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**Jesus and Empire:
The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder**

Richard A. Horsley

Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003

178 pages, \$17.60 Softcover

In 2001 the prolific New Testament author Richard A. Horsley was invited to the prestigious Rauschenbusch lectureship. Out of this experience came the current book *Jesus and Empire* which expanded on his lectures at Colgate-Rochester-Crozier theological consortium. In my opinion this publication represents an eminently accessible and popular update of Horsley's earlier *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (1993 [1987]). Having read six books authored by Horsley, I remain an enthusiastic booster of his work on the dual grounds of exciting scholarship and burning relevance to those who embrace the Christian faith. Effusive reviews by the likes of Desmond Tutu, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Walter Wink hint obviously at the high quality of this work. When approached by undergraduate students or lay people eager to discover Jesus in his historical life setting I recommend immediately two works, John Dominic Crossan's *Jesus, a Revolutionary Biography* and this recent work by Richard Horsley. I am convinced that Dr. Horsley has no peer in his capacity to describe the social, economic and political setting out of which Jesus lived and operated. I find his work, all of it, enriches me academically and challenges me in my faith and the way I seek to live it. As I read *Jesus and Empire* I was drawn into its history in deeply personal ways. The power of his work is both satisfying to those seeking scholarly knowledge on the topic and to those who sense themselves caught up in the call to discipleship.

In *Jesus and Empire* we sense the heavy boot of Roman oppression through its mix of military might and client rulers both political and ecclesiastical. We rediscover the heartbeat of the Jewish liberation faith driven my memories of the Exodus and songs like those of Miriam, Deborah, Hannah and Mary. We re-enter the Galilean villages and towns suffering under the heavy tribute which drives people off their ancestral lands, and we feel personally the rekindled hopes in various resistance efforts of the Jewish population, especially Jesus' village renewal movement. Once again we are

brought face to face as to why “reasons of state” necessitated his death. I have some quarrel with Horsley’s interpretation of particular texts, and I find his confidence in the historicity of the Markan redactor greater than my own. When I work with the text in search of historical Jesus material I sense that I push harder than Dr. Horsley on separating tradition and redaction. Yet having said that, I remain a solid booster of his work. John Dominic Crossan, William Herzog and Richard Horsley feed me as a trinity of New Testament scholars who bring Jesus of Nazareth to life. Most recently it is Richard A. Horsley whose 1993 *The Liberation of Christmas* led me spiritually through this year’s Christmas season. Simultaneously his *Jesus and Empire* reminds me daily that Christ and not Caesar is Lord and that when one “renders to God what belongs to God” that leaves next to nothing for Caesar. The God of Jesus described by the American Richard Horsley calls into question the so-called “Christian” imperialism of George W. Bush and Company. The Jesus we encounter in this book does honour not only to Richard Horsley its author but also to the social gospel namesake of the lectures he delivered.

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**House Church and Mission:
The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity**

Roger W. Gehring

Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004

408 pages, \$34.29 Softcover

Most published dissertations have a tendency to be a heavy and burdensome read, however scholarly they might be. Thankfully Gehring’s tome on the New Testament house churches stands out as an exception. Yes, it reads like a dissertation, yet at the same time, it remains compelling, even inspiring in places. To be sure, the passion the topic holds for me may be a factor in this judgement; nonetheless, any who have both a scholarly and pastoral interest in this theme will