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# SSEC

# eNewsletter

Newsletter 80

September 2014



**Wednesday 8 October 2014** - Professor Alexander Weiss (Leipzig) will talk on the topic: ***Local Colour in the Canonical and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles-: "Reality effect or markers of authenticity."***

- SSEC Upcoming Events
- Post-doctoral Publishing Fellowship
- Program for the Archaeology of Ancient Israel
- SSEC Articles
  - "The Flogging of Jesus" by Norm Young
  - "Blaspheming heaven: Revelation 13:4-8" by Paul Yeates
- SSEC Travel & Thanks
- Publication Subsidy Rundle
- Eastern Christianity Conference
- Non- SSEC activities
- SSEC Calendar

## From the President's Desk

Welcome to our September 2014 Newsletter. This is our 80th newsletter over the last 27 years. This is the **11th newsletter** in full colour delivered as an **eNewsletter**, or electronic newsletter. Well done to all volunteers involved in its production over the years.

In June 2014, we were delighted to have **Dr Jeremy Hultin**, (*Lecturer in New Testament at Murdoch University*) with his very interesting topic: ***What's in a Name? The Name Symeon Peter (Συμῆων Πέτρος) in 2 Peter 1:1.***

This event was very well attended and it was pleasing to see so many coming out on a cold wintery day and supporting the Society.

We have four upcoming events for the remainder of 2014 and you can read about these on page 3 and on the calendar of events on page 15.

In addition, we are well underway in making plans for our **2015 Annual May SSEC conference** and Conference "curtain raiser" events. The conference theme will be **"The early Church: Cults and Controversies."** The keynote speaker is Professor Paul Trebilco from University of Otago. Read more about these two events on page 3.

As in previous years, we are expecting speakers of international reputation. If you would like to give a paper, then please apply by **Friday 7 November 2014**. Read more about submitting an abstract on page 3.

Once again, thank you to all SSEC members who attend our events & continue to make them a worthwhile learning endeavour.

### Professor Alanna Nobbs AM President SSEC



***"The unique emphasis of our Society is one of history. The study of Early Christianity in its Jewish and Graeco Roman Setting."***

#### **SSEC Newsletter**

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Cover Photo on eNewsletter: **Professor Alexander Weiss (Leipzig) will talk to us on Wed 8 October 2014.**

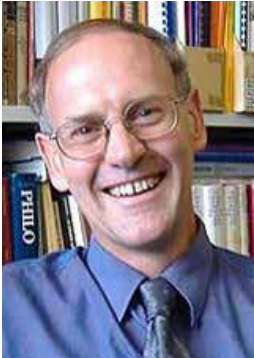


# SSECfocus

The following items outline "SSEC in focus", or the future direction of the Society.

## SSEC Conference 2 May 2015

### "The early Church: Cults and Controversies."



Our visiting speaker for 2015 will be **Professor Paul Trebilco** (Otago). He studied Chemistry at the University of Canterbury, then did a Bachelor of Divinity at Otago before completing his PhD in the New Testament in 1987 at the University of Durham.

He has published work on the Jewish and Greco-Roman backgrounds to the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, the apostle Paul, early Christians in Ephesus, the relationship of Scripture and Church tradition, and the Self-designations used by the earliest Christians in the New Testament. He is currently the General Editor of the Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, published by Cambridge University Press.

SSEC holds its annual conference in May each year. Join us next year : **Sat 2 May 2015**.

We are very excited that Paul is coming to speak to us.

- At our "Conference Curtain Raiser" on the **Thursday night, 30 April 2015**, we will have two guest speakers and afterwards a light supper with tea & coffee.
- Our **day conference** will be held on the **Saturday 2 May 2015**. We plan to have **seven quality speakers** - including two at the "Conference Curtain Raiser".

We believe that this conference will be very special and will further promote the study of Early Christianity and the cults and controversies surrounding this time.

**Please mark these two dates into your diaries.**

Each year we are honoured to have international guest speakers. In addition local academics, papyrologists, archaeologists, numismatists & historians come to speak at our conference.

## Conference Papers

We are gratified that so many quality speakers wish to speak at our annual conference. The SSEC conference sub-committee is looking to select **seven speakers** (including our visiting speaker outlined above) for our curtain raiser evening & for the day conference in 2015.

Senior Post-graduates, Academics and Staff at Tertiary Institutions may apply if they have well advanced papers. We will be preparing the conference timetable, conference brochure, and finalizing speakers in the fourth quarter 2014. If you fit our criteria, and have a well-advanced paper pertinent to the conference topic, you are invited to send an abstract of 200 words, with a suitable portrait photo and your biographical details. **Apply before 7 Nov 2014** by email to [SSEC@mq.edu.au](mailto:SSEC@mq.edu.au). The information will be forwarded onto the SSEC conference sub-committee for their consideration.

Also if the paper is not used for the conference, it might in some circumstances be possible to give the paper/talk in a separate session to SSEC members. This may occur at one of our lunchtime or evening SSEC events, or may be published in a future SSEC newsletter . **Note: As further details become available they will be loaded onto the SSEC Conference Website.**

## SSECupcoming

### Four Seminars to anticipate

#### Wed 8 Oct 2014 : Professor Alexander Weiss

On Wednesday 8 October, **Professor Alexander Weiss** (Leipzig) will talk on the topic: **Local Colour in the Canonical and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: "Reality effect or markers of authenticity."**

Professor Alexander Weiss from the University of Leipzig will be well known to many at Macquarie as he spent two years with us as a Humboldt Fellow.



His research interests range over ancient slavery, nomads in antiquity, Roman social history, epigraphy and early Christianity. The goal of his

research project is to show that there were probably members of the social elite, or more exactly members of the Roman ordines (senatorial ordo, equestrian ordo, decurional ordo), already among the first Christians. If this can be established, it will force a reconsideration of current social historical explanations of Christian conversion. See details on the SSEC calendar of events on page 15.

### Wednesday 15 October 2014: Associate Prof Boyo Ockinga

We are eagerly awaiting the talk from **Associate Professor Boyo Ockinga (Macquarie)**. His topic will be ***The Egyptian Background of the Exodus***. Please join us for this very interesting talk.



### Monday 3 November 2014: Dr Don Barker



On 3 November 2014, Dr Don Barker (Macquarie & SSEC Secretary) will give an illustrated lecture - with slides on: ***Care taken in Producing Ancient Manuscripts***. This will be followed by discussion, and Q & As.

### Thursday 4 December 2014: Dr Peter Edwell

**This is our end of year/ Christmas Event.** It is also the 27th anniversary of SSEC and Macquarie University's 50th Birthday. It is gratifying to note that SSEC has been in existence for more than half the University's life. **What a record!!**



Speaker: **Dr Peter Edwell**, Topic: ***Recent View of St Nicholas Church at Myra***, Light refreshments provided. Please see the SSEC website for further details when they become available.

[www.mq.edu.au/ssec/events](http://www.mq.edu.au/ssec/events)

## SSEC / Macquarie Uni Post-doctoral Publishing Fellowship

**2014 -15** *Based at the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Jordan.*

Established by SSEC and the Faculty of Arts at Macquarie University, the fellowship aims to enhance the publication record of a promising post-doctoral, early career scholar with a PhD from an Australian or New Zealand university. Further details (in PDF format) will be loaded (in due course) onto the Ancient History Home website. [click here](#).

### Who knew garbage could be so rewarding? *Exciting activities by the Program for the Archaeology of Ancient Israel*

Thanks to the generosity of donors, twenty three students recently travelled to Israel. Braving the threat of war, some students had the amazing opportunity of digging for a week in the City of David. There they helped excavate an ancient tip with stratified remains from the year zero to 70 CE – when Jerusalem was taken and sacked by the Romans! There they were treated to a wonderful program of field trips and lectures organised by **Professor Yuval Gadot** from Tel Aviv University.

All the students then travelled south to continue the third year of excavations at the important site of Tel Azekah. They dug for two weeks until rockets forced the university to order their recall. Still everyone had a wonderful time and the archaeological discoveries are helping to change understandings of life in the ancient Shephalah.

- **Dr Kyle Keimer** (Macquarie) has been busy delivering the popular new first year unit on the Archaeology and History of Ancient Israel, as well as teaching into other units and supporting postgrads.
- In breaking news, Program Director **Dr Gil Davis** is delighted to report a very substantial donation by the Roth Family to fund a new Fellowship. The Fellow will work with schools teaching Ancient Israel and Studies of Religion to develop resources for teachers including an authoritative text book.
- SSEC will be joining with the **Joel Foundation** in sponsoring one or two events in 2015.



# SSECtravel

## Travel Grant Thanks

by Lydia Gore-Jones

With the help of the SSEC Travel Grant, I was able to travel to Israel and participate in the excavation at Bethsaida on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee for two weeks (8 June to 21 June 2014) under the supervision of Dr Rami Arav, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Dr Carl Savage, Drew University. The site has been identified as the biblical Bethsaida where five of Jesus's apostles were called.

This year, the 28th season, the excavation was focused on three areas:

- Mamluke Islamic occupation at Bethsaida,
- the Iron Age city of Geshur (home to Maachah, wife of King David and mother of Absalom & Tamar)
- and the Greco-Roman occupation in the first century.

I was assigned to work in the 1st century Greco-Roman area. The most valuable part of the experience has been a better understanding of the socio-economic context of the Greco-Roman period, which is the historical background of my doctoral research, and an understanding of archaeological evidence for the cultural and ethnic background of the first Jesus followers.

The Galilee region was also the centre of Rabbinic Judaism and Jewish life after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. During my stay in the region I also visited:

- archaeological remains of Talmudic Jewish centres such as ancient Qasrin and Korazim.
- the ancient Gamla, a Jewish town that was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD during the Jewish revolt, an event recorded by Josephus in detail.

I spent my last week in Jerusalem, researching and writing a paper on the eschatological interpretation of a thanksgiving hymn of the Dead Sea Scrolls. I utilised the time to see the scrolls housed at Israel Museum. Unfortunately, the particular scroll, **1QH**, is not available for close examining. I paid a visit to Prof. Emanuel Tov at Hebrew University Jerusalem; Prof. Tov is an expert in textual criticism of biblical texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls. I am grateful for his feedback and suggestions for my paper. The paper

has been accepted for the upcoming Fellowship for Biblical Studies National Conference to be held in Sydney in September this year.

I would like to express my deep gratitude for the generous people (members of SSEC) whose donation has greatly helped my trip to Israel. Thank you!

## Tyndale House Travel Grant 2015

It is our pleasure to announce that the Tyndale Travel Grant for 2015 has been awarded to **James Unwin**.

This scholarship is provided by a donation by a SSEC member and enables students to travel to Cambridge UK, to visit Tyndale House in January each year. It is provided in conjunction with the warden of Tyndale House and via special arrangement with the Macquarie University ancient history department. These grants are very worthwhile for the individual students, for SSEC, and for fostering and supporting Macquarie University study and research into Early Christianity.

Scholarships or travel grants cover the cost of airfare, transfers, accomodation, library costs, for a few weeks and we are seeking an amount of \$5,000 each student. The grants provide a worthwhile study environment and access to world class libraries, research facilities and/or archaeological sites for research.

**We have been approached by a very generous donor who has provided half the amount for the following year (2016), but we would love to receive the other half (\$2,500) either anonymously or in memory of someone.** Please contact Professor Alanna Nobbs on (02) 9850 8844, or by email at [Alanna.Nobbs@mq.edu.au](mailto:Alanna.Nobbs@mq.edu.au)

## Publication subsidy Rundle

The details of the Rundle publication subsidy for 2015 are not yet finalised. Please watch the Ancient History Home website, for an announcement. [click here](#). If you would like to receive an email notification when the details appear please email our volunteers at [ssec@mq.edu.au](mailto:ssec@mq.edu.au).

## Judging Augustus

August 19th, 2014 marked the bi-millennium of the death of Augustus Caesar. Augustus also happens to be one of the principal research interests of **Professor Emeritus Edwin Judge**, the Founding Father of Ancient History at Macquarie University. The first lecture in Ancient History delivered at the University was Edwin Judge's inaugural lecture "Augustan Rome".

The celebration evening was organised by MAHA (Macquarie Ancient History Association) and featured a wonderful debate with the following Speakers:

- **A/Prof Tom Hillard**, 'Anniversaries, Ancient & Modern'
- **Dr Peter Keegan**, 'Augustus on the Big and Little Screen'
- **Dr Rosalinde Kearsley**, 'The Achievements of Augustus'
- **A/Prof Kathryn Welch**, 'Deconstructing Octavian'
- **Mr Ian Grady**, 'Augustus@Macquarie'

## Conference on Eastern Christianity

Convened by Ken Parry

### *Christianity in Crisis: Eastern Christians in the Middle East and their Diaspora Communities*

**Friday December 12th 2014, 9 am – 4 pm**  
**Building Y3A Lecture Theatre I**

This day conference features scholars and representatives from the Christian communities currently affected by the ongoing crisis in the Middle East. It provides an opportunity for the general public, community members, and the media to hear speakers give historical background and commentary on the minority Christian groups in the Middle East who are coming under increasing pressure, and the impact this is having on their communities in Australia. The rapidly declining numbers of Christians in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and the Lebanon is resulting in some communities becoming larger overseas than in their original homelands. The implications of this for Australia

are considerable, but these are not presently being addressed by politicians and policy-makers or discussed in the media.

This is a free event sponsored by the Faculty of Arts as part of its community outreach program and the Society for the Study of Early Christianity. The Co-op Bookshop will provide a bookstall and refreshments will be available.

Invited speakers:

- **Dr Ken Parry** (Macquarie),
- **Dr Peter Edwell** (Macquarie),
- **Prof Rifaat Ebied** (University of Sydney),
- **Dr Ross Burns** (Macquarie),
- **Bishop Anba Suriel** (Coptic Orthodox Church),
- **Metropolitan Mar Meelis** (Assyrian Church of the East),
- **Metropolitan Mor Malatius** (Syrian Orthodox Church),
- **Bishop Robert Rabbat** (Melkite Catholic Church),
- **Bishop Tarabay** (Maronite Church),
- **Bishop Haigazoun Najarian** (Armenian Apostolic Church),
- **Archbishop Jibrail Kassab** (Chaldean Catholic Church),
- **Metropolitan Paul Saliba** (Antiochian Orthodox Church).

Please register your intention to attend on the Macquarie events website: [click here](#).

## SSEC Seminar Reminders

Please let us know your email address, and we can send you a brief reminder about SSEC seminars and other events of interest.

If you also wish to receive the Newsletter electronically, and you are not already getting it this way - please let us know - it will help us save on printing and postage costs.

Please send a brief email to [SSEC@mq.edu.au](mailto:SSEC@mq.edu.au)

# SSECarticles

## The Flogging of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel

by Norm Young



**Bio:** Dr Norman Young did his doctoral research under Professor F. F. Bruce and later an MLitt (Classics) at UNE. He lectured at Avondale College of Higher Education for many years. In his retirement he has focused on John's

Gospel. He has been a member of the "Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas" since 1974 and the "Society for the Study of Early Christianity" from its inception.

**Editors' Note:** This paper was listed in the SSEC conference "book of notes" & the SSEC "2014 conference proceedings" website as the following topic: **The Man born to be King - John 18:28 - 19:22**

**Abstract:** The Fourth Gospel's (FG) account of Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate has some affinities with Mark and—to a lesser degree—with Luke's narrative; but overall, John marches according to his own drum-beat. The most obvious difference between the FG's account of the Roman Trial and the Synoptics is their length. The FG devotes 593 words to its account (18.28-19.16) of the trial compared with 338 words for Matthew (27.11-31), 265 for Mark (15.1-20), and 252 for Luke (23.1-5, 13-25). However, a more startling difference is the FG's positioning of the scourging and the Roman soldiers' mocking of Jesus in the midst of Pilate's investigation of the charges against Jesus. Matthew and Mark place these events at the end of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus, just prior to his being handed over to be crucified. In contrast the FG situates them in the midst of Pilate's inquiry, that is, as scene four (John 19.1-3) of the seven scenes that form the FG's trial narrative. Thus John distances the scourging and the troops' mockery from Pilate's handing Jesus over to be crucified. Why does he do this? He does it for dramatic effect: so as to forcefully portray the abused, pitiable, and mocked Jesus, as indeed being the true King (Messiah) of Israel. Hence the FG's remarkably frequent use of βασιλεύς and βασιλεία in its trial narrative.

### I Introduction: The Problem

According to reviews, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* devotes ten minutes of the film's 126 minutes to the scene where Jesus is flogged prior to his being crucified. The Gospels, on the other hand, do not focus on the brutal details of the flogging and employ only

the one verb (*phragellōsas*, Mark 15.15; Matt 27.26; *emastigōsen*, John 19.1) in describing the incident. Their concern is to portray the dignity of Jesus, and hence they refer to the shame and humiliation of their Lord's tragic end rather than its violence.

Most readers would understand Mark and Matthew's sequence of events—the release of Barabbas, the flogging of Jesus, the soldiers' mocking, and Pilate's handing him over to be crucified—as associated events that followed each other in relatively quick succession:

*So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort [and began to mock him] (Mark 15.15–16 NRSV, cf. Matt 27.26–27).*

However, if the flogging is an immediate preliminary to the crucifixion, then there is a disparity between Mark (and Matthew) and the Fourth Gospel (FG) regarding the timing of its occurrence.

Mark and Matthew place the flogging of Jesus at the end of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus, whereas the FG situates it in the midst of the trial. The following table (p8) clarifies this contrast.

There is no parallel in Mark and Matthew of the trial continuing before Pilate for *twelve more verses* after the flogging and the soldiers' mocking. The FG's location of the flogging and the mocking in the midst of the trial rather than at its end also obliges him to position the handing over of Jesus to be crucified after and not before the mocking (see the above table). The listing of the generally-accepted seven scenes of the FG's trial narrative emphasises the uniqueness of the FG's account.

1. Scene one (outside, 18.28–32) "We are not permitted to put anyone to death" (v. 31).
2. Scene two (inside, 18.33–38a) "Are you the King of the Jews?" (v. 33).
3. Scene three (outside, 18.38b–40) "Not this man, but Barabbas!" (v. 40).
- 4. Scene four (inside, 19.1–3) "Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged" (v. 1).**
5. Scene five (outside, 19.4–8) "Behold the man!" (v. 5 NKJV).
6. Scene six (inside, 19.9–11) "Where are you from?" (v. 9).
7. Scene seven (outside, 19.12–16) "Behold your king!" (v. 14 NKJV).

How then are we to understand the disparate sequence of events between Mark and Matthew and the FG

Mark 15	Matthew 27	John 18–19
Before Pilate vv. 1–5	Before Pilate vv. 11–14	Before Pilate I, 18.28–38
Release of Barabbas vv. 6–15a	Release of Barabbas vv. 15–26a	Release of Barabbas vv. 39–40
Flogging v. 15b	Flogging v. 26b	Flogging 19.1
<i>Handed over v. 15c</i>	<i>Handed over v. 26c</i>	
<i>To be crucified v. 15d</i>	<i>To be crucified v. 26d</i>	
Mocking vv. 16–20a	Mocking vv. 27–31a	Mocking vv. 2–3
		<i>Before Pilate II, vv. 4–15</i>
		<i>Handed over v. 16a</i>
		<i>To be crucified v. 16b</i>
Led out v. 20b	Led away v. 31b	Took Jesus v. 17a
Simon carries cross v. 21	Simon carries cross v. 32	Jesus carries cross v. 17b
Golgotha vv. 22–25	Golgotha vv. 33–36	Golgotha v. 18

regarding the flogging of Jesus? There are five main solutions known to me; three of which assume Jesus was flogged twice during the trial, while two limit it to once. Let us examine these in turn.

## II Solutions that Require Two Floggings

### 1. A Lesser Punishment

Several scholars (A. N. Sherwin-White; F. F. Bruce; J. H. Neyrey; D. A. Carson) believe that the FG refers to the same lighter whipping depicted in Luke 23.16, 22. Pilate's intention was to discipline (*paideuō*) Jesus as a caution and then release him (I. H. Marshall; J. Nolland; F. Bovon). As this proposed flogging occurred in Luke earlier in the procedures and prior to the release of Barabbas some feel it parallels the FG's order. On this view it is a whipping prior to and distinct from the scourging associated with the crucifixion.

There are a number of problems with this view. First, the whipping in Luke was proposed but there is no evidence that it was carried out. If there was a whipping, and Luke does not say there was, then Barabbas was the recipient, as he and not Jesus was released (Luke 23.25). Second, unlike Luke, the flogging in the FG was administered, and yet Jesus was not released. According to this opinion Jesus was whipped in an effort to get him released, and when this failed he was scourged prior to the crucifixion (following Mark and Matthew). Two floggings in rather quick succession seems unlikely to me. Third, the FG

places the flogging after the release of Barabbas just prior to the soldiers' mocking. This parallels Mark and Matthew but not Luke. Fourth, the verb used in the FG (*mastigoō*) is used in the Gospels for the scourging related to the crucifixion (Mark 10.34; Matt 20.19; Luke 18.33) and is not a synonym for the disciplinary whipping (*paideuō*) that Pilate proposed according to Luke 23.16, 22.

### 2. A Judicial Torture

Another suggestion (J. A. Glancy, M. L. Skinner) that also draws on a parallel with Luke is the view that Pilate is driven to use torture (a lashing) against an uncooperative prisoner in an attempt to establish the truth and thus provide cause to have Jesus released. All the objections to the previous solution apply equally to this proposal. Further, despite John 19.4, 6, 12, there is no suggestion in verses 1–3 that Pilate had Jesus tortured (lashed) in an effort to release him.

### 3. To Arouse Pity

Some notable scholars (R. Bultmann; E. Haenchen, M. W. G. Stibbe; M. C. de Boer; C. M. Tuckett) propose that in the FG Pilate hoped that by whipping Jesus he would arouse the Jewish authorities' pity and thus agree to his releasing him as a harmless pretender. The severe scourging that preceded the crucifixion was hardly designed to evoke sympathy: "in the culture of the time such a scene would surely provoke laughter and derision. Crowds regularly gathered at public executions to



participate in the mockery” (Neyrey). Hence, this solution too assumes, whether stated or not, that the whipping was some milder punishment and not the terrible ordeal associated with the scourging that preceded the crucifixion. Notwithstanding the narrator’s comment in John 19.12 regarding Pilate’s desire to release Jesus, the Prefect’s calling him their king (vv. 14) was extremely provocative and more likely to arouse their ire than their pity—and indeed it did (v. 15a).

### III Solutions that Require only One Flogging

#### 4. The Gap Theory

Several commentators (J. Blinzler, G. R. Beazley-Murray, C. L. Blomberg) interpret the Aorist participle in Mark 15.15 and Matthew 26.27 (*phragellōsas*) as allowing an indeterminate time between the flogging and the actual handing of Jesus over (*paredōken*) to be crucified. That is, to translate the passage thus: “And sometime after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.” The aorist is more likely simultaneous action within a series of aorist and imperfect verbs that follow one another in uninterrupted succession (Mark 15.15–20): released, delivered, having flogged, to be crucified, led ... began, struck, mocked, stripped, clothed, led, and crucified. The suggestion that Mark and Matthew’s language allows room between these events for the FG’s twelve verses of continuing interrogation is less than convincing. This view tries to align Mark and Matthew with the FG by arguing that the former permits what the latter demands, namely, that the flogging of Jesus occurred in the midst of the trial and not at its end.

This could mean either that all four Gospels have only a lighter disciplinary whipping or that Mark, Matthew and John have placed the severe flogging (*verberatio*, Sherwin-White) much earlier in the trial and consequently detached it somewhat from the crucifixion, which is not the usual Roman custom (Luke has no flogging prior to the crucifixion).

#### 5. A Dramatist’s Licence

On this view, the FG, as well as Mark and Matthew, refers to the brutal scourging that preceded the crucifixion, but it positions it out of align with the other two Gospels. However, “it is quite clear that John has done this [dislocation] deliberately, regardless of the correct procedure (perhaps not knowing it” (B. Lindars, cf. R. E. Brown). So if John has given a dramatist’s interpretation of the historical event; what is his purpose? It is this: he wished to place the mocked king centre stage to make it known that this brutalised and humiliated figure was indeed the true Davidic King. Notice the FG’s concentration of the terms king/kingdom in its trial narrative: 15 of the 21 (**71 per cent**) occurrences of these two terms occur in the scenes before Pilate (including the three in the inscription on the cross, John 19.19–21).

This compares with Mark’s 12½% of its usage of these two terms and Matthew’s 2½% in their trial narratives.

Unlike Mark and Matthew, the FG retains the burlesque regal attire that the soldiers placed on him in mock adoration: “Hail, King of the Jews!” (John 19.3). So when Jesus came outside to the Jewish leaders, they were confronted with the ludicrous spectacle of a severely beaten individual wearing a crudely plaited crown and a makeshift royal robe, and to add insult to injury, Pilate gestures and says, “Behold the Man! (v. 5 NKJV). This is the very language that God used when identifying Saul as Israel’s first king (The Lord said to [Samuel], “**Behold, the man** of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people.” 1 Sam 9.17 NASB). Little wonder then that “when the chief priests and the police **saw him**” (v. 6) they shouted “Crucify him!”

Pilate probably had no inkling how insulting to the Jews was his first declaration (“Behold the man”), but he certainly intended the taunt with his second, “Behold your King!” (v. 14 NKJV) and equally when he asked, “Shall I crucify your King?” (v. 15). This final insult is met with the extraordinary declaration; “We have no king but Caesar” (v. 16a NIV). This is despite the contrary and frequent biblical claim that God alone is Israel’s King (Judg 8.23; Isa 26.13; 44.6; Jer 10.10; Ps 47. 6, 7, 8; 95.3; 145.1). For Pilate their exclusive allegiance to Caesar signalled the end of the tussle, and so he immediately handed Jesus over to be crucified (v. 16b). His taunts had succeeded; but then the Jewish leaders had achieved their goal too, since Pilate handed Jesus over **to them** to be crucified.

The inscription Pilate wrote on the cross in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” was calculated to wound the national pride of the chief priests; and it succeeded. He may have thought he had the last word, but did he? Pilate considered such a powerless king (however, see 18.36; 19) a joke; a king fit for the Jews. The chief priests thought such a humiliated king an insult; a king not fit for Israel. John, with typical irony, presents Jesus, the lacerated and helpless king as the true Majesty: “the Man Born to Be King” (D. L. Sayers).

Editors’ Note The views expressed are those of the authors/ speakers and the Society takes no position on the intellectual content of papers and articles.

# Blaspheming heaven: Revelation 13:4-8 & the competition for heaven in Roman imperial ideology and the theology of John.

by Paul Yeates

PhD student, Macquarie Uni

In Revelation 13, the narrative of the conflict between the Dragon, representing Satan, & the Offspring of the Woman, representing the people of God, is continued with the introduction of a Beast from the Sea & a Beast from the Land. These beasts embody Satan's authority & power on earth & represent Rome & its imperial power. One aspect of the characterization of the Beast from the Sea is its mouth from which it issues arrogant blasphemous speech:

*He began to speak blasphemies against God: to blaspheme His name and His dwelling-- those who dwell in heaven. Revelation 13:6*

This paper will address two questions: *Who are the ones who dwell in heaven?*; and *How were they blasphemed by Rome?*

Revelation 13:6 describes the Beast from the Sea's blasphemy which is directed against God, & in particular his name & his dwelling (σκηνή), his dwelling is then identified by an exegetical appositional phrase as, 'the ones who dwell in heaven' (τοὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας). Apart from God & Christ, various other beings are located in the heavenly realm & are possible candidates for the heaven dwellers of 13:6. However, they are most typically identified as either angels, perhaps as counterparts to the saints on earth, or the saints on earth who spiritually dwell in heaven - their 'citizenship is in heaven', to borrow a Pauline concept. In his commentary on Revelation, David Aune states that the idea of blaspheming saints *already* in heaven makes no sense. However, that is what I will argue & demonstrate to be meaningful.

At the opening of the fifth seal in Revelation 6:9-11, John sees the souls of those martyred for their faithful testimony under the heavenly altar. They appeal to God for justice against those who dwell on earth. These souls are reintroduced in the vision of heaven between the sixth & seventh seals & attention is drawn to their identity & again to their vindication:

*Then one of the elders asked me, "Who are these people robed in white, and where did they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." Then he told me:*

*These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His sanctuary. The One seated on the throne will shelter them: (καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου σκηνώσει ἐπ' αὐτούς) Revelation 7:13-15.*

They have been martyred, they dwell in heaven, & in verse 15 God is said to shelter them. The word used is σκηνώω the same used in 13:6. The heaven dwellers in 13:6 are most likely these martyred saints; their position in heaven is stated repeatedly & they are located with a part of the Temple - the Altar, & associated with God's presence. Also, the concern in the text for their vindication establishes a context for the Beast's blasphemy against them as we shall see.

How then is it conceivable that the martyred saints in heaven might be blasphemed? We answer the question first by considering the significance of the heavenly location of these saints in the text of Revelation. There we find that their dwelling in heaven is a stage in the vindication of their ignoble deaths. This is demonstrated in the story of the two prophets in Revelation 11 who are an idealized version of the martyred saints. Their death is met with rejoicing by the earth-dwellers (οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) who also shame them by refusing burial; on earth they are left exposed to ridicule. The earth-dwellers rejoice because they conquered the ones who tormented them. But after three days the prophets are revived by God & called up to heaven on a cloud & the point is made that their ascent happened in the eyes of their enemies. The ascent to heaven was evidence that their deaths were a glorious victory rather than an ignoble defeat.

This is the cosmos John reveals, the martyred saints have ascended from earth to heaven & the Dragon has been expelled from heaven to earth. A key question in Revelation is, "Who are the true conquerors?", & this question is answered by the framing of another, "Who now *truly* dwells in heaven?" In John's cosmos it is the faithful martyred saints in the presence of God & Christ but in Roman imperial ideology a cosmology was propagated that implicitly denied this & could thereby be construed as blasphemy against God & his martyred saints.

There is an Old Testament motif in which the wicked are characterized by arrogant speech that has a cosmological dimension. For example, Psalm 73:9 roughly translated is: "They set their mouths in heaven & their tongues walk over the earth." Though one translation (NET) has, "They speak as if they rule in heaven, & lay claim to the earth." The arrogant speech of the wicked King of Babylon is summarized in Isaiah 14:13, 'You said to yourself: "I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne above the stars of God.'" Here the boastful speech of a wicked ruler

involves the claim to rule in heaven. Revelation 13:5 says the Beast was given a mouth to speak boastfully. The motif of arrogant speech entices us to consider how the Beast/Rome might claim heaven in its discourse.

Roman emperors were often deified after death & in some cases laid claim to divinity during their own lifetime. This was one aspect of a whole system of thought that accounted for & explained the nature & workings of the cosmos. It is the cosmological dimension of Roman imperial ideology that illuminates how the Beast blasphemed the martyred saints in heaven.

Firstly, in Roman imperial ideology heaven & earth were harmoniously aligned in Roman rule; rule which involved the subjugation of the Jews. This concept was conveyed in Virgil's epic on the foundation of Rome & its empire - *The Aeneid*. Conflict in the heavenly realm between Jupiter & Juno is manifest in earthly conflict as Aeneas progresses towards the destined site of Rome. The plot tension is resolved when the will of Jupiter that Rome become a universal & eternal empire is initially realized on earth, bringing peace in each realm & harmony between the two.

This aspect of Roman imperial ideology was expressed in the images of the cuirass of the influential Primaporta statue of Augustus. Either side of the central figures are two weeping women representing subjugated peoples, possibly Gaul & Spain. Above, the sky/heaven god, Caelus, holds up the canopy of the heavens & is balanced by Telles/Gaia below. Roman rule is represented as a manifestation of perfect cosmic order encompassing heaven & earth.

**Figure 1: Primaporta statue of Augustus and cuirass detail. Image: "Statue- Augustus white background" by FollowTheMedia (Original author: Till Niermann) / Wikimedia Commons**



An astrological expression of this ideology appeared on coin types, including the Capricorn with globe. Capricorn was the sign of the zodiac associated with Augustus. It appears with the globe positioned either underneath or

between its paws. Such images draw on the belief that events on earth are controlled by the stars and the signs of the zodiac in particular. The Capricorn with globe expresses the idea that this heavenly influence on earth is manifest in the rule of Augustus and Rome.



**Figure 2: Augustus with Capricorn holding globe between feet, 12 BCE.**

**Figure 3: Laureate head of Titus and Capricorn with globe below, Denarius, 79CE. Image: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com>**



This aspect of Rome's ideology would be deemed blasphemous because it claimed heavenly authority for the Beast's actions on earth including its persecution of the saints, their subjugation an aspect of the harmony between heaven and earth. In this imperial cosmology, there is no space for the heavenly vindication of the saints who must therefore remain exposed to shame on earth.

Secondly, Roman imperial ideology involved Rome ruling in heaven and from heaven to perpetuate its rule on earth. In *The Aeneid*, Jupiter promised Venus that Rome would be an empire without end (*Aeneid* 1:387-90). This prophecy is spoken again to Aeneas when he journeys to Tartarus and meets his dead father Anchises - this empire stretches to the distant ends of the earth beyond the path of the sun and the zodiac:

*...this is the man you heard so often promised – Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will Renew a golden age in Latium, In fields where Saturn once was king, and stretch His rule beyond the Garamantes and the Indians - a land beyond the paths Of year and sun, beyond the constellations, Where on his shoulders heaven-holding Atlas revolves the axis set with blazing stars. (Aeneid 6:1048-56)*

Manilius goes further and incorporates Augustus's heavenly dominion in his astronomical map of the cosmos. Making reference to the apotheosis of Caesar and Augustus, Manilius mentions the latter's rule in heaven:

*...man himself is now creating gods and raising godhead to the stars, and beneath the dominion of Augustus will heaven grow mightier yet. (Ast. 4.933-35).*

At the end of the *Astronomica* is an image of cosmic order in which the heavenly bodies form a heavenly



city arranged in a concentric hierarchy of diminishing illumination but increasing number (*Ast.* 5.735-40). In the heavenly city, the signs of the zodiac are the most bright and thus at the centre. However, earlier in the *Astronomica*, Augustus was assigned a place in heaven alongside Jupiter in controlling the movement of the zodiac (*Ast.* 1.800-804). If we may combine these accounts, we have an image of the heavenly realm which has Augustus and Jupiter side by side ruling over and surrounded by the zodiac, which are in turn surrounded by lesser constellations and then the Milky Way on the periphery. To complete this cosmology we would then need to imagine the earth below with the emperor Tiberius acting as the vice-regent of Jupiter-Augustus above. This very idea is conveyed in the Grand Camée de France which shows Augustus in heaven over the enthroned Tiberius on earth in the centre of the gem, below are the barbarians. The three levels map power in the cosmos, Augustus rules in heaven over Tiberius on earth who rules to the ends of the earth, represented by the barbarians.



**Figure 4: The Grand Camée de France.** Image: © Marie-Lan Nguyen / Wikimedia Commons

In Statius' panegyric, Vespasian is described as ruling in heaven with offspring in both heaven - Titus, and on earth - Domitian, 'He who with his nod now sways the heights of heaven, and has given of his glorious offspring to earth and sky alike' (*Silvae* 3.3.138-39). Statius praises Domitian as he who, '...consecrates to the family of his father constellations which will last forever and a Flavian heaven' (*Silvae* 4.4.18-19).

Starting with Julius Caesar, the apotheosis of the emperor and his family members became common. In the first two weeks of his reign, Domitian deified his dead son, which was represented on a denarius showing the boy as an infant Jupiter in the heavens surrounded by seven stars. In 81 CE Domitian had the Arch of Titus built in Rome which on the top of the inside of the arch shows Titus ascending to heaven on an eagle, the same arch that represents the conquest of the Jerusalem.



**Figure 5: Domitian with laureate head, boy on globe with seven stars, Denarius, 82-83CE.** Image: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com>

In Roman imperial ideology, its empire extended to heaven through the presence of the emperors after their apotheosis. The heavenly dwelling of the imperial family would be construed by John as blasphemy against the martyred saints for the reason that one group had to displace the other. And if the saints are not in heaven they remain shamed on earth.

Just as John lived on earth under the rule of Flavian Rome, so too, according to Roman imperial ideology, he lived under a Flavian heaven. In its military and diplomatic endeavours, Rome sought to eliminate any potential threat to its power that lay beyond its borders. In a similar way, in its ideology, it denied the existence of any threatening place or power even beyond the ends of the earth, i.e. in the heavenly realm. A key strategy that John employs as he seeks to persuade his audience to conquer in their situations is to establish that there is an all-powerful hostile force beyond Rome's borders that is about to act and that there is a safe territory for those who conquer through death. John displaced the Flavian heaven with a heaven belonging to the Christ.

## inprint

### Engaging Rome and Jerusalem: Historical Essays for our Time

Edwin Judge (author), ed. Stuart Piggin (Australian Scholarly Publishing: Melbourne, October 2014).



More information will be available in October.

### Donation Request: Wider Biblical Manuscripts Research

Papyri from the rise of Christianity in Egypt (**PCE**) has been a collaborative research project over several decades looking at procuring, scanning, printing, collating & publishing papyrus manuscripts from Egypt. This has been in conjunction with Cambridge University Press. This collaborative research has been supported for a number of years, by the Australian Research Council (ARC), the Ancient Cultures Research Centre, the Macquarie University Research Funding & donations from



SSEC members. Although PCE work will be continuing, the government & the university funding will be ending in December 2013.

We are now seeking your help, to expand this into a **wider Biblical Manuscripts Research Project** as part of the program of **Ancient Mediterranean Studies**.

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For further information contact, **Professor Alanna Nobbs** by phone on 61 +2 9850 8844, or via email on [alanna.nobbs@mq.edu.au](mailto:alanna.nobbs@mq.edu.au)

**Please Note:**

- **The electronic version of the SSEC newsletter is slightly longer at fifteen (15) pages than the paper version at eight (8) pages.**
- **It also contains more useful features such as "click on links" & larger fonts.**
- **It can easily be viewed on iPads, iPhones & other mobile devices.**

## Egyptology conference report thanks for SSEC publicity

The Third Australasian Egyptology Conference was held at Macquarie 16-18 July. It was very well attended and well received. At the reception, Professor Judge gave an outline of the history of Egyptology at Macquarie University, and the organisers kindly distributed SSEC publicity in the conference bags.

*Bequests* If you would like to leave a Bequest to the **Society for the Study of Early Christianity Macquarie University**, please phone Professor Alanna Nobbs on (02) 9850 8844 or email me at [Alanna.Nobbs@mq.edu.au](mailto:Alanna.Nobbs@mq.edu.au)

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## Membership Renewal & Electronic Newsletter

- Membership renewals are due in March each year - if you have overlooked your payment to renew your SSEC membership it would be appreciated. [Click on this link for a Membership/Renewal form.](#)
- If you would prefer to receive future newsletters electronically in PDF format by email, then tick the box labelled **Electronic Newsletter** on your renewal form.

# non-ssecevents

**Macquarie Ancient Languages School (MALS)** The Macquarie Ancient Languages School (MALS) – the 2015 Summer School will be held from **January Monday 5 to Friday 16, 2015**. It offers a wide range of courses in Classical & Koine Greek, Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Classical Hebrew, Akkadian, Coptic, Sanskrit and others, including Hieratic and Aramaic. The program, timetable and application form will be available on the Ancient History website at <http://www.anchist.mq.edu.au/mals.html> from 24 October 2014. To add your name to the MALS mailing list, email: [mals@mq.edu.au](mailto:mals@mq.edu.au)



**Continuing Education Programme** - Cost \$220 per unit. Dates for Session 1 of 2015, & the full list of units on offer will be available on website. [click here for website.](#)



**Macquarie Ancient History Association (MAHA)** – For enquiries 9850 9965, 9850 8833, or email: [ancienthistory@mq.edu.au](mailto:ancienthistory@mq.edu.au) or website: [www.ancienthistory.com.au/news.php](http://www.ancienthistory.com.au/news.php)

**MAHA: Last Chance Study Day, Saturday 6 September 2014.** Lectures on the most popular topics for the HSC given by experts. Contact [philippa.medcalf@mq.edu.au](mailto:philippa.medcalf@mq.edu.au).

**Face to Face with the New Testament** Dr Don Barker, a Papyrologist at Macquarie University, seminars for special interest groups. Cost per student - \$20.90 Dr Don Barker on 9850 9962 or email: [don.barker@mq.edu.au](mailto:don.barker@mq.edu.au)

### The Australian Centre for Egyptology & the Rundle Foundation

**25th Anniversary Dinner, Saturday, 25th October 2014**, The Heritage Function Centre, Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club, 6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. start.

For further details and booking forms please contact the ACE on (02) 9850 8848, email [egypt@mq.edu.au](mailto:egypt@mq.edu.au) or visit our website [www.egyptology.mq.edu.au](http://www.egyptology.mq.edu.au)



**Macquarie Asian Historical Research Society (MAHRS)** – For enquiries please email [hugh.waugh@mahrs.org](mailto:hugh.waugh@mahrs.org) : on the MAHRS website [www.mahrs.org](http://www.mahrs.org) and on the MAHRS facebook page <http://facebook.com/MAHRS.org>

**The Sir Asher Joel Foundation** supports the participation of Macquarie people (and the public) in archaeological field work in Israel through our agreement with Tel Aviv University, and offers post graduate scholarships and brings a visiting fellow in Early Jewish studies to Australia each year. For further information please contact Dr Gil Davis by email: [gil.davis@mq.edu.au](mailto:gil.davis@mq.edu.au)

**Centre for the History of Christian Thought and Experience** - runs seminars fortnightly on Thursdays at 6.00 pm. For further information contact A/Prof Stuart Piggin 9850 8816, or email: [stuart.piggin@mq.edu.au](mailto:stuart.piggin@mq.edu.au)

**Inscriptions and Life in Roman Asia Minor - May 31-June 6, 2015**, Post-seminar optional tour, June 7-10, 2015 Seminar \$US995; Tour \$US395 (in double occupancy) Seminar leader: Dr. Rosalinde Kearsley, Macquarie University, assisted by Dr. Mark Wilson. For more information contact Mark Wilson at: [markwilson@sevenchurches.org](mailto:markwilson@sevenchurches.org)

**Fellowship for Biblical Studies National Conference 29 – 30 Sept 2014.** Keynote speaker will be **Professor Mark Leuchter** (Temple University, USA). Enquiries to Ian Young by e-mail ([Ian.Young@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Ian.Young@sydney.edu.au))

## Society for the Study of Early Christianity

Ancient Cultures Research Centre  
Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University, NSW 2109 Tel. (02) 9850 7512 Fax (02) 9850 9001/8240  
Email: [SSEC@mq.edu.au](mailto:SSEC@mq.edu.au)  
Website: [www.mq.edu.au/ssec/events](http://www.mq.edu.au/ssec/events)

### SSEC Calendar of Events 2014

Date	Details	Venue & Cost
<b>Wednesday 8 October</b> 7:05pm	Speaker: <b>Professor Alexander Weiss</b> (Leipzig), Topic: <b><i>Local Colour in the Canonical and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles-: "Reality effect or markers of authenticity."</i></b>	W6A 107 (first floor) \$5/\$8
<b>Wed 15 October</b> 7:05pm	Speaker: <b>Associate Professor Boyo Ockinga</b> , Topic: <b><i>The Egyptian Background of the Exodus</i></b>	W6A 308 (doc centre) \$5/\$8
<b>Mon 3 November</b> 7:05pm	Speaker: <b>Dr Don Barker</b> , Topic of Illustrated Lecture : <b><i>Care taken in Producing Ancient Manuscripts.</i></b>	W6A 308 (doc centre) \$5/\$8
<b>Thur 4 December 2014</b> 7:05pm	<b>This is our end of year/ Christmas Event</b> It is also the 27th anniversary of SSEC and Macquarie University's 50th Birthday. Speaker: <b>Dr Peter Edwell</b> , Topic: <b><i>Recent View of St Nicholas Church at Myra</i></b> , Light refreshments provided. Please see the SSEC website for further details when they become available. <a href="http://www.mq.edu.au/ssec/events">www.mq.edu.au/ssec/events</a>	Museum of Ancient Cultures X5B 321 \$5/\$8

**Note:** Macquarie University enforces parking charges up to 8:00pm daily. Parking charges are \$6 for 1 hour, \$10 for 3 hours, \$25 all day. (rates for 2014). As SSEC seminars start at 7:05pm, attendees need only pay for one hour.

**Phone:** SSEC Office (9850 7512), Dr Don Barker (9850 9962),  
Professor Alanna Nobbs (9850 8844) or Ancient History Office (9850 8833)  
**Website:** [www.mq.edu.au/ssec/events](http://www.mq.edu.au/ssec/events) **Email:** [SSEC@mq.edu.au](mailto:SSEC@mq.edu.au)

