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Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John

BY

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Preface

An earlier version of this book was conceived and written as a dissertation under the direction of Dr. Julian V. Hills and presented to Marquette University in 2004 under the title, *'Truly This is the Savior of the World': Christ and Caesar in the Gospel of John*. I had long been interested in how the political contexts of the gospels helped shape their content, but had previously thought the best way to conceive of this relationship was by using materialist categories, such as those employed by Fernando Belo in his treatment of Mark. While I was casting about for a way to connect the political context of the Fourth Gospel to its theology, my director gently suggested that the approach employed here, rather than the standard tools of materialist exegesis, might perhaps permit me to say something of interest to the scholarly community. While researching and writing, I came to see not only the practical wisdom of his advice but, even more importantly, the relevance of this subject for contemporary political theology (which, however, I have left undeveloped in the present work) and for understanding the unparalleled complexity of Johannine theology.

I wish to express here my gratitude (such an inadequate word in this case) to Julian Hills, for the many years of instruction, moral support, professional guidance, and friendship I have enjoyed from him. Without his example as a teacher and mentor, his constant support (usually unknown to me) behind the scenes pleading my case for financial assistance, and his careful editing and assistance at every stage, this project could never have come to completion.

Special thanks is also due him for the simple reason that it was at his suggestion and encouragement that I submitted my work to the *Catholic*

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For the generous financial assistance in the form of tuition scholarships which have enabled me to pursue and complete my studies I am also deeply indebted to the Marquette University Graduate School and its Department of Theology. Fr. Thaddeus Burch, S.J., Fr. Philip Rossi, S.J., Mr. Thomas Marek, Ms. Cheryl Nelson (formerly of the Graduate School), and Ms. Gale Prusinski have shown a special solicitude towards me over many years, and I am most grateful to all of them. In addition, the staff of the library at my former employer, Conception Seminary College, especially Mrs. Carolyn Fischer, was invaluable in helping locate countless articles and books. This monograph could not have been completed without their assistance.

My children, Emma, Madeleine, Karl, Louis, and Zoë, who may often have wondered whether they would finish their educations before I completed mine, deserve special mention here, both for the joy they have provided and the incentive they have given for me to complete this project in order to devote more time and energy to them. Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Carol, for the great patience she has shown and the immeasurable love and support she has given me through so many years of graduate education and beyond. To her, with my love, this work is dedicated.

List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
BDAG	F. W. Danker (3d ed.), *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BNTC	Black's NT Commentaries
BR	*Biblical Research*
CPJ	*Corpus papyrorum Judaicarum*
EPROER	Etudes Préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
IBS	*Irish Biblical Studies*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JSJSup	Supplements to *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series

JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*
NCB	New Century Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NJBC	R. E. Brown et al. (eds.), *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*
NovTSup	*Novum Testamentum*, Supplements
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature, Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TS	*Theological Studies*
VCSup	Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

Introduction

We reject the false doctrine that there could be areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ but to other lords, areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.
—Barmen Declaration, 1934[1]

Jesus of Nazareth, although abandoned by his closest followers and executed as a criminal by Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem during the reign of Tiberius, was proclaimed by the author of the Fourth Gospel as nothing less than σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14: all Scriptural quotations RSV, unless otherwise indicated). So successful were John's efforts to spread this belief in Christ as the Savior of the world (John 20:31) that now, some 2000 years later, it is largely forgotten how throughout the entire first century that same title "with sundry variations" was bestowed upon a group of men considerably less fondly remembered by Christ's followers: the Roman emperors.[2] Considering the infamy of certain of these men (e.g., Nero and Domitian) among both Christians and pagans, John's decision to attribute this particular imperial title to Jesus is remarkable and can scarcely have

[1] Robert McAfee Brown, ed., *Kairos: Three Prophetic Challenges to the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 157.

[2] Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan; 1927; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995) 364. For a fuller discussion of the currency of this title (and its variations) within the Imperial Cult, see Craig Koester, "The Savior of the World (John 4:42)," *JBL* 109 (1990) 665-80.

been accidental.[3] In fact, it has frequently been suggested that the relatively late appearance of this title in Christian texts is due precisely to its association with the Roman emperor.[4] The connotation of that title would have been well-known across the Roman Empire, as would have been its implications for understanding Jesus Christ: "like Caesar he was a figure of universal significance."[5]

This appropriation by John of a title drawn from Roman political culture is not unique. Indeed, a number of titles in the Gospel of John were previously or contemporaneously applied to various Roman emperors, deceased or living. In addition to σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, Richard J. Cassidy lists ὁ κύριος and ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεός as titles central to both the Imperial Cult and Johannine Christology.[6] Dio Cassius relates how the Emperor Domitian "took a tremendous pride in the titles of 'lord' and 'god'" (67.5.7), while Suetonius reports Domitian's practice of beginning at least some of his circular letters with the phrase *Dominus et deus noster hoc fieri iubet*, "Our Lord and God orders the follow-

[3] Deissmann (*Light*, 364) noted this fact over seventy-five years ago: "Another fact, the great importance of the Emperor Nero in the establishment of the idea of a Saviour of the world, has only recently come before me in due clearness. On his accession Nero was venerated in the East as 'saviour of the world.' This was no mere isolated excess of adulation; it points to the institution of a cult, as suggested by the fact that this cult of Nero as 'saviour of the world' left its creative mark on language." Koester ("Savior," 666), while admitting the use of this title more broadly in the ancient world, concludes: "Nevertheless, in the first century, the title 'Savior of the world' had striking imperial connotations."

[4] This view is explicitly argued by Vincent Taylor (*The Names of Jesus* [New York: St. Martin's, 1953] 108-9) and implied by C. H. Dodd (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953] 238-39). Dominique Cuss (*Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament* [Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1974] 71) follows Taylor closely, suggesting in addition that the popularity and theological sufficiency of the term κύριος in the primitive Church may temporarily have alleviated the need for additional titles for Christ. On the other hand, while Oscar Cullman (*The Christology of the New Testament* [trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. Hall; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959] 241) emphasizes the non-Hellenistic character of the term σωτήρ as used in the NT, he admits that "perhaps non-Christian usage did in fact *further* [emphasis added] its Christian utilization—just as the non-Christian use of *Kyrios* contributed to the spread of the concept *Kyrios Jesus Christos*." Cullman ignores the fact that, while John's use of σωτήρ may well have been influenced by the OT, the term itself would clearly have connoted the emperor to many of his readers.

[5] Koester, "Savior," 668.

[6] Richard J. Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective: Christology and the Realities of Roman Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992) 13-16, 33-39.

ing . . .” (*Dom.* 13.4; cf. Thomas’ exclamation “My Lord and my God!” in John 20:28).[7]

What makes the appearance of these titles in the Fourth Gospel so significant is the exclusive sense in which they are applied to Jesus—so exclusive in fact as practically to invite the notice of Roman authorities.[8] Such titles would have the potential to provoke persecution, especially during the reign of Domitian (81-96 C.E.), which overlapped with the period when the Fourth Gospel began to receive its final form. The appearance in the Gospel of titular duplications such as these suggests a conscious effort on the part of John to address issues which would unavoidably have been raised for his community by the Roman Imperial Ideology, or, as it is more commonly called, Augustan Ideology.

Toward a Definition of “Augustan Ideology”

While this topic will receive extended treatment in Chapter Two, it is necessary here to give a brief definition of what the Augustan Ideology was—and was not. What is called here the Augustan Ideology must be distinguished from the Imperial Cult *per se*. The former is more inclusive and involved a wide variety of political, social and literary practices (e.g., Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue* and *Aeneid*) which placed the emperor at the center of Roman society, in addition to its “strictly religious” manifestations in the worship and practices of the Imperial Cult. The Augustan Ideology developed after Octavian’s ascension to power in 31 B.C.E., which marked the end of the Roman Republic, and effectively reordered the conceptual landscape of the Roman world by establishing the person of the emperor at its new center. Karl Christ writes of this sea-change in Roman society:

[7] Cited by Cuss (*Imperial Cult*, 57), following Alfred Robert Theodore Finckle, *De appellationibus Caesarum honorificis et adulatoriis usque ad Hadriani aetatem apud scriptores Romanos obviis* (Königsberg: Gruber and Longrien, 1867) nos. 28 and 31.

[8] Cassidy (*Perspective*, 34) asks: “Is the emphasis upon Jesus’ saving power here and in the Gospel as a whole such as to preclude that an emperor such as Nero or a pagan god of healing might also appropriately be given such acclaim? . . . Patently it is absurd to hold that within the perspective of John’s Gospel such a title could also be attributed to any god or mythic force. And surely it cannot be conceived that the Gospel of John attributes any real role in the ‘saving’ of the world to the power of a Roman emperor.”

> In the establishment and consolidation of the new political system, we must not underestimate the importance of the Augustan ideology. From the very beginning it helped to justify and legitimate [Augustus'] own claims, and to make propaganda for his own achievements. It was thus in line with ancient traditions of the Roman governing class, who had always been obliged to make a parade of the grounds on which they based their own social prestige. . . . What was new, however, in Augustan propaganda, was the size of the 'tool kit,' the scale of manipulation of views, the monopolisation of public opinion, and the gradual identification of one man and his family with the sovereignty of the state, the *maiestas rei publicae*. But it was not only the claims and achievements which the Augustan ideology indoctrinated. Its slogans also preached integration; they helped to strengthen the system and make it fast; they gave prominence to the chosen successors of Augustus, and were a decisive factor in identifying the family of the *princeps* with the state.[9]

This ideology was not monolithic, of course, nor incapable of considerable adaptation to the special circumstances of different regions and social classes throughout the empire. Rather, it was a complex and considerably varied set of beliefs, practices and claims about the nature and source of temporal power in imperial Rome. It presented the emperor or *princeps* as the central figure of the empire on whom the continued peace and prosperity brought by the *Pax Romana* depended.[10]

[9] Karl Christ, *The Romans: An Introduction to Their History and Civilisation* (trans. Christopher Holme; Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985) 51.

[10] At the same time, it must be said that the Augustan Ideology was not a totalitarian one—at least in the modern sense—which dominated and defined every aspect of private and public life within the empire. Such a conception of it runs the risk of emptying the Augustan Ideology of any specific content whatsoever by identifying it with imperial Roman culture in general. While clearly acknowledging the pervasive influence of the Augustan Ideology on all levels of Roman life, it is equally important to define it carefully enough that it does not become, as it has for some scholars, an omnipresent feature of life within the empire. For example, Karl Galinsky (*Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996]) offers a discussion of the broad range of meanings *auctoritas* possessed and the utility of its conceptual elasticity to Augustus' rule which, while quite useful, is perhaps too ambitious (see Chapter Two below). In his review of Galinsky, Joseph B. Solodow criticizes his efforts to locate traces of *auctoritas* "outside the political sphere, . . . [where he] runs into the

This translated on a practical level into a large set of demands on the population of the empire that were both religio-ideological—involving the "mythic" or "imaginative" space claimed by the emperor from his subjects—and socio-legal—pertaining to his more mundane social and political powers.[11] As we will see, both sets of claims are addressed by John.

Given the centrality of the Augustan Ideology to the social and political organization of the Roman Empire, Richard J. Cassidy's claim that in its final form the Gospel of John is preoccupied with the authority (both religious and secular—if such a sharp distinction can be made in the first century) of the Roman emperor seems eminently plausible.[12] When one examines the recent theories of Raymond E. Brown and J. Louis Martyn concerning the history and development of the Johannine community, the geographical and demographic reasons for supposing such a preoccupation with the emperor make this claim even more compelling.[13] First, there is no plausible locale or timeline for the composition of the Fourth Gospel in which the author(s) would not have been confronted at every turn by the images, practices, and beliefs of the Augustan Ideology. Moreover, by the 80s, when the final redaction of the Gospel had begun, the Johannine community had absorbed a large

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problem of giving it so expansive a definition that it may be comparable to virtually any quality" (*Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 9 [2000] 322). In light of this, I will limit my treatment of the Augustan Ideology to its most commonly accepted political, religious, and literary manifestations.

[11] To illustrate: the *Weltanschauung* involved in proclaiming Augustus Caesar σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, and the resulting hierarchical conception of both society and the universe, as well as of the place of believers within them, would be "religio-ideological." On the other hand, any social or political sanctions for the refusal to do so (e.g., execution, punishment, social ostracization) are "socio-legal."

[12] Cassidy, *Perspective*, 5. Of course, the religious/secular dichotomy is in many ways anachronistic in any discussion of first-century society—which is not to say it does not have a limited usefulness. For a very intelligent discussion of the way in which it has distorted historical thinking about the Imperial Cult, see Simon R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 15-16.

[13] See especially the reconstructions of the Johannine community found in Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1979); Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History: Essays for Interpreters* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1978) and *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

number of non-Jewish converts who presumably would have had personal knowledge of, and perhaps even had participated in, the Imperial Cult. Thus, while Christians may (or may not) have been able to escape direct participation in the religious practices of the Imperial Cult, the pervasiveness of the Augustan Ideology in the first-century empire would still have confronted them at every turn. Many Johannine Christians' personal experience overlapped with the larger ideology of the surrounding culture. As a result, there was a pressing need to distinguish the nature and role of the emperor within Roman society from that of Christ within the Johannine community.

Preliminary Investigations of the Problem

Given the near universal penetration of the Augustan Ideology into Roman society in the first century, no Christian community could have entirely escaped or ignored it. Accordingly, one would expect to find an abundance of secondary literature on this theme in John's Gospel. When reviewing to the research done on the Fourth Gospel over the last century, though, we find relatively little has been produced.[14] Despite the

[14] The treatment of the imperial title σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου clearly illustrates this neglect. Among the major commentators, Walter Bauer (*Das Johannesevangelium* [3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck) 1933] 75-76) traces out its Roman parallels most fully but does not utilize them in his comment upon John 4:42. Dodd (*Interpretation*, 238-39), while not connecting John's use of the title to the Imperial Cult, does note that "in the Hellenistic world it was a very common attribute of pagan gods (and of emperors), and it seems likely that it was in Hellenistic circles that it gained currency." Rudolf Bultmann (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [introduction by Walter Schmithals; trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray et al.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971] 201 n. 4) limits his discussion to a single note which does not even mention the Roman use of the title, an omission repeated in Barnabas Lindars (*The Gospel of John* [NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972] 198). Raymond E. Brown (*The Gospel According to John* [2 vols.; AB 29-29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966-70] 1. 175 n. 42) makes only a passing mention of its application in the Greek world "to gods, emperors (Hadrian was called 'Saviour of the world'), and heroes." Rudolf Schnackenburg (*The Gospel According to Saint John* [3 vols.; trans. Kevin Smyth et al.; New York: Crossroad, 1980-90] 1. 458) does acknowledge the provenance of this title in the Imperial Cult but only to deny that it implies any polemic against it on the rather curious grounds that the title does not appear in the book of Revelation. Similarly, Cullman (*Christology*, 244) is reluctant to acknowledge this influence, despite the titular overlap: "This application of *Soter* [in John 4:42 and 1 John 4:14] formally sounds quite like Hellenistic ruler worship—indeed, it sounds exactly like the formulas applied, for instance, to Hadrian. But one can by no means decide with cer-

wealth of studies on the background of the Gospel of John in the modern era, the Roman context of Johannine theology has not attracted the sustained attention that it deserves. Only a very few scholars have taken seriously the possibility that John was aware of and responding to the claims of the Augustan Ideology. Perhaps the most direct effort to read the Gospel of John within its Roman context is Cassidy's *John's Gospel in New Perspective*. Cassidy's claim that, "in depicting Jesus' identity and mission within his Gospel, the evangelist John was concerned to present elements and themes that were especially significant for Christian readers facing Roman imperial claims and for any who faced Roman persecution," seems essentially correct.[15] However, Cassidy's work lacks the sort of detailed and tightly-focused discussion of the Augustan Ideology necessary to establish a thesis that the author concedes is perhaps "startling for many readers and students of the Gospel of John."[16] Without a careful investigation of the practices and literature of the Augustan Ideology, Cassidy's broad, thematic study is

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tainty whether the author was conscious of a parallel to these formulas, or whether here also he was only unconsciously influenced by them." Warren Carter (*The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2006] 83-99), in his otherwise useful study of Rome's "Imperial Theology," discusses the Roman connotations of the title "savior" in Philippians 3:20 and Luke 2:11, but makes no reference to John 4:42. The one notable exception to this neglect is the article by Koester ("Savior") already mentioned.

[15] Cassidy, *Perspective*, 1. Cassidy's "political" reading of the Fourth Gospel should be clearly distinguished from the "liberationist" readings offered by David Rensberger (*Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988]) and José Porfirio Miranda (*Being and the Messiah: The Message of St. John* [trans. John Eagleson; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973]). These latter works are much more efforts to draw a political theology from the Fourth Gospel (not an unworthy task in and of itself) than to relate Johannine theology to its specific historical-political context. For example, Rensberger (*Johannine Faith*, 96-98, 116-18), in his often very fine book, makes almost no reference at all to the extra-biblical sources at our disposal in his discussion of the relationship of Christ to Caesar. The idiosyncratic study of Miranda (*Being*, 175), preferring to find John's enemy in capitalism rather than Caesarism, fails to mention the Imperial Cult at all and even goes so far as to accuse John of "self-indulgence" for placing the theological emphasis upon "savior" instead of "the world." For an example of more fruitful method of bringing one's contemporary political concerns to bear on the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, see Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1-42* (WUNT 31; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1988).

[16] Cassidy, *Perspective*, 1. For instance, his (ibid., 10-16) brief discussion of the Imperial Cult makes little reference to the enormous body of classical (as opposed to biblical) scholarship on the topic.

ultimately more suggestive than demonstrative of a Roman imperial influence on the Fourth Gospel.[17]

Craig Koester's article, "The Savior of the World (John 4:42)," is in general an excellent attempt to interpret the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4 in light of the Imperial Cult. After presenting the relevant inscriptional and literary evidence, Koester reconstructs the attitudes towards the Roman emperor that members of the Johannine community would likely have held (especially the Samaritan members symbolized by the woman at the well in John 4). He concludes that John 4 is intended to draw the Samaritans away from their national religion and into the Christian community by presenting Christ as the true alternative to Caesar—and belief in Christ as the true alternative to armed resistance against Rome. This study is both original and compellingly argued. Unhappily, the literary evidence of the Imperial Cult Koester offers, while very useful so far as it goes, offers an incomplete portrait of the Augustan Ideology. Furthermore, he makes no attempt here or elsewhere (to my knowledge) to integrate the Imperial motifs into an interpretation of the Gospel as a whole. Because of its limitations and despite its potential to contribute to a fresh understanding of John's Gospel, Koester's article has attracted considerably less notice than it deserves.

More typical of Johannine research into the Imperial Cult is Dominique Cuss's *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament*. Her attempt to trace the titular linkages between the NT and the Imperial Cult has a very solid and well-documented foundation in the literary, numismatic and inscriptional evidence of the first and second centuries. Cuss deploys her knowledge quite effectively in an attempt to identify the Roman provenance of numerous christological titles. However, Cuss applies her researches to the book of Revelation

[17] This may also account for its lack of notice within the literature. In fact, I have so far located only two critical notices on the book. While Paul Anderson (*JBL* 113 [1994] 731-33), in a generally positive review of Cassidy, considers many of his theses "at least arguable, if not convincing," on the very important topic of the Johannine employment of Imperial titles Anderson overlooks the clear temporal priority of these titles in the Imperial Cult. At least part of the blame for this misunderstanding lies with Cassidy who, as stated above, does not provide a detailed study of the Augustan Ideology before interpreting the Gospel itself. The favorable review of John Mitchell Scholer (*Int* 48 [1994] 210) is limited to a single paragraph and offers no critical engagement with the book.

and provides only passing treatment to the impact of the Imperial Cult upon the Fourth Gospel. Similar objections can be raised regarding Klaus Wengst's study of the political, economic, and social effects of the ideology of the Pax Romana and their presence in the New Testament.[18] Indeed, research into the influence of the Augustan Ideology on primitive Christianity occurs commonly in discussions of Revelation and rarely in relation to the Fourth Gospel.[19]

The Purpose and Structure of this Study

Despite the widespread neglect of the Roman context of the Fourth Gospel in contemporary scholarship, the current situation is promising. As the work of the scholars mentioned above clearly show, all the tools necessary for a fresh reading of this Gospel are ready at hand, waiting to be put to work. Building on the work of several scholars, I will argue in this monograph that, in matters both of grand design and of minor detail, and on both a structural and a lexical level, the final redactor(s) of the Fourth Gospel made a conscious effort to address issues raised for the Johannine community by the Augustan Ideology.

At the same time, it should be noted that the influence of the Augustan Ideology on the Fourth Gospel that I am proposing is a relatively indirect one. There was no body of documents constituting the essence of the Augustan Ideology upon which the evangelist drew (though Virgil's texts perhaps approximate this description). Instead, I suggest that the Roman documents and inscriptions related to the Augustan Ideology express a fundamental way of conceiving the world in the first century that John felt compelled to challenge through his Gospel. No direct literary dependence of the Gospel of John upon particular texts was involved. The Augustan Ideology was less a set of texts confronting the

[18] Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

[19] See, e.g., David E. Aune, "The Influence of the Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John," *BR* 28 (1983) 5-26; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 192-99; Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 158-67. This preference has been reciprocated by classicists employing the NT as a source: see, for example, Price, *Rituals and Power*, 196-98.

evangelist than the intellectual atmosphere that he and his readers breathed in every day, identifiable through a careful study of relevant texts. The underlying conceptual structure of the Augustan Ideology is found in the Gospel especially when it is being denied or criticized by the author.

By carefully examining the function of the Augustan Ideology in first-century Roman society, particularly but not exclusively as mediated through the Imperial Cult in the provinces of Asia Minor, we can find in the Fourth Gospel substantive parallels and allusions that would have clearly connoted the person of the emperor to John's audience. These parallels and allusions, in turn, are pervasive and systematic enough to suggest the existence of a polemic governing the final redaction of John and directed at least in part against the Augustan Ideology and the grave theological and practical dangers that it posed for the Johannine community.[20] In short, the final redactor(s) of the Gospel wanted to distinguish clearly the nature of Christ's divinity and power from the religious and political authority of the emperor.

In order to establish this thesis, it is necessary first to situate the Fourth Gospel temporally, geographically and demographically in order to show how the Augustan Ideology influenced its authors and their community and placed them at odds with the surrounding Roman society. Thus, Chapter One summarizes the results of modern efforts to reconstruct the history of the Fourth Gospel and of the community that produced it. I will pay special attention to theories that link the development of the Gospel to increasing conflicts between the community and the synagogue. These conflicts, I argue, ultimately resulted in the Johannine community being pronounced ἀποσυνάγωγος (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).

Chapter Two reconstructs the Roman context of the Gospel, in particular the Augustan Ideology established during Augustus' reign to legitimate and perpetuate the emperor's supremacy within his newly founded imperial government. This discussion is not limited to the religious aspects of the Augustan Ideology found in the Imperial Cult.

[20] It should be stressed, however, that any polemic against the Augustan Ideology constitutes only the last layer of the Fourth Gospel's literary and polemic sediment. It neither erases nor invalidates the literary vestiges of earlier models of Jesus' messiahship (and described at great length by Bultmann, Brown, Martyn, and others) which may have survived in the text.

Rather, it also includes the political relationships involved in the Augustan Ideology, some of the broader cultural and literary manifestations of it, and the legal and social demands and expectations that this ideology placed on subjects of the empire. This is particularly important since the Johannine community, once declared ἀποσυνάγωγος, would have lost the exemption from participation in the Imperial Cult enjoyed by Judaism. In this context, the social, legal, and ideological challenges offered by the Augustan Ideology to the Johannine community (in part as a weapon wielded against it by opponents within the synagogue) will become more clear.

Chapter Three turns to the vocabulary employed by the Imperial Cult to express and defend the divinity and authority of the Roman emperor. If the Johannine community in the final redaction of the Gospel attempted to address the Augustan Ideology as a real threat to the proper understanding and worship of Christ, it is likely some lexical evidence for this concern should be present in the text. Therefore, I isolate relevant "pools" of vocabulary associated with both political and divine authority in Roman society and explore how the Gospel of John also contains and critiques these notions of authority.

Following the examination of the historical context and lexical template in support of this approach, the exegesis of the text begins. In Chapter Four, John's Prologue and the initial testimony of the Baptist are interpreted as attempts to contrast Christ with Caesar—an approach to the Prologue to my knowledge as yet untried. The Prologue makes clear from the very beginning of the Gospel that Christ is totally unlike the worshiped Caesar, both by what it affirms (for instance, the pre-existence of Christ as the Logos) and by what it omits (a birth narrative which might be misconstrued as the sort of "miraculous sign" motifs employed by the Imperial Cult in recounting the births of emperors).

Chapter Five examines the Johannine Passion Narrative. Particularly close attention is paid to three key verses: (1) 18:36, where Christ tells Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world"; (2) 19:12, where "the Jews" tell Pilate, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend"; and (3) 19:15, where the chief priests declare that "We have no king but Caesar." It is my contention that in these verses John attempts to differentiate clearly the authority claimed by Christ and the rule exercised by Pilate on behalf of the emperor. Rather than interpreting the Passion

Narrative as an anti-Semitic diatribe, I suggest that the main opponent is the Roman emperor.

The Conclusion provides a general assessment of the Gospel of John based on my research in order to suggest it should be read as a challenge not only to the synagogue but also to the Augustan Ideology that posed a serious theological and political threat to the Johannine community's understanding both of Christ and of itself. In short, the Johannine community's encounter with large numbers of Gentile converts unavoidably brought it into contact with the Augustan Ideology. This encounter in turn demanded some clarification of the duties and proscriptions that membership in the community placed upon these converts. It also demanded that the Christology of the community be clearly distinguished from the portrait of Caesar that suffused everyday life in the empire. Thus, it is hardly surprising to find the Augustan Ideology in John, especially where it is used to convey the superiority of Christ to Caesar.

CHAPTER 1

Neither Jew nor Roman: Reconstructing the History of the Johannine Community

Over the last forty years Johannine scholarship has seen a renewed interest in the Jewish roots of the Gospel of John, after a generation of studies preoccupied with its Hellenistic and philosophical background.[1] This movement found expression in the efforts of important scholars such as Barnabas Lindars, Wayne Meeks, Oscar Cullmann, Rudolf Schnackenburg, and Marie-Émile Boismard.[2] However, it is the attempts of Raymond E. Brown, J. Louis Martyn, and, to a lesser extent, Georg Richter to reconstruct the history of the community behind the Fourth

[1] Rensberger (*Johannine Faith*, 15-36) offers a detailed reconstruction of the history of Johannine scholarship in the twentieth century, including the seminal works of the first half of the century by Bultmann (*John*) and Dodd (*Interpretation*). To some extent, through his later research Dodd (*Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963]) serves as a transitional figure between these two periods.

[2] Lindars, *John*; Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967); Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976); Schnackenburg, *Saint John*; Boismard, *L'Evangile de Jean: Commentaire* (vol. 3 of ed. idem, and Pierre Benoit, *Synopse des Quatres Evangiles en français*; 4 vols.; Paris: Cerf, 1977). In this chapter I pass over with minimal comment the works of Lindars, Meeks, and Schnackenburg because their studies do not provide a detailed discussion of the history of the *community* which produced the Fourth Gospel. The thesis of Cullmann (*Johannine Circle*) that the Johannine community had extensive and early contact with "Christian Hellenists" and other heterodox Jews, while it does address the historical issue directly, has met with such mixed reception that I have chosen not to examine it in detail. Robert Kysar ("Community and Gospel: Vectors in Fourth Gospel Criticism," *Int* 34 [1977] 355-66, esp. 356) offers a fuller criticism of this thesis. Similarly, Boismard (*L'Evangile*) relies on a highly complex

Gospel that have attracted probably the most attention of any work in recent Johannine scholarship.[3] Indeed, their efforts to reconstruct the origins of the Fourth Gospel within a social matrix dominated at first by conflict with the synagogue and (excepting Martyn) later by internal divisions over Christology have supplanted Bultmann's multiple-source theory of Johannine composition as the preferred exegetical framework. As D. M. Smith observes, this new approach "goes a long way towards explaining the distinctive character of the Fourth Gospel, if it does not answer every question about its provenance and purpose."[4]

The key insight distinguishing the work of Brown, Martyn, and Richter from previous scholarship is that the text of the Fourth Gospel can and should be read as a multi-layered narrative that "tells us the story both of Jesus and of the community that believed in him."[5] Brown, recalling the great breakthroughs in Gospel criticism at the beginning of the twentieth century by Julius Wellhausen and Rudolf Bultmann, notes that they shared the assumption that "the Gospels tell us primarily about the church situation in which they were written, and only sec-

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literary theory that has not received widespread acceptance. My decision not to treat them at length should not, however, obscure the fact that these scholars illuminate the historical models under consideration in important ways, e.g., Meeks's work on Mosaic Christology intersects with, and advances, key elements of the work of Georg Richter ("Präsentische und futurische Eschatologie im 4. Evangelium," in *Studien zum Johannesevangelium* [ed. J. Hainz; Biblische Untersuchungen 13; Regensburg: Pustet, 1977]) 346-82). Likewise, Brown (*Community*, 176-78) admits multiple points of agreement with Cullmann's work.

[3] Brown, *Community* and *John*; Martyn, *History and Theology* and *Gospel of John*; Richter, "Präsentische." Richter's theory is summarized and assessed by A. J. Mattill ("Johannine Communities Behind the Fourth Gospel: Georg Richter's Analysis," *TS* 38 [1977] 294-315). In an important article, Brown ("Johannine Ecclesiology—The Community's Origin," *Int* 34 [1977] 379-93) offers his fullest assessment of Martyn and Richter.

[4] Smith, "The Presentation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," in idem, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on its Setting, Sources, and Theology* ([Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1984] 175-89, here 181-82). Smith's original article takes into account Brown's 1977 *Interpretation* article ("Johannine Ecclesiology") but predates *Community* by two years. As a result, Smith inadequately appreciates the major contribution of Brown to the development of this theory. Likewise, the otherwise useful discussion of Kysar ("The Fourth Gospel: A Report on Recent Research," *ANRW* II 25. 3. 2391-480, esp. 2426-35), although published in 1985, was apparently composed no later than 1978 as it makes no reference to Brown's fully developed theory.

[5] Brown, *Community*, 17.

ondarily about the situation of Jesus which *prima facie* they describe."[6] Building upon and extending this methodological principle, Brown suggests that the Fourth Gospel, if carefully read, can tell us more. It can reveal not only "how the evangelist conceived of and presented Jesus to a Christian community in the last third of the first century" but also "something about the pre-Gospel history of the evangelist's christological views . . . [and] about the community's history earlier in the century."[7] Somewhat more poetically, Martyn compares the text of the Gospel "to what archeologists call a 'tell' . . . [in which] there are numerous literary strata, and to some extent these strata may be differentiated from one another . . . [while] much of the substance of the 'material' in the strata is of such a character as to reflect communal interests, concerns and experiences."[8]

Brown, Martyn, and Richter recognize the difficulties and uncertainties in any attempted reconstruction of the community's history from a text that is largely theological in its intent.[9] Nevertheless, Brown rightly considers the postwar debates over the possible theological trajectories of the Fourth Gospel necessarily inconclusive in the absence of at least a tentative historical framework that can contextualize and arguably adjudicate them.[10] It is this interest in the *history* of the community—

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Martyn, "Glimpses into the History of the Johannine Community," in idem, *History and Theology*, 145-67, here 145.

[9] Brown (*Community*, 7) modestly claims that "if sixty percent of my detective work is accepted, I shall be happy indeed." In a similar spirit, Martyn ("Glimpses," 146) suggests that "it would be a valuable practice for the historian to rise each morning saying to himself three times slowly and with emphasis, 'I do not know.'"

[10] Regarding the numerous debates over the theological character (e.g., docetist or anti-docetist, sacramentalist or anti-sacramentalist, Petrine or anti-Petrine) of the Fourth Gospel which dominated Johannine studies throughout the middle third of the twentieth century, Brown (*Community*, 16-17) writes: "While there is always some basis in the Johannine writings for such radical interpretations, there is enough evidence on the other side of the issue to make them unconvincing and to point towards a more nuanced interpretation of Johannine christology and ecclesiology. At any rate, there is little to be gained by debating once more such points." Smith ("The Contribution of J. Louis Martyn to the Understanding of the Gospel of John," in *History and Theology*, 1-19, here 5) acknowledges the significance of this approach for the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel: "Just when the stage might have been set for a battle royal between [Ernst] Käsemann and his allies and the more orthodox position represented by [Edwyn] Hoskyns,

as opposed to earlier concerns focused almost exclusively on the gospel's *theological* location within a spectrum of possible positions—that makes this approach so potentially fruitful. Indeed, it is just this specifically *historical* context that is required to understand the Roman influence upon the Johannine community and its Gospel.

Accordingly, in this chapter I attempt to situate the Johannine community within its historical context. I focus in particular on the work of Brown and Martyn, and draw out the most secure results of their researches, especially those that might indicate potential sources of conflict between the community and the surrounding Roman society. Only by consolidating the most secure results from the work of these three scholars can a stable foundation be laid for the present research into the Roman influence on the Fourth Gospel.

Toward a History of the Johannine Community

Adele Reinhartz is undoubtedly correct when she writes that the "ecclesiological tale" that Brown and Martyn drew from the Gospel of John "has since become virtually axiomatic in New Testament studies."[11] These scholars agree that the origin of the community that produced the Fourth Gospel was situated firmly within the synagogue. They also hold that the gospel's subsequent history (and to a large degree the development of its distinctive theology) was determined by the conflicts with and eventual separation from the synagogue. This insight has been one of the decisive factors in the shift from a Hellenistic to a Jewish framework for Johannine scholarship in the latter half of the last century. Given the importance of their work (and Richter's research to a lesser extent), and its influence upon an entire generation of scholars, a detailed reconstruction of their individual theories is unnecessary here and is available elsewhere.[12] For our purposes, a basic outline of the

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the terms on which such a discussion could go forward were radically questioned by the original, insightful, provocative contribution of J. Louis Martyn."

[11] Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2003) 37.

[12] Richter's theory is contained in his "Präsentische,"and most thoroughly analyzed by Mattill, "Johannine Communities" (upon which both Brown and Martyn depend heavily). The impediment posed by the lack of translations in the spread and acceptance

broad features and stages of the history of the Johannine community generally shared by their theories is sufficient to provide a plausible framework for exploring the possible influence of the Augustan Ideology upon the community. Thus, in this section I will offer a very brief sketch of the "consensus" picture, which can be divided into three main stages in the history of the life of the community.[13]

The Early Period: As noted above, all three writers share an assumption that the origin of the Johannine community lies in a sectarian Jesus-movement within first-century Judaism, although the precise location and date are disputed. Richter locates the earliest stages of Johannine Christianity's development within a largely Jewish Johannine community, possibly already in conflict with followers of John the Baptist over the identity of the Messiah. The community, characterized theologically by a Mosaic understanding of Jesus as a divinely chosen prophet (e.g., John 1:29-34; 6:14), settled in Syria, northern Palestine and eastern Jordan.[14] Brown shares this basic assumption about temporal and geographical setting, but instead posits a group of mid-first century Palestinian Jews within the synagogue, accompanied by some followers

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of Richter's work is recognized and lamented by Smith (*John Among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth Century Research* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992] 77). Martyn's theory is presented most fully in his *History and Theology*; for an extended analysis and assessment, see Smith, "Contribution." Brown's reconstruction is presented most fully in his *Community*; however, despite its exceeding importance for contemporary scholarship, I am unaware of any full-length treatment of Brown's reconstruction of the history of the Johannine community. Gilbert Van Belle's massive *Johannine Bibliography, 1966-1985: A Cumulative Bibliography on the Fourth Gospel* (Collectanea Biblica et Religiosa Antiqua 1; Brussels: Wetenschappelijk Comité Voor Godsdienstwetenschappen Koninklijke Academie Voor Wetenschappen, Letteren En Schone Kunsten Van België, 1988) does not list even a single major critical notice for Brown's *Community*. However, Smith ("Contribution") does a good job of situating Brown's work in relation to the research of Martyn.

[13] The periodization used here is drawn primarily from Martyn (*History and Theology*), and shared (with adaptations) by John Ashton (*Understanding the Fourth Gospel* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1991] 166-74) in his discussion of the Johannine community's history.

[14] Richter, "Präsentische," 126 (= Mattill, "Johannine," 297). Richter gives no defense of this original geographic location but appears to base it upon similarities between the most primitive Johannine community and the low Christology of the Ebionitic Christianity which was found in Northern Palestine in the first century. For more on Ebionitic Christianity, see Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: Volume 2. History and Literature of Early Christianity* (2d ed.; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2000) 208-9.

of John the Baptist (e.g., John 1:6-8, 19-36), who came to accept Jesus as the *Davidic* Messiah.[15] This group, he suggests, was quickly joined by a group of Samaritans who interpreted Jesus against a Mosaic background as the Messiah sent from God. As a result of this union, there was a heightening of the community's Christology (e.g., John 4; 6:32-35). Martyn avoids committing to any particular geographic location or christological framework. Instead, he speaks of a group of Christian Jews who were "clearly living within the theological, social, and cultural security of the synagogue" while accepting Jesus as the Messiah.[16] Even while evangelizing other Jews with considerable success (e.g., the calling of the disciples in John 1:35-49), Martyn insists, this community of believers originally remained "wholly within the bosom of the synagogue."[17]

During this early period the most primitive literary strata of the gospel perhaps began to develop, although the exact form of this process is the subject of disagreement. Martyn argues that, because of its success evangelizing other Jews, the community soon collected the homilies used in this activity and developed them into a primitive "Signs Source or Signs Gospel," which served as the foundation for further preaching and missionary work.[18] Richter, on the other hand, sees the community having slowly developed a *Grundschrift* that portrayed Jesus as the prophet-Messiah promised by Moses as a result of conflicts with the synagogue. Brown is noncommital whether these Johannine traditions assumed literary form during this early stage. However, he posits an increasing missionary effort among Gentiles as an impetus

[15] Brown, *Community*, 29-31. Brown (ibid., 39) bases his decision for this location (Palestine, the Transjordan and adjacent Syria) on the known or likely locale of anti-temple Jews, partisans of the Baptist, and Samaritans in the mid-first century.

[16] Martyn, "Glimpses," 152.

[17] Ibid., 150.

[18] Ibid., 150-51. Martyn in unclear about the exact character of this foundational document within the community. It may have been simply a collection of miracle stories that evidenced the messianic character of Jesus (e.g., Rudolf Bultmann's σημεῖα source) or a more fully developed proto-Gospel with a passion narrative attached and a more elaborate Christology (e.g., Robert T. Fortna's *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel* [SNTSMS 11; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], based on his dissertation directed by Martyn). Martyn appears to favor a fuller version of the document along the lines of Fortna's reconstruction. See further Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

behind both the heightening of the community's Christology and the deepening of its division with the synagogue.

The Middle Period: As a result of these theological and possibly ethnic changes among Johannine Christians, peaceful existence within the synagogue became increasingly difficult. Because of the conflicts with Jewish monotheism inherent in a rapidly escalating Christology, Martyn argues that, by the late 80s, a crisis occurred in the Johannine community that forced them into open schism with the synagogue. The introduction of the *Birkat ha-Minim* (the Curses upon Heretics supposedly promulgated by the Council of Jamnia) into the synagogue service resulted in the excommunication (being made ἀποσυνάγωγος [9:22]) of some Johannine Christians from the synagogue (e.g., the healing of the blind man in John 9). It may also have occasioned the apostasy and return to the synagogue of others.[19] Similarly, Brown also sees increased

[19] Martyn, "Glimpses," 152-53. Martyn gives an extended discussion of John 9 and its reflection of events in the life of the Johannine community in *History and Theology*, 35-66. Martyn has come under sustained criticism for linking the excommunication of the Johannine community from the synagogue at the beginning of the Middle Period with the *Birkat ha-Minim* supposedly issued by the Council of Jamnia. The linkage of the *Birkat ha-Minim* to the Johannine usage of ἀποσυνάγωγος is one of the most troubled steps in his argument and has not been accepted by some scholars. Some have suggested that the Benedictions should not be dated to Jamnia but rather to the early second century under Gamaliel, and that they are only indicative of the issues which originally separated Jews and Christians rather than the actual cause of this separation. This view, which Martyn (*History and Theology*, 61 n. 75) attributes to Morton Smith, is later advanced and developed by W. Hornburg in his "The Benediction of the Minim and Early Jewish-Christian Conflict" (*JTS* 33 [1982] 19-61). Meeks ("Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," in "*To See Ourselves as Others See Us*": *Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* [ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernst S. Frerichs; Studies in the Humanities 9; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985] 93-115, here 102), while very sympathetic with the positing of a Jewish milieu for the Fourth Gospel, is quite skeptical of the value of the Benedictions for reconstruction the history of the Johannine community and believes it has been a red-herring for the study of the Gospel. This supposed link between the *Birkat ha-Minim* and the Johannine use of ἀποσυνάγωγος is also strongly criticized by Reuben Kimmelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Antiquity," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (3 vols.; ed. E. P. Sanders; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980-83) 2. 226-44.

In Martyn's defense, Smith ("Contribution," 8 n. 17) points out the connection and mutual support between this identification by Martyn and the work of his colleague W. D. Davies on the Twelfth Benediction in his *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 275-86. For a discussion of the more recent scholarship, see Pieter W. Van der Horst, "The Birkat Ha-minim in Recent Research," *ExpTim* 105 (1994) 363-68.

tensions with and eventual excommunication from the synagogue, precipitated by the introduction of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, perhaps as a direct result of the Johannine Christians' elevated Christology.[20] Their separation from the synagogue, Brown suggests, became permanent after an influx of Gentile converts joined the community. In this scenario, their admission would have been a logical extension of the community's previous outreach to the non-Jewish Samaritans.[21] The presence of these Gentiles, according to Brown, is reflected in the textual reference to a possible mission by Jesus to "the Greeks" (John 7:35) and by the appearance of Greeks (John 12:20-23) as a signal that Jesus' ministry to the Jews had come to an end.[22] This break with the synagogue, Martyn argues, was possibly accompanied by the subsequent martyrdom of members of the community for ditheism by synagogue Jews (e.g., Jesus' prediction of persecution in John 15:18-16:4). The result was an increase in the community's hostility towards "the Jews."[23]

The trauma of excommunication and persecution in turn led the Johannine community to develop its distinctive Christology portraying Jesus as a stranger from heaven (e.g., John 3:31) and a dualism between the world "below," which rejects Christ and the community, and the world "above, " which is the spiritual home of Jesus and the community (e.g., John 15, 17). Brown further theorizes that an influx of Gentiles was either the result or the cause—he is unclear on this point—of all or part of the community relocating to Asia Minor, probably in an urban setting (e.g., John 7:35).[24] In any case, at least intermittent conflicts with Jews

[20] Initially Brown (*Community*, 22) admits that Martyn's identification of the *Birkat ha-Minim* with the cause of this expulsion may be correct, but in his detailed discussion (ibid., 42-43) he makes no mention of it, looking instead to other ancient testimonies of Jewish persecution of Christians (i.e., *m. Sanh.* 9:6; Justin Martyr, *Trypho* 133:6, 95:4; *Mart. Pol.* 13:1).

[21] Brown, *Community*, 56. Brown believes this influx of Gentiles was accomplished without major upheavals within the community, which (he argues) remained unified until after the Gospel was composed.

[22] Ibid., 55-57. For a more complete discussion of Brown's argument for a Gentile rather than Diaspora Jewish presence, see the discussion of "secure conclusions" below.

[23] Martyn, "Glimpses," 155. See also his "Persecution and Martyrdom: A Dark and Difficult Chapter in the History of Johannine Christianity" (in idem, *Gospel of John*, 55-89), which considers *The Ascents of James* and the *Pseudo-Clementines* as possible sources for early Jewish-Christian experiences of persecution paralleling and possibly influencing the author of the Fourth Gospel, as well as his more detailed discussion of John 5 and 7 in *History and Theology*, 68-98.

[24] Brown, *Community*, 56-57.

within the synagogue continued to plague the community. These forced the community to define its Christology in a defensive posture towards Judaism while at the same time it drew upon the religious traditions of the synagogue that it had inherited. Such a scenario, John Ashton notes, goes a long way towards explaining the "'Jewish and anti-Jewish' paradox which has baffled so many commentators" on the gospel.[25]

The Late Period: Having been excluded from and persecuted by the synagogue Jews for their supposed ditheism, the Johannine community redoubled its efforts at evangelization among the Gentile community, and in the process elevated its Christology. It is during this period, Richter argues, that the community reshaped the *Grundschrift* and added many of its most characteristic elements, such as the Prologue and numerous references to Jesus as the "Son of God" (e.g., John 1:34; 10:36; 19:7). In addition, the strife between Jewish Christians and this new movement was projected back to Christ's lifetime—a retrojection also claimed by Martyn and Brown. However, the hope of greater missionary success here was largely unfulfilled, as the Johannine community proved as objectionable to many Gentiles at it had to the Jews.[26] This effort at evangelization, Brown argues, was significant for the development of Johannine Christology despite its ultimate failure, since its demand that Jesus be presented "in a multitude of symbolic garbs" may also have helped break down the community's awareness of "worldly" distinctions.[27] This, in turn, led to a greater emphasis on the universal significance of Jesus for all believers regardless of group or place of origin. Ultimately, though, continued persecution by the (now Diaspora?) Jews, paired with greater missionary contacts with and frequent rejection by Gentiles, caused the Johannine community to develop and heighten their Christology even further. As a result, they separated themselves more clearly from "the Jews" and "the World" of the Gentiles who had rejected Jesus.[28]

[25] Ashton, *Understanding*, 171.

[26] Brown (*Community*, 64-65) writes: "That the Johannine community would have been detested by non-believers who encountered it, we may well suspect. Later records show the extent to which pagans were infuriated by the inner intimacy of the Christians with their 'brother' and 'sister' language." Brown here follows Abraham J. Malherbe (*Social Aspects of Early Christianity* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1975] 40), who cites Tertullian (*Apol.* 39) and Minucius Felix (*Oct.* 9.2, 31.8) for evidence.

[27] Brown, *Community*, 57.

[28] Ibid., 62-91.

At the same time, this reshaping and elevation of its Christology to appeal to Gentiles may have caused serious divisions and even schism within the Johannine community itself, as it could tend towards docetism. Thus, Richter sees in the Gospel itself evidence of more conservative elements of the community who advocated a "Son of God" Christology in reaction to these docetic excesses by reasserting the true humanity of Christ (e.g., John 1:14-18; 20:24-29), especially through a renewed emphasis on the reality of the Eucharist (e.g., John 6:51-58).[29] Brown sees this schism most clearly in 1 John's appeals (i.e., 1:1; 2:7) to an original deposit of teaching concerning the proper understanding of Christ (e.g., 1 John 4:15; 5:5), the requirement for moral purity (e.g., 1 John 2:15-17), observance of the commandments (e.g., 1 John 3:4-10), and brotherly love (e.g., 1 John 4:7-12); all of these were apparently under attack by the more radical members of the community.[30] Martyn, on the other hand, denies the existence of serious conflict and schism *within* the community at any stage. Instead, he sees the self-identity of the Johannine community developing initially out of external conflicts with Jews in the synagogue who did not accept Jesus as Messiah, possibly abetted later by other Jewish Christians existing covertly within the synagogue, and in opposition to Gentiles who rejected the community's evangelization. Nevertheless, Martyn too sees the alienation of the Johannine community from the synagogue and other non-Johannine Christians and the possible despair caused by their excommunication during the Middle Period as being manifested in the negative portrayal of both "the Jews" and "the World" throughout the Gospel. Whether or not an internal schism over Christology occurred within the Community (Brown and Richter are probably correct in seeing such a schism), by the time the Gospel assumed its final form it reflected a community that had experienced a double alienation from both the synagogue that provided its initial matrix and the Gentile world that had largely rejected its efforts at evangelization.

[29] Richter, "Präsentische," 128 (= Mattill, "Johannine," 308). Rensberger (*Johannine Faith,* 72) supports Richter's theory of an anti-docetic impetus behind the insertion of this passage into the text of the Gospel.

[30] Brown, *Community*, 109-35. While Brown does give the post-Gospel phase of the community's history extended treatment, my focus on the Gospel permits a more summary treatment of it than of the earlier pre-Gospel and Gospel phases of the community's life.

Summarizing the final situation of the Johannine community when it produced its Gospel, Ashton writes:

> At this stage the Johannine community was shut off not just from the synagogue but from the world at large. This is clear from the very negative use of κόσμος throughout the farewell discourses. Were it not for the single verse (10:16) on which Martyn builds so much, one might be tempted to think now in terms of a Christian ghetto. But we shall see that in this Gospel universalism and isolationism go hand in hand: the Jesus worshiped by John and his community is still the light of the world even when the world is blind.[31]

A full appreciation of this sense of alienation from the surrounding world is essential for understanding the threats to the community's existence and its Christology. And the unique portrait of Christ in the Fourth Gospel, in turn, is made comprehensible only in light of the general portrait of the history of the Johannine community, which can be drawn with reasonable certainty from the works of Richter, Martyn, and Brown. So, while particular scholars may have strong preferences for one theory over another (the present author not excluded), it is wise to recall Smith's observation that "the differences between Martyn and Brown are of less weight than the agreements."[32]

[31] Ashton, *Understanding*, 173-74.

[32] Smith, "Contribution," 14. Clearly, Johannine scholars are still some distance from reaching consensus on the relative merits of Martyn and Brown as guides to reconstructing the Johannine milieu—though Richter's secondary importance is more securely established. However, given the various imperfections in each theory, this lack of unanimity is more of a strength than a weakness, since particular weaknesses in one theory can often be offset by the strengths of another. For instance, the absence of any account of Gentile influence upon the Fourth Gospel in the work of Martyn and Richter can be supplemented by the arguments of Brown for an influx of Gentiles at the beginning of the Middle Period as a result of extra-Jewish missionary work.

The work of these scholars cannot be considered in isolation from one another. Not only does Brown (*Community*, 176) consider them the two most important predecessors to his theory of the history of the Johannine community, he even goes so far as to say that "perhaps the correct position is between Martyn and Richter." The powerful effect of their work on Brown becomes clearer still when we consider his abandonment of the much more traditional discussion of "John and his redactor" in the first volume of his commentary in favor of the more radical notion of a Johannine "school of writers" operating within and responding to the community's history in *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*. See especially his *John*, 1. lxxxvii-cii; *Community*, 17, 101-3.

The great accomplishment of these scholars, whatever their disagreements, is the new and fruitful path for exegetes that their work opened. By abandoning the tacit assumption of a monolithic Johannine text and theology informing it, it becomes possible

> to distinguish the various strata in John and to trace the course of theological development within Johannine Christianity. And since each author does not write as a theoretician serenely surveying the ecclesiastical situation from his ivory tower but rather writes as an exponent of a specific Johannine community engaged in theological polemics, we shall also learn something of the congregation(s) represented by each author and the stages of development of the Johannine churches.[33]

And at least one target of these polemics, I will argue, was the Roman emperor and the ideology that secured his place in the empire.

Some Secure Conclusions about the Johannine Milieu

More important than the individual successes of these scholars is the cumulative effect that their research has had on subsequent scholarship, and especially in providing some basic facts about the Johannine milieu that can serve as a secure foundation for further research. Of course, the search for a few secure points of reference within the history of the Johannine community is a considerably more modest goal than the reconstruction of its history, but as is often the case in studying the Fourth Gospel, the less presupposed, the better. Only a few of the details from these scholars' theories need be correct to support the thesis that the Augustan Ideology posed serious challenges to the community and that a response to it may be found within the text of the Gospel.

These few "points of reference" are of paramount importance for establishing connections between the Augustan Ideology and the Johannine community. Only within a comprehensive theory of the community's origins and history can the social forces at work within the Johannine community and the *interconnectedness* of these points of ref-

[33] Mattill, "Johannine," 297.

erence be seen clearly. They are not an arbitrary (or, worse yet, *ad hoc*) set of claims about the background of the Fourth Gospel. Rather, they constitute the bare-boned but most secure underpinnings of any coherent and comprehensive theory of Johannine origins that can both account for the Gentile and Jewish elements present within the Gospel and provide a comprehensible and plausible social setting for the expression of anti-Roman impulses. Moreover, the "two-layered" approach to the text pioneered by Martyn and Richter and further developed by Brown justifies searching the text for signs of such impulses within the community.

In light of the research by these scholars, three key features of the Johannine community as it existed in its pre-Gospel and Gospel stages can be put forward as reasonably secure and relatively interconnected: (a) its origin in or relocation to Asia Minor before and while the Gospel was composed; (b) an influx of Gentile converts into the originally Jewish community sometime prior to the composition of the Gospel; and (c) the excommunication from, and continuing hostility by, Jews in the synagogue. It is the confluence of these three events that arguably resulted in harassment and persecution by the Roman authorities, perhaps indirectly at the instigation of "the Jews." Eventually certain features of the community were deemed offensive and potentially dangerous both to Roman religious custom and Roman political power. Given both the evidence and arguments presented above and the discussion in the following chapters, no extended defense of these assumptions need be given here. However, a fuller statement of each presupposition at this point may facilitate the later discussion as well as indicate (albeit cursorily) how numerous the occasions for possible conflict with the ideology and practice of the Imperial Cult would have been.

(a) Asia Minor as the Location of Gospel

Of the many disputed questions about the Fourth Gospel, few are as ancient as the place of its composition. The list of plausible locations can be narrowed to four main contenders, each one with defenders and arguments in its favor. Ephesus has been the traditional choice ever since Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 3.1.2) at the end of the second century located it

there, based primarily on the belief that the author of the Gospel also composed Revelation. Antioch is also a possibility, given the relationship between the Gospel and the writings of Ignatius of Antioch. Alexandria has its defenders, too, who point to the ready adoption of John by the Valentinians and the wide circulation of the Fourth Gospel within Egypt from an early date. More recently, especially as the Jewish aspects of the Gospel have been given greater prominence, Palestine has emerged as another possible location.[34] As with so many other problems surrounding the Fourth Gospel, the answer probably lies somewhere in-between these competing positions.

Traditionally, the Fourth Gospel was believed to have been composed in Ephesus. However, the main source of this tradition, Irenaeus, bases this location for the Gospel on the belief that the evangelist and the author of Revelation were identical—an unsustainable position for modern scholars; nor has any textual or historical evidence has been provided that would demand acceptance of Ephesus as the location. But if Ephesus has not been definitively established as the place of composition—and it has not—other attempts to rule it out as a possibility have been equally unsuccessful. For instance, Ashton rejects it based on the distance between the language of the Fourth Gospel and "the pidgin Greek of the Book of Revelation."[35] However, the logic of this argument presupposes authorial identity between these two works (unless he makes the very unlikely assumption that *all* Ephesian Christians were semi-literate). Walter Schmithals' rejection of Ephesus and Alexandria in favor of Syria and Palestine is based on nothing more than the geographical requirements of a Bultmannian theory of Gnostic influence, which has been surpassed in subsequent scholarship.[36] On the other hand, the argument from tradition, while not conclusive, cannot be disregarded. Irenaeus is, after all, the earliest witness we have about the place of the Gospel.[37] Given the problems in establishing either Antioch

[34] It is not possible to review these debates in detail here. For representative discussions of the issues and figures involved in this debate, see *inter alia* G. R. Beasley-Murray (*John* [WBC 36; Waco, TX: Word, 1987] lxxix) and Brown (*John*, I. ciii). I only wish to lay out the basic line of reasoning behind my preference for Ephesus and its coherence with the history of the community outlined above.

[35] Ashton, *Understanding*, 197.

[36] Walter Schmithals ("Introduction," in Bultmann, *John*, 3-12, here 12) writes: "Above all nothing in the Gospel points to its origin in Egypt or Asia Minor."

[37] John Marsh (*Saint John* [Pelican New Testament Commentary; Baltimore, MD:

or Alexandria as the most probable locations, the conclusion of John Marsh that "all in all none of the arguments for abandoning the long Irenaen tradition of Ephesus as the home of the gospel possess real cogency" seems correct.[38]

This having been said, the rediscovery of the Jewish context of the Fourth Gospel in the mid-twentieth century and its implications for locating the Gospel's place of origin cannot be ignored. Brown's evolving position on location shows how the Fourth Gospel has come to be read less and less as a timeless theological meditation and increasingly as a document with a Jewish history. In his original commentary in 1966, Brown does not even consider Palestine and accepts Ephesus as the most likely location primarily because it is the traditional favorite and because "there is nothing in internal evidence to give major support to any other theory."[39] He notes even then that "the question of the place of the Gospel's composition is not an extremely important one."[40] After more than a decade of further research, though, he reveals a much greater interest in the place of composition and admits a greater complexity in the possible answers to the question. Like Richter and Martyn before him, Brown argues in *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* that the origin of the Johannine community within the synagogue, alongside probable connections to adherents of John the Baptist, "certainly points to the Palestine area as the *original* homeland of the Johannine movement" (emphasis added).[41]

While accepting some Palestinian influence on the Gospel, it is equally clear that the Gospel was not the product of an exclusively Palestinian environment. Even if the community originated there, it must have been dispersed geographically at later stages. For instance, Smith argues that

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Penguin, 1968] 41) points out that Ephraem Syrus (d. 373) claimed Antioch was the location, but the very late date of this (some two hundred years after Irenaeus) greatly weakens its evidential force. For a fuller discussion of the ancient testimonies about Johannine authorship and place of origin, including their near-unanimity about Ephesus, see Maurice F. Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) 7-12. Wiles also notes that, according to Eusebius, Polycrates (*Hist. eccl.* 5.24.2-3) and Clement (*Hist. eccl.* 3.23.6-9) make the same claim at approximately the same time.

[38] Marsh, *Saint John*, 41.

[39] Brown, *John*, 1. civ.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Brown, *Community*, 39.

the Gospel's identification of "the Jews" with the synagogue is one indicator about location: "Perhaps it goes without saying that only after 70, and especially outside Palestine, would synagogue membership be the decisive mark of Jewish identity."[42] Moreover, the existence of the Johannine epistles reveals the need for correspondence between different and presumably geographically separated Johannine churches, although the debate over inhospitality in 2 and 3 John suggests they might have been no more than different Johannine "house churches" within a common metropolitan (Ephesian?) area.[43]

Long before Brown, Martyn, or Richter wrote, T. W. Manson put forward a comprehensive theory of relocation of the Gospel traditions and text that includes the other leading candidate for place, Antioch. George R. Beasley-Murray summarizes it thus: "The Fourth Gospel originated in a tradition which had its home in Jerusalem, and was taken to Antioch; there it influenced literature connected with that city, the liturgical usage of the Syrian church, the teaching of missionaries who went out from it (e.g., Paul) and its later leaders (e.g., Ignatius); from Antioch it was taken to Ephesus, where 'the final literary formulation was achieved in the Gospel and Epistles attributed to John.'"[44] If correct in its main

[42] Smith, "Contribution," 15. Brown (*Community*, 40-41) likewise recognizes the oddity of John's expression in 9:22:

> Most gentile readers of today do not notice the strangeness of John's having Jesus and the Jews around him refer to other Jews simply as "the Jews"—for the gentile readers the Jews constitute a different ethnic group and another religion (and often they think of Jesus more as a Christian than as a Jew!). But to have the Jewish parents of the blind man in Jerusalem described as "being afraid of the Jews" (9:22) is just as awkward as having an American living in Washington, DC, described as being afraid of "the Americans"—only a non-American speaks thus of "the Americans."

This fact about John's understanding of social groups within the Gospel has been insufficiently appreciated in the past.

[43] Brown, *Community*, 98. Even the assumption that the epistles were produced by "house churches" tacitly assumes a relocation from Palestine to a much larger and more metropolitan setting than that found around Jerusalem. Since the population of Ephesus during the first century may have reached or exceeded 200,000, the possibility that the Johannine churches were not geographically isolated from one another appears even more likely. For a discussion of population estimates for some of the major cities of Asia Minor during this period, see George M. A. Hanfmann, *From Croesus to Constantine: The Cities of Western Asia Minor and Their Arts in Greek and Roman Times* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1975) 49.

[44] Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxxxi, quoting T. W. Manson, "The Fourth Gospel," *BJRL*

outlines, this theory would be able to address the arguments of Martyn and Richter for a Palestinian and Syrian provenance for the Gospel without rejecting Brown's defense of the traditional choice of Ephesus as the final location of the community. Moreover, it would indicate why the Johannine community, as it moved to Antioch and then to Ephesus, would have come into closer and closer proximity to—and greater and greater conflict with—the Imperial Cult, since its presence in Asia Minor was stronger than in any other region of the Roman Empire.

The only other candidate for the locale of the Johannine community, Alexandria, should be rejected. The argument from Johannine usage among Valentinian Gnostics, while interesting, is hardly conclusive or even especially compelling, given the late date of Heracleon's commentary (ca. 160-180).[45] The same argument, supported by a much earlier dating (ca. 80-100), applies equally to Antioch through the writing of Ignatius.[46] Likewise, the discovery of late first- or early second-century papyri in Egypt containing fragments of John—e.g., P^{52}, containing John 18:31-33, 37-38, which has been dated as early as 100—proves that the Gospel circulated in Egypt at an early date, but it is no argument for its origin there.[47] Lindars notes: "But *all* the most ancient manuscripts of the New Testament come from Egypt, thanks to its preservation climate, and John's lack of knowledge of Philo actually precludes Alexandria from consideration."[48]

The Johannine community, at least in its later stages when the Gospel received its final form, was evidently located not in rural Palestine but in a major metropolitan center, probably in Asia Minor. Whether in Ephesus or Antioch (or both), the Johannine community was situated within the cultural sphere of Asia Minor where the Augustan Ideology and especially the Imperial Cult were most prominent in the empire.

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30 (1946-47) 312-29, here 320. Beasley-Murray notes that R. H. Lightfoot and Schnackenburg have followed Manson in his theory.

[45] Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (SBLMS 17; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973) 16.

[46] William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 6.

[47] For a summary of these texts and the debates about their dating, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxxv-lxxvi.

[48] Lindars, *John*, 43. Lindars' claim that John did not know of Philo is widely but not universally accepted. For the best discussion of the parallels with Philo and the possibility of his direct influence upon the Gospel, see Dodd, *Interpretation*, 54-73.

Close contact and conflict with it would have been unavoidable. Moreover, whatever particular geographical choice is made by exegetes, the Johannine community would still be found within a society controlled by Rome and infused with the symbols and practices of the Augustan Ideology.

(b) Increasing Gentile Presence Within the Community

No theory of the Gospel's place of composition can be evaluated apart from the questions of Gentile presence within the Johannine community and continuing Jewish hostility to it. Without understanding the composition of the community and the social forces acting upon it, the place where the Gospel was written remains little more than a name on a map. Brown recognizes this point and attempts to bring these problems into dialogue with one another, albeit more tentatively than one might desire. In a most suggestive—though undeveloped—passage, Brown writes of John 7:35:

> Did the opening to the Gentiles involve a geographic move of the Johannine community (in whole or in part)? Many scholars have posited such a move in order to reconcile the evidence of Palestinian origins with the tradition of composition at Ephesus in Asia Minor. Is there a hint of transplantation in John 7:35 where "the Jews" wonder if Jesus is going off "to the Diaspora of the Greeks"? Some interpreters have read the genitive in this case as explicative: "to the Diaspora which consists of Greeks, i.e., Greek-speaking Jews." However, why would Jerusalem Jews hint that Jesus would find a better and safer hearing among Jews who spoke another language? A more likely suggestion is that he could escape the Jewish efforts to destroy him by going among the gentiles, with the genitive read as one of direction: "The Diaspora among the Greeks." This ironic proposal (which by the rules of Johannine irony unconsciously predicts what will happen) would have Jesus become a Diaspora Jew, living among the Gentiles and teaching them successfully. Is this also a portrait of the Johannine community?[49]

[49] Brown, *Community*, 56-57.

In short, Brown argues that the reference to Ἕλληνες in 7:35 (as well as in 12:20—notably the only two places in all four Gospels where the word appears) is an attempt by the evangelist to justify the community's acceptance of a large and ever-increasing number of Gentiles by retrojecting the process to the ministry of Jesus.

Julian Hills has suggested that the tensions in the first century between Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism overlooked by Brown could provide a context for reading 7:35 as a reference to Diaspora Jews, which would undermine Brown's argument for a Gentile presence within the Johannine community.[50] However, without denying tensions between Palestinian and Diaspora Jews, the overall character of the Gospel, and especially its anti-Jewish polemic, argues against such a reading. Indeed, this opinion is shared by most scholars. Schnackenburg argues that "'Greeks' does not mean Hellenistic Jews but native Greeks, those among whom the Jews of the Diaspora live. The expression ἡ διασπορά had already become a technical term, followed by a genitive to indicate the region concerned."[51] Ernst Haenchen makes the same point: "The Evangelist has in mind not just a mission among Hellenistic Jewish Christians; the word 'Greeks' (Ἕλληνες) and the fact of the mission to the Gentiles in the time of the Evangelist proves that."[52] C. K. Barrett is even more forceful in rejecting the suggestion of a Johannine mission to the Diaspora:

> The argument that the Ἕλληνες in 12.20 are not Greeks or pagans but Jews of the Diaspora is not convincing. Linguistically, this interpretation is not tenable, as Bauer and Windisch have already shown. These Ἕλληνες are most naturally Greeks who are interested in the culture and religion of Judaism. . . . This is confirmed by the most probable reading of 7.35. . . . It seems to me impossible to accept the hypothesis that the Fourth Gospel is a missionary tract for Judaism in the Diaspora.[53]

[50] Hills, personal communication.

[51] Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 2. 150.

[52] Haenchen, *John* (2 vols.; trans. Robert Funk; ed. Robert Funk and Ulrich Busse; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 2. 17.

[53] Barrett, *The Gospel of John and Judaism* (trans. D. M. Smith; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 18-19.

At best, Lindars argues, the passage can be read as admitting both groups (Jews and Gentiles) as the possible audience: "In this case the Jews take what Jesus has said literally, as so often, and suggest that he may intend to travel to the Greek cities of the Mediterranean seaboard, where there were numerous colonies of Jews, and they even consider the possibility of a mission to the Gentiles themselves."[54] Even there, though, he points to the prophetic nature of the passage: "Though [the Jews] have misunderstood Jesus' words, we cannot miss the forecast of the Church's Gentile mission, which John has in mind in placing these words on their lips."[55]

The expression ἡ διασπορά τῶν Ἑλλήνων is clearly a reference to the Gentiles and not—or at least not primarily—to Hellenistic Jews, as Schnackenburg and Haenchen make clear. Likewise, a mission to the Gentiles by Christians after Jesus' death is a matter of established fact. But what are we to make of Brown's claim that relatively *early* in the history of the Johannine community a large number of Gentiles was admitted, and that it is precisely this development which the Gospel hints at? Everything that has been said above about 7:35 and 12:20 is compatible with Brown's theory, but nothing noted requires it. Could the Gospel not simply be a missionary tract for present or future evangelization, not reflecting at all the *history* of the community?

As noted above, Martyn pays almost no attention to the question of Gentile presence within the community. He focuses instead on the conflict between Jews in the synagogue and Jewish Christians who have left it, voluntarily or otherwise. Likewise, Richter leaves room for a Gentile presence (e.g., in the Middle Period, with the proponents of a "Son of God" Christology that understood Jesus as divine and descended from heaven), but he does not actually identify them with the Gentiles or any other group. Why? Perhaps the reason lies in the inadequate attention that these two scholars give to the notion of "the World" in the Fourth Gospel. Brown himself takes "the World" to refer specifically to non-Christian Gentiles and not at all as virtually identical to "the Jews."[56] While his thesis that the focus on "the Jews" in John 5-12 and on "the

[54] Lindars, *John*, 296.

[55] Ibid. In his commentary, Barrett (*St. John*, 325) strikes a similar position as regards 7:35: "Jesus will not merely visit the scattered Jews but will also teach those who by birth are not Jews at all."

[56] Brown, *Community*, 63. Cf. the interpretation in Barrett, *St. John*, 420, 528.

World" in chapters 14-17 "suggests a chronology in the relationships" may not be the key to the narrative structure of the Gospel as a whole, it likely reflects an important division within the Johannine community between Jews and Gentiles which predates the Gospel.[57] Missionary work was not *only* a task set by the Gospel; it was also a past reality that had shaped the Gospel itself. Brown argues: "What I would deduce from the Johannine references to the world is that, by the time the Gospel was written, the Johannine community had had sufficient dealings with non-Jews to realize that many of them were no more disposed to accept Jesus than were 'the Jews,' so that a term like 'the world' was convenient to cover all such opposition."[58]

An early appearance of Gentiles within the Johannine community also makes sense on a sociological level. The impending or actual separation from the synagogue and continuing hostility of the Jews that the Gospel clearly reveals (see below) would have increasingly limited the availability of Jewish converts whom the community needed to grow and survive. This may have been realized relatively early in the history of the community, along with the fact that the only other possibility for new members would have been the Gentiles among the Diaspora. Even without any textual evidence for the inclusion of Gentiles within the community, such an assumption would make sense based on what we know of other Jewish-Christian churches of the period.[59]

Given these considerations, the conclusion that the Johannine community began to attract Gentile members before any "official" break with the synagogue, and before the Gospel reached its final form, seems likely. Whatever questions can be raised about particular details of Brown's theory, one of its greatest strengths is the fact that it cuts the Gordian knot within the text itself: it explains the strongly Jewish elements at the heart of the Gospel and accounts for the setting of the final version of the Gospel and of the Epistles within a community that was

[57] Brown, *Community*, 63. Sandra M. Schneiders has repeatedly warned against an overly literal interpretation of John's category of "the Jews" to avoid anti-Semitic readings of the text, and her moral point for modern readers is well taken (*Written that you may believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1999] 75-76).

[58] Brown, *Community*, 65.

[59] See, e.g., Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992) 113-45.

increasingly, if not predominantly, Gentile. In sum, the presence of relatively large numbers of Gentiles in the community by the time the Gospel was produced can be assumed.

(c) The Persistence of Jewish Hostility

The relocation of the community from Palestine to the general vicinity of Asia Minor and the influx of Gentiles that accompanied this move (whether as partial cause or result) presuppose another, far less controversial assumption: that the Jewish authorities within the synagogue saw the Johannine community as a threat (e.g., John 11:48) and displayed hostility towards its members. While it is less clear whether this hostility boiled over into persecution by "the Jews" or simply the instigation of persecution at the hands of the Roman authorities, very few contemporary scholars would deny that throughout its history the community that produced the Fourth Gospel found itself in conflict with the synagogue, or that this conflict appears in the text itself (e.g., 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).

Whatever one makes of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, and whether it reflected, brought about, or actually constituted the ban placed on Jewish-Christians by the synagogue, there is no doubt that before the end of the first century a final and irrevocable rupture had occurred between Jews and Christians. This break, in turn, would had not have been just psychologically traumatic to the Johannine Christians since, as Martyn argues, "Jews who believe in Jesus may have been subjected not only to expulsion from the synagogue, but also to severe discipline and indeed to persecution which goes as far as death."[60] The level of animus directed at "the Jews" in the Fourth Gospel could well point to more than a simple schism within the synagogue, with much more than friendships at stake.[61] The extent of this persecution can be left to a later

[60] Martyn, "Persecution and Martyrdom," 56.

[61] It should be emphasized here, though, that the conflict was certainly a "two-way" affair, that is, Johannine Christians were not mere passive victims of "the Jews" but probably instigators as well, at least as "thorns in the side" of the Jewish leaders, with their anti-synagogue polemics. The numerous warnings among post-World War II scholars against anti-Semitic readings of the Fourth Gospel should not be forgotten in the account of Jewish-Christian relations underlying my reading of the Gospel. For further discussion, see Chapter Five below.

discussion, when we consider the place of the Johannine community under Roman rule. At present, the only question is whether the hostility between the two groups substantially pre- or postdated this break.

That hostility would have predated any such break makes sense when we consider the trajectory of the Johannine community away from the synagogue. Conflict with the synagogue was hardly unique to the Johannine community during the first century, but could be found throughout the early history of Jewish Christianity. This conflict may be traced back to the ministry of Jesus since two of the Synoptics ascribe the immediate cause of Jesus' betrayal and execution to Jewish authorities (e.g., Matt 26:3 || Mark 14:10; cf. Luke 22:52). That this hostility continued after Jesus' death is also clear from the testimony of Paul. Despite its highly theologized retelling of the history of the Primitive Church, Acts also contains genuine traditions about the earliest tensions between Jews and Christians.[62] From the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:58) to Paul's claim that "five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one" (2 Cor 11:14), the evidence from the first generation of Christianity reveals conflict with, and persecution by, the synagogue. The last example is particularly notable for understanding early Jewish persecution of Jewish Christians since, as Jerome Murphy-O'Connor points out, "such punishment could be administered only by qualified authorities [i.e., the Jewish leaders in the synagogue], and not by private individuals."[63]

There is no reason to think the Johannine community was spared these experiences. In a recent sociological analysis of the transition from "faction" to "sect" in early Jewish Christianity, John H. Elliott marks out eight steps for this process. Especially interesting are the fifth and sixth:

> (5) A view held by the faction that the parent body is distinct from itself. They constitute 'the Jews/Judaeans' (John 7:13; 9:22, 28; 19:38; 20:19). . . . (6) A move on the part of the corporate body to differentiate and dissociate itself from the erstwhile Jewish faction with

[62] For a fuller discussion of the conflict between the "Hebrews" and "Hellenists" in Acts 6, see Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 71-80.

[63] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 67-68.

> the claim that the movement is no longer representative of, or consistent with, the core values and commitments of the parent body of Israel (Birkat ha-minim; exclusion of the Jesus movement from synagogues: John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).[64]

Elliott's analysis provides theoretical support for the work of Richter, Martyn, and Brown, in their assumption of a rupture between the Johannine community and the synagogue. This is especially true in the case of Martyn, since ongoing Jewish hostility towards Christians provides a historical context and rationale for the Jewish authorities to have introduced the *Birkat ha-Minim* into the order of worship in the synagogue. No group unnecessarily creates a schism within its ranks. Rather, it was the last resort in a long and painful internal struggle.

It also appears that Jewish hostility towards the Christians continued *after* the break. The evidence here, while mainly inferential, is no less compelling. Martyn argues that evidence of the persecution of Christians (or at least of former Jews who had converted) can be found in the two-tiered drama of John 7, where there is "an unhistorical juxtaposing" of "the Jerusalem Sanhedrin of Jesus' day and . . . the Gerousia [local representatives of the Pharisaic *Bet Din* in Jamnia] of John's city."[65] Hence, in 7:32, when the Chief Priests send ὑπηρέτας (officers),

> John does not need to juxtapose two terms. He has been able to effect the double level with a single term. For *Chazzanim* [= ὑπηρέται] may equally well refer to the Levitical Temple police, who were at the beck and call of the Sanhedrin (via its high priestly members), *and* to the beadles of a local court, among whose functions may have been that of summoning litigants for trial before a local Gerousia. . . . It is apparent, therefore, that in constructing the final scene (7:45 ff.), John concentrates his view on the contemporary level of the drama. To his eyes the power in the local Gerousia lies with members who belong to the Pharisaic *chabura*

[64] Elliott, "The Jewish Messianic Movement: From Faction to Sect," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-scientific studies of the New Testament in its context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 75-95, here 79.

[65] Martyn, *History and Theology*, 85.

> ["guild" or brotherhood], and these men do actually dispatch *Chazzanim* to arrest Jewish Christians charged with being *Mesithim* ["beguilers" or proselytizers].[66]

Likewise, C. K. Barrett assumes an ongoing persecution reflected in the text of the Fourth Gospel in order to make sense of John 9 and 16: "The dangerous situation of such Jewish Christians [who had been made ἀποσυνάγωγος] must also have been known to their non-Jewish fellow Christians. The whole context [of John 9 and 16] places the hatred of the world in a broad framework, but it is not surprising that John, in a purportedly historical work, gave this hatred an appropriate (Jewish) form."[67]

In short, from its earliest stages until the time when the Gospel received its final form, the Johannine community found itself in conflict with the Jewish authorities in the synagogue and under the threat of various forms and degrees of persecution by them. This situation gave impetus to the tendency towards separatism, which the influx of Gentiles into the community had already set in motion and which probably manifested itself in the geographical relocation of the community from Palestine to the more cosmopolitan region of Asia Minor.

Conclusion

After the work of Martyn and Brown, no one seriously questions the deeply Jewish character of the Fourth Gospel. From the community's origin within the synagogue to its excommunication from and subsequent persecution by it, first-century Judaism provides an essential context for reading and historically situating the Fourth Gospel. However, no matter how Jewish the Gospel may be, it is not *only* Jewish in its background or interests. Rather, it reflects a wider range of influences and concerns. The history of the community that has been sketched out here, with its trajectory from the synagogue to the Gentile communities of Asia Minor, suggests another context as well, specifically, a Roman

[66] Ibid., 85-86.
[67] Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 18.

one that would prove just as objectionable and inhospitable. In Chapter Two we consider the possibility that the Jewish authorities employed Roman law as a weapon in their fight against Johannine Christianity. These questions about the history of the community exceed the parameters set by Richter, Martyn, and Brown. Thus, it is to this Roman context of the Fourth Gospel that we now turn.

CHAPTER 2

Confronting the Many Faces of Power: Augustan Ideology and Johannine Christianity

After his defeat of Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E., Octavian (declared Augustus in 27 B.C.E. and hereafter referred to by this title) set about reordering the Roman political and social order to avoid the political unrest, assassinations, and civil war that had brought Rome to the brink of ruin. Key to his success in this task was the development of what is now called the Augustan Ideology, which overturned the conceptual landscape of the Roman Republic and laid the foundation for a unified and dynamic imperial system by establishing the person of the emperor at the center of the new order. This ideology, Karl Christ writes, did not simply secure the position of Augustus as the current ruler over the Roman Empire, but its "slogans also preached integration; they helped strengthen the system and make it fast; they gave prominence to the chosen successors of Augustus, and were a decisive factor in identifying the family of the *princeps* with the state."[1] It was perhaps the decisive factor in the formation of the Roman world and thus for the growth of Christianity, including the Johannine community.

In the first part of this chapter, I will examine the three main areas of Roman life that were essential for the rise and consolidation of the Augustan Ideology: (1) Augustus' supreme political position and the structures that he and his successors used to exercise control over the empire of the first century; (2) the Imperial Cult, which arose during

[1] Christ, *Romans*, 51.

the reign of Augustus to justify and buttress the position of the emperor in Roman society by making him the object of popular religion; and (3) the aptly-named "Augustan poets," especially Virgil, whose works helped to connect the role of the emperor to the heroic past of the Roman people. As will be shown, the cumulative effect of these three manifestations of the Augustan Ideology was not merely to secure the political position of the Emperor within Roman society. Rather, it resulted in the creation of a new and distinctively Roman *Weltanschauung*, which situated the inhabitants of the empire not only in respect to the emperor but within the larger cosmos as well. After showing the penetration of the Augustan Ideology into everyday Roman life and thought, I will argue that this ideological hegemony presented a serious threat to the Johannine community, since the community could neither accept nor participate in the Augustan Ideology, nor could it claim a legal exemption from doing so because of its excommunication from the synagogue.

The Augustan Ideology in the First Century

In the introduction to this study, I made a distinction between the "religio-ideological" and the "socio-legal" aspects of the Augustan Ideology. The former, I suggested, refers to the "mythic" or "imaginative" space claimed by the Emperor from his subjects as the central figure in the empire, while the latter covers the social and political demands placed on them.[2] This distinction is not absolute, of course, and some overlap is unavoidable. Nevertheless, only by first understanding how

[2] There is some debate whether the people of Asia Minor are properly considered "subjects" of Rome during this period, although the arguments do not challenge the reality of the emperor's power and instead revolve around the technical question of legal status. Robert Turcan ("La promotion de sujet par le culte du souverain," in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity: Papers presented at a conference held in The University of Alberta on April 13-15, 1994, to celebrate the 65th anniversary of Duncan Fishwick* [ed. Alistair Small; Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement Series 17: Ann Arbor, MI: n.p., 1996] 51-62, here 51) writes: "Thus, by law, the emperor had no subjects, or, more exactly—and this justifies the title of this talk—there were subjects and the emperor. But, in any case, whether they were called Roman citizens or travelers, before the emperor everyone who lived in the Roman world was *de facto* in the state of a subject from the moment when he held, with the full power delegated by the Roman people, a sovereignty which transcended the law."

important the emperor was as a political, religious, and literary-mythic *symbol* of the empire can we appreciate the difficulties and dangers involved in attempts by the Johannine community to carve out a theological and cultic space for itself. Therefore, in this section I attempt to outline the most significant "religio-ideological" features of the Augustan Ideology before turning in the next section to its "socio-legal" status in Roman society and the demands that it would have placed on dissident groups such as the Johannine community in the first century.

(a) The Political Aspect: Potestas *and* Auctoritas

Beginning with Augustus, the position of the emperor within the Roman government was defined by his *tribunicia potestas*, the official and publicly recognized legal power he possessed by virtue of the imperial office.[3] Augustus dates the start of his reign to his assumption of this power (probably in 36 B.C.E.), which was later granted him for life. Through the constitutional settlement of 27 B.C.E. Augustus officially surrendered the broader dictatorial powers previously granted him during and following his contest with Antony (albeit while simultaneously assuming other compensatory powers). Thereafter he intentionally limited his still enormous *potestas* to forms that were putatively continuous with the republican constitution and exercised it with a limited but still meaningful degree of consent and advice from the Senate (in contrast to his great-uncle and adoptive father Julius Caesar, whose flagrant disregard for the republican sensibilities of the Senate had precipitated his murder in 44).[4] It was not until later in the first century C.E., first

[3] In this context *potestas* refers to "a position of power, office, magistracy; also, jurisdiction, authority" (*Oxford Latin Dictionary* [ed. P. G. W. Glare; combined ed., reprinted with corrections; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996], s.v. "*potestas*" [3.a]).

[4] The continuities and discontinuities between Augustus' rule and the Late Republic, and the strategic decision of Augustus to present himself as continuous with its traditions, is discussed in W. Eder, "Augustus and the Power of Tradition: The Augustan Principate as Binding Link between Republic and Empire," in *Between Empire and Republic: Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate* (ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub and Mark Toher; Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990) 71-122. For a more complete discussion of the constitutional powers held by Augustus, see the commentary to *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus* (ed. P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967; hereafter, *Achievements*) 10-15; Paul

under Caligula and especially under Vespasian, that these "official powers" of the emperor began to shatter the molds imposed by the republican tradition.[5] It is this later break with Augustus' practices and the resentment it provoked that demonstrates the essentially public and lawful character of *potestas* as it was understood in the first century.

The *potestas* of the emperor, however, was never sufficient by itself to rule the empire of the first century, a fact that Augustus fully realized.[6] To meet the demands of governing a far-flung empire that his *potestas*, even when expanded quite beyond traditional republican boundaries, could not accomplish, Augustus made *auctoritas* a central component of his mode of governing.[7] This distinction is crucial for

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Petit, *Pax Romana* (trans. James Willis; Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976) 46-53.

[5] Christ (*Romans*, 53) notes:

> From the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, the so-called "certificate of appointment" of the Emperor Vespasian which has been partly preserved in an inscription, we learn that the new *princeps* assumed, in one flagrant bundle, all the rights, offices and privileges previously held by Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius. This massive accumulation was all the more provocative for the very reason that Vespasian in other respects appealed ostentatiously to the example of Augustus. In reality his very idea of the principate was diametrically opposed to that of his already idealised predecessor. While Augustus had maintained the appearance of being still bound by the old republican rules of precisely limited terms in office and collegial sharing of magistrates' powers, Vespasian together with his son Titus (AD 79-81) year after year assumed the consulate, together with *tribunicia potestas* and *imperium consulare*, and in AD 73-74 also the censorship.

Notably, the reigns of Vespasian (69-79 C.E.) and Titus (79-81 C.E.) immediately preceded the period during which the composition of John occurred. They clearly constitute a period of aggressive expansion in imperial powers that would have further imposed the personality and figure of the emperor upon his subjects.

[6] Indeed, the organization of the Roman military resisted complete centralization of power in one person, in large part as a result of the administrative structure of the empire that needed more local control over forces by governors and proconsuls, as well as the republican tradition of senatorial control. While Augustus quickly brought most of the army under his command, even at the end of his life a single African legion (the 3d Augustus) remained under the control of a governor. Only under Caligula was its command transferred to an imperial legate. See Michael Grant, *The Army of the Caesars* (New York: Scribner, 1984) 55-84.

[7] Even here, though, we find Augustus working out of the republican tradition, at least nominally, since under the republic *auctoritas* had referred to "an informal decree of the senate" or "a proposal made by an individual senator" (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "*auctoritas*" [4]).

understanding the nature of Augustus' rule, as Edwin S. Ramage points out in his study of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*: "The key words here [in 34.3] are *auctoritas* and *potestas* which are clearly two different things serving two different functions in Augustus' career. *Potestas* is easy to deal with in this context, for it is clearly legitimate power connected with holding political office. *Auctoritas*, however, is more complicated and so more difficult to understand, since it is not as directly based in law and politics as *potestas* is."[8] Karl Galinsky describes *auctoritas* as "part of a para- or supraconstitutional terminology (other such terms are *princeps*, *pater patriae*, and even *libertas*) by which Augustus bypassed or, on a different view, transcended the letter of the republican constitution."[9] This *auctoritas*, in turn, was based on—indeed, defined by—Augustus' "personal influence or ascendancy."[10] John Buchan more generally describes it as "a status won by strong men in all ages despite the forms of a constitution."[11]

In contrast to his *potestas*, Augustus' *auctoritas* constituted an amorphous and informal influence based not on legal statute but rather upon his personal client-relationships with numerous individuals inside and outside of the official governmental structure. There was precedent for this use of the clientele-structure by Julius Caesar, who administered Gaul solely through his *auctoritas*, and a major factor in Augustus' triumph over Antony was "his mobilisation of [Julius] Caesar's *clientela*."[12] It is not surprising that under Augustus the client-patron relationship became the decisive element of how his *auctoritas* functioned in Roman political culture, since its application to the state repeated a more basic pattern of human relationships which organized Roman society at every level.[13] In the case of the emperor, this client-

[8] Ramage, *The Nature and Purpose of Augustus' "Res Gestae"* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1987) 41.

[9] Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 12.

[10] *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "*auctoritas*" (12).

[11] Buchan, *Augustus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937) 151.

[12] Christ, *Romans*, 49.

[13] Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller ("Patronal Power Relations," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* [ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997] 96-103, here 96) describe the centrality of patronage to the Roman social order thus: "The place of a Roman in society was a function of his position in the social hierarchy, membership of a family, and involvement in a web of personal relationships extending out from the household. Romans were obligated to and could expect support from their families, kinsmen, and dependents both

patron relationship, a two-way street whereby "a patron's *auctoritas* entailed an active concern for his client's welfare," linked the emperor to his subjects not merely on a transactional basis but also, ideally, on a deeper level of loyalty and trust.[14] In this respect, the emperor's *auctoritas* was part of what made him a leader as opposed to a mere official (however powerful).[15] Brunt and Moore neatly illustrate the difference: "With *potestas* a man gives orders that must be obeyed, with *auctoritas* he makes suggestions that will be followed."[16] Thus, publication—or, when necessary, invention—of those qualities in the personal character of the emperor that represent him as a reliable and trustworthy patron became one of the most important functions of the Augustan Ideology.

That the distinction between *potestas* and *auctoritas* was well-established in Roman imperial culture, even after the triumph of Christianity, is testified to by numerous ancient authors.[17] Cicero relates how

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inside and outside the household, and friends, patrons, protégés and clients." Whether this concept of patronage can be extended to the Roman attitude towards Asia Minor has been the subject of some debate. The classic argument in defense of this thesis by E. Badian (*Foreign Clientelae 264-70 B.C.* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958] 1-13, 55-83) was challenged by, *inter alios*, E. S. Gruen's *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). Recent inscriptional evidence supporting Badian, and a short discussion of the debate, can be found in T. W. Hillard, "Roman Patronal Practice in the Greek East," in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (ed. S. R. Llewelyn; vol. 9; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 6-7.

[14] Richard Horsley, "Introduction," in *Paul and Empire*, 10-23, here 15. A. N. Sherwin-White (*Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1963] 65) illustrates well the informal yet powerful influence of *auctoritas* in reference to Paul's appeal to Caesar in Acts 26:32:

> Equally when Agrippa remarked: "This man could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar," this does not mean that in strict law the governor could not pronounce an acquittal after the act of appeal. It is not a question of law, but of the relations between the emperor and his subordinates, and of that element of non-constitutional power which the Romans called *auctoritas*, "prestige," on which the primacy of the Princeps so largely depended. No sensible man with hopes of promotion would dream of short-circuiting the appeal to Caesar unless he had specific authority to do so.

[15] The associated meaning of *auctoritas*, "leadership as a quality, authority, influence," captures this personal aspect of it (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "*potestas*" [7]). Galinsky (*Augustan Culture*, 15) calls this "the kind of [personal] substance on which real influence is based."

[16] Brunt and Moore, *Achievements*, 84.

[17] Indeed, Gerald Bonner (*St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* [Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1986] 231) points to Augustine's appeal to the authority of the Catholic

the then consul-elect Quintus Mettelus, "when a certain tribune of the plebs had in virtue of his prerogative ordered the masters of the games to celebrate them in defiance of a senatorial decree, forbade the celebration though [he was still] a private citizen, and achieved by his personality (*auctoritate*) what he could not yet achieve as a magistrate (*potestate*, literally, 'by his power')."[18] Similarly, Tacitus writes when describing the practices of the Germanic tribes: "Then a king or a chief is listened to, in order of age, birth, glory in war, or eloquence, with the prestige that belongs to their counsel (*auctoritate*) rather than any prescriptive right to command (*potestate*)."[19] In perhaps the most famous example, from his *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Augustus writes of his sixth and seventh consulships: "After this time, I excelled all in influence (*auctoritate*), although I possessed no more official power (*potestatis*) than others who were my colleagues in the several magistracies."[20]

This last example is particularly important for our study, since Augustus' *auctoritas* played an essential role in establishing one of the other major components of the Augustan Ideology, the Imperial Cult. The *Res*

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church in justifying his own acceptance of the Bible: "The verb used [in *In Johan. Evang.* 37.6]—*commoveo*—is a fairly strong one; we might perhaps render it 'constrain' in the context; but it is significant that what constrains is *auctoritas*—authority—a word which, in the political theory of the later Roman Empire, had a peculiar meaning, very different from the coercive power—*potestas*—of the Roman emperor."

[18] Cicero, *Pis.* 4.8 (Watts, LCL): *cum quidam tribunus plebis suo auxilio magistros ludos contra senatus consultum facere iussisset, privatus fieri vetuit, atque id, quod nondum potestate poterat obtinuit auctoritate.*

[19] Tacitus, *Germ.* 11.5-6 (Hutton, LCL): *mox rex vel princeps, prout aetas cuique, prout nobilitas, prout decus bellorum, prout facundia est, audiuntur auctoritate suadendi magis quam iubendi potestate.* Herbert W. Benario (*Tacitus' Germany* [Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1999] 78) comments: "Emphasis is gained by the presence of two words which were extremely potent in Roman political vocabulary, *auctoritas* and *potestas*. The former represents personal prestige, the latter authority linked with a position." It is widely acknowledged that Tacitus here imposes the essentially Roman distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas* onto the Germanic tribes as part of his larger strategy as an author to idealize them in order to criticize by comparison the politics of Roman society in the late first century C.E. For a discussion of Tacitus' motives in writing, see ibid., 4.

[20] Augustus Caesar, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (hereafter, *Res Gestae*; trans. Brunt and Moore) 34.3: *Post id tempus auctoritate omnibus praestiti, potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt.* Both the Latin and Greek versions used in this study are drawn from *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (2d ed.; ed. Victor Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones [Oxford: Clarendon, 1976]) 1-31.

Gestae—written personally by Augustus to extol the virtues and achievements underlying his *auctoritas*—was read to the Senate by Tiberius' son at Augustus' funeral in 14 C.E.[21] In this rather curious document, it is primarily his *auctoritas*, and not the official *honores* and *potestatae* granted by the Senate, that grounds "the old emperor's argument, his *apologia*, for receiving his crowning honour, state divinity, which he had modestly (or prudently) rejected throughout his lifetime."[22] In any event, Augustus' strategy was very successful. Immediately following the funeral, a certain Numerius Atticus swore under oath he had seen Augustus' soul ascend into heaven, and the following month the full Senate officially granted "heavenly honors," i.e., the status of divinity, to Augustus and established a temple and priesthood for his worship. This event marks the "official" start of the Imperial Cult, at least in the West.[23] It is to this new element in Roman life that we now turn.

(b) The Religious Aspect: Imperial Cult

The Senate's decision to declare Augustus a god and to establish his cult had benefits for the empire that stretched far beyond the posthumous gratification of his vanity. Without senatorial endorsement, Augustus' *auctoritas*, upon which the Augustan Ideology had placed the

[21] Ittai Gradel (*Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* [Oxford: Clarendon, 2002] 282) argues that the *Res Gestae* constitutes a unique document in the ancient world, an autobiographical funeral oration which allowed Augustus "even in death . . . to remain in control and argue his own case," so that "it was not left to Tiberius to present the argument for deification."

[22] Ibid., 281.

[23] Ibid., 273-74. By Roman tradition, Augustus' apotheosis could only be made official after his death, but as early as the first decade of his rule Augustus clearly began to cultivate his cult. Duncan Fishwick (*The Imperial Cult in the Latin West* [EPROER 108; 4 vols. in 2; Leiden: Brill, 1991] 1. 1. 90) writes: "Officially divinity was something Augustus would attain only after death, but unofficially there are signs he was not averse to the more open ascription of divinity to himself already in his lifetime." The earliest examples Fishwick gives come from the "charismatic language of the court poets" whose "poetic license" frequently went beyond traditional honorific language in reference to Augustus. On the matter of court poets, see also L. Cerfaux and J. Tondriau, *Le Culte des Souverains dans la Civilisation Gréco-Romaine* (Paris: Desclée, 1957) 332-34. As will be shown below, the more "official" poetic manifestations of the Augustan Ideology in Virgil and Horace played a very prominent role in its spread.

burden of Roman stability and prosperity, would have died with him.[24] Instead,

> the imperial cult succeeded brilliantly in solving the problem of Augustus' charismatic authority. . . . In its pure form charismatic authority is naturally unstable. It may not last the lifetime of its possessor and it certainly cannot be transmitted to his successor. The importance of rituals is that they can objectify and institutionalize this unstable form of charisma. Thus the sudden outbursts of the cult of Augustus helped to ensure the perpetuation of his personal authority."[25]

In other words, establishing, honoring and promoting the cult of Augustus allowed subsequent emperors to preserve and draw upon his *auctoritas* in order to solidify the system of governance that he had built during his lifetime.[26] The subsequent establishment of cults for Augustus' successors were modeled on his, and were properly perceived as building upon and continuous with his *auctoritas* rather than as challenges to it.[27]

[24] The informal, or at least non-constitutional, character of the emperor's *auctoritas* is also demonstrated by the fact that it, unlike his *potestas*, was not transferable at death. Brunt and Moore (*Achievements*, 84) note: "Augustus' *auctoritas*, founded on his high birth, great achievements and unexampled accumulation of offices and legal powers, was not inherited by all his successors. Tiberius could have claimed the same pre-eminence, but not Caligula, Claudius or Nero."

[25] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 58.

[26] Likewise, the "literary-mythic" work of Virgil in the *Aeneid* also served this purpose: "If the Aeneid is viewed from the perspective of its reception (historical, ideological, poetical or whatever), the theme of legitimacy of succession becomes that of *translatio imperii*" (Duncan F. Kennedy, "Virgilian Epic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* [ed. Charles Martindale; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997] 145-54, here 153).

[27] When the cult of the living emperor came into practice intermittently after the death of Tiberius (who had rejected it for himself), it was modeled on and identified in the public mind with the existing cult to Augustus. The standard practice for an emperor who would not accept divine honors was to have his *genius* worshiped instead, normally on his birthday. For a discussion of the cult of Augustus' *genius*, see Christ, *Romans*, 162. The cult of the emperor's *genius*, however, is primarily a Western practice, since the acceptance (or at least the lack of prohibition) by a living emperor of divine honors during his lifetime was common in the Eastern Provinces and probably widespread in the West as well. Gradel (*Emperor Worship*, 233) points out: "We may rest assured that such refusals of sacrifice had very little or no effect whatsoever, and obviously no man was ever prosecuted for sacrificing to his emperor."

This legitimating function was especially important in the newly conquered Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire of the first century of the Common Era, where the Imperial Cult flourished more than anywhere else in the Empire despite—or perhaps because of—the absence of any personal presence of the Emperor during this period.[28] Simon R. F. Price has argued persuasively that the Imperial Cult helped to form a symbiotic relationship between Rome and the Asian Provinces. On the one hand, the new cult gave legitimacy to Roman power. On the other hand, it allowed these relatively new Roman subjects "to come to terms with a new type of power" previously unknown in the region by presenting these new realities of power in the form of traditional Hellenistic ruler cults.[29] The innovation of the Imperial Cult, which distinguished it from these earlier cults and which made it such an effective part of the Augustan Ideology, was its function not "merely" as a religious system but also as what Price calls as a "system of exchange."[30] The Imperial Cult sponsored by Greek cities was an important instrument for establishing and maintaining relationships between Rome and the Greeks and for mediating power relations between the Greeks themselves. The acceptance of worship by the emperor in turn bestowed a prestige upon the gift-givers, which frequently became an important part of their self-identity.[31] This does not entail, as G. W. Bowersock supposes, that "the

[28] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 1.

[29] Ibid., 29. For a fuller discussion of the Hellenistic ruler cults and their relationship to the Imperial Cult, see Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 1. 1. 6-20; Lily Ross Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, CT: American Philological Association, 1931) 1-34.

[30] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 65-77. Price here adopts the ideas of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (trans. Richard Nice; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[31] Steven J. Friesen (*Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* [EPROER 116; Leiden: Brill, 1993] 58) notes:

> The evidence for Pergamum, however, clearly documents the importance of such titles for the inhabitants of Asia's cities. In the early years of Trajan's reign, the city of Pergamum stopped using the simple title ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος in its inscriptions and replaced it with ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος τῶν νεωκόρον Περγαμενῶν, "the boule and the demos of the neokorate Pergamenes." In a matter of a few years, the Pergamenes amended their official title to show that they were the first city of Asia to receive a provincial cult and so the inscriptions from about 102-114 CE read ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος τῶν πρώτων νεωκόρον Περγαμενῶν. In 114 CE the city received a second provincial cult from Trajan and initiated the title ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος τῶν

cult was fundamentally an extension of a diplomatic system which had developed under the Republic."[32] Rather, it reveals the complexity of the Imperial Cult's function in Asia Minor as a set of practices which defies categorization as either purely political or purely religious.[33]

Neither was the Imperial Cult simply a matter of external practices aimed at winning favor from the emperor. Such an interpretation reflects a very Christian—or perhaps Augustinian—understanding of religion as essentially or even exclusively concerned with "interiority" as the criterion of authenticity.[34] Helmut Koester typifies this attitude:

> The cult of the emperor was part of the official Roman state religion, it never became a new religion as such, or a substitute for religion. . . . Certainly, people were grateful for the establishment and preservation of peace by the emperor, and they hoped that the gods or the powers of fate would continue to enable the emperor to secure peace and prosperity. But this did not imply that this Roman empire could be the fulfillment of the religious longings and spiritual aspirations of mankind.[35]

According to this view, the public and political character of the Imperial Cult disqualifies it from serious consideration as a religious phenomenon, and instead it should be treated as a political, sociological, or cultural practice. However, with the exception of some educated and philosophically inclined elites, the contrast between "interior" and "exterior" religion was hardly a central one for the first-century mind, if it existed at all.[36]

πρώτων καὶ δὶς νεωκόρον Περγαμενῶν. In 120 *CE* the title appears with the addition of the term μητρόπολις.

[32] Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) 121.

[33] Price (*Rituals and Power*, 18-19) argues that "the conventional distinction between religion and politics privileges the view of an observer over that of the Greeks and makes it impossible to understand the dynamics of the imperial cult."

[34] Price's (ibid., 10) warning against making too tight a distinction between the religious and the political spheres in the first century or downplaying the religious "authenticity" of the Imperial Cult because of its political functions in the empire is valuable. Both mistakes, he says, are "covertly Christianizing" and impose the categories of a later Christian debate on the thought-world of the first century.

[35] Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: Volume 1. History, Culture and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (2d ed.; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1995) 355.

[36] For a fuller discussion (particularly of the Augustinian and Lutheran origins of the

Against these anachronistic criticisms of the religious significance of the Imperial Cult, Géza Alföldy claims that "the cult of the ruler was a central element of ancient religious life. I would even dare to suggest that under the Roman Empire, from the time of Augustus to that of Constantine, the cult of the emperor was, according to patterns of 'religion' (not in a Christian but in the sense of Roman religion) the most important type of worship."[37] Alföldy recognizes its immense popularity, because of the numerous feasts and festivals associated with it, as well as its universal quality, where "practically everybody was involved" (in contrast to the plethora of local dieties also worshiped by the peoples of the empire). In addition, Alföldy argues that the success of the Imperial Cult ultimately depended upon its ability to meet the sincere religious needs of everyday people:

> First, even if the worship of the emperor might upon occasion have amounted to nothing more than adulation or political calculation, or even if it was sometimes mere hypocrisy, there can be no doubt about the widespread conviction that the ruler was a god, or was at least something like a god. His insuperable and therefore divine power, at once a very real and present force for most of his subjects, was regarded by these people as the guarantee of their *salus*. Moreover, to secure the continual operation of this power, it was necessary to fulfill the demands of cult—with prayers, victims, and further rites—in the same way as one might acquire the help of other gods. The only difference was that the emperor was also a human being, liable to illness and death, i.e., he could guarantee the *salus* of his subjects only when his own *salus* was secured. Precisely this double nature of the ruler, however, magnified the importance of his cult. On the one hand, it was necessary to honor and adore him; but it was also essential to sacrifice for his safety. In other words, one sacrificed not only to him as a god, but also for him as a man.[38]

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modern prejudice against ancient religious attitudes), see Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 78-96.

[37] Alföldy, "Subject and ruler, subjects and methods: an attempt at a conclusion," in *Subject and Ruler*, 254-61, here 255.

[38] Ibid.

Moreover, in these prayers for the *salus* of the living emperor, we see the fulfillment of yet another duty of the client towards his patron as payment for the *salus* received from him. Steven J. Friesen writes:

> Thus, the double prayer—*to* the emperor and to the gods *on behalf of* the emperor—does not reveal a deep-seated ambivalence at the heart of the imperial cult. Rather, the twofold prayer accurately reflected imperial theology: the gods looked after the emperors, who in turn looked after the concerns of the gods on earth to the benefit of humanity. Imperial authority ordered human society, and divine authority protected the emperors. That is why the prayer to the emperors was a petition regarding various personal affairs, and the prayer to the gods was simply for the continued well-being of the emperor.[39]

J. Rufus Spears describes the dynamic here: "By his care, Augustus preserves the commonwealth. His subjects, cognizant of this fact, pray for his safety, and, in so doing, pray for their own safety."[40] The overlap here of the "political" and the "religious" elements of the Augustan Ideology could not be clearer.

Despite its importance for understanding the phenomenon of the Imperial Cult, exactly how pervasive this devotion to and intercession on behalf of the emperor was outside of the public cult remains unclear: "Private cult of the emperor, its form and quantity, must be decisive for any general interpretation of emperor worship, especially so since scholars have usually claimed that the phenomenon was exclusively or overwhelmingly a public one and from this conclusion have often questioned the 'sincerity' or 'true religiosity' of imperial cults. . . . Unfortunately, the sources fail us almost completely in this field."[41] Nevertheless, Ittai Gradel argues for at least some standardized forms of private cult based on the presence of frescoes and murals in private residences.[42] Similarly,

[39] Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 152.

[40] Spears, *Princeps A Diis Electus: The Divine Election of the Emperor as a Political Concept at Rome* (Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome 26; Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1977) 129.

[41] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 198. The obscurity of private devotion to the emperor is caused in part by the absence of any general study on it (ibid., 198 n. 1).

[42] Ibid., 198-212.

Duncan Fishwick has argued for an established set of private devotional practices associated with the Imperial Cult, involving the offering of wine and incense to the Emperor on a daily basis within the household.[43] Even if these arguments fail, though, this is hardly evidence against such practices. It must be remembered that "our evidence [for the Imperial Cult] overwhelmingly consists of texts and monuments created, indeed, published for the public to behold. . . . The basic point, however, is that absence of evidence cannot be taken as evidence of absence, as has usually been assumed in the few remarks found on the subject in modern scholarship."[44] Until more evidence is unearthed and the existing remains more carefully scrutinized with this question in mind, no further conclusions can be reached on this matter.

However, given the concerns raised above about the misapplication of Christian criteria in evaluating the importance of Roman religion to its individual practitioners, the absence of private devotion to the emperor may not be a very meaningful measure of its place in the mental landscape of the first century or of the type of threat that the Imperial Cult was seen as posing to early Christians. While the presence of such practices would have given impetus to any effort in the Johannine community to draw contrasts between devotion to the emperor and the worship of Jesus, their absence would not have significantly reduced the need to do so. Whether someone worshiped the emperor in the temple or in the home, the act involved the worshiper in a larger ideology that integrated secular power and divinity, as well as the individual's relationship to both. That was one of the most vexing problems confronting Christians in the first century, and the Johannine community may have felt it more keenly than any other Christian group of its day.

Efforts at avoiding participation in the Imperial Cult and the political life of the day would not have been sufficient to escape the Augustan Ideology, which was much more than a set of religious rituals. Through the work of the Augustan poets, the rule of Caesar came to include a conception not only of society and the gods but of the greater course of all human history. It is to their work that we must now turn in order to complete our sketch of the Augustan Ideology.

[43] Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 2. 1. 531-32.
[44] Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 198-99.

(c) The Literary-Mythic Aspect: The Augustan Poets

The function of any ideology is to interpret in a comprehensive manner the world and the place in it of those who live under—or, more properly, within—that ideology. Thus, if the Imperial Cult situated the subjects of the Emperor "vertically" in relation to the gods, and the emperor's *auctoritas* situated them "horizontally" within their society, then the work of the Augustan poets, especially Virgil, did so "diachronically" through the representation of Roman history. In other words, their poetry presented Augustus not only as the inheritor of the republican traditions of Rome but also as the bearer of the historical destiny of the Roman people. To that extent, their work was very important for both the Imperial Cult and the notion of Augustus' *auctoritas*, and it provided a central support for both. By means of the Augustan poets, the imperial system established by Augustus came to be understood not merely as a fortuitous resolution to the crises of the first century B.C.E. but as the fulfillment of an inevitable and divinely ordained historical process.[45] A complete account of the Augustan poets, and of the scholarly debates over how directly or sincerely they fulfilled the "officious directives" given them by Augustus, cannot be attempted here. However, it is undeniable that their work was an effective means of "propagating the ideas and tenets of the new regime."[46]

[45] That these poets presented Augustus in such a favorable light is not surprising, given that they were *clientes* dependent (directly or indirectly) upon his patronage and favor to continue their work. The degree of the poet's dependence on his patron in Ancient Rome was considerable, if not absolute: "Literature could hardly be considered as a profession, though a certain number of men lived by it. Virgil and Horace, for all their popularity, depended on their patrons for their comfort if not for the bare means of livelihood. It is not probable that the reading public was large enough to guarantee incomes for those who lived entirely by their art, though Martial seems to have done pretty well" (Harold Mattingly, *Roman Imperial Civilisation* [Garden City, NY: Anchor Doubleday, 1959] 79).

[46] Hans-Peter Stahl, editor's introduction to *Vergil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context* (London: Duckworth, 1998) i-xxxiii, here xxv. Stahl's introduction does an excellent and concise job of sorting out the modern scholarly debates over Virgil's poetic motives and methods, "ranging from Vergil viewed as endorsing Rome's imperial warfare, to Vergil lending his voice to the victims of Roman imperialism; from the present-day literary critic's denial that any application of political context is feasible, to Vergil seen as holding up the ideal of the old republic to Rome's new master" (ibid., xv). This diversity of interpretation, Stahl argues, "has almost always been entwined with reac-

The most important of these ideas (for our purposes) is the glorification—indeed, the divinization—of Julius Caesar and Augustus by the Augustan poets. The clearest example of this "literary-mythic" aspect of the Augustan Ideology is found in work of Virgil.[47] Virgil's *magnum opus*, the *Aeneid*, was begun at Augustus' request after his victory at Actium and famously saved from the flames by imperial order following the poet's premature death in 19 B.C.E.[48] From the flight of Aeneas from fallen Troy in Book 1 to his slaying of Turnus at the mouth of the Tiber (Book 12), the *Aeneid* provides a mythical past for the Romans that is nothing less than a "theology of history" or, better yet, theodicean epic.[49] The weight of this task is reflected even in the somber tone of the poem, "a mood very different from the joyousness of Homer. For the burden the *Aeneid* carries is no less than the history and destiny of Rome and, in a sense, the world."[50]

Virgil lays the groundwork for the Imperial Cult by emphasizing the

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tion to the political conditions prevailing in the interpreter's own time" (ibid., xix). This relationship between modern politics and Virgilian scholarship has been masterfully traced out by Theodore Ziolkowski, *Virgil and the Moderns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) and Duncan F. Kennedy, "Modern Receptions and their Interpretive Implications" (in *Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, 38-57). But whatever his private attitudes towards the emperor were, the historical fact is that Virgil's work served as an invaluable and immensely popular support for Augustus and the imperial system.

[47] I have adopted the most common spelling of his name, Virgil, throughout my text, but have preserved the alternate spelling, Vergil, when employed by other authors.

[48] Just how directly Augustus controlled these poets is unclear, and there seem to have been intermediary patrons separating the emperor from them. Gordon Williams ("Did Maecenas 'Fall from Favor'? Augustan Literary Patronage," in *Between Republic and Empire*, 258-75, here 263) rejects the argument that after 19 C.E. Augustus personally assumed the position of patron to Virgil (very briefly, given the latter's death that year) and others, displacing Maecenas (Virgil's first patron) and "actually requesting—or rather demanding—poems on specific topics." Whether or not this theory is correct, we can be certain that Augustus' approval would have been of paramount concern since, even if Maecenas was not displaced as patron, "the literary patronage exercised by [him] was unique in that it was exercised for the political benefit of Augustus" (ibid., 267).

[49] Accordingly, Stahl writes of the death of Turnus in Book 12: "Far from seeing in Turnus a hero dying for Italy, the *Aeneid* presents him as a rebel against the gods" ("The Death of Turnus: Augustan Vergil and the Political Rival," in *Between Republic and Empire*, 174-211, here 177).

[50] F. J. H. Letters, *Virgil* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1946) 91. For a discussion of the "imperialistic" (in the modern sense) motives which lay behind the Augustan Ideology, namely, the belief among Romans that they were by nature destined to rule the world, see P. A. Brunt, "*Laus Imperii*," in *Paul and Empire*, 25-35.

divine origin of the Julio-Claudian house, specifically with the idea of presenting Aeneas as the offspring of Venus (e.g., *Aen.* 1.261).[51] Since Julius Caesar claimed a similar descent, this device served Augustus' own ambitions for divinity while at the same time presenting his rule as the culmination of a historical process that could be traced back through the myth of the *Aeneid* to Aeneas himself.[52] This genealogy is made explicit in the Sibyl's prophecy to Aeneas in Book 6:

> Turn hither now your two-eyed gaze, and behold this nation, the Romans that are yours. Here is Caesar and all the seed of Iulus destined to pass under heaven's spacious sphere. And this in truth is he whom you so often hear promised you, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will again establish a golden age in Latium amid fields once ruled by Saturn; he will advance his empire beyond the Garamants and Indians to a land which lies beyond our stars, beyond the paths of year and sun, where sky-bearing Atlas wheels on his shoulders the blazing star-studded sphere.[53]

[51] One measure of Virgil's success here can be found in the fact that Aeneas himself became the object of worship in Roman religion along with the Julio-Claudians. See Joyce M. Reynolds, "Ruler-cult at Aphrodisias in the late Republic and under the Julio-Claudian emperors," in *Subject and Ruler*, 41-50, esp. 44.

[52] John Tasker ("The Apotheosis of Augustus in Virgil's *Eclogues*" [M.A. thesis: Brown University, 1964; available from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI] 84) writes:

> While Octavian was letting no one forget about his divine ancestors and his many connections with Caesar, Virgil was strengthening his position—ultimately to his own good—by lauding their divinity in literature. To apotheosize Caesar is to give Octavian divine parentage which would support his ultimate elevation to *deus* while yet alive. If Julius Caesar as father is deified and the lamenting mother of *Ecl.* V, 22-23 is understood to be Venus, *Aeneadum genetrix*, the ultimate deification of their mutual offspring is guaranteed.

[53] Virgil, *Aen.* 6.788-97 (Fairclough and Gould, LCL):

> *Huc geminas nunc flecte acies, hanc aspice gentem*
> *Romanosque tuos. hic Caesar et omnis Iuli*
> *progenies magnum caeli ventura sub axem.*
> *hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,*
> *Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet*
> *saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva*
> *Saturno quondam, super et Garamantas et Indos*
> *proferet imperium; iacet extra sidera tellus,*
> *extra anni solisque vias, ubi caelifer Atlas*
> *axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum.*

The political implications of this passage for Augustus' *auctoritas* are clear: "In the *Aeneid*, Vergil portrays Augustus as chosen by Jupiter to establish a universal Roman empire and to rule over a renewed golden age."[54] Aeneas' submission to his historical mission prefigures Augustus' role as the instrument of the gods who saved Rome from the calamities of the civil wars; he was not simply another, albeit uniquely successful, politician. The importance of this last point for the Augustan Ideology cannot be overstated. Theodore Haeckel writes: "Aeneas—Aeneas, the leader towards the glory of Rome. But the true leader—and this, be it remembered, was Virgil's opinion after a century of civil war—the true leader is not he who makes himself leader, but he who is called and dedicated to that end by Fate."[55]

Likewise, the shield forged by Vulcan in Book 8, with the history of Rome displayed upon it, places Augustus' highly idealized triumph over Antony at the apex of this history: "In the center could be seen brazen ships with Actium's battle; one might see all Leucate aglow with war's array, and the waves ablaze with gold. Here Augustus Caesar, leading Italians to strife, with peers and people, and the great gods of the Penates, stands on the lofty stern; his joyous brows pour forth a double flame, and on his head dawns his father's star."[56] Virgil's artistry is at work here on a variety of levels, which are all tied to the purposes of the Augustan Ideology. As Gordon Williams observes about Book 8: "Augustus can be seen in this portrait to embody all the virtues that have appeared in the earlier scenes" on the shield, which include *pax*, *fides*, *castitas*, *pietas*, *virtus*, and *res publica et libertas*.[57] Alexander G. McKay has even argued that the shield itself is a symbol of Augustus'

[54] Spears, *Princeps A Diis Electus*, 123.

[55] Haeckel, *Virgil, Father of the West* (trans. A. W. Wheen; New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934) 80.

[56] Virgil, *Aen.* 8.675-81 (Fairclough and Gould, LCL):

in medio classis aeratas, Actia bella,
cernere erat, totumque instructo Marte videres
fervere Leucaten auroque effulgere fluctus.
hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar
cum patribus populoque, Penatibus et magis dis,
stans celsa in puppi, geminas cui tempora flammas
laeta vomunt patriumque aperitur vertice sidus.

[57] Williams, *Technique and Ideas in the Aeneid* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983) 155-56. See also Ramage, *Nature and Purpose*, 74-75.

triumph: "But Vulcan's shield was designed above all to signal the end of civil wars and the achievement of a matchless victory and peace. . . . The *orbis* of the shield is transformed finally into an emblem of *orbis terrarum*, a massive Atlantean burden which prefigures Rome's future empire, a burden which Aeneas-Augustus carries piously into a beckoning future."[58]

This motif of Augustus as divinely ordained leader is also found in Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*, often called the "Messianic Eclogue," because of its prophecy of a Golden Age that would be inaugurated by the birth of a child.[59] In it, Virgil tells the consul Pollio of

> the birth of a child, under whom the iron brood shall at last cease and a golden race spring up throughout the world! Your own Apollo is now king! And in your consulship, Pollio, yes, yours, shall this glorious age begin, and the mighty months commence their march; under your sway any lingering traces of guilt shall become void and release the earth from its continual dread. He shall have the gift of divine life, shall see heroes mingled with gods, and shall himself be seen by them, and shall rule the world to which his father's prowess brought peace.[60]

[58] McKay, "*Non Ennarabile Textum*? The Shield of Aeneas and the Triple Triumph of 29 BC, Aeneid 8.630-728," in *Vergil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*, 199-221, here 213-14.

[59] See, for instance, Joseph B. Mayor et al., *Virgil's Messianic Eclogue: Its Meaning, Occasion and Sources* (London: J. Murray, 1907); John Van Sickle, *A Reading of Virgil's Messianic Eclogue* (New York: Garland, 1992). Against christianizing interpretations, Allen Brent (*The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity before the Age of Cyprian* [VCSup 65: Leiden: Brill, 1999] 54) points out that "although we may describe this ode as 'messianic,' it is important to remember that the golden age that is here in view is not one that exists eternally as the goal of history, but is rather a returning golden age." On the other hand, J. Wight Duff (*A Literary History of Rome from the Origins to the Close of the Golden Age* [ed. A. M. Duff; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1953] 324) suggests that "much of the imagery may fairly be termed 'Messianic' in the sense that it is ultimately traceable to Jewish ideas, which spread considerably in Italy in the latter half of the first century *B.C.*"

[60] Virgil, *Ecl.* 4.8-17 (Fairclough and Gould, LCL):

> *. . . nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum*
> *desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,*
> *. . . . . .: tuus iam regnat Apollo.*
> *Teque adeo decus hoc aevi, te consule, inibit,*
> *Pollio, et incipient magni procedere menses;*

One of Virgil's greatest innovations here was to project the Golden Age into the future rather than in the distant past, as was the common practice in the Roman world. Another was his identification of its inauguration with the birth of a child, which resulted in centuries of christianizing interpretations of the poem.[61] These two innovations enabled the poem's pastoral ideal to be both personalized (in the emperor) and realizable (through his rule), which suited its solemn and prophetic tone. This prophetic quality, in turn, made the poem uniquely well suited for its adoption by Augustus, since "Vergil's presentation of prophecy after prophecy surely struck a chord with an audience that considered prophecy an important and interesting part of life."[62] Augustus could not have been unaware of the power of such symbolism in the public mind, and it surely played an important part in his decision to "request" the *Aeneid*.[63]

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te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
inrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.
ille deum vitam accipiet divisque videbit
permixtos heroas et ipse videbitur illis,
pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.

Ironically, the poem was originally composed ca. 40 B.C.E. and probably referred to the anticipated birth of a son to Antony and his new wife Octavia (Augustus' sister). However, by the time he published it five years later Pollio's consulship had ended and Virgil had been "drawn into the circle of Maecenas and became acquainted with Octavian," causing the poem to be associated with Augustus instead of Antony (Wendel Claussen, *Virgil's Eclogues* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1995] 126). For a full debate over the question of the identity (if any) of the *puer*, see the discussion of Williams, William S. Anderson, and Charles E. Murgia in *Virgil's Fourth Eclogue* (ed. Wilhelm Wuellner; Protocol series of the colloquies of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture 7; Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975).

[61] Claussen, *Virgil's Eclogues*, 121. For a fuller discussion of this tradition of Christian interpretation, which lies outside the scope of this study, see Pierre Courcelle, "Les Exégèse chrétiennes de la quatrième éclogue," *Revue des études anciennes* 59 (1957) 298-315; Stefan Freund, *Vergil im frühen Christentum : Untersuchungen zu den Vergilzitaten bei Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Novatian, Cyprian und Arnobius* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000).

[62] Claussen, *Virgil's Eclogues*, 65. Providing historical context to Virgil's poem, Spears (*Princeps A Diis Electus*, 121) observes that "although a belief in omens was an essential element in the Roman religious mentality, oracles and omens foreshadowing kingship had long been an important political and literary device in the Greek world." David Potter (*Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994] 70) writes: "It is perhaps ironic that Vergil's effort to imitate oracular verse is so successful that the poem has been taken to be an actual prophecy."

[63] This is not the only nod to Augustus and the Julian house that Virgil makes in the

If, as Ramage claims, "Vergil is the creator of the image which Augustus adopted," then Horace is "the announcer" of this image.[64] Dieter Geogi points out that "Virgil's Fourth Eclogue is not a strange and singular bird, but the expression of a more general and pervasive mood" that reaches its fullest expression in Horace's poetry.[65] For example, Horace acclaims Caesar as "a sovereign than whom nothing greater, nothing better, have the Fates and gracious gods bestowed upon the world, nor shall bestow, even though the centuries roll backward to the ancient age of gold."[66] Elsewhere, he places Augustus second only to Jove in power as lord of all the earth: "Mayest thou [Jove] be lord of all, with Caesar next in power! Whether he lead in well-earned triumph the humbled Parthians, that now threaten Latium, or the Seres and Indians lying along the borders of the East, second to thee alone shall he with justice rule the broad earth."[67]

Eclogues: "In Eclogue I there is Tityrus's gratitude to Octavian for his land, in tension with Meliboeus's having been unpropertied so that it could be given to Octavian's veterans. . . . In Eclogue V it may be that one way (though only one way) to read Daphne's death is to think of the death of Julius Caesar, and in Eclogue IX one of the half-forgotten songs predicts the rising of Julius Caesar's star in the sky" (David Ferry, *The Eclogues of Virgil* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999] xi). The First Eclogue is possibly autobiographical, since Virgil lived in Campania when "Octavius wanted to settle 200,000 demobilized troops on the land, and ruthlessly confiscated farms in Italy. . . . It is possible that Varus, or some other powerful friend, saved Vergil's home from confiscation" (W. F. Jackson Knight, *Roman Vergil* [London: Faber and Faber, 1944] 41). See also Tasker, "Apotheosis," 89.

[64] Ramage, *Nature and Purpose*, 145.

[65] Dieter Georgi, "Who is the True Prophet?" in *Paul and Empire*, 36-46, here 36. Despite his genius, Horace "has come in for his share of censure for the want of restraint that characterizes his efforts to honour Augustus in his poetry" (J. F. D'Alton, *Horace and his Age: A Study in Historical Background* [London: Longmans, Green, 1917] 115). Whether Horace personally believed in the divinity of Augustus is a matter of some debate. See L. P. Wilkinson, *Horace & His Lyric Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946) 30-31.

[66] Horace, *Odes* 4.2.37-40 (Bennett, LCL):

quo nihil maius meliusque terris
fata donavere bonique divi,
nec dabunt, quamvis redeant in aurum
tempora priscum.

[67] Horace, *Odes* 1.12.51-57 (Bennett, LCL):

. . . . . *tu secundo*
Caesare regnes.
ille seu Parthos Latio imminentis
egerit iusto domitos triumpho,

This ode helped to win for Horace the commission of composing the *Carmen saeculare* in 17 B.C.E. to commemorate the secular games, "the official jubilee for the founding of the republic."[68] In this work Horace, by reference to Aeneas recognizes the divine origin of Augustus and prays for blessings upon his reign: "And [grant] what the glorious scion of Anchises and of Venus, with sacrifice of milk-white steers, entreats of you, that he may obtain, triumphant o'er the warring foe, but generous to the fallen!"[69] The message here is unmistakable: "the miraculous heroic past [found in the *Aeneid*] has become present epiphany in the activity of Augustus."[70] Likewise, the occasion for its publication, the secular games, was hardly accidental. According to Georgi, "since Octavian understood himself as the savior of the republic, a celebration of the turn (revolution) of a *saeculum* as centenary of the initial republic fit well into his program. He had the secular games, long overdue, very carefully prepared."[71] The trust placed in Horace is repaid repeatedly through his works, where Augustus' rule was portrayed as "a manifestation of order overcoming chaos, of reason replacing brute force. Viewed in this light, the new regime acquired more than a temporal dignity."[72]

The immense popularity of these two poets played no small part in the propagation of the Augustan Ideology among the educated classes, at the very least. How far their works penetrated into the public consciousness, either directly or indirectly, is less clear. Given the very low literacy rates in the ancient world, direct, personal knowledge of Virgil

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sive subiectos Orientis orae
Seras et Indos,
te minor latum reget aequos orbem.

[68] D'Alton, *Horace and his Age*, 37. The prominence of this assignment and its role in securing Horace's fame cannot be overstated: "The success of the Carmen and the world-wide publicity of the occasion gave him a new lease on life" (Wilkinson, *Horace*, 17).

[69] Horace, *Carm. saec.* 49-52 (Bennett, LCL):

quaeque vos bobus veneratur albis
clarus Anchisae Venerisque sanguis,
impetret, bellante prior, iacentem
lenis in hostem.

[70] Georgi, "Who is the True Prophet?" 42.

[71] Ibid., 37.

[72] Eduard Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957) 354.

was certainly not common in the empire as a whole. Still, a widespread if second-hand popular knowledge of Virgil's account of Aeneas' arrival in Latium and his sacrifice there (*Aen.* 8.18-85) is presupposed by its portrayal on the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, perhaps the greatest monument to Augustus erected during his lifetime.[73] Likewise, some have seen a more subtle influence of Virgil on the Imperial Cult in his references to Julius Caesar's star (e.g., *Aen.* 8.81; *Ecl.* 9.47), which helps to account for the numerous appearances of astronomical themes in the Imperial Cult, especially its temples.[74] Horace's *Carmen saeculare*, on account of its special function in the secular games, certainly received a wider audience than any work of Virgil. Nevertheless, because of his supreme artistry and the role of his epic in the formation of the public consciousness during Augustus' reign, Virgil, and not Horace, remains the defining poet of the Augustan Ideology. With only slight exaggeration, W. R. Johnson claims that "it would be more nearly correct to say that the *Aeneid* created the Augustan Age than to say that the Augustan Age produced, in any way, the *Aeneid*."[75]

Propertius, on the other hand, reveals the darker side of the Augustan Ideology, with its unparalleled concentration of power in one person and its sweeping reorganization of traditional Roman society. His *Elegies* ostensibly represents a cycle of poems tracing out his doomed love for a consort (Cynthia) with whom marriage was forbidden by the *Lex Papia Poppea* of Augustus in 9 C.E. While Augustus' military triumphs are duly praised (e.g., 2.10.13-18; 4.6.22-23) and prayers are offered for his health in order to secure Rome's triumph (3.11.50) in the poem, the poet "was unable to adopt a more heroic style" like Virgil's.[76] Rather, the underlying theme of Propertius' poem is the precarious position of the individual under Augustus and his ideology. Stahl identifies this theme as "a poet's difficulty in raising his unique personal voice in a publicly uniform and therefore homogenizing environment. Historically speaking, the problem touches upon the situation of a non-

[73] H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 B.C. to 68 A.D.* (New York: Praeger, 1959) 360-61. See also Ramage, *Nature and Pupose*, 65.

[74] Cerfaux and Tondriau, *Le Culte des Souverains*, 334.

[75] Johnson, *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's Aeneid* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976) 136.

[76] Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 248.

conformist under the rule of Emperor Augustus, telling of the individual's attempts to preserve his identity by carefully voicing even his most intimate personal concerns."[77]

Here we find expressed the essential problem of the Augustan Ideology for the first century. Augustus truly had saved Rome from destruction in the civil wars and had brought a real measure of peace and order to the empire; for these accomplishments the Augustan Ideology duly exalted him. Because of its ubiquity, hegemony within Roman society, and its penetration into personal life, the Augustan Ideology typified the "Caesarism" that Oswald Spengler called a "kind of government which, irrespective of any constitutional formulation that it may have, is in its inward self a return to thorough formlessness."[78] The price paid for peace was, in the minds of many (if not on their tongues), perhaps too great. If even so educated and well-placed an artist as Propertius could only indirectly lament its influence, how much greater must have been the tensions and difficulties of a dissident group such as the Johannine community.

Summary

Clearly, any attempt to understand the Roman context of the Fourth Gospel must begin with a study of the Augustan Ideology. Through it, the most important strands of the individual's life (family, status, religion, a personal sense of security) all found a common point of reference and were able to be brought together under a larger and surprisingly comprehensive view of the world above and around them and their place in it. Many loose ends remained, of course, and probably very few people reflected in a systematic fashion—or at all—on how these different aspects of their lives were held together through the person of the emperor. The hallmark of any successful ideology, though, is its invisibility to those who live under it. It is only when one steps outside of a meaning-system, when, like Jesus, one "overcomes the world"

[77] Stahl, *Propertius: "Love" and "War": Individual and State under Augustus* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985) 3.

[78] Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (2 vols.; trans. Charles Frances Atkinson; New York: Knopf, 1926-28) 2. 431.

(John 16:33), that it can become an object of reflection and criticism. When the Johannine community stepped outside of this ideology (and outside the legally privileged realm of the synagogue as well), it unavoidably placed itself against the Roman world in which it lived. It is to the results of this conflict, namely, the danger of persecution by Roman authorities experienced by the Johannine community, that we now turn.

Excommunication and Persecution: Two Challenges to Johannine Christianity

The synagogue was a "legally privileged realm" within Roman society, as noted in Chapter One of this study, which discussed the Johannine community's conflict with and eventual expulsion from the synagogue. The effect of being declared ἀποσυνάγωγος on the Johannine community would have been traumatic, not just psychologically—through the loss of the familiar setting and meaning system of the synagogue—but also legally—since Jews enjoyed a privileged legal status within the Empire. Jews in Roman society were exempt from many of the practices of the Augustan Ideology. Thus, once they were removed from the synagogue, Jewish members of the Johannine community would have lost this special status. By first examining the "socio-legal" status of the Imperial Cult in first century society, we can begin to understand how and why being made ἀποσυνάγωγος would have placed the Johannine community at odds not only with the Jews but with Rome as well. The community, whatever their disagreements with traditional Jewish beliefs, would still have considered the practices of the Augustan Ideology anathema and could not have participated in them. This, then, was the dilemma facing Johannine Christians when the Gospel was composed: while no longer Jews either legally or theologically, neither were they Romans.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to determine the exact status of the Johannine Christians with respect both to the Roman government and to the synagogue: in both contexts, their position was "extra-legal." The Johannine community, in the eyes of the Romans, was not a legal entity but a vague association of people who could not be accurately numbered. Likewise, for those Johannine Christians who had been made

ἀποσυνάγωγος, the synagogue would no longer make official notice of them. Being neither Jew nor Roman, the Johannine community fell between the cracks in first-century society, leaving no records that would give us direct access to their legal and religious situation. Therefore, as with the reconstructed history of the Johannine community of J. Louis Martyn and Raymond E. Brown, our study here is necessarily inferential and our primary sources scanty.

(a) The "Socio-legal" Status of the Imperial Cult

We are able here to leave to one side the *auctoritas* of the emperor and the "literary-mythic" aspects of the Augustan Ideology, not because they were unimportant—they were perhaps even more important than the Imperial Cult—but because they were by definition ideological and not obligatory in the strictest sense of the term. Only in the Imperial Cult do we find a legally constituted and manifestly public forum within which participation or non-participation could be easily recognized and punished. As Adolf Deissmann notes, "it is not always possible . . . to distinguish between the Imperial *cult* and the Imperial *law*; the Imperial cult was in fact a portion of the law of the constitution."[79] The question is, what were the precise legal demands and social expectations that the Imperial Cult placed upon members of the Empire?

The Imperial Cult relied far more upon social pressure rather than legal sanction for its success, and it is doubtful whether there was any specific legal requirement that all members of society attend or participate in the Imperial Cult, at least during the first century.[80] Duncan Fishwick argues that attendance was widespread, "though we have no idea of the numbers in attendance."[81] We do know that "governors, orators,

[79] Deissmann, *Light*, 343.

[80] In the third century, "as part of the first case of a *general* persecution of Christians, the emperor Decius ordered the whole population of the empire to sacrifice to the gods" (ed. Mary Beard et al., *Religions of Rome* [2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998] 1. 239). It is possible that various provinces or cities may have established similar laws earlier, though there is no record of such. In any case, no such universal legislation exists from the first century.

[81] Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 2. 1. 529. Friesen (*Twice Neokoros*, 164) makes a similar point about the multiple attractions of the Imperial Cult and the likelihood of its general popularity:

prostitutes, craftsmen, and tinkers" all flocked to cities where the festivals were held, and "special tax breaks were given to peddlers and craftsmen selling wares."[82] In light of these economic benefits, it is not surprising that the general public's "presence at festivals of the living emperor at least will certainly have been encouraged."[83] Because of its entertainment value, as much as for any religious content the Imperial Cult might have, encouragement to attend was probably unnecessary for many people. Moreover, since "the different sections of the municipal populace would have been represented whenever or wherever the town paid cult to the emperor," the absence of members of the Johannine community might have been noted by authorities.[84]

Complete avoidance of these ceremonies would have been difficult anyway, if for no other reason than their scale and their place in the public calendar: "Processions with the carrying of imperial likenesses—a practice ingrained in Roman cult—will have marked the major imperial occasions of the year in the Latin west, very much as they did in the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Both at the provincial level and at the municipal level such public demonstrations must have been factors contributing significantly to social cohesion and imperial unanimity."[85] The importance of this social function alone would have justified the financial and political capital expended on the Imperial Cult by local authorities, and the extensive control that they frequently exercised over its performance.[86]

> If there is little direct evidence for the affect of the Cult of the Sebastoi [i.e., the Imperial Cult] on the general populace, a few broad inferences can be drawn. There were many aspects of the cult which would have appealed to many inhabitants of the region. The cult symbolized significant facets of life in Roman Asia in the late first century CE: the benefits of imperial authority, gratitude towards and dependence upon the emperors, the ordering of cities of the province, and the role of the elites in the mediation of imperial influence. The Cult of the Sebastoi likewise provided regular opportunities for entertainment, travel, social intercourse, and extra economic activity.

[82] Thompson, *Book of Revelation*, 161. Thompson here cites Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 35.15.

[83] Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 2. 1. 529.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 2. 1. 536.

[86] For instance, "in Narbo, the authorities collected money to pay for a particularly expensive kind of offering on behalf of the emperor—the taurobolium, quite often made by cities, not by individuals, in Gaul—and determined the type and calendar of sacri-

As for the degree of participation attendance entailed, specifics are hard to come by but a few facts can be ascertained. In general, "at the provincial level the performance of rites was essentially the responsibility of the high priest with his assistants," although "on certain occasions, however, there is clear evidence that the ordinary man was drawn in."[87] But any "lay" involvement in the official rites performed by the high priest was uncommon. As with most religious practices, participation was probably much more extensive than it was intensive among the general populace:

> As for participation by the individual, . . . in principle everyone was expected to take part but all that was required was to wear festive attire, notably crowns, and to hang the doors of one's home with laurels and lamps. . . . Above all, formal participation did not, as a rule, impose any obligation to perform rites; individuals were free to pay cult or not as they chose. In practice it seems clear that everyone did join in, even the elite, to some of whom the emperor cult might appear laughable or offensive.[88]

Whether it was mandatory or not (and this may have varied from place to place and time to time), the social pressure to participate in the Imperial Cult, at least during the major festivals, was probably great. As Alföldy writes,

> In the cult of the emperor, however, practically everybody was involved. This is true in a double sense. Spatially, the ruler-cult was carried out at Rome as well as in all the towns of Italy and the provinces, and even in private houses. Socially, it was spread through all classes and groups. The *fratres Arvales* and the *collegia* of *sodales Augustales*, *sodales Flaviales*, etc. represented the participation of the senatorial aristocracy in this cult; the *flamines* or *sacerdotes provinciae*, coming from the equestrian order and other local elites, represented the whole population of their

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fices for the *numen* of the emperor" (Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* [New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1981] 105).

[87] Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 2. 1. 528, 530.

[88] Ibid., 2. 1. 529-30.

> province; the *flamines* of the towns represented the elites of the *municipia* and *coloniae*; the *seviri Augustales* the 'second class' of the urban population, especially rich freedmen; the *magistri* and the *ministri* of the *Lares Augustorum* etc. were freedmen and slaves.[89]

Given the popularity of and broad demographic representation at the festivals, systematic avoidance of them would have been noticeable, to say the least.[90]

More serious still, the "official" character of these ceremonies made any public resistance to them appear as anti-social and a potential threat to the public order deserving the notice of the Roman authorities. Christ concedes as much: "At the same time, the systematic merger of politics and religion was characteristic of the new religious system. The cult worship of the *princeps* became an act of political loyalty."[91] It was not by accident that "willingness to perform sacrifice came to be used as a key test of Christians during the persecutions" of the second and third centuries.[92] For instance, Price points out the existence of four references to demands made of Christian martyrs for sacrifices "to the emperor" (*Acta Pionii* 8; Eusebius, *Mart. Pal.* (Syriac) 1.1, 54; *Hist. eccl.* 7.15)—in two of these instance as a "lesser alternative after the Christian had refused to sacrifice to the gods."[93] Later, under the Decian persecution in the third century, the Romans actually issued documents which certified the offering of sacrifices, though this "formaliziation" of the persecution process probably did not occur before then.[94] While there is no direct evidence tracing this "test of loyalty" back to the first century, the refusal of Christians to participate in the sacrifices by the second century would comport with an early origin to the "loyalty test"

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[89] Alföldy, "Subject and Ruler," 255.

[90] Outside the festivals, the Imperial Cult would also have made itself felt in numerous, smaller ways. For instance, "sacrifices might be made to imperial statues by those entering marriage," and "statues were placed on grave sites" (Thompson, *Book of Revelation*, 163). Exactly how normal or normative these secondary manifestations of the Imperial Cult were cannot be determined with any precision.

[91] Christ, *Romans*, 161.

[92] Beard et al., *Religions of Rome*, 2. 164.

[93] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 221.

[94] Beard et al., *Religions of Rome*, 2. 165.

practiced by Roman authorities. We do know that, as early as the second decade of the second century, Pliny the Younger imposed a similar test on Christians called before him, and punished with death those who would not supplicate the gods.[95] Adela Yarbro Collins suggests that "such tests were probably used somewhat earlier as well."[96]

Cassidy has argued that John 21 refers, in part at least, to public trials and political loyalty-tests similar to those imposed by Pliny a generation later. In John 21:18-19 Jesus says to Peter: "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go. (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.)" While certainly preserving an earlier tradition and referring primarily to Peter, Cassidy suggests that the lesson of this passage is for all those charged with pastoral responsibility for the community: "Might not John's readers have accordingly reflected that some of those called to pastoral service within the Christian community could also be called to martyrdom? This consideration possesses a two-edged significance; it has implications for the communities themselves and for those individuals serving in pastoral capacities within Christian communities."[97] If Richard J. Cassidy is correct—and I think he is—it would indicate that at least the leaders of the Johannine community may have had a certain prominence that could attract Roman attention, or even perhaps a duty to place themselves in harm's way for the good of the community. However, based on the text of the Gospel it is difficult to infer more about either the visibility of the Johannine church in first-century society or its internal church order.[98]

The objection has been made that, "for Christians, then, sacrificing itself was at stake, not obeisance to the emperor."[99] While it may be true that Christians "were happy to pray for the state but not to sacrifice for, let alone to, the emperor," failure to perform such sacrifices was still

[95] Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96-97. For the exact powers of the local Roman authorities in the first and early second centuries, including their ability to try and condemn to death non-citizens, see Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 1-23.

[96] Yarbro Collins, "The Apocalypse (Revelation)," *NJBC*, 996-1016, here 1009.

[97] Cassidy, *New Perspective*, 78.

[98] For a discussion of church order in the Gospel, see Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 190-222.

[99] Thompson, *Book of Revelation*, 164.

considered a *de facto* defiance of the emperor subject to severe punishment, even death. The importance of the Imperial Cult for integrating the far-flung empire of the first century and reinforcing the position of the emperor within this empire made it a central element in the Augustan Ideology. Through it, the ideas of the *auctoritas* of the emperor and the destiny of Rome were able to be disseminated throughout every level of Roman society in a form both recognizable and powerfully persuasive. Given this context, it is not surprising that rejection of the Imperial Cult was seen not as a private decision but as a public and political act of rebellion against Rome, or that its punishment took place within the context of the cult. Hence, "the martyrdom of Christians . . . took place in the context of games linked with imperial festivals or put on by imperial priests. It was in the amphitheater that condemned prisoners were decapitated, burned alive or exposed to the beasts, so the setting was appropriate for the punishment of those who refused to pay cult to the gods of Rome, one aspect of which was the cult of the emperor."[100] The most notorious persecutions took place, of course, in the second and third centuries. However, the Neronian persecution of Christians in Rome in 64 C.E. indicates what Christian communities potentially faced already in the first century.[101]

(b) "Made Ἀποσυνάγωγος": The Legal Status of Johannine Christians Under Rome

To understand the position of the Johannine community vis-à-vis the Imperial Cult, it is first necessary to determine the status of the Jews under Roman rule, since the community (as was shown in Chapter One) originated within the synagogue and was in conflict with it during the latter half of the first century—and certainly during the time of the Gospel's composition. Jews within the empire enjoyed a *de facto*, if not a *de iure*, exemption from participation in the Imperial Cult. As a result, they were normally spared from the persecutions that Christians endured in the first three centuries.[102]

[100] Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 2. 1. 577.

[101] Michael Grant, *The World of Rome* (Cleveland/New York: World, 1960) 186-87.

[102] Of course, the Jews were frequently persecuted, but not for their religion *per se* but rather for their political activities (especially in Palestine) or out of a general popu-

The exact status of the Jewish privilege is a matter of some debate. Koester denies that the Jews had any special legal status whatsoever within the empire:

> Members of the diaspora communities . . . were never officially exempted from participation in the public cults of the city or state. The idea that Judaism was a *religio licita*, an officially licensed religion, is a modern construction meant to draw a comparison with unprivileged early Christianity; this concept did not exist in antiquity, either in the Hellenistic or Roman period. . . . No one could possibly receive permission to scorn the deities of the city or the gods of the Roman people. It is no accident that no document is preserved that grants such a right; the claims of Jewish authors in this respect are purely apologetic. In actual practice, it was simply ignored when Jews (or Christians) failed to show up at official religious celebrations. Such nonobservance was only noticed when there were other reasons for a rise in anti-Jewish feelings among residents of the city.[103]

However, Koester is almost certainly mistaken in this claim. Wayne Meeks points out that in "the famous letter of Claudius in A.D. 41, a papyrus copy of which was discovered in the first decade of this century, . . . [he] reconfirmed the Jews' rights to continue their ancestral practices without molestation."[104] These would presumably include, for instance, the Jewish law forbidding the display of pagan images within the Temple, which had always been respected by Roman governors; the exception was Pilate, who provoked a major riot recorded by Josephus (*J.W.* 2.169-74; *Ant.* 18.55-59).[105] These privileges were not restricted to

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lar antipathy towards them as a distinct and exclusive group within Roman society. Judaism itself was never put under a ban by the authorities, as was the case with Christianity.

[103] Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, 215-16.

[104] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983) 38. The text referred to by Meeks is PLond. 1912 (= *CPJ* no. 153).

[105] See Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation* (SNTSMS 100; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 79-85. Caligula's plan to erect a statue of himself in the Temple, which certainly would have provoked even greater unrest, was prevented only by his assassination in early 41 C.E. See Grant, *The Jews in the Roman World* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973) 120-32.

Palestine. Josephus also records "a series of edicts by Roman officials guaranteeing the rights of the Jews of Ephesus and exempting from military service those of them who were Roman citizens."[106]

That these privileges explicitly included a Jewish substitution for the Imperial Cult is also clear. E. Mary Smallwood, in a discussion of the province of Judea in the early first century, writes:

> It went without saying that the Jews of the new province enjoyed *the privileges of religious liberty guaranteed for the Diaspora by Julius Caesar and Augustus* [emphasis added]. The right to practice Judaism carried with it automatically the privilege of exemption from participation in the imperial cult. It was most probably at the time of the formation of the province, when the normal provincial oath of loyalty to the emperor will have been instituted, that a substitute for the direct worship of the emperor as a deity was devised for the Jews: in accordance with their Law, which countenanced prayer and sacrifice for temporal overlords, sacrifices of two lambs and a bull were to be offered daily in the Temple to God for the emperor's well-being, to replace the offering of sacrifices to the emperor himself normal in other provinces.[107]

We do not know whether Christians were ever, at least in the first century, given a similar option.

This is not to claim, of course, that first-century Judaism was monolithic—it most certainly was not—or that there was a single, simple Roman test for whether or not someone was Jewish and thereby able to claim exemption from sacrifice. The cultural and religious diversity of first-century Judaism has been well documented, especially for the Diaspora following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.[108] Likewise,

[106] Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 44. He cites here Josephus, *Ant.* 14.223-30, 234, 237-40.

[107] E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (2d ed.; Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2001) 147-48. For a fuller discussion of the privileges and limited sovereignty of the Jews in Judaea, see Hannah M. Cotton, "Jewish Jurisdiction under Roman Rule," in *Zwischen den Reichen: Neues Testament und Römische Herrschaft* (ed. Michael Labahn and Jürgen Zangenberg; Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 36; Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2002) 13-28.

[108] See, e.g., Tessa Rajak, "The Jewish community and its boundaries," in *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (ed. Judith Lieu et al.; London/New York: Routledge, 1992) 9-28.

the official tolerance granted Jews by the Romans need not always or even usually have been a matter of universal legislation or edict. Rather, it is likely that most Jewish privileges of the first century—at least those which did not directly impact the administration of the empire, such as those governing military service or the Temple-tax—were adopted piecemeal as local circumstances required.[109] At the same time, Judaism was hardly amorphous and the requirements for being considered Jewish could not have been completely subjective. The fact that Christians left the synagogue shows that the Jews had a clear understanding of their self-identity.

The self-understanding of what it meant to be Jewish was intimately connected to membership in the synagogue, "especially outside Palestine," D. M. Smith argues, where "synagogue membership [would] be the decisive mark of Jewish identity."[110] On a practical level, the continuation of the Jerusalem temple tax and its confiscation by the Emperor Vespasian after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. would have required administrative rules among the Romans which conformed more or less to the current Jewish self-understanding.[111] At the very

[109] Rajak ("Was there a Roman Charter for the Jews?" in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* [Leiden/Boston/Cologne: Brill, 2001] 301-34, here 331), arguing against the assumption of a universal (and universally respected) special status for Jews in the empire, notes that, "as far as the evidence of the decrees [of Jewish privilege] goes, it looks rather as though in many cases they became necessary only because of deliberately engineered attacks on Jewish practices." Cf. the argument for a special Jewish status in Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 128-43.

[110] Smith, "Contribution," 15. Rajak ("Jewish Community," 10-11) writes: "Diaspora communities were grouped around the institution of the *synagōgē*, also called *proseuchē*, of which there would be more than one in a large city—eleven are attested for Rome in the catacomb epitaphs. Inscriptions reveal synagogue officials to have been prominent figures. But the word *synagōgē*, which means assembly, unlike *proseuchē*, which means prayer, carries an important ambiguity, and we cannot always tell whether a building is intended, or merely the particular community." The distinction, it should be noted, would not affect the question of membership criteria that are important for my discussion.

[111] Smallwood (*Jews under Roman Rule*, 345) makes clear the implications of this confiscation both for the Roman authorities and Jews in the empire:

> In 71-72 [Vespasian] appropriated the half-shekle Temple-tax for the Roman exchequer by converting it into a tax ostensibly for the benefit of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, the god who in the Roman victory had triumphed over the God of Israel, and at the same time extending its incidence to cover both sexes from the age of three to (probably) the sixty-second birthday in

least, payment of the tax would be required for member of the synagogue by the synagogue authorities, which itself would be a criterion for membership. This is also important for determining when the Johannine community might have become recognizable to the Romans as a distinct group. Expulsion from the synagogue would remove someone from the tax-roll, which would simplify the task of a Roman inquisitor.

Once they were declared ἀποσυνάγωγος Johannine Christians would presumably have ceased payment of the "Jewish tax." They would have lost their legal exemption from the Imperial Cult and may have presented a new set of problems to the Roman authorities. Indeed, these problems may have arisen even earlier, depending on the exact meaning of ἀποσυνάγωγος: it may be a technical legal term which actually *effected* the expulsion of Johannine Christians from the synagogue, or only a descriptive term (possibly devised by Christians) referring to an expulsion that was accomplished separately. Preferring the former interpretation, Martyn argues that the term refers to "the formal separation of the disciples of Jesus from the synagogue" when declared by "an authoritative body within Judaism."[112] While admitting that it may have had a less formal and merely descriptive meaning, Martyn still argues that "one would expect it to bear some relation to known Jewish methods of discipline. Thus when one seeks to identify the term historically, the practice of the ban is the most obvious candidate."[113] BDAG, however, takes the second interpretation, defining it as "expelled from the

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the case of women and perhaps for life in the case of men. The effect of this measure was that Judaism became a *religio licita* only for those people who declared their allegiance by paying the *didrachmon*, soon to be known as the "Jewish Tax", to Rome, and thus purchasing the privilege of worshiping Yahweh and contracting out of the imperial cult by a subscription to Jupiter.

[112] Martyn, *History and Theology*, 39. Martyn (ibid.) concedes that this interpretation is necessarily conjectural, since "the adjective ἀποσυνάγωγος has not yet been found in *any* document other than the Fourth Gospel."

[113] Ibid., 43. Martyn draws here on the claim of James Hope Moulton and George Milligan (*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930] 70) that ἀποσυνάγωγος is "just the sort of word that would have to be coined for use in the Jewish community". This conclusion would not be appreciably weakened if it was coined by Christians who had been placed under the ban—a possibility that Martyn (*History and Theology*, 43) considers.

synagogue, excluded, put under a curse/ban."[114] Under either interpretation, and whether it was coined by Jews or Christians, ἀποσυνάγωγος points to the official separation from the synagogue of the Johannine community.[115]

One important result of this separation may have been the persecution of Christians by leaders of the synagogue. Brown cites the deaths of Stephen (Acts 7:58-60), James son of Zebedee (Acts 12:2-3), and of James the brother of the Lord (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9) as examples, and the theological justification given for such killings (*m. Sanh.* 9:6).[116] Martyn points to Acts 13:34-50, where "in Pisidian Antioch the Jews persuade the city authorities 'to drive Paul and Barnabas out of their district.'"[117] This occurred at a time when Paul was still subject to direct punishment from the Jewish authorities themselves (2 Cor 11:24): "Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews forty lashes less one."[118]

It may be a similar persecution by Roman proxy that Justin Martyr refers to in his complaint against the Jews: "Though you have slain Christ, you do not repent; but you hate and murder us also . . . as often as you get the authority."[119] Brown draws out the implications of such examples more fully:

> Now we know that in the second century the 'killing' of Christians by Jews was most often not a direct action but by way of denunciation to the Romans. Judaism was a tolerated religion, and in principle the Jews were not forced to take part in public worship. As long as Christians were considered Jews, there was no specific

[114] BDAG, s.v. "ἀποσυνάγωγος."

[115] An interesting question, which cannot be pursued here, is at what point and on what basis the Jews within the synagogue felt it necessary to expel the Johannine Christians. However, this may always remain an unanswered question since, as Robert Dornan (*Birth of a Worldview: Early Christianity in its Jewish and Pagan Context* [Oxford/San Francisco: Worldview Press, 1995] 55) writes, "unfortunately, we have almost no evidence to document the Jews' understanding of what it meant to be a Jew in the cities of the Mediterranean world." Moreover, the sociological category of deviance which would underlie any attempted reconstruction is itself a matter of some debate. See John M. G. Barclay, "Deviance and Apostasy: Some Applications of Deviance Theory to First-Century Judaism and Christianity," in *Modelling Early Christianity*, 114-27.

[116] Brown, *Community*, 42.

[117] Martyn, *History and Theology*, 54.

[118] Ibid., 47.

[119] Justin Martyr, *Trypho* 133.6; 95.4, cited and translated in Brown, *Community*, 42-43.

> legal reason for the Romans to bother them. But once the synagogues expelled them and it was made clear that they were no longer Jews, their failure to adhere to pagan customs and to participate in emperor worship created legal problems. Second-century Christians accused Jews of betraying them to Roman inquisitors. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 13:1 says that "the Jews were extremely zealous, *as is their wont*, in preparing material for burning the saint," a burning that was carried out by a Roman pro-consul *ca.* A.D. 155.[120]

Such Christian views of Jewish incitement was not solely a second-century phenomenon. Smallwood, following the claims of Melito of Sardis and Clement of Rome, suggests that the Neronian persecution—which predates the production of the Fourth Gospel by a generation—"was engineered by the Jews in an attempt to enlist the might of Rome as their ally in their conflict with the new sect which they feared and hated."[121] Even taking full account of the anti-Jewish polemic in many of these second-century Christian complaints and disavowing the subsequent use of them to justify Christian anti-Semitism, there is probably some historical basis lying behind them. While this view remains hypothetical, Brown suggests that "indirect participation in executions carried out through expulsion from the synagogues may have been part of the background for John's charges against 'the Jews.'"[122]

Nor did the Johannine community's problems with Roman authority end with their formerly Jewish members. The Johannine community was placed in a double bind by the presence in it not only of Jews but also of Gentiles who presumably had previously participated in the Imperial Cult. The presence of Gentiles within or around the religious community was hardly unique to Christians, of course. However, the

[120] Ibid., 43.

[121] Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 218-19. Smallwood cites Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.25.1-5; Clement, *1 Clem.* 5-6.

[122] Brown, *Community*, 43. Of course, not all instances of Roman persecution need be explained by Jewish incitement, even when Jews were directly involved. It could often simply be a case of Rome protecting a recognized group against an unrecognized opponent in order to avoid more serious trouble later. As Smallwood (*Jews under Roman Rule*, 219) notes, "The antagonism between Judaism and the religion which threatened to undermine it cannot have escaped the notice of the power committed to the protection of Judaism."

strictness of the Johannine Christians about their continued participation in pagan practices set them apart from the Jews. For example, Jewish proselytes were often less rigid in the demands placed upon a Gentile "God-fearer," who could frequently meet the Jewish demand of monotheism "with singularly little action . . . by the avowal that the divinities he worshiped were all aspects of the single divine nature."[123] Likewise, "some Jewish texts encouraged further worship at the Jewish Shrine, but this was rarely felt to be incompatible for Gentiles with continued pagan practices."[124] On the other hand, what Price calls the Christian "transvaluation of sacrifice" prevented any such laissez-faire attitude towards paganism, even if distinctions were made by the Romans between sacrifice for the emperor and sacrifice to him.[125]

Since the actual degree of participation demanded of average Romans and its popularity has been discussed above, it is not necessary to repeat it here. It should be clear, though, that any decision to recuse oneself from participation in the Imperial Cult, especially after previous involvement, carried potential dangers. On an individual if not a communal level, avoidance of the Imperial Cult may have posed a threat to these Gentile Christians. The persecution of Roman Christians by Nero in 64 was a constant reminder of the threat of Roman power to the Christians of the late first century. Assuming the correctness of these considerations, it may be expected that the Fourth Gospel contains a polemic aimed not only against the Jews who incited persecution of the Johannine community, but also against the Roman authorities and the Imperial Cult that served as their instruments.

Conclusion

As has been shown in the first part of this chapter, to be a Roman of the first century was to exist within a world whose focal point, religious, political, and historical, was the Emperor. In contrast, to be a Christian was potentially to set oneself outside the world of the Roman world of the first century, ideologically if not politically. To recognize Christ as

[123] Martin Goodman, "Jewish Proselytizing in the First Century," in *Jews Among Pagans and Christians*, 53-78, here 73.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 222.

Deus et dominus was, by definition, not to recognize Domitian as such. And this, in turn, was to deny the ideological foundations of the political order established during the Augustan Principate, which had restored peace, stability and a relative prosperity to the Mediterranean after the disastrous civil wars of the first century B.C.E. Christianity, like Judaism before it, made a special claim on the believer that took precedence over all previous commitments. Unlike the Jews, though, it was not until the fourth century that Christians found a place within Roman society that would shelter them from its power. Thus, conversion to Johannine Christianity meant that the Roman imperial *Weltanschauung* had to be rejected and replaced, however inchoately at first, by a new understanding of the world which was radically incommensurable with their previous beliefs and the beliefs of the Roman world about them. That persecution would have followed upon such a decision is hardly surprising, since by its refusal to accede to the Augustan Ideology the Johannine community effectively challenged the authority of the entire social order of the first century.

The crucifixion of Jesus at the hands of Roman authorities and the belief in his subsequent resurrection and ascension into heaven counterpose the main contestants vying for divine authority. To defend the divinity and authority of Jesus for believers, it was necessary to delimit the divinity and authority of the emperor. In order to do so, it was necessary to make their respective authorities in some way commensurable, and thus a common language of power was required to present this conflict. Since there was no well developed christological language already available, the only remaining option was to conceptualize and portray Jesus in the language of power familiar to Christians, namely that of the emperor. In Chapter Three we will examine the language of the Fourth Gospel and see how, in some of its key christological terms, it echoes the language of the Augustan Ideology in its attempt to express a distinctively Johannine Christology.

CHAPTER 3

Rethinking the Language of Power: John's Christological Vocabulary in Its Roman Context

In his magisterial study of the effects of Victorian literary culture on the experience of trench warfare in the First World War, Paul Fussell discusses how John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* provided a template used by British soldiers to interpret both the experience of war and its role in their private spiritual histories. He writes: "It would be impossible to count the number of times 'the Slough of Despond' is invoked as the only adequate designation for churned-up mud morasses pummeled by icy rain and heavy shells. It becomes one of the inevitable clichés of memory. So does 'the Valley of the Shadow of Death,' where, in Bunyan, 'lay blood, bones, ashes, and mangled bodies of men, even of Pilgrims that had gone this way formerly.'"[1] This process of literary transference, Fussell argues, is not simply an affectation of the educated elites or a result of the dearth of literariness among the lower classes. Rather,

> it is a case illustrating E. D. Hirsch's theory of the way new meanings get proposed: "No one would invent or understand a new type of meaning unless he were capable of perceiving analogies and making novel subsumptions under previously known types. . . . By an imaginative leap the unknown is assimilated to the known, and something genuinely new is realized." The "new type of meaning"

[1] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) 139.

> is that of the new industrialized mass trench warfare. The "previously known types" are the motifs and images of popular romance. The "something genuinely new" is the significant memories of the war we have been focusing on, where *significant* means, in fact, *artistic*. Because Dante has never really been domesticated in Protestant England, when an English sensibility looks for traditional images of waste and horror and loss and fear, it turns not to the *Inferno* but to *Pilgrim's Progress*.[2]

In short, the traumatic events of the First World War, despite their incommensurability with all previous civilian life, became intelligible and capable of communication by being cast into existing literary models. A reader lacking familiarity with this precedent literature misses not only occasional literary echoes and allusions, but also the larger meaning-system that made possible the remembrance and description of the war.

A similar interpretative process arguably occurred within the Johannine community during the first century in its attempts to formulate and express the belief in Jesus which defined it and separated it from both Judaism and the surrounding Roman world. In this case, the "new type of meaning" behind the Fourth Gospel is the belief that the human being Jesus was also the divine Christ who offered salvation to his believers. The "something genuinely new" was the distinctive high Christology of the Johannine community, which found its first and fullest expression in the Fourth Gospel. And, I will suggest in this chapter, at least some of the "previously known types" were drawn from the Augustan Ideology, which placed the Roman emperors at the center of religious and political life throughout the Mediterranean world and, in particular, Asia Minor during the first century. As such, the Augustan Ideology provided a universal currency for discussions of power and divinity.

The history of the Johannine community sketched in Chapter One sets the Fourth Gospel apart from most other NT texts (the book of Revelation being a notable exception) in the degree of contact and potential conflict that it might have experienced with the Augustan Ide-

[2] Ibid., 139. Fussell here quotes from E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1967) 105. For a reliable overview of Hirsch's theory and his later amendments to it regarding the place of authorial intent in textual interpretation, see Edgar V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader: An Introduction to Literary Theory* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 94-100.

ology. Accordingly, this engagement may have fostered a dialectical relationship between Augustan and Johannine concepts and language about divinity. As the community left its original home in the synagogue and turned to the surrounding world for converts, a new vocabulary to proclaim its belief in Christ would have been acutely needed. As Raymond E. Brown writes:

> An opening towards the Gentiles (with or without a geographic move) and the need to interpret Johannine thought to them involved much more than the occasional parenthetic note explaining Hebrew or Aramaic terms. It would have been necessary to adapt Johannine language so that it could appeal more widely. . . . [W]hile phrases like "Son of God" and "I AM" have a distinctive Old Testament and intertestamental background, their usage in John could be appreciated by pagan Greeks. If this is true, the existence of "parallels" to Johannine terminology and thought in various bodies of Hellenistic and pagan literature may become more intelligible.[3]

In other words, the movement of the Johannine community into the Gentile world demanded not merely the translation but to a considerable extent the recreation of their distinctive Christology in the manner described by Hirsch. That the Johannine community possessed the first two components of Hirsch's theory, the "new type of meaning" and the "something genuinely new," is evident. The uniqueness of the Fourth Gospel and the faith that motivated its composition are sufficient proof. However, the claim that John's Gospel generated this new type of meaning via the ideology and language of imperial Rome remains to be demonstrated.

Perhaps the best way to identify this influence is by searching for lexical parallels between the Augustan Ideology and the Christology of the Fourth Gospel. The most likely entry point for any widespread socio-religious phenomenon into the thought world of the Johannine community would be in the common words and phrases that they employed and modified in their attempts to express their newfound belief in the

[3] Brown, *Community*, 57.

divine Christ. By locating and analyzing some of these parallels, the influence of the Augustan Ideology upon the authors of the Fourth Gospel can begin to be understood.

This chapter takes the first step in understanding the role of the Augustan Ideology on Johannine thought, namely, the establishment of a lexical basis for comparison. Having already sketched out in Chapters One and Two the first-century religious and socio-political context of the Fourth Gospel, in this chapter I will examine three of the most important concepts relating to the person of Christ in the gospel: ἐξουσία; ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου; and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. While questions of definition and translation cannot be entirely avoided, the goal here is not to give an exhaustive discussion of the theological meaning of any of these concepts as they appear in John. Rather, I will only compare and contrast the Johannine usage of each of these with the Greek and Latin vocabulary of the Augustan Ideology (and with other NT occurrences where relevant) in order to situate them within the immediate social and religious context of the Gospel. The Augustan Ideology served as the backdrop before which—or, in the case of the Johannine community, *against* which—daily life was lived across first-century Asia Minor. Some of the key terms in the Johannine Christology clearly echo this backdrop.[4] Only when it has been shown how the christological language of the Fourth Gospel would have evoked in the minds of its readers a wide range of religious and political concepts drawn from the Augustan Ideology can we turn to the more complex and "theological" attempts at exegesis in Chapters Four and Five.

Ἐξουσία, "Power"

For exegetes, theologians, and even moderately educated Christian believers, it is common knowledge that the Gospel's overriding concern

[4] I generally will speak here of Johannine Christology rather than the "presentation of Jesus" in John. Smith ("Presentation of Jesus," 175) argues that "Christology is a second-order language about Jesus. John's Gospel is a first order presentation of Jesus." However, I would argue that—especially in the Fourth Gospel—the portrait of Jesus is controlled by a pre-understanding of him which can only be considered christological. Therefore, it might be better to distinguish the, for lack of a better term, "experiential" Christology of the evangelist from the "biblical" one of post-biblical theologians.

lies with Christology. It reshaped numerous OT and early Christian terms and ideas to produce a unique portrait of Jesus. As has been argued above, its Roman context subtly shaped and colored the Gospel's thought, and gave new resonances and connotations to its christological terms that they do not possess elsewhere in the NT. A prime example of this process, I suggest, can be found in his use of the term ἐξουσία. While it appears in John only eight times (1:12; 5:27; twice in 10:18; 17:2; twice in 19:10; 19:11), these occurrences mark some key texts in the revelation and defense of Jesus' divinity and authority: the Prologue (1:12), confrontations with the Jewish authorities over Jesus' work and person (5:27; 10:18); the Farewell Discourse in which Jesus calls upon the Father to glorify him (17:2); and the confrontation with Pilate during the Passion Narrative (19:10-11).[5] In each of these contexts, Jesus' supremacy is either being challenged by those outside the community (10:18; 19:10-11), or being affirmed by Jesus (17:2) or the text of the Gospel (1:12). If the purpose of the Gospel was indeed that the reader "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31), the evangelist could hardly have chosen more prominent places to employ this term.

The proper English translation of ἐξουσία has occasioned considerable controversy among scholars and translators, who have normally alternated between "power," "authority" and "right" as the best rendering. BDAG provides little firm guidance here, offering as possible translations "right," "capability," "authority," "absolute power," and "ruling" or "official power" for the different attestations of the word in John.[6] This ambiguity is reflected also in the most widely accepted English translations, which show no standard translation for the eight occurrences of ἐξουσία in the Fourth Gospel.[7]

This diversity in translation reflects an uncertainty about the exact meaning of a term whose importance has not been adequately recognized and whose meaning within the Roman context of the first century

[5] All word-counts, unless otherwise noted, are based on Alfred Schmoller, *Handkonkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament* (8th ed., 3d rev. printing; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1989).

[6] BDAG, s.v. "ἐξουσία."

[7] The most common rendering (though one not systematically employed) is "power." The RSV uses it for every occurrence except 5:27, and the NAB for all except 17:2, where both substitute "authority." The REB uses both translations, as well as "made sovereign" for 17:2, while the NIV uses "right," "authority," and "power" variously.

has too often been overlooked by scholars.[8] Normally such a diverse rendering of a single term would not raise any great concern, since translators are expected to be especially sensitive both to Greek context and connotation and to the rather different and difficult demands of contemporary English usage. In this instance, though, I would suggest that the word choice of the evangelist was quite intentional and uniform in meaning.

This uniformity of meaning is suggested by the fact that even a cursory examination of the respective semantic domains reveals that Greek offers almost as many synonyms as does English for these words. This makes it seem unlikely that the consistent usage of ἐξουσία was coincidental.[9] Less likely still is the suggestion that the evangelist was so limited in his vocabulary that he was unaware of the choices available, including such common terms as δύναμις or ἰσχύς. Furthermore, the lack of consensus among translators on any single rendering does not suggest John was playing off an ambiguity or double entendre in his

[8] The emphasis put a century ago by Edwin A. Abbott (*Johannine Vocabulary: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with Those of the Three* [London: Adam and Charles Black, 1905]) on ἐξουσία for John's theology has unfortunately been ignored by most commentators, including, surprisingly, Cassidy (*Perspective*), who focused specifically on the Roman context of the Fourth Gospel.

[9] For instance, δύναμις (which appears approximately 118 times and spread across all the New Testament texts except John, the Johannine Epistles, Philemon, 1 Timothy and Jude) and ἰσχύς (which appears ten times in the NT, in Mark, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Peter, and Revelation) are perfectly workable synonyms for ἐξουσία understood as "power" in the sense of "ability to do something." Ἐπιταγή (appearing six times in the Pauline and Pastoral Epistles) or ἐπιτροπή (once, in Acts 26:12), while less common words than ἐξουσία, could still substitute for "authority." The sense of "right" is a more difficult case, given its distinctive modern connotations, but options exist even here. Γέρας (BDAG: "material exhibition of esteem, prize, reward, in our lit. given by God"), while not occuring in the NT but in LXX, Josephus, 1 Clement, and the Apocalypse of Peter, could probably substitute without significant loss of meaning. Moreover, τιμή (in the sense of "a manifestation of honor, esteem" [BDAG]) appears 29 times in the NT, predominantly in the Pauline and Catholic Epistles and Revelation but also once (i.e., 4:44) in John, and might even be more appropriate than ἐξουσία in some places (e.g., 1:12). The semantic domains and verbals equivalences used here are drawn from Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988]), with the exception of γέρας. Its equivalency is drawn from BDAG and S. C. Woodhouse, *English-Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1910) s.v. "γέρας." While the topic cannot be further developed here, it is worth noting that many of these synonyms also carried a political-imperial connotation during the first century. See Deissmann, *Light*, 363 n. 9.

choice. Rather, the evangelist evidently selected ἐξουσία intentionally because it best captured the meaning that he wished to convey. What was that meaning?

As shown in Chapter Two, within the context of the Gospel, namely, Roman-ruled Asia Minor in the first century, the Augustan ideology carefully distinguished between "power" and "authority," namely, in regard to the *auctoritas* and the *potestas* of the emperor. Thus, the technical political distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas* made by Augustus in the *Res Gestae* extended to the Greek translations of the text found in Ancyra and Apollonia. The passage quoted above (*Res Gestae* 34.3: "I excelled all in influence [*auctoritate*], although I possessed no more official power [*potestatis*] than others who were my colleagues") was translated ἀξιώμ[α]τι πάντων διήνεγκα, ἐξουσίας δὲ οὐδέν τι πλεῖον ἔσχον τῶν συναρξάντων μοι.[10] If the decision by this translator to render *potestas* as ἐξουσία and *auctoritas* as ἀξίωμα is not arbitrary but reflects a technical distinction, this may shed a great deal of light on John's choice of ἐξουσία in the gospel, rather than another common word such as δύναμις.

In fact, did ἀξίωμα have a special technical sense that contrasted with ἐξουσία? With the exception of the *Res Gestae*, tracing this technical usage in the Imperial Cult is difficult at best, as the lexical evidence of the Imperial Cult in the rest of Asia Minor does not address these categories, at least not in conjunction with one another. Of course, ἐξουσία is mentioned countless times in connection with the Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors, but ἀξίωμα (as well as *auctoritas* in the Latin West) is almost entirely absent from the literary and inscriptional evidence for the Imperial Cult.[11] However, there is a simple explanation for this omission: ἀξίωμα or *auctoritas* refers to a set of practices and arrangements that is not publicly expressed or documented. Thus, in the case

[10] The brackets in any quotes from the *Res Gestae* have been supplied by the editor of the critical text, Hans Volkmann, upon whose work Ehrenberg and Jones based their edition. The text survives in the most complete form at "the temple of 'Rome and Augustus' at Ancyra, the ancient capital of Galatia, the modern Ankara; here were inscribed on the walls of the temple the Latin text and a Greek paraphrase of it" (Brunt and Moore, *Achievements*, 1). The word "paraphrase" here is too weak, since all other editors treat it as a translation. There are two other surviving sources, a Latin version from Pisidian Antioch and a Greek one from Apollonia, the capital of Pisidia.

[11] Δημοκριτὴ ἐξουσία was the normal translation of *tribunicia potestas*, which was claimed by every emperor and constituted a standard title in public inscriptions.

of living emperors especially, any reference to what Galinsky calls the "para- or supraconstitutional terminology" of *auctoritas* would be unwise if not actually dangerous. Rather, the preference was to recognize publicly only those powers "officially" granted under the constitution. For Agrippa to publicly state in Acts 26:32 that he would not exercise his *potestas* to release Paul without the consent of the emperor would not only demean both men but would also be legally untenable.[12] Given this consideration, the scarcity of ἀξίωμα in the evidence of the Imperial Cult is not particularly relevant for determining its technical meaning in the first century.

The decision to render *auctoritas* as ἀξίωμα was not unreasonable on a lexical level, despite the term's limited usage in Koine Greek (it does not appear in the New Testament and is not discussed in BDAG).[13] In Classical Greek the meaning of ἀξίωμα corresponded well with what the Romans would come to call *auctoritas*. LSJ defines it primarily as "that of which one is thought worthy, an honour," secondly as "hon-

[12] Two other, supporting explanations also come to mind: (1) In the case of deceased emperors, since *auctoritas* or ἀξίωμα dies with its possessor any posthumous reference to it would make little sense. Notably, Augustus' public reference to his *auctoritas* or ἀξίωμα was autobiographical and limited to a single instance. (In a similar vein, while Lyndon Johnson was famous for his ability to persuade and direct legislators, his public legacy remains only those official functions [the enactment of legislation, the issuance of executive orders, the command of the military] which the constitution allotted to him as president—there are no statues of him "arm-twisting" anyone.); (2) Since Augustus integrated into the cult various virtues such as *virtus*, *pietas*, *iustitia*, and *clementia* (which, because of their brevity, were given special prominence on Roman coinage)—and all these expressed the "personal excellence" which underlies *auctoritas*—the actual mention of it would be superfluous. For a discussion of the role of the virtues in justifying Augustus' *auctoritas*, see Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 1. 1. 109; Cerfaux and Tondriau, *Le Culte des Souverains*, 403-4; Brent, *Imperial Cult*, 64-67.

[13] In an email to the author dated 17 July 2003, Dr. William McCarthy of The Catholic University of America pointed out that Cassius Dio [55.3.5] claims *auctoritas* cannot be properly expressed in Greek. However, by the second century ἀξίωμα began to be used in the Apostolic and Patristic writings to refer to the holders of defined offices or positions in the Church, especially that of bishop. For this later development, see G. W. H. Lampe (*A Patristic Greek Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1961] s.v. "ἀξίωμα") who cites Clement of Rome, *Const. Ap.* 8.1.22, and Titus of Bostra's (fragmentary) *Commentary on Luke* 22:3. The more general meaning of "dignity, rank, office," though in this instance used in connection with the episcopacy, is given by A. E. Sophocles (*Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* [New York: Frederick Ungar, 1887] s.v "ἀξίωμα"), citing the fourth-century *Can. Ap.* 76. Given the primarily pastoral rather than juridical understanding of the bishop's functions in the early church, the choice here is quite logical, even though—or because—it reverses the standard Roman usage.

our, reputation," and only thirdly as "rank, position."[14] Since the Greek translation of the *Res Gestae* was almost certainly a local product, its vocabulary likely reflects the accepted usage of these terms in Asia Minor and not a mistranslation by a non-native Greek- or Latin-speaking author.[15] Moreover, no translator would choose an uncommon word such as ἀξίωμα and not ἐπιταγή or ἐπιτροπή, which were both common enough words in the NT (in contrast to ἀξίωμα), unless it was recognized as a technical term for "(imperial) authority."[16]

This presumably technical usage of ἀξίωμα in conjunction with ἐξουσία in the *Res Gestae* might also explain John's predilection for the former because of the importance of this document in the establishment and development of the Imperial Cult, especially in Asia Minor. Not only was the *Res Gestae* read at Augustus' funeral and inscribed upon bronze tablets (no longer extant) at his tomb in Rome; it was also publicly posted in the Roman temples of several major cities in central Asia Minor. At the request of several cities in Asia Minor, Augustus had authorized the Imperial Cult as early as 29 B.C.E. in conjunction with that of *Roma*.[17] Thus, by the time the gospel was composed, there was a century of tradition and development for the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor. Indeed, no other region of the empire had so many temples and altars dedicated to it. Simon R. F. Price lists a total of 45 imperial altars and 75 imperial temples in Asia Minor at the beginning of the second century C.E., concentrated in the central and western regions but also found as far east as northern Cappadocia, as well as in eastern Pisidia.[18]

At the same time, the display of the *Res Gestae* at temples and altars other than the three extant in Galatia and the bordering regions of Pisidia is unknown, and so it may not have been the practice in these

[14] LSJ, s.v. "ἀξίωμα."

[15] Brunt and Moore, *Achievements*, 2. They base their judgment on *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: Text Monumentis Ancyrano et Antiocheno Latinis, Ancyrano et Apolloniensi Graecis* (2d ed.; ed. J. Gagé; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960) 9-13.

[16] That ἀξίωμα refers specifically to the emperor's *auctoritas* is also clear, since the only other mention of *auctoritas* in the *Res Gestae* is to that of the Senate (*Res Gestae* 12: [*ex senatus auctoritat]e*), which is translated by a different expression entirely (δόγματι σ[υ]νκλήτου) which refers not to any informal power but rather to "a formal statement concerning rules or regulations that are to be observed" (BDAG, s.v. "δόγμα").

[17] For a full chronology of Augustus' promotion of his cult as early as 41 B.C.E., see Cerfaux and Tondriau, *Le Culte des Souverains*, 313-22. For a complete list of the titles and honors granted Augustus, see Taylor, *Divinity*, 270-87.

[18] Price, *Rituals and Power*, xvi-xxvi.

areas.[19] Galatia was the only eastern region that Augustus elevated to a province during his reign (in 25 B.C.E.), and it is possible that this region developed a unique cult because of its special relationship to Augustus.[20] On the other hand, Price argues that during this period of imperial consolidation all cultic practice, including the Imperial Cult, tended towards uniformity.[21] In addition, Augustus reorganized the province of Asia in 27 B.C.E. and made Ephesus its capital. As a result, Ephesus enjoyed a special relationship to the Imperial Cult in general and to Augustus in particular. His temple occupied the center of the Upper Square, which was redesigned during his reign. Thus the absence of any public version of the *Res Gestae* would seem unlikely.[22] Taking into account as well the importance of Antioch, Apollonius and Pisidian Antioch in the commercial and political life of the region, the assumption of at least a general familiarity with the document's contents by at least some of the cult's more educated participants also seems reasonable, regardless of the precise location of the Johannine community in Asia Minor (see Chapter One).[23]

[19] Neither Price (*Rituals and Power*) nor Fishwick (*Imperial Cult*) gives evidence of the *Res Gestae* being utilized in the rituals of the Imperial Cult, though this is not an impossibility, at least on certain festival days. The re-creation of the actual cultic rituals performed at the altar is notoriously difficult. Price (*Rituals and Power*, 207-8), whose study is necessarily limited to the "external" features of the cult such as priestly garments, procession and architecture, notes that "there is indeed only one extant prose description of any Graeco-Roman sacrifice." Fishwick (*Imperial Cult*, 2. 1. 475) makes a similar complaint about the West. However, the very fact that the calendar was populated by—indeed, ordered around—numerous imperial feasts (ibid., 2. 1. 482-501) increases the probability of the *Res Gestae*'s usage in at least some ceremonies.

[20] The ambiguity of the term "Galatia," covering as it does both a Roman jurisdiction and an ethnic area which includes Pisidian Antioch and Apollonia, also arises when determining the recipients and date of Paul's epistle to the Galatians. See Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. ed.; trans. Howard Clark Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 295-96. For a more complete history of Roman rule in this province, see David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the End of the Third Century after Christ* (2 vols.; 1950; repr., New York: Arno, 1975) 1. 453-67.

[21] Price (*Rituals and Power*, 56) writes: "This greater consolidation of cults in the imperial period is part of a more extensive change in the relationship between the honours and the ruler. The replacement of piecemeal and isolated cults by a new density and organization of cults helped to strengthen the idea that the cults themselves had real constitutive power."

[22] For a diagram of the Upper Square in second-century C.E. Ephesus, see ibid., 139.

[23] Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 158. Unfortunately, we have no evidence for or against the circulation of the *Res Gestae* in written form, so the "literary" presence of the work in Asia Minor outside the context of the Imperial Cult cannot be determined. Given that

As we have seen, the pairing and contrasting of ἀξίωμα and ἐξουσία in Roman political thought, if not always in texts, was commonplace in the first century. Thus the employment of one in a political context would have been evocative of the other, even for so common and multivalent a term as ἐξουσία. This rhetorical device of "paired terms" was common in the ancient world. Another instance of "paired-terms," also related to the Augustan Ideology, can be found in Virgil (*Aen.* 1.1), *Arma virumque cano* ("Arms and the man I sing"), which is evoked by Ovid in his *Amores* 1.1, *Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam edere* ("Arms, and the violent deeds of war, I was making ready to sound forth").[24] William McCarthy, claiming that this "sort of silent summoning . . . is exceedingly common," argues that "when Ovid begins the *Amores* with *arma gravi numero* he plays on and the audience/reader is supposed to think of the beginning of Vergil's *Aeneid* (*Arma virumque cano*). 'Arms' and 'man' are thus linked . . . , but Ovid swaps out 'man' because his purpose is not to write another epic."[25] Similarly, John did not intend to memorialize another Caesar. Assuming the evangelist was writing for a community alienated from and feeling threatened by the surrounding Roman society, there would be no better way to challenge the most pervasive form of secular power in Asia Minor, ἀξίωμα, than by constantly invoking its contrasting pair, ἐξουσία.[26] When we examine the Fourth Gospel with the distinction between ἐξουσία and ἀξίωμα in mind, it becomes evident why John would want to evoke this comparison in the minds of his readers.

In John ἐξουσία is a manifestly christocentric concept. All the references to ἐξουσία immediately involve the person of Jesus: to the power

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its existence is not evidenced in any other literature of the period—indeed, its existence was unknown in the Medieval West until its discovery by a Dutch scholar in 1555—this is improbable. For a short history of its rediscovery and reconstruction by modern scholars, see the introduction to the *Res Gestae* in *Velleius Paterculus: Compendium of Roman History; Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (ed. Frederick W. Shipley; LCL: Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1924) 332-38.

[24] Virgil = (Fairclough and Gould, LCL); Ovid = (Showerman, LCL).

[25] Dr. William McCarthy, email to author dated 17 July 2003.

[26] Similarly, in contemporary American English, the common word "House" also has a particular political meaning connected with the Senate. If the president were to lavishly praise the "House" while never mentioning the Senate, this denotative absence would not necessarily correspond to a connotative one, and might well be used to implicitly condemn the Senate.

he gives (1:12); to the power he is given (5:27; 10:18; 17:2); and to the power which is wrongly claimed over and then denied by him (19:10-11). If ἐξουσία was intended by John to mean "authority" in the technical sense described above, major problems would immediately arise for his Christology and soteriology since in the first century, as has been shown above, "authority" was not a transferable possession. Jesus could not give his followers the "authority" to become children of God (1:12), nor could the Father give him "authority" to execute judgment (5:27), to lay down his life or take it up again (10:18), or "authority" over all flesh (17:2), nor could any "authority" be given to Pilate from above (19:11). All these appearances of ἐξουσία involve the handing of something to someone else, an action that is inconceivable if ἐξουσία means "authority." Likewise, Pilate could never release Jesus or crucify him on his own "authority" (19:10), since that ability was clearly given him by his office and not by his personal influence.

Furthermore, John's Christology could not use ἐξουσία to mean "authority" in this strictly political sense for the simple reason that, as explained above, in the first century "authority" functioned as a "two-way street" or a "system of exhange" between patrons and clients. Thus, of necessity it involved the consent and active participation of both parties, and thereby constituted a *de facto* limitation on the exercise of power. Such an understanding of Jesus' ἐξουσία stands radically at odds with a high Christology of Jesus as the pre-existent λόγος (1:1): he is the one through whom all things were made and without whom not anything was made that was made (1:3), one with the Father (10:30), and the one over whom the ruler of this world has nothing (14:30: ἐν ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἔχει οὐδεν). Note the absence of the term ἐξουσία in 14:30, which is entirely appropriate since ἐξουσία (= "power" in the Johannine sense) cannot be attributed at all to "the Ruler of this world."[27] *TDNT* describes this type of power thus: "ἐξουσία signifies the absolute possibility of action which is proper to God, who cannot be asked concerning the relationship of power and legality in this ἐξουσία, since he is the source of both."[28]

[27] Schackenburg (*Saint John*, 3. 87) discusses the possible rabbinic parallels for this expression, but also notes its closest Johannine parallel in 19:11 (where Pilate's power over Christ is challenged by him).

[28] Werner Foerester, "ἐξουσία," *TDNT*, 2. 566-67.

Neither could John employ ἐξουσία as "authority" in the associated but somewhat looser sense of "the merit or weight of an opinion or of a person holding that opinion." Nowhere in the gospel is there even a hint that Jesus' ἐξουσία rests on his virtues, wisdom or learning, as would be the case with Caesar (at least in the Augustan Ideology), the Jewish authorities, or, more distantly, some θεῖος ἀνήρ.[29] The contrast of John with the Synoptic gospels on this point is revealing. For instance, in Matt 7:29 ‖ Mark 1:22 ‖ Luke 4:32, the crowd is astonished that Jesus teaches as one with ἐξουσία, generally (and properly) rendered as "authority" because of the stated contrast with the Scribes (in Matthew and Mark) rather than a political figure. However, the closest Johannine parallel omits the use of ἐξουσία entirely. Jesus instead says: γνώσεται περὶ τῆς διδαχῆς πότερον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν ἢ ἐγὼ ἀπ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ λαλῶ (7:17: "He shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own" [RSV, slightly emended]). And the onlookers respond: οὐδέποτε ἐλάλησεν ὕυτως ἄνθρωπος (7:46: "No one ever spoke like this man"). Notably absent from the Johannine account of Jesus's "authority" as a teacher is ἐξουσία, the very word used by all the Synoptic writers.[30]

This specific and highly connotative use of ἐξουσία by John, though, would work, as it would evoke in the minds of the readers the contrasting term in the pair, ἀξίωμα. In other words, unless the members of the Johannine community knew a "previously known type" such as the

[29] On the relationship of the concept of a θεῖος ἀνήρ to the development of the Imperial Cult, see Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, 164-65, 280-81.

[30] We can assume that John's non-use of ἐξουσία was intentional for two reasons. First, John's method of circumlocution here does not at all reflect common usage in Koine Greek. As Barrett (*St. John*, 318) notes, the expression in 7:17 involves "a classical construction [which] occurs here only in the New Testament. The alternatives are absolute; the extreme humility of the Johannine Christ is to be noted. He does not speak as a θεῖος ἀνήρ with authority of his own; his humility and obedience allow him to speak with the authority of God." Second, the ἀπ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ construction (whereby in 7:46 Jesus speaks "on his own" rather than "by his own authority") is unique to John among the gospels, occurring three other times in the gospel (5:30; 8:28; 14:10) and with minor variations three more times (7:18; 16:13: ἀφ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ; 12:49: ἐξ ἐμαυτοῦ). While John stands alone among the gospel writers in having Jesus use ἐμαυτοῦ to refer to himself (a full sixteen times), the absence of ἐξουσία even in 7:46 points to a conscious decision on the part of the evangelist to avoid the term in these verses (J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* [2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928] 1. 246).

ἐξουσία of the emperor that contrasted with his ἀξίωμα, they would not understand how the ἐξουσία of Jesus was essentially different from and superior to that of Caesar. I have tried to show that, in fact, the concepts of ἐξουσία and ἀξίωμα were paired together in first-century Asia Minor by the realities of Roman governance and by the omnipresent Imperial Cult, which structured and presented these realities within a comprehensive religio-political ideology. Unless these competing and incompatible understandings of ἐξουσία are recognized in interpreting the Fourth Gospel, it is impossible to appreciate properly the portrait of Jesus that John offers to his readers. When the evidence is taken as a whole, it may be reasonably concluded that for John ἐξουσία means "power" and does not refer to "authority," at least as those concepts were understood at the time. Thus, the absence of ἀξίωμα from John's Gospel is not an accident, as is possibly the case in the other NT writings. Rather, it is an important part of his christological strategy in the Gospel: *Jesus' ἐξουσία, unlike that of the emperor, does not depend at all upon, and differs entirely from, ἀξίωμα.*

In contrast, the absence of ἀξίωμα from the other NT texts that frequently employ ἐξουσία does not appear to indicate a similar strategy. While the Synoptic authors use ἐξουσία more frequently than John, they greatly vary in their connotations.[31] The Matthean occurrences center mainly around the "authority" of Jesus (and by extension the church) as opposed to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and do not evidence any special concern with secular authority.[32] On the other hand, Mark and Luke are less ecclesial and more cosmological in their concerns: "Mark and Luke agree, though not *verbatim*, in associating their evangelistic statements about out Lord's 'authority' with authority over devils, i.e., the power of casting out unclean spirits."[33] Even where the Synoptic

[31] The figures are: ten times in Matthew, ten times in Mark, and twenty-three times in Luke-Acts (sixteen and seven times, respectively). All but one of the Markan occurrences (13:34) are duplicated in Matthew, Luke or both.

[32] For a further discussion of Matthew's concern with the ἐξουσία of the church and its relationship to rabbinic tradition, see Richard H. Hiers, "'Binding' and 'Loosing': The Matthean Authorizations," *JBL* 104 (1985) 233-50.

[33] Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, 90. This does not necessarily make the discussion apolitical, but it does embed the political aspects of ἐξουσία into a larger cosmological framework. Howard Clark Kee (*Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977] 71) writes that, in Mark's apocalyptic world-view, "the political problems—involving both political and religious authorities—will not be

and Johannine materials overlap the most, namely in the Passion Narrative (arguably the most obvious place to deploy ἐξουσία in a political sense), the Synoptic writers uniformly do not use the word, while John employs it three times within two verses (19:10-11).[34] Unlike the contrastive use in John, the Synoptic evangelists generally harmonize secular and divine ἐξουσία, as summed up in the logion: "Render therefore to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt 22:21 || Mark 12:17 || Luke 20:25; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 17). The same holds for Paul. Although ἐξουσία does occasionally refer to Roman or secular government power (e.g., Rom 13:1), Paul normally uses ἐξουσία to refer either to his "right" of respect and support by his churches or to spiritual powers and principalities that Christians must resist (e.g., Eph 6:12).[35] In general, Paul was unconcerned about secular authorities; he even offers modest support.[36] Only in John—evidently

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resolved until the demonic and cosmic powers are brought under control. The very fact that the imagery used to depict the political powers is drawn from the cosmic mythology of the Ancient Near East—raging waters, mysterious mountains, falling stars, earthquakes—underscores the interconnection between present realities and unseen powers."

[34] See Chapter Five below. At this point, it is not necessary to take a position on the dependence or independence of John from the Synoptic gospels. Specific exegetical questions will be addressed in later chapters on a case-by-case basis. For the classic statement on Johannine independence, see Patrick Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938). For a more recent defense of the dependence-thesis, see Thomas L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origins of John's Gospel: A Source-Oriented Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 67-120.

[35] For a very controversial challenge to this traditional interpretation of Paul, see Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The background, meaning and development of the Pauline phrase* hai archai kai hai exousiai (SNTSMS 42; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 104-10.

[36] Joseph A Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 662-65. However, Paul's attitude toward secular authority may be more complex and subversive, albeit in a much more "pastoral" way as opposed to John's christological critique. Dieter Georgi (*Theocracy in Paul's Practice and Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991] 102) writes:

> Paul's treatment of the relationship of Christians to the political and legal authorities is an example of his critical imagination. The period was one of increasing political centralization, and there was a great emphasis on the ideology of Caesar's authority and power. Yet Paul, in this letter [i.e., Romans] to the citizens of the capital, never mentions the *princeps* or the special status of Rome. And in Rom. 13:1-7, he borrows a fragment of Jewish tradition from the republican period. By citing this anachronistic tradition (particularly during this time of increasing centralization), Paul gives the

because of the unique history of the community that produced it—is there an attempt to evoke a connotation of ἀξίωμα through its absence.

Arguments *ex silentio*, of course, are always difficult and should be used with caution. At the same time, when embedded in a larger narrative that justifies and extends their implications, they can also be quite illuminating. Not without a certain amount of justice, David R. Hall complains: "Arguments from silence fail to recognize one simple fact: the art of writing is the art of omission."[37] However, it is necessary to remember, too, that the art of persuasive writing is the art of *meaningful* omission, and the evangelists were concerned, above all else, with persuasion.[38] Barnabas Lindars writes: "The Gospel according to John is a book with a message. The author wants to bring the reader to the point of decision."[39] And, as any good rhetorician knows, the most effective way to bring an audience to this "point of decision" is to sharpen contrasts and eliminate alternatives and possible compromise positions in their minds. The subtext is visible from within the larger social, cultural and political situation that initially produced and received the text.

In summary, the significance of ἐξουσία for John's Christology requires a careful reading of the Fourth Gospel not simply against its Jewish background, but within its immediate cultural and political context. In this context, ἐξουσία carried not only a specific political meaning in Roman Asia Minor, but also evoked the related concept of ἀξίωμα

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passage a critical slant: he urges decentralization and undermines the ideology that supports the majesty of the state.

Dale B. Martin (*Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* [New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1990] 102) attempts to trace Paul's conception of ἐξουσία as "right" not to a political paradigm *per se* but rather to first-century master/slave relations.

[37] Hall, *The Seven Pillories of Wisdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990) 61.

[38] Hall (ibid., 63) claims that "the word 'gospel' means 'good news,' and the gospel writers were 'newsmen.' . . . The gospel writers, like media people today, had to learn the art of selective omission." But newsmen are not—or at least should not be—editorialists, but only journalists. In any case, John was much closer to the former than the latter. As he tells us clearly, "these [things] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (20:31). The goal of the gospel is *belief*, and not the objective presentation of historical events. Presumably, the contrast with the daily papers could not be greater.

[39] Lindars, *John*, 24.

which could not be attributed to Christ within the framework of the Johannine Christology. In contrast to the emperor's conditional authority, John proclaims Christ's absolute power. In light of this contrast, Edwin A. Abbot wisely chose ἐξουσία as one of the two "key words" in his research because, in his words, it "pervades the whole of the Fourth Gospel in such a way that to follow the Evangelist's use of it is to trace, in brief, the development of his doctrine as well as the methods of his style."[40]

Ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, "The Savior of the World"

Though appearing only once in the Fourth Gospel (4:42; cf. 1 John 4:14), ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου perhaps expresses the Johannine Christology more accurately and succinctly than the widely quoted John 3:16.[41] George R. Beasley-Murray calls 4:42 "a notable confession, worthy to be placed alongside the declarations about Jesus in chap. 1," while Edwyn Clement Hoskyns considers it a prime example of John's "capacity for crystallizing the meaning of Christian tradition into a short and pregnant phrase."[42] That John is in fact creative in his use of ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου is not disputed by scholars. What is disputed, though, is exactly *how* John is being theologically creative here. In Hirsch's terms, what "previously known type" is John employing here to create "something genuinely new" in first-century Christianity? Since John is not theologizing *ex nihilo*, the tradition or cultural phenomenon used in portrayal of Jesus needs to be determined.

A few scholars have attempted to explain John's use of σωτήρ in 4:42

[40] Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, 14. His other selection, πιστεύειν ('to believe' or 'to have faith in'), has little or no resonance with the Imperial Cult and can be passed over here.

[41] This is not to claim, of course, that ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου *exhausts* the content of Johannine Christology. Ernst Käsemann (*The Testament of Jesus According to John 17* [trans. Gerhard Kroedel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968] 60), properly emphasizing the role of judgment in Christ's mission against those who would focus only on the Johannine call to Christian unity, argues that neither John 3:16 nor 4:42 "adequately designate[s] the Johannine Christ."

[42] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 64; Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (ed. Francis Noel Davy; London: Faber and Faber, 1947) 248.

by reference to the LXX, where it renders the Hebrew *māšîaḥ*.[43] For instance, J. H. Bernard argues that "the title has its roots in the OT and there is no need of the hypothesis that it is imported into the NT from the pagan mysteries or from the Emperor cults."[44] However, most scholars have rejected the argument for an OT (or another Jewish) source for John in 4:42, because of the lack of any biblical or Jewish precedent for John's usage. Indeed, there is little precedent in Jewish usage at all: it is very infrequent in the LXX: "σωτήρ is not used as a term for the Messiah" (cf. Isa 62:11); and it is even rarer in later Judaism, where "σωτήρ occurs in the Apocrypha only with reference to God as the One who keeps Israel past and present from many dangers."[45] Given the paucity of evidence for a Jewish source behind this occurrence of σωτήρ, at most it can be said that "the OT passages probably provided a scriptural basis for using a title which could be understood in a wider context."[46]

Likewise, the NT occurrences of σωτήρ are not especially illuminating for the Fourth Gospel. Paul uses it only twice, both times in reference to Jesus (Phil 3:20; Eph 5:23), and these occurrences are almost certainly unknown to John.[47] Luke uses it three times to refer to Jesus (Luke 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23) and once for God (Luke 1:47). Once again, there is no consensus about possible Lukan influence on the Gospel of John.[48] Furthermore, Werner Georg Kümmel points out that the appearances in Luke 2:11 and Phil 3:20 both use it "in the Jewish sense of the

[43] Barrett, *St. John*, 244. Barrett does not, however, accept the OT as John's source (or at least his primary source) for σωτήρ here.

[44] Bernard, *St. John*, 1. 162. See also Lindars, *John*, 198.

[45] Werner Foerester and Georg Fohrer, "σωτήρ," *TDNT*, 7. 1012, 1015.

[46] Pheme Perkins, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978) 59. See also Barrett (*St. John*, 244): "It seems very probable that John's terminology is drawn from Greek sources, as is in part his doctrine of salvation, but he has behind him the Old Testament conception of, and hope for, salvation, and the primitive Christian conviction that the hope was fulfilled in Jesus. John does not hesitate, in this chapter (vv. 25f.), to represent Jesus as the Messiah of Judaism; but he insists that this term, and all others, must be understood in the widest sense."

[47] As regards Ephesians, cf. the argument of Brodie, *Quest*, 128-34.

[48] Cf. ibid., 116-20; Anton Dauer, *Johannes und Lukas* (FB 50; Würzburg: Echter, 1984); Hans-Peter Heekerens, *Die Zeichen-Quelle der johannischen Redaktion* (SBS 113: Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984)

anticipated eschatological bearer of salvation," and not as descriptions of the pre-Easter Jesus.[49] Moreover, these occurrences do not appear to reflect a pattern of calling Jesus σωτήρ in the Primitive Church.[50] This relative infrequency of σωτήρ for Jesus perhaps sprang from the association of the term with Hellenistic religion in general and the Imperial Cult in particular: "Common in the religious aspirations of the Hellenistic world, [σωτήρ] did not commend itself to the Christians as a leading title for their Lord."[51] In any case, there is no evidence of any specific Christian precedent for John 4:42.

Only after the time when the Fourth Gospel was composed—and probably not until well into the second century—does σωτήρ come into general use as a title for Jesus. The remaining appearances of σωτήρ in reference to Jesus (excluding 1 John 4:14) are all from the Pastoral and Catholic Epistles (2 Tim 1:10; Tit 1:4; 2:13; 3:4; 2 Pet 1:1; 1:11; Jude 25; cf. the references to God in 1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10). In these writings "'savior' as a title for Christ occurs in keeping with the language of Hellenism, which used this title to identify a wide range of deities, but also men and, above all, the emperor."[52] At the same time, there is no evidence of Johannine dependence upon any of these texts. Wilhelm Bousset notes that σωτήρ also enjoyed a currency among the Valentinian Gnostics of the second century, which may be another indicator of the term's popularity among Christians: "The language usage of the Valentinians who made their compromise with the church, however, also lets us infer something of the language usages at least of certain circles in the Great

[49] Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament According to Its Major Witnesses: Jesus—Paul—John* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973) 274.

[50] Dodd (*Interpretation*, 239) observes: "There is thus little ground for supposing that the primitive tradition gave the title σωτήρ to Jesus. This is somewhat surprising, since it would seem to suggest itself naturally from the etymology of the name Jesus; but it is so." For a fuller discussion of the relationship of the name Jesus (= Joshua) to the term Messiah, see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Vol. 1. The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (ABRL: New York: Doubleday, 1991) 205-8.

[51] J. L. Houlden, *A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* (BNTC; New York: Harper and Row, 1973; repr. as 2d ed., 1994) 116.

[52] Kümmel, *Introduction*, 274. I assume here (with the large majority of scholars) a late dating for Jude, 2 Peter, and the Pastoral Epistles. Cf. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) 67-85, 140-200. Even if Robinson were correct in his early dating of the NT texts, it would not affect my assumption of Johannine independence from these epistles.

Church. Thus around the middle of the second century people begin extensively to characterize Jesus as the 'Savior.'"[53]

Although Christians later adopted the term as a uniquely suitable title for Christ, the scarcity of this term in the NT is not very surprising. An examination of its range of meanings in the first century reveals that it did not have a singularly religious, much less messianic, sense. Noting the widespread use of the term in the ancient world in reference not only to political and religious figures but "as a title of honor for deserving persons" of every sort, BDAG defines σωτήρ quite broadly as "one who rescues, savior, deliverer, preserver."[54] *TDNT* recognizes an even wider range of meanings in the Hellenistic world, ranging from impersonal entities such as ships or rivers to human and divine persons. Thus, the gods are frequently called σωτῆρες, as are human physicians, philosophers, and statesmen of various importance.[55] When we compare this broad and frequently non-religious Hellenistic usage with the scattered and dissimilar uses of σωτήρ in the OT and NT, the direction that we should take to understand John 4:42 is clear.

Perhaps part of the reason for the obscurity of ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου to some scholars is that they only look at the noun, σωτήρ, in isolation from its modifier τοῦ κόσμου. The connection is possibly overlooked because only the Johannine writings attest to the precise formula ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, which would have resonated with the Augustan Ideology. Once this connection is recognized, the provenance of ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου within the Imperial Cult is evident.

While the exact expression used by John was attributed only to Hadrian in the second century, the term σωτήρ (with various combinations) was applied to every emperor from Augustus to Vespasian with the exception of Caligula, and in the early second century to both Trajan and Hadrian:[56]

[53] Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970) 311. See also Pagels, *Johannine Gospel*, 48.

[54] BDAG, s.v. "σωτήρ."

[55] Foerester and Fohrer, "σωτήρ," *TDNT*, 7. 1004-10.

[56] The data in this chart are drawn from Koester, "Savior," 667. Koester relies upon David Magie, *De romanorum iuris publici sacrique vocabulis sollemnibus in graecum sermonen conversis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1905) 67-68. Domitian preferred the title *Dominus et deus noster*.

Title	*Period*
σωτὴρ τῆς οἰκουμένης	Julius Caesar, Claudius, Hadrian
σωτὴρ τῶν Ἑλλήνων τε καὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης πάσης	Augustus
εὐεργέτης καὶ σωτὴρ τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου	Augustus, Tiberius
σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης τῆς οἰκουμένης	Nero, Titus
σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης τοῦ κόσμου	Vespasian
σωτὴρ τοῦ παντος κόσμου	Trajan
ὁ παντὸς κόσμου σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης	Trajan
σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου	Hadrian

Whether or not the term σωτήρ in any of these combinations constituted an official title has been the subject of some debate. *TDNT* makes the argument that "σωτήρ was not and did not become part of the imperial style. . . . If it had been a title for the world saviour who brings in the golden age one would have expected it to be officially adopted at least by Caligula, Nero, and Domitian."[57] This claim, however, seems to be based primarily on the fact that σωτήρ "was not reserved *exclusively* [emphasis added] for the emperor," which is hardly a decisive consideration in such matters.[58] At best, this is a semantic argument about the "official" function of the term σωτήρ, since it was associated with the emperor in the popular mind.

Augustan Ideology encouraged the popular belief in the emperor as σωτήρ. For instance, "in the famous decree of the League of Asia Cities, probably to be dated to 9 B.C., Augustus is hailed as a divinity and savior whom Divine Providence has bestowed upon mankind for its benefit and for the restoration of peace."[59] Indeed, the popular ascription of the name σωτήρ to various emperors was an increasingly common feature of life in the empire immediately before and throughout the first-century. Even before Augustus, "in an official inscription of the year

[57] Foerester and Fohrer, "σωτήρ," *TDNT*, 7. 1010.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Spears, *Princeps A Diis Electus*, 215.

48 B.C., the town council of Ephesus, in conjunction with other Greek cites of Asia, spoke of Julius Caesar, who was then dictator, as 'the God made manifest, offspring of Ares and Aphrodite, and common savior of human life (τὸν ἀπὸ Ἄρεως καὶ Ἀφροδε[ί]της θεὸν ἐπιφανῆ καὶ κοινὸν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου σωτῆρα)."[60] Nor is this the only such instance of the emperor assuming that title. Later, in the first century C.E.,

> Philo notes that Caligula had been looked upon by many as the "Saviour and Benefactor" of his people who would "pour fresh streams of blessing on Asia and Europe." . . . During the Jewish campaigns, Vespasian and Titus received enthusiastic acclamations and the people hailed them as their Saviors. At Tiberias, Vespasian and his army were met by citizens, who opened up the gates of the city to them, and acclaimed them as their Saviour and Benefactor. . . . On the return of Vespasian to Rome after the seige of Jerusalem, he was received with great enthusiasm by the people who had come out to meet him, and they called him their Benefactor and Saviour, the only person worthy to be the ruler of the Romans.[61]

That these titles with their applications were known to Jews of the first century is demonstrated by the fact that Cuss's references to Vespasian and Titus come not only from Philo, but also from Josephus.[62] The same general knowledge presumably was found also among the Jewish Christians within the Johannine Community as well as the Gentile converts.

This evidence points to the use of the title ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου in association with the emperor, if not always the Imperial Cult proper. In contrast, its absence from the OT and NT is marked. However, that John actually *intended* the reader to make such a connection with the Imperial Cult requires demonstration. Oscar Cullmann objects that, while "this application of *Soter* formally sounds quite like Hellenistic ruler worship—indeed, it sounds exactly like the formulas applied, for instance, to Hadrian . . . one can by no means decide with certainty whether the author was conscious of a parallel to these formulas, or

[60] Deissmann, *Light*, 344.
[61] Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 68-69.
[62] Josephus, *J.W.* 3.459; 4.112-13; 7.71.

whether here he was only unconsciously influenced by them."[63] More forcefully, Hoskyns denies that "the fourth Evangelist has simply borrowed a phrase from Philo or transferred to Jesus a current Hellenistic title. . . . The phrase Saviour of the world is Johannine, but its meaning belongs essentially to the earlier Christian literature."[64] However, as we have seen, there is no extant Christian literature prior to John that uses this title. Moreover, it is not feasible to follow Hoskyns' assumption that "in the Fourth Gospel [there are] no . . . literary allusions to non-biblical, non-Christian writers . . . [and] the Evangelist formulates his generalizations out of the oral and literary material with which he is familiar as a Christian."[65]

Most scholars have looked beyond the Christian and Jewish context of the Fourth Gospel to explain 4:42, even when they are reluctant to associate it specifically with the Imperial Cult. For example, Rudolf Schackenberg points out that "the title 'Saviour of the world' also played a part in Hellenism, and the evangelist probably felt that it was well adapted for the public preaching of the Gospel," though he correctly warns that "clearly, he does not wish it to be understood in the sense in which it was used in his syncretistic environment."[66] Against such a minimalist interpretation of John's choice of titles, though, Dominique Cuss argues: "Even the question as to what extent the early Christians would have been influenced in the use of the title 'σωτήρ' by its parallel usage in the imperial cult, is perhaps less significant than the fact that it was used at all, at least from the point of view of the Roman authorities. It was enough that it *was* used, and this aggravated the dispute between the authorities and the Christian community."[67] Following Cuss on this point, I would propose a polemical purpose for the phrase: the decision by John to use ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου must have been polemical for the very reason that only a polemical intent would justify the hazards of using it in the first place.

When we look to the narrative context of the title, namely, Jesus' public ministry in a *Samaritan* setting, the conclusion that ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ

[63] Cullmann, *Christology*, 244.

[64] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 248. Hoskyns here relies in part on a traditional, early dating to the Pastoral Epistles which has been generally rejected, as stated above.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Schackenburg, *Saint John*, 1. 458.

[67] Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 71.

κόσμου had a specifically imperial connotation for John's readers makes eminent sense. Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida hint at this view when, while admitting Jewish parallels, they also suggest that, "in light of the fact that Samaria was largely under the influence of Greek culture, it may be better to look for the background of this term in the Greek world, where it was applied to gods, emperors, and various heroes."[68] More explicitly, Craig Koester, recalling Josephus' accounts of the popular acclamations of Vespasian and Titus as saviors, argues that in 4:42 "the use of the full title 'Savior of the world,' rather than the more typical 'savior' or 'benefactor,' in a scene where Jesus was welcomed by the townspeople on the road and invited into the city, suggests that the passage was intended to evoke imperial connotations."[69] That the following verses (4:43-45) tell of Jesus' being welcomed as well by the Galileans continues a pattern already established by Vespasian and Titus of a σωτήρ being lauded and welcomed in each city that he visits.[70]

That John's choice of σωτήρ in 4:42 was intended to convey to the reader the Imperial Cult and not a Jewish background also seems likely when one recalls that he also had available the noun Μεσσίας, which the same chapter applies earlier to Jesus (4:25).[71] In the larger narrative context of 4:42 (especially after Jesus had identified himself with the Μεσσίας to the Samaritan woman in 4:25-26), the reiteration of this title

[68] Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (London/New York/Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1980), 133.

[69] Koester, "Savior," 667. Cassidy (*Perspective*, 103 n. 20) praises Koester's attempt to determine the meaning of this title by situating it in its narrative context:

> [Koester] rightly emphasizes that this title transcends the traditional meanings associated with Samaritan or Jewish messianic expectations and attributes a universal significance to Jesus like that of Caesar. Koester's marshalling of references from Josephus to show that the welcome and title accorded Jesus by the Samaritans contrasts effectively to the comparable welcomes and titles accorded to Vespasian and Titus at the time of the Jewish War is also an extremely useful contribution.

[70] Admittedly, the visit to Cana (4:46-54) which follows does not contain such an account, but this is probably due to its having belonged to a separate, pre-existent "σημεῖα source." For a complete discussion of the theoretical σημεῖα source, see G. Van Belle, *The Signs Source in the Fourth Gospel: Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation of the Semeia Hypothesis* (BETL 116; Louvain: Leuven University Press/Uitgeverij Peeters, 1994).

[71] For a fuller discussion of John's use of Μεσσίας and its Hebrew background, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 65. Beasley-Murray (ibid.) identifies it as a translation of the Samaritan Hebrew *taheb* (*tāwēb*).

by the Samaritan crowd would be appropriate *unless* John intended to draw upon Roman connotation of the imperial title, ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου.[72] While Jesus is truly the Μεσσίας awaited by the Jewish people, he is *more* than that: he is savior of the entire world. Accordingly, Koester writes: "When the people of Sychar heard about [Jesus telling the woman all things about herself], they put the pieces together, recognizing that what Jesus said about the woman as an *individual* fulfilled and surpassed their *national* hopes."[73]

In conclusion, the appearance of the imperial title ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου in John 4:42 was the result of an effort by the evangelist to present Jesus as surpassing the nationalist messianic expectations of Samaritans and Jews. His mission, John tells his audience, is truly universal. To supply the language to express this category, John drew on Imperial Cult. While John's Christology comports with the Jewish background of the Johannine community, in the new context of the Augustan Ideology it also adopts the idioms of the Imperial Cult, which would have confronted members of the community. In borrowing from it, though, John challenges its presuppositions:

> The cult of Christ goes forth into the world of the Mediterranean and soon displays the endeavour to reserve for Christ words already in use for worship in that world, words that had been transferred to the deified emperors (or had perhaps even been newly invented in emperor worship). Thus there arises a polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ, which makes itself felt where ancient words derived by Christianity from the treasury of the Septuagint and the Gospels happen to coincide with solemn concepts of the Imperial cult which sounded the same or similar.[74]

[72] Such a "universalist" reading of σωτήρ becomes even more compelling—and more firmly planted in a specifically Roman context—when we focus on the modifier τοῦ κόσμου and how it was understood in Roman society: "The [Roman] State is summed up in 'The World.' As Bishop Westcott says, 'In the Emperor the World found a personal embodiment and claimed Divine honour'" (William M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* [New York/London: Putnam's, 1893] 304). Ramsay quotes here from B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John: the Greek Text, with Notes and Essays* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886) 255.

[73] Koester, "Savior," 675.

[74] Deissmann, *Light*, 342.

This polemic was presumably operating on a more complex theological and narrative level (as the Samaritan context of 4:42 makes clear). Nonetheless, John's use of ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου is clear at the lexical level. As is the case with ἐξουσία, attention to the Roman context of John's vocabulary does not merely nuance our understanding of his Christology, it deepens it considerably.

Ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, "The Son of God"

The centrality, if not the precise meaning, of the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in Johannine Christology is manifest in the stated purpose of the Gospel that the reader "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31). However, any discussion of possible Roman influence on John's use of the christological title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ faces a number of challenges that do not apply to ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου and ἐξουσία. Unlike ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, which is unique to the Johannine literature in the Bible, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ occurs numerous times throughout the NT and occasionally in the OT as well. And, while ἐξουσία seems to have a specific meaning and connotation in John lacking in other NT texts, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ has at least some overlap in meaning with its other NT occurrences, despite whatever special nuances it may manifest in the Fourth Gospel. Moreover, it is impossible to do more here than indicate briefly the similarities and dissimilarities in the use of this title in John's Gospel and other scriptural texts. Fortunately, our purposes do not demand an exhaustive study of the range of meanings that the OT and NT gives to this title. Rather, this study will attempt only to sketch out how John's use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεου as a messianic title stands apart from other occurrences of the phrase in the Bible, and then to see how this distinctive Johannine usage would have evoked and challenged the meaning of this title within the Imperial Cult.

Hanz Conzelmann points out that "the historical origin of the title Son of God, unlike that of Messiah, is obscure."[75] Certainly, in the Jewish background to John, there is little evidence for use of the expression "Son of God" as a special, messianic title—as opposed, for example, to

[75] Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1969) 76.

the more general notion of a king being called God's son (e.g., 2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:7; 89:26), where "the connection with the historical monarchy rules out a Messianic interpretation of these verses," or to a general concept of the people of Israel as "sons of God" (e.g., Exod 4:22 [LXX]: υἱὸς πρωτότοκός μου; *Pss. Sol.* 17:27: υἱοὶ θεοῦ).[76] Josephus never uses the title, while Philo uses it only metaphorically (e.g., inner spiritual laughter is called "son of God" in *Mut.* 131) or morally (e.g., the doer of good is "God's son" in *Spec.* 1.318).[77] Even in Palestinian Judaism, where political unrest and eschatological expectation made the title more popular, "the OT promises in which the royal anointed one is called God's son . . . were used with caution and not adduced without explanation."[78] Moreover, E. P. Sanders notes, "in a Jewish context 'Son of God' does not mean 'more than human.' All Jews were 'Sons of God' or even the (collective) 'Son of God.'"[79] Given the very different understanding of the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in Greco-Roman religion (see below), not to mention its later Christian use, it is not surprising that "Judaism in pre-Christian times obviously avoided employing the title 'Son of God' in order to ward off misunderstanding of the term in the non-Jewish world. This Jewish reservation naturally became all the stronger when Christians began to apply this title 'Son of God' to Jesus of Nazareth."[80]

[76] Peter Wulfing von Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 349, 354. Cf. Conzelmann (*Outline*, 76), who argues that the application of the title to kings makes it "therefore synonymous with Messiah."

[77] Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 355.

[78] Ibid., 8. 361-62. Martitz points out that "the title 'Son of God' is not used in the Dead Sea Scrolls either except in OT quotations" (e.g., the reference to 2 Sam 7:14 in 4Q Flor. 14). Reginald H. Fuller (*The Foundations of New Testament Christology* [New York: Scribner, 1965] 32) takes this citation as evidence that "'son of God' was indeed used as a Messianic title in pre-Christian Judaism." Fuller (ibid., 33) also points out that in Palestinian Judaism the high priest was called "son of God," although "it is . . . most unlikely that this usage should be considered as a source for the Christian use of Son of God as a title for Jesus." For more recent discussions of the occurrences of this title in the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially in reference to Palestinian Judaism, see Fitzmyer, "The Palestinian Background of 'Son of God' as a Title for Jesus," in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts. Essays in Honor of Lars Hartman* (ed. T. Fornberg and D. Hellholm; Oslo/Copenhagen/Boston: Scandanavian University Press, 1995) 567-77.

[79] Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993) 161.

[80] Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 362. The same is true of later Jewish usage. William Manson (*Jesus the Messiah: The Synoptic Tradition of the Revelation of God in Christ:*

The title is attested first in Christian literature in Paul, who uses ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ four times (Rom 1:3; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13) and ὁ υἱός twice (1 Cor 15:28; 1 Thess 1:10). The notion of Jesus' divine sonship was a central one in Paul's theology, but whether and in what sense Paul's employment of the title is original remains unclear.[81] In any case, we may contrast Paul's clear preference for the equally early title κύριος, which appears, according to Vincent Taylor, 103 times by itself and fifty-nine times in other combinations in the Pauline corpus. This difference puts into perspective the relative importance of the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ for understanding Paul's theology.[82] But, whatever the christological assumptions behind Paul's use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, its relevance to our study is quite limited, since John presumably was not dependent upon it. Much work has recently been done on the influence of the Augustan Ideology on some of the key concepts of Pauline theology (e.g., faith-

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With Special Reference to Form-Criticism [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1943] 106) notes that, "in the Talmud, . . . the Messiah is named Son of God only when an Old Testament passage, understood to be Messianic, makes use of that appellative."

[81] If, as Lucien Cerfaux (*Christ in the Theology of Saint Paul* [trans. Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker; New York: Herder and Herder, 1966] 452) suggests, "most of the contexts in which the expression 'Son of God' appears were provided for Paul by previous Christian tradition," the very primitiveness of these traditions would naturally suggest a similar Jewish and Messianic meaning for the title. However, Boussett (*Kyrios Christos*, 207) argues that, while it is possible and even likely that "with the designation of Jesus as the υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ Paul reached back to an older messianic title, . . . in any case with him it receives a new imprint which has nothing more to do with Jewish messianology. In Paul the Son of God appears as a supraterrestial being who stands in the closest metaphysical connection with God." But whether Paul in fact intended "Son of God" to express such a high Christology is doubtful. Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 233-34) warns that "though Paul implies by the title a significant relationship [between Jesus and the Father], one should be reluctant to load it with all the metaphysical connotation of later patristic writers. Although Paul never speaks of Jesus as an incarnate Son (cf. John 1:14-18), his use of *huios* may imply some sort of preexistent filiation." Barrett (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [BNTC; New York: Harper and Row, 1957] 19) denies even this implication: Jesus "was *born* as Son of David, *appointed* Son of God. We have no grounds for taking any other than the natural view, namely, that the birth preceded the appointment." Of course, these questions over the "height" and "breadth" of Paul's Christology are beyond the scope of this study. For further discussion of the topic, see, Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology," *NJBC*, 1388-1402.

[82] This Pauline preference for κύριος is significant for understanding primitive Christology: "'Lord' in its various combinations was by choice and preference the habitual usage of primitive Christianity both early and late. Christians in general knew that Christ was 'the Son of God', but they preferred to call him 'Lord'" (Vincent Taylor, *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* [New York: St. Martin's, 1959] 148).

fulness, peace, grace), but no argument has been made linking Paul's use of this title with the Imperial Cult.[83] Given these facts, we may leave the Pauline appearances of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ aside without additional comment.

When we turn to the Synoptic Gospels, the frequency and pattern of use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is quite different, with the expression occurring some twenty times in reference to Jesus (nine in Matthew, five in Mark, and six in Luke).[84] Despite some important differences, there is a fundamental similarity of reference among these appearances.[85] For Mark, "the title Son of God expresses the mystery of Jesus as the One sent by God in a higher sense than any of the prophets . . . in contrast to a Christology which sees Jesus primarily as a miracle-worker."[86] Sharing this Markan lack of the Hellenistic concept of a θεῖος ἀνήρ, "Matthew takes it further [than Mark] when he places Jesus' teaching and healing in Galilee . . . under the word of salvation to those who dwell in the land and shadow of death. . . . Thus the miracles here are no longer the manifestation of the θεῖος ἀνήρ, but of his mercy and lowliness. The fundamental rejection of the Hellenistic picture of the miracle-worker

[83] Georgi, *Theocracy*, 84-88. See also Koester, "Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians," in *Paul and Empire*, 158-66; Neil Elliott, "The Anti-Imperial Message of the Cross," in idem, 167-83. While Georgi (*Theocracy*, 87) argues that, in general, "Paul's gospel must be understood as competing with the gospel of the Caesars," Cerfaux (*Christ in the Theology of Saint Paul*, 456-57) explicitly rejects such an association, at least in the case of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ: "It would be descending too low if we were to compare the Son of God of the Christians with the numerous 'Sons of God' with which pagan mythology was coloured."

[84] The title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ appears in Matthew nine times (4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54), Mark five times (1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 14:61; 15:39), and Luke six times (1:35; 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 22:70—but in Acts see also 9:20 and possibly 8:37, omitted from most critical editions). The related term υἱὸς μοῦ occurs in Matthew four times (three times in 11:27; 24:36), Mark once (13:32), and three times in Luke 10:22, while υἱὸς μοῦ occurs in each Synoptic Gospel twice (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35). These statistics, and those for Pauline and Johannine usages below, are drawn from Taylor, *Person of Christ*, 147. Taylor does not provide the specific verse citations, which are from Schmoller, *Handkonkordanz*.

[85] For a discussion of the more subtle changes in meaning which ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ underwent in its movement through the Synoptic (and Pauline) traditions, see Fuller, *Foundations*, 33-34, 65, 114-15, 164-67, 192-97.

[86] Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 379. For an important discussion of Mark's possible use and reinterpretation of earlier Christologies which interpreted Jesus as a θεῖος ἀνήρ, see Paul J. Achtemeier, "Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae," *JBL* 89 (1970) 265-91.

is thus declared."[87] A similar caution is found in Luke, where "the invocation of Jesus as Son of God by the demons [4:41] . . . is expressly interpreted by the obviously more natural Χριστός. . . . The fact that in the centurion's confession in 23:47 Son of God is replaced with δίκαιος probably testifies to a desire to safeguard against exposition in terms of pagan sons of God."[88] This is not to deny that the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ has a richer and broader meaning than indicated here when taken in the context of the specific Christologies of the Synoptic Gospels, or that the concept of a θεῖος ἀνήρ in the ancient world was more amorphous than is often recognized.[89] Nevertheless, in the Synoptic Gospels "Son of God" in its basic sense appears to be associated positively with a Jewish Messianic (rather than a metaphysical) understanding of Jesus and negatively against a Greco-Roman concept of the θεῖος ἀνήρ.

Unlike the case with Paul and the Synoptic Gospels, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ captures the Christology of the Fourth Gospel possibly better than any

[87] Günther Bornkamm et al., *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (trans. Percy Scott: NTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 37. Schnackenburg (*The Gospel of Matthew* [trans. Robert R. Barr; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002] 37-38) agrees here that the Matthean usage is primarily aimed against a θεῖος ἀνήρ Christology rather than at a positive statement of Jesus' "ontological" status: "'Son of God' cannot be meant in a metaphysical sense; rather, it characterizes the Messiah in the Christian sense (16:16; 26:63), in his union with God the Father, a bond proclaimed by God himself (3:17; 17:5). This 'Son of God,' who nevertheless can be hungry and have appetites, presented no difficulties for the narrator, as it did later for the Fathers of the church."

[88] Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 380-81. Martitz also considers the possibility suggested by C. F. D. Moule ("The Christology of Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Studies Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert* [ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn; Nashville: Abingdon, 1966] 159-85, here 165) that Luke intentionally avoids the title Son of God because of the possibility of such misunderstandings: "Yet once more it is noteworthy that the title υἱός is given to Jesus in the Gospel only by other than human voices—divine, angelic, or satanic, or in his own monologue, until the climax of the story when, at the trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus is asked whether he is the Son of God and gives, perhaps, a noncommittal reply". On the other hand, William Kurz has suggested to me that Luke's use of δίκαιος is probably based on his desire to emphasize Jesus' innocence and that he dies an innocent martyr's death. In any case, "the strong reserve of Luke in relation to the title Son of God misunderstood in terms of the divine sons of paganism shows that fundamentally he is not referring to anything other than the election of God. . . . Since Luke was not interested in the biological question he does not cross over the boundary to a metaphysical understanding" (Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 382).

[89] "As regards the question whether divine sonship is connected with the Hellenistic idea of the θεῖος ἀνήρ it is thus to be noted that θεῖος ἀνήρ is by no means a fixed expression at least in the pre-Christian era" (Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 339).

other title used by John. Indeed, it might fairly be described as primarily a "Son of God" Christology. However, as Sjef van Tilborg points out, "the impression one is left with, when reading John's Gospel—that Jesus is called son of God on just about every page—is not based on the constant use of the title. Rather the contrary."[90] While essentially correct, Tilborg perhaps underestimates the relative statistical prominence of the title in the Fourth Gospel, which "reveal[s] a strong preference for the terminology of Sonship."[91] In comparison with the first three Gospels, John contains nine occurrences of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31)—more than any Synoptic Gospel except Matthew—and sixteen of ὁ υἱός (1:18; 3:16, 17, 35, twice in 36; twice in 5:19, 21, 22, twice in 23, 26; 6:40; 14:13; 17:1)—more than double the number of occurrences in all the Synoptics combined.[92] While all these occurrences cannot be given even a cursory treatment here, this great disparity in frequency between John and the Synoptic Gospels strongly suggests that the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ carries an importance and a distinctiveness in the former which it does not in the latter. In the Fourth Gospel, "the title 'son of God' is not identical with the messianic Christ-title. It contains messianic connotations—the son of David as the son of God; the just one as the son of God; the people as sons of God—but it also goes beyond that."[93]

To note the most immediate difference, the Synoptic concern with correcting a θεῖος ἀνήρ Christology does not appear to be a dominant theme in John. While two occurrences (Jesus' in 11:4 and Martha's in

[90] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus* (NovTSup 83; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 27.

[91] Taylor, *Person of Christ*, 148. This preference for the notion of Sonship is continued in 1 John, where ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ occurs seven times (3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12, 13, 20), υἱὸς μοῦ six times (2:22, 23 [twice], 24; 4:14; 5:12), and ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ("His Son") eight times (1:3, 7; 3:23; 4:9; 5:9, 10, 11, 20). However, υἱὸς μοῦ does not appear in the Johannine corpus.

[92] Tilborg (*Reading John in Ephesus*, 27) argues that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ and ὁ υἱός are so closely conected in John's Gospel that "the traditional distinction between speaking about 'the son' and 'the son of God' does not exist anymore." Nor are these occurrences the only manifestations of John's "Son of God" Christology: "The impression of such omnipresence of the use of the title comes about, because Jesus (or the evangelist) constantly speaks about 'the father' and 'my father' implying that Jesus speaks about himself as the son of the father" (ibid.). The difference here between John and the Synoptics is remarkable: πατήρ (used in reference to God) occurs in the Synoptic Gospels only eight times (four in Matthew, once in Mark, and three times in Luke) but some eighty-two times in John (and another twelve in 1 John)!

[93] Ibid., 29.

11:27) are associated with the raising of Lazarus, none of the others is situated within the context of miracle stories. Moreover, even John 11 is not focused on the miraculous power of Jesus to raise the dead, though clearly he has such power. Unlike the standard pattern found in Synoptic miracle stories, in John 11, "Lazarus is thrust into the background, and the sisters have been made the chief persons."[94] Rather, as Rudolf Bultmann notes, this pericope effectively completes Jesus' public ministry, simultaneously precipitating the decision of the Sanhedrin to seek his death and setting the stage for Jesus' journey to the cross by prefiguring his own triumph over death in the raising of Lazarus.[95] This triumph, truly the great and only work of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, bears a significance for all his believers that could never be ascribed to the works of a θεῖος ἀνήρ: "The raising of Lazarus is no piece of black magic, or even the supreme achievement of a saint; it is an anticipation of what is to take place at the last day. It means that the believer has eternal life; that he has passed from life to death."[96]

Furthermore, the nine occurrences of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in the Fourth Gospel show a remarkable pattern. Unlike the simple expression ὁ υἱός, "exclusive to . . . ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is the fact that it is used as a real title" and not simply as a description of Jesus.[97] While Jesus applies the title to himself three times (3:18; 10:36; 11:4), the remaining six occurrences are placed on the lips of the main symbolic witnesses to Jesus' divinity: John the Baptist (1:34), Nathanael (1:49), the Samaritan woman (5:25), Martha (11:27), the leaders of the Synagogue (19:7), and the Evangelist himself (20:31). Each speaker in this list carries a definite symbolic significance for members of the Johannine community based on its history. First, the figure of John the Baptist is significant for bringing his followers into the Johannine community, as emphasized by Brown.[98] Second, Nathanael is described as "an ideal Israelite" (1:47) and almost certainly stands in the narrative as "a representative of the true Israelites who believe in Jesus and recognize him as king."[99] Third, in John 5, "the

[94] Bultmann, *John*, 395.
[95] Ibid., 394-409.
[96] Barrett, *St. John*, 388.
[97] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 28.
[98] Brown, *Community*, 69-71.
[99] Barrett, *St. John*, 184; Koester, "Savior," 671. However, Brown argues that "there is no evidence that Nathanael is a *purely* [emphasis added] symbolic figure" (*John*, 1. 82).

evangelist portrays the Samaritan woman in a way that presents the Samaritan people as part of a world estranged from God."[100] Fourth, in John 11, Martha is held up by John "to his readers as a mirror for their own faith, [where] Martha's attitude is an example of faith which proves its worth in a critical situation."[101] Fifth, the chief priests and officers in John 19, representing those Jews in the synagogue who persecute the community, ironically call Jesus "Son of God" in their denunciation of him to Pilate.[102] Sixth and finally, the Jewish testimony in John 19 is then sealed by John's own confession in 20:31, which reveals the purpose of the preceding narrative of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, namely, the belief that Jesus is in fact the Son of God.

When we consider this list of characters in light of the history of the Johannine community laid out in Chapter One of this study, the identities of these six witnesses to Jesus as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ are clearly important. All the major groups whose response to Jesus, positive or negative, helped to determine the composition and history of the community are represented here as confessing the true identity of Christ (albeit ironically in the case of the synagogue Jews). Thus, in the course of the Gospel, the entire Johannine social world, including followers of John the Baptist, believing Jews, Gentiles, Johannine Christians under trial, the synagogue Jews, the leaders of the Johannine community (in the person of the evangelist), and even Jesus himself, acclaims Jesus as the Son of God. The artistry and theological purpose at work here is evident.

What is perhaps most striking about the list above (apart from the literary artistry behind it) is the sheer *universality* of the confession of Jesus as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, a feature also in evidence in the use of ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου. Every conceivable reader of the Gospel could relate to it, making clear the significance of Jesus not only for Jews, or Gentiles, or believers, but for all humanity. Unlike the messianic connotations of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ found in the OT and the Synoptic Gospels, in John this

[100] Koester, "Savior," 669. Koester also points out the pronounced Roman presence in Samaria, including a capital city (Sebaste) "named for Caesar Augustus," which would have been common knowledge among readers of the Gospel (ibid., 679).

[101] Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 2. 332.

[102] Their testimony is perhaps the most important of all the witnesses, since by what Brown (*John*, 2. 891) calls their "crescendo of disbelief [wherein] Jesus is mockingly or incredulously called 'the King of the Jews,' 'the man,' and 'God's Son.'" In the process, the series of titles first given to Jesus in chapter one is completed through a "mock reversal" (Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1985] 133).

title is put on the lips of every group in the world. This universality in turn reveals implicitly to John's readers the identity of the true rival of Jesus, namely the putative "Ruler of this world" who "is cast out" (12:31), "judged" (16:11), and who now "has no power" over Jesus (14:30). Only one other person in the first century could claim any comparable dominion on the earth: the Roman emperor—who was also proclaimed ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. When we examine the use of this title within the Augustan Ideology, it is evident why John contrasts Christ versus the emperor as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

The title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ—universally rendered *divi filius* in Latin—was a standard one for the emperors of the first century beginning with Augustus, whose "full name after 27 B.C. was *Imperator Caesar divi filius Augustus*, while other Romans were simply called, for example, *Marcus Tullius Marci filius Cicero*."[103] Augustus' strategy of advertising the divinity of his adoptive father Julius Caesar to promote his own apotheosis and authority was repeated by his successors: "As Augustus was the son of the god Julius, and Tiberius of Divus Augustus, so was Nero the son of Divus Claudius and Domitian the son of Divus Vespasian."[104] Upon the assumption of this title by an emperor, it was immediately communicated throughout the empire by its inclusion on coins and public monuments.[105] As Cuss notes, "the frequency of the abbreviation of this title on coins and inscriptions must have impressed this idea firmly on the minds of Christian and pagan alike."[106] The title

[103] H. Galasterer, "A Man, a Book, and a Method: Sir Ronald Syme's *Roman Revolution* After Fifty Years," in *Between Republic and Empire*, 1-20, here 15. Taylor (*The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 103) dates the origin of this practice to 40 B.C.E., while Cuss (*Imperial Cult*, 72) traces it back as early as 42 B.C.E.

[104] Ibid., 73.

[105] The special power of coins (because of their universal use) to promote the notion of the emperor's divinity was recognized early by Augustus, and well before Actium "gradually the portraits of other triumvirs disappeared from the Roman mint, the names of the moneyers are suppressed, and Octavian drops his title *triumvir*. *Imperator Caesar divi filius*, his emblems, his victories, his honors, and his protecting gods become the sole adornment of money coined in Rome" (Taylor, *Divinity*, 131). See also Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 1. 1. 76. That this practice of limiting the person and adornments of the emperor to Roman coinage extended to the provinces is proven by Matt 22:21 || Mark 12:17 || Luke 20:25. The appearance of the title on public monuments in the East may even predate or immediately postdate the victory at Actium: an inscription from Olympia before 27 B.C.E. refers to Αὐτοκράτορα, and the base of a statue in Pergamum from the same period reads in part Αὐτοκράτορα Καίσαρα θεοῦ υἱὸν θεὸν Σεβαστὸν (Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 72).

[106] Ibid., 73.

divi filius would have been associated in the public mind with the emperor.

Despite its wide currency, the title's exact meaning in the context of the Augustan Ideology is less clear. While "in the Roman imperial period *Divi filius* was rendered θεοῦ υἱός," it is unclear whether its translation from Latin to Greek (and from Italy to Asia Minor) did not undergo some change in meaning, however subtle.[107] The common assumption that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ and *divi filius* are interchangable—and thus that the understanding of the Imperial Cult in the West could be transferred more or less straightforwardly to the study of it in Asia Minor—has been challenged by Price, who notes that θεός, "though a basic term of Greek religion, has never been given a detailed semantic study."[108] One result of this neglect is that

> the bizarre practice of calling the emperor *theou huios* is seen as perfectly natural because it is simply the translation of *divi filius*. Why natural? Because, as the heirs of Rome, we can attempt to ignore the cultural differences between us and the ancient world. But the tactic of treating Greek as a translation out of Latin does not always work. Calling the living emperor *theos* cannot be seen as a translation of *divus*, a term which applies only to dead emperors. Modern scholars are therefore forced to treat the usage as 'deviant', the product of either folly or flattery. In fact the failure of *theos* to translate *divus* undermines the first assumption that *huios theou* is a translation of *divi filius*.[109]

While *divus* was well-defined in its range of applications, "there were no uncontroversial criteria for the predication of *theos*. The boundaries

[107] Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 336-37.

[108] Price, "Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult," *JHS* 104 (1984) 79. Price argues that "the Greeks under Roman rule suffer from a double prejudice. On the one hand, Hellenists lose interest in the Greeks after the classical period; on the other, Roman historians find it hard to avoid a Romanocentric perspective. This double prejudice becomes particularly acute when the issue is the religious language used by Greeks to refer to the Roman emperor" (ibid.). Examples of the traditional position which identified ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ with *divi filius* include Cuss (*Imperial Cult*, 72), who writes: "As has already been pointed out by several authors, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ or υἱὸς θεοῦ is the corresponding Greek formula" for *divi filius*. The authors she cites include such major figures as Deissmann, Cerfaux and Tondriau.

[109] Price, "Gods and Emperors," 79.

of the concept were not unequivocally defined."[110] Unlike in Rome, where "the emperor was not a *deus* ('god') in his lifetime, but after his death might be made a *divus*," in the Greek-speaking provinces of the empire—especially Asia Minor—θεός was used for both human persons such as the emperor (e.g., *theos* Nero), living or dead, and any one of the traditional deities.[111] Thus, it is not possible to assume that when a citizen of Ephesus worshiped Augustus as θεοῦ υἱός he understood the term in the same sense as a Roman senator who proclaimed Augustus *divi filius*. As Price observes, θεοῦ υἱός "had a different range of meanings, forming part of a radically different conceptual system."[112]

This differences between *divi filius* and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ hold important implications for understanding the Johannine use of the title. Rather than simply assume that there could be no real influence of the Imperial Cult on the Fourth Gospel's Christology, it is necessary to consider the possibility that the emperor was in fact understood by Greek-speaking Christians as a "true" god—or at least as true a god as any other. The christianizing tendency among many exegetes and historians to minimize or deny entirely the religious significance of the Imperial Cult (discussed above in Chapter Two) has certainly been felt in the study of the Fourth Gospel, much to the detriment of our understanding of Johannine Christology.

For instance, let us consider C. H. Dodd's observation that "in popular Hellenistic usage therefore the expression υἱὸς θεοῦ reflects a certain confusion of divinity and humanity. On the one hand it represents a reduction of the idea of God, and on the other hand an extravagant estimate of the great man."[113] Dodd simply avoids the problem by assuming that the concept of God, which is clear to us, would have been equally clear to a person of the first century—a "covertly Christianizing" move on his part. Not surprisingly, Dodd shifts his attention away

[110] Ibid., 80.

[111] Ibid., 82. Price's example of "*theos* Nero" is drawn from Cerfaux and Tondriau, *Le Culte des Souverains*, 191. Cassidy (*Perspective*, 11-12) makes the same point as Price about the Latin, but does not mention of the implications of this fact for understanding the Greek of the Fourth Gospel.

[112] Price, "Gods and Emperors," 84. Similarly, Price (ibid., 84 n. 45) points out that "it is also wrong to imagine that *Sebastos* is an exact translation of the Latin *Augustus*. It did indeed become the standard equivalent almost instantaneously, but its semantic motivation is more strongly religious than *Augustus*."

[113] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 251.

from popular usage to the philosophical concept of God in the ancient world. However, any potential "confusion" in the popular mind in the first century would be clarified in John's Gospel. Similarly, Tilborg's decision to focus his discussion on the christological title βασιλεύς in John 19:12, while relevant for determining the extent of Roman influence on the Fourth Gospel, leads him to neglect the more important title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. Furthermore, he determines its sense solely from internal evidence in the Gospel and without reference to the Imperial Cult.[114] Behind both these exegetical moves, I would suggest, seems to be an unfounded assumption that the meaning of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ was unproblematical for the Evangelist or his audience, and that they would have automatically understood that the title was used equivocally in the Fourth Gospel and the Imperial Cult. But, as Price has shown, such an assumption is contradicted by the usage of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ across Asia Minor in the first century, which is the best candidate for the context of the Gospel's composition.

Given the ambiguity of the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in the first-century mind, the danger of confusion among Christians about its application to Jesus should not be ignored. Indeed, as we have seen, it may have been just this danger of confusion that led the primitive Church to avoid its use. At least in the case of the Fourth Gospel, we must differ with Cuss's judgment that "it is not likely that the term 'Son of God' for Christ had been influenced by the imperial use."[115] We do agree with her that "the Christian title at least had a similarity of words [with the imperial title], and this in itself could have led Christians to look on the pagan use as blasphemous."[116] However, in the Fourth Gospel the solution to this problem was not to avoid the title but to redefine it as one proper not to the emperor but to Jesus Christ, the true υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. Certainly, Dodd's observation that "there is no other writing known to me in which the idea of divine sonship is treated with anything like such fullness and precision" suggests that such a reinterpretation is taking place in the Fourth Gospel.[117]

[114] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 196-219. This neglect is also apparent in his rather brief discussion of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (ibid., 27-29), despite its much greater prominence in the text. In fairness, Tilborg's main interest is in the Passion Narrative, but since ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ appears there also (19:7), his silence is curious.

[115] Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 74.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 253.

John was attempting a reinterpretation precisely because of the widespread (mis-)understanding of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ associated with the Imperial Cult. As I have suggested above, "Son of God" is perhaps *the* central christological title in the Fourth Gospel, and it defies concise definition. The meaning of this title cannot simply be stated. Instead, the person who is ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ can only be pointed to—which is exactly what the Fourth Gospel does. Thus, only a more detailed exegesis of the Prologue and the Passion Narrative, offered in Chapters Four and Five, will clarify the broad outlines of the Johannine Christology and the challenge that it presented to the image of the emperor found in the Augustan Ideology.

Conclusion

We have seen how some of the central religious and political concepts of the Augustan Ideology, namely, ἐξουσία, ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, were taken up into Johannine Christology and radically altered and subverted as a result. I have argued that these terms would have immediately connoted the emperor in the popular mind of the first century and that these are turned by John into attributes and titles of Christ. While still drawing on their sense within the Augustan Ideology, these terms can no longer be thought of as properly belonging to that conceptual system. Even though the new christological senses of these concepts have not been fully developed here, the very fact that this process of adoption and adaptation took place indicates that the Fourth Gospel was involved in a struggle with the Augustan Ideology for their meanings, and that the Johannine Christology cannot be understood outside of its immediate political and religious context. At this point, we are finally in a position to attempt a more detailed exegesis of two of the central sources of John's Christology, namely, the Prologue and the Passion Narrative, in light of its crucial but frequently ignored Roman setting.

CHAPTER 4

"In the Beginning Was the Word": Christology as Counter-Ideology in the Prologue to John's Gospel

In discussing the hazards and uncertainties which necessarily accompany any interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, J. Louis Martyn observes that "the surveyor knows that a point fixed by measuring along a straight line is more reliable if it is confirmed by the intersection of two reasonably drawn lines. . . . [I]f it is reasonably clear that John is a theologian with opponents, it is equally clear that the scholar who searches for clues to the identity and beliefs of those opponents will need as many scientific controls as he can get."[1] In keeping with this advice, the first three chapters of this study have attempted to lay out several sets of "controls" for the interpretation of the Gospel, including a schematic reconstruction of the Johannine community's history, the Roman social and ideological context of the Gospel, and the significant parallels with and connotations of the Augustan Ideology in the christological language of the Gospel. The intersection of these ecclesio-historical, classical, and christological trajectories, in turn, can point out a fruitful and almost completely uncharted course for the interpretation of the Gospel of John, one that reads the Gospel as responding not solely, or even primarily, to the Jewish or philosophical-Gnostic background of the text but rather to its Roman religious and political context in general, and to the image of the emperor in the Augustan Ideology in particular.[2]

[1] Martyn, "Source Criticism and Religionsgeschichte in the Fourth Gospel," in *Jesus and Man's Hope* (2 vols.; ed. D. G. Buttrick; Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1970-71) 1. 247-73, here 251.

[2] Neglect of the Roman context of primitive Christianity is hardly unique to schol-

The Prologue is perhaps the most logical starting point for any such attempt. Because of both its narrative position and theological depth it holds a privileged place in the Gospel for understanding the Johannine Christ. As Rudolf Bultmann writes:

> A preliminary glance tells us that 1.1-18 forms a whole, and has been placed at the beginning of the Gospel as a kind of introduction. A remarkable introduction, certainly! For the Prologue is no introduction or foreword in the usual sense of the words. There is no indication in it of the content or structure of what follows; nor are we told why the author has set his task, as we are, for instance, in the Gospel of Luke. On the contrary, the section forms a whole, and is complete in itself; it is not necessary for anything to follow.[3]

Bultmann's judgment about the Prologue, both as regards its unique position in the NT—where it has long been recognized as *the* christological *locus classicus*—and its self-sufficiency as a summary of the theology of the Fourth Gospel as a whole, seems essentially correct.[4] This is not to say, of course, that the Prologue could take the place of the

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arship on John. Except for the book of Revelation (see Introduction), only relatively recently has the Roman context of the NT writings begun to receive any sustained attention among scholars. In addition to Richard J. Cassidy's *John's Gospel in New Perspective*, see also his *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987) and *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul* (New York: Crossroad, 2002). Further work on the Roman context of Paul's life and thought appears in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire* and, most recently, *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).

[3] Bultmann, *John*, 13.

[4] Cullmann (*Christology*, 249), summing up the unique importance of the Prologue for Christian theology, writes that "although Logos became the dominant designation for Jesus in the classical Christology of the ancient Church, and to a great extent was even considered the essential content of all Christology, we find it as a Christological title only in one group of New Testament writings, the Johannine." James D. G. Dunn (*Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry Into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980] 239) judges that the Prologue "expresses without doubt the most powerful Word-christology in the NT," while Louis Dupuis (*Who Do You Say That I Am? Introduction to Christology* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994] 71), a leading Roman Catholic theologian who is not uncritical of the traditional high Christology drawn from John, nevertheless considers the Logos-Christology contained in the Prologue to be the "climax" and the "best expression" of NT Christology.

Gospel in subsequent christological reflection.[5] Neither does this mean that the Prologue has no literary forebears or parallels in the religious and philosophical literature of the ancient world, whether pagan, Jewish, or Christian.[6] Rather, Bultmann's judgment expresses the simple fact that any plausible reading of the Gospel must attend properly to the high Christology of John's Prologue and its ancient setting.[7]

[5] Robinson ("The use of the Fourth Gospel for christology today," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: Studies in Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule* [ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973] 61-78, here 61) points out that "in the patristic age it was taken for granted that texts from [John's] Gospel were to be regarded as primary data of the problem which had to be solved. No christology which . . . failed to posit in Jesus both genuine human limitations and consciousness of pre-existent glory could satisfy the 'facts.'" While the post-biblical history of christological dogma is, of course, far beyond the scope of this discussion, the profound influence of the Johannine writings on its development is well documented. The importance of the Fourth Gospel for Ante-Nicene Christology is treated both in T. E. Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (SNTSMS 13; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) and in Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*. When the volumes on John finally appear in the Ancient Christian Commentary series (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1998-), they should provide a useful supplement to these studies of patristic exegesis. A standard discussion of the christological debates up until Constantinople III (681 C.E.) can be found in J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (rev. ed.; San Francisco: Harper, 1978) 138-62, 280-343.

The dominant influence of the Fourth Gospel on practically all christological reflection makes their separation particularly difficult. Perhaps the most well-known recent attempt to separate the two is found in the work of Edward Schillebeeckx, especially his *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (trans. Hubert Hoskins; New York: Seabury, 1979). The source-critical and anthropological assumptions underlying Schillebeeckx's work are summarized and assessed in Fitzmyer, *Scripture & Christology: A Statement of the Biblical Commission with Commentary* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1985) 12-13, 80-82. The negative reaction to Schillebeeckx's work by ecclesiastical authorities demonstrates the challenges involved in—indeed, perhaps the impossibility of—rethinking the scriptural foundations of Christology over 1600 years after the Council of Nicea.

[6] I adopt in this study the very widely held belief among modern exegetes that the evangelist has employed a previously existing Logos-hymn in 1:1-18 rather than an original composition. For a summary of the most important proponents of a literary source behind the Prologue, see Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Born from Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (HUT 29; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992) 66-67; Brown, *John*, 1. 19-23. Perhaps most notable among those who defend Johannine authorship of the Prologue are Barrett (*St. John*, 151), Lindars (*John*, 81-82), and Hoskyns (*Fourth Gospel*, 162-63).

[7] While a very few exegetes have tried to refocus christological attention away from the Prologue and towards later sections of the text, such efforts have not been widely imitated. A leading example is Ernst Käsemann's article "The Purpose and Structure of the Prologue to John's Gospel" (in idem, *New Testament Questions of Today* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969] 138-67), in which he argues for a functional rather than an ontolog-

In this chapter I will offer a new reading of the Prologue as the evangelist's attempt to respond to the Augustan Ideology and the figure of the emperor that it presented to Roman society. When read in this specifically Roman context, the Prologue can be seen as an essential element in the larger anti-imperial polemic running throughout the final version of the Gospel. After a brief note on the methodology to be employed in this chapter (as well as the next), I will turn my attention to the Prologue proper. My examination divides it by subject into four distinct sections (1:1-5, 6-8, 9-13, and 14-18). These subdivisions, I argue, respond to the challenges—cosmological, prophetic, political, and doxological—that the Augustan Ideology presented to the Johannine community by placing the emperor at the nexus of the human and the divine orders in the ancient world. As such, the Prologue can properly be considered a piece of political theology, although essentially a negative one designed to subordinate the dominant political and ideological categories of the Roman world to the christological ones found in the Fourth Gospel. As I hope will become clear, the Prologue is not an effort by the evangelist to produce a "Spiritual Gospel" but rather his attempt to address very real and worldly concerns about how power, divinity, and prophecy were interrelated in the Augustan Ideology.

A Note on Method

Historical-critical investigation of the Fourth Gospel during the twentieth century was dominated by two competing approaches. One

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ical reading of the Prologue's Christology: its purpose is to explain the salvation wrought by Christ rather than his person. There is a treatment of this distinction and of its limitations for any biblical Christology in Cullmann, *Christology*, 6-11; Fitzmyer, *Scripture & Christology*, 10, 72. Elsewhere, Käsemann (*Testament of Jesus*, 11-12) rejects any accommodation between the docetic Christology exemplified by John 17 and the emphasis on the Incarnation found in the Prologue and subordinates the latter to the former in his interpretation of the Gospel. However, his argument that a "naive docetism" lies behind the Christology of the Fourth Gospel has been widely criticized. See, e.g., Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 63-70, 172-73. For a discussion of Käsemann and Bultmann that is both sympathetic to their goals and critical of some of their assumptions and methods of argumentation, see Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1994) 196-202.

emphasized the supposed philosophical-Gnostic roots of the Gospel, typified by the works of Bultmann, Walter Bauer, and C. H. Dodd.[8] The other focused on its Jewish background, an approach pioneered by Martyn and Raymond E. Brown. That both approaches contribute greatly to our understanding of the historical milieu of the Fourth Gospel and to the pre-history of the text is not in doubt. However, the success of these schools in opening the Fourth Gospel to new and more profound interpretations promoted a somewhat blinkered view of both its context and its possible opponents. As a result, theories about the literary and historical *sources* of the Gospel were seen all too often as offering answers to questions about its theological *purpose*. Thus, the logic goes, if the literary sources behind the final text were of a Gnostic or Proto-Gnostic character, then the Christology of the Gospel must also be so—even if by way of opposition.[9] Or, if the fractious origin of the community was within the Synagogue, the impetus for the Gospel's composition and the opponents behind the text could only be Jewish in character.[10] In both instances, pre-history, whether of underlying texts and traditions or of the Johannine community itself, displaced contemporary history as the key to understanding the Fourth Gospel.[11]

On the other hand, Jerome H. Neyrey (*An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988] 1), while not denying its importance to Johannine Christology, intentionally avoids the focus on the Prologue found in almost all studies of the topic. He writes that this decision "does not imply a judgment that John's Prologue (1:1-18) has been exhausted by biblical criticism or that consensus has now been reached on its interpretation. I have decided that strategically it is more fruitful to concentrate on a systematic exposition of what I perceive as the real focus of the Gospel's high Christology: Jesus' status and powers as a figure equal to God." This "strategic" decision to downplay the Prologue seems much more defensible than the polemical stance taken by Käsemann towards its Christology.

[8] This "philosophical-Gnostic" background suggested by some scholars includes a variety of non-Jewish schools of thought, including the Gnostic and Mandaean texts examined by Bultmann (*John*), Bauer (*Johannesevangelium*), and Dodd (*Interpretation*), as well as the Hermetic and Philonic (e.g., hellenized Judaism) traditions treated at length only in Dodd.

[9] Bultmann writes: "In short, then, the figure of Jesus in John is portrayed in the forms offered by the Gnostic Redeemer-myth, which had already influenced the christological thinking of Hellenistic Christianity before Paul and then influenced him" (*The Theology of the New Testament* [2 vols.; trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Scribners, 1951-55] 2. 12-13.

[10] See, e.g., the absence of any Gentile presence in Martyn's reconstruction of the history of the Johannine community (already mentioned above in Chapter One).

[11] Donald J. Rappé ("Reading John in Delos: The Genres of the Johannine Farewell"

This same criticism about insufficient concern for the immediate social and religious context of the Gospel can be made even more forcefully of the "literary" criticism of John that has appeared in the past generation. Its focus on the Fourth Gospel as a literary rather than as a historical document has resulted in the evacuation of most—and occasionally all—historical controls for interpreting the text, and their replacement by methodologies drawn from contemporary literary theory. For instance, concern with the implied reader of the text, as opposed to the historical reader of the first century, seems fundamentally ahistorical, if not antihistorical, in its implications. Adele Reinhartz, in her study of the "cosmological" dimensions of the Johannine narrative, plainly states that "we shall consider this gospel to be a work of fiction, a 'self-consciously crafted narrative . . . resulting from literary imagination.' Although the possibility that the Fourth Gospel may contain historical data should not be dismissed, this issue is not germane to the present study."[12] I am in agreement with this approach insofar as it rejects any pre-critical "historicizing" of the narrative. However, Reinhartz's further insistence that the "implied reader" involved in the construction of the meaning of the text must be given methodological priority over the "original readers whom the real author meant to

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[Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1999] 16) makes a similar point, using as an example the infancy narratives, about the limitations of source- or genre-critical approaches for explicating their meaning within the text:

> Consider for a moment the hybrid which we call the infancy narrative. The arc or controlling concept is unquestionably the origins of Jesus, but contained within its framework are the genealogy (akin to those, e.g., within the Priestly material of the Pentateuch), the canticle (akin to, e.g., the Song of Moses / Miriam in Exod 15:1-18, 21; the Song of Deborah in Judg 5:1-30), the birth story (akin to that of, e.g., Sargon of Akkad, Moses), childhood narratives (akin to, e.g., Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*; the Alexander Romances), prophecy, and so on. The final product is better defined not so much by the artifice of a single generic construct but as what may be called a literary complex, within which the writer assumes for his audience multiple frames of reference.

Obviously, the appeal of this more nuanced approach to source and genre concerns is hardly limited to the Johannine Prologue, although the density of the Logos-concept perhaps increases the temptation of the exegete to follow a familiar path in order to escape its thickets.

[12] Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* (SBLMS 45; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 6-7.

address in writing this gospel" seems mistaken.[13] Furthermore, her relegation to an appendix of "relevant material from outside the gospel," neglects the critical importance of historical context in understanding John.[14] At the very least, her strong distinction between the "implied" and the "original real" reader may separate too sharply what are for many exegetes complementary concepts.

Of course, Reinhartz would challenge the appropriateness of demanding too historically specific a context for the reading of the Gospel:

> It is important to note, however, that the gospel in general, and 20:30-31 in particular, do not specifically limit their intended audience to a specific community. Rather, they suggest an open definition of the implied readers as those who see themselves being personally addressed by the verbs in 20:30-31 which are in the second person plural: "you may believe" [πιστεύητε], "you may have life" [ζωὴν ἔχητε] "in his name."[15]

But I would argue that there is no necessary connection between Reinhartz's first claim (that there is no *specific* limitation on audience) and the second (that the Evangelist had no clear definition of his intended audience). Indeed, it seems difficult to conceive how anyone could write at all (or at least write effectively) without *some* idea of who the actual audience would be.[16]

Likewise, narrative criticism, with its concern for the coherence of the gospel as a literary text rather than as a historical one, can shed light on the effectiveness of John as an author in the modern sense but not—

[13] Ibid., 8.

[14] Ibid., 15, 105-31.

[15] Ibid., 9.

[16] Barrett (*St. John*, 135) appears to reject the relevance of audience (actual or implied) for determining authorial purpose, suggesting that John wrote purely for himself: "It is easy, when we read the gospel, to believe that John, though doubtless aware of the necessity of strengthening Christians and converting the heathen, wrote primarily to satisfy himself. His gospel must be written: it was no concern of his whether it was also read." While containing an important kernel of truth, Barrett's position, if taken to its logical conclusion, would make John a solipsistic writer concerned only with his own "aesthetic" enjoyment of the text. The carefully crafted character of the Gospel, though, shows no evidence that he was this sort of a writer.

or at least not in isolation from other methods—on his purposes as an evangelist in the first-century context. The limitations of this approach for situating the Gospel historically are evident even in the most respected and responsible examples. R. Alan Culpepper, in a telling passage worth quoting at length, indicates his desire to move beyond the historical-critical investigation of the Fourth Gospel found in Martyn and others:

> [I]t is clear that John has been used as a "window" through which the critic can catch "glimpses" of the history of the Johannine community. The meaning of the gospel [according to this approach] derives from the way it was related to that history. The meaning of the text, therefore, is assumed to lie on the other side of the window. The task of the reader, then, is to become sensitive to the two historical levels lurking in the gospel, the historical level (the ministry of Jesus) and the contemporary level (the situation of the Johannine community). By observing how the latter is reflected in an ostensible account of the former, the reader is able to grasp the gospel's message for first-century readers. Insofar as parallels and similarities can be drawn between the first- and twentieth-century contexts, the gospel may continue to speak to twentieth-century readers. This approach to the gospel has been immensely fruitful and exciting, but it ties the gospel's meaning to historical considerations which are forbidding to all but New Testament specialists, neglects the essential unity of "the most literary of the gospels," and overlooks the relationship between text and reader.[17]

Even leaving aside whether "forbidding . . . historical considerations" are relevant in assessing the value of an exegetical approach to the Gospel, Culpepper does not so much build upon this "fruitful and exciting" tradition as he abandons it. For example, in his discussion of the blind man in John 9, he writes that the blind man "is a model of those who come from signs to an authentic faith and are excluded from the synagogue."[18] He then comments that "the definitive interpretation of

[17] Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 3-4.

[18] Ibid., 140.

the blind man" is that of Martyn, without even asking whether his interpretation coheres with Martyn's.[19] Whatever value this approach has for modern appropriations of the Gospel—and it is considerable—it is less useful for reading the text as a historical document from the first century or for determining the theological vision of the Evangelist in composing this particular text for a particular community.[20]

Apart from my reaffirming a fundamentally historical-critical approach to the Gospel, my own approach in these last two chapters does not fall under any single set of scholarly categories. Unlike a source- or form-critical investigation of the Prologue and the Passion Narrative, I will not be particularly concerned with identifying the exact extent and provenance of underlying documents or oral traditions that John employed in composing his text. None of this is intended to diminish the value of such research for identifying the literary resources available to the evangelist. It is only a warning against substituting source criticism for the interpretation of the text itself, since a very complex relationship exists between the "original" meaning of a text or tradition and its sense within the context of its subsequent reception. The creative appropriation and interpretation of previously existing texts or traditions (including the Johannine Prologue and Passion Narrative) generates a new context and therefore a new and often different meaning. Otherwise, it would not involve creative appropriation at all but simple repetition. With the bracketing of source and form criticism in this study we also set aside redaction criticism in the classical sense since it rests immediately upon their results. Nor do I read the text as a liter-

[19] Ibid., 140 n. 80.

[20] It is helpful here to distinguish between the "original" meaning of the text and the "actualized" meaning it has when received by subsequent readers. This distinction and its implications for contemporary "actualizations" of Scripture are explored in Marcel Dumais, "Sens de l'Écriture: Réexamen à la lumière de l'herméneutique philosophique et des approches littéraires récentes," *NTS* 45 (1999) 310-31, esp. 311-14. I am indebted also to William S. Kurz, S.J., for his discussion and application of Marcel's work in Luke Timothy Johnson and idem, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A Constructive Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 221-27. This approach should be distinguished from the "canonical criticism" of Brevard Childs (*The New Testament as Canon* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984]), whose concern is not for the "contemporary" actualization of Scripture or its "original" meaning but rather for the Church's understanding of the books of Scripture which led to their inclusion in the canon in the third and fourth centuries—which he then takes as being normative for their interpretation. My concern in this study is chiefly the "original" meaning of John, though the implications of this for later Christology (both in the fourth and the twentieth centuries) are important.

ary critic in order to map out its narrative space in isolation from its cultural context. Rather, my reading is situated at the *intersection* of these approaches, where the Prologue and the Passion Narrative are read within the cultural context of the Johannine community that, in turn, would have found unique resonances and significations in the texts and traditions used by John.

The task here is to investigate the text using the data developed in the first three chapters to see how well this reading of John as an anti-Roman polemic works. Of course, this "Roman" reading is not intended to exhaust its meaning or rule out other echoes and resonances within the text. For instance, the Prologue certainly carried other connotations and associations for members of the Johannine community, both because of the history of the community and the literary associations of the Prologue with other religious and philosophical literature. However, if my reconstruction of the history and context of the community is correct, these would be subordinate themes, lingering from earlier stages in the history of the text and its community. These would no longer control the meaning of the text because these opponents and contexts no longer dominated the life of the community. As with any reading of the Fourth Gospel, this will necessarily involve a certain selectivity regarding what themes and concepts should or should not be discussed. These decisions, in turn, are always subject to question. The ultimate test of the value of my reading is simply this: does it make sense of the Gospel *as a historical document*, or at least more sense than other readings? Does bringing the Roman context of the Gospel to bear on their interpretation illuminate the Prologue and Passion Narrative, or does it simply add historical data and literary parallels without advancing our understanding of the text? If the text makes more sense when read in this light, and if the historical situation of the community can be brought to bear more closely and intelligently on the interpretation of the text as a historical document, this approach will be justified.

The Prologue as Counter-Ideology

While scholars frequently emphasize its uniqueness within the NT, the Prologue is hardly *sui generis* in its christological language. Admittedly, within the NT its very prominent Logos-terminology is almost

unique to the Fourth Gospel.[21] However, its motifs have significant parallels both inside and outside the NT. For instance, John 1:5 famously states that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Luke has Simeon proclaim Jesus "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). Matthew, quoting Isa 9:2, announces that "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned" (Matt 4:16).[22] Likewise, the extra-biblical literature has also been examined carefully by scholars in the search for parallels. For example, C. K. Barrett cites the parallel of *Odes Sol.* 18:6: "Let not the luminary be conquered by the darkness; nor let the truth flee away from falsehood." Brown mentions the reference in *Acts Thom.* 130 to "a light that has not been overcome."[23] Not cited at all, so far as I can determine, is Seneca's prayer for the Emperor Claudius: "May this sun, which has shed its light upon a world that had plunged into the abyss and was sunk in darkness, ever shine!"[24] This passage offers a similar pairing of light and darkness and the theme of light not being overcome, here in reference to a very different sort of "god," i.e., "Divus Augustus" (*Polyb.* 15.3). This text is at least as suggestive as the other parallels mentioned above, yet contemporary scholarship on the Prologue has shown almost no interest in it or in the Augustan Ideology that it expresses.[25]

However, parallels to and echoes of the Augustan Ideology are numerous. Although the Prologue forms a single unit within the gospel narrative, it is hardly a simple one. We find within the first eighteen

[21] Indeed, nowhere else in the NT does the unadorned title ὁ λόγος refer to Jesus Christ, and only in two other places does a modified version of ὁ λόγος function thus: 1 John 1:1 (περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς) and Rev 19:13 (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ). Both instances, it should be noted, derive from the Johannine corpus.

[22] Perhaps because of their obviousness, these parallels are usually passed over in favor of OT or apocryphal references in the discussions of modern scholars. See, e.g., Brown (*John*, 1. 7-8), Lindars (*John*, 85-87), and Schnackenburg (*Saint John*, 1. 241-49), none of whom mentions these Synoptic passages in discussing 1:5.

[23] Barrett, *St. John*, 158; Brown, *John*, 1. 8.

[24] Seneca, *Polyb.* 13.1 (Basore, LCL): *Sidus hoc, quod praecipitatio in profundum et demerso in tenebras orbi refulsit, semper luceat!* This reference is found in Wengst (*Pax Romana*, 48), but he draws no connection with the Prologue. This neglect of much classical literature probably has its origin in the history-of-religions approach of earlier scholars such as Bousset (*Kyrios Christos*), who paid little attention to "secular" Greco-Roman literature.

[25] For instance, Cassidy limits his discussion of the Prologue to little more than a page (*New Perspective*, 29-30).

verses of the Gospel a wide variety of concepts (e.g., witness, the World, Light) and persons (e.g., the Father, John the Baptist, Moses), all of which are centered around and subordinate to the concept and person of the Word. Moreover, after the first five verses the Prologue changes focus. To use a cinematic metaphor, the camera pans out beyond the Word to bring on screen successively the various supporting players, all the while keeping the lead actor squarely before the eyes of the viewer. Accordingly, it is helpful to divide up the Prologue into parts and to analyze them, in order to see how these all fit together in its portrait of Jesus, the Word, as the great and only alternative to Roman Emperor and to the *Weltanschauung* of the Augustan Ideology.

In the Prologue, the narrative shifts from the Word to the Baptist, then from the Baptist to the world, and then from the world back to the Son. Accordingly, four basic divisions within the text appear: vv. 1-5 (the pre-existent Logos); vv. 6-8 (the witness of the Baptist); vv. 9-13 (the Logos' reception or rejection by the world); and vv. 14-18 (the glory of the Son).[26] The first is the decisive passage for interpreting the Prologue both because of its initial position and christological content. The following three sections, I will argue, are supplementary insofar as they presuppose and add "prophetic," "political," and "doxological" nuances to the governing "cosmological" elements found in vv. 1-5. In comparison with other proposed reconstructions, this four-part division of John 1:1-18 is highly plausible and readily defensible, not too theory-laden, and quite popular among scholars.[27] From this division of the

[26] While unanimity is an impossible ideal within Johannine scholarship, the amount of scholarly agreement on this schema is encouraging. Those who adopt the same four-fold division include Barrett, *St. John*, 149-50; Bauer, *Johannesevangelium*, 10-29; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10-17; Lindars, *John*, 80-100; Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 1. 227. Bultmann (*John*, 19-81) makes an almost identical division, but pairs v. 5 with vv. 9-13. The plausibility of this reconstruction is even greater when we note that its proponents include authors with diametrically opposed positions on the source-critical questions surrounding the Prologue (e.g., Barrett and Bultmann).

[27] Other possible arrangements include Brown's proposal of an original four-strophe poem greatly expanded by the Evangelist (*John*, 1. 21-39); H. Van Den Bussche's division of it into seven stanzas (*The Gospel of the Word* [trans. M. Marta and John C. Guiness; Chicago: Priory, 1967] 19-26); and B. F. Westcott's division of the Prologue into two very unequal parts: v. 1 and vv. 2-18 (*The Gospel According to St. John* [1880; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951] 1-16).

The most common alternative to my proposed organization is a chiastic structure for the Prologue, normally centered around vv. 12-13. These include Boismard, *St. John's Prologue* [trans. Carisbrooke Dominicans; Westminster, MD: Newman, 1957] 79-81; Crossan,

text, I will argue that each of these subsections of the Prologue can be seen to challenge the cosmological, prophetic, political, and doxological elements of the Augustan Ideology by contrasting the unique and superior character of Jesus' person and activity with features associated with the Emperor. These challenges, taken *in toto*, constitute nothing less than a "counter-ideology," which would have allowed members of the Johannine community to distinguish clearly between the attributes of Christ and the properties of Caesar.

(a) Johannine Cosmology: In the Beginning was the Word (vv. 1-5)

Because of its resonance with both Hellenistic philosophy and various strains of OT theology, source-critical approaches to the Logos-concept have dominated modern research. Ed. L. Miller strikingly expresses the situation:

> In more than one respect the usual approaches to the Johannine Prologue have been, probably, entirely misguided. No doubt the best example of this is the notorious effort of scholars to locate the origin of the Logos-concept which dominates the Prologue. Their attempts to trace this concept to some pre-Johannine milieu such as the *dabar* and *hochma* traditions of the Old Testament and Apocrypha, or wisdom speculations of later Jewish literature, or Greek philosophical strains, or Gnosticism, and the like, are utterly misplaced and in the end serve only to dilute and confuse the original meaning and power of John's Logos.[28]

One result of this source-critical emphasis has too often been a misdirection of the exegetical eye to what is a secondary level of meaning in

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The Gospel of Eternal Light: Reflections on the Theology of St. John (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967) 44-46; Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984) 19-28; Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976) 26. This "chiastic" approach to the Prologue remains unconvincing since there are problems with the theological and poetic balance required for such an interpretation. See, e.g., the criticism by Beasley-Murray (*John*, 4) of the chiastic reconstruction centered around v. 12b offered in Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (1980-81) 1-31.

[28] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4* (NovTSup 60; Leiden: Brill, 1989) 1.

the text. As Jerome H. Neyrey complains, "studies of [the Prologue] have been primarily interested in its sources or redaction. Some scholarship also treats thematic issues implied in it. . . . But little can be found on the precise contents of the Johannine confession of Jesus as divine."[29] The problem with these source-critical approaches, I have suggested above, is not the belief that a more primitive text underlying the Prologue might exist—indeed, I think it does—but rather the assumption that the meaning of the Fourth Gospel itself lies *behind* the text at all. Instead, I suggest, it must lie in dialogue with the social, political, and religious milieu of the Johannine community. In order to understand the Prologue, it is necessary to understand not where the concept of the Logos came from but what the Prologue says about it—and why.

The beginning of the Prologue may be the most familiar section of the entire NT. It is certainly one of the most influential for subsequent christological reflection: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (1:1-3b).[30] The conciseness of the text here is almost as impressive as its content. In a single sentence, the Evangelist manages to summarize, as Marie-Émile Boismard says, the "the preexistence of the Word before creation: his existence with God at the same time as his distinction from God: his identity with God" (1:1); then, in 1:2, "by an imperceptible transition, the thought already gravitates towards the consideration of the part played by the word in the work of creation," which is made explicit in 1:3.[31] Clearly, the first verses of the Prologue are concerned with not the Logos' implications but its explication. Any implicit philosophical or religious resonances the term might possess are subordinated to its explicit affirmation that it is divine and in what that divinity consists. Therefore, the first three verses of John contain *in nuce* what might be called the "cosmological" (or, per-

[29] Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, 1.

[30] ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν. While, for the present study, little turns on the difficult question of whether the punctuation in verse 3 should follow or precede ὃ γέγονεν, my reading follows that of NA27. For a full examination of the question and justification for this decision, see Miller, *Salvation-History*, 1-15.

[31] Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 8, 10.

haps, "ontological") elements of what would become in the fourth and fifth centuries the orthodox Christology of the Church: pre-existence, co-equality with God, and—their natural consequence—divine creativity.[32]

However, these later christological decisions about the Prologue's proper interpretation cannot explain why John decided to include it in the text, unless one were to assume the Evangelist intended several centuries in advance to head off the heresies of the third and fourth centuries with a clear statement that Jesus' divinity entailed pre-existence and co-equality with God.[33] Barring such an answer, we are left with

[32] By "cosmological" here I mean those elements of Johannine Christology which place the person of Jesus in a relation of equality to the Father and of superiority to the created order. As the highest order categories available to John, it is within this cosmological portrait of Jesus that lower order narratives within the Gospel (e.g., the historical tale of Jesus and the ecclesiological tale of the history of the Johannine community) are embedded. Reinhartz, acknowledging the work of Martyn and Brown in drawing out these latter two levels of the Gospel, warns that, "rich as these two tales are, however, they do not exhaust the levels of the narrative content of the Fourth Gospel. Rather, specific hints in the gospel intimate that its story goes well beyond the temporal and geographical boundaries of the historical and ecclesiological tales" (*The Word in the World*, 4). But where Reinhartz argues that "the cosmological tale is the meta-tale which provides the overarching temporal, geographical, theological, and narrative framework of the other two tales" (ibid., 5), I have suggested that the "meta-tale" of the gospel is essentially a *political* one—albeit one which contains strong elements of cosmology. As we have seen, the Evangelist had every reason to be and in fact was pre-occupied with the threat the Augustan Ideology posed to the Johannine community in the late-first century. Thus, while Reinhartz is correct in seeing a cosmological concern in the Gospel, and especially in the Prologue, she overlooks the "political" context of this concern, namely, the "cosmological" elements of the Augustan Ideology. If John is forced to introduce a Christ-centered cosmology into his gospel, it is because the community found itself confronted by a Roman worldview in which political, religious and cosmological concepts were all employed to secure the position of the emperor within first-century society.

[33] I leave to one side here the role of inspiration and divine providence in the composition of the text, concepts more proper to dogmatic theology than history. Such prognosticative explanations of John's intentions can be found in many of the later patristic writers. A comparison between the commentaries of Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia is instructive. While Origen "does not distinguish [Logos] from Christ's other titles as one more properly descriptive of his own intrinsic nature," for Theodore "this is the one term in the Gospel to which he devotes any thorough or extended investigation. . . [and] its purpose is to express the timeless relation of unity between the Father and the Son. The sounder exegetical approach of Origen had to give way before the requirements of a more developed doctrinal approach. Between the two stand the doctrinal controversies of the fourth century" (Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 94-95). Similar (if more subtle) anachronism occurs occasionally among modern scholars. Hence, Westcott (*St. John*, 2)

the question: why did John, unlike the Synoptic authors, feel it appropriate to open the Gospel with a Prologue that clearly ascribes these qualities to Jesus?

The inadequacy of source-critical approaches to the background and currency of the Logos-concept to answer this question has not been sufficiently appreciated by many scholars. For example, William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, argues that by using the Logos-concept

> St. John has thus established common ground with all his readers. If they are Jews they will recognise and assent to the familiar doctrine of the Old Testament concerning the Word of God. If they are Greeks they will recognise and assent to the declaration that the ultimate reality is Mind expressing itself. To both alike he has announced in language easily received that the subject for which he is claiming their attention is the ultimate and supreme principle of the universe.[34]

More recently, George R. Beasley-Murray makes a similar claim: "The employment of the Logos concept in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel is the supreme example within Christian history of the communication of the gospel in terms understood and appreciated by the nations."[35]

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can claim that the Prologue "sets aside the false notion that the Word became 'personal' first at the time of the Creation or at the Incarnation. The absolute, eternal, immanent relations of the Persons of the Godhead furnish the basis for revelation."

This is not to claim, of course, that later doctrinal developments or the theology of inspiration are irrelevant to contemporary theological appropriations of the text, but only that they should be kept distinct from the historical-critical investigation of it. Kurz ("Beyond Historical Criticism: Reading John's Prologue as Catholics," in *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship*, 159-81) offers a suggestive discussion of how contemporary readers of the Prologue can legitimately draw upon the theological results of Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Christology without lapsing into a pre-critical eisegesis. More thematically, John J. O'Keefe ("The Peril and the Promise of Patristic Exegesis," in *Practical Theology: Perspectives from the Plains* [ed. Michael G. Lawler and Gail S. Risch; Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 2000] 144-61), while acknowledging the critical value of modern scholarship, defends the pastoral and theological relevance of patristic exegesis for the contemporary Church.

[34] Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel: First and Second Series* (London: Macmillan, 1945) 5.

[35] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10. Beasley-Murray does acknowledge that this traditional concept has been "startlingly modified by the affirmation of the Incarnation" in the Fourth Gospel.

However, neither scholar explains why, if its meaning would have been "understood" and "easily received" by both his Gentile and Jewish readers, the pre-existence, co-equality with God, divine creativity, etc., of ὁ λόγος would need to be spelled out by the evangelist. In fact, the decision of the evangelist to emphasize the creativity and pre-existence of the Word and its equality with God in such a strong and unambiguous statement may suggest that the audience would *not* have understood the Logos-concept necessarily to possess any of these attributes.[36]

The supposed familiarity of the Logos-concept claimed by Temple, Beasley-Murray and others obscures the importance of the Prologue in the Gospel by assuming that its theological content was on the most basic level uncontroversial and self-evident to a first-century audience. In this understanding, the Prologue provided a résumé of common knowledge about Jesus rather than a bold revelation of his identity. However, the very concept of divinity was contested when the Fourth Gospel was composed. The Augustan Ideology presented the Johannine community with an understanding of what it meant to call a person a god. Yet because it lacked the features of pre-existence, divine co-equality or divine creativity, it was considerably different from what the Fourth Gospel expresses about Jesus' divinity.

Occasionally, it is true, language *resembling* pre-existence can be found in the Imperial Cult and its predecessors, e.g., the early reference (ca. 48 B.C.E.) to Julius Caesar as "the God *made manifest* [emphasis added], offspring of Ares and Aphrodite, and common savior of human life (τὸν ἀπὸ Ἄρεως καὶ Ἀφροδε[ί]της θεὸν ἐπιφανῆ καὶ κοινὸν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου σωτῆρα)."[37] However, such language is exceedingly rare among even the most obsequious and flattering of the Augustan Poets, who never speak of a Caesar, even Augustus, as pre-existing his

[36] It is true that the OT figure of Wisdom (especially as presented in Proverbs 8 and developed in Wisdom 7-9) could and did sometimes have similar divine attributes ascribed to it during this period. Hence, in Aristobulus' works "we find a unique combination of the resting of God on the seventh day and the creation of light on the first day with the pre-temporal being of wisdom according to Prov 8:22 and certain philosophical notions" (Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* [trans. John Bowden; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974] 1. 166). However, the need of the evangelist to enumerate the divine attributes of the Logos perhaps shows that this identification had not penetrated too deeply into the popular consciousness.

[37] Deissmann, *Light*, 344.

earthly career. Indeed, the very category of pre-existence, being non-historical, made no sense within an Augustan Ideology which, through the *Aeneid* and *Eclogues* of Virgil and the *Carmen seculare* of Horace, portrayed the emperor not as existing *outside* of history but rather as being a central actor *within* the larger historical drama of the entire Roman people. The proper reference to the emperor is not to a god who σὰρξ ἐγένετο (John 1:14) but is rather to a *nascens puer* (*Ecl.* 4.8). It will be remembered that divine origin of Augustus is portrayed by Virgil as a historical event with a historical purpose and meaning that transcends him as an individual: "Turn hither now your two-eyed gaze, and behold this nation, the Romans that are yours. Here is Caesar and all the seed of Iulus destined to pass under heaven's spacious sphere. And this in truth is he whom you so often hear promised you, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will again establish a golden age in Latium amid fields once ruled by Saturn."[38] As the Prologue makes clear, especially in 1:10-11, Jesus' historical mission by contrast involves rejection by the world, not the establishment of a golden age. The distance between this fundamentally historical understanding of Caesar's divinity and the high Christology of the Fourth Gospel is unbridgeable.

The denial of Caesar's pre-existence was accompanied by a denial of his co-equality with the standard gods of the Roman pantheon. True, Martial, in a moment of extravagance, does exult Domitian above a traditional Roman deity: "Aforetime was Alcides worshipped with prayer and full blood of victims; now he, the lesser, himself worships a greater Alcides [i.e., Domitian]."[39] More typical, though, is Horace's prayer to

[38] Virgil, *Aen.* 6.788-95 (Fairclough and Gould, LCL):

Huc geminas nunc flecte acies, hanc aspice gentem
Romanosque tuos. hic Caesar et omnis Iuli
progenies magnum caeli ventura sub axem.
hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,
Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva
Saturno quondam, . . .
proferet imperium.

[39] Martial, *Ep.* 9.64.5-6 (Ker, LCL):

ante colebatur votis et sanguine largo,
maiorem Alciden nunc minor ipse colit.

Notably, under Trajan, Martial later retracted this praise offered Domitian, declaring, "I think not to address any man as Master and God" (*dicturus dominum deumque non sum*) (*Ep.* 10.72.3).

Jupiter: "O Father and Guardian of the human race, though son of Saturn, to thee by fate has been entrusted the charge of mighty Caesar; mayest thou be lord of all, with Caesar next in power!"[40] Likewise, in Ovid the most ever attributed to Augustus is his having achieved on earth a relative equality with Jupiter in heaven: "Jupiter controls the heights of heaven and the kingdoms of the triformed universe; but the earth is under Augustus' sway. Each is both sire and ruler."[41] Even this praise, though, is mitigated by the earlier admission that Julius Caesar's apotheosis was necessary to avoid Augustus being nothing more than a mere mortal: "So, then, that his son might not be born of mortal seed, [Iulus] Caesar must needs be made a god."[42]

Insistence on the divine birth of Caesar also ruled out the possibility of ascribing creative power to the person of the emperor, as he too is a creature sprung from the gods.[43] Thus, in an inscription from Halicarnassus, which otherwise lavishes extravagant praise on Augustus, his essential status as a creature and not as a creator still shines through: "Since the eternal and immortal nature of the universe, out of overflowing kindness, has bestowed on human beings the greatest of all goods by bringing forth Caesar Augustus, the father who gives us a

[40] Horace, *Odes* 1.12.49-52 (Bennett, LCL):

gentis humanae pater atque custos,
orte Saturno, tibi cura magni
Caesaris fatis data: tu secundo
Caesare regnes.

[41] Ovid, *Metam.* 15.859-61 (Miller, LCL):

. . . Iuppiter arces
temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformas
terra sub Augusto est; pater est et recto uterque.

[42] Ovid, *Metam.* 15.760-61 (Miller, LCL):

ne foret hic igitur mortali semine cretus,
ille deus faciendus erat.

[43] This same debate over the status of Christ (with all the associated questions of preexistence and co-equality) was played out in the Arian controversy several centuries later, which, notably, was resolved in large part through appeal to the Johannine Prologue: "Yet when Arius forced upon the church the question, 'Who or what was incarnate?', the answer could only be 'God.' The Logos who became incarnate can be no other than, and no less than, God; Logos and Father are of one and the same essence" (G. W. H. Lampe, "The Holy Spirit and the Person of Christ," in *Christ, Faith and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology* [ed. S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972] 111-30, here 122).

happy life and father of his own native goddess Roma, [sprung from] Zeus and saviour of the human race."[44] Indeed, not even Caligula or Nero, in their most extreme moments, pretended to creative power.

The same dissimilarity in language between the Imperial Cult and John is correspondingly found in the references to Jesus as "life" and "light" in 1:3c-5: "That which has been made in him was life, and the life was the light of the men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."[45] While, as noted above, there are some parallels in the Augustan Ideology, it never employs the language with the same theological depth and majesty in reference to the emperor as John's Prologue. The emperor's role as preserver of life (or, more properly, a "happy life" or εὐδαιμονίος βίος) is well documented and arose from the patron-client relationship (see Chapter Two), but carried no "theological" or "ontological" force. The same point applies to Seneca's prayer mentioned above, "May this sun, which has shed its light upon a world that had plunged into the abyss and was sunk in darkness, ever shine!" (*Polyb.* 13.1). This prayer contains language similar to that of the Prologue, but it is clearly metaphorical rather than ontological in intent. Rather, the frequent appearance of such "light" imagery in the Imperial Cult is doubtless due to the association of the emperor with Apollo, the Sun god. Hence, Virgil calls Augustus "your own Apollo," a title later taken up by Nero on numerous occasions.[46] There is an enormous dis-

[44] [ἐ]πεὶ ἡ αἰώνιος καὶ ἀθάνατος τοῦ παντὸς φύσις τό [μέγ]ιστον ἀγαθὸν πρὸς ὑπερβαλλούσας εὐεργεσίας ἀνθρ[ώ]ποις ἐχαρίσατο, Καίσαρα καὶ Σεβαστὸν ἐνεν[κ]αμένη [τ]ὸ[ν] τῷ καθ' ἡμᾶς εὐδαίμονι βίῳ πατέρα μὲν τῆς [ἑαυ]τοῦ πατ[ρ]ίδος θεᾶς Ῥώμης, Δία δὲ πατρῷον καὶ σωτῆρα τοῦ κο[ιν]οῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους (Ehrenberg, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, 83). The translation is based on Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (trans. Brian McNeil; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) 296. The material in brackets indicates revisions I have made to the translation based on the Greek.

[45] ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων· καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν. I have adopted the alternate reading of the RSV to reflect the text of NA27.

[46] Virgil, *Ecl.* 4.10 (Fairclough and Gould, LCL): *tuus . . . Apollo*. An inscription found at Athens reads: "To Imperator [Nero] Caesar Augustus, the new Apollo" (Αὐτοκράτοι [Νέρω]νι Καίσαρι Σεβαστῷ νέῳ Ἀπόλλωνι), and he was hailed as such when he appeared there for the Olympic games. The Greek can be found in M. P. Charlesworth, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Claudius and Nero* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951) 42; the translation and additional historical reference is from *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian* (ed. and trans. Robert K. Sherk; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 115.

tance between these flattering expressions and images and John's description of Jesus as ἡ ζωὴ [ἦ] ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Nevertheless, the emperor's claim to be a god, without either claiming pre-existence, divine co-equality and divine creativity or appearing patently insane, by itself reveals the flexibility that the concept of θεός enjoyed in the first century. While it certainly did not overlap in any significant way with the traditional Jewish or Christian understanding of what was meant by θεός, the concept of divinity employed by the Imperial Cult was well within the recognizable parameters of the term's usage, at least in the Greek-speaking provinces of the empire. It was pointed out in Chapter Three that in Asia Minor the conceptual distinction made in Latin between a "divine man" (*divus*) and a "god" (*deus*) was collapsed into the single Greek word θεός. Within the culture that produced the Gospel of John, "there were no uncontroversial criteria for the predication of *theos*. The boundaries of the concept were not unequivocally defined."[47] As a result, θεός could be and in fact was used for both human persons such as the emperor (e.g., *theos* Nero), living or dead, or to one of the traditional deities.

Given this situation, it becomes clearer why John—unlike any of the Synoptic writers—would have wanted to include the Prologue in the text of the Fourth Gospel. Indeed, perhaps what is most striking about the opening verses of the Prologue is how they directly challenge the understanding of θεός found in the Imperial Cult as a way of prefacing the Gospel narrative's portrait of Jesus. A notion of what θεός means and competing claims over who ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ was are not addressed by calling Jesus "Son of God," as in Mark 1:1 (and nine times in the Fourth Gospel beginning with the witness of John the Baptist in 1:34). This title by itself would not indicate Jesus' pre-existence and co-equality with God. As shown in the last chapter, the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ was arguably problematical for first-century Christians, who generally avoided it precisely because of its association with the title *divi filius* employed in the Imperial Cult.[48] If the Imperial Cult did present an

[47] Price, "Gods and Emperors," 80.

[48] Indeed, there is debate over the authenticity of this expression even in Mark 1:1. For a summary of the textual issues involved and a defense of the inclusion of the title in the text of Mark, see Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (2d ed.; New York: St. Martin's, 1966) 152; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; 1994; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 62.

immediate danger (politically and theologically) to the Johannine community, any reference to Jesus as "Son of God" would need to be clearly distinguished from the other uses of this title by the surrounding culture. Without such a clarification and explication of the title, the employment of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in the Fourth Gospel would merely have restated rather than solved the christological problems that the Prologue was intended to address.[49]

Likewise, the use of some other biographical convention—for example, an "infancy narrative" such as those found in Luke and Matthew—arguably would have been ill-fitting for at least two reasons. First, neither infancy narrative contains an unambiguous expression of Jesus' pre-existence or co-equality with the God. Indeed, the logic of an infancy narrative militates against the inclusion of such information. Yet such a clear ascription of these qualities to Jesus and to Jesus *alone* was needed by the Johannine community.[50] Second, the birth narratives in these two gospels (Matt 1:1-2:23; Luke 1:5-2:40) both rely on miraculous events and signs accompanying the birth of Jesus (e.g., the star guiding the wise men in Matt 2:1-5; the annunciation by the angel in Luke 1:26-31). In the ancient world "signs and wonders" were commonplace devices for justifying claims of divinity, and were especially prominent in the Imperial Cult.[51] In short, an inclusion of an infancy

[49] The reconstruction of the history of the Johannine community given in Chapter One dovetails nicely with this interpretation of the Prologue. Richter ("Präsentische," 127) theorized that the Prologue, along with the numerous "Son of God" references, was added to the Gospel precisely when an unidentified group (which, however, in light of Brown's researches, must be identified as predominantly Gentile) entered the community. A Gentile-dominated group, unlike the Jewish members of the most primitive community, would perhaps have needed a clear differentiation of Christ's divinity from that claimed by the emperor.

[50] Hence, the importance of v. 14 in stressing that Jesus was μονογενής, thereby providing a not-so-subtle attack on the claims of the various *principes* to be descended from the gods via Julius Caesar. This exclusivity is mirrored in the claim of 1:18 of the "exclusivity and absoluteness of Jesus as the revelation of God" (Michael Theobald, *Im Anfang war das Wort: Textlinguistische Studie zum Johannesprolog* [SBS 106; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983] 118). For a further discussion of the term μονογενής and its importance for the Prologue, see below.

[51] The prominence of star-imagery in the Imperial Cult, in particular in connection with Julius Caesar's claimed descent from Venus, dates to the appearance of a comet shortly after Julius Caesar's death which was widely interpreted as a sign of his apotheosis. Its appearance is mentioned by both Virgil (*Ecl.* 9.47) and Ovid (*Carm.* 1.12.47). Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 2.23.93-94; Rackham, LCL) gives the following account of the event:

narrative at the beginning of the Gospel would have evoked a comparison of Jesus with Julius or Augustus Caesar in the minds of John's readers rather than a clear contrast.[52]

The first five verses of the Prologue, however, express the cosmological concepts that clarify Jesus as the "Son of God" proclaimed later in the Gospel: it means he is pre-existent, co-equal with God, divinely creative, and the *true* light of the world. None of this is involved necessarily, though, in the term ὁ λόγος, but rather is spelled out by the evangelist through the inclusion of the entire Logos-hymn. In light of the contemporary religious terminology surrounding the Imperial Cult, it is evident why source-critical investigations of the Prologue have been inadequate. As Miller points out, they always implicitly consider the terminology of the Logos more problematical than its theological content. Attempts to explain John's decision to employ this hymn based on its philosophical or OT resonances fail.[53] John used the Logos-hymn *not*

> The only place in the whole world where a comet is the object of worship is a temple in Rome. His late Majesty Augustus had deemed this comet very propitious to himself; as it had appeared at the beginning of his rule, at some games which, not long after the decease of his father Caesar, as a member of the college founded by him he was celebrating in honour of Mother Venus. In fact he made public the joy that it gave him in these words: 'On the very days of my Games a comet was visible for seven days in the northern part of the sky. It was rising about an hour before sunset, and it was a bright star, visible from all lands. The common people believed that this star signified the soul of Caesar received among the spirits of the immortal gods, and on this account the emblem of a star was added to the bust of Caesar that we shortly afterwards dedicated in the forum.' This was his public utterance, but privately he rejoiced because he interpreted the comet as having been born for his own sake and as containing his own birth within it; and, to confess the truth, it did have a healthgiving significance over the world.

Taylor (*Divinity*, 91) makes the connection to the infancy narratives: "In foretelling the birth of a new age which Vergil celebrated a few years later, the comet was, like the star of Bethlehem, the sign of the coming of a child."

[52] On the other hand, Schmithals has suggested that the Lukan infancy narrative, which explains Jesus' birth in the city of David by appeal to the census ordered by Augustus Caesar, may intend a "subtle irony" about who really is the "savior of the world" ("Die Weihnachtsgeschichte Lk. 2:1-20," in *Festschrift für Ernst Fuchs* [ed. Gerhard Ebeling et al.; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1973] 281-97, here 290).

[53] R. P. C. Hanson (*The Continuity of Christian Doctrine* [New York: Seabury, 1981] 42-43) argues that the prominence of Logos-Christologies in the Christian tradition owes at least as much to post-biblical theological developments (most importantly, the move away from eschatalogical interpretations of Jesus' messiahship) as to the influence of the Fourth Gospel. Thus,

because it contained the word "Logos" but because it helped to express the qualities that John ascribed to the Son of God. It is not the use of the *term* "Logos" alone that is the key here (a possibility supported by its notable absence in the Gospel outside the Prologue); it is the *meaning* given it in the Prologue that is central. Once this cosmological dimension of Jesus' person, specifically the difference between his divinity and that claimed by the emperors, has been established, other elements of the Augustan Ideology can be addressed in light of it. Thus, John turns next to the witness of John the Baptist, which serves as a counterweight to the prophetic motifs current in the Imperial Cult.

(b) Johannine Prophecy: The Witness of the Baptist: vv. 6-8

If, as I have argued, the first five verses of the Prologue inform the reader of the Gospel about the pre-eminent cosmological significance of

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> we can detect in the second century a tendency from eschatology to Christology accompanied by a use of Logos doctrine. Even if we put aside the surprising ascription to Jesus of the title "Logos of God" at Revelation 19:13, we can find Ignatius describing Christ by the enigmatic title "the Logos proceeding from silence," and we can discern in the *Apologies* of Aristides and of Justin, neither of whom can with confidence be regarded as indebted to the Fourth Gospel, nor even to Philo, something much more than a tentative use of a Logos doctrine.

Moreover, he continues, the *philosophical* interpretation of the Logos-concept as the World-Soul or *Nous* that resulted from this shift (which was a phenomenon of the second and third centuries, not the first) was decisively rejected in the fourth century by Athanasius through his employment of the Fourth Gospel against Arianism:

> Ever since the time of the Apologists in the second century there had been a recurring tendency among Christian theologians to use the identification of Jesus Christ with the preexistent Logos as a convenient philosophical device. This was certainly not due to the influence of the Fourth Gospel; on the contrary those theologians, such as Irenaeus and Tertullian, who avoided this tendency, did so precisely because they could use the Fourth Gospel, and later the Fourth Gospel was to be Athanasius' chief weapon in killing this doctrine. But the temptation to give way to the influences of middle-Platonist philosophy and identify the Logos-Christ with the World-Soul or *Nous*, or some similar mediating reality, was too great many theologians of the first three centuries. (ibid., 56)

Not recognizing the post-biblical ascension to prominence of the Logos-concept, and the resultant tendency to read this process into the Gospel itself, leads unavoidably to a misunderstanding of John's intentions in beginning the Gospel with the Prologue.

Jesus in contrast to the more mundane figure of the Roman emperor, then the subsequent sections function as supplements that further compare and contrast the Johannine Christology and the Augustan Ideology. The witness of the Baptist in vv. 6-8 is ancillary to the cosmological elements of 1:1-5 in that prophecy was used to represent the person of the emperor as a divinely-ordained and world-historical figure intimately connected with the destiny of the entire Roman Empire.

The Prologue continues: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the Light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light" (1:6-8).[54] John understood the witness of the Baptist as an integral part of his christological portrait of Christ in the Prologue. This is clear from the fact that these verses likely interrupt the structure of the Prologue and appear to have been detached from the separate Baptist tradition contained in 1:19-37 (where they originally functioned as the Gospel's opening verses).[55] But even if they are an original composition by the evangelist, the fact remains that the content of these verses clearly shifts the focus away from the pre-existent Logos and into history. Here, Barrett writes, "the second division of the Prologue begins and for the first time the stage of history is reached."[56] Through the witness of the Baptist, the evangelist is able for the first time to present the person of Christ not only as superior to the emperor in an ontological sense but also as his rival on the plane of human events.

Certainly, John the Baptist holds immense importance for the development and self-understanding of early Christianity, as demonstrated

[54] ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης· οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ. οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.

[55] This opinion is widely shared and seems secure. See, e.g., Brown, *John*, 1. 27-28; Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 1. 249-53; Haenchen, *John*, 1. 116; Perkins, *John*, 4; Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 248-49. Even Lindars (*John*, 82, 88), who holds to Johannine authorship of the Prologue, accepts that vv. 6-8 (along with v. 15) are entirely or in part "insertions into the formal composition of the Prologue" drawn from a previously existing tradition. Barrett (*St. John*, 159), however, rejects this claim: "There is no need to suspect interpolation here; John occupies an important place in the gospel, and it is quite natural that he should be introduced into the Prologue." But since the Beloved Disciple, who plays at least an equally important function in the Gospel, is not mentioned here, Barrett's verdict remains a minority view.

[56] Ibid., 159.

by his appearance in all four gospel narratives.[57] In the Fourth Gospel, though, his significance is reduced to a single function:

> In the work of the Baptist in and for itself the Fourth Gospel shows little interest—even less, perhaps, than Mark, who has given us a sketch of his personal appearance and habits, and a brief characterization, as well as an account of his death. There is nothing here of the prophet of judgment depicted in Matthew and Luke, or of the preacher of righteousness whose down-to-earth morality is exemplified in a passage peculiar to the latter [Luke 3:10-14]. As might have been expected, the Fourth Evangelist is not concerned to record either the birth or parentage or the death of the Baptist. . . . He is interested in the Baptist solely as the forerunner and herald, or, in his own words, the "witness," to the Messiah.[58]

John's exclusive focus on the prophetic function of the Baptist by John stands in marked contrast to the Synoptic Gospels, with which "his report has little contact."[59] In light of the discussion of vv. 1-5 above, it also suggests a very different concern as compared with the Synoptic gospels, namely to echo the legitimating role of prophecy in the Augustan Ideology. This possibility, though, is rarely if ever entertained by most scholars.

John's portrait of the Baptist's ministry neglects the Roman context in favor of an OT background for several reasons. Perhaps most obviously, the Gospel narrative (1:19-23) mentions both the prophet Elijah and ἡ προφήτης (presumably the prophet promised by Moses in Deut 18:15-18) as possible (but rejected) identities of the Baptist, while he him-

[57] For discussions of the current state of research on John the Baptist and his followers, see Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-historical Study* (JSNTSup 62; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); *John the Baptist and Jesus: A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (ed. W. Barnes Tatum; Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1994); Carl R. Kazmierski, *John the Baptist: Prophet and Evangelist* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996); Catherine M. Murphy, *John the Baptist: Prophet of Purity for a New Age* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003).

[58] Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 248. The Baptist traditions found in vv. 19-37 and their role in John's Christology are discussed in detail by Dodd (ibid., 248-70). The possibility of an early conflict between the Baptist's followers and those of Jesus is developed in more detail by Brown (*Community*, 69-71).

[59] Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 248.

self quotes Isa 40:3 in response to his questioners. In addition to this factor was the common, if not universal, belief among Jews and Christians in the late first-century that prophecy had ceased before or with John the Baptist, respectively.[60] This view has reinforced the tendency throughout Christian history to interpret the Baptist against an OT background rather than within the broader cultural matrix of the first-century empire.[61] Finally, as Rebecca Gray notes in her study of Second Temple Judaism, there is the "bias of most modern biblical scholars toward the classical prophets of the pre-exilic and exilic periods" which excludes from this category figures "who might be classified as 'prognosticators,' 'apocalyptists,' or 'mantic wise men'" but whom ancient writers might well have called "prophets."[62]

However, in the larger cultural context of both Judaism and Christianity, prophecy and "prophetic" phenomena such as omens and oracles had long played a key role in legitimizing political and social authority. As shown in Chapter Two, the Augustan Ideology, especially through the writings of Virgil and Horace, employed a language and style of *ex eventu* prophecy with very deep roots in classical culture.[63]

[60] This belief was solidified among "orthodox" Christians by the Montanist heresy in the mid-second century.

[61] For a discussion of whether Josephus in particular (and Jews in general) believed that all forms of prophecy had ended by this period, see Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 8-34. Her conclusion, following that of John Barton (*Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel After the Exile* [London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1986]), is that "the belief that prophecy had ceased was not an absolute dogma, but rather one expression of a vague nostalgia that idealized the past as a time when people were, in some indescribable way, closer to God and holier than in the present" (*Prophetic Figures*, 34). Since her focus is on Josephus, however, Gray does not consider the understanding of prophecy in the surrounding non-Jewish culture. The most recent and comprehensive treatment of this matter is Alexander P. Jassen, "Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Early Judaism" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2006).

Regarding the Montanist movement and its failed attempt to reinstate the role of prophet within second-century Christianity, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[62] Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 6.

[63] The historical roots of this use of prophecy pre-date not only the Roman Empire but the Roman Republic as well. Spears (*Princeps A Diis Electus*, 121) argues that "although a belief in omens was an essential element in the Roman religious mentality, oracles and omens foreshadowing kingship had long been an important political and literary device in the Greek world." Certainly in the case of Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Fourth Eclogue*, these prophetic motifs accounted in large measure for their popularity, since

As an example, albeit a singularly important one, the Sibylline Oracles were invoked constantly to justify in world-historic terms the rule of individual men and nations.[64] Thus the founding document of the Augustan Ideology, the *Aeneid*, places on the lips of the Sibyl (6.752-853) the prophecy of Rome's greatness that will culminate in Augustus' reign, a story repeated by Ovid (*Meta.* 14.101-54). Following Virgil's example, Propertius describes the Sibyl of Troy as having "bade Remus sanctify the fields of Aventine."[65] Horace also cites the Sibyl as the authority for his *Carmen saeculare*: "O Phoebe, and Diana, queen of forests, radiant glory of the heavens, O ye ever cherished and ever to be cherished, grant the blessings that we pray for at the holy season when the verses of the Sibyl have commanded chosen maidens and spotless youths to sing the hymn in honour of the gods who love the Seven Hills."[66] Such examples could be multiplied, but these should suffice to indicate the important place of a distinctively non-Jewish type of prophecy in the first-century empire.

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his readers and listeners from every social level "considered prophecy an important and interesting part of life" (Claussen, *Virgil's Eclogues*, 65).

[64] Klauck (*Religious Context*, 201) describes this phenomenon thus:

> The concept of "Sibyl," which is virtually impossible to explain in etymological terms, has presumably developed from the proper name of a specific person to become the designation of a genre. The Sibyl is understood to be a woman of advanced age, with visionary gifts that break out from time to time. She is not linked to any one site of oracles, nor are questions explicitly posed to her. In a condition of ecstasy, she prophesies calamitous premonitory signs and catastrophes.

For extended discussions of the role of the Sibylline Oracles in the political life of the Late Republic and Early Empire, see ibid., 200-4; John J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (JSJSup 54; Leiden: Brill, 1997); Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); Eric M. Orlin, *Temples, Religion and Politics in the Roman Republic* (Mnemosyne Bibliotheca Classica Batava Supplements 164; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[65] Propertius, *Eleg.* 4.1.49-50 (Butler, LCL):

> *. . . tremulae cortina Sibyllae*
> *dixit Avertino rura pianda Remo*

[66] Horace, *Carm. saec.* 1-8 (Bennett, LCL):

> *Phoebe silvarumque potens Diana,*
> *lucidum caeli decus, o colendi,*
> *semper et culti, date quae precamur,*
> *tempore sacro,*
> *quo Sibyllini monuere versus*

The Augustan Ideology extensively employed the genre of Sibylline Oracles to consolidate and exercise the power of Roman rulers:

> The Roman Empire was an empire of the written word. The emperors communicated with their subjects through a combination of the written word, visual art, buildings, and ceremonies. Their subjects may have responded vocally at first (when they did not do things like tear imperial edicts off walls), but their responses also found their way into writing in oracular form. As religious language provided the vocabulary for conceptualizing temporal power, so too it provided a natural format for authorizing responses to the actions of the powerful. To retain their authority they had to be written down. The use of ancient and revered prophetic figures or prophetic forms gave responses in the present instant authority as the wisdom of a respected member of cultured society.[67]

The importance placed on oracles and prophecies by the emperor, and the dangers posed to him by competing or conflicting prophecies, helps explain why Augustus, after his ascension to the office of high priest, "brought in from all quarters and burnt the books of prophecy, both Latin and Greek (in number more than two thousand), whose authors were unknown or little known, retaining only the Sibylline books, and of these he made a selection."[68]

The powerful effect of these prophesies on the general population hardly went unnoticed by early Christians, as evidenced by the portrait of the first beast in Revelation 13 with "a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words" (13:5: στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ βλασφημίας). Likewise, the image of the second beast "even speaks" (13:15: λαλήσῃ).[69] An

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virgines laetas puerosque castos
diis quibus septem placuere colles
dicere carmen.

[67] Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*, 95.

[68] Suetonius, *Aug.* 31.1 (Rolfe, LCL): *postquam uero pontificatum maximum, quem numquam uiuo Lepido auferre sustinuerat, mortuo demum suscepit, quidquid fatidicorum librorum Graeci Latinique generis nullis uel parum idoneis auctoribus uulgo ferebatur, supra duo milia contracta undique cremauit ac solos retinuit Sibyllinos, hos quoque dilectu habito.*

[69] This point is made by Georgi ("Who is the True Prophet?" 36), who refers to Steven Scherrer, "Revelation 13 as an Historical Source for the Imperial Cult under Domitian" (Th.D. diss.; Harvard University, 1979). See also Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 50-96.

awareness of the Sibylline Oracles among first-century Christians is also suggested by the term for "inspiration" in 2 Tim 3:16 (θεόπνευστος). This word appears not in the LXX but in pagan literature, most notably in the Sibylline Oracles.[70] Likewise, the appearance of the Sibyl in the late medieval hymn *Dies Irae*, "with David and Sibyl as witnesses" (*Teste David cum Sibylla*), reveals the lasting power of Roman oracular and prophetic imagery among Christians of the first and subsequent centuries.[71] If these images lingered in the Christian imagination for more than a millennium after the death of Christ, it seems unlikely that they would have escaped the notice of a mixed Jewish-Gentile community living under rulers such as Nero, Vespasian and Domitian.

I am not claiming that John understood or presented the Baptist as an oracle or prophet drawn from pagan models. The Jewish background of the Johannine community and the traditions associated with the Baptist clearly presuppose a primarily OT context for his ministry, and the portrait of him in the Fourth Gospel bears this out. However, this does not explain why John detached some of these traditions from their original source and inserted them into the Prologue, thereby disrupting the poetic structure, when they could have remained with the materials in 1:19-37. The decision to interpolate them into the Prologue is to be explained by their function there. And that function, I suggest, is to provide, within the christological portrait of the Prologue, an explicit parallel to the prophetic and oracular language of the Imperial Cult that shows Caesar's place in world history not as an unexpected or happenstance event but as the culmination of a long, divinely-ordered and pre-ordained historical process. It is unimportant here whether or not this historical process is to be understood as "sacred" or "salvific history"—or whether these categories drawn from biblical theology are really applicable at all to the Johannine attempt to re-present history.

[70] Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 8-11. It is worth noting here that part of the Sibylline Oracles (3.396-400) presupposes the book of Daniel, which further suggests that Jewish and Christian writers of the period read and were influenced by it. See William Sanday, *Inspiration: Eight Lectures on the Early History and Origin of the Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration* (London: Longmans, Green, 1896) 102.

[71] The *Dies Irae* of the traditional Requiem mass was composed by Thomas of Celano in the thirteenth century. Klauck (*Religious Context*, 200-1) writes of it: "The *Dies Irae* shows us the final product of a long development to which Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian traditions have made their successive, overlapping contributions."

What does matter is that the defining text for Johannine Christology attributes to Jesus the same sort of credentials that the emperor claimed, namely, the μαρτυρία of someone ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ (1:6). John represents the character of John the Baptist only as a herald or prophet because it is the function that resonates most clearly with the Augustan Ideology that he intended, at least in part, to use as a contrast to his portrait of Christ. The provision of this "witness" (μαρτυρεῖν, μαρτυρία), in turn, was the sole purpose of the Baptist's place: he sets before his listeners (and the readers of the Fourth Gospel) the fundamental choice between Christ and Caesar.[72] As Edwyn Clement Hoskyns puts it, "the Evangelist in straightforward prose requires his readers to stand in faith before a man sent and appointed to declare the will of God."[73] Moreover, by his testimony as a man within history, the Baptist witnesses to the historical meaning of the Logos: until now it was of supreme cosmic significance but had not been shown as "coming into the world" (1:9: ἐρξόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον). It is to this historical mission of the Logos that the Prologue next turns.[74]

(c) Johannine Society: The World's Rejection Overcome: vv: 9-13

If Augustus' use of prophecy secured the assent and worship of the Roman world, this world gave Jesus a different reception. In fact, Jesus' rejection by his own people and the resulting ignominious death proved

[72] Barrett (*St. John*, 159) writes that John's employment of μαρτυρέω "is normal Greek usage, [and] it corresponds sufficiently to the use of the root *'ûd* in the Old Testament (which also supplies the notion of God's testifying to, or against, his people), and is the common meaning of the words in John." This judgment as to its verbal meaning is supported by BDAG: "to confirm or attest something on the basis of personal knowledge or belief" (BDAG, s.v. "μαρτυρέω").

[73] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 144. The quotation from Theodore Haeckel (*Virgil*, 80) about Virgil's theodicy (cited also in Chapter Two) also captures this: "Aeneas—Aeneas, the leader towards the glory of Rome. But the true leader—and this, be it remembered, was Virgil's opinion after a century of civil war—the true leader is not he who makes himself leader, but he who is called and dedicated to that end by Fate."

[74] Ulrich Busse (*Das Johannesevangelium: Bildlichkeit, Diskurs, Ritual, mit einer Bibliographie über den Zeitraum 1986-1998* [BETL 162; Louvain/Paris/Sterling, VA: Uitgeverij Peeters/Leuven University Press, 2002] 70) argues that vv. 6-13 form a single "*Lebensdrama historisch*." While perhaps correct, the shift in focus between vv. 6-8 and vv. 9-13 (along with the probability of interpolation in the first section) justifies their separate treatment here.

a serious stumbling block to belief for many in the generations following his death. We need only recall here Paul's various references to the scandal of the cross (e.g., 1 Cor 1:23; 2 Cor 13:4; the insertion of a reference to the cross into the Christ-hymn in Phil 2:8 and possibly again in Col 1:20).[75] Almost any Roman subject of the first century would see an extremely great contrast between Jesus, a crucified criminal abandoned by his closest followers, and Augustus, elevated by the full Senate of the Roman people with "heavenly honors" and an official cult of worship after his death. Indeed, were the Baptist an ordinary Sibyl his prophecy would have been one of catastrophe, not of triumph. So manifest was the difference between the world's responses to Christ and to Caesar that the evangelist apparently felt compelled to address it. So in 1:9-13 the evangelist first acknowledges the world's rejection of Jesus, then explains how it reveals not the failure of God in history but rather a divine victory.

The cosmological importance bestowed upon Christ in the first five verses of the Prologue recurs in vv. 9 and 10, keeping Jesus at the center of the reader's attention: "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came into his own home, and his own people received him not" (1:9-11).[76] John reaffirms Jesus as the true light of the world (1:5), the creative divinity through whom the world was made (1:3) and the one who, as announced by the Baptist (1:7-8), has entered into world history (1:9). John then informs the reader that "the world knew him not" (ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω). According to the next verse, the world's incomprehension resulted in the rejection of Christ, a theme that in many respects characterizes the remainder of the Gospel: "He came to his own home (τὰ ἴδια), and his own people (οἱ ἴδιοι) received him not."

While the cosmological titles and their significance as a response to the notion of divinity found in the Imperial Cult have been discussed above, the introduction of the adjective ἴδιος is a new element here.

[75] See, e.g., Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 312; Bornkamm, *Paul* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 158-60.

[76] ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθροπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω. εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.

Many commentators have seen an exclusively Jewish reference here. Hence, B. F. Westcott claims that "there can be no reasonable doubt that this phrase, and the corresponding masculine which follows . . . describes the land and the people of Israel," an interpretation followed by Bernard, Boismard, Brown, and Barnabas Lindars.[77] The choice of the neuter plural τὰ ἴδια, though, is neither accidental nor unimportant, since it undermines the supposed identification of "his own home" with "his own people." While the latter usage (οἱ ἴδιοι) may refer to the Jewish people and recall the earlier conflicts between the synagogue leaders and the Johannine community, the former expression (τὰ ἴδια), especially in light of the anti-imperial elements of the preceding verses and the contrasting use of the masculine earlier in the same verse, suggests a broader understanding of what in this world was Jesus' "own."[78] C. K. Barrett, while adopting the narrower interpretation of τὰ ἴδια as "Israel," considers another possibility: "But it must be observed that it would be possible to speak of a coming of the Logos in the Platonic sense to the created world, which was his natural counterpart, or in the Stoic sense to rational men, who were peculiarly λογικοί."[79] For Bultmann, this wider interpretation of τὰ ἴδια finds its limit: "Τὰ ἴδια refers therefore to the world of men, which belongs to the Logos as its Creator, and the ἴδιοι equally are men."[80]

Unmentioned by these commentators, though, is the fact that, in the first century, "the world" was widely understood as having another owner, the emperor, who claimed possession and absolute authority over the sphere of earthly existence: "Jupiter controls the heights of heaven and the kingdoms of the triformed universe; but the earth is

[77] Westcott, *St. John*, 8; Bernard, *St. John*, 1. 15; Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, 35; Brown, *John*, 1. 10; Lindars, *John*, 90.

[78] It should be noted that this "anti-imperial" context does not extend to the appearances of τὰ ἴδια in 16:32 and 19:27.

[79] Barrett, *St. John*, 163.

[80] Bultmann, *John*, 56. This interpretation, though, goes too far: while correctly applying the broadest possible application to τὰ ἴδια, it inadequately appreciates the Jewish background of the Johannine community which οἱ ἴδιοι would have evoked for John's readers. In any case, such philosophizing interpretations of τὰ ἴδια, whatever the original context and reference of the Logos hymn, would probably not have had much resonance within the Johannine community itself. Brown (*John*, 1. 10) notes that Bultmann's "interpretation flows from his presupposition that the Prologue was originally a Gnostic hymn."

under Augustus' sway. Each is both sire and ruler."[81] All the lands and wealth of the empire ultimately were at his disposal, whether by legal appropriation (e.g., criminal proceedings against rebels or political enemies), military exigency (e.g., the confiscation of the Jewish temple-tax by Vespasian), or imperial fiat.[82] Moreover, under some rulers, for example, Nero, this claim to authority over all the earth reached levels that far transcended any merely political claim to power. Seneca could write a soliloquy for Nero, which rivals any OT psalm:

> Have I of all mortals found favour with Heaven and been chosen to serve on earth as vicar of the gods? I am the arbiter of life and death for the nations; it rests in my power what each man's lot and state shall be; by my lips Fortune proclaims what gift she would bestow on each human being: from my utterance peoples and cities gather reasons for rejoicing; without my favour and grace no part

[81] Ovid, *Metam.* 15.859-61 (Miller, LCL):

> . . . . . *Iuppiter arces*
> *temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformas*
> *terra sub Augusto est; pater est et recto uterque.*

This position as "sire" and "ruler" did not, of course, erase either public or private ownership of particular properties and was never interpreted absolutely in a *legal* sense. The separation of the private funds and properties of the emperor (*res privata*) not only from that of other individuals but also from the public wealth and properties (*patrimonium* or *res publicae*) was maintained throughout the imperial era, albeit with considerable modifications and blurring of lines in regard to the latter at different periods. See Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) 620-30; Magie, *Roman Rule*, 1. 681.

[82] Examples of all three strategies are plentiful. For instance, under Domitian, to relieve the financial stress caused by his building projects, "the property of the living and dead was seized everywhere on any charge brought by any accuser. It was enough to allege any action or word derogatory to the majesty of the prince. Estates of those in any way connected with him were confiscated, if but one man came forward to declare that he had heard from the deceased during his lifetime that Caesar was his heir" (Suetonius, *Dom.* 12.1-2; Rolfe, LCL: *bona uiuorum ac mortuorum usquequaque quolibet et accusatore et crimine corripiebantur. satis erat obici qualecumque factum dictumque aduersus maiestatem principis. confiscabantur alienissimae hereditates uel uno existente, qui diceret audisse se ex defuncto, cum uiueret, heredem sibi Caesarem esse*). Pliny the Elder tells how Nero solved the problem of economically ruinous large estates in the provinces: "six owners were in possession of half of Africa when our Leader put them to death" (Plint, *Nat.* 18.7.35; Rackham, LCL: *sex domini semissem Africae possidebant, cum interfecit eos Nero princeps*). Sherk (*Roman Empire*, 115) comments on this passage: "Henceforth provincial land was the property of the Roman people or the emperors."

> of the whole world can prosper; all those many thousands of swords which my peace restrains will be drawn at my nod; what nations shall be destroyed, which banished, which shall receive the gift of liberty, which have it taken from them, what kings shall become slave and whose heads shall be crowned with royal honour, what cities shall fall and which shall rise—this is mine to decree.[83]

In light of such claims to absolute power, the empire itself would have appeared to most people as the extension of an emperor who presented himself not only as a political leader and as an instrument of historical destiny but as a god as well. If, as Westcott claims, "in the Emperor the World found a personal embodiment and claimed Divine honour," by the same logic the emperor could rightly claim the whole world as an extension of himself.[84] For the emperor ὁ κόσμος and τὰ ἴδια were identical.

The Prologue reveals, though, that the true sire and ruler of the world is not Caesar but rather the Logos or Christ, since "The world came to be through him" (1:10: ὁ κόσμος δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο). Furthermore, 1:7 states plainly that the Baptist's mission was not to any one people or nation; rather he came "for testimony . . . that all might believe through him (εἰς μαρτυρίαν . . . ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ). The entire world, not just the people of Israel, is "his own"(τὰ ἴδια): "There is, however, no final distinction between Israel and the world, between Jew and Greek. As the creation of God, all men are His property."[85] For the

[83] Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.2 (Basore, LCL): *Egone ex omnibus mortalibus placui electusque sum, qui in terris deorum vice fungerer? Ego vitae necisque gentibus arbiter; qualem quisque sortem statumque habeat, in mea manu positum est; quid cuique mortalium fortuna datum velit, meo ore pronuntiat; ex nostro responso laetitiae causas populi urbesque concipiunt; nulla pars usquam nisi volente propitioque me floret; haec tot milia gladiorum, quae pax mea comprimit, ad nutum meum stringentur; quas nationes funditus excidi, quas transportari, quibus libertatem dari, quibus eripi, quos reges mancipia fieri quorumque capiti regium circumdari decus oporteat, quae ruant urbes, quae oriantur, mea iuris dictio est.*

[84] Westcott, *Epistles*, 255.

[85] Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 146. Not surprisingly, given these competing claims to ownership of the world, the language of the Imperial Cult and of the LXX and primitive Christianity sometimes overlap when describing the authority of the emperor and that of God. For example, as Deissmann (*Light*, 347) observes:

> Five fragments of a marble pedestal from Pergamum bear this inscription, which was put up in honour of Augustus while he was still alive: Αὐτοκρά-

evangelist the claim that Jesus "came to his own" (1:11: εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν) was not simply a theological statement about the Logos but implicitly a political one as well. Jesus is both the ultimate source of all secular authority (cf. 19:11: "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above") and the secular leader claimed to be ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κοσμοῦ. It is Christ rather than Caesar who is *Dominus et deus noster* (Suetonius, *Dom.* 13.4). To worship Christ as Lord and God (John 20:28) is to deny the title to the emperor.

Since this world has rejected Christ, though, and acclaimed Caesar as a god, the evangelist challenges and redraws the boundaries of the world by presenting a new order of things in Christ: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (1:12-13).[86] The challenge presented here to the established order of the Roman world is twofold. It establishes a new society within, and opposed to, the secular order established by the *Pax Romana*, composed not of all people but only "those who received him" (ὅσοι ἔλαβον αὐτόν), that is, "those believing in his name" (οἱ πιστεύοντες εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ). Its membership is composed of those "born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σάρκος οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν), in other words, Johannine Christians.[87] In addition, the Prologue offers to all believers "power to become children of God" (ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι), thereby reversing the logic of the Imperial Cult, which placed the emperor at the head of society by virtue of his divinity. Within the context of the first-century empire, where all power was centered in and all well-being

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τορα Καίσαρα θεοῦ υἱὸν θεὸν Σεβαστὸν πάσης γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης ἐπόπτην. (*The Emperor, Caesar, son of a god, the god Augustus, of every land and sea the overseer.)* "Overseer" as a title of honour in this inscription recalls the use of the same word as a predicate of God in Judaism and Primitive Christianity.

[86] ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σάρκος οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.

[87] The Romans likely did not see Johannine Christians as forming a well-defined community (see Chapter Two above). Instead, this was their self-understanding, defined by opposition both to the synagogue and to the Imperial Cult.

flowed from the person of the god-emperor, the challenge contained in these verses to the established order of things could hardly have been missed.

The new society of the Johannine Community should not be understood in traditional political terms. John entirely lacks the language of the "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven" (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ; ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) which is so common to the Synoptic Gospels.[88] Indeed, the two attestations of the expression ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in the Fourth Gospel (3:3, 5) occur when Jesus requires that one be "born anew" (γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν) or "born of water and the Spirit" (γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος). These cases almost certainly echo the claim in 1:13 that only those people "born of God" (ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν) can become "children of God" (τέκνα θεοῦ). Rather, the proper understanding of the new society of believers, as Georg Richter argues, is eschatological, with Christ's promises being fulfilled in the present moment within the Johannine community.[89]

For John, this new society formed by the appearance of the Logos in history is not the result of any human action: "It is a strictly supernatural event, wrought by God alone" and not "of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man" (1:13: οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σάρκος οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός).[90] Schnackenburg also makes the pertinent observation: "The three negatives excluding all natural factors are, however, so striking that one may well suspect 'vehement polemics' behind the verse."[91] Given the lack of any single target for them—the attack is not directed against only the Jews or only the Imperial Cult or only Gnostic dualism—the logical opponent is arguably the

[88] The expression ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ occurs some fourteen times in Mark, four times in Matthew, and thirty-two times in Luke, but only twice (3:3, 5) in John. Ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, Matthew's preferred expression, appears twenty-eight times in his gospel but nowhere else among the gospels. Βασιλεύς does appear sixteen times in John (fourteen in the Passion Narrative), always in reference to Jesus, but always ironically as a misunderstanding of his office. See Chapter Five below.

[89] Richter, "Präsentische," 127. Notably, Richter argues that the Prologue was added to the *Grundschrift* in order to reinforce the present eschatology of the Johannine community following the influx of a new (and presumably Gentile) group of believers (ibid.).

[90] Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 1. 263. Barrett (*St. John*, 164) shares this opinion, arguing that the expression οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σάρκος οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός is intended to emphasize that "no human agency is or can be responsible for such a birth as this."

[91] Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 1. 263. Schnackenburg attributes this position to Adolf von Harnack, but without source citation.

entire Roman world that had rejected Christ. Or, in John's expression, τὰ ἴδια.[92]

Set against these varied opponents, who collectively encompass the world of the first-century empire, are "those believing in his name," whom John then describes alternatively as "children of God" and "born of God." The language is striking, and particularly political in its connotations. Although the phrase τέκνα θεοῦ does have some currency in Paul's letters (e.g. Rom 8:16, 21; 9:8, 26; Phil 2:15), his preferred term is υἱοί. The Synoptic Gospels employ the expression only once (Matt 5:9, in the Sermon on the Mount), elsewhere deploying υἱοί or avoiding the noun altogether. However, the Johannine tradition uses the term in a number of passages. It appears not only in John 11:52 (where the high priest prophesies that Jesus is to die "not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God"!) but also in 1 John 3:1, 2, 10 and 5:2. In all, these attestations are equal in number to those in the Synoptics and the authentic Pauline letters combined. For an audience sensitive to the Roman context and especially to the claim made by the emperor to be ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, these expressions would have carried connotations beyond what they conveyed in the context of the original Logos-hymn.[93]

[92] The exact reference of the threefold negation οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σάρκος οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός in 1:13 is unclear. It may refer to Jewish ethnicity requirements, ancient theories of procreation, a dualistic rejection of the body, or even initiation by sacrifice into Gnostic religions, or any combination of these. The use of the plural "bloods" (αἱμάτων) is especially obscure. It is possible here that the evangelist is disavowing the matrilineal ethnicity requirements of Judaism. However, if this is the case the singular would be most natural. Hoskyns (*Fourth Gospel*, 147) considers it a necessary aberration from normal usage by the evangelist since "[Christians'] birth does in fact depend upon a death which later he describes as involving the outpouring of blood (19:34)." Bultmann (*John*, 60 n. 2) rejects this interpretation, pointing instead "not to Semitic but to Greek [usage], where at least Eurip. Ion 693 provides a proper parallel: ἄλλων τραφεὶς ἐξ αἱμάτων = a son sprung from strange blood. Otherwise the plur. of blood is only used of drops or streams of spilt blood (Lev. 12 and 15 passim and the Tragedians)." Brown (*John*, 1. 12) also notes this association, likewise rejecting a Semitic background in favor of one in Greek physiology. If "spilt blood" is intended, the reference may be to the sacrificial rites involved in both Jewish and Pagan religion, including the Imperial Cult. Wes Howard-Brook offers a liberationist interpretation wherein "the nonchild of God is the one born out of bloodshed, violence, and, ultimately, in the Genesis thematic, fratricide" (*Becoming Children of God: John's Gospel and Radical Discipleship* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994] 56). Considering the demographic complexity of the Johannine community, it is probably not necessary to choose between these various possibilities.

[93] The provenance of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in the Imperial Cult is discussed above in Chapters Two and Three.

John's use of τέκνα θεοῦ as a description of Christ's followers also allowed him to challenge the key tenet of the Augustan Ideology, namely, that the emperor held a unique status as υἱὸς θεοῦ, with authority over the world and all its inhabitants.[94] So closely connected were divine descent and political power in the first century that Dio Chrysostom could use the expression τοῦ Διὸς εἶναι υἱός ("to be a son of Zeus") as synonymous with "to be a ruler."[95] Likewise, Deissmann observes that "the adjective θεῖος, 'divine,' . . . is, like the Latin *divinus*, very common in the sense of 'Imperial' throughout the whole Imperial period."[96] But sharing in the emperor's divinity was never a possibility, even if a greater or lesser share of the benefits that accrued to humanity through his rule could be expected for loyal service and servility.

Even Paul, who certainly rejected the Imperial Cult, recognized these benefits and occasionally slips into the language of the Augustan Ideology:

> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. (Rom 13:1-4a)[97]

[94] The absence of τέκνον θεοῦ from the Imperial Cult is probably due to its diminutive sense ("child" rather than "son"), which would be an inappropriate title for the emperor.

[95] Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 4.21; cited by Martitz et al., "υἱός," *TDNT*, 8. 337 n. 12.

[96] Deissmann, *Light*, 347. He continues: "So firmly had it established itself in the language of the court that it is found even in the period when Christianity was the religion of the state—a period far removed from the Primitive Christian standard of conscience. . . . we have no less than ten documents in which Christian emperors are called 'our most divine Lord' . . . . Similarly we find θειότης, 'divinity,' used of the (Christian) Emperor's majesty, this also, of course, being taken over from the old language of religious observance" (ibid., 347-48).

[97] Wengst (*Pax Romana*, 80), following August Stroebel ("Zum Verständnis vom Rom 13," *ZNW* 47 [1956] 79), writes that "all the way through this passage Paul has taken up the terminology of Hellenistic administrative language." Ernst Käsemann (*Commentary on Romans* [trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 354) understands Paul's reference to be more local and municipal, an alternative that Wengst (*Pax Romana*, 205 n. 72) does not take to be exclusive.

Jesus' response to Pilate in John 19:11 is entirely different, signaling quiet defiance rather than prudent submission. These two very different responses to the emperor were written in equally different circumstances: Paul to a community still unnoticed by Nero, John to a community living after the Neronian persecution, after the fall of Jerusalem, and under the rule of Domitian *Dominus et deus noster*.[98] Accordingly, John offers his readers not an accommodation to but a decision about Roman power: were they to become the *clientela* of *Imperator Caesar divi filius Augustus* or τέκνα θεοῦ?

This process of becoming τέκνα θεοῦ, as John relates in 1:12, does not demand the sort of submission or sacrifice found in the Imperial Cult. Rather, it is necessary πιστεύειν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, that is, "not simply to accept His claim, by intellectual assent, but to acknowledge that claim by yielding allegiance. . . . Πιστεύειν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ means to acknowledge Christ and to accept him as the revelation of God."[99] This claim, in turn, requires not just belief in the Logos in its cosmological importance but also in its historical activity and its decisive socio-political significance for the believer. Schnackenburg argues as follows:

> Faith is the basic prerequisite for salvation, and in Johannine theology the one condition which contains all others. The expression "believe in his name" is typically and exclusively Johannine (cf. 2:23; 3:18; 1 Jn 3:23; 5:13), and implies the acceptance of Jesus to the full extent of his self-revelation. Such an act of faith is possible only in the encounter with a historical bringer of salvation, a person who is the mediator of salvation.[100]

Having both laid the groundwork for faith in Christ and spelled out its challenge to the cosmological, prophetic-historical and social aspects of the Augustan Ideology, John next completes his portrait of the Logos-Christ.

[98] Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 36) writes: "Paul's words about the duty of Christians to be submissive to governing authorities (13:1-2) would have fallen on receptive ears, because there is no reason to think that Christians of Rome would have been opposed to Nero at this time."

[99] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 184-85. Barrett (*St. John*, 164) explains this unusual phrase: "It may be distinguished from πιστεύειν with the dative, which generally means 'to give credence to.'"

[100] Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 1. 262-63.

(d) Johannine Doxology: The Glory of the Only-Begotten: vv. 14-18

The entire Prologue is concerned with the δόξα of the Logos: detailing its pre-existence, divine creativity and co-equality (vv. 1-3); calling it the true light of all people (vv. 4-5, 9), which the Baptist announced (vv. 6-8) and which has come into its home and been made flesh (vv. 10-12); and spelling out its effects on those who believe (v. 13). However, in the last five verses of the Prologue, John refocuses the audience's attention on the object of their faith, Jesus Christ, seen now for the first time in all his glory *and* humanity. For, despite all the echoes of the emperor and the Augustan Ideology reverberating throughout the Prologue up to v. 14, it is not until this point that John explicitly tells his audience that the appearance of the Logos in human history was accomplished by its incarnation among the children of Israel: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John bore witness to him, and cried, 'This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me'" (1:14-15).[101]

The incarnation, unlike the mythic founding of Rome and the *ex eventu* prophecies related by the Augustan poets, was an event in human history.[102] John also stresses to the readers, though, that the incarnation is not just a dead fact from the past but a present reality in their contemporary lives, since John "witnesses" (present tense: μαρτυρεῖ) to it.[103] As a result of the Logos becoming flesh and dwelling

[101] καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων· οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον· ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι προωτός μου ἦν.

[102] Barrett (*St. John*, 166) therefore writes: "The faith of the church rests upon a real beholding of one who, however glorious, was a historical person."

[103] Bultmann (*John*, 75 n. 2) is unequivocal on this point: "The present tense μαρτυρεῖ is used because of the continuing actuality of the witness of the Baptist. That is to say, it is not a historical report." This opinion is also shared by Barrett (*St. John*, 167), as well as Haenchen (*John*, 1. 120): "This saying [v. 15] is best understood from the point of view that John has apparently been incorporated into the community; as a member of the community he is perpetually present." Brown (*John*, 1. 15, paraphrasing Haenchen) is less convinced of this reading, without ruling out the possibility: "The witness of the Baptist (μαρτυρεῖ) is probably used in the historical present here, though it is possibly 'a real present in the sense that John the Baptist is now giving witness along with the community.' The use of a present for an aorist tense in vivid narrative is common in the NT."

among humanity, "we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός).[104] Here, in the climax to the Gospel's overture, we finally discover the theological center of John's Christology: Jesus Christ, the human being in whom "the Word became flesh" has glory "as of the only Son from the Father" (1:14), indeed, is μονογενὴς θεός (1:18).[105]

The word choice here is significant. John is alone among NT writers in using μονογενής to refer to Christ, with four occurrences in the Gospel (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). The remaining occurrences of the word in the NT and the LXX shed little light on his meaning. Elsewhere in the NT, the term occurs three times in Luke (7:12; 8:42; 9:38) and once in Hebrews (11:17), but never with christological significance. There it always refers to an "only child" in the everyday sense of a young person without siblings. The LXX often uses μονογενής to translate *yāḥîd* (Jdt 11:34; Tob 3:15; 6:11; 8:17; but cf. Ps 24:16, where it means "lonely"). It "is therefore parallel to ἀγαπητός, 'beloved,' an alternative rendering of *yāḥîd* in the LXX."[106] The Synoptic Gospels frequently present the Father using ὁ

The work of Edwin A. Abbott (*Johannine Grammar* [London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906] 350) provides some support for Brown's interpretation, in noting that "the historic present . . . is a striking characteristic of John," and the historical present does occur in 1:29 (βλέπει), where it is used by the Baptist. Even if 1:15 is in the historical present, though, it does not seriously undermine Bultmann and Haenchen since, in this particular context, it conveys a clear sense of continuing testimony.

[104] Barrett (*St. John*, 167) comments on 1:14: "This first person plural [ἐθεασάμεθα] does not necessarily imply that the gospel was written by an eye-witness. It is the apostolic church that speaks." Likewise, Smith (*Johannine Christianity*, 20) remarks: "If the Johannine community which produced the Gospel saw itself in traditional continuity with Jesus, we are in a position to perceive in the 'we' of the prologues of both Gospel and Epistle, not the apostolic eyewitness per se, but a community which nevertheless understood itself as heir of a tradition based upon some historical witness of Jesus."

[105] The text of v. 18 is highly contested on this point. While NA27 and USB4 both adopt μονογενὴς θεός, there is a very solid textual tradition preferring μονογενὴς υἱός. Beasley-Murray (*John*, 2) summarizes the problem: "The decision as to whether μονογενὴς θεός or μονογενὴς υἱός in v 18 is the original reading is difficult. Both readings are consistent with Johannine theology, and both have good external attestation, though the support of P^{66} and P^{75} give advantage to the former. The difference in the uncials would be minimal, ΘΣ or ΥΣ (both abbreviations were usual). While υἱός seems more natural in light of the following εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, it should, perhaps, for that very reason, be viewed as the easier reading and so yield to the more difficult θεός." Barrett (*St. John*, 169), who provides a more complete review of both the manuscript and patristic evidence, adopts the same position, noting that "the sense is substantially unaltered by the textual variation."

[106] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 14. But cf. F. Büchsel, "μονογενής," *TDNT*, 4. 739: "But

υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός in reference to Christ (e.g., Matt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:17; Luke 3:22; 20:13), which betrays the common Northwest Semitic basis for both expressions.[107] John's use of the less common μονογενής as well as the absence of ἀγαπητός from the Fourth Gospel or 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11) suggests that he is not attempting to evoke scripture in this description of Christ, but something else. That something else is arguably the "other" god-man who was constantly present to Johannine Christians, namely, the Roman emperor.

By using the term μονογενής, the evangelist can attack the image of the emperor in the Augustan Ideology from at least two directions. It captures not only the uniqueness of Jesus' genealogy but also his absolute pre-eminence in the κόσμος as well. As Lindars notes, "'the only Son' [1:14] is a rather free translation of μονογενής, which means either 'one only-begotten' or 'one unique in kind.'"[108] Most immediately, the term's appearance in 1:14 makes clear that Jesus is μονογενής in the sense of "only (begotten) Son from the Father" (μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός), a sharp challenge to claims of divine ancestry made by Julius Caesar and subsequent emperors. The prefix μονο- rules out the possibility of there being any other person who is begotten by the Father, and by itself constitutes a unique claim to divinity never made by any of the emperors who represented themselves as "the seed of Julius [Caesar]."[109] According to John 1:1-3, γενής indicates that Jesus was not "born" of the Father in any human sense, but rather "begotten" from him, since "in compounds like διο-γενής, γη-γενής, εὐ-γενής, συγ-γενής the -γενής suggests derivation (γένος) rather than birth."[110] In contrast,

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there is a distinction between ἀγαπητός and μονογενής. It is a mistake to subsume the meaning of the latter under that of the former. Μονογενής is not just a predicate of value. If the LXX has different terms for *yāḥîd*, this is perhaps because different translators were at work." Büchsel also criticizes the decision to use μονογενής in Ps 24:16 as "an unfortunate translation" which should have been rendered as πρωτόγονους, "living by oneself" (ibid.).

[107] See, e.g., Beasley-Murray, *John*, 14; Bultmann, *John*, 74; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 149; Lindars, *John*, 96; Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 1. 270-71.

[108] Lindars, *John*, 96.

[109] Virgil, *Aen.* 6.789-90 (Fairclough and Gould, LCL): "*omnis Iuli* | *progenies*."

[110] Büchsel, "μονογενής," *TDNT*, 4. 737-38. The translation of μονογενής as "only-begotten" is almost universally accepted, at least as one sense of the word. Cf. Gerard Pendrick ("Μονογενής," *NTS* 41 [1995] 587-600), who argues that the meaning "only-begotten" became associated with μονογενής later during the christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries.

Julius Caesar, following the pattern of the divine kings of the Hellenistic East, had based his claim to divinity explicitly upon a supposed *biological* lineage traceable to Venus through Aeneas and occasionally to Mars as well, through the Alban kings.[111] Using μονογενής in the sense of "only-begotten" constituted a direct challenge to the notion of divinity found in the Imperial Cult: Jesus and Jesus *alone* is the Son of God, and even then in a unique, non-natural manner.[112]

[111] It was noted earlier how Deissmann (*Light*, 344) quotes an inscription from Ephesus in 48 B.C.E. to Julius, "the God made manifest, offspring of Ares and Aphrodite, and common savior of human life (τὸν ἀπὸ Ἄρεως καὶ Ἀφροδε[ί]της θεὸν ἐπιφανῆ καὶ κοινὸν τοῦ ἀνθροπίνου βίου σωτῆρα)." See also Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 1. 1. 56; Cerfaux and Tondriau, *Les Culte des Souveraines*, 294-95. The claim of descent from Mars was made only intermittently by Julius, and never received the widespread popular acceptance which the supposed Aeneas-Venus lineage did (e.g., Virgil, *Aen.* 6.788-97).

Admittedly, direct descent from a deified emperor was not required to claim to be υἱὸς θεοῦ—Augustus, after all, was the biological nephew of Julius, made son only by adoption. Nevertheless, membership in the imperial *gens* (Julio-Claudian until the death of Nero, Flavian thereafter), by marriage or adoption (or both) was after the deification of Julius a necessary requirement for any emperor's (or member of his family's) claim to worship. Horace writes from exile: "The foreign country sees that there is a shrine of Caesar in our house. There stand beside him his pious son and priestly wife [Tiberius and Livia], deities as important as him who has now been made a god. To make the household group complete, both the grandsons stand there, one next to the side of his grandmother, one next to his father" (Horace, *Ep.* 4.9, cited and translated in Price, "Gods and Emperors," 92: *nec pietas ignota mea est: videt hospitia terra in nostra sacrum Caesaris esse domo. stant pariter natusque pius coniunxque sacerdos, numina iam facto non leviora deo. neu desit pars ulla domus, stat uterque nepotem, hic aviae lateri proximus, ille patris*).

The contrast being drawn here by John between the μονογενής Jesus and Roman emperors such as Augustus (and their families) should also rule out any adoptionist readings of the Gospel: "The Evangelist does not suggest that the Word became Son at the incarnation, or that the incarnation took place at the Baptism" (Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 150). This position was first suggested by Alfred Loisy, *Le Quatrième Évangile* (Paris: Picard, 1903) 230-32. More recent defenses include Reginald H. Fuller, "Christmas, Epiphany, and the Johannine Prologue," in *Spirit and Light: Essays in Historical Theology* (ed. M. L. Engel and W. B. Green; New York: Seabury, 1976) 63-73; Francis Watson, "Is John's Christology Adoptionist?" in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 113-24. As Watson (ibid., 115) notes, most scholars reject this thesis, if they even consider the question at all: "Loisy did not work out his suggestion in detail, and it apparently made little impact in subsequent scholarship."

[112] That this is John's intention is further suggested by the fact that in the Fourth Gospel "believers who as children of God are called υἱοὶ θεοῦ . . . in Matthew, Paul, etc., are always called τέκνα θεοῦ in John 1:12, 11:52; 1 John 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2, while υἱός is reserved for Jesus" (Büchsel, "μονογενής," *TDNT*, 4. 739-40). Büchsel (ibid., 740) continues: "It is not that Jesus is not unique in this sonship for Matthew, Paul, etc. also. His Messi-

In addition to expressing the belief that Jesus is the *only* and *only-begotten* Son of God, μονογενής can also carry the derivative meaning of "'unique,' 'unparalleled,' [or] 'incomparable,'" probably the intended sense in the context of the Prologue.[113] Similarly, BDAG translates μονογενὴς θεός "an only-begotten one, God (acc. to his real being; i.e., uniquely divine as God's son and transcending all others alleged to be gods)."[114] William Kurz has suggested that this interpretation is reinforced by the fact that, in 1:18, the sense of sonship or begotten comes not from the word μονογενής but from its context ("who is in the bosom of the Father").[115] But the choice of meanings here need not be exclusive, since "the themes of the prologue provide, as one of their dimensions of meaning, a strong affirmation of Jesus' unsurpassed standing."[116]

This sense of "supreme" divinity is presupposed by the preceding two verses, which place Jesus above the greatest figure of the OT, Moses, and present him as the mediator of all grace and truth: "And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (1:16-17).[117] It is true that the mention of Moses here could only remind the readers of the past (and present) conflicts with the synagogue leaders leading to the painful separation from the parent Judaism. However, multiple references are not only possible but likely here given the complex history of the text and the community. The christological language employed ("from his fullness we have all received . . . ; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ") would probably bring to the reader's mind other figures as well.[118]

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ahship proves this. But John puts it in an illuminating and easily remembered formula which was taken up into the baptismal confession and which ever since has formed an inalienable part of the creed of the Church."

[113] Ibid., 739.

[114] BDAG, s.v. "μονογενής."

[115] Kurz, personal communication. See also his "Intertextual Permutations of the Genesis Word in the Johannine Prologues," in *Early Christian Interpretations of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals* (JSNTSup 148; Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 5; ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 179-90.

[116] Cassidy, *New Perspective*, 30.

[117] ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος· ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο.

[118] As I noted earlier, Deissmann (*Light*, 363 n. 9) included χάρις in his list of NT terms which were also employed in the Imperial Cult.

Seneca's soliloquy for Nero strikes a tone similar to the Prologue's: "By my lips fortune proclaims what gift she would bestow on each human being: from my utterance peoples and cities gather reasons for rejoicing; without my favour and grace no part of the whole world can prosper." So does the consolation Seneca offers Polybius: "As long as he [Nero] is alive your dear ones are alive—you have lost nothing. Your eyes ought to be not only dry, but even happy; in him you have all things, he takes the place of it all."[119] In the same vein, Philo reports that Caligula was at first welcomed by the peoples of the empire as "the Saviour and Benefactor . . . [who would] pour fresh streams of blessings on Asia and Europe."[120] Leaving aside here the very important title σωτήρ (see Chapter Three), its normal companion title, "benefactor" (εὐεργέτης), carried the plain sense of a person who bestows benefits and blessings upon another.[121] For John to say of Christ that "from his fullness we have all received" (ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν) may have evoked in broad terms the model of a εὐεργέτης in the minds of his audience. This would have been true especially in the first century, when not only one's well-being but one's very survival often depended on the generosity of rulers and other powerful individuals.

John makes one crucial distinction that would have distinguished Christ from such men. By virtue of being μονογενὴς θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, Christ can accomplish for his believers what no one else—prophet, lawgiver, miracle-worker, or emperor—can do: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (1:18).[122] This language finds only imperfect parallels in the

[119] Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.2 (Basore, LCL): *ex nostro responso laetitiae causas populi urbesque concipiunt; nulla pars usquam nisi volente propitioque me floret*; *Polyb.* 7.4 (Basore, LCL): *hoc incolumi salvi tibi sunt tui, nihil perdidisti, non tantum siccos oculos tuos esse sed etiam laetos oportet; in hoc tibi omnia sunt, hic pro omnibus est.*

[120] Philo, *Legat.* 4.1: ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης . . . τινας ἀγαθῶν πηγὰς νέας ἐπομβρήσειν Ἀσίᾳ τε καὶ Εὐρώπῃ" (cited in Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 67).

[121] BDAG, s.v. "εὐεργέτης": "a title of princes and other honored persons, esp. those recognized for their civic contributions." It also possess an adjectival meaning of "beneficent, bountiful" (LSJ, s.v. "εὐεργέτης"), which would find a clear echo in ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβουμεν.

[122] Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. Regarding the verb ἐξηγήσατο, Leon Morris (*The Gospel According to John* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] 114-15) comments:

Augustan Ideology. A similar but somewhat lesser claim is made for Augustus by Virgil in the Fourth Eclogue: "He shall have the gift of divine life, shall see heroes mingled with gods, and shall himself be seen by them."[123] However, nothing is said here or elsewhere about Augustus "making known" these gods. Indeed, the very logic of apotheosis presupposes that the gods whom the emperor is joining are already known and worshiped. Moreover, as argued in Chapter Two, the Augustan Ideology's portrait of the divine Caesar was not of a "revealer" of the gods, but their divine instrument. The emperor may have functioned as a mediator of public prayers to the traditional gods but was always understood within a client-patron model rather than a Father-Son paradigm.

The presentation of Jesus as one with the Father and as his sole revealer offers a further contrast between Christ and Caesar. By closing the Prologue with verse 18, John manages to bring the entire discussion back to its starting point: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.[124] The intervening discussion, with its many layers of reference suggesting not only an OT or philosophical-Gnostic background but also, as I have argued, a Roman one, makes John's Christology absolutely clear to his audience.[125] Jesus is not simply a

> The verb "declared" (here only in John) is used of setting forth a narrative. . . . It indicates that Jesus has now given a full account of the Father. This does not mean that there is nothing more to be learned of him. The term is not precise enough for that. But it does point to the adequacy of the revelation in Christ. We may have confidence that God is as Christ revealed him. The word is used in the mystery religions and elsewhere as a technical term for the revelation of divine secrets. Often it is used of the gods themselves making a disclosure. Such associations fitted the word to be used of a full and authoritative revelation of the divine Being. Such a revelation could, of course, be made only by One uniquely qualified in a manner made clear by the references to him in the earlier part of the verse.

[123] Virgil, *Ecl.* 4.15-16 (Fairclough and Gould, LCL):

ille deum vitam accipiet divisque videbit
permixtos heroas et ipse videbitur illis.

[124] Hence, Schnackenburg (*Saint John*, 1. 280) can write: "At the end of the Prologue, the evangelist affirms once more the full divine dignity of the Son of God on earth, and also his unique capacity as revealer." Lindars (*John*, 99), rejecting the alternative reading of μονογενὴς υἱός, argues that "the harder reading has the merit of bringing thought back to verse 1, and so constitutes another case of Johannine *inclusio*. 'God' here has the same meaning as 'and the Word was God.'"

[125] Concerning the "philosophical-Gnostic background" of the Fourth Gospel, see above, p. 108 n. 8.

θεῖος ἀνήρ, nor a προφήτης, nor even a new Μωϋσέως. He certainly is not a υἱὸς θεοῦ or εὐεργέτης in the "imperial" sense. Instead, he is μονογενὴς θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός (1:18).[126]

Conclusion

The Johannine Prologue, adopted and adapted by the evangelist as a summary of his Christology, constitutes one of the crowning achievements of early Christian thought. Whatever the background of the hymn that John employed here (Jewish, Gnostic, or otherwise), in the Fourth Gospel it primarily functions for contrastive purposes: Jesus Christ, the Logos, is not like any other being, since he alone is God. Accepting his divinity, though, has consequences far beyond the boundaries of the synagogue or the Johannine community. It results in setting believers against the world that rejected Christ. Not without reason does Bernard write that "the Fourth Gospel is the Gospel of the Rejection."[127] The language of the Gospel reveals this rejection in denying the claims of supremacy by the world and the emperor, which threatened the existence of the Johannine community. As Norman R. Petersen observes, John's

> usage [of language] stands in fundamental contrast to everyday usage. John and his people speak and think in ways that are in contrast with the speech and thought of others in their social environment. The others, moreover, are as it were the lords of the everyday, of the conventional and of the traditional. They are the maintainers of norms to which John and his people oppose themselves, linguistically, conceptually, and, not least of all, socially. We cannot appreciate John's special use of language without acknowl-

[126] C. K. Barrett ("Christocentric or Theocentric? Observations on the Theological Method of the Fourth Gospel," in idem, *Essays on John* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982] 1-18, here 16) makes the same point about the entire Gospel: "This is indeed the message of the Gospel. The whole truth (ἅπαντα) about the invisible and unknown God is declared in the historical figure to which John points in his not literally historical narrative. The figure of Jesus does not (so John in effect declares) make sense when viewed as a national leader, a rabbi, or a θεῖος ἀνήρ; he makes sense when in hearing him you hear the Father, when in looking at him you see the Father, and worship him."

[127] Bernard, *St. John*, 1. 15.

> edging its social function as an affirmation of difference over against the sameness of the world around him and his people, a world that has also rejected what they affirm. Indeed, we will find that the fact of social rejection is the motivating force behind the affirmation of a difference that has been imposed upon John and his people.[128]

The language of John, including especially his christological language, was not a *creatio ex nihilo*. Petersen's argument that the Johannine vocabulary is one of contrast and difference is undoubtedly correct. However, while John upsets and inverts the language of power and divinity used by the Roman world, he does not and could not destroy it. To understand how the Christ of the Prologue is unique, it is first necessary to know how John uses the existing conceptual categories and the same vocabulary of power and divinity. These, I have argued, were drawn from the Augustan Ideology, that shadowy darkness within which the Light shines, and brilliantly, thanks to John's christological genius.

[128] Norman R. Petersen, *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995) 21.

CHAPTER 5

"You Are No Friend of Caesar": Anti-Roman Themes in the Johannine Passion Narrative

For a number of reasons, scholarship on the Johannine Passion Narrative (18:1-19:42) since the Second World War has shown a preoccupation with its portrait of the Jewish leaders and their role in the death of Jesus. First and foremost, the human and moral catastrophe of the Nazi genocide of European Jewry, and the complicity of many Christian churches in it, have demanded a reexamination of the biblical and historical sources of European anti-Semitism, which includes the anti-Jewish polemic of the Fourth Gospel.[1] This badly needed Christian self-examination has combined the rediscovery of the Jewish background of the Johannine community by scholars such as Raymond E. Brown and J. Louis Martyn with an enormous body of research that attempts not only to understand John's anti-Jewish polemic but also to

[1] Note the distinction drawn by John Dominic Crossan (*Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995] 32): "Anti-Semitism arrives in history when anti-Judaism is combined with racism. Anti-Judaism is a religious prejudice: a Jew can convert to avoid it. Anti-Semitism is a racial prejudice: a Jew can do nothing to avoid it. They are equally despicable, but differently so." While the evangelist, perhaps understandably so given the history of the Johannine community, was certainly guilty of anti-Judaism, he cannot be accused of anti-Semitism, lacking as he does the modern ideological category of race that it involves.

The amount of literature on the modern concept "race" is daunting. For a general overview of the issues involved (discussed within an American context), see Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993).

expunge it from the modern church.[2] These efforts are in general praiseworthy, both as valuable investigations into the context of the Gospel and as responsible pastoral responses to the greatest tragedy in modern history.[3]

At the same time, this focus on John and Judaism has arguably drawn attention away from the prominent role played by the Roman authorities in John's Passion Narrative.[4] The Fourth Gospel, throughout its

[2] Some of the most recent treatments of the topic include Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?*; Culpepper, "The Gospel of John as a Threat to Jewish-Christian Relations," in *Overcoming Fear between Jews and Christians* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; New York: Crossroad, 1993) 21-43; W. D. Davies, *Christian Engagements with Judaism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 1999), esp. 199-210; Robert Kysar, "Anti-Semitism and the Gospel of John," in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 113-27; John McHugh, "'In Him was Life': John's Gospel and the Parting of the Ways," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways. The Second Durham-Tübingen Symposium on Judaism and Early Christianity, Durham, September 1989* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 123-58.

[3] However encouraging this necessary reexamination of Christian attitudes may be, Brown (*Community*, 69), a leader in this ecumenical effort, points out that the problem facing contemporary Christians and Jews ultimately demands that an understanding of the historical conflict between the two religions must come from both parties:

> We can only be grateful that in the mid-twentieth century, partly out of revulsion for the holocaust, the situation has changed; and a sincere effort at understanding is being made on both sides. However, I have an uneasy feeling that the basic Johannine difficulty still faces us. To Jews disturbed by Christian attempts to convert them, the Christian question comes back, which may be phrased in the words of John 9:22: Why have they agreed that anyone who acknowledges Jesus as Messiah can no longer be part of the synagogue? Christians have ceded to that decision by converting Jews *away from* the synagogue. Both parties, today as then, need to wrestle with the question of believing in Jesus and remaining a practicing Jew—a decision that ultimately reflects upon the compatibility of Christianity and Judaism.

[4] The problem with studies of the Passion Narrative has not been denial—one could hardly deny the obvious care given to John's portrait of Pilate, for instance—so much as a refusal to let the facts of the text speak in a Roman voice in addition to a Jewish one. Rensberger (*Johannine Faith*, 87-88) captures the problem well:

> The centrality of political issues in the Johannine trial narrative has in fact often been noted. Usually, however, John's interest in these issues is seen as apologetic, like that of the other evangelists and the early church generally: he wished to relieve the Romans of responsibility for the death of Jesus and to assure them that despite appearances to the contrary, neither Jesus nor the church was a political threat to the Empire. Exceptions to this have been very rare. Yet certain features of John's presentation invite the question whether his attitude towards Rome is really as conciliatory as Luke's, for instance, is often said to have been.

account of Christ's final ordeal, places an importance on the Roman characters that they enjoy nowhere else in the gospels. For instance, in John 18:3 Judas brings with him not a crowd (ὄχλος: Matt 26:47 || Mark 14:43 || Luke 22:47) but a "band of soldiers" (σπεῖρα), which John Dominic Crossan correctly points out "is the technical terminology for a cohort, for a unit of six hundred troops. It is, in other words, the complete body of Roman troops permanently garrisoned in Jerusalem."[5] Likewise, while the Synoptic Gospels all recount Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin prior to being handed over to Pilate (Matt 26:57-68 || Mark 14:53-65 || Luke 22:54-71), John (18:13-24) limits this episode to a simple interrogation by the high priest Annas: "He has the twin trials from Mark but has changed them so that the Jewish one is much less emphasized and, correspondingly, the Roman one is much more important."[6] And only in John (19:31-37) does the Roman soldier pierce Jesus' side "that scripture might be fulfilled." Whether John intentionally departed from the Synoptic traditions in these passages or if he even knew of them at all has been the subject of much debate in the last century and cannot be settled here.[7] In any event, Crossan correctly observes that

[5] Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* 80-81. For additional details on the Roman garrisons stationed in Judea, which support the basic accuracy of Crossan's note, see Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 145-49. The meaning here in John is almost certainly colloquial rather than technical, i.e., Judas brought an "army" of soldiers with him in the looser sense of "band." Bringing the full Roman garrison of six hundred troops to arrest one man could hardly have been within Judas' power—though such an exaggerated claim would be in keeping with John's exalted portrait of Christ.

However, the basic historicity of John's account of the arrest is very suspect. Ernst Bammel ("The Trial before Pilate," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* [ed. idem and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984] 415-51, here 440) points out that the trial before Pilate in John seems to indicate that Pilate was unaware of Jesus' arrest prior to his being brought to him, and "the interpretation the scene [of Jesus and Pilate] receives in John 18:36 points against Roman participation in the arrest."

[6] Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* 114.

[7] Crossan (ibid., 22) assumes throughout his study of the five earliest Passion Narratives (he includes the *Gospel of Peter* in this category) that John is dependent upon Mark's gospel for his material, if not for "the miracles and sayings of Jesus." Since my concern is not with the sources underlying the Gospel but rather with its relationship to and resonance with the Augustan Ideology (see Chapter Four above), the question of whether and how John redacted Mark is of less importance for the present study than the portrait of Roman power that resulted from the final redaction.

The classic statement of the Fourth Gospel's *independence* of the Synoptics was given by Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, and it found widespread acceptance throughout the middle part of the twentieth century. Raymond E. Brown (*Intro-*

the account of Jesus' trial and death the Fourth Gospel places a special importance on Pilate and the Roman authorities.

In this chapter, I will look at some passages in the Fourth Gospel's account of Jesus' trial that suggest not only or even primarily an anti-Jewish polemic, but also an anti-Roman one. Given the wealth of studies on almost every aspect of Johannine Passion Narrative, my discussion of John 18 and 19 will be highly selective in the elements singled out for study, including the source-critical and historical questions surrounding these chapters.[8] Clearly, the line-by-line analysis devoted to 1:1-18 in the last chapter is not possible here. However, unlike the Prologue, the anti-Roman themes in the Passion Narrative are close to the surface of the text, and require less textual excavation.

Accordingly, this chapter will focus on three key passages that show John's fundamental oppositions between Christ and Caesar, and between the Johannine Christians and their Roman persecutors: (1)

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duction to the New Testament [ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1998] 98), who also rejects Johannine dependence, includes Cullmann, Käsemann, Kysar, Martyn, Morris, Sanders, and Schnackenburg among those who have accepted Gardner-Smith's arguments. By the early 1970s, only a small minority of scholars, most notably Barrett and Kümmel, continued to defend the thesis that John relied on the Gospel of Mark as a source. However, under the leadership of Frans Neirynck, the "Louvain School" has revived the debate and has undermined this earlier consensus. See Neirynck, *Jean et les synoptiques: Examen critique de l'exégèse de M.-É. Boismard* (BETL 49; Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1992). Furthermore, a mixed position whereby John is independent of the Synoptic Gospels in his sources but shows the influence of Luke in his redaction has been advanced by Dauer, *Johannes und Lukas*, and Heekerens, *Zeichen-Quelle*. For a full discussion and bibliography of the course of this long debate, see Smith, *John Among the Gospels*. A convenient summary can be found in Beasley-Murray, *John*, xxxv-xxxvii.

[8] The source-critical assumptions that govern this chapter have been discussed in Chapter Four. Another important issue that cannot be addressed at length here involves the historicity of John's Passion Narrative. The spectrum of scholarly opinion on this matter varies greatly. Crossan (*Who Killed Jesus?* 1), comparing his approach to that of Raymond E. Brown (*The Death of the Messiah from Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives of the Four Gospels* [2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994]), comments: "Basically the issue is whether the passion accounts are prophecy historicized or history remembered. . . . Ray Brown is 80 percent in the direction of history remembered. I'm 80 percent in the opposite direction." The solution to this question does not seriously affect the conclusions here. For discussions of the issues involved, see, e.g., Barrett, *St. John*, 134-44; Brown, *Death*, 1. 4-35; Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* 1-12; Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, esp. 21-151; Robert T. Fortna, "A pre-Johannine Passion Narrative as Historical Source: Reconstructed Text and Critique," in *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 1 (1998) 71-94; Lindars, *John*, 54-56.

Jesus' claim to Pilate, "My kingship is not of this world" (18:36); (2) the threat made to Pilate by the crowd, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend" (19:12); and (3) the response of the chief priests to Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar" (19:15).[9] These verses challenge the Augustan Ideology by posing a choice between God and Caesar. Taken together, these passages serve as a climax to the polemic against the Augustan Ideology, which develops in Fourth Gospel from the Prologue onwards.

"My kingship is not of this world" (18:36)

The setting of this saying is manifestly political: Jesus has been brought by the chief priests before Pilate, the Roman Prefect of Judea, on the charge of making himself a king (βασιλεύς). The priests explain that "it is not lawful" for them to put him death. Asked by Pilate what he has done to deserve this, "Jesus answered, 'My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from this world'" (18:36).[10] A. E. Harvey provides a typical interpretation of this passage: "Jesus is described as firmly declining the offer of such [earthly] authority, and although the title, 'King of Israel'. . . was of course true in a sense, the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate is carefully designed to show that it was not the sort of kingship which conferred secular authority."[11] Harvey's interpretation appears to be confirmed by the next verse: "Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears

[9] This selection of passages is based on my sense of which ones resonate most clearly with the Augustan Ideology. I have not discussed 19:11 ("You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above") separately since the role of the word ἐξουσία has already been treated at length in Chapter Three. Other passages, including the posting of the sign "King of the Jews" upon the cross by Pilate (19:19-22), could also be used, though to lesser effect, in making the same points.

[10] ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου· εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἦν ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμή, οἱ ὑπηρέται οἱ ἐμοὶ ἠγωνίζοντο ἂν ἵνα μὴ παραδοθῶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις· νῦν δὲ ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐντεῦθεν.

[11] Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976) 88.

my voice'" (18:37).[12] 18:36-37 apparently supports a "dualist" understanding of Jesus' and Caesar's kingships, each one with his own proper sphere of authority (in heaven and on earth, respectively). Neither overlaps with the other nor—theoretically, at least—should it come into conflict with the other.

This interpretation of Jesus' kingship fits nicely with the emphasis accepted by many scholars on what has been called the "cosmic dualism" unique to the Fourth Gospel, characterized by the contrasts between "light and darkness (1:5), above and below (8:23), spirit and flesh (3:6), life and death (3:36), truth and falsehood (8:44-45), heaven and earth (3:31), God and Satan (13:27)."[13] These two realms, supposedly locked in conflict with one another, are divided by what Luke calls "a great chasm" (Luke 16:26) that only the incarnate Logos can span. In this interpretation, the chasm is not filled but only bridged so that those who believe in Christ can cross over it. Accordingly, Jesus becomes incarnate not to assume power in "the world" but to allow his followers to escape from it, leaving the power structure proper to it untouched.[14]

This dualistic reading of John's Gospel also has a strong apologetic

[12] εἶπεν οὖν αὐτῷ ὁ Πιλᾶτος· οὐκοῦν βασιλεὺς εἶ σύ; ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς· σὺ λέγεις ὅτι βασιλεύς εἰμι. ἐγὼ εἰς τοῦτο γεγέννημαι καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἐλήλυθα εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ἵνα μαρτυρήσω τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· πᾶς ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀκούει μου τῆς φωνῆς.

[13] Francis J. Moloney, "Johannine Theology," *NJBC*, 1417-26, here 1421. The origin of this dualism has been the subject of much debate. Moloney interprets it as a Johannine response to "a form of dualism [that] was part of first-century Judaism, steeped in ideas of a sovereign Lord of creation and a world trapped by forces opposed to the divine way only to be finally overcome by the Messianic appearance" (ibid.). Bultmann (*John*, 27), on the other hand, associates it with the Logos-theology of the Prologue, which ultimately has a "pre-gnostic origin; that is to say, that there was originally a cosmogony, without an eschatology corresponding to it, unrelated to the idea of soteriology, and designed merely to explain the permanence and structure of the world." The repetition in these alternatives of the philosophical-Gnostic/Jewish dichotomy which has dominated Johannine studies in the last century is obvious.

[14] The attempt to escape from the pressing political challenge of the Fourth Gospel through one or another version of dualism was recognized long before the twentieth century, and the different solutions were mapped out relatively early in the life of the Church. David Hill ("'My Kingdom is not of this world' [John 18:36]: Conflict and Christian Existence in the world according to the Fourth Gospel," *IBS* 9 [1987] 54-62, here 54) laid out the problem:

> Do we, with the grandsons of Jude, the "brother" of the Lord, interpret this [verse] in a "spiritualist" sense—that is, that Jesus' kingship is purely heavenly and has nothing to do with this world: "It is not worldly or on earth,

element, since it would allow Johannine Christians to present themselves not as rivals to or enemies of Roman power but rather as citizens of both worlds. It thereby avoids any theological basis for conflict with the secular authorities:

> The trial before Pilate also contains a two-fold apologetic interest. The charges against Jesus were not genuinely political: they were calumnies used to manipulate Pilate. John wants his reader to know (a) that Jesus was put to death not because he was a political revolutionary, but because, being sent by the Father, he witnessed to the truth that "the world" cannot bear; and (b) that the Roman empire consequently has no good ground for persecuting Christians.[15]

Similar dualistic understandings of Jesus' kingship can be found elsewhere in the NT, especially in Paul and Luke.[16] However, attribution of these attitudes to John is untenable.[17] David Hill observes: "We accept

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> but heavenly and angelic, and will be established at the end of the world" (Eus., *Hist.* 20.4). Or do we, in light of John 17:11, 16, accept Augustine's distinction between kingship that is *in* the world but not *of* it: "His kingdom is here till the end of time . . . . but it does belong here because it is only in the world as a pilgrim" (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 115.2).

[15] Ibid., 57. While they do mesh together nicely, the question whether John contains an apologetic for Roman Christians or not is distinct from whether he offered a dualistic political theology. Thus, Hill can accept the former while rejecting the latter (though at times he appears inconsistent on this point).

[16] Lindars (*John*, 536) offers a typical example of this apologetic interpretation of John's Passion Narrative, connecting it with the more general political situation of first-century Christians:

> Even before Mark's narrative was written the tendency had begun of shifting the blame for the crucifixion away from Pilate and on to the Jews. John's highly dramatic handling of the trial before Pilate shows a definite advance in this direction in comparison with Mark. The reason for this is not anti-Semitism, but the practical need for Christians to be on good terms with the Romans, in order to be allowed to practise their religion unhindered. It must be shown that Jesus was not really held to be guilty of sedition by Pilate, even though he condemned him to death.

[17] Comparing the Lukan and Johannine Passion Narratives, Wengst (*Pax Romana*, 209 n. 27) points out: "Luke had to pass over the similar report in Mark simply because he does not have Jesus condemned before Pilate, and flogging and mockery followed the

as fact that the NT evinces doctrinal pluralism. If this is so for such fundamental issues as Christology, it will be true, *a fortiori*, for the question of the Christian's attitude to the state and political involvement in general."[18] Such pluralism seems especially likely, given the anti-imperial motifs in the Prologue and the christological language of the Fourth Gospel discussed in the preceding chapter. Thus, David Rensberger rightly rejects an apologetic reading of John: "If it is correct to suppose that the general inclination of early Christianity, including the Synoptic gospels, is toward an apologetic aimed at improving relations with the Roman government, then John at least does not share in that inclination, and we shall be justified in reading the rest of his trial narrative without necessarily expecting to find it there."[19]

More recently, a few scholars have tried to translate this "cosmic" dualism into more explicitly moral or political terms. As a result, they read John as a first-century political theorist of non-violence, and the Fourth Gospel as a manifesto for passive resistance in the face of the powers of the world. For example, Richard J. Cassidy offers a liberationist account of 18:36-37 that distinguishes the rule of force by Rome and the peaceable kingdom of Jesus: "Jesus, then, does not seek to supplant Roman rule in Judea through force of arms. . . . Jesus' kingdom is a kingdom that has to do with truth and his kingly role has to do with bearing witness to the truth."[20] Rensberger adopts a similar reading: "Jesus' kingship will necessarily come into conflict with the kingdoms of this world, but precisely because it is 'not of this world,' the conflict is not carried out on the world's terms. Jesus' followers do not fight, and his enthronement is on the cross. The sovereignty that Jesus asserts against Caesar is that of Israel's God, but precisely as *God's* sovereignty and not the world's it is not won by violence."[21]

Sjef van Tilborg, who shows little interest in liberationist readings of John, likewise interprets 18:36 in this manner: "Jesus defends a point of

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judgment; he could not and did not want to attribute to a Roman procurator cynical use of the power to have Jesus flogged and mocked before a judgment in the way depicted by John 19:1-3." Instead, Luke has Pilate return Jesus to Herod's control temporarily for infliction of this punishment.

[18] Hill, "My Kingdom," 54.

[19] Rensberger, *Johannine Faith*, 91.

[20] Cassidy, *New Perspective*, 49.

[21] Rensberger, *Johannine Faith*, 116.

view which is pacifist in the extreme. The absence of any means of power, the absence of fighting servants as demonstrated by the story of his capture, his open surrender, the protection of his followers, the rejection of Peter's sword, they are all proof of the origin of his kingdom and of its content: resist the powers of the cosmos in powerlessness."[22] However, this pacifist reading of John is implausible given the community's history. Thus it seems more a projection of contemporary ethical and political concerns onto the text than a persuasive account of the evangelist's vision.[23]

Underlying both the more traditional "dualist" interpretation of Jesus' kingdom and the liberationist concerns of Rensberger and Cassidy is the assumption that the sovereignty possessed by Caesar differs from the sovereignty claimed by Jesus altogether, each existing in different ontological (heavenly versus earthly) or moral (violent versus nonviolent) spheres and ultimately disconnected from one another. While attractive on a theological level, these attempts to collapse the political challenges to the Johannine community into a broader set of binary oppositions at work in the Fourth Gospel are misplaced. Indeed, the category "dualism" is far too broad to capture all these oppositions. Some of them are to be conceived in "either-or" terms: truth *or* falsehood, life *or* death, God *or* Satan. These polar opposites do require choice and allegiance of believers. Yet, as John Ashton points out, John's use of the terms κόσμος and οὐρανός cannot be divided so readily: "We must conclude that without further specification the contrast between heaven and earth or above and below is not, properly speaking, dualistic at all. The gap between heaven and earth is constantly being bridged, sometimes by theophanies, sometimes by angelic or human messengers, prophets, conceived as sent directly from the heavenly court."[24] Rather than an "either-or" proposition, heaven and earth formed a "both-and" category for Johannine Christians, since both had their origin in the creative activity of the Logos. Accordingly, the

[22] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 169.

[23] Cassidy (*New Perspective*, 48) correctly points out that Jesus' order during his arrest that his disciples not resist "emphasized that he himself was consciously choosing to drink from the cup which the Father had given him (18:11)." No ethic of non-violence is expressed or implied here. At the same time, of course, John does not promote violent resistence to Rome. Rather, the violent/non-violent issue is not raised by him at all.

[24] Ashton, *Understanding*, 207.

"either-or" decision demanded is not between heaven and earth or violence and non-violence but between Christ and Caesar.

Moreover, any "dualistic" interpretation of 18:36, ontological, liberationist, or otherwise, does not address the fact that Jesus nowhere in the Gospel *denies* being a king. It is true that in 6:15, Jesus, "perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him a king (ἵνα ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα)," withdraws from the crowd of five thousand that he has fed, but this seems to represent a different matter. The issue in this case involves Jesus being made a king *then* and *by the people*, an ill-fitting notion in light of the divine qualities ascribed to him in the Prologue. Wayne Meeks draws a connection between these two verses:

> The phrase οὐκ . . . ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου must be understood first of all as a genitive of origin. Jesus' kingship does not derive from the world, but from God. . . . The origin of Jesus' kingship corresponds to his own origin. Since it does not originate in the world, it is not established by worldly power (18:36b), but only by the power of God. From those who seek to make Jesus king by force (ἁρπάζειν) he flees (6:15).[25]

Jesus' rejection of kingship here is a rejection of any kingship bestowed by human beings or secular authorities. It is not a rejection of kingship *per se*. Ignace de La Potterie expresses the distinction in these terms: "The kingship of Christ does not depend on the powers of this world and is not inspired by them. It is sovereignty in this world, but it is established in a different way from earthly power and draws its inspiration from another source."[26]

This approach seems to be confirmed by Jesus' response to Pilate in 19:11: "You would have no power over me unless it was given you from above." Heinrich Schlier observes: "The testimony that Jesus . . . gives thus does not deny that he, Jesus, has a sovereign domain in this world. It also says, however, that this realm does not have its roots in this

[25] Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 63-64. NA27 adopts the reading ἀνεχώρησεν ("withdrew") rather than φεύγει ("fled"). Meeks' concern lies with Moses traditions rather than the Roman context of the Fourth Gospel.

[26] La Potterie, *The Hour of Jesus: The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus According to John* (trans. Dom Gregory Murray; New York: Alba House, 1989) 68.

world. Thereby, however, it sets before the world a sovereignty that fundamentally surpasses every other. . . . Jesus' kingdom shows that it is not bound to the world in that he, its king, gives himself over voluntarily into its hands."[27] The importance of 19:11 for understanding 18:36, indeed, for understanding John's attitude toward the state in general, has been interpreted variously. Hill summarizes the situation: "[Rudolf] Bultmann and Heinrich Schlier find here the truth that all civil power ultimately derives from God and have built thereon a finished theory of the rights and duties of citizens and state. Others like H. von Campenhausen and Ernst Haenchen believe that the text tells us little about the nature of the political order."[28] It is doubtful that the evangelist had a fully developed theory of what moderns call church-state relations, or that a satisfactory theory could be built on the basis of the Fourth Gospel alone, or even the entire NT. John was certainly not a theocrat in either the medieval or the modern sense. However, seen in light of the Roman context of the Gospel and the physical and theological threats the Augustan Ideology posed to the Johannine community, the political importance of these verses is quite evident.

Particularly relevant to this point is Jesus' response to Pilate in 18:36: "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from this world." These words are not to be taken as implying an ontological or moral dualism between the reigns of Caesar and Jesus. Rather, in light of the Logos-theology of the Prologue and the reactions against the Augustan Ideology found in the language of the Gospel, Jesus should be understood as making a very different claim: the authority or power claimed by Caesar and his representatives is imperfect and derivative, a pale shadow of the true and supreme power of the Father and the Son. The power claimed by Pilate does not belong to a different type from God's: if it were, it could not have been given him from above (19:11). Instead, it is a derived power, limited to the earthly sphere just as surely as Pilate's power from Caesar is limited to Judea, and a power ultimately in service to God:

[27] Schlier, "Jesus und Pilatus nach dem Johannesevangelium," in idem, *Die Zeit der Kirche: Exegetische Aufsätze und Vorträge* (4th ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 1966) 56-74, here 63-64 (cited and translated in Rensberger, *Johannine Faith*, 97).

[28] Hill, "My Kingdom," 54-55.

"Pilate's power over Jesus comes 'from above.' Jesus is not subject to Pilate. The reverse is true. If he allows Jesus to be crucified he does what is in God's plan. Through Jesus, Pilate is subject to this 'power from above.'"[29]

However, Jesus confronts his hearers with a decision, and in doing so he passes judgment upon the world. Rudolf Bultmann's commentary provides a very astute analysis of the dynamic at work in Jesus' response to Pilate in 18:36, albeit one which contains a residuum of the dualistic interpretation ("world of sin") of Jesus' kingdom that is criticized above:

> If [Jesus'] βασιλεία does not enter into rivalry with political organisations of this world, his claim nevertheless does not allow the world to rest in peace, for it concerns every man, and so stirs up the sphere within which the state establishes its order. For the βασιλεία is not an isolated sphere of pure inwardness over against the world, it is not a private area for the cultivation of religious needs, which could not come into conflict with the world. The word of Jesus unmasks the world as a world of sin, and challenges it. In order to defend itself against the word it flees to the state, and demands the latter put itself at its disposal. But then the state is torn out of its neutrality precisely in so far as its firm hold on neutrality signifies a decision against the world.[30]

Jesus' claim that his kingship is not of this world, far from absolving his believers from making a decision between Christ and Caesar, instead universalizes the decision to include all humans, Jew, Roman, and Christian. Confronted by Jesus, there is no middle ground for Pilate to take. For, as Hill states of Jesus, "when he is king, enthroned on a Cross, he will draw all people to himself (12:32; 3:14f.; 8:28). As truth incarnate, no one can remain indifferent to him: depending on whether or not they give ear to his voice, people will decide one way or another. Jesus' kingdom, though not *of* this 'world' is nevertheless *in it*, for here is where the choice must and will be made."[31]

[29] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 172.
[30] Bultmann, *John*, 657.
[31] Hill, "My Kingdom," 57.

It is forgotten all too often that the Johannine community, while strongly sectarian in its outlook, lived within an urban setting in Asia Minor and likely continued to evangelize and seek out new members. It was no Qumran community living in the desert to await the final judgment, and thus avoiding most of the compromises with secular authorities demanded by daily interaction. Nor does John gloss over these conflicts by focusing on the concept of the "Kingdom of God," which could be interpreted eschatalogically (either in the present or the future), or spiritually in order to avoid confrontation with Rome. Rather, Hill argues, "the theme of the 'Kingdom of God,' so prominent in the Synoptics, has, in John, given way to the theme of 'Christ's Kingship.' Indeed, Christ's kingship—culminating in his exaltation and enthronement on the Cross—is a thread that binds together the entire Passion story."[32] This decision by John to emphasize the most political aspect of Christ's person hardly seems accidental in the social context of the Johannine community. We will return to this theme in the discussion of 19:15 below.

The fundamental decision that Jesus places not only before Pilate but before all persons defies an easy "separation of powers" that would allow Johannine Christians to make their peace with Caesar while still following Christ. Unlike the Synoptic accounts (Matt 22:21 || Mark 12:17 || Luke 20:25), John nowhere has Jesus tell his followers to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Had John included this logion in the Fourth Gospel, interpretation of 18:36 might be simpler. He did not, though, since the image of Caesar on every coin served as a means of propagating the Augustan Ideology.[33] The decision confronting Jesus' listeners and John's readers cannot be avoided by a theological sleight-of-hand. The choice between Christ and Caesar remains the fundamental one for John, and it is not surprising that the Jewish leaders, as represented in their attack upon Jesus, forced Pilate to make it as well.

At the same time, Jesus challenges Rome not as a rival to Caesar on the earth, nor as a ruler in heaven instead of on earth, but instead as his

[32] Ibid., 55.

[33] For a discussion of this Synoptic logion and the relevant numismatic history of Roman coinage, see H. St J. Hart, "The coin of 'Render unto Caesar . . .' (A note on some aspects of Mark 12:13-17; Matt 22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26)," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, 241-48.

superior, ruling both heaven *and* earth. That is the one claim never made for the emperor by the Augustan Ideology. The Imperial Cult guaranteed him a place in the heavens after his death but no supreme authority there. The tendency to read this verse dualistically comports with the tendency to avoid attributing to Jesus a sort of "earthly messianism," the charge that the Jewish leaders made before Pilate.[34] However, as the discussion of the title ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου in Chapter Three makes clear, the real threat of earthly messianism came not from Jesus but from the emperor, who offered peace and prosperity to the entire Roman world in exchange for obedience and worship.[35] Precisely because Jesus does not offer such a limited and earthly reward to his followers, he cannot be guilty of sedition. Pilate implicitly acknowledges as much in 19:6 when he says mockingly to the Jews, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him."

"If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend" (19:12)

Immediately after Jesus tells him "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (19:11), Pilate seeks to release the man whom he has judged to be innocent. Upon seeing this, "the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar" (19:12).[36] A touch of irony underlies this protest, since it puts on the lips of "the Jews" the true nature of Christ's kingship revealed in 18:36: he has "made himself a king" insofar as his kingship could not have come from this world, and this kingship does indeed set him against the emperor and the claims of the Augustan Ideology.[37] Since Pilate does

[34] La Potterie, *Hour of Jesus*, 67. La Potterie also draws parallels here to the temptation of Jesus by Satan in Luke 4:5-6, where the offer of earthly power is explicitly declined.

[35] Recall here Philo's report that Caligula was acclaimed as "the Saviour and Benefactor . . . [who would] pour fresh streams of blessings on Asia and Europe" (*Legat.* 4.1: ὁ σώτηρ καὶ εὐεργέτης . . . τινας ἀγαθῶν πηγὰς νέας ἐπομβρήσειν Ἀσίᾳ τε καὶ Εὐρώπῃ).

[36] 19:11-12: ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Ἰησοῦς· οὐκ εἶχες ἐξουσίαν κατ᾽ ἐμοῦ εἰ μὴ ἦν δεδομένον σοι ἄνωθεν· . . . . οἱ δὲ Ἰουδαίοι ἐκραύγασαν λέγοντες· ἐὰν τοῦτον ἀπολύσῃς, οὐκ εἶ φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος· πᾶς ὁ βασιλέα ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν ἀντιλέγει τῷ Καίσαρι.

[37] Duke (*Irony*, 134) writes: "Their mention of the Son of God has set them back, so they return to the lie about Jesus' political kingship—with the inadvertent truth that Jesus *is* in a way set against Caesar"

not recognize Christ's kingship in the preceding verses, he does not condemn him on that charge. The Jewish leaders pair their demand for Jesus' death with what Schnackenburg calls "a scarcely veiled threat": unless Pilate accedes to their demands, he is not Caesar's friend.[38] Any first-century reader of the Gospel would have recognized the seriousness of this accusation, and its ability to force Pilate's hand. Thus, a closer examination of its meaning can help to illuminate the anti-Roman polemic running through the Passion Narrative.

Despite the Jewish background of the Johannine community and its Gospel, the expression "friend of Caesar" clearly connotes a Roman context rather than an OT background. The formula "friend of '*x*'" (φίλος τοῦ '*x*') used as a title has little currency in the LXX. For example, 1 Chr 27:33 refers to Hushai the Archite as "the king's friend," and in 1 Macc 15:32 Athenobius is called "the friend of the king." Prov 25:1 mentions "the friends [RSV: men] of Hezekiah." Dan 3:27 speaks of "the king's friends [RSV: counselors]." In a slightly different form, 1 Macc 14:40 speaks of the Jews as "friends and allies and brethren" of the Romans, which most closely approaches the meaning of John 19:12 (but in the context of the Roman Republic rather than Augustus' empire). None of these scattered appearances, with the possible exception of Dan 3:27, suggests a titular usage of the expression. In the NT, the formula is rare. Luke 7:34 (|| Matt 11:19) calls Jesus "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (hardly an honorific). James 4:4 does identify a "friend of the world" with an "enemy of God," and calls Abraham a "friend of God" (φίλος θεοῦ) in 2:23. However, the precise Johannine expression φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος has no parallel in Scripture.

φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος did, however, possess a definite meaning and importance within Roman society.[39] The title οἱ βασιλέως φίλοι was strongly rooted in the political culture of Asia Minor prior to the Roman conquest. Cuss notes that "with various shades of meaning [it] is strongly attested during the Hellenistic period under the Seleucids and Lagids," and that, "under Augustus, this title of friend, '*amicus Augusti*,' was adopted for imperial usage."[40] The Latin equivalents, *ami-*

[38] Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 3. 262.

[39] I am indebted to Cuss (*Imperial Cult*, 44-49) for much of the material in this paragraph. See also Bammell, "Philos tou Kaisaros," *TLZ* 77 (1952) 205-10.

[40] Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 45-46.

cus Augusti or *amicus Caesaris*, were applied further, to include members of the imperial family.[41] The title was probably honorific rather than official, although the difference here is less sharp than is commonly supposed. Cuss writes: "Suetonius makes reference to the 'friends' of the emperors, and together with those references of Tacitus and Dio each emperor had his following of friends. This practice was adapted to suit the special needs of the empire, and various changes crept in to the position of 'friends,' which were not part of the Hellenistic practice, such as the receiving of official or semi-official functions."[42] As an honorific title, its importance grew throughout the first century to indicate that "the friends of the emperors enjoyed a particular intimacy with them, and that the title of 'friend' was conferred on a man for reasons of imperial gratitude, such as the reward for loyalty."[43]

This title was employed frequently in Judea under Roman rule to secure the position of the Herodian dynasty by connecting it with the authority of the emperor and the benefits brought to the new empire by his rule:

> With the return of peace and stability to the empire after Actium, Herod was at last externally secure: the threat from Cleopatra had been removed, the problem of a choice of loyalty between rival Roman warlords had been resolved, and his position had been confirmed by the undisputed master of the Roman world. The two things now required of him by Rome were efficiency in his internal administration and loyalty to Octavian, who trusted him politically and liked him personally. The next two decades were years of material prosperity and imperial favour for the king who styled himself "Friend of Rome" and "Friend of Caesar."[44]

This pattern of establishing authority within Judea by openly allying oneself with the emperor continued under his successors, including

[41] Hence Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.27) could use the expression *amicorumve Caesaris* in reference to the friends of Drusus, the son of Tiberius.

[42] Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 46-47. See also Barrett, *St. John*, 543. Cf. the argument of Sherwin-White (*Roman Society*, 47): "Its connotation, originally political rather than personal in Republican usage, becomes markedly official in imperial documents, with the suggestion that so and so is the official representative of the princeps."

[43] Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 49.

[44] Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 70-71.

Agrippa, whom Gaius (Caligula) honored "with a formal treaty of alliance" and who, "until his death in 44 . . . ruled a kingdom larger than his grandfather's as 'Great King, Friend of Caesar and Friend of Rome.'"[45] Helen K. Bond notes also that "coins of Herod Agrippa I frequently read 'Philokaisar,' a designation that Philo also gives him (*In Flaccum* 40)."[46] This alone reveals that the title would have been common in the imperial provinces during the first century.

Moreover, Pilate himself may have been called "friend of Caesar," although there is no firm evidence outside the Fourth Gospel to link this title to him.[47] However, as A. N. Sherwin-White notes, "there is no historical improbability in the Johannine variations of this sort from the synoptic version [of Jesus' trial]."[48] Many scholars have speculated that Pilate received this appellation through the patronage of Sejanus.[49] If this is the case, and depending on the date of Jesus' crucifixion, the charge "You are not Caesar's friend" could have put even greater pressure on Pilate: "If Jesus dies at Passover in 30 or 31, Sejanus was still in power; if he dies in 33, Sejanus had fallen."[50] If his patron Sejanus had already been executed for treason, by association Pilate would have been especially vulnerable to the charge of not being Caesar's friend and eager to allay any fears in the emperor's mind. If not, executing a Jewish criminal would only have pleased Sejanus, who was by all accounts remarkably anti-Semitic.[51] Either way, a Roman governor could scarcely

[45] Ibid., 192.

[46] Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, 190.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 47.

[49] Whether there is a personal connection between Pilate and Sejanus has been the matter of some debate. Claude Spicq (*Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament* [3 vols.; Paris: Gabalda, 1958-59] 3. 239-45) argues for the connection, a position followed by Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 48; Schnackenburg, *Saint John*, 3. 262; Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 172. For an opposing view, see Jean-Pierre Lémanon, *Pilate et la gouvernement de la Judée: textes et monuments* (Paris: Gabalda, 1981) 275. Brown (*Death*, 1. 693-95) summarizes the issues involved. His brief description of "Lucius Aelius Sejanus, a Roman noble, [who] had gradually risen in importance in the emperor's estimation, even though already in the early 20s Sejanus was engaged in plots with and against members of the imperial family" (ibid., 1. 693), does not adequately capture the Rasputin-like career of this remarkable and remarkably unscrupulous individual. Through his machinations he became a virtual co-emperor under Tiberius, only to fall suddenly from power and be executed (by strangulation) within a single day: 18 October 31. For a full biography, see Dieter Hennig, *L. Aelius Saianus: Untersuchungen zur Regierung des Tiberius* (Munich: Beck, 1975).

[50] Brown, *Death*, 1. 693.

[51] See ibid., 1. 693-94; Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 165-67.

tolerate being called "no friend of Caesar," since it struck at the very heart of his loyalty to and trust by the emperor.

With their response in 19:12, the Jews demand that Pilate make a decision between his loyalty to Caesar and his stated belief in 19:6 that Jesus is innocent. The essential conflict between these competing loyalties, which a dualist interpretation of Christ's kingship would try to deny, cannot be glossed over here. Cuss puts the point well:

> Already Christ had shown that he had no intention of introducing some kind of revolutionary kingship which would set him up as the direct rival to Caesar: "Mine is not a kingdom of this world," but Pilate realized well enough that there was an element of truth in what they were saying, all the same; to shut his eyes to the fact that Jesus did have a following and had made certain definite, though somewhat vague, references to his kingdom, would show a lack of interest in the concerns of Caesar.[52]

Until now, Pilate has tried to remain uncommitted, to avoid the decision which until now was placed only before the Jews and Jesus' other listeners. It is hardly an enviable situation. In Tilborg's words: "Pilate faces a dilemma because of what the *Iudaioi* say to him: if he condemns Jesus he acts unjustly; if he sets him free he is guilty of lese-majesty. He must choose between Jesus and the emperor. He opts for the emperor and thus for injustice."[53]

Because of the difficulty confronting him, many have seen in the Johannine Pilate an almost sympathetic figure, standing not for Rome but for all of humanity in the dilemma posed by this situation.[54] Brown accordingly argued: "We would look on the Johannine Pilate not as a personification of the State but as another representative of a reaction to Jesus that is neither faith nor rejection. Pilate is typical, not of the State that would remain neutral, but of the many honest, well-disposed

[52] Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 44.

[53] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 172.

[54] Rensberger (*Johannine Faith*, 92) writes (somewhat hyperbolically): "By virtually universal consent, Pilate is seen in John as a more or less sympathetic figure, a man who wants to be fair, who would gladly acquit Jesus, but who through lack of resolve and susceptibility to political pressure all too easily becomes the tool of 'the Jews' and their malevolence." He cites in support of this claim the commentaries of Barrett, Brown, Dodd, Haenchen, and Schnackenburg.

men who would try to adopt a middle position in a struggle that is total."[55] Likewise, Hill writes: "Pilate is caught in the middle between clashing forces—Jesus (representing the world above) and 'the Jews' (representing the world below). Despite his temporizing and indecision, he cannot escape coming down on one side or another."[56] Pilate is a tragic figure in many ways, and exceedingly human in John's portrait, certainly one of the richest in the Fourth Gospel. Thus Brown's sympathetic interpretation of Pilate is neither foolish nor entirely false. But for the Gospel's audience he certainly is more than a conflicted and weak man.

As Bultmann argues, the impossibility of indecision faced by Pilate the man extends to the state as well: "the state is torn out of its neutrality precisely in so far as its firm hold on neutrality signifies a decision against the world."[57] Hill complains, against Bultmann and Schlier, that "the introduction of the abstraction 'the State' seems anachronistic" and perhaps "a reinterpretation or re-application of John in light of a modern theological problem, rather than an exposition of the evangelist's own viewpoint."[58] This negative judgment, however, ignores the all-pervasive character of the Augustan Ideology, and the emperor as a pole star for the social, cultural, religious and political life of the first-century empire.

By ancient standards the Augustan Ideology introduced a new level of control over the world. Earlier I quoted Karl Christ's description of it:

> What was new, however, in Augustan propaganda, was the size of the "tool kit," the scale of manipulation of views, the monopolisation of public opinion, and the gradual identification of one man and his family with the sovereignty of the state, the *maiestas rei publicae*. But it was not only the claims and achievements which

[55] Brown, *John*, 2. 864. Curiously, Warren Carter (*Pontius Pilate: Portraits of a Roman Governor* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003] 1-11), offering five different "types" for Pilate which have dominated historical interpretation (Cruel and Anti-Jewish; Weak and Without Conviction; Typical and Insensitive Roman Official; Christian Convert; Saint), leaves out this category, though it is to be noted that his study is not focused exclusively or even primarily on John.

[56] Hill, "My Kingdom," 56.

[57] Bultmann, *John*, 657.

[58] Hill, "My Kingdom," 60.

> the Augustan ideology indoctrinated. Its slogans also preached integration; they helped to strengthen the system and make it fast; they gave prominence to the chosen successors of Augustus, and were a decisive factor in identifying the family of the *princeps* with the state.[59]

Indeed, the world of John was a serious threat to his community, as Nero had shown so plainly in 64 C.E.

By raising the issue of what it means to be Caesar's friend, the Jews effectively shift the debate "from the question of Jesus' guilt to the issue of Pilate's position."[60] C. F. Evans captures the irony and the power of John 19:12 well: "The roles are now reversed. In place of the Roman governor offering the Jewish people the choice, 'Which will you have, Jesus or Barabbas?' the Jewish people offer the governor the choice, 'Which will you have, Christ or Caesar?'"[61] For John the issue is predetermined: Pilate will fail the test, and Jesus will freely accept death on the cross, all so that God's will may be accomplished. Accordingly, Jesus says, he is less culpable than the Jews (19:11). However, Paul D. Duke is mistaken to claim that this verse diminishes the importance of Pilate: "No matter what Pilate claims about a power to release, he is now destined to play a part in killing Jesus; and for all his blustering about his importance in this affair, the little governor will not even rate a larger share of guilt. His 'power to release' is now non-existent; his 'power to crucify' shrinks to the dubious role of minor accomplice."[62] Rather, it emphasizes Pilate's central role: "Since the divine economy required that Jesus' 'lifting up' be realized on the Cross, Pilate's concrete role was therefore necessary."[63] Furthermore, Pilate's "concrete role" was situated within the context of Roman power, since only the Romans could

[59] Christ, *Romans*, 51.

[60] Lindars, *John*, 569.

[61] Evans, "The Passion of John," in idem, *Explorations in Theology 2* (London: SCM, 1977) 50-66, here 61.

[62] Duke, *Irony*, 134. Schnackenburg (*Saint John*, 3. 261) takes a similar, though less pronounced, approach towards Pilate: "Because Pilate is only the extension of God's arm . . . , among the human participants more one directed than directing, he bears a lesser guilt. He is, it is true, in no way released from his responsibility; but compared with him, those who handed Jesus over to him bear the greater guilt [19:11]."

[63] Hill, "My Kingdom," 59.

order that specific manner of death.[64] Far from separating the person of Pilate from the position of governor, John here forces and extends their identification: as Pilate decides, so does Caesar through him.

This in turn raises a deeper question that John's Gospel in many ways seeks to answer: What does it mean to be Caesar's friend? The answer often given this question—and it is not completely mistaken—is that, for Pilate at least, it means executing an innocent man in order to preserve the peace that Augustus had brought to the world, that is, to choose injustice over justice, to choose the peace of this world over the peace that comes from above. As Josef Blinzler suggests, Pilate's "fear of the sinister and suspicious emperor was even greater than his awe of the mysterious personality of the Accused; his own safety appeared to him more important than a passing triumph over the accusers who were unsympathetic to him."[65] This answer is common among those who find Pilate typical of all humanity in his fearful and partially involuntary rejection of Christ. Moreover, it also supports, in Rensberger's words, "the usual view of

[64] Only in John do the Jews justify their decision to bring Jesus before Pilate on the grounds of what is "lawful" (ἔξεστιν) for them to do. The Synoptic Gospels lack any explanation for this decision. In the Fourth Gospel alone is it made explicit that the power of life and death belongs to the Roman authorities. This is particularly significant since, as Barrett (*St. John*, 533) points out, it may not be historically accurate: "The question whether the Jews had or had not the right (under the prefects and procurators) to carry out capital sentences is very difficult, and is still disputed among scholars." Brown gives at least four possible interpretation of what is meant by ἔξεστιν: (1) the Jews are forbidden in principle by the Mosaic Law; (2) they are forbidden at this time (i.e., on the eve of the Passover); (3) they are forbidden in the case of crimes such as those of which Jesus is accused (i.e., rebellion); or (4) they are forbidden by Roman law from putting anyone to death. The first two possibilities are contradicted by scriptural and historical evidence. While not ruling out the third, Brown (*Death*, 1. 748) concludes that "according to the better evidence, except for certain specified religious and moral crimes where death was the automatic penalty, the Jews in Judea were not allowed to execute." But Harvey (*Jesus on Trial*, 55) points out that the Jews had previously tried to stone Jesus to death (10:31; 11:8). Thus, the point of handing him over to Pilate must have been to insure a different *method* of execution, crucifixion. Brown (*Death*, 1. 748) describes their possible motive: "While they could put Jesus to death on religious grounds, they could not put him to death as a would-be king rebelling against the emperor—and that is how they want him remembered." This is the interpretation adopted by Beasley-Murray (*John*, 328). In either scenario, though, the necessity of Roman involvement in Jesus' death remains.

[65] Josef Blinzler, *Der Prozess Jesu* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1969) 338 (quoted and translated in Beasley-Murray, *John*, 341).

John's purpose as apologetic: Pilate is portrayed as Rome's representative, convinced of Jesus' political innocence and sincerely trying to let him go. At the very worst he is seen as representing a divinely legitimated state, which, through a misplaced effort at neutrality, forgoes its chance to stand for God and so inevitably loses control of events to the world, the forces of darkness."[66] This solution weaves together three guiding themes of Johannine exegesis—dualistic, apologetic, and tragic.

None of these approaches to the Fourth Gospel, though, adequately captures the political significance of Pilate's failure, nor does any of them appreciate the anti-Roman polemic found in its Passion Narrative. The rule of Caesar is not entirely separate from the kingship of Christ, but a part of it. Pilate is not an isolated individual representative of all people: he is the representative of Rome. His decision between Christ and Caesar is not a tragic dilemma but a false one.

The first two features of the portrait of Pilate have been discussed already, but the third needs further clarification. The choice given Pilate between Christ and Caesar is, for him, the choice between the man who has "made himself the Son of God (υἱὸς θεοῦ)" (19:7) and the man who has claimed to be *divi filius* (son of a god). Christ's claim to be Son of God was necessarily interpreted by Pilate in political terms to mean "King of the Jews," an identification never made by the Jewish leaders themselves.[67] However, for Pilate, the emperor's claim to be *Imperator* also entailed the claim to be the "son of a god." Given the confusion that follows from these two beliefs, it is hardly surprising that Pilate would have seen a conflict between the two and thus a need to choose one or the other.

[66] Rensberger, *Johannine Faith*, 92. The commentary of Bultmann (*John*, 663) expresses this latter approach: "Pilate is confronted with the question whether he will act objectively, as he was under obligation to do precisely in the light of the ἐξουσία, as he understood it, i.e. in the sense of the authority of the state, or whether he will betray the power of the state by putting it at the disposal of the world for its own ends."

[67] However, the title βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ is used by Nathanael (1:49) and the crowds welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem (12:13). The latter may be the source of Pilate's question to Jesus in 18:33. Schnackenburg (*Jesus in the Gospels: A Biblical Christology* [trans. O. C. Dean; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995] 263) points out that the failure of the Jews to recognize Jesus as Messiah which leads to the crucifixion was both unavoidable on their part and essential to the revelation of his true identity on the cross: "It is a paradox: the misunderstanding of the Jewish Messiah brings out the true messianic understanding of the exalted Son of Man."

The dualistic solution to this dilemma, whereby Jesus' kingship is seen as belonging to a different world, leaves the theological issue unsolved. It is not enough for John to solve the community's *political* problem with Rome by saying that Jesus is not a rival to Caesar: it is also necessary to solve the *theological* problem posed by the emperor's claim to divinity. Because of the symbiotic relationship between the Imperial Cult and the Roman system of governance, this is precisely what Pilate could never do. To be Caesar's friend requires not only looking after his *political* interests, but also defending the *ideological* foundations of his *imperium*. It demands not only loyalty to the *person* of the emperor, but also to his *image* as well, which in the Augustan Ideology was a manifestly and exclusively divine one. Dodd senses this ideological dimension in his comment on 19:12 and 15 when he writes: "In the other gospels we learn that Jesus was condemned by Pilate as King of the Jews, but here everything turns upon the claim of Jesus to kingship, over against the *exclusive* claim of Caesar."[68] In other words, to be a friend of Caesar is to affirm and embrace the Augustan Ideology, which so identifies *divi filius* and *Imperator* that it must reject Christ as the true υἱὸς θεοῦ and βασιλεύς. The fundamental decision Pilate makes, therefore, is not simply between justice and injustice, or even between Jesus and the Jews: it is between Christ and Caesar.[69] As Tilborg drily observes, "Pilate did not solve his dilemma very well."[70]

"We have no king but Caesar" (19:15)

With the threat in 19:12, the Jewish leaders turn the tables on Pilate, shifting the burden from their giving proof of Jesus' guilt to the governor's giving evidence of his loyalty to Caesar. Forced to condemn Jesus to death against his better judgment and unto his own judgment, Pilate now turns the tables once again. In v. 13 the Jews demand Jesus' death, shouting "Crucify him!" The evangelist could have passed on immedi-

[68] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 426 (emphasis added).

[69] Donald Rappé has suggested that the third-century *Acts of Pilate* reflects the later Christian resolution to this dilemma (formed along very Johannine lines) when it presents the Roman standards held by Pilate's troops at the trial as having "bent down and adored Jesus" (*Acts Pil.* 1.9).

[70] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 172.

ately to the crucifixion, but does not. Pilate refuses to let the matter drop. The decision that he confronted and which Caesar confronted through him must be faced by them as well. Duke comments: "They have utterly rejected Jesus; but in the author's view this is not enough. They must be made to confess the full implication of their choice. Pilate with wicked irony invites them into the final noose."[71] He brings out Jesus one final time and mockingly asks the crowd, asking, "Shall I crucify your king?" Duke draws out the irony in the passage: "While 'the Jews' have just urged Pilate to be true to his king, this pagan now invites them to consider their own. Will they forfeit the Messiah, and so cease to be the messianic people of God?"[72] He immediately receives his answer from the chief priests: "We have no king but Caesar" (19:15).[73] Their response completes the cycle of rejection that began in 1:11 when we were told that Jesus' "own people knew him not." Abandoned by Peter and the disciples, condemned by Pilate, and finally rejected and condemned to death by his own people, Jesus has nothing to do now but fulfill his mission: "Then [Pilate] handed him over to them to be crucified" (19:16).[74] Brown concludes that, after v. 15, "the real trial is over, for in the presence of Jesus 'the Jews' have judged themselves; they have spoken their own sentence."[75]

[71] Duke, *Irony*, 135.

[72] Ibid. Duke's "ironic" reading of John's text is not always convincing, but he captures the dynamic of this scene quite well. John 19:12-15 clearly involves a tug-of-war between Pilate and the Jews.

[73] 19:15: ἐκραύγασαν οὖν ἐκεῖνοι·ἆρον ἆρον, σταύρωσον αὐτόν. λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Πιλᾶτος· τὸν βασιλέα ὑμῶν σταυρώσω; ἀπεκρίθη οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς· οὐκ ἔχομεν βασιλέα εἰ μὴ Καίσαρα.

[74] τότε οὖν παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς ἵνα σταυρωθῇ. The ambiguous "to them" (αὐτοῖς) in 19:16 cannot refer to "the Jews" mentioned in the preceding verse. Lindars (*John*, 572) notes: "This is impossible, as John understands perfectly well that the Roman soldiers took to Jesus to be crucified (verses 23 and 25). But the subject of the verbs in 17f. is not expressed, and yet it must be the soldiers and not the Jews." Barrett (*St. John*, 546) considers it to be a possible instance of sloppy redaction. Brown (*John*, 2. 884), adopting an apologetic reading, claims that "more likely it reflects a later tendency to exculpate the Romans and inculpate the Jews." The ambiguity here is quite possibly intentional, since it allows both the Jews and the Romans to be interpreted as the ones who contributed to Jesus' crucifixion.

[75] Ibid., 2. 894. The irony here is typical of John: in passing judgment on Jesus the Jews also pass judgment on themselves, and seal their own fate in sealing his. By their final rejection of Jesus and their acclaim of Caesar, the Jews complete their role in revealing the Messiah. The only words left to them in the Gospel are the reiteration of their denial of Jesus (19:21); afterwards they are present only as a looming threat to Christ's followers (19:38; 20:19).

Some historical and theological background is necessary to understand the full importance of their response. According to the OT, until the period of the monarchy only God had been Israel's ruler. Gideon had declined the kingship of Israel, saying, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you" (Judg 8:23). When the people rejected Samuel as king, the Lord told him, "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them" (1 Sam 8:7), and instructed him to make Saul king instead (1 Sam 8:22). Likewise, the Davidic monarchy was established not by Saul or David but by God, and the king was invested with the divine spirit (2 Sam 7:13; Ps 2:6-7).[76] This religious expression set the Israelite kingship apart from the representation of kingship among most other ancient Near Eastern societies.[77] Because of this intimate association of the office of the king with Yhwh, its destruction by the Babylonian Empire was psychologically catastrophic. It precipitated not simply a political crisis but even more a theological one.

After the return from exile in 538 B.C.E., the territory of Yehud was first ruled by the Persians, then by the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties (as Judea), until the Maccabean revolt temporarily reestablished Jewish rule under the Hasmonaean dynasty. In 63 B.C.E. it fell under Roman control with Pompey's conquest of Egypt.[78] While numerous rulers assumed the title of king during these centuries, these rulers generally did not claim the divine authority that had belonged to the Davidic monarchy. Rather, they all relied on external support to secure their local rule, understanding themselves (and being understood by the people) as agents of foreign powers and ultimately responsible to

[76] Kenneth E. Pomykala (*The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism* [SBLEJL 7; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995] 13) considers 2 Sam 7:11b-16 "of primary importance for the davidic dynasty tradition" since it establishes "a filial relationship between God and the davidic kings." For a discussion of the "messianic" themes in Psalm 2, see S. E. Gillingham, "The Messiah in the Psalms: A Question of Reception History and the Psalter," in John Day, ed., *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (JSOTSup 270; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 209-237, especially 212-14.

[77] The distinctiveness of the Davidic monarchy in the ANE should not be overstated. For a study of the numerous historical similarities between the Davidic monarchy and other monarchies of the ANE, see Dale Launderville, *Piety and Politics: The Dynamics of Royal Authority in Homeric Greece, Biblical Israel, and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003).

[78] See Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 1-20.

them.[79] The one exception to this pattern, the Hasmonaean dynasty established under the Maccabees, failed to secure lasting independence for the region and was eventually overturned by the Romans after the conquest.

An important result of this long history of foreign rule was the gradual development of a widespread hope for "the unique anointed of the House of David, the future Messiah, who was to come and establish God's rule on earth. Only one raised up by God could be the true king of God's people—not the Persian, nor Ptolemaic, nor Syrian, nor Roman overlords whose troops had marched across the land."[80] These messianic expectations developed slowly and unevenly, and never took a single theological form, leading Kenneth E. Pomykala to write: "Since there never existed a continuous, widespread, dominant, or uniform expectation for a davidic messiah in early Judaism, scholarly discourse should dispense with the idea of a 'traditional' davidic hope for this period."[81] Precisely because of the diversity of forms it took, this

[79] Herod presents an especially clear example of this attitude: "A clever politician, he at first favored Marc Antony; but after the latter's defeat at Actium in 31, Herod hastily visited Octavian on the island of Rhodes, removed his crown in the victor's presence, and explained his attitude. Octavian restored his crown and confirmed his kingship by decree (Josephus, *J. W.* 1.20.2)" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "A History of Israel," *NJBC*, 1219-52, here 1246).

[80] Brown, *John*, 2. 895.

[81] Pomykala, *Davidic Dynasty*, 271. This growing messianic expectation is of paramount importance in setting the stage for Jesus' ministry, but its effective employment is made difficult by the complexity of its sources and the lack of consensus among scholars as to its proper interpretation and application to NT exegesis. The literature is enormous. John L. McKenzie ("Aspects of Old Testament Thought," *NJBC*, 1284-1315, here 1311) offers a summary of perhaps the safest conclusions from late twentieth-century research:

> The postexilic development of messianism is difficult to trace because of the lack of written evidence; in part we must reconstruct its history from the end product, viz., the expectation of the Messiah in the latest pre-Christian period. The fact that the Davidic line no longer ruled after the exile (or at least after the governorship of Zerubbabel, to the best of our knowledge) made a profound difference in messianism. Before the exile the ideal king who would restore the vigor of the Davidic line could always be thought of in terms of the next generation of a reigning dynasty. But now there could be no ideal king until the indefinite future when the Davidic throne would be restored. Thus the expectations began to move toward the indefinite future; and rather than centering on one monarch in a continuing line of rulers, these expectations came to center on one supreme king who would represent Yahweh's definitive intervention to save his people. It is in this

inchoate messianism was capable of being adopted by very different religious and political movements. On the one hand, the Qumran community awaited the coming of the Messiah from their desert retreat.[82] On the other hand, the Zealots in the first century considered the occupation of Palestine by foreigners an intolerable situation and therefore demanded violent resistance to Roman rule to establish a new Israel. Their militancy contributed to the Jewish uprising in 66 C.E., which ended in the Roman victory at the mountain fortress at Masada in 73 C.E.[83]

That the first-century concept of "messiah" could readily be understood as "(anti-Roman) political messiah" helps to explain why John presents Jesus as alarming the Jewish leaders.[84] As John 11 represents the situation, it was precisely the prospect of Jesus inciting national destruction at the hands of Rome that led the Jewish leaders to begin plotting his death: "If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and

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period that we may begin to speak of *the Messiah* in the strict sense. Earlier Scripture (Royal Psalms; Isaiah) was now reread with this new messianic understanding in mind.

[82] The rule of the Qumran community can be found in "The Rule of the Congregation" (1QSa), which Geza Vermes (*The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* [New York: Penguin, 1998] 157-60) renames "The Messianic Rule" because of its content. For a fuller discussion of messianism in the Qumran community, see John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1995); Shemaryahu Talmon, "Waiting for the Messiah: The Spiritual Universe of the Qumran Covenanters," in Jacob Neusner et al., eds., *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 111-38.

[83] An important account of the Masada siege is that of Yigael Yadin, *Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealot's Last Stand* (trans. Moshe Perlman; 1967; repr., New York: Welcome Rain, 1998). Cf. the criticisms of Neil Asher Silberman, *A Prophet from Amongst You: The Life of Yigael Yadin: Soldier, Scholar, and Mythmaker of Modern Israel* (Reading, MA: Wesley-Addison, 1993).

[84] While numerous attempts have been made in the last two centuries to link Jesus with the Zealots, these efforts have met with little acceptance. Recent defenses of this connection include Richard A. Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985); and J. P. M. Sweet, "The Zealots and Jesus," in *Jesus and the Politics of his Day*, 1-10. A history of the scholarly literature can be found in Bammel, "The revolutionary theory from Reimarus to Brandon," in *Jesus and the Politics of his Day*, 11-68. Even less compelling, in my opinion, are the attempts to present Jesus as providing a non-violent alternative to the Zealot's resistance, e.g., Rensberger's definition of "John's political stance as allegiance to the kingship of Jesus, which [John] presents as a third alternative to the claims of both Caesar and the Zealots" (*Johannine Faith*, 116).

the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation. . . . So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death" (11:48, 53). Such fears may echo the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and anticipate the subsequent, final dispersion of the Jews from Palestine following the revolt of Bar Kochba in 117 C.E.[85] However, as the evangelist presents him in 18:36, Jesus is not a political revolutionary at all. The event that precipitates the chief priests planning his death is not a plot by Jesus to overthrow Roman rule but rather his giving of life to Lazarus, and the resultant spread of Lazarus' sister Mary's belief that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world" (11:27). As with his treatment of Pilate, John represents the chief priests' refusal to accept Jesus as based on an apparent confusion between what an earthly king is and what the Son of God is. Favoring the former, the Jewish leaders are represented as rejecting the latter.

Notably, it is the Jewish *leaders*, not the crowd, that are represented as speaking in v. 15. Tilborg comments: "There is again a remarkable change in person: only the high priests say that they do not know any other king but the emperor."[86] It may be the case here, as Brown supposes, that the chief priests serve "as spokesmen for 'the Jews'" and that the shift in person has no special significance.[87] However, it may indicate that, at least for John, the chief priests saw in Pilate's question a threat to their own political position. As Smallwood observes,

> Josephus says that after the end of Herodian rule, "the constitution was an aristocracy and the High Priests were entrusted with the leadership of the nation" [Josephus, *A.J.* 20.251]; that is, he sees the presidency of the high Priest as the real ruler under the aegis of the Roman resident governor, which was virtually what the Jews had asked for. But the political power of the High Priesthood now became unmistakable, when the right of appointment passed from

[85] Other would-be revolutionaries who fared no better than Bar Kochba in resisting Roman rule—and who might have been known to John—include Theudas of Jordan (Acts 5:36), Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:37), and the anonymous leader of the Sicarii (Acts 21:38).

[86] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 173. This shift back from the crowd to the high priests at this critical moment is often overlooked, even by those concerned with absolving John of a generalized anti-Judaism.

[87] Brown, *Death*, 1. 849.

> Archelaus to the Roman authorities, normally the governor of Judaea.[88]

It is hardly surprising, given this situation, that "the supreme Jewish authority, the Sanhedrin, came under indirect Roman control, since only men who could be relied on to pursue a policy approved by Rome would be chosen for its presidents."[89] John's portrait of the Jewish leaders perhaps is meant to be especially cutting.

This, in turn, raises the question of the numerous Passover motifs in John. Much has been made of the prominence of Passover themes in the Gospel, especially the Passion Narrative. For example, Jesus is "enthroned" (crucified) at the hour when preparation for Passover would begin (19:17). He is taken down from the cross early to prevent the defilement of the Passover (19:31). His bones are left unbroken, just like those of the Passover lamb (19:37). Meeks notes an additional parallel that may help to explain John's anti-Roman polemic:

> But anyone familiar with the Passover Haggadah cannot fail to be reminded by the cry of the high priests, "We have no king but Caesar," of the *Nišmat*, the hymn sung at the conclusion of the Greater Hallel [i.e., that very evening]:
>
> *From everlasting to everlasting thou art God;*
> *Beside thee we have no king, redeemer or savior,*
> *No liberator, deliverer, provider,*
> *None who takes pity in every time of distress and trouble.*
> *We have no king but thee.*[90]

[88] Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 148.

[89] Ibid., 149. This fact causes considerable difficulties for Rensberger (*Johannine Faith*, 96), who claims that the Jews' preferrence for Barabbas "the revolutionary" over Jesus suggests "that their coerced submission to Caesar is not entirely wholehearted." On the one hand, no one would suggest Roman occupation was popular; on the other hand, the high priests in service to Pilate could not allow much sympathy to be shown for any politically suspect criminal.

[90] Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 77. Meeks (ibid., 77 n. 3) recognizes a difficulty with this parallel, namely, that "it is unfortunately not possible to ascertain the date at which the *Nišmat* became part of the Seder." Brown (*Death*, 1. 849) describes it as "a Passover hymn of somewhat later Judaism," though he then points to "the Eleventh Benediction of the *Shemoneh Esreh* [which] prays, 'May you rule over us, you alone.'" Whatever the exact

It is notable here that John and the Jewish tradition agree about the opposition of the Roman Imperium and submission to God. For John, the very men who declare to Pilate that "We have no king but Caesar" will in but a few hours put on their vestments and declare to their sole allegiance to God. By placing this statement upon their lips, John completes the polemic against the chief priests that runs throughout the Gospel. Meeks continues: "God's eternal reign as king is the principal theme of the *Nišmat*, . . . if the cry of the high priests does refer to the *Nišmat*, it represents not just the rejection of the Messiah, but also of 'the one who sent him' (12:44; 13:20). God himself, universally praised by every circle of Judaism as the king and judge of all men, is here rejected."[91]

John's literary representation of "the Jews" puts them in an ideological dilemma in the narrative. Just as Pilate was presented with the decision between Christ and Caesar by the Jews in 19:12, so too here the Jews are represented as facing the same choice. To remain in Pilate's favor, they must admit "We have no king but Caesar." In Brown's words, "by rejecting [Jesus] the chief priests have given up their hope for the Messiah king to be sent by God and have settled for Roman civil kingship. . . . By their own choice and words 'the Jews' have become like other nations, subject to Rome: they are no longer God's special people."[92] The words that they directed at Pilate in v. 12 now come back to apply to them as well: "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend." And, as was implied with Pilate as well, if they do not release him by proclaiming him their king, they are not God's friends either. The words of

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date of the *Nišmat*, Lindars (*John*, 572) properly observes of the chief priests' response to Pilate: "No Jew could say this with a clear conscience."

[91] Ibid., 78. The obvious and grave implications of the chief priests' claim, and the absence of this detail from any of the Synoptic narratives, argue against the historicity of John's account at this point. Barrett (*John and Judaism*, 71) writes that 19:15 involves "a distortion of history, and it is perhaps not so important to decide whether the distortion was conscious or developed unconsciously with the increasing enmity between Christians and Jews during that period." Cf. Craig L. Blomberg (*The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2001] 248), who argues unconvincingly that "it is scarcely credible that [this response] could have been *invented* in the light of Jewish attitudes after the war with Rome." While Blomberg is probably correct that no practicing Jew would have invented such a response after 70 C.E., John's hostile attitude towards the Jewish leadership would not have prevented him from doing so.

[92] Brown, *Death*, 1. 849.

1 John 2:23, probably directed at schismatics within the Johannine community, apply equally here: "No one who denies the Son has the Father."

Seen in this light, John's anti-Jewish polemic looks like a variation of his anti-Roman critique that had played itself out in the trial before Pilate. Tilborg points out the dilemma faced by the chief priests in 19:15, which parallels Pilate's situation in 19:12: "Saying this, the high priests not only renounce their political independence but they also no longer profess that God is the only king of Israel. In this way the dilemma 'Jesus or the emperor' is not only Pilate's dilemma; it is just as much the dilemma for the leaders of Israel. And they too did not solve it well."[93]

Conclusion

Buried in Meeks's book on the Moses traditions in the Fourth Gospel is a provocative paragraph:

> Jesus' kingship is not "unworldly." Instead one of the characteristics of the Johannine treatment of the trial is that its *political* implications are emphasized. In 11:48 a specifically political motivation is injected into the plotting of the Jewish authorities. John alone mentions the presence of Roman soldiers (ἡ . . . σπεῖρα καὶ ὁ χιλίαρχος) at the arrest of Jesus. In the trial itself, the political-realistic element is introduced by the Jews at 19:12: "If you release this man you are not Caesar's friend; anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." The climactic rejection of Jesus by the Jews is the statement "We have no king but Caesar," in which the "religious" and "political" questions are shown to be inextricably merged. Hence, while the Christian community's precarious relation to the Empire at the end of the first century has doubtless influenced the Johannine form of the trial, it is not quite accurate to call the narrative apologetic. It is certainly not true that the trial scene provides a model by which Christians can readily show "that they are not seditious" [Hoskyns]. On the contrary, what the trial suggests is that the disciple will always have to decide *vis-à-vis* the Empire whether Jesus is his king or whether Caesar is.[94]

[93] Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, 173.
[94] Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 64.

One of the most remarkable things about this quotation is how little attention it has received among scholars.[95] And yet, in light of opposition between Christ and Caesar that runs throughout the Passion Narrative and ties together the seemingly disparate characters of Pilate and the high priests, it seems on target.

Several statements in John 18-19 address the opposition at work: the claim of Jesus that "My kingdom is not of this world" (18:36); the warning to Pilate that "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (19:11); the threat of the chief priests to Pilate, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend" (19:12); and their response to Pilate three verses later, "We have no king but Jesus" (19:15). All these can be seen to fit together, but not within a framework governed by a cosmological or moral dualism or a primarily anti-Jewish polemic in the Passion Narrative. Rather, they all belong to a conceptually well-developed understanding of what sort of power is proper to Christ, what sort is proper to Caesar, and the theological danger the latter posed to every person, whether Jew or Christian or Roman. While this understanding is hardly a complete political theology, it does express the basic principles of the Johannine attitude towards politics. Even if, as Hill claims, "such principles, with their potential for inspiring political options, remain quite general and do not furnish us with concrete blue-prints for political programs," they delineate the boundaries that John's Gospel conceives, not only for the absolute limits of state power but also for the relative limits of divine influence within the world as well.[96]

[95] Renserberger mentions it in a single endnote.
[96] Hill, "My Kingdom," 61.

Conclusion

Modern Catholics are often surprised to learn that the feast of Christ the King, which is now celebrated on the last Sunday of Ordinary Time, does not date back to the Middles Ages but rather was instituted less than eighty-five years ago by Pope Pius XI in response to the rise of secular political movements that he believed threatened the traditional privileges of the Church across Europe. But a necessary condition for protecting the political prerogatives of the Church, he realized, was reasserting the political significance of Jesus Christ that had been pushed aside since the French Revolution:

> It has long been a common custom to give to Christ the metaphorical title of "King," because of the high degree of perfection whereby he excels all creatures. . . . But if we ponder this matter more deeply, we cannot but see that the title and the power of King belongs to Christ as man in the strict and proper sense too. For it is only as man that he may be said to have received from the Father "power and glory and a kingdom," since the Word of God, as consubstantial with the Father, has all things in common with him, and therefore has necessarily supreme and absolute dominion over all things created.[1]

Taken in isolation, this quote could be mistaken for a gloss on John 19:11: "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above."

[1] Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas* [December 11, 1925], in *The Papal Encyclicals, 1740-1981* (5 vols.; ed. Claudia Carlen; n.p.: McGrath, 1981) 3. 272.

The Johannine understanding of Christ's kingship offends modern political sensibilities—even those of many conservative Catholics. Certainly, the practical appeal of many "dualist" readings of the Fourth Gospel is that they enable one to avoid the conclusions of Pius XI, and instead permit a metaphorical rather than a literal interpretation of those passages in John where the autonomous power of the State is called into question and where Christ is placed neither beside nor apart from Caesar but *above* him. Moreover, given the last seventeen hundred years of Church history, a strong argument can be made that a dualist interpretation of the Fourth Gospel is the only viable one for a church that, in Augustine's phrase, is still "in the world as a pilgrim."

John would have none of Paul's obeisant attitude towards the State. Rather, as I have argued in this study, it was precisely the Roman exaltation of the State in the person of the emperor over that of God in the person of Christ that inspired John to introduce into the Gospel a polemic against the Augustan Ideology and its explicit claim to absolute sovereignty in the world. It was, at its core, this political belief—albeit often wrapped in religious and literary garb—that lay at the root of the cycle of rejection that Christ experiences throughout the Gospel, from his rejection by his own people (1:11) to his execution as a criminal at the hands of the authorities in John 19. And, as Raymond E. Brown and J. Louis Martyn have suggested, the story of Christ's rejection is also the secret history of the rejection of his followers, both by "the Jews" and the Roman authorities who aided them.

Rather than promoting a suicidal rebellion against Caesar's power, the evangelist attempts a systematic reversal of the political logic of the Augustan Ideology. For example, the unparalleled portrait of the "only-begotten Son" in the Prologue, the reservation of true "power" to Christ alone, the bestowal of the title "Savior of the World" on Jesus, and the confrontation with Pilate in the Passion Narrative all suggest that John wished to strike at the true heart of Roman power. This target was not the troops and governors that could put down local uprisings, but the *Weltanschauung* that secured the overwhelming consent of the Mediterranean world by presenting the Roman triumph as the inevitable result of a divinely ordained historical process guided by divine men. In this respect, John's theology foreshadows the Barmen Declaration (to which Rudolf Bultmann was a signatory), that lonely protest of 1934 against the Nazi regime and its National Socialist church, which proclaimed:

"We reject the false doctrine that there could be areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ but to other lords, areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him."[2]

In retrospect, it is surprising how many exegetes pass over this aspect of the Gospel. The point here is to show how the Fourth Gospel, a historically particular document, challenges a historically particular political system. Given the temptation over the centuries to read it as a timeless and placeless document about Christ, it is perhaps justification enough for my research if it helps to illuminate those elements of time that gave rise to John's timeless meditations. In other words, that John challenges all political systems should surprise no one. However, the way in which he challenged this particular structure might surprise many, and recognizing it will at the very least expand our understanding of the Gospel.

More precisely, the political understanding of the text offered in this study may serve to chart a new path for contextualizing the Fourth Gospel. It holds the potential to move beyond the traditional historical-critical paradigms (Jewish vs. Philosophical-Gnostic) or theological approaches (Sacramentalist vs. Docetist vs. Christological vs. etc.). By looking to the first-century political context of the Gospel, we can come to understand how Johannine Christians would have understood themselves as men and women with divided hearts, torn between Christ and Caesar. How clear their self-understanding may have been or how normative it should be for Christians in the twenty-first century is another question, but one that can only be answered once we know what the self-understanding of Johannine Christians was. And my project, I hope, contributes towards that goal.

Beyond the field of biblical exegesis, this study has something to offer contemporary work in both Christology and political theology. Given the historical centrality of the Fourth Gospel for Christology, the sug-

[2] Brown, *Kairos*, 157. Perhaps moderns readers of John should not forget that Hitler in the twentieth century looked back to Augustus as a model and predecessor of the European empire that he hoped to fashion. Joachim C. Fest (*Hitler* [New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1971] 543) writes: "It was necessary for Hitler to reject the past because there was no era in German history which he admired. His ideal period was classical antiquity: Athens, Sparta ('the most pronounced racial state in history'), the Roman Empire. He always felt closer to Caesar or Augustus than to the German freedom fighter Arminius."

gestion that its portrait of Christ was formed in part as a reply to historically particular forms of political power (i.e., the Roman emperor) can enable the systematic theologian to reconceptualize what John's high Christology was supposed to accomplish for his community and what it can (and cannot) accomplish in the contemporary context. At the very least, a greater appreciation and understanding of how Johannine Christology was shaped in part by a polemic against a historically specific form of political power must affect how theologians go about transferring Johannine texts to the contemporary world when doing Christology. In short, the Johannine Christ may have come down from heaven in the text, but John's portrait of him arose from the soil of first-century Roman Asia Minor. Any modern Christology must capture both places of origin if it is to be true to both history and faith.

The same problem of sorting the particular from the universal in John recurs in modern political theology. Modern liberationist theologians such as Leonardo Boff and Gustavo Gutierrez, to name only two of the most prominent, have attempted to reconceive the tasks of Christian theology in the socio-political spheres, and to reshape their Catholic societies away from what is often seen as a medieval emphasis on hierarchy and towards a modern emphasis on egalitarianism and democracy. Leaving aside the question of the value or disvalue of these efforts for the church, the recognition that John's autocratic understanding of Christ's authority (John 18:36) was formed within and against an autocratic and decidedly non-democratic society certainly adds a new layer of complexity to the problems confronting any political theology. Are these ancient paradigms of political authority that John incorporated into his Christology to be abandoned as historical relics? Are they no longer able to help Christians think usefully about the theology of the state, or are they normative elements of authentic Christian theology that challenge the political beliefs of the twenty-first century just as radically as John challenged those of the first century? Likewise, Pope John Paul II's quite laudable search for a "third way" between capitalism and communism announced in his *Centisimus Annus* presupposes the same task of shifting and sorting out not only the relics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but also those of the first in the search for a workable Christian social order. I have no ready answers for these larger theological questions, but even to pose them is sufficient to show the relevance of this study for contemporary theology.

On the more mundane level of historical-critical exegesis, this study leaves several questions about the Gospel unanswered. What was the exact status of Gentile members of the community *vis-à-vis* the Imperial Cult? How does John's understanding of Christ's kingship inform his portrait of Jesus' Galilean ministry? What are the implications of this anti-Roman polemic for the interpretation of the Farewell Discourses? Does the movement towards a universal Church reflected in John 21 challenge or at least nuance this polemic? Most importantly, can a more positive and systematic theory of the State be drawn from the Fourth Gospel that may have guided the hand of John when he redacted earlier traditions and documents into the final version of the Gospel? To answer these questions would require a full commentary on the Gospel from a "Roman" perspective, an intellectual project that lies beyond the scope of this study.

My goals here have been more modest: to draw together the results of modern scholarship on the Augustan Ideology and to see how John can be read fruitfully in light of it. The history of the Johannine community is one of conflict with several enemies outside and inside itself, the Roman Empire being only one. Yet at the stage when the Gospel was put into its final form, it may well have been the most threatening. To recognize the Roman *imperium* as such, and for a moment to look past other opponents, allows a new and valuable light to be shed on the text. By this standard, I hope that my efforts to re-read the Fourth Gospel can command some scholarly attention—and perhaps promote allegiance to him "through whom all things were made" (John 1:2).

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