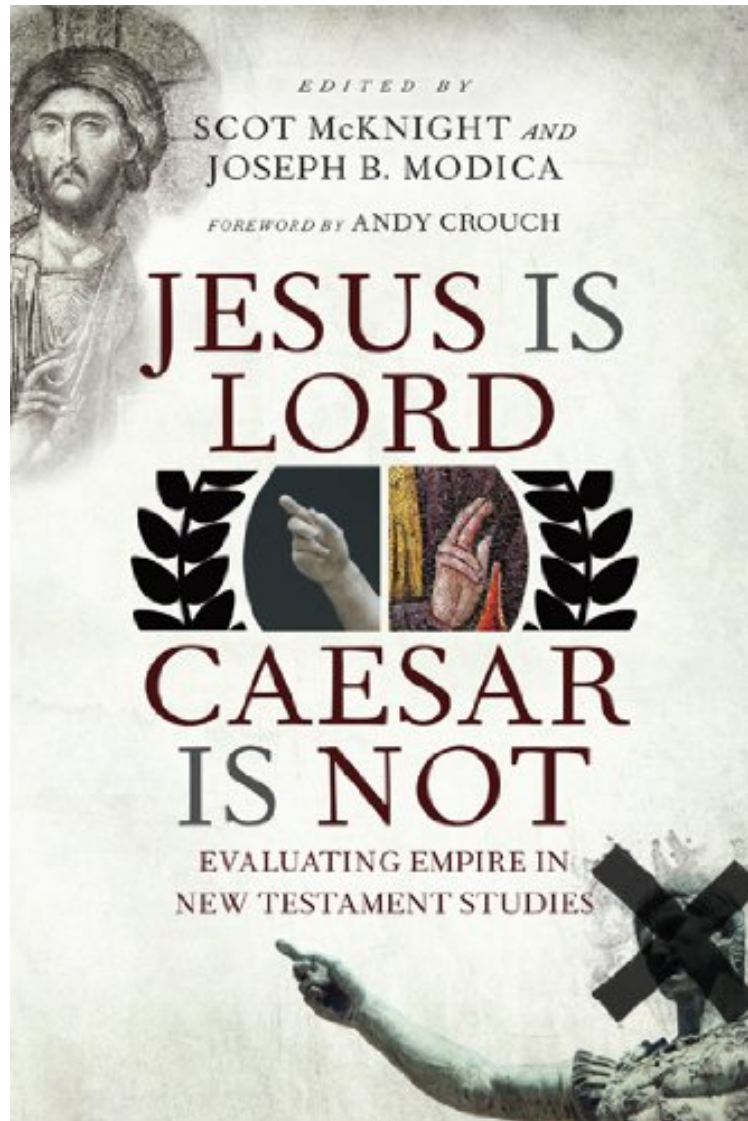


Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies

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From InterVarsity Press : Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies:

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Good Critique but Lacking.By Henry T ImlerOver the last 18 years anti-imperial and postcolonial readings of the New Testament have become fashionable. Formidable scholars

like N. T. Wright advocate such readings. But how well do they hold up to scrutiny? Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica have edited together a book to answer that question. I found the book to be a helpful introductory work in the area of empire and postcolonial criticism. The first essay is a nice summary of Roman ideology, philosophy and theology. The second essay gives a helpful intro into the field of empire criticism of the NT. The rest of the book looks at certain books of the NT and evaluates the use of empire criticism. I agree with the consensus evaluation of the writers that the NT isn't so much anti-empire, specifically anti-Rome, but rather sees Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament eschatology and apocalyptic hope. The OT looked for Israel's God to return to Jerusalem and restore the Davidic monarchy and rule over the nations. In other words, God will defeat the pagan nations through his servant, the Messiah, and establish himself as king over all. The Gospels and Paul are trying to teach the Jew+Gentile church how to live out Jesus as God fulfilling this hope. The major setback of this book isn't so much what it says, but what it doesn't. The authors spend so much time talking about the shortcomings of anti-imperial readings that they fail to say how it is helpful. They look at specific passages to show how postcolonial doesn't work. But they will also say it's helpful and then never get more specific than that. I would have liked to have seen a more evenhanded approach. In discussing the Gospels, they mention how the presentation of Pontius Pilate (the closest thing to a stand-in for Rome) isn't a negative presentation. The Gospels spend most of their time critiquing the Jewish leadership instead of Roman leadership. But they left out the Roman soldiers who mocked Jesus and cast lots for his clothes. How does this part of the story play into the Gospels' understanding of Rome? I liked the book and found it helpful in seeing the shortcomings of empire criticism. It was a good reality check to see N. T. Wright get critiqued for overreaching on his anti-imperial readings. But I found the book not as helpful as it could be because there could have been more said, in specifics, about how empire criticism is helpful--rather than just merely stating the fact. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good But Understanding the NT Writers Lies Somewhere In Between By Biblical Reader Jesus is Lord Not Caesar I gave this book 4 stars rather than 5 because it doesn't provide a lot of new information. The basic thesis of the book is that the New Testament writers are not anti-imperial but rather simply saying that Jesus and God are above Caesar. While I think this perspective is closer to what the New Testament writers are emphasizing rather than the anti-imperialism expressed by Horsley, Elliott, and Georgi, it is probably better to see the New Testament in relation to the Roman Empire in terms of a continuum. The very fact that the New Testament writers are portraying Jesus and God with words that are used to describe the emperor is subversive to some extent as can be seen in how the community reacts to Paul in Acts 7. Can one be subversive without actively seeking to undermine and overthrow the government? I think so. Can passive resistance, (like turning the other cheek) be subversive precisely because it is so different from the methods of Rome? I think so. The very fact that Paul is lifting up faith, hope and love rather than the Emperor's virtues of justice, peace, security, harmony and victory is subversive. One important point that none of the writers in *Jesus Is Lord, Not Caesar* mention is the reason why the writers of the New Testament don't attack the Roman Empire more than they do. It is true that the New Testament writers see Satan and not the Roman Empire as their main enemy; but no mention is made of the fact that the NT writers believe that it is wrong to have a judgmental attitude toward those in power. This point can be seen in Douglas Campbell's interpretation of Romans 1-3 found in *Deliverance*. It may also explain why slavery is not condemned. Colossians and Ephesians encourage masters to treat their slaves with compassion rather than command that they set their slaves free. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good overview but repetitive By W. S. Ehrhart Good evaluation and critical review of scholars who are pro-imperial in their perspective of the New Testament writers' approach. Highlights key texts in the Gospels through Revelation but is somewhat repetitive in each chapter's conclusion. It echoes the idea that there are legitimate imperial arguments for the writing of each book/letter, but they are never the main thrust behind the author's motive. Nystrom's tone in chapter one sets up the analysis well.

The New Testament is immersed in the often hostile world of the Roman Empire, but its relationship to that world is complex. What is meant by Jesus' call to "render unto Caesar" his due, when Luke subversively heralds the arrival of a Savior and Lord who is not Caesar, but Christ? Is there tension between Peter's command to "honor the emperor" and John's apocalyptic denouncement of Rome as "Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots"? Under the direction of editors Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, respected biblical scholars have come together to investigate an increasingly popular approach in New Testament scholarship of interpreting the text through the lens of empire. The contributors praise recent insights into the New Testament's exposé of Roman statecraft, ideology and emperor worship. But they conclude that rhetoric of anti-imperialism is often given too much sway. More than simply hearing the biblical authors in their context, it tends to govern what they must be saying about their context. The result of this collaboration, *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not*, is a groundbreaking yet accessible critical evaluation of empire criticism. Contributors include: David Nystrom on Roman ideology; Judith A. Diehl on the state of empire scholarship; Joel Willitts on Matthew; Dean Pinter on Luke; Christopher W. Skinner on John's Gospel and Letters; Drew Strait on Acts; Michael F. Bird on Romans; Lynn Cohick on Philippians; Allan R. Bevere on Colossians and Philemon; Dwight Sheets on Revelation

"[T]he editors are to be thanked for assembling a fine team of contributors and for offering a sensible and timely response to this scholarly trend." (John K. Goodrich, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, June 2014)"Eleven contributors engage the question: Are we reading Rome and Caesar into the NT or are we reading what is actually there? They praise recent insights into the NT's expos of Roman statecraft, ideology, and emperor worship. Yet, they conclude that the rhetoric of anti-imperialism is often given too much sway. Their collaboration provides an accessible critical evaluation of empire criticism." (*Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, 2014, Vol 68(1))"McKnight and Modica's *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not* is a welcome contribution and may serve as a valuable point of entry for those who are not aware that such a discussion about the New Testament and Rome has been taking place among scholars over the last few decades." (Danny Yencich, *Englewood of Books*, Eastertide 2013)"These accessible studies are exemplary in their clarity, informed by excellent scholarship and highly insightful in their argumentation. Although it is acknowledged that 'empire criticism' has given us some valuable new insight, it is clearly shown that anti-imperial rhetoric is not a major emphasis of the NT, nor was it a key purpose of the NT authors to oppose Rome in what they wrote. These insightful essays advance our thinking on this very important topic and further our understanding of the gospel and of the relationship between God's kingdom and the powers of this world." (Paul Trebilco, professor of New Testament studies, University of Otago, New Zealand)"A series of vigorous assessments of the question, How anti-imperial are the New Testament texts? Most of these clearly argued articles come down fairly firmly on the negative side although some, such as Bird on Romans, see the texts as posing challenges to Rome. Everyone involved in these debates will want to engage with this book." (Peter Oakes, Greenwood Senior Lecturer in the New Testament, University of Manchester)"A valuable book. Highly recommended as both a good introduction to and a sane evaluation of the currently popular anti-imperial interpretation of the New Testament. Most of the essays clearly demonstrate that that interpretation is driven more by assumptions and modern theories of postcolonial criticism than by sound exegesis." (Seyoon Kim, professor of New Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary)"Finally a book that takes a balanced approach to the issue of imperial criticism of the NT. Following the lead of careful scholars like Christopher Bryan, the contributors remind us that it is overreading the NT to suggest that the writers were preoccupied with contrasting the lordship of Christ with that of Caesar. They operated with a cosmology that suggests that the ruler of this fallen world since long before there was a Roman Emperor is Satan, not Caesar. And while the NT writers certainly critique polytheism in its many guises, the imperial cult is seen as just one form of the many gods and lords subject to the one God's judgment. At the same time, the contributors to this volume urge that in the NT human rulers are not cast solely in a bad light. Jesus' kingdom is of a different sort than Caesar's. I highly commend this book." (Ben Witherington, Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary)About the AuthorScot McKnight (Ph.D., University of Nottingham) is professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary in Lombard, Illinois. He is the author of *The Jesus Creed*, *The King Jesus Gospel*, *A Community Called Atonement*, *Embracing Grace*, *The Real Mary* and commentaries on James, Galatians and 1 Peter, and coeditor of the award-winning *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. He is also a widely recognized blogger at the Jesus Creed blog. His other interests include golfing, gardening and traveling. Joseph B. Modica is university chaplain and associate professor of biblical studies at Eastern University (Pennsylvania). He completed his Ph.D. in New Testament and early Christianity at Drew University (New Jersey). His current research interests include spiritual formation, faith development and historical Jesus studies. Andy Crouch (M.Div., Boston University School of Theology) is executive editor of *Christianity Today* and the author of books such as *Culture Making and Playing God*. Andy serves on the governing boards of Fuller Theological Seminary and Equitas Group, a philanthropic organization focused on ending child exploitation in Haiti and Southeast Asia. He is also a senior fellow of International Justice Missions Institute for Biblical Justice. His writing has appeared in *Time*, the *Wall Street Journal* and several editions of *Best Christian Writing* and *Best Spiritual Writing*. Crouch served as executive producer for the documentary films *Where Faith and Culture Meet* and *Round Trip*, as well as the multi-year project *This Is Our City*, which featured documentary video, reporting and essays about Christians seeking the flourishing of their cities. He also sits on the editorial board for *Books Culture* and was editor-in-chief of *re:generation quarterly*. He also spent ten years as a campus minister with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Harvard University. A classically trained musician who draws on pop, folk, rock, jazz and gospel, Crouch has led musical worship for congregations of five to twenty thousand. He lives with his family in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.