powerful but a word of caution for those who have to lose everything. *Liberating Paul*, 226.
68. Horsley, "Rhetoric and Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 93.
69. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Paul and the Politics of Interpretation," in ibid., 45.
70. Ibid., 46. This term, parallel to the German term *Herrschaft*, includes but also transcends the term *patriarchy* by emphasizing the multidimensional aspects of power and domination.
71. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 213.
72. In this connection, the feminist efforts to discern the voices of the Pauline communities in tension with Paul are very helpful. See the work of Schüssler Fiorenza and Antoinette Clark Wire (below).
73. See Joerg Rieger, "Dualism," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, ed. Bron Taylor (New York: Continuum, 2005), 510–12.
74. See Schüssler Fiorenza, "Paul and the Politics of Interpretation," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 54–55.

75. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Der semitische Hintergrund des neutestamentlichen Kyriostitels," in Georg Strecker, ed. *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1975), 271; Fitzmyer prefers the second option. Most of the prominent European scholars fit in this scheme. Ferdinand Hahn prefers the first source; Oscar Cullmann, Eduard Schweizer, and Werner Foerster emphasize sources two and three; Wilhelm Bousset, Rudolf Bultmann, and Hans Conzelmann argue for source four. See also N. T. Wright, who emphasizes the parallels to the Septuagint, where *kyrios* stands for the Tetragrammaton, *YHWH*; as a result, the term is seen as emphasizing the unity of Jesus and God. "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 169.
76. In reference to Adolf Deissmann, see Karl Donfried, "The Imperial Cults and Political Conflict in 1 Thessalonians," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 217.
77. See Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 115–17.
78. Fitzmyer, "Der semitische Hintergrund," 276.
79. Hellenistic Jews, Fitzmyer argues, are not a likely source, as pre-Christian versions maintain the Tetragrammaton, although in Greek letters; ibid., 282–83.
80. Ibid., 297. For an example, see 1 Cor. 16:22.
81. Helmut Merklein points out that there seems to be a strong royal connotation. "*Marānā* ['*unser Herr*'] als Bezeichnung des nabatäischen Königs," in Rudolf Hoppe and Ulrich Busse, eds., *Von Jesus zum Christus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 38.
82. N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 168.
83. Note that in rabbinical Judaism at the time of Jesus, *kyrios* designates God both as ruler of the whole world and of the individual. Foerster, "Kyrios," 1084.
84. This is what Foerster means when he calls this "an oriental kind of monarchy" (ibid., 1049). The orientalist undercurrent of this wording should be clear.
85. Foerster points out an interesting discrepancy: "What is unique about the situation of the time of the Roman emperors is that, under the cover-up of a constitutional blanket, the kind of absolute Monarchy was established for whose representatives the Orient always used the title 'lord.'" "Kyrios," 1054. Foerster tries to distinguish between political and religious uses of the term, but it is doubtful that this was much of an issue in the Roman Empire.
86. Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London/Minneapolis: SCM/Fortress Press, 1998), 557–63. Note that there are two different terms for lord in the New Testament Greek: *Kyrios* and *despotēs* are used in parallel fashion in the environment of the New Testament. *Kyrios* is the one who has power

over something; *despotēs* is the one who owns something or someone; the power of the *Kyrios* appears to be less arbitrary. See Foerster, "Kyrios," 1043–44.

87. Gottfried Quell, "Kyrios," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 3, 1060.
88. See Foerster, "Kyrios," 1092.
89. This assumption can also be found in ibid., 1093–94.
90. Stephen G. Hatfield, "The Lordship of Christ: A Biblical Analysis," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 33, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 16–25. The two quotations are from pp. 23 and 25.
91. Millard J. Erickson, "Lordship Theology: The Current Controversy," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 33, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 10. A similar argument is made by Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *Lord of the Saved: Getting to the Heart of the Lordship Debate* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 1992), 51–65. *Kyrios* "denotes sovereign rulership" (ibid., 65). The same is true, he says, when *kyrios* is applied to God.
92. Gentry, *Lord of the Saved*, 65.
93. Quoted by Timothy Noah, "The Imperial Vice Presidency: Dick Cheney Says the 'E'-Word," in the *Slate* magazine feature *Chatterbox: Gossip, Speculation, and Scuttlebutt about Politics*, Dec. 17, 2003; http://slate.msn.com/id/2092800 (accessed 10/30/06)
94. Karl Heim, *Jesus der Herr: Die Führervollmacht Jesu und die Gottesoffenbarung in Christus* (Berlin: Furche Verlag, 1935), 5; see also ibid., 63, 65, 69, 71.
95. Ibid., 77.
96. Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital*, 35–36.
97. See Foerster, "Kyrios," 1087. Foerster adds that *lord* here is the "name" of Jesus.
98. John L. White, *The Apostle of God: Paul and the Promise of Abraham* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 189. See also 1 Thess. 4:16.
99. Georg Eichholz, *Die Theologie des Paulus im Umriss* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 146. Emphasis in original.
100. Eichholz claims that Paul usually thinks about the implications of the *kyrios* for the community—but these implications remain limited to the community of the church (Rom 14:7-8); in Philippians 2 the horizon is clearly broader, a fact that Eichholz attributes to the pre-Pauline origins of the passage; ibid., 147.
101. Gerhard Friedrich, "Der Brief an die Philipper," in *Das Neue Testament Deutsch: Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher und Philemon*, vol. 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1981), 151. In terms of the paradigm of the strict separation of "indicative" and "imperative" under which these theologians operate, this passage is simply "indicative." Christ, Friedrich emphasizes, is not the "ideal," which no one can ever achieve.

102. Quoted in David Way, *The Lordship of Christ: Ernst Käsemann's Interpretation of Paul's Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 88–89. Gnosticism is seen as the background, not empire (see ibid., 90–91). In his later commentary on Romans, Ernst Käsemann seems to revise this strict rejection of Christ's example, but prefers the notion *conformitas*—"conformity" with Christ—to the notion of the imitation of Christ (see Käsemann, *An die Römer*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. 8, 4th exp. ed. [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1980], 369, on Rom, 15:1-6, which he reads in parallel to Phil 2:5ff.). Christ is "example and archetype of our behavior, according to which the strong have to be in solidarity with the powerless and those who are in need of help, having to endure together their humiliation and in this act they are exposed to the blasphemies of the world." In his earlier interpretation of Philippians 2, Käsemann rejected the idea of Christ as "example" (*Vorbild*); see Way, *The Lordship of Christ*, 93–94.

103. Meeks states that "Christ's self-humbling obedience is both basis and model for the practice of 'humility' and other-regarding love in the church"; *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 98. He also notes that early Christian hymns, such as Phil. 2:5-11, not only shape the communities' Christology but also the communities themselves. Of course, it could be argued that all texts do that. What is glaringly absent is any reference to the challenge provided by the notion of lordship.

104. See Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 63; and Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Woman Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 69–70.

105. Quoted in Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 198.

106. Stanley P. Saunders, *Philippians and Galatians* (Louisville: Geneva, 2001), 18, commenting on Phil. 5:1-11. Saunders also makes the helpful observation that "solidarity with the humiliated is not the same as solidarity with the humble" (ibid.). See also Klaus Wengst, *Humility: Solidarity of the Humiliated: The Transformation of an Attitude and its Social Relevance in Graeco-Roman, Old Testament-Jewish, and Early Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

107. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 290. 1 Corinthians 1–4 can be read as a commentary on that transformation that begins with the downward movement. See also Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 12:9-10: "Whenever I am weak, then I am strong."

108. N. T. Wright has pointed out that Paul's high Christology has Jewish flavor; "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 181–82. See also Wright's comments on Phil. 2:5-11: "As you look at the incarnate son of God dying on the cross the most powerful thought you should think is: this is the true meaning of who God is. He is the God of self-giving love." *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 103.

109. White, *The Apostle of God*, 191, 196.
110. See Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 83–99.
111. Ibid., xiv.
112. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 49.
113. Henry Chadwick, *Die Kirche in der antiken Welt* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), 14–15, 19, 21. Chadwick sees Paul as a successful missionary due to his ability to translate the Palestinian gospel into a Hellenistic world.
114. Elliott tells the story of the depoliticization and mystification of Paul. *Liberating Paul*, 55–90.
115. Daniel Boyarin interprets Paul as "a Jewish cultural critic." *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 2.
116. For this connection of sexuality and power see Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 193–95.
117. See ibid., 94–99.
118. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 182.
119. See Marcus Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 91. In Borg's words, "if Jesus had been only a mystic, healer, and wisdom teacher, I doubt that he would have been executed. But he was also a God-intoxicated voice of religious social protest who had attracted a following." Moreover, "Jesus died as a martyr, not as a victim. A martyr is killed because he stands for something."
120. See Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 59.
121. Ibid., 32–33.
122. See ibid., 26–31.
123. See ibid., 166, n.13.
124. N. T. Wright, in Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*, 102–04.
125. Elliott points out that in Romans 6 the "atoning significance of Jesus' death disappears" and is "supplanted by an apocalyptic scheme of fields of power." *Liberating Paul*, 129.
126. Ibid., 113; Elliott points out that this is the symbolism of the Jewish apocalypses; ibid., 110.
127. While the spirit of our passage in 1 Corinthians 15 seems clear, the subjection of all things under Christ (15:27), including the rulers of this world and the world as a whole in Col. 3:1-2, introduces a different spirit that appears to play off against each other "above" and "below," "heaven" and "earth": "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."
128. Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987), 156.

129. See Horsley, "Rhetoric and Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 93; the only exception from this rule is the Hasmonean dynasty.
130. See ibid., 95–97.
131. See, for instance, Horsley's interpretation (ibid., 94). Dualistic notions can certainly be found in Paul (Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 59), but this does not have to imply a rejection of the body or the phenomenal world. This insight can be developed politically, in the resistance against empire, an issue that is not on Boyarin's horizon.
132. If in the African American Spirituals Christ "is the conquering King and the crucified Lord," as James Cone has pointed out, this means that he is the one "who has come to bring peace and justice to the dispossessed of the land." *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (New York: Seabury, 1972), 49.
133. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 173.
134. See Dieter Georgi, "God Turned Upside Down," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 150–51.
135. Foerster, "Kyrios," 1090.
136. Richard A. Horsley, "1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 248.
137. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 182.
138. Ibid., 161–62; Wright emphasizes that Paul's political agenda was driven by his theological one; ibid., 164.
139. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 242.
140. See Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 61, 197. See also Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 69-70; she calls this the "voluntary downward plunge of the divine."
141. Erik M. Heen, "Phil 2:6-11 and Resistance to Local Timocratic Rule: *Isa theō* and the Cult of the Emperor in the East," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 125–26, 134.
142. See ibid., 150.
143. Elliott also emphasizes this option for the poor in *Liberating Paul*, 87–89: "Why not assume that Paul's vision will be clearest when seen from the standpoint of the oppressed today, and of those who work for liberation—and suffer arrest, imprisonment, and torture for their trouble?" (ibid., 88).
144. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, quoted in ibid., 186.
145. For a discussion of the relationship of authority and power see Joerg Rieger, *Remember the Poor: The Challenge to Theology in the Twenty-First Century* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998).

146. See Georgi, "God Turned Upside Down," in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*, 157. Paul's death most likely happened under Nero in 64 CE; in the midst of the troubles of the persecution, there was no time to pay much attention to particular stories and events. See Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 401.
147. See Jacob Taubes, *Die Politische Theologie des Paulus*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann (Munich: Wilhem Fink Verlag, 1993), 178–80.
148. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 48.
149. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 176.
150. Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital*, 35.