

JAMES R. HARRISON

Paul and the  
Imperial Authorities at  
Thessalonica and Rome

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen*

*zum Neuen Testament*

273

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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James R. Harrison

# Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome

*A Study in the Conflict of Ideology*

Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

This book began during my doctoral research at Macquarie University (1991–1996). In investigating Paul’s understanding of grace in its Graeco-Roman context (‘Language of Grace’, 2003), I read the seminal work of Dieter Georgi on the intersection of Paul’s gospel with the Julio-Claudian propaganda (*Theocracy*, 1986; cf. ‘True Prophet’, 1986). This led to an exploratory article on how Paul’s eschatology contrasted with the Augustan age of grace in Romans 5:12–21 (Harrison, ‘Augustan Age of Grace’, 1999). Discussions of the first-century Thessalonian context by Edwin Judge (‘Decrees of Caesar’, 2008) and Edgar Krentz (‘Roman Hellenism’, 1988) stimulated an investigation of the imperial terminology employed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11 (Harrison, ‘Imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki’, 2002). Already the idea of exploring the extent to which Paul’s gospel ideologically engaged with the Julio-Claudian propaganda in the Greek East and Latin West, focusing on the Thessalonian and Roman epistles, was beginning to take shape.

The design of the book achieved its final form when I returned to the roots of my undergraduate teaching under Edwin Judge at Macquarie University (Harrison, ‘Introduction’, 2008). Edwin’s exposition of the Roman nobles’ quest for glory (Judge, ‘Roman Literary Memorials’, 2008) and Augustus’ conception of history in the *forum Augustum* (Judge, ‘Eulogistic Inscriptions’, 2008) provided me with an entry point for considering how Roman believers, living in the capital, might have originally responded to Paul’s letter in its imperial context.

I am deeply grateful for the support that Mohr Siebeck has given the book from the outset when I broached the possibility of a new publication. Professor Jörg Frey, the editor of *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, has warmly accepted the book’s inclusion in this highly regarded series and I register my gratitude to him for his commitment to its publication. Dr Henning Ziebritzki, Theology Editor at Mohr Siebeck, has provided help in bringing the editing of the book to its conclusion. I am thankful for his patience during this protracted process and for his enthusiasm for the book’s completion. Last, I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable help of Tanja Mix, Production Department of Mohr Siebeck, on manuscript issues.

Many people should be thanked for their help with the contents of this book. Above all, I would like to highlight the very substantial contribution of Edwin Judge. He read Chapter Four and sections of Chapters Five and Six. He has been

unstintingly generous with his time and advice on the documentary and literary evidence, as well as with his knowledge of the customs and politics of the Roman world.

Brad Bitner (Macquarie University) prepared the Indexes, with the exception of the Subject Index. I am indebted to him for his professionalism in completing this task, as well as for his friendship and encouragement.

Four scholars have made the completion of the book easier by their generosity in sharing with me unpublished copies of their manuscripts: namely, Neil Elliott, Joseph Fantin, Bruce Fisk, and John Barclay. Many scholars have helped me to strengthen the book's argumentation by their responses to my conference presentations or by their discussions with me of various issues: namely, John Barclay, Ben Blackwell, Lukas Bormann, Cilliers Breytenbach, Joseph Fantin, Beverly Gaventa, Eleanor Ghey, Robert Jewett, Mark Reasoner, Ken Sheedy, and Larry Welborn. Any errors that remain in the book are mine.

In terms of the visual evidence, Walter Holt – numismatist at the *M.R. Roberts Wynyard Coin Centre*, Sydney, Australia – provided me with the image of the Neronian silver denarius referred to in Chapter 4 n. 61. The image is reproduced with his permission in the Appendix.

Chapter 3, revised and slightly expanded, originally appeared as 'Paul and the Imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki', *JSNT* 25/1 (2002): 71–96. It is reproduced here with the permission of Sage Publications. The discussion of the Roman evidence on 'glory' in Chapter 6 appeared as 'Paul and the Roman Ideal of Glory in the Epistle to the Romans', in U. Schnelle (ed.), *The Letter to the Romans* (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Uitgenerij Peeters, 2009), 323–363. It is reproduced here with the permission of Peeters Press, but the discussion of the Jewish evidence relating to glory in Chapter 6 (§ 6.4) is an addition to the original publication.

Last, special mention has to be made of the support of my wife, Elisabeth. She has been patient, encouraging and understanding during the entire writing process and this book is dedicated to her with all my love.

James R Harrison  
Sydney  
December 2010

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## Abbreviations

ABSA	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
AFP	<i>Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum</i>
AHB	<i>Ancient History Bulletin</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AJT	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> ed. H. Temporini
ARW	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
BFCT	<i>Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester</i>
BMC	<i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i>
BMI	<i>Ancient Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CA	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CIA	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum, et al.</i> , ed. W. Dittenberger
CIJ	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum</i> , ed. J.B. Frey
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CJ	<i>Classical Journal</i>
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CPJ	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> , ed. V. Tcherikover
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CurTM	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
DocsAug	<i>Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius</i> , eds. V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones
DocsGaius	<i>Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero</i> , ed. E.M. Smallwood
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
ExAud	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
Exp	<i>Expositor</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae, et al.</i> , ed. W. Dittenberger

HSCPh	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
I.Cret.	<i>Inscriptiones Creticae</i> , ed. M. Guarducci
I.Delos	<i>Inscriptions de Délos, et al.</i> , ed. A. Plassart
I.Eph.	<i>Die Inschriften von Ephesos, et al.</i> , ed. H. Wankel
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae, et al.</i> , ed. F.H. von Gaertringen
IGRR	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes, et al.</i> , ed. R. Cagnat
I.Hadrianoi	<i>Die Inschriften von Hadrianoi und Hadrianeia</i> , ed. E. Schwertheim
I.KosPH	<i>The Inscriptions of Cos</i> , eds. W.R. Paton and E.L. Hicks
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , ed. H. Dessau
I.Magnesia	<i>Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander</i> , ed. O Kern
I.Mylasa	<i>Die Inschriften von Mylasa. I. Inschriften der Stadt</i> , ed. W. Blümel
Inscr. Ital.	<i>Inscriptiones Italiae</i> , ed. A. Degrassi
I.Olympia	<i>Die Inschriften von Olympia</i> , eds. W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold
I.Pergamon	<i>Altertümer von Pergamon</i> , eds. M. Fränkel and C. Habicht
I.Priene	<i>Die Inschriften von Priene</i> , ed. F. Hillier von Gaertringen
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JGRChJ	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
MAAR	<i>Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome</i>
MDAI	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts</i>
MH	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
Michel	<i>Recueil d'inscriptions grecques</i> , ed. by C. Michel
Neot	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
New Docs	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> , eds. G.H.R. Horsley (vols 1–5); S.R. Llewelyn (vols 6–9)
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , ed. C. Brown
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OGIS	<i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> , ed. W. Dittenberger
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
P. Lond.	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum, et al.</i> , ed. F.G. Kenyon
P. Med.	<i>Papiri Milanesi (P. Med.)</i> , ed. S. Daris
P. Oxy.	<i>Oxyrhynchus Papyri, et al.</i> , eds. B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>

REL	<i>Revue des études latines</i>
RTR	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RevExp	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
RhM <sup>2</sup>	<i>Rheinisches Museum</i>
RHR	<i>Revue d'histoire des religions</i>
RIC	<i>Royal Imperial Coinage</i>
SB	<i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten, et al.</i> , ed. F. Preisigke
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
Select Papyri	<i>Select Papyri in Five Volumes</i> , eds. A.S. Hunt and C.C. Edgar
SIG <sup>3</sup>	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , ed. W. Dittenberger
Str-B	<i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> , eds. H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck
TAM	<i>Tituli Asiae Minoris, et al.</i> , ed. E. Kalinka
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TBT	<i>The Bible Today</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UPZ	<i>Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit</i> , ed. U. Wilcken
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
VerbEccl	<i>Verba Ecclesia</i>
VoxEv	<i>Vox Evangelica</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
YCS	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZSTh	<i>Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>





## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

This book will argue that Paul's eschatological gospel engaged the Julio-Claudian conception of rule. The ruler's propaganda, with its claim about the 'eternal' rule of the imperial house over its subjects, embodied an idolatry of power that conflicted with Paul's proclamation of the reign of the crucified, risen and returning Son of God over his world. The 'symbolic universe' of the Julio-Claudian rulers stood at odds with the eschatological denouement of world history, which, in Paul's view, culminated in the arrival of God's new creation upon Christ's return as Lord of all.

Paul's narrative theology, with its Jewish eschatological and apocalyptic roots, unfolds the wider parameters of this ideological conflict. The election of the ruler by the Roman gods and his providential appointment to rule was countered by Paul's meta-narrative about God's electing grace being extended through Israel to the nations. God's justification of Abraham, the father of the nations, led inexorably to the eschatological gathering of a 'counter-imperial' family of nations ruled over by the messianic Root of Jesse. In a paradoxical inversion of the imperial reciprocity system, Christ the dishonoured Benefactor had defeated the ruling powers of sin and death, with the result that his powerful death on behalf of his ungrateful dependants transferred to them the 'glory' and 'righteousness' that had become the preserve of the Julio-Claudian house. Moreover, the Roman ruler was held hostage to the Adamic reign of sin and death and would face divine judgement along with the rest of humanity. Thus the Senate's decision to apotheosise some of the Julio-Claudian rulers and their family members upon their death was an honorific accolade without any reality.

The reign of Christ's grace and the newness of his Spirit filling the church represented an overflow of beneficence in the present age that not only outstripped the iconic Augustan age of grace but also rendered obsolete its much fêted revival under Nero. While the Roman ruler was to be obeyed and honoured by believers, Paul, in line with the Jewish scriptures, demoted the ruler to 'servant' status. Concomitantly, Paul elevated the Body of Christ in importance over Nero's 'body of state', transferring to the risen and ascended Jesus many of the ruler's titles and to the Body of Christ many of the ruler's functions. In particular, the emergence of the Body of Christ as a 'benefactor' community not only provided believers with the opportunity of winning the ruler's praise through their civic beneficence but also usurped one of the ruler's traditional avenues of securing clients loyal

to his house. In sum, Paul's eschatological gospel collided ideologically with the Julio-Claudian conception of rule in ways that fundamentally challenged the mores of first-century Roman society and which transformed its hierarchical social relations within the Body of Christ.

In outlining these points of collision between Paul's gospel and the Julio-Claudian propaganda, I am not suggesting that the apostle's apocalyptic theology was primarily constructed as a pastoral and social response to the imperial conception of rule. Nevertheless, the imperial cult, with its concentration of power in the ruler and in the Roman gods, represented *one* prominent case of Graeco-Roman idolatry that Paul exhorted his Gentile believers to avoid, even though they were to submit to the Roman authorities as God's appointed servants. In this regard, the LXX and the writings of Second Temple Judaism powerfully shaped the apostle's theological worldview as he responded to the challenges of imperial cult. We have to allow, therefore, for Paul's versatility as an apocalyptic thinker as he worked seamlessly with Jewish and Roman motifs, bringing each ideological tradition into dialogue with the gospel of Christ crucified.

Although some scholars have recently questioned the ability of New Testament exegetes to detect objectively whether there are imperial allusions within Paul's epistles (§ 1.1), this book will argue that the imperial context of the Roman and Thessalonian epistles has to be taken seriously, as much the contexts of Second Temple Judaism and the Graeco-Roman indigenous cults, or the internal epistolary evidence regarding the house churches themselves. Rather than dismissing any appeal to the imperial evidence as another misguided case of 'parallelomania', it should be recognised that a nuanced understanding of the Julio-Claudian world can contribute richly to exegetical method. This is especially the case where the relevant *local* evidence (literary, documentary, numismatic, iconographic and archaeological) is discussed responsibly in relation to Paul's writings and where his distinctive emphases – the Jewish scriptures, the Jesus tradition, and his own apostolic teaching – are respected and accounted for exegetically.<sup>1</sup> We turn to a discussion of modern scholarship on the 'Paul and Politics' debate and later an exposition of the methodologies employed in the book.

### 1.1 Modern Scholarship on the 'Paul and Politics' Debate: A Survey of Its Proponents and Critics

Any investigation of modern scholarship on the 'politics' of Paul should begin with the famous claim of A. Deissmann that there was a 'polemical parallelism' between the language of the cult of the ruler and the cult of Christ. The early

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<sup>1</sup> A good example of this approach is J. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult: A Critical Analysis of the First-Century Social Context of Paul's Letter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

believers, Deissmann argued, reserved for Christ honorific 'words that had been transferred to the deified emperors (or had perhaps even been newly invented in emperor worship)'. The intersection of competing traditions can be seen in the fact that many of these words had currency in the LXX and the Gospels.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for the early believers, 'abhorrence of emperor worship' formed 'an upper line of demarcation'.<sup>3</sup> However, although Paul demonstrated an interest in politics, he was nonetheless a political conservative. In Deissmann's view, this was because the social constituency of the early Christian movement was drawn almost exclusively from the lower classes.<sup>4</sup> In an important methodological caveat to his discussion, Deissmann warned scholars against assuming that polemical intent against the ruler cult could be determined merely on the basis of the coincidence of terminology.<sup>5</sup> Thus the issue of how one detects imperial allusions in Paul's letters must be addressed in our study (§ 1.4.3.2). But several important questions still remain unanswered from Deissmann's study. Are we merely witnessing here the collision of Paul's gospel with the honorific terminology of the imperial cult and its idolatry? Or is Paul's critique of the imperial conception of rule more incisive than Deissmann allows? What are the social consequences of such a critique if Paul is moving in this direction? And what alternative does the apostle articulate for those dependent on the ruler's patronal networks?

Since Deissmann's study, New Testament scholars have commented on Paul's political stance from a variety of perspectives. The continuous stream monographs on the topic at the present – provoked to some degree by the excesses of American foreign and economic policy under Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush<sup>6</sup> – began with a trickle of publications

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<sup>2</sup> A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts from the Graeco-Roman World* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 342. For discussion of the terminology, see *id.*, *ibid.*, 343–378. Note the earlier study of H. A. A. Kennedy, 'Apostolic Preaching and Emperor Worship', *Exp* 7 (1909): 289–307. One year later a major study of Paul's use of one of the terms discussed by Deissmann (κύριος; cf., *ibid.*, 349–362) appeared: K. Prümm, 'Herrscherkult und Neues Testament', *Bib* 9 (1928): 19–31. See now the methodologically and exegetically nuanced study of J. D. Fantin (*The Lord of the Entire World: Lord Jesus, A Challenge to Lord Caesar?* [unpub. PhD thesis: University of Sheffield, 2006], forthcoming Sheffield Phoenix) which skilfully covers the κύριος language in Paul's letters. See also the earlier studies of J. L. White, *The Apostle of God: Paul and the Promise of Abraham* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 172–206; P. Oakes, *Philippi: From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 147–174.

<sup>3</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 338–339.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 339–340. For evaluations of Deissmann's social analysis of the early Christian movement, see J. R. Harrison, 'Introduction', in E. A. Judge (ed. J. R. Harrison), *The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 17–20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 342–343.

<sup>6</sup> Note the comment of N. T. Wright ('A Fresh Perspective on Paul?', *BJRL* 83 [2001]: 28): 'There is a danger – and I think Horsley and his colleagues have not always avoided it – of ignoring the major theological themes in Paul and simply plundering parts of his writings to find help in addressing the political concerns of the contemporary Western world'.

in the 1950's and 1970's. E. Stauffer and D. Cuss investigated the intersection of imperial honorific terms and motifs with the gospel of the early Christians.<sup>7</sup> Each book was characterised by sensitivity to the various genres of imperial evidence. Surprisingly, Stauffer bypassed the imperial context of Paul's letters, contrasting the apostle instead with Rabbi Akiba,<sup>8</sup> whereas Cuss discussed the overlap of Paul's terminology with the honorific accolades of the ruler (e.g. 'lord', 'Son of God', 'epiphany').<sup>9</sup>

But it was D. Georgi's work on how Paul's theocracy interacted with the imperial propaganda that grabbed the attention of New Testament scholars in the late 1980's.<sup>10</sup> The momentum of interest unleashed has continued unabated to our day. Several significant thematic and exegetical studies have appeared since Georgi's seminal publication. J. L. White, for example, has discussed the imperial themes of 'lordship', 'fatherhood' and 'household' in relation to Paul's epistles.<sup>11</sup> B. Blumenfeld's innovative work focused on how Paul's gospel related to the 'kingship' ideology of the Pythagorean political theorists. Although Blumenfeld concentrates on the ideology of the Hellenistic ruler cult, his work throws indirect light on how the imperial cult in the Greek East built upon the conception of rule articulated in the Pythagorean sources.<sup>12</sup> J. D. Crossan and J. L. Reed have produced a wide-ranging examination of the imperial context of Paul's letters, employing different genres of evidence and adding to our understanding of the first-century background.<sup>13</sup> Finally, several stimulating exegetical works examining the imperial context of individual epistles of Paul have appeared in 2008.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> E. Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (London: SCM, 1955); D. Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament* (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars*, 192–204.

<sup>9</sup> Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 63, 70, 140–144.

<sup>10</sup> D. Georgi, *Theocracy in Paul's Praxis and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991, Gmn. org. 1987). Georgi's essay ('Who is the True Prophet?', *HTR* 79 [1986]: 100–126) also stimulated strong interest in the intersection of the New Testament with the imperial cult.

<sup>11</sup> White, *The Apostle of God*, 135–172, 207–249. On related themes, see also J. R. Hollingshead, *The Household of Caesar and the Body of Christ* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> B. Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul: Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> J. D. Crossan and J. L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom. A New Vision of Paul's Words and World* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> N. Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); M. Gill, *Jesus as Mediator: Politics and Polemic in 1 Timothy 2:1–7* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); J. Hardin, *Galatians*; D. C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); B. Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009). For a general coverage of politics in the New Testament writings, see W. Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006). For a succinct coverage of the scholarly literature in the field, see Gill, *Jesus as Mediator*, 55–70.

A series of seminal essays have further contributed to our understanding of Paul and Empire. Three volumes of essays, edited by R. A. Horsley and published from 1997 to 2004, were influential in exposing New Testament scholars to the ways in which historical, postcolonial and exegetical studies mutually informed each other in regards to Paul's political context.<sup>15</sup> In a fine study overlooked by New Testament scholars, J. Meggitt explored the methodological issues relating to the responsible use of the imperial evidence in New Testament studies.<sup>16</sup> Our own discussion of methodology for imperial studies (§ 1.4.1–§ 1.4.3) continues down the path ventured by Meggitt.

Before we turn to modern scholarship on the imperial context of Romans and the Thessalonian epistles, two significant studies should be mentioned because of the challenge they issue to the position taken in this book. First, in an important paper delivered at the *SBL 2008 Annual Meeting*, Boston, (Nov 22–25), Professor John Barclay debated Dr Tom Wright regarding the state of scholarship on 'Paul and Empire'.<sup>17</sup> Barclay challenged the coalition of scholars represented by Wright regarding their use of 'code' and the criteria of Richard Hays for detecting allusions within the Pauline texts. He proposed that, in contrast to Hays' detection of Jewish allusions in Paul's letters, Wright is working subjectively from nothing explicit in the text. Along with several other scholars, Barclay dismissed the idea of Goodenough's 'code' as inappropriate for Pauline studies. He also differentiated Scott's sociological understanding of 'hidden transcript', in which subordinate peoples spoke discreetly before their oppressors for personal protection, from the situation of political openness in which the early house churches operated. More generally, Barclay argued that Paul attributes the Rome Empire little significance because it was coopted under the range of powers (sin, death, flesh) that hold humanity enslaved. Rather than opposing the Empire in code, Paul is establishing Christ-imitating communities of grace that embody the powers of the new Creation (the resurrection life and the Spirit). The Empire belongs to the idolatry of

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<sup>15</sup> R. A. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1997); *id.* (ed.), *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 2000); *id.* (ed.), *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 2003). Most recently, see *id.* (ed.), *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 2008). See also the essay of R. Saunders, 'Paul and the Imperial Cult', in S. E. Porter (ed.), *Paul and His Opponents: Pauline Studies* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2005), 226–238. An entire edition of *JSNT* (27/3 [2005]) was also devoted to imperial studies.

<sup>16</sup> J. Meggitt, 'Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously: The New Testament and the Roman Emperor', in C. Joynes (ed.), *The Quest for Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Philip Budd* (Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2002), 143–169.

<sup>17</sup> I am thankful to Professor Barclay for passing on to me a copy of his paper, titled 'Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul'. The paper will appear in a Mohr Siebeck collection of Professor Barclay's writings on social issues. The volume, to be published in the future, has not yet been assigned a title.

the old creation that is passing away: it is merely a ‘bit-part’ player in the salvation drama being enacted on the world’s stage.

Second, S. Kim has argued that the idea of Paul as the ‘anti-imperial’ apostle to the Gentiles is fundamentally misconceived.<sup>18</sup> Although Paul was aware of the inadequacy of the *Pax Romana*, he did not promote the church as the replacement of the Roman Empire. Indeed, Paul was confident that the Roman authorities would act justly, as were the later Church Fathers who also did not advocate rebellion against Rome. Paul’s mission in the eastern Mediterranean basin is predicated precisely on this assurance. Therefore the attempt of New Testament scholars to portray the apostle as a subversive agent in relation to Rome, Kim claims, involves them in a grave-self contradiction. Consequently, they resort to the device of ‘coding’ and simplistic proof-texting. Moreover, they fall into the trap of ‘parallelomania’ by overemphasising the significance of the overlap of Paul’s terminology – drawn mainly from the LXX – with the imperial honorific terminology. Last, the imperial cult was less pervasive in the Greek East than is commonly assumed, with Paul not referring to the imperial cult in 1 Corinthians 8–10.

In reply, it needs to be pointed out that Barclay relies on secondary discussion (i.e. M. Niehoff, *infra* n. 129) for his criticism of ‘coding’ rather than engaging directly with the primary source evidence. The same criticism can also be levelled against Kim. Our discussion of the primary and secondary sources relating to ‘coding’ seeks to address this issue comprehensively (§ 1.4.2; § 7.3). Barclay points to the politically open context of the early house churches, but he forgets that in the case of Rome the authorities had no problem in differentiating the early Christians, by virtue of their social distinctiveness, from the Jews in the persecution of AD 64. Presumably, the authorities in the capital had been monitoring the perceived threat of the Roman believers to the *mos maiorum* (‘custom of the ancestors’) for some time prior to their arrests (§ 1.4.1 nn. 153–154; § 7.4). In other words, Barclay overestimates the degree of political openness at Rome, as the various expulsions of the Jews from the capital attest. Further, Barclay is correct in arguing that Paul is an apocalyptic theologian whose emphasis is on enslaving powers such as death rather than on the ruler. But Barclay overlooks the fact that these powers have *localised* expressions that varied from church to church, as the difference between living under the Neronian ‘reign of death’ at Rome (Rom 5:14, 17, 21; § 4.2) and coping with the unexpected deaths of believers at Thessalonica (1 Thess 4:13) illustrate. The interpretative significance of the imperial *context* still has to be assessed exegetically epistle by epistle, even if the imperial cult is generally coopted by Paul under the reigning powers of sin and death (Rom 1:23a), along with the other idolatrous cults (1:23b). Barclay also comes close to assertion

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<sup>18</sup> S. Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 3–71.

in claiming that the coalition of scholars represented by Wright work subjectively from nothing explicit in Paul's texts. To cite one example, the interplay of imperial and LXX motifs in 1 Thessalonians 4:14–5:11 (§ 2.2), carefully charted by several scholars, deserves more serious consideration than Barclay allows. In sum, Barclay has contributed helpfully to the debate by focusing our attention again on Paul's apocalyptic thought in discussing the ruler as a player on the historical stage. But Barclay has underestimated the impact of the Julio-Claudian ideology of rule that Paul and the early believers had to engage, city-by-city, in their proclamation of the eschatological reign of Christ. It is historically and theologically naïve to assume that Paul did not intend any political implications in his eschatology, whereas his far more prescient auditors at Thessalonica and Rome would have been able to draw such conclusions for themselves from his epistles.

In regards to Kim's critique, it is true that Paul does not promote the Church as the replacement of Empire. Nonetheless, we will argue that the apostle demotes the status of the ruler, transfers to the Body of Christ many of his honorific titles and functions as a ruler, and radically critiques the mores of imperial society. Undoubtedly, as Kim argues, Paul did not advocate rebellion against Rome. But Paul, by fulfilling his divine vocation to call out the obedience of the nations to the risen Son of God 'in power' (Rom 1:4–5), intended that the Body of Christ would exemplify, through its community life and message, a transforming alternative to the hierarchical and self-serving social relations of Nero's 'body of state' (Rom 12:1–15:33). Although the eschatological glory of the 'new creation' was Paul's constant hope (Rom 8:18–23; cf. 2 Cor 4:16–5:10; Phil 1:23; Col 3:4), nevertheless for Paul the crucified Christ had engaged with and triumphed over the powers of the world through his atoning work and resurrection (1 Cor 2:6, 8; Gal 4:3–9; Eph 1:20–23; Col 2:14–15). As a result, the Body of Christ emerged, precisely because of the cross (Rom 8:32, 34–35, 39),<sup>19</sup> as the 'super-victor' over all powers (8:37–39), including the threat of the ruler's sword (8:35; cf. 13:4).

In terms of methodology, like Deissmann and Sandmel before him, Kim warns against the danger of 'parallelomania'.<sup>20</sup> But, if wielded in an uncritical way, the charge of 'parallelomania' can be used to stifle any discussion of historical context because of its perceived dangers. We require a more balanced assessment of the overlap of LXX and imperial terminology than Kim presents. Although Kim's warning against proof-texting is well taken, he himself overlooks inconvenient 'proof-texts' that undermine his contention that Paul ignored the imperial con-

<sup>19</sup> Kim's bald assertion (*Christ and Caesar*, 67) that Paul's conception of salvation is 'a trans-historical and transcendental reality' overlooks Paul's emphasis on the historical contingency of the incarnation culminating in the cross and, arising from its paradigm, the suffering of believers on behalf of Christ.

<sup>20</sup> On 'parallelomania', see S. Sandmel, 'Parallelomania', *JBL* 81 (1962): 1–13. N. T. Wright ('Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire', in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 162) is well aware of the danger.



text of idolatry (e.g. 1 Cor 8:5–6).<sup>21</sup> Kim's approach is therefore too sharply polarised, notwithstanding his methodological caution. In sum, Barclay and Kim are justifiably reacting to the writings of Elliott, Horsley, and Wright which, to some extent, portray Paul's theology as a reaction to the imperial cult and its ideology of rule. However, their own scholarly overreaction poses as many exegetical, historical and theological questions as the stance of their opponents.

## 1.2 Modern Scholarship on the 'Paul and Politics' Debate in Romans and in the Thessalonian Epistles

But what have New Testament scholars been saying about the imperial context of the Romans from the 1980's onwards? D. Georgi provided a brief but suggestive account of how Paul's Jewish missionary theology critiques Roman political theology.<sup>22</sup> The work of Georgi opened up new vistas for scholars: the collision of Paul's eschatology with the Julio-Claudian propaganda;<sup>23</sup> the triumph of Christ's resurrection over imperial apotheosis (Rom 1:3–4);<sup>24</sup> the solidarity of Christ as princeps with his enemies (5:6–10);<sup>25</sup> the superiority of Christ as a benefactor over the *saeculum* of Augustus and Nero (5:6–11, 15–21);<sup>26</sup> the contrast of Paul's suffering creation (8:18–25) with the idyllic pastorals of imperial propaganda;<sup>27</sup> and, finally, Paul's demotion of the ruler and eternal Rome (13:1–13).<sup>28</sup> All subsequent interpretations of Paul's 'political' theology in Romans stand, to some extent, on the shoulders of Georgi.

J. Taubes has posited that Romans represented 'a *political* declaration of war on the Caesar'. However, Taubes' case for Romans being a 'war' document does not convince because, in contrast to Georgi, he pays very little attention to the Julio-Claudian literary and documentary sources.<sup>29</sup> More incisive is N. Elliott's distillation of the theology of the Roman Empire and, conversely, his portrayal of Paul's rejection of imperial ideology.<sup>30</sup> Elliott investigates Romans 13:1–7 against

<sup>21</sup> For discussion of the anti-imperial rhetoric in 1 Cor 8:5–6, see Fantin, *The Lord of the Entire World*, 209–212.

<sup>22</sup> Georgi, *Theocracy*, 79–104.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 81–85.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–87.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 97–98.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–102.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>29</sup> J. Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004; Gmn. orig. 1993), 16; cf. 24–25. Apart from a few general references to Seneca and Juvenal (*ibid.*, 16, 19), as well as to several Roman rulers (*ibid.*, 16, 23), Taube does not engage with the imperial world of Paul.

<sup>30</sup> N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 181–230, esp. 184–190. Note especially how Elliott (*ibid.*, 3–19) seeks

the backdrop of Roman imperialism and anti-Semitism,<sup>31</sup> proposing that Paul's prophetic-apocalyptic theology 'did not enjoin unqualified obedience to the authorities'.<sup>32</sup> In later publications, Elliott drew heavily upon the research of E. R. Goodenough to argue that Paul's rhetoric in Romans 13:1–7 was really a coded warning to Roman believers about the danger posed by the ruler and his officials (§ 7.4).<sup>33</sup> But Goodenough's arguments have not commanded the support of several prominent classical scholars. Before we endorse the idea that Paul has used a coded rhetorical stratagem in speaking about the authorities, we will have to assess the strength of Goodenough's arguments, as well as the sociological model (Scott's 'hidden transcripts') often cited in support.

J. R. Harrison has suggested that Paul's language of overflowing grace in Romans 5:12–21 drew upon the benefaction parlance of the Augustan 'age of grace' in order to establish the superiority of the apocalyptic 'reign of grace' in Christ.<sup>34</sup> Further, Harrison proposed that Paul's metaphor for Christians as obligated beneficiaries in Romans 6:12–23 was drawn from the *familia Caesaris*.<sup>35</sup> Harrison also argued that Paul's language of covenantal election, applied to all believers, would have spoken powerfully to Roman Gentile auditors familiar with the Julio-Claudian propaganda of the *princeps a diis electus*.<sup>36</sup> Instead of election being the preserve of the Roman ruler, it was now democratised throughout the Body of Christ. However, the collision of Paul's eschatology in Romans with the Julio-Claudian conception of rule needs to be examined as well. In this regard, the 'new age' of Augustus and Nero should be understood against the Roman understanding of 'time' rather than speaking misleadingly, as Harrison does, of a Roman 'eschatology' competing with Paul's gospel.<sup>37</sup> While such language might be useful for New Testament scholars unfamiliar with the first-century Roman world, it is conceptually inaccurate for the ancient historian.

N. T. Wright has contributed stimulating articles on the imperial context of Paul's gospel in Romans<sup>38</sup> and on the intersection of imperial ideology with Jew-

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to liberate Paul from various modern imperialistic contexts spanning the historical period 1709–1992.

<sup>31</sup> Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 214–226.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>33</sup> For Elliott's most recent discussion of hidden and public transcripts, see *id.*, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 30–57.

<sup>34</sup> J. R. Harrison, 'Paul, Eschatology and the Augustan Age of Grace', *TynBul* 50/1 (1999): 79–91.

<sup>35</sup> J. R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 234–242.

<sup>36</sup> J. R. Harrison, 'Paul, Theologian of Electing Grace', in S. E. Porter (ed.), *Paul the Theologian: Pauline Studies Volume III* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 77–108.

<sup>37</sup> Harrison, 'Augustan Age of Grace'.

<sup>38</sup> The first two essays of Wright below are substantially the same publication with different introductions: N. T. Wright, 'Paul and Caesar: A New Reading of Romans', in C. Bartholemew (ed.), *A Royal Priesthood: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically* (Carlisle: Paternoster,

ish critiques of ‘pagan’ empires and Paul’s ‘counter-imperial’ theology.<sup>39</sup> Wright insists that the unresolved debate about the ‘New Perspective’ in Pauline studies needs to be supplemented by a fresh appreciation of the imperial context of Romans. Romans 1:1–17, in Wright’s view, is a parody of the imperial cult, whereas Romans 15:7–13 – with its provocative citation of Isaiah 11:10 (Rom 15:11) – represents a direct challenge to Caesar as the ruler of the nations. This critique stems from the Jewish traditions that were reshaped around Paul’s gospel, culminating in his high Christology and robust doctrine of justification. Wright depicts Paul as sponsoring a balanced eschatology that asserted Jesus’ lordship over Caesar, while simultaneously creating a ‘community owing imitative allegiance to the crucified and risen Jesus’.<sup>40</sup> The eschatological tension between the present and the future provided the dynamism for the transformation of imperial society by means other than revolution or anarchy. As a brief aside to Wright at this juncture, B. W. Winter’s presentation of Paul as a radical critic of Roman society in Romans 12–15 better represents, in my view, the apostle’s agenda of transformation.<sup>41</sup> While Wright has well captured the balance of Paul’s eschatology in an imperial context, he tends to overestimate the ubiquity and power of the imperial cult.<sup>42</sup> He also reads into some texts of Romans an anti-imperial allusion where the Paul’s imagery is capable of another construal.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, two major works have been recently written on the imperial context of Romans that have opened up new panoramas for Romans studies.<sup>44</sup> First, I. E. Rock’s unpublished thesis investigates the exordium of Romans 1:1–17 and

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2002), 173–193; *id.*, ‘A Fresh Perspective’, 21–39. See also Wright, ‘Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire’, 160–183, esp. 170–173.

<sup>39</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London: SPCK, 2005), 59–79.

<sup>40</sup> Wright, ‘A Fresh Perspective’, 38.

<sup>41</sup> For an excellent discussion of this theme, see B. W. Winter, ‘Roman Law and Society in Romans 12–15’, in P. Oakes (ed.), *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 67–102. Also useful is the discussion of M. Tellbe (*Paul between Synagogue and State: Christians, Jews and Civic Authorities in 1 Thessalonians, Romans, and Philipppians* [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001], 141–209), though he concentrates on Romans 13:1–7.

<sup>42</sup> On this issue, see the recent challenge of K. Galinsky to New Testament scholars (§ 1.5.3.1).

<sup>43</sup> On the (alleged) anti-imperial ‘fighting talk’ of Paul’s ‘regnal’ imagery in Romans 5 (Wright ‘A Fresh Perspective’, 35 n. 17), see the alternative suggestions of Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 228 n. 62. The publication of the Augustan essays of Judge (*The First Christians*, 1–345) provide New Testament scholars with a rich resource for reconstructing the Augustan conception of rule.

<sup>44</sup> Mention, too, should be made of R. Jewett’s magisterial commentary on Romans (*Romans: a Commentary* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007]) which is continually sensitive to the imperial context of the letter in its exegesis. See also Jewett’s excellent essay entitled ‘The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Reading Rom 8:18–23 within the Imperial Context’, in Horsley (ed.), *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 25–46. S. K. Stowers (*A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994], 42–82) has also explored the theme of self-mastery, with reference to Romans and the Jewish literature, against the backdrop of the moral politics of the Augustan revolution.

explores its counter imperial ramifications throughout the rest of the epistle.<sup>45</sup> Rock sketches adeptly the themes and ideological impact of Virgil's *Aeneid* in the Roman Empire, with a view to assessing Paul's exposure to the popular imperial propaganda. But, in my opinion, the likelihood of Paul's exposure to this type of aristocratic literature needs fuller assessment on Rock's part (§ 1.4.1). In conclusion, Rock's careful exegesis, aided by his literary and sociological perspectives, makes a very important contribution to the field.

Second, N. Elliott has recently published a seminal discussion on Paul's critique of imperial rule, grouped around several motifs of the Julio-Claudian propaganda: namely, *imperium*, *iustitia*, *clementia*, *pietas* and *virtus*. While traditional exegetes might regard such an approach as imposing a foreign grid upon Paul's text, nevertheless we do gain a sense of how first-century auditors, with their preconceptions about empire, might have perceived the social and political implications of Paul's theology. Elliott argues that Paul wanted to steer non-Judean believers in Rome away from regarding their fellow Judeans in the same arrogant and dismissive way that the Romans adopted towards those they had conquered. The book is a fine example of the new insights that arise from the text of Romans when diverse genres of Julio-Claudian evidence are pressed into the service of exegesis. Another major strength of Elliott's work, though probably considered a deficit by his detractors, is his sensitivity to the excesses of American imperialism and how that illumines, to some extent, the rhetoric and strategies of empire in the first-century context.

Nonetheless, in my opinion, an important omission weakens the force of Elliott's work. If the focus of Paul's gospel was Christ 'crucified' (1 Cor 1:23), in terms of its soteriological and social outcomes (1:18ff; 5:7ff; 6:9ff, 19ff; 8:11ff; 10:14ff; 11:23ff), how did this cruciform message undermine the rule of the Julio-Claudian house and their clients (2:6b, 8)? It is disappointing that Elliott does not explain how texts in Romans referring to the death of Christ (3:23–26; 5:6–10; 6:1–10; 7:4; 8:3, 32; 14:15; 15:7–8) might have engaged imperial ideology. The reason for his omission is clear enough. In Elliott's view, Paul's theology in Romans is *kyriarchical*: that is, it points to the resolution of history under Christ as κύριος. As Elliot elaborates,

Though I intend to show that some aspects of Paul's rhetoric in Romans were subversive of some of the claims of imperial propaganda, I recognise that Paul never provides a systematic or comprehensive critique of the emperor (whom he never names) or of the empire as such. The empire as such is never his direct target: his goal is to lay claim on the allegiance of his listeners with which the rival claims of empire inevitably interfered. ... In so far as his thought was shaped by the contestation over power that surrounded him, and in which imperial themes and tropes were dominant, Paul resembled his Judean contemporaries.

<sup>45</sup> I. E. Rock, *The Implications of Roman Imperial Ideology for an Exegesis of Paul's Letter to the Romans: An Ideological Literary Analysis of the Exordium, Rom 1:1–17* (unpub. PhD thesis University of Wales, Lampeter, 2005).

In strictly historical terms, then, I consider it anachronistic to read Romans as an early specimen of Christian theology. The letter is rather one expression of the range of Judean response to the Roman empire.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, according to Elliott, ‘kyriarchical’ rhetoric dominates Romans because the ascendant Gentile believers in the mid-fifties Roman house churches had a strong attachment to imperial ideology.<sup>47</sup> Traditional theological paradigms are therefore deemed by Elliott to be historically ‘anachronistic’ in assessing Paul’s response. Whether this includes the ‘atoning’ and ‘propitiatory’ dimension of Christ’s death is never explicitly stated, but Elliott’s neglect of the death of Christ is clear enough.<sup>48</sup> For Elliott, Paul works within the rhetorical conventions of first-century Jews who were struggling with submission to the Roman Empire.

However, I will be arguing, on the basis of Paul’s rhetoric in Romans 5:6–10, that the advent of the *crucified* Christ is the decisive eschatological event of salvation history which undermined Augustus’ twin claims to have fulfilled Roman history and to be the yardstick of all future leadership (§ 5.2). The death of Christ on behalf of his enemies secured reconciliation with the Father and incorporated into the household of his risen Son those who had been marginalised and excluded from imperial favour.<sup>49</sup> In other words, what Elliott terms – somewhat anachronistically in the case of Paul – ‘Christian theology’ is at the very core of Paul’s critique of Empire.

In sum, there has been no major investigation of the collision between the Julio-Claudian conception of rule and Paul’s eschatology in Romans. Although some scholars have discussed Paul’s eschatology in Romans in relation to the imperial cult, their discussions have not been properly articulated against the backdrop of the Roman understanding of time. Further, not only has the republican and imperial context of glory been ignored – apart from Harrison’s recent study<sup>50</sup> – but also the theme of eschatological glory itself in Romans remains largely unexplored. As noted, the cruciform nature of Paul’s gospel has to be brought into conversation with the imperial propaganda rather than being quietly subsumed under Paul’s ‘kyriarchical’ theology or bypassed as ‘traditional’ or

<sup>46</sup> Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> As Elliott (*ibid.*) argues, ‘I read the letter not as a Christian critique of Judaism, or a defence of Gentile Christianity, but of a Judean critique of an incipient non-Judean Christianity in which the pressures of imperial ideology were a decisive factor’.

<sup>48</sup> In terms of traditional ‘justification’ language, Elliott (*The Arrogance of Nations*, 59–85) interprets ‘righteousness’ (ἡ δικαιοσύνη) as ‘justice’ and relates it to the injustices done to Jews by the Romans, with the result that the ‘justice of God’ (ἡ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ) intervenes on behalf of his chosen people.

<sup>49</sup> See especially Georgi (*Theocracy*, 93–100) who relates the death of Christ in Romans to imperial ideology.

<sup>50</sup> J. R. Harrison, ‘Paul and the Roman Ideal of Glory in the Epistle to the Romans’, in U. Schnelle (ed.), *The Letter to the Romans* (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Uitgeverij Peeters, 2009), 323–363.

'anachronistic' theology. This study seeks to rectify these important lacunae in modern scholarship on Romans and Empire.

In the case of the Thessalonian epistles, there has been so far no full-scale monograph devoted exclusively to the intersection of the Julio-Claudian propaganda with Paul's eschatology in the Thessalonian letters. E. A. Judge devoted a study to the imperial background of the decrees of Caesar that the early believers had purportedly violated at Thessalonica (Acts 17:7).<sup>51</sup> K. Donfried has endorsed Judge's conclusion, to cite one prominent example,<sup>52</sup> but others, as we shall see, have demurred. The unpublished thesis of H. Hendrix provided keen insight into the Romanisation of Thessalonica through his examination of the activities of its Roman benefactors,<sup>53</sup> as well as the honouring of the ruler at Thessalonica.<sup>54</sup> Several studies touch briefly on the imperial context of the Thessalonian epistles and Pauline eschatology in discussions of conflicts, internal and external, within Paul's house churches in various cities,<sup>55</sup> or in Thessalonica itself.<sup>56</sup> J. R. Harrison has discussed Paul's rebuttal of Julio-Claudian propaganda in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11.<sup>57</sup> Harrison highlights how Paul, through his use of common LXX and imperial language, called the Thessalonian believers back to a commitment to the house of David and its risen messianic Son of God, as opposed to the house of Caesar and its apotheosised Son of God. Recently, P. Oakes has opposed Harrison's construction, positing that Paul's Christological and eschatological conflict with Roman ideology more centres on the remapping of the imperial universe than on the overthrow of the ruler or on participation in the imperial cult.<sup>58</sup> Last, A. Smith has proposed that in 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16 'Paul criticises pro-Roman Thessalonian aristocrats who have persecuted his assembly through an

<sup>51</sup> E. A. Judge, 'The Decrees of Caesar at Thessalonica', in *id.*, *The First Christians*, 456–462.

<sup>52</sup> K. P. Donfried, 'The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence', in *id.*, *Paul, Thessalonica and Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 21–48, esp. 31–38.

<sup>53</sup> H. Hendrix, *Thessalonians Honor Romans* (unpub. PhD thesis Harvard University, Cambridge Mass., 1984).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 283–318.

<sup>55</sup> C. S. de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and the Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 123–177; T. D. Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbours* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 260–266; Tellbe, *Paul between Synagogue and State*, 118–130.

<sup>56</sup> C. vom Brocke, *Thessaloniki: Stadt des Kassander und Gemeinde des Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). See also the attention devoted to the imperial cult at Thessalonica in the commentary of G. L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), *passim*. Most recently, see C. Steimle, *Religion im römischen Thessaloniki: Sakraltopographie, Kult und Gesellschaft 168 v. Chr. – 324 n. Chr.* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

<sup>57</sup> J. R. Harrison, 'Paul and the Imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki', *JSNT* 25/1 (2002): 71–96. This article, slightly revised, is reproduced with permission in Chapter 2 *infra*.

<sup>58</sup> P. Oakes, 'Re-Mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philipians', *JSNT* 27/3 (2005): 301–322, esp. 315–318.