can then read his fragments against thematic parallels in Josephus' material on Herod, along with contradictions in Josephus' narrative suggesting that he used an external source (18). The enterprise enables plausible theories of where Josephus was indebted to Nicolaus.

This approach often leads the authors to differ from past scholarship regarding what Nicolaus' narrative arc for Herod was. Herod, a usurper without an ancestral claim, came to power in a Roman imperial system that rewarded merit, unlike the late Hellenistic and Hasmonaean contexts that preceded (ch. 1). Being energetic, skilled and ambitious, he behaved like a good king; spending lavishly, he relieved his people of famine, built impressive cities and fortresses and distributed land (chs 2–3). Cooperating with the benign oversight of Rome, he enabled his subjects to live by their ancestral laws (their 'freedom' and 'autonomy': ch. 4). But he eventually degenerated because life at a royal court is morally toxic, and surviving members of the Hasmonaean family into which he had married (especially his female in-laws and his sons by Mariamne) had motives to ruin him (chs 5–6). Instead of being untrammelled praise, Nicolaus' history offered a balanced portrait of a flawed man at his best and vilest. Herod may have executed a wife and several children. But the people closest to him *were* often deceitful, manipulating and plotting against him, and the strain and isolation of governance had poisoned him. If Nicolaus' material on Herod is flattery, this is because Nicolaus praises himself: for being a moderating influence and an opponent of the evil, cunning people at Herod's court.

A key argument of the authors is that by understanding Nicolaus' complicated treatment of Herod, we can grasp how Josephus integrated it into his narrative agenda (19–20), more or less as he did with inscriptions (Miriam Pucci ben Zeev, *Jewish Rights in the Roman World* (1998)). Nicolaus portrayed Herod as a virtuous usurper who ruled legitimately but then declined due to factors beyond his control. His Jewish subjects were unreasonably critical of him, since his mediating with Rome enabled them to practise their ancestral traditions (69–71, 90–3, 139–63). In turn, Josephus reworked Nicolaus' material to portray Herod as the problem, especially in his *Antiquities*. Instead of being a virtuous usurper, Herod was an illegitimate one (41) who unjustly killed the Hasmonaeans into whose dynasty he had married (110). Instead of being a liberator, his relationship with Rome often prompted him to violate the sacred principles of Jews or alienate them (42–6, 88–93). The infamous trophy incident and eagle affair (Josephus, *BJ* 1.648–50; *AJ* 15.269–79, 17.149–64) probably reflect how Nicolaus portrayed Herod's Jewish subjects as unreasonable. Josephus recast this material to make Herod the impious transgressor (139–63). Ultimately, despite their different backgrounds and aims, Nicolaus and Josephus were kindred spirits. They sought to justify their past behaviour in the face of valid criticism. They were dynamic historians who sought sources and reworked them, while also claiming superiority.

The authors consistently communicate that their views rely on plausible inferences and not incontrovertible proof (for example: 18, 169). Specialists will undoubtedly critique how they interpret various parts of Josephus. But their overall theory for Nicolaus and his version of Herod is compelling and warrants serious consideration.

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doi:10.1017/S0075435823000011

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CHRISTOPH HEILIG, *THE APOSTLE AND THE EMPIRE: PAUL'S IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT CRITICISM OF ROME*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2022. Pp. xxii + 170. ISBN 9780802882233. US$ 29.99.

Was Paul critical of the Roman Empire? Thus asks Christoph Heilig in *The Apostle and the Empire*. The book's sub-title insinuates instantly a positive answer to the question, one that merely needs further fine-tuning to identify and distinguish *Paul's Implicit and Explicit Criticism*. The question has bothered scholars intensively in the last decades, prompting diverse answers: notably, N. T. Wright made the case for criticism, carefully couched (in R. A. Horsley (ed.) *Paul and*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075435823000692 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Politics (2000), 160–83; and *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (2005)), while John Barclay sought to rebut it (in Barclay (ed.), *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (2011), 363–87). H. has published profusely on the topic himself (e.g. *Hidden Criticism?* (2015)), arguing *for* criticism of Rome. His present contribution takes its cue from a recent article challenging anew the idea of Pauline criticism (Laura Robinson, *New Testament Studies* 2020, 55–72). H.'s monographic reply is two-fold: first, primarily historiographic and methodological, in chs 1, 2 and 5; second, analytical and interpretative (regarding a single Pauline comment), in chs 3 and 4.

H. writes smoothly, advancing his case purposefully, in conscious contradistinction to earlier interventions. This is helpful for anyone new to the topic, because in the early chapters H. lays out in detail the contours of the debate, simultaneously clarifying the particular advance aimed for in this new book. Moreover, H. expands a previously established five-fold check-list designed to identify implicit criticism of Rome—focused on 'the rules of public discourse' (nos 1 and 2), the potential for Paul's confrontation with aspects specifically perceived as Roman by him (no. 3), the likelihood of Paul's critical stance towards these aspects (no. 4) and of his personal disposition towards expressing criticism in his correspondence's subtext (no. 5)—with a sixth item, i.e. the existence of an occasion that might have compelled Paul to critique Rome (42). Hailing this check-list as a methodological advance, H. then seeks such an occasion in the triumphal imagery in 2 Cor. 2:14, raised by Paul's use of θριαμβεύω. H. deplores the fact that several translations have downplayed the historically specific meaning of the term, privileging instead generic notions of triumphing. Emphasising the link to Roman triumphal imagery, H. relates it to Claudius' triumph in 44 C.E.—thus satisfying his new, sixth criterion. H.'s argumentation centres on identifying the source of Paul's knowledge of the Roman triumph. He argues that Claudius' triumph as the 'incumbent emperor' is the 'only potential source for contemporary knowledge about the *triumphus*' (64), transmitted through 'Paul having met potential eyewitnesses' (Priscilla and Aquilla: 65) as well as an epigraphically attested cult to Victoria Britannica in Corinth, believed to be contemporary to Paul's presence in the city (69–70). Ch. 4 advances the argument through reference to diverse other sources (coins, reliefs, poetry, etc.). H. contends that while Pauline criticism is primarily directed at the Corinthians, the text's replacement of the Roman triumphator with God challenges 'basic assumptions of Roman ideology' and is thus to 'be classified as at least potentially "subversive"' (99). Ultimately, H. argues however for obvious, not hidden criticism (101), given that 'the dissonances created by Paul's metaphor [...] are indicative of his rejection of at least the cultically elevated expression of Roman military conquest' (99).

H. returns to methodological matters in ch. 5, including critique of standard teaching foci and approaches in NT exegesis in Germanic and Anglophone settings, while praising digital advances, including search facilities. Following a trend in the study of early Christianity, H. calls for more specialised commentaries and handbooks (e.g. focused on papyrological materials) to aid historical contextualisation, claiming that the relevant knowledge is not readily within the reach of NT scholarship. Somewhat dominating the book, these broader issues dwarf the analytical contribution in chs 3 and 4. The latter is small enough anyhow, given its narrow remit, i.e. the interpretation of a single line ('a Pauline passage': 55)—for all H.'s relentlessly bold evaluation of his own contribution. But the book's revisionist stance is actually weakened by the text's analysis: the proposed method for contextualising the passage through connections to a single event shows just how thin our knowledge base is. It also shows disregard for sound historical argumentation. To be sure, Paul might well have alluded to Claudius' triumph. But this possibility cannot be established (rather than merely raised) through rough contemporaneity, let alone hypothetical eyewitness accounts or other, coinciding cult activity. Unfortunately, H.'s discussion does not engage with the large body of scholarship concerned with allusions in contemporary texts, while his call for more specialised commentaries or handbooks to provide the missing expertise is unconvincing: such research is widely published and accessible—requiring merely a preparedness to approach the ancient world holistically, rather than within a single scholarly niche.

H. rightly challenges the narrow-minded nature of some earlier scholarship. But *The Apostle and the Empire* follows suit by keeping the focus myopically concentrated on a single question and by pursuing it in an inward-looking manner. Critically, the microscopic attention on Paul's potential critique of the Claudian triumph is not explained: (why) does it matter? *Does* addressing the matter change our view of the Pauline mission—and if so, how and in what ways? I have myself no issues with the exploration of specialised topics. But such work does not normally produce

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075435823000692 Published online by Cambridge University Press

sufficient intellectual harvest to justify 140 pages of text and is better suited to article-length publication. There seems to me a bigger issue with a debate that spends much time on loud discussion of method instead of quietly developing new insights.

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doi:10.1017/S0075435823000692

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JARED SECORD, *CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUALS AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE: FROM JUSTIN MARTYR TO ORIGEN*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020. Pp. xi + 202. ISBN 9780271087078. £79.95/US$112.95.

Jared Secord's argument in this book is that the Christian writing of the second and early third centuries, especially the work of Justin, Tatian, Origen and Africanus, is much more closely linked with the Greco-Roman intellectual culture of the imperial period than we usually assume. That argument extends work others have done recently (for example, Kendra Eshleman) in bringing early Christian literature more into dialogue with its Greco-Roman equivalents, but S.'s account is in some ways quite distinctive in its emphasis. Among other things he is interested in the importance of gaining imperial attention as a goal for intellectuals in many different fields. He also has a particular interest in the way in which many different authors debate the value of cultural purity in Hellenic identity. In many cases that involved asserting the antiquity and continuity of the Greek heritage; in others it involved arguing for the value of barbarian culture: as S. shows, both of those poses were widespread in Greco-Roman writing from this period and also in the Christian texts he examines. He shows how Christian writers came to be increasingly successful in accommodating themselves to the norms of Greco-Roman intellectual culture; in the process he resists the standard narrative which explains the improved prospects of imperial approval for Christian writers in the third century C.E. simply as a consequence of increasing tolerance of Christianity.

Ch. 1 lays out some of those broader trends in Greco-Roman culture with reference to a wide range of authors: Galen, Nicolaus of Damascus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, among many others. S.'s focus is above all on authors who value purity in Greek language and culture; also on the challenges faced by authors who were unable to claim that kind of purity for themselves: we have to wait until later chapters for a glimpse of the many non-Christian authors who resist those assumptions and construct a positive narrative about their own barbarian origins. This chapter in particular will be valuable as a free-standing study for researchers whose primary interests are in non-Christian intellectual culture in the Roman empire.

Ch. 2 turns attention to Justin. S. focuses on inserting Justin into the competitive context of imperial intellectual culture, using Galen among others as a comparison point, and taking Justin's criticism of the Cynic philosopher Crescens as case study. S. also shows, however, that this is a relatively rare example for Justin, who was less involved in this kind of agonistic interaction than many of his Greco-Roman contemporaries. He offers some thought-provoking suggestions on the way in which the threat of denigration (of the kind that Galen so often seems to have faced) and even persecution could be a badge of honour and a sign of intellectual importance, shared between Christian and non-Christian intellectuals, rather than something just directed at Christians and shaped purely by negative attitudes to Christianity.

Ch. 3 focuses on Tatian's use of the miscellany genre, and the way in which it allows him to demonstrate his own engagement with the broader knowledge-ordering culture of the Roman empire even as he uses that format to criticise Greek tradition. S. also shows how Tatian's criticism of ideals of Attic purity and his willingness to define himself as a barbarian again brings him close to some Greco-Roman intellectual contemporaries, many of whom similarly resisted conventional models of Greek identity in favour of more expansive models of cultural value (although, as S. shows, this espousal of barbarian identity may also have contributed to Tatian's reception as a heretic in the eyes of his fellow Christians, many of whom were less willing to make that move).

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