

LIVING IN TWO WORLDS – A POSTCOLONIAL
READING OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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To Angélica

my beloved faithful wife for all these years of love, support and encouragement

and to our children

Paulina, Rubén Andrés and Constanza

an infinite source of happiness

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CHAPTER I

POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM AS AN OPTIC FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

Introduction

Reading biblical texts through the lens of postcolonial criticism offers a new perspective on familiar ancient texts. In this chapter, I describe the development of postcolonial theory in general and its application to biblical studies in particular. I review several postcolonial categories—such as hybridity, diaspora, mimicry, identity, issues of colonialism and race, and representation of the Other—that I will use to read the Acts of the Apostles as a description of one of many groups of Christianity resisting two centers of power: the Roman Empire and the institutions that define Judaism. I conclude the chapter by presenting a critique of postcolonial studies and final observations for the reading that follows.

In chapter II, I examine Acts 12, the death of Herod Agrippa I, as my starting point: its motif of self-exaltation and self-attribution of divine prerogatives, I would argue, Luke uses as a hidden transcript within the system of imperial worship. The presuppositions of Roman imperial worship I pursue in chapter III, both in historical context and in Roman religion: the pivotal component of the *neokoros* should be seen, I would argue, as a sole cult for the emperor and not as a combined worship to god/dess and emperor. Once the theoretical and methodological framework has been analyzed, I continue by analyzing the following representations at work in the Acts of the Apostles and their

implications: first, the institutions that define Judaism (chapter IV); second, the Roman Empire (chapter V). I conclude by returning to the theoretical and methodological framework by way of general conclusions and observations.

Postcolonial theory is polysemous in meaning and application. It was initially conceived of as Commonwealth studies-- the literary critique of British Imperialism from the people of the former Colonies. Later, it began to include readings from other French and European Colonies, especially from the Caribbean, India, and Africa. During and after the development of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and other philosophical trends, the historical critical method show that every critical method applied to biblical studies is a generalization of studies in contemporary literature.¹ Most of the time, these approaches were carried out in a subjective vacuum and in complete isolation from the reality of flesh-and-blood readers. Using a scientific study of ancient texts, the excavators and diggers reconstructed, in absolute fashion, an ahistoricisation of the people's lives and possessors of these ancient texts.² In these literary 'creations,' inherent colonialism and imperialism came to the fore with overtones of superiority, missionizing obligations, mercantilism, and territorial expansion. Because of these overtones, studies of these texts demanded a break from the typical silence of the academy and the rhetoric of

¹ R. Fernández Retamar quoting Tzvetan Todorov: "Formalistes et futuristes", in *Tel Quel*, n° 30, otoño de 1968, p. 43, quoted in Krystina Pomorska (in *Russian formalist theory and its poetic ambiance*, Mouton, 1968), webpage. <http://www.literature.us.roberto/caliban6.html>.

² For an excellent characterization of the grand models and competing discourses, see the first three chapters in Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*, (New York: Orbis Book, 2000). Abbreviated as *Decolonizing* hereafter.

complicity, a break from the methodical silencing and denying of the voices of these peoples-groups who were studied, a rupture from the habitual promoting of the colonizer on the one side and the denigrating and obliterating of the local values of the colonized on the other.

Edward W. Said—author of the seminal work, *Orientalism*—is considered one of the foremost exponents of these inequalities of representation.³ Said was able to prove that European literary creations were no more than a representation of the writers, rather than of those written about. Other scholars such as Enrique Dussel remind us that Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, perhaps as a prophetic precursor, “understood and expressed the dialectic of master and slave – two centuries before Rousseau, and three before Hegel or Marx – on a global scale.”⁴

Of course, postcolonialism is not simply a Western phenomenon. R.S. Sugirtharajah in his article “Charting the Aftermath: A Review of Postcolonial Criticism”⁵ mentions Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, C.L. R. James, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, and Ananda Coormarswamy as writers from the colonial world whose mostly anti-colonial discourse articulated the ‘suffering of colonialism’.

³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). The book has many editions.

⁴ Enrique Dussel, *Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxist, and Liberation Theology*. Edited by Eduardo Mandieta. (Lanham/Boulder/New York/Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2003), 214. I will return and expand on this in the discussion below on the categories of race and colonialism.

⁵ Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, ed. *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell Pub Ltd, 2006), 11. Previously published in *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Abbreviated as *PBR* hereafter.

Said and others scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak based their analysis on that of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist who was the first to foreground and grapple seriously with the concept of the “Southern question” as the central problem in Italian life and introduced the concept of the subaltern. Gramsci holds that “subalternity is a condition marked by the absence of a will or project on the part of a social group to achieve an integral organic critical self-consciousness.”⁶ For Gramsci the subaltern are those classes “lacking in or deprived of historical force.” Spivak states that “the subaltern has been redefined to encompass all subordinated populations oppressed by colonial/postcolonial regimes in various way (economic, racial, sexist), to which the supplement of resistance acts a contrapuntal chord.”⁷ Thus, subalterity is associated with epithets such as simple, inorganic, fragmentary, passive, and derivative. These terms were studied under the umbrella of the opposite term of ‘hegemony’ which connotes the qualities of being organic, unitary, original, and active.⁸

Putting it succinctly, earlier anti-colonial responses from the Caribbean, Africa (e.g. by Chinua Achebe), India,⁹ etc.— in addition to the movements of

⁶ Epifanio San Juan, *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*, (New York: San Martin’s Press, 1998), 95.

⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Spivak reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. Edited by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 203.

⁸ Alberto Maria Cirese, “Gramsci’s Observation on Folklore.” *Approaches to Gramsci*. Ed. Anne Showstack Sasson. London: Writers and Readers, 1982, quoted by San Juan, 97.

⁹ For a description on literature see: Bill Aschroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial literatures*. (London: Routledge, 1989). Ania Loomba. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. (London: Routledge, 1998); John McLeod. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2000).

feminism, civil rights, and Liberation theology during the sixties and seventies—paved the way for postcolonialism. Thus, R.S. Sugirtharajah states, “Postcolonial studies emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed by the historical reality of colonial presence.”¹⁰

Definitions

There have been several attempts to define postcolonialism. Some emphasize the reading, the optic, a post-colonial state, etc. The difficulty of an absolute definition lies in the fact that this “field of inquiry is not monolithic but rather a field which provides and caters to a variety of concerns, oppositional stances, and even contradictory positions.”¹¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* define it as:

A way of reading and rereading texts of both metropolitan and colonial cultures to draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization on literary production; anthropological accounts; historical records; administrative and scientific writing.¹²

Epifanio San Juan attests: “I consider postcolonial as the cultural logic of this mixture and multilayering of forms taken as the ethos of late modernity, a logic distanced from its grounding in the unsynchronized interaction between the civilizations of the colonial powers and the colonized subalterns.”¹³ Later, he

¹⁰ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *PBR*, 11.

¹¹ Sugirtharajah, *ibid*, 7.

¹² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 192.

¹³ San Juan, 5.

says, more harshly, that “postcolonial theory, in brief, can be read as metaphysical idealism masking its counterrevolutionary telos by denying its own worldly interest and genealogy.”¹⁴

According to Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, “postcolonialism,, foregrounds a politics of opposition and struggle and problematizes the key relationship between centre and periphery.”¹⁵ In the counter-relationship between the center and periphery, cultural critic Homi Bhabha defines “the postcolonial discourse of cultural difference [as] essentially ambivalent, liminal, hybrid, disjunctive, chockfull of ironies and aporias; unrepresentable by definition, it refuses the logic of representation and all principles of intelligibility.”¹⁶ He adds,

Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third world countries, and the discourses of “minorities” within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic “normality” to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories, of nations, races, communities, people.¹⁷

In sum, postcolonial theory is an effort to create a critical discourse that contests the ‘settings of modernity’ with other forms of enunciation.¹⁸

In addition, postcolonial theory contains elements of deconstruction criticism as an

Attempt to radical decentering by unearthing and subverting the unquestioned assumptions on which the metaphysical tradition are

¹⁴ San Juan, 10. Later in this chapter I offer more of my criticism of his theory.

¹⁵ Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, 276 quoted by San Juan, 24.

¹⁶ Bhabha, 1990, quoted by San Juan 25.

¹⁷ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), 171, edition Routledge Classic 2004, pg. 245-6. Abbreviated as LC with two editions 1994 and 2004.

¹⁸ Bhabha, *LC*, 2004, 365.

based... that works by positing binary opposition...and by systematically affirming the superiority of the first over the second term.”¹⁹

This we also see in postcolonial theory’s use of concepts such as: identity, the problematic of orthodoxy and orthopraxis of Liberation Theology; deconstruction criticism and the works of the post-structuralist like Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault which highlight the notions of difference and the definition of the Other. However, some theoreticians still criticize these poststructuralist deconstructions as part of another Eurocentric ideological movement that criticizes the establishment of the binarism of interpretation, speaking of “difference” and “alterity” that result – similar to colonialism itself -- in the same practices of imposed definitions and “unifying the sameness.”²⁰

In sum, postcolonial theory is an attempt to ‘interrupt,’ to read ‘contrapuntally’ and ‘interrogatively’ the tragic experiences of those dispossessed of voice and discriminated against, those “who have suffered the sentence of history,” in order, instead, to formulate critical revisions of cultural differences and “empowering strategies of emancipations.”²¹

¹⁹ David Jobling, “Structuralism and Deconstruction” in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, John H. Hayes, editor, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), Vol 2, 510.

²⁰ See Stephen Moore, “Postcolonialism” in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretations*. Ed A. K.M. Adam (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000).

²¹ Bhabha, *LC* 2004, 246.

The prefix “post”

In postcolonial theory, the prefix “post” indicates a critical process “that goes beyond the colonial in all its forms,”²² but always as a project or strategy of resistance. I use the word “project” deliberately to emphasize the continuity of the process of decolonization as a continual re-evaluation of any and all policies, treaties, and systems of thoughts, economic decisions and sanctions in any and all systems of power toward the other. In other words, the prefix “post” is not simply anti-imperialistic; it does not attack or resist per se the discursive domination only from the powerful, globalized empires but between any groups of people and structures of unequal power.

Segovia suggests that the term postcolonial may be understood simply as a temporal application of what follows the colonial, without assuming the end of colonialism in itself. Others resist the term as meaning being definitely after something; for example, Mark L. Taylor suggests “there is no simple epoch after colonialism.”²³ However, postcolonial theory’s most important characteristic is the critical questioning of the thought and practices of colonialism.²⁴ R.S. Sugirtharajah states, “It is an active interrogation of the hegemonic systems of

²² Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, editors, “Introduction: Alien/Nation, Liberation, and the Postcolonial Underground” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 7; henceforth abbreviated as *PTDE*.

²³ Mark Lewis Taylor, “Spirit and Liberation” in *PTDE*, 44.

²⁴ Fernando F. Segovia, “Interpreting beyond Borders: Postcolonial Studies and Diasporic Studies in Biblical Criticism”, in *IBB*. 2000, 12.

thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices... of cultural and discursive domination.”²⁵

In summary, the “post” that is never truly “post” is primarily a resistance to subjugations, to the historical construct of European colonialism in constructs such as race, nation, class, self-identity, and gender. Furthermore, postcolonial theory also includes the anticolonial activists and liberation readings from those peoples designated as third world, in the macro sense, especially in the interaction of the indigenous inhabitants—inside of those countries in the micro cosmos—as a way of neocolonialism.

Postcolonialism and Biblical Studies

Postcolonialism in biblical studies has been championed by R.S. Sugirtharajah and Fernando F. Segovia²⁶. Segovia reminds us that the presuppositions of the historical critical method were always evolving in principle, always both defective and ready to be fixed, always full of aporias and layers of possible revisions. Even though some historical critics interpret these readings from the ground up, in reality most of the time such interpretations were done like excavations, from the present to the past, to discover the original layer and its evolution. This assumption, contrary to the scientific and neutral position, loaded

²⁵ R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism, Bible and Liberation*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 17.

²⁶ Fernando Segovia and R.S.Sugirtharajah, editors, *Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*. Bible and Postcolonialism. (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007). Stephen Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, editors. *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*. (London/New York: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 2005).

the text and its interpretations with the biases and preconceptions of the interpreters.²⁷ Indeed Segovia cautions us that:

Historical Criticism was perceived and promoted not only as the proper way to read and interpret the biblical texts but also as the ultimate sign of progress in the discipline, the offer of the (Christian) West to the rest of the (Christian) world and the means by which the backward and ignorant could become modern and educated.²⁸

In similar fashion, Justin S. Upkgon from the African continent asks: Why do the religious practices of Africa, Latin America, Asia, and so on always have to be compared with the European? Why are not they studied in their own right? The presuppositions of the historical critical Method are being used as the norm in these studies “for communicating to Africans the role of Christ in the human community.”²⁹

Conclusion

In conclusion, postcolonialism is a way of reading, a criticism, an optic that intends to decolonize the theories and practices of biblical interpretation and theology from the centers of the West, compared and contrasted with the readings of base communities or of social-groups, and “from my place.” Postcolonial readings consciously contrast, compare, and incorporate into one’s understanding elements from the dynamics of oppressed identities, for example,

²⁷ See Segovia, *Decolonizing*, 13-15

²⁸ Segovia, *Decolonizing*, 38

²⁹ Justin S. Ukpong, “Development in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions” in *Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader*, compiled by Susanne Scholz, (Upper Saddle River, NY: Prentice Hall, 2003), 259 originally published in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West, and Musa W. Dube, 11-26, Leiden: Brill, 2000.

through gender studies, cultural studies, and studies of the relationship of economic power and oppression. As Marcella Althaus-Reid explains, “Any theology concerned with issues of wealth and poverty needs to consider more the incoherence of oppression and its multiple dimensions rather than its commonalities.”³⁰ Taylor goes a step further calling for the deliberate inclusion of other religions and intercultural modalities, other than the Christian in this development of postcolonial theology.

Indeed, contrary to the methods of the Enlightenment – especially the Hegelian opposition and binarism-- it makes sense to advocate for postcolonial theologies in the plural rather than the singular. This requires an openness to a multiplicity of meaning in the development of “interreligious and intercultural modalities.”³¹ As one who is a hybrid-- educated and living in the diaspora (West/North) – I look, as an act of resistance and independence of the colonized, for a state of mind that will alter the universal, the meta-narratives and the presuppositions of Eurocentric theological interpretation—or indeed of any other reigning interpretation, including my own. Thus, I look for an ‘alter-native’ option, new readings from the margins. Yet, I hope for this not only to celebrate the uniqueness of the other, but to see them as both participants in and part of the center without being the same as that center.

This process of decolonization must also apply to the Bible, as the product of writers coming from different situations of oppression and resistance to various

³⁰ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics*. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 168f.

³¹ Taylor, in *PTDE*, 49.

establishments. Such a decolonizing or postcolonial reading must make us scrutinize why and how we find in the Scriptures, which are sacred to all of us Christians, such clear elements of oppression, such clear perpetuation of the hegemony of the establishment with unequal relations of power. Ultimately, as Musa Dube proposes, such a postcolonial reading will try “to create [a] better system.”³²

We can see clearly why such a reading is necessary when we are reminded by Segovia that at the beginning of the twentieth century, Christian Europe and its colonies owned more than eighty-five percent of the world territory, with a stunning sixty-five percent of Christians living in Europe and North America, and a mere seventeen percent representing the entire “rest” of the world – the area typically designated as the so-called “Third World”, meaning Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. These were still the days of mission-and-expansion that was considered by Europeans either as “colonial benevolence”³³ or a mission of goodness. Statistics today shows an ironic reversal: those who were formerly in the position of power ‘sending missionaries’ to the rest of the world now represent only thirty-five percent of Christians and are dwindling daily in number. Because the “rest” today account for more than sixty percent of Christians and are increasing in number daily, third-world theologies have an obligation and responsibility to represent those flesh-and-blood believers in their daily struggles. The task is difficult: First, because it

³² Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 17.

³³ Sugirtharajah’ term.

identifies the majority of Christian believers as being unschooled in the academic ways of doing theology. Second, because acknowledging and studying the ramifications of colonialism is hard for privileged Westerners to do. Indeed, as R.S. Sugirtharajah claims, “European colonialism has never been a popular subject for theological inquiry in Western discourse.”³⁴ Third, because to a great extent the West’s energies are still directed to upholding imperialism – though not named as such—in matter of economics, military expansion, film-media, and values generally. Taylor rightfully attests that “centuries of Christian imperialistic hermeneutics have obscured the counter-imperial elements of Christianity’s own scriptural narratives.”³⁵

The aim of this study is, therefore, to close the gap between the traditional Eurocentric – imperialistic reading and a more politically liberating, decolonized, and alternative reading of the teaching of Jesus and the life of early Christians found in Acts.

³⁴ R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Recofingurations* (St Louis, Chalice Press, 2003), chapter 9. S. shows that theological journals, such as *The Expository Times and Theology*, did not carry a single article on imperialism or colonialism between 1900 and 1960.

³⁵ Taylor, in *PTDE*, 49.

Postcolonial Categories

Introduction

Postcolonial criticism is not a monolithic theory with a fixed set of rules and paradigms, but an optic, a way of reading, a perspective, a mind-set that uses diverse categories and characteristics of resistance that are sometimes described as the hidden transcripts of several different types of criticisms combined into one. The purpose of these categories –such as ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry-mockery—is to examine all aspects of a passage in a contrapuntal reading, an approach that “disturbs, intervenes, unsettles, interrogates, ironizes, denaturalizes and transgresses by refusing to ‘fit’ into established categories.”³⁶ I will pause to describe some of these categories.

Hybridity

Bhabha defines hybridity as a third space of enunciation or a time-lag created in order to explain the positionality of the individual. He attests:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory ... may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity.³⁷

³⁶ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Mapping: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 89, quoted by Mayra Rivera, “God at the Crossroads: A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia” in *PTDE*, 189.

³⁷ Bhabha, *LC*, 37-8.

I am not sure that the hybrid “must constantly negotiate her/his position between contrasting, often contradictory realities” where “this in-between position can be painfully torn between conflicting loyalties and subject to the rejection of all groups.”³⁸ I admit that my view of early Christianity is of an in-between position; however, I am not sure to what degree those Christians are or should still be “loyal” to one or both dominant groups. My uneasiness with the acceptance of the totality of the definition resides in the concept/disposition of the colonized, or the inability to replicate the same identity for the colonizer.

González states that for Bhabha, “the hybrid is a product of colonial culture’s inability to replicate itself in a monolithic and homogeneous manner.”³⁹ I believe hybridity/ambivalence exists only when one accepts the culture of the colonizer as monolithic and homogenous, but this is not and never has been the case. For it is in the power interests of the colonizer to maintain some difference between one’s own people and those being colonized. The resistance of the one being colonized is to the colonizer’s intention that he or she imitate that one—without, however, being given any power or being asked if they even wish to submit to this control. Hybridity is the result of this combined lack of desire to allow or take on exact imitation. In this regard, it is a pre-conditioned separation or difference that prevents duplication. Should the colonized be victimized and subjected to this kind of oppression and humiliation? Most definitely not. After all, the category of hybridity is in itself a bifocal nomenclature of the colonizer which

³⁸ Keller, Nausner, Rivera, in *PTDE*, 13.

³⁹ Michelle A. Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?: Theological Anthropological, Postcoloniality, and the Spanish-Speaking Americas” in *PTDE*, 61.

imposes upon the colonized on one hand. In this context, I argue that this creation of a third state where “something new is created”⁴⁰ should not be accepted.

On the other hand, is this newness or what Bhabha’s terms “the inter – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the *meaning of culture*” actually a new identity?⁴¹ Certainly, this *betweenness* must exist as a means for resistance, a diasporic conflict; but not of assimilation, not of the colonized losing their own identity. Although I accept the category of hybridism as a colonial process, as an undeniable reality expressed by Bhabha, I resist accepting it completely. For example, those who identify themselves as bicultural amalgamations (expressed in hyphenated identities, such as Mexican-American, Cuban-American, Asian-American, and so forth) recognize their diasporic situation, “the third-space”, in which they find themselves, with all its problematic nomenclature, of “you” and “I”, or better, “them”⁴² and “us”, and therefore the “ambiguity” of creating identity. However, I think that the colonized must make huge compromises in order to function on the colonizer’s terms without at the same time giving up their own authenticity and

⁴⁰ González, 62. González in the same page argues: “Bhabha’s understanding of hybridity... is far from uncontested... for example, for *universalizing the colonial* encounter. Gender, class and other elements of social location hardly play into the picture” (italics mine emphasis).

⁴¹ Bhabha, *LC* 1994, 37 emphasis added.

⁴² Bhabha, *Location of Culture*,

identity as 'cultural values.' In that sense, I disagree with hyphenated identities.⁴³

Lomba summarizes it well when she states,

Hybridity seems to be a characteristic of his inner life (and I use the male pronoun purposely) but not of his positioning," as "it is to say [that] he could exist anywhere," as a "curiously universal and homogeneous [being]."⁴⁴

Bhabha's thesis is that "the emergence of the human subject as socially and physically authenticated depends upon the negation of an originary narrative of fulfillment or an imaginary coincidence between individual interest or instinct and the General Will."⁴⁵ The problem with this thesis is that it always relies on the colonizer to construct the Self. This process of dependence makes the colonized person a colonizer-in-theory. I would argue for a process of beyond the "post" or anticolonial perspectives which demonstrate the value for One Self without using the paradigms of the Other (in this case the colonizer). San Juan summarizes the situation well when he asserts: "Lacking that "originary narrative" any negation seems pointless."⁴⁶ Nevertheless I would not follow San Juan to the extreme of stating that postcolonialism strives for the diaspora's hybridity concepts: it is a paradigm that "reproduces notions of ambivalence, dual personalities, hybrid or split psyches, and lately borderline personalities

⁴³ Similarly San Juan and other Marxist theorists criticize his position as maintaining the centrality of the colonizer. Gonzalez, 63 quotes also, Alfred J. López, *Post and Past: A Theory of Postcolonialism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 12.

⁴⁴ Lomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 178. I am taking the liberty of rephrasing the order of the original statement.

⁴⁵ Bhabha, *LC* 1994, 118 quoted by San Juan 27.

⁴⁶ San Juan, 27. Parry 1994, Callinicos 1995 have been examined Bhabha 'fallacies' (San Juan, 27).

disadvantaged in the competition for scarce resources and opportunities.”⁴⁷ My criticism of San Juan has to do with identity: I do not consider dual personalities, much less a borderline person, as being devoid of their own space. Because of his denial of this reality, I think San Juan goes too far in his interpretation. Commenting on these hyphenated identities in relationship to “Asian American Literature,” neither American nor Asian, San Juan argues that

This space [the third space] will not materialize through neutralizing or distancing stances, nor through hybridity and hyper-real ambivalence; the functional necessity of the “ethnic” text will defy the rationalizing and autonomizing pressure of marketized liberalism together with its racializing motivation. Heterotopia, borderland, mestizaje or mestissage subject-in-process, locations of differential locutions, and so on may be drawn up as sites of contestation and subversion, and for the recomposition of positional identities.⁴⁸

San Juan quotes Geetha Kothari who pleads not to be terrorized by the question “Where are you from?” to which she responds with the strategic words, “I’m here.”⁴⁹ Can we escape history and its inscriptions in our bodies? Or as Debra Kang Dean, of Japanese and Korean ancestry confesses:

I am a visible minority who wishes to be asked neither to live in the illusion that is a fact that makes no difference nor to believe that it is the sole determining factor in my life. My body is the necessary, the essential locus for event.⁵⁰

San Juan states,

⁴⁷ San Juan, 176.

⁴⁸ San Juan, 192

⁴⁹ Uriah Yong-Hwang Kim mentioned something similar in. *Decolonizing Josiah : toward a postcolonial reading of the Deuteronomistic history*. (Sheffield [England] : Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005).

⁵⁰ San Juan, 192 quoting, Debra Kang Dean, “Telling Differences” in *Under Western Eyes*. Ed. Garrett Hongo, (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 67, and Geetha Kothari, “Where are you from?,” *ibid*, 173.

Because it is easy to invoke stratagems of “in-betweenness” and ambivalence, we need a rigorous critique of postcoloniality, difference, versions of Otherness or alterity, intertextuality, hybridity, and so on, notions of rubrics that simply multiply the individualistic axioms of liberal normative pluralism in order to mystify the effective subordination and oppressions of Asians and other people of color under the pretext that we all equal and free – except that we as historically specific communities act on the basis of incommensurable values of cultures to which we are all entitled equal recognition. “One in many” / *E pluribus unum* – this, in fact, is the last and final stage of the evolution of the forms of value.⁵¹

However, I believe this rash criticism nullifies the ‘natural’ identity of the person and groups in the diaspora, and sociologically speaking diminishes the ‘self-esteem’ of the individual. On the other hand, it is an accurate representation of their lives, a reality that San Juan seems to deny. It is exactly because you recognize that your space is not “equal” that you fight back. This fighting is for your own identity, and not a mixed or combined one. The individual knows that s/he lives in the diaspora, a world that though yours was yet not yours because of the preconditioned definitions imposed by the colonizer. Your subversion acknowledges that in some way you upset the colonizer’s “racializing motivations;” in this manner, your place become one “site of contestation and subversion.”⁵²

Diaspora - Alterity

It is in this context that I define myself as a dark mestizo South American – a Chilean reared and educated as a professional in the south of the American continent, now living a ‘condition of diaspora’ in itself, transformed into a

⁵¹ San Juan, 192-3.

⁵² Ibid.

nortemaraucano, a diasporic interstitial of the North being educated as a theologian and living as an assigned totalizing taxonomy of ‘minority – a Latino/Hispanic’; uprooted in a voluntary exile from the South of the world and unaccepted in both places.⁵³ In the south, I am one “contaminated” by the North;

⁵³ Araucanos is the name that Alonso de Ercilla y Zuñiga, Conquistador and Spanish author of the epic poem *La Araucana* (published in Spain in three parts 1569; 1574 and 1589, *The Araucaniad* in English) gave to one of the many indigenous groups who inhabit Chile. In *La Araucana*, Ercilla y Zuñiga describes the conquest of Chile in terms of the wars between Spaniards and the indigenous peoples of the region of Arauco. For some, in fact, the name is a clear representation of the Europeans over the *Mapuché* – “people of the land”, the real name of the inhabitants with the epic’s convention of helping the empire to contain and control over the Other. Others have studied the effects of representation as an anti-imperialism poem, since Ercilla depicts and exalts the Araucanos’s rebellion against Spanish authority as resistance. Perhaps, another reading should be in terms of postcolonial categories such as of mimicry and mockery, but this remains a matter for a future paper. For an interesting analysis of representing the Other, see Craig Kallendorf, “Representing the Other: Ercilla’s *La Araucana*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and the New World Encounter” in *Comparative Literature Studies* 40.4 (2003), 393-414. Kallendorf makes an extensive comparison between what has been accepted as “*the Aeneid of Chile*” –a phrase coined by Andrés Bello (1830). For more on the *Araucana* see *The Araucaniad*, trans. Charles Maxwell Lancaster and Paul Thomas Manchester (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1945, 11). Also see David A Lupher, (*Romans in the a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003, 277-309; who “places *La Araucana* into the larger discussion about the virtues of the Indians among Spanish writers who ‘ultimately turned classical references toward a critique of Roman values’”; quoted by Kallendorf, notes 21 and 36. Thus, *nortemaraucano* reads as “one araucano living in the North”. In Chile, Araucanos were the only indigenous group who were able to resist and stop the Spanish conquest. In fact, the name of the province from which I come and the University where I received the degree of Electrical Engineer has the name of La Frontera -- The Frontier. Some lines from *La Araucana* that every child learns by memory in elementary school come from Canto 1, “Chile, fértil provincia y señalada/ en la región antártica famosa,/de remotas naciones respetada/por fuerte, principal y poderosa;/la gente que produce es tan granada,/tan soberbia, gallarda y belicosa,/que no ha sido por rey jamás regida/ni a extranjero dominio sometida.” For similar connections of appropriations see: David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic form from Virgil to Milton*, (Princeton: NJ, Princeton Press, 1993), 131-159; Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam and*

in the north, I am only an alien, an immigrant, never to be a part of the “general collective”, a failure of the ‘melting-pot’ since I do not fulfill the required conditions of ‘in-betweenness of the Atlantic.’ I am part of a minority that has become part of the ‘globalized minority’, the Other, “them”, “not me”, “the rest” or the eschatological “remnant-- the poor of the earth”, etc.

The concept and problematic of diaspora are intrinsically connected with the history of the Latin American peoples. A spirit of liberation and rejection as non-European existed since the beginning of the resistance movement against the colonial-imperial powers (Spain, Portugal, Britain, and France). The Libertador Simón Bolívar, in 1819, at the time when the first countries of Latin America won their independence from Spain, affirmed:

We must recognize that our people is neither the European, or the North American, but it is composed of peoples from Africa and the continent of America - which is in itself an emanation of Europe--. Furthermore, Spain itself is no longer European because of its African blood, its institutions and its character. Then, it is impossible to affirm in all truth of which human family we belong. Most of the indigenous people have been annihilated; the European has been mixed with the American [Europeans raised in the continent of America] and the African. The result of this mixture has also mixed with the Indian and the European. All of us were born from the bosom of the same mother. Our fathers are foreigners different in origin and blood, and all of them differ in the epidermis. This unlikeness brings a story of major importance.⁵⁴

European Identities. Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 44.

⁵⁴ My translation - Quoted by Fernández Retamar, *ibid*. The original reads: “Tengamos en cuenta que nuestro pueblo no es el europeo, ni el americano del norte, que más bien es un compuesto de África y de América que una emanación de Europa; pues que hasta la España misma deja de ser europea por su sangre africana, por sus instituciones y por su carácter. Es imposible asignar con propiedad a qué familia humana pertenecemos. La mayor parte del indígena se ha aniquilado; el europeo se ha mezclado con el americano y con el africano, y éste se ha mezclado con el indio y con el europeo. Nacidos todos del

On another occasion he stated: “We represent a small mankind; we possess another world.”⁵⁵

The category of diaspora reflects the dynamics of confrontation, when the periphery is the center of the essence, something of the “inescapable and omnipresent reality” that occurs from living in two worlds at the same time. Concerning the tension of the center and periphery in relation to Latin American identity, the Argentinean poet Jorge Luis Borges observes:

To the *criollos* (the new identity group of the mix of European/Americans/Native Inhabitant) I want to talk. To the men [and women] that in this soil/territory [tierra] feel how to live and how to die. I am not talking to those who believe that the sun and the moon are in Europe. This place is for true exiles [*desterrado nato*]. Those people who are nostalgic of the distant and foreign: those are the true *gringos*, with or without authorization of their blood – and to them my fountain pen does not speak.⁵⁶

In the same manner, Cuban writer Roberto Fernández Retamar states,

In the colonial world there exists a special case: a vast zone where the mestizaje is not an accident, but the essence. This is the central thought that we are “our América Mestiza” as José Martí, who knew the language admirably used this precise adjective as a distinctive

seno de una misma madre, nuestros padres, diferentes en origen y en sangre, son extranjeros, y todos difieren visiblemente en la epidermis; esta semejanza, trae un relato de la mayor trascendencia.”

⁵⁵ <http://www.literatura.us/roberto/caliban1.html>, my translation. The original reads in the Carta de Jamaica (1815), “Nosotros somos un pequeño género humano: poseemos un mundo aparte.”

⁵⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, *El tamaño de mi esperanza*, Buenos Aires, 1926, p. 5. My translation, the text in Castellano reads: “A los criollos les quiero hablar: a los hombres que en esta tierra se sienten vivir y morir, no a los que creen que el sol y la luna están en Europa. Tierra de desterrados natos es ésta, de nostálgicos de lo lejano y lo ajeno: ellos son los *gringos* de veras, autorícelo o no su sangre, y con ellos no habla mi pluma.”

sign of our culture, a culture of descendants of aborigines, of Africans, of Europeans –ethnically and culturally speaking.⁵⁷

Segovia understands diaspora theology as a diverse and plural enterprise that includes many voices, but always voices that are mutually respectful, “committed to critical conversation with other theological voices from both the margins and the center alike.”⁵⁸ The importance of the diaspora theology lies in its contrapuntal nature: it should not conceal any voices, even that of the imperialist. The experience of the diaspora, of living outside of one’s own place in a ‘foreign place’ that does not accept us as real participants, the experience of not feeling welcome or of being part of a place of which one does not want to be a part typically results in both contradictions and opportunities. This diaspora can be rude and cruel if it comes by force; at other times, it is a voluntary exile. Yet, in the end, it allows interaction in both places. The contradictions are maintaining one’s own identity and being transparent to both places. The opportunities include giving voice to those who are voiceless. No place to stand? Yes, there is a place: the issue is finding the place to stay where you are most vital.

The term *mestizaje* has been appropriated by Hispanic theologies following the seminal work of Virgilio Elizondo. However, one of the

⁵⁷ My translation of R. Fernández Retamar, in <http://www.literatura.us/roberto/caliban1.html>. The original reads: “Pero existe en el mundo colonial, *en el planeta*, un caso especial: una vasta zona para la cual el mestizaje *no es el accidente, sino la esencia*, la línea central: nosotros, “nuestra América Mestiza”. Martí, que tan admirablemente conocía el idioma, empleó este adjetivo preciso como la señal distintiva de nuestra cultura, una cultura de descendientes de aborígenes, de africanos, de europeos —étnica y culturalmente hablando-.

⁵⁸ Segovia, “Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic” in *Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 53.

contradictions in this term is its negative ideological and imperialistic character. Some have been challenging the concept of mestizaje as simply being a way to reinscribe the old racial categories and to perpetuate ethno-cultural, racial and social hierarchies, where the white people are the still the norm, where the indigenous people remain at the bottom of the social strata, and where the black people are simply invisible. The presuppositions are varied and include⁵⁹: (a) Mestizaje as fusion is possible when viewed from a binary perspective reconciling two radically different cultural universes and in turn creating a third one, Yet, this is still done using the racial categories and hierarchy established by the empire. (b) Mestizaje as an oppositional binarism denies the African presence and ethnocultural contributions to what today we identify as Latin America. (c) Mestizaje viewed as a cultural category simply to point to the mixing of cultures is an ideological abstraction devoid of historical meaning and validity; (d) Mestizaje erases the possibilities for specific plurality. (e) Mestizaje does not recognize the presence of indigenous peoples who do not identify themselves as mestizos. Indigenous peoples are looked on as imageries, icons, and symbols turned into folkloric items of an already dead civilization. (f) Mestizaje, simply stated, does not remove racism but rather reinscribes it by establishing a 'racial' hierarchical cast of shades of skin using white as the norm. This is where mestizaje shares much in common with notions of creolization, hybridity, multiculturalism, and syncretism.

⁵⁹ Comments are from "Race, Culture and Faith: (Re)Mapping the Development of Mestizaje in Theology." Angel Rosemblat, Eleazar Zapata Olivella, Tinoco Guerra, Virgilio Elizondo.

Mimicry/mockery

Bhabha introduces the concept of mimicry and mockery. Mimicry is “when the colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to ‘mimic’ the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values.”⁶⁰ Yet, the term “encourages” seems tame compared to the reality, which I would suggest is more about the colonial discourse being “enforced” to mimic some kind of characterization and behavior on the part of the colonized. Surely, this is a matter of self propagation and survival from the colonizer. But what does one make of the colonized’s resistance or adaptation to being assimilated to being like the other? This complex relation creates a situation of ambivalence. To copy or not to copy is the question. Using the categories of mimicry and ambivalence, Marion Grau states that “a text has the potential to interrogate structures of dominance; but can at the same time function as the reinscription of the status quo.”⁶¹ Grau agrees with Althaus-Reid who states that ambivalence is not about “erasing” the “contradictions that are many” but about engaging with difficult questions, refusing to “render stale, dogmatic, and unresponsive the liveliness of the text and tradition, remaining open to the processual qualities of all divine commerce.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Ashcroft, Gareth, Griffiths, 139.

⁶¹ Marion Grau, “Divine Commerce: A Postcolonial Christology for Times of Neocolonial Empire” in *PTDE*, 173.

⁶² Grau, 183. She explains that the divine commerce she explains “refers to redemptive forms of agency not merely as understood through Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection, but extends to the thoughts and acts of those who would mimic or imitate such acts of redemption in their own lives”, 183

Mockery, on the other hand, is resistance to the views of the colonized. For Bhabha, mimicry and mockery “produce a consistent ambivalent narrative.”⁶³ How? Because, “the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority enables a form of subversion, founded on the undecidability that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention.”⁶⁴ Bhabha suggests that “mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility: signs of spectacular resistance. Words of the master become the site of hybridity.”⁶⁵

Identity

“When an alien resides within your land, you shall not oppress the alien.

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens (Lev 19:3).”

“Neither race nor language can any longer define nationality.”⁶⁶

The constant difficulty in this globalized society is to learn how to differentiate between the “them” versus the “us”. Some will argue that these terms have become almost obsolete. There is a sense of a diasporic mingling among these intergroups, groups which therefore no longer resemble what according to the ethonographers used to be the ‘purity’ of society. Such groups

⁶³ Bhabha, *LC*, 86.

⁶⁴ Bhabha, *LC*, 112.

⁶⁵ Bhabha, *LC*, 121.

⁶⁶ Keller, Nausner, Rivera, 1.

represent the inherent contradictory sense of the term *mestizaje*: some people still consider *mestizos/as* as people who are the “epitome of racial degeneration”, people “who [represent] the moral corruption of the Spaniards and the sexual insatiability of the indigenous woman.”⁶⁷

To such a stance, Sugirtharajah suggests that

current postcolonial theorizing about racism, and its analytical concept, hybridity, can release biblical scholarship from its misguided notion of euro-centrism, its erroneous concept of race, and its deluded state of insularity. Postcolonial racial theories have dealt most significantly with the contradictions and ambivalence of racial purity... It will liberate Christian discourse from its habitual binary division of us and them.⁶⁸

Here, I would prefer the term “ethnic group(s)” rather than the term “race,” for race is an invention of nineteenth-century expansionism to “dis-cover” these groups of new peoples – who in reality had of course already existed for several millennia before Europeans stumbled upon them.⁶⁹ However, it is only during the capitalist and missionary expansionism of the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries that Europeans began to become aware of and relate to the no-longer invisible Other. Such a definition of Other is in terms of a binary concept that “you are what I am not” and “I am not what you are,” and this is central to the postcolonial categories of ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity. This is what Keller, Nausner and Rivera call the “idolatry of identity,” as the “identity detached from all that it excludes,” meaning the identity fashioned when a person

⁶⁷ Race, Culture and Faith...

⁶⁸ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations*, 108-9.

⁶⁹ For more see Hjamil A. Martinez, *Shifting the Discursive Space: A Postcolonial Approach to United States Religious Historiography*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation presented at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2003.

“negotiates a sense of belonging to some group, and [at the same time] *being distanced* from others.”⁷⁰ Identity in this realm of colonialism creates a separation that defines “what I am not.” This characteristic of a murky identity describes the postcolonial categories of hybridity and mimicry.

In this sense, the category of hybridity produced by the colonizer helps one set of persons to relate to and define the Other. In another sense, though, the colonized who accepts such categorization is still under the auspices and patronage, the domination of the colonized (Empire). The postcolonial concept of mimicry is useful here; it is one that Homi Bhabha uses to mean “a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed.” It is the realization of being “almost the same, but not quite,” – and for this reason must be coupled with the act of resistance as mockery. It is what James C. Scott – doing agrarian studies and how the subaltern people resist dominance—recognizes when the paisano/campesino laborer bows in front of the master -- but at the same time laughs at him, firing in his presence by deliberately not recognizing him completely.⁷¹

This search for one’s own identity, an identity not part of the master’s, may be compared with what Sugirtharajah understands as several “options” for “postcolonial cogitations” with the following ingredients: (a) a “search for answers in the vernacular heritage”; (b) the recognition that we are “new global nomads” with “no fixed cultural identity”; and (c) that our task is “to blend creatively

⁷⁰ Kelly, Nausner, Rivera, 12 (emphasis added).

⁷¹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

cosmopolitan cultures. Sugirtharajah understands vernacular cosmopolitanism as “a political process that works towards the shared goals of democratic rule, rather than simply acknowledging already constituted ‘marginal’ political entities or identities.”⁷² The issue is whether such a vernacular cosmopolitanism actually represents somebody? If we assert that the fact of national frontiers is just a thing of the past, and we are in the deepest sense borderless, a diasporic representation, the matter becomes more complicated. Sugirtharajah explains that “cosmopolitan and vernacular cultures cannot be tantamount to blending into someone else’s culture which the globalizers blindly advocate and which will inevitably lead to the destruction of one’s own identity and history.”⁷³

The three characteristics that Sugirtharajah wishes for his ‘new blending’ all “go beyond identity hermeneutics.” Thus, he attests:

Self-affirmation and restoring the lost pride and emasculated dignity of an alienated people are fine and worthy causes in themselves. But to hold on to them, and to reiterate them uncritically when the context out of which these issues has moved, is to risk turning them into theological clichés.⁷⁴

What Sugirtharajah wants is a real blending as would be the case with a creation of a new identity, a vernacular one. However, I believe that the challenge and risk of this reading presupposes an infusion of supersessionism. On the one hand, he advocates going beyond the “dignity of an alienated people”; but, on the other, he also advocates restoring their “myths and legends.” I would certainly support “going beyond the identity hermeneutics” as an act of resistance to the self-

⁷² Bhabha, *LC*, xviii, Preface to the 2004 edition.

⁷³ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations...*, 158-60; *PCC*, 37-38.

⁷⁴ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations...*, 159, *PCC*, 38

definition that the center has imposed on the Other. It should be an act of resistance to the self-proclaimed superiority, triumphalism and heroism of colonial Christianity. Thus, the “subaltern,” the one who has been defined, must reinstate his dignity of identity in contrast to what has been assigned. I do not mean the subaltern is to go in search of an identity. He or she already has one. However, when the subaltern shrugs off the values and customs assigned to him or her, and manages to distance himself from the representation assigned him or her, then he or she will know exactly what he or she is. This is what I understand to be the movement of “departing from their habitual inbred rules of transformation” of which Bhabha speaks. He attests that “vernacular cosmopolitanism is a cultural act and translation which is “not simply appropriation or adaptation, it is a process through which cultures are required to revise their own systems of reference, norms and values, by departing from their habitual or ‘inbred’ rules of transformation.”⁷⁵ It is fine to leave the ‘inbred rules,’ especially when these rules have been set by the other, the superior, the colonizer. However, I think blending of the rules is a compromise.

In conclusion, I argue that the quest for self-identity should not be motivated by the total acceptance of the category of hybridity. I agree with San Juan when he mentions, for example, Rigoberta Menchu’s case and “her speech-act” as one form of survival of identity. However, this voice of resistance does not give to the Guatemalan Quiche natives a real identity, only a

⁷⁵ Homi Bhabha, “The Vernacular Cosmopolitan” in *Voices of the Crossing: the Impact of Britain on Writers from Asia, the Caribbean and Africa*, ed Naseem Khan (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2000), 141, quoted by Sugirtharajah, *PCC*, 38.

represented identity. Nevertheless, I would affirm, this is preferable to having a self-identity based on the paradigms and axioms of the Colonizer. San Juan reminds us that, “this quest for a radical universality is sustained by an impulse to preserve something unique, something distinctive, whose substance can be only precariously named by the term ‘ethnic’ –the aboriginal signature –that resists codification, hermeneutics gloss, cooptative translation.”⁷⁶ But, I think perhaps here he is forgetting the reality of five hundred years of reality of intercultural relations that have already taken place.

Race in Imperialism and Colonialism

“Resistance far from being merely a reaction to imperialism is an alternative way of conceiving human history.”⁷⁷

“The capacity to live with difference is, in my view, the coming question of the twenty-first century.”⁷⁸

Race is an ideological construct that creates separation. The greatest genocides of history including those of the twentieth century-- the Holocaust of Jews, Gypsies, and homosexuals during the last Christian war, the tribal wars of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia-- demonstrate the problem of what happens when the Other is defined, differentiated, isolated, and then exterminated. This ideological construct is the product of colonialism and imperialism, mostly based

⁷⁶ San Juan, 38.

⁷⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 216.

⁷⁸ Stuart Hall, 1993, 361, quoted by John Solomos and Les Back, editors. *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*. Routledge Readers in Sociology (London and New York: Routledge, 2000, 4).

on mere assumptions of the strange and unknown, yet perpetrated and perpetuated over centuries in life and literature.

I shall examine the issue of race and racism related to colonialism. First I will state my motivations, because, although we live today in globalized and almost-free democracies around the world, the shadow of racism continues to grow long in our age. I will show that presuppositions of both racism and empire have impacted literature with signifiers as race, culture, and nation. I will analyze some examples of problems of representations, first from the European world, demonstrating the continuation of old patterns of ideologization from the times of the old colonial empires of Greece and Rome. I will include some examples of genderization and barbarism before drawing some conclusions.

For Miles, the idea of race refers to a human construct, an ideology with regulatory power within society. The analysis of race constitutes a paper tiger (Miles 1988). Race is thus an ideological effect, a mask that hides real economic relationship (Miles 1984).⁷⁹ Instead, I suggest that cultural identity is more important than 'race' when trying to define the other -- the one who is not like me. Perhaps, the greatest contribution that Miles makes is his insistence that "races are created within the context of political and social regulation. Thus 'race' is above all a political construct."⁸⁰ I will add not only race, but the whole 'assigned-definition' of the other. This assigned-definition of the colonized is given by characteristics that differentiate them from the colonizer. It seems to me that if

⁷⁹ Back and Solomos, 7 in *Theories of Race and Racism*, quoting Robert Miles in the same volume.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 8.

one forgets to bring to the discussion of race the additional issues of class struggle, ethnicity and religion, etc., -- in so doing isolating those particular elements that are unique to either the colonized or the colonizer and thus which differentiate them – if one does that, then the whole process of analysis will fail or at least be incomplete. Thus, race is only one component of the constructed social and political relation.

In an excellent reader: *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, a volume of forty-one contributors, editors Les Back and John Solomos state;

We need to remember that most Victorians had no personal contact with the “exotic” peoples and places that they were assuming responsibility for. Their opinions were formed according to the sources of their information, and these sources were for the most part the popular press and literature.⁸¹

Similarly, in her comparative analysis of the Victorian nineteenth century and the Imperial Romans, Jane Webster reminds us that “much of what we accept as literary evidence... can be deconstructed as colonial discourse.”⁸² According to these

One of the major lacunae in the existing literature is that while much has been written about the impact of colonial expansion and imperial domination on racial attitudes there has been surprisingly *little comment* on the role and impact of anti-colonial ideas and movements. Given the extent of its influence on political and social discourses during this period, it is surprising indeed that we have little knowledge of both the nature of the anti-colonialist movements and the influence that they had on the changing of ideas about race in Britain and elsewhere. It is perhaps this absence that has helped

⁸¹ Back and Solomos, 14.

⁸² Jane Webster, *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*. Edited by Jane Webster and Nick Cooper. Proceedings of a Symposium held at Leicester University, Nov 1994. (Leicester: UK: School of Archeological Studies”, 1996, 116.

to produce a rather monolithic view of the impact of the Empire on domestic British political culture.⁸³

Back and Solomos speak of “little comment” on the role and impact of anti-colonial ideas. The trouble for me is that they are still referring in imperial mode to “Britain and elsewhere;” in other words they are still thinking of the empire as the center of everything, and all else as peripheral and nameless, unworthy of specific recognition. Of course anti-colonial literature did exist – occasionally. But, the empire managed to dominate the conversations.⁸⁴ In the book we find no attributes of different concepts listed other than “whitening/whiteness as “being normal” and black as being the other, the alternative. For those outside that regulation, it seems that everything revolves around these two standards. Or are they speaking of the “blackness of white?” They state that, “prioritizing whiteness as an area of critical endeavor has the potential to disrupt the sociological common sense that equates the discussion of racism.”⁸⁵ Using a neo-Marxist framework, they call for “a return to an analysis of the nature of ethnicity in metropolitan settings” as “reclaiming culture.”⁸⁶ They pause to quote Goldberg’s definition of race that is other than “difference and culture.” Goldberg states, “The semantics of race [is] produced by a complex set

⁸³ Back and Solomos, 15 emphasis mine.

⁸⁴ The discussion in the book is only about Britain, the authors take a few lines to mention the period of imperial expansion of Spain and Portugal (15th-16th centuries) but it is not discussed, much less the anti-imperial literature of that time as well, as other have done (e.g. Dussel). It has been generally assumed that the peoples inhabiting the Americas were all peoples without history. In fact, the Spaniards in the discovery or invasion of the Americas, destroyed all kinds of writings materials of the Aztecs, Incas, Mayas, etc.

⁸⁵ Back and Solomos, 21.

⁸⁶ Back and Solomos, 19.

of inter-discursive processes where the *language of culture and nation* invokes a hidden racial narrative”. Solomos and Back explain that the defining feature of this process is the way in which “it naturalizes social transformation in terms of a racial/cultural logic of belonging.”⁸⁷ The problem is that even the concepts of race, culture, and nation as definers of the “cultural logic of belonging” are also an assigned/assumed role and concept imposed by the colonizer. In summary, it is a circular conundrum.

Thus, the problem persists even while scholars are trying to solve the situation. As Sugirtharajah recommends, unless the intellectual movements of Hegelianism, Heideggerianism and Romanticism are challenged and constrained, biblical scholarship “will remain embedded in racial tendencies.”⁸⁸ From my own context, why am I presenting these difficulties? Said states that “the entire world was decolonized after [...] World War Two.”⁸⁹ At first reading, this may seem an accurate statement. History shows that at the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century, Latin American countries obtained independence from Spain and Portugal; however, even today, concepts of neocolonialism such as the “purity of race,” the rule of oligarchies with its different strata and class societies – which of course always undermine the indigenous peoples or anyone remotely “less than white”-- are far from disappearing. For example, in year 2006, Evo Morales, the first indigenous President of an ‘independent’ country, as President of Bolivia, stated in his

⁸⁷ Back and Solomos, 21, quoting Goldberg, emphasis mine.

⁸⁸ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations*, 105.

⁸⁹ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 198.

inauguration address that: “Fifty years ago, we the indigenous were expelled from the central square of the city (la plaza).”⁹⁰ Today, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, the authorized history textbooks of those purportedly “independent and decolonized countries,” still show the representation of the indigenous peoples who were *conquistados* (conquered), exploited by the millions, and murdered, being referred to as “*naturals*” (naturals) or “close to nature” and primitive, compared with the “well-born European.” By contrast, any association with the *madre-patria* or mother country (Spain, Brazil) legitimates the individual, commerce, the exploitation, business decisions, and so forth.

During the first three hundred years since the times of the colonies to independence (1492-1800s), the oligarchies that have represented and ruled the countries, such as the “*padres de la patria*,” were all Spaniards, Englishmen, or other peoples of direct European descent who were not representing the indigenous population (O’Higgins, Bolívar, San Martín, etc). In the Americas even today, a review of the last names of the latest Presidents shows that the problem of representation is still valid.⁹¹ In addition, any reviews of the bibliography of today’s scholars who speak “for” Latin America are generally those in the higher

⁹⁰ On-line discourse, <<<http://www.LaTercera.cl>>> my translation.

⁹¹ In Chile: Michelle *Bachelet*, Eduardo *Frei*, *Ruiz-Tagle*, Salvador *Allende Gossens*, Augusto *Pinochet*, Patricio *Alwyn*, Jorge *Alessandri*. In Argentina, *Kirchner*, *Duhalde*, *Menem*; In Mexico, *Fox*, *Salinas de Gortari*, and the list is endless. For a sociological critical reflection during the years of Pinochet’ dictatorship in Chile and “who was who”, see the film “Machuca.” There are not voices from the Colocolo, Caupolican, Tupac Amaru, Atahualpa, Cuauhtémoc, Moxtezuma, etc.

strata of the neocolonialist system⁹². Most of them are of white complexion with foreign surnames, or else they are mestizos, but in any case the indigenous people are not recognized. In the realm of religion we find a similar situation: Roman Catholics are better represented than Protestants and any other minority group, such as Muslims, Jews, etc. Again privilege and elitism as characteristic of neocolonialism are still present in these countries. As Klor de Alva states about mestizaje, "It has been effectively used to promote national amnesia about us or to salve the national conscience in what concern the dismal past and still colonized condition of most indigenous peoples of Latin America."⁹³

With *Orientalism* Said has shown that most of these ethnographers, who wrote endless pages about the Orient, did not even travel a hundred miles from home. Another example of false representation is found in the writings of Garcilaso Inca de la Vega (1617), an out-of-wedlock son of a Spanish Captain and an Inca Princess. Although threatened by the Spanish Inquisition, he wrote a history of the conquistadores in Peru from Spain as a way of resistance and protest. In it he states: "In the discourse of history, we protest the truth of it... from the Spanish historians who took part in it ...and as foreigners, they interpreted it out of context."⁹⁴ Such false representation has been practiced by

⁹² In González' article, 65. She describes several "Latin Americans scholars": Irving Leonard; Margo Glantz, Suzanne Bost; Althaus-Reid; Dussel; Klor de Alva; Lunsford, etc.

⁹³ Klor de Alva, "Postcolonization of the (Latin) American Experience," 257, quoted in González, 70

⁹⁴ Garcilaso Inca de la Vega, 1617, *Comentarios Reales*, "Proemio al lector", taken from <http://www.bibliotecasvirtuales.com/biblioteca/LiteraturaLatinoamericana/IncaGarcilasodelaVega/ComentariosReales/primeraparte/proemio.asp>. My translation.

many. Namson Kang recalls that “in his notorious foreword for the chapter on China, Hegel places China and India outside the scope of world history on the ground that these countries experience no dialectical change whatever but merely repetition of the same pattern.”⁹⁵ In this manner, it is common that the colonized are represented in a one-dimensional manner, as people who do not change or evolve, as having an essentialized and unified identity, and as never attempting to change—the identity of the other. Namson argues that identification with these characteristics is no more than “either arrogant or ignorant.”⁹⁶ The way Young describes the practice of colonialism as producing homogenous entities is an overgeneralized or oversimplified way to describe the diverse, the other that is not sameness. These practices and derogatory terms came from the times of other situations of colonial formations and representation that I now go on to describe.

The original quotation reads: “*En el discurso de la historia protestamos la verdad de ella, y que no diremos cosa grande, que no sea autorizándola con los mismos historiadores españoles que la tocaron en parte o en todo: que mi intención no es contradecirles, sino servirles de comento y glosa, y de intérprete en muchos vocablos indios que como extranjeros en aquella lengua interpretaron fuera de la propiedad de ella, según que largamente se verá en el discurso de la Historia, la cual ofrezco a la piedad del que la leyere.*”

⁹⁵ Namsoon Kang in “Who/What Is Asian? A Postcolonial Theological Reading of Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism” in *PCC*, 103, quoting G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁹⁶ Namsoon Kang, 107.

The signifiers of Race, Culture, and Nation

“Cultures are not impermeable; just as Western science borrowed from Arabs; they had borrowed from India and Greece. Culture is never just a matter of ownership, appropriations, commons experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures.”⁹⁷

Terms such as race, culture, identity, and nation have been interpreted in the realm of Western literature, as Said states, as “Christianity *for* the West.” The study of Christianity has been whitenized and westernized by interpreters, who in doing so are avoiding a critical look not only at the Christian’s identity and culture, but also at other groups in which they operate, namely, the perpetrators of the empire, the establishment. Gedaliah Alon in 1933 suggested with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans that too much emphasis had been given to the victims rather than the perpetrators. I would add that it is not only the perpetrators who warrant more attention, but also that their religion cannot be explained by researching the agendas and policies of politics, of commerce, and of the spirit of mercantilism and expansion. The objectified other should not be observed/studied as the exotic or less white but as the one whom political and class agenda also affect.

As Bhabha suggests, “the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types... in order to justify conquest and

⁹⁷ Said, CI, 217.

to establish systems of administration and instruction.”⁹⁸ Robert Young states that the colonial construction is in terms of “computation of normalities” and “degrees of deviance from the white norm.”⁹⁹ He concludes, “it was necessary to conceptualize and depict the colonial Other as an infantile, sexually licentious savage in order to justify continued economic exploitation, surveillance and the ruthless wielding of power”¹⁰⁰ Said summarizes that “the net effect of cultural exchange between partners conscious of inequality is that the people suffer.”¹⁰¹

Colonial formations have defined the unknown as savages and inferior yet also as a required part of the colonizer in that they allow themselves to submit to being an ideological creature. As James C. Scott argues, the powerful always have “a collective theater to maintain which often becomes part of their self-definition.”¹⁰² Roberto Fernández Retamar, commenting on Shakespeare’s play, *The Tempest*, and specifically the character of Caliban, (whose very name suggest cannibalism, savagery, uncouthness), explains that the colonizer’s subsistence depends on the survival of the colonized, in this manner submitting to deal with them and not getting rid of them. In this tumultuous relationship of domination, the concepts of mimicry and mockery flourish. Fernández Retamar quotes the lines: *We cannot miss [do without] him: he does make our fire / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / that profit us.* (Act 1, scene 2). The necessity

⁹⁸ Bhabha, LC, 154.

⁹⁹ Young, Robert. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), 180.

¹⁰⁰ Young, 282.

¹⁰¹ Said, CI, 195.

¹⁰² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1990), 49-50.

of 'a necessary-evil' is that the colonizer must submit in order to profit. Domination is not only the aim, so too is the welfare of the colonizer. In this necessary encounter, according to the colonizer, all parts must do what they are "born to do."¹⁰³

Darwin's theory of evolution is another colonial discourse that affects the view of the Other as inferior and *vías-de-desarrollo* (in the process of developing) affecting also the development of countries, places and peoples. These are usually referred to as 'under-developed,' --as if the person, place, or country were not complete, but insufficient or degenerate. Sharon Betcher argues that "the 'degenerate' is an early modern conflation of what today distinguishes as disability, race and gender... epitomized by the marginalization of disabled

¹⁰³ Fernández Retamar, Caliban, footnote 14 quoting Aimé Césaire in: *Discours sur le colonialisme*, 3a ed., París, 1955, p. 13 who is citing Ernst Renan, *Caliban*, suite de *La tempête*, *Drame philosophique*, París, 1878.] in the webpage, <http://www.literatura.us/roberto/caliban2.html>. He quotes Ernest Renan with his characteristic "aristocratic elitism and pre-facist" attack on anti-democracy stating: "We aspire, not to equality, but to domination. The country of the foreign race must be again a country of slaves, a race of agriculture laborers or industrial workers. It is not the aim to suppress the inequalities between men, but to expand and make them, a law." He continues showing the greater hatred toward the inhabitants of the colonies: "the regeneration of the inferior or bastard races by the superior ones is in a providential order of the humankind. The town man is almost, among us, a noble without class, his heavy hand is better prepared to handle the sword than to serve. Rather than work, he chooses to fight, i.e., he returns to the initial state. *Regere imperio populos*, this is our vocation. Impose this devour activity of work to countries as China, they are asking for the foreign conquest. (...) Nature has made of them a race of laborers, the Chinese race, with its marvelous accomplishments, however, without any sentiment of honor; rule them with justice, extracting from her, the benefits of a government, that enable us with succulent wealth and goods, and she will be satisfied; a race of laborers of the soil is the black (...); a race of soldiers and masters is the European race (...) That everyone do that for what is prepared, and everything will be fine."

persons.”¹⁰⁴ Betcher concludes with what she calls, the “metaphor of disablement” as “the notion of degeneracy – with the disabled body as somatic and geographic template – “invites” the imperial dynamic of a superior’s “helping” a “deficient” person or population. It mobilizes the imperialist to act as savior.”¹⁰⁵ In this regard, concepts such as “the rescue work”, “salvation armies”, “alliance for progress”, “penetrating a dark territory,” even the term “crusader for Christ,” emphasize the issues of superiority for the colonizer, and proves the other as being in need, “asking” for some assistance in what is called the humanitarian, social, and medical missions, the social gospel.

I will continue to explain some problems of representation and comparison with examples from the ancient Empires of Greece and Rome that are useful for our study.

Problems of Representation

In this section I will show some short examples of the problems of representation, views from Colonial Europe, and some of its counterparts in the new world, and views of colonialism and gender.

The problems of representation of the other, especially with the concepts of blackenization or less whitenization of the other, have been long maintained. The Oxford English Dictionary, for example, before the sixteenth century

¹⁰⁴ Sharon Betcher, “Monstrosities, Miracles and Mission: Religion and the Politics of Disablement” in *PCC*, 81.

¹⁰⁵ Betcher, 89 quoting Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 89

described black as “deeply stained with dirt, dirty, foul... Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister... Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked...Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc.”¹⁰⁶ Winthrop D. Jordan states that, “embedded in the concept of blackness was its direct opposite – whiteness. No other colors so deeply implied opposition, “beinge coloures utterlye contrary”; no others were so frequently used to denote polarization: “Everye white will have its blacke, and Everye sweete its sowre.”¹⁰⁷ In the same manner, there are numerous examples in Shakespeare and Milton, and others, where white and black are seen as the extreme polarization of purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil.¹⁰⁸

Dussel illustrates this problematic citing an assessment of Europe that appears in a dictionary in 1643.

Although Europe is the smallest of the three parts of our continent, it has nevertheless certain advantages which make it preferable to the others. Its air is extremely temperate and its provinces very fertile... It excels by reason of its good properties and its peoples, who are normally mild, honest, civilised, and much given to science and the arts... The peoples of Europe, by reason of their education and their valour, have brought into submission other pars of the world. Their spirit is apparent in their works, their wisdom in their systems of government, their power in their arms, their standards of

¹⁰⁶ Winthrop D. Jordan, “First Impressions” in Back and Solomos, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Jordan, in Back and Solomos, 35 quoting Francisco López de Gómara in Peter Martyr (D’Anghera), *The Decades of the Newe Worlde ...* trans. Richard Eden (London, 1555) in Edward Arber, ed., *The First Three English Books on America...* (Birmingham, Eng., 1885), 338; and Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry...*, ed. Robert A. Willmott, (London, 1857), 27 (Sir Cauline, pt. 2, stanza 1).

¹⁰⁸ Jordan enumerates, at least ten quotations, note 10, pg 47.

conduct in their commerce, and their magnificence in their cities. Thus in every respect Europe surpasses the other parts of the world... In our view it is only right that the name of Europe should frequently be confused with that of Christianity.¹⁰⁹

Similar contrasting examples from the new world abound, such as José Martí who states that “there is no hatred of races, because there are no races” and can be contrasted with past Argentinean President and educator Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, who states:¹¹⁰

It may be unjust to exterminate the savages, extinguish newborn civilizations, to conquer peoples who are in possession of a privileged land; however, thanks to this injustice, America, rather than being a land abandoned to the savages, incapable of progress, today America is occupied by the Caucasian race, the

¹⁰⁹ Article “Europe” in the *Grand dictionnaire historique*. Edited L. Moreri (Provence. 1643. See Bernard Duchene « Un exemple d’univers mental au XVIIIe siècle » in *Civilisation Chrétienne* (Paris), pp 29-30, quoted by Dussel, 215.

¹¹⁰ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento: *Obras completas*, Santiago de Chile-Buenos Aires, 1885-1902, tomo XLVI, Páginas literarias, p. 166-73. quoted by Fernández Retamar, *ibid*, my translation; The original states “puede ser muy injusto exterminar salvajes, sofocar civilizaciones nacientes, conquistar pueblos que están en posesión de un terreno privilegiado; pero gracias a esta injusticia, la América, en lugar de permanecer abandonada a los salvajes, incapaces de progreso, está ocupada hoy por la raza caucásica, la más perfecta, la más inteligente, la mas bella y la más progresiva de las que pueblan la tierra; merced a estas injusticias, la Oceanía se llena de pueblos civilizados, el Asia empieza a moverse bajo el impulso europeo, el África ve renacer en sus costas los tiempos de Cartago y los días gloriosos del Egipto. Así pues, la población del mundo está sujeta a revoluciones que reconocen leyes inmutables; las razas fuertes exterminan a las débiles, los pueblos civilizados suplantán en la posesión de la tierra a los salvajes.” Sarmiento was President of Argentina in 1868-74, promoting a great reform of immigration from Europe as one the three ways to solve the “illness of this land.” According to different historians, concerning the local gauchos, the former mestizos after the colonization, he wrote, “Fertilizing the soil with their blood is the only thing gauchos are good for”, which Jose María Rosa interprets as a proof of harshness towards the lower non-educated classes in Argentina, especially the Gauchos. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domingo_Faustino_Sarmiento. For a more balanced approach and comments of *Conflicto y Armonías en las Razas en America* see. <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/publications/ThinkersPdf/sarmiene.PDF> .

most perfect, the most intelligent, the most beautiful and the most progressive of the peoples who inhabited the land. To the mercy of this injustice, the Oceania is filled with civilized peoples; Asia begins to move under the European impulse; Africa see again the rebirth in her beaches the times of Cartage, and the glorious days of Egypt. Thus, the population of the world is subject to the revolutions that recognized immutable laws; the strong races exterminate the weak ones; the civilized peoples supplant the savage in the possession of the land.

The concepts of race and racism, notions developed during these years of difference between the noble and the native, permeate all material about the conquest with the effect of establishing and reiterating the differences among individuals. Dussel quotes Pierre Chaunu in saying that “the sixteenth century brought about, from our point of view, the greatest mutation in the human species”¹¹¹ The new United States of America that was forming spoke of the nation as a “melting pot,” but it was a ‘melting’ of those of European origin from which Blacks, Native Americans, Chinese, and other immigrants were excluded.

Examples of representation of the Other

We read of how the Other was represented by the colonizer in reports left behind, such as the following short examples in documents of the British East India Company. An early nineteenth-century report states that the British officials

¹¹¹ Dussel, 208 quoting Pierre Chaunu, *Conquête et exploitation des nouveaux mondes* (PUF Paris 1969), p 7. Dussel 209, remind us that, “for Europeans, for Spaniards, “the other”, the native, was a rudo. The word derived from the Latin rudis (in the rough, not having been worked one), and from the verb rudo (to bray, to roar). It is the opposite of “erudite” and erudition (which indicate the one who has no roughness, brutishness, lack of cultivation). Even the best Europeans thought of the Indian as a “rudo,” a “child,” a piece of educable, evangelisable “material.” “Christendom” was beginning its glorious expansion, and papal bulls gave theological justification to the plundering of the peoples of the Third World.”

were zealous in spreading the messages that the Joasness – their Arab commercial rivals – were as piratical as their Moslem brethren from North Africa.

Captain John Malcolm, the British representative in the Gulf, stated that

their occupation is piracy, and their delight murder; and to make it worse they give you the most pious reasons for every villainy they commit... if you are their captives and offer all you possess to save your life, they say 'No! It is written in the Koran that it is unlawful to plunder the living, but we are not prohibited in that sacred work from stripping the dead'. So saying they knock you on the head. But then ... that is not so much their fault, for they are descended from a Ghoul or monster.¹¹²

De Souza writes that the East India Company eventually forced the Qawasimi (Arabs) to surrender and to accept a peace treaty which formally labeled them as pirates. This echoes Cicero's representation of the economic Other as "enemies of all mankind" as long before as 44 BCE. Concerning one's political and moral obligations to the Other, he writes: "If for example, you do not hand over to pirates the amount agreed upon as the price for your life, this is not perjury, not even if you have sworn and oath and do not do so, for pirates are not included in the category of the lawful enemies, but they are the enemies of all mankind."¹¹³

Feminism and Race

The people of Africa perhaps have received the most systematic differentiation from the fixed and particular denigrations of colonial discourse.

¹¹² Phillip de Souza, "They are the enemies of all mankind': justifying Roman imperialism in the Late Republic" in *Roman Imperialism*, 126, quoting M. al-Qasimi 1986, *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf*. London. xiv.

¹¹³ Cicero, *Off* 3, 107 quoted by De Souza, 127, and note 5, pg 132.

Lola Young states that “in particular the notion of atavism – the belief that the ‘primitive’ people of Africa constituted an earlier stage of human development – often recurs: all the references to primeval swamps, to primitive rituals, the colonial subjects’ perceived deficiency of language, intellect and culture attest to this belief.”¹¹⁴

She argues that, together, the project of hegemony of imperialism of racial difference and the “fetishization of native savagery” are always in the realm of the supremacy of masculinity. I do not want to be repetitive here, for feminist scholars have elaborated on this subject extensively,¹¹⁵ so two short examples will suffice to demonstrate such sexist and shameful language. In his novel “King Solomon’s Mines” (1885), Rider Haggard offers this description of the African landscape:

I attempt to describe that extraordinary grandeur and beauty of that sight, language seems to fail me. I am impotent even at its memory. Before us rose two enormous mountains... These mountains ... are shaped after the fashion of a woman’s breast, and at times the midst and shadows beneath them take the form of a recumbent woman veiled mysteriously in sleep. Their bases swell gently from the plain, looking at that distance perfectly round and smooth; and on top of each is a vast hillock covered with snow, exactly corresponding to the nipple on the female breast.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Lola Young, “Imperial Culture: The Primitive, the savage and white civilization” in *Theories of Race and Racism*, Solomon and Back, 266.

¹¹⁵ For more on this subject see the works of Musa Dube *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis: Chalice Pres, 2000). Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), and Laura Donaldson among many others, *Postcolonialism, Feminism & Religious Discourse*. Edited by L.E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui-lan, (New York/London: Routledge, 2002).

¹¹⁶ Haggard, 1979, 56-57 quoted by Young, 272-3.

Young understands this narrative as an example of the rape of the land and people. She states, “Through the sexualization of the feminized African landscape, lying passively on its (her) back displaying naked splendour and availability (for penetration and conquest), the white male unconscious can indulge itself in fantasizing about his assault on, his merging with the forbidden object of fascination and desire”¹¹⁷

From such examples, we can see that colonial literature and interpretation of ancient texts, on the one hand, portray the benign labor of Imperialism, but a closer reading reveals the real motivation behind such actions. Imperialism never has been a defensive move, although it has been interpreted in most cases in that way. Defensive imperialism is an oxymoron. Modern and current examples of such imperialism include calling the Other “terrorist” or the “axis of evil”, and by extension calling any nation that does not support one’s imperialist moves an enemy for its passive collusion, as President George W Bush has done.

It is immaterial where such imperialism comes from-- the Spaniards-Portuguese; the ancient empires, including the stories of ‘conquest and settlement of Canaan’; the East India Company or the New Pax Americana. Whoever the instigator, behind the apparent motivation of those conquests -- of peace, Christianization, liberty, etc.—lies the same clear methodology: First, a presentation of the other as primitive, savage, war-like, and threatening one’s own existence. This objectification of the Other becomes complete when the Other becomes the deviant, is excluded, and then occurs the universalization of

¹¹⁷ Young, 273.

the colonized as representing completeness.¹¹⁸ The second stage of this methodology is forceful military intervention, which destroys the local infrastructure and eradicates local values. The colonizer considers these values as pagan and self-destructive for the natives. Of course, such apparent beneficence is merely a pretext for the colonizer's economic gain, political oppression and territorial expansion.¹¹⁹ Then comes the third stage: the establishment of 'peace and order', in which the colonizer is portrayed as the benefactor who rebuilds (by destroying and the replacing with his own) the foundation and values of local life. In this manner, the powerful demands economic and monetary compensation from the same peoples/countries that are receiving protection. The inflated figures for sustaining the current war in Iraq and

¹¹⁸. Western centrism is patent in terms generally accepted without major scrutiny; this is the practice even in simple matters such as the U.S. being referred to as the larger entity of "America;" or in referring to the wars of 1914-18 and 1935-45 as "World Wars", which expresses a false totality of the world. A more precise naming of those wars might have been something like the Wars of the European Christian countries and of the North Atlantic and Japan. We see this even in the secular world of sports in which the competitions between only U.S. teams dare to call themselves baseball or football "World" series. Christianity perpetuates this same arrogance.

¹¹⁹ Dussel, 216, states of Hegel, "The great "theologian" of Europe's domination in the world actually says in his 'modern" *Summa theologiae*: "The material existence of England is based on trade (*Handel*) and industry (*Industrie*), and the English have accepted for themselves the role of missionaries (die Missionarien; notice the religious connotation) of civilisation throughtout the world. Thus, their commercial spirit (*Handelgeist*, the Holy Spirit of Capitalism?) impels peoples (*barbarischen Völkern*), to arouse in them new needs and industries, and, above all, to create in them the conditions necessary for engaging in human relations, that is, the renunciation of acts of violence, respect for poverty(!) and "hospitality" (towards capital, Hegel forgot to add!)." Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte* (Frankfurt 1970) XII p. 538.

Afghanistan, and the succulent salaries of those “reconstructing” the country (they destroyed) confirm this fact.¹²⁰

Empire representations – Greeks, Romans and Jews

Another example from the literature of ideological construct on race is the concept of barbarism, which E. Hall defines as “a complex system of signifiers, denoting the ethically, psychologically, and politically other: terms, themes, actions, and images.”¹²¹ Self-histories of the colonizer are rife with views of the other as barbaric, innate war warriors. These are metanarratives of commonness, most of the time imagining vast extensions of terrain and peoples, as the great equalizer, pan-individuals, subjected, voiceless, without history, timeless, primitive. Webster argues that

Recent anthropological studies of the practice of ethnography have indicated that one of the more fundamental aspects of colonial discourse in indigenous warfare has been a textual suppression of historical context; a denial of the changes wrought by contact and colonization, despite the fact that ethnography is itself a product of European colonial encounters.”¹²²

The Greeks

The demonization of the Other by the English specifically but also more generally by the Europeans from the Middle Ages onward was not a new invention. A comparative study on the concepts of race during the hegemony of

¹²⁰ De Souza, note 13, p. 132, gives references for the ‘burdensome exactions’ of some Romans commanders to the Hellenistic Greek Cities and the federation of the Eastern Mediterranean.

¹²¹ Hall, E. *Inventing the Barbarian*, 2.

¹²² Webster, 112.

ancient empires such as Greece and Rome reveal the same phenomenon. These colonial formations explained blackness in terms of the whiteness and superiority of the west over the strange and superfluous Easterners. Ironically, the concept of the culturally Other emerged for the first time in the writings of the Greeks on the Persians, whom they labeled as barbaric-- an extreme and xenophobic assessment that resulted from the struggle against Persian imperialism.¹²³ Webster states that “the Other arose as an antithesis, providing a means for the Greeks to pursue a self-identity... the Other was anti-Greek, the other-than-us.”¹²⁴ Some Greek myths, such as the myth of Phaëton, describe the Other (in this case, the Ethiopians) as originally “white and fayre”; however changes occurred when “wanton Phaeton overthrew the Sun,” and the chariot approached the sun wildly.¹²⁵ Similarly, Ptolemy suggested that the “Negro’s blackness and woolly hair was caused by exposure to the hot sun and pointed out that people in northern cultures were white and those in temperate areas an intermediate color.”¹²⁶ The story does not end there: Greek and Roman authors such as Aristotle, Antigonus, Pliny, and Plutarch passed along the familiar story of a black baby born into a white family –a telltale trace of some Ethiopian ancestor. “The idea that black babies might result from maternal impressions during conception or pregnancy found credence during the Middle Ages, and

¹²³ E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*. (Oxford: Oxford, 1989), 62.

¹²⁴ Webster, 116.

¹²⁵ Jordan cites, R. Warwick Bond, ed., *The Poetical Works of William Base* (1602-1653) (London, 1893, 279; The original story of Phaeton is in Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch’s Mythology* (NY: Modern Library, n.d.), 36-42.

¹²⁶ [Claudius] Ptolemy, *Tetrabilos*, trans. and ed. by F.E. Robbins (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1940), 121-25, 439. quoted by Jordan, 48.

took centuries to die out, if indeed it ever has entirely.”¹²⁷ These examples help us to illustrate how the explanation of the Other has always been in terms of the normative, the ruler, the superior, the colonizer. This differentiation is not new: Aristotle speaks of a “political man,” meaning none other than one who inhabits a polis. Likewise, the *civis*, or civilized person, displayed *civilitas*, or “conduct becoming to the citizen” – hence the term – *civilization*.

The European *conquistadores* in the new world were not doing anything other than arguing the same philosophical postulates of Aristotle, who had affirmed that “he who is a man not in virtue of his own nature but in virtue of that of another is by nature a slave... Those who find obedience to authority advantageous to them are slaves by nature (*physei douloi*)... The usefulness of slaves differs little from that of animals.”¹²⁸ These arguments are the same arguments that Romans will use later to expand the Empire by expediently deeming the Easterners to be ‘rough’ and inferior in nature, as I explain in the next section.

Examples of the literary construct of barbarism – The Romans

Webster shows how colonial writers, such as Strabo and Livy, writing two hundred years or more after the events they describe, based their narratives on previous literary accounts, re-establishing the myth of barbarism and its need for establishing the peace. An example is Caesar’s main account of Gallic customs (61-50 BCE), in *De Bello Gallico*. He states, “In Gaul, not only every tribe,

¹²⁷ Jordan, 36, 48.

¹²⁸ Aristotle, *Pol.* I 5 1254a 14-16, 1254b 19-24, quoted by Dussel, 211.

canton, and subdivision of a canton, but almost every family is divided into rival factions.” He later describes how the civil wars among themselves motivate one of the factions to ask for Caesar’s “intervention” in order to promote peace. Webster argues that “in Caesar’s thesis that innate Gallic aggression (rather than Roman territorial aggression) was the key causal factor in Roman intervention.”¹²⁹ This story recalls the similar “intervention” of Pompey in Judea (64 BCE) under the Jewish civil wars.

Webster finally argues for a call to check our “own complicity” in constructing the literary concept of barbarians in order to support territorial expansion. She cites the case of Strabo, the Asiatic Greek (b. 64 BCE) who “never traveled further west than Tuscany, and drew his information from a variety of sources” in order to compile *Geographica* (9 BCE-19 CE) but certainly not from his own experience, just previously nurtured prejudices and distortions. Other examples of such misrepresentation are the reports from the Roman Empire against the Iberian tribes during the mid-second century BCE, where the ancient sources again describe on the one hand, the “ignoble motivations” of the Romans, and, on the other, treating the Other as “uncivilized bandits whose followers are little better than wild beasts.”¹³⁰ Polybius writes about Roman expansion: “No sane man goes to war with his neighbours simply for the sake of defeating his opponents, just as no sane man goes to sea merely to get to the other side ... All actions are undertaken for the sake of the consequent pleasure,

¹²⁹ Webster, 119, quoting Caesar *De Bello Gallico*, 6.11, 15.

¹³⁰ De Souza, 127, quoting *Appian Iberica* 60-75; Strabo *Geographica* 3,4,5.

good or advantage.”¹³¹ Other sources portray the idea of being a friend of a pirate or bandit as enough reason for the Romans commanders to authorize conquest in defense of particular human values, as was the case with Mitridates of Pontus.¹³²

This argument goes against the Pax Romana and the concept of land and sea free of danger and is in fact simply a justification to continue exploiting the inhabited conquered lands. Plutarch expresses well this sentiment when he describes some local uprisings in terms of piracy:

Their power was felt in all parts of the Mediterranean so that it was impossible to sail anywhere and all the trade was brought to a halt. It was this which really made the Romans sit up and take notice. With their markets short of food and a great famine looming, they commissioned Pompey to clear the pirates from the seas.¹³³

Rather than enforce the suppression of pirates, Pompey made a deal with them, allowing him to gain political control and later “enable the Romans to incorporate more territory into their rapidly expanding empire,”¹³⁴ in this way justifying the acts of imperialism.

Judaism

First-century Judaism claims antiquity and legitimation through a system of sayings and traditions, later known as the Mishnah. These interpretations emphasize the purity of Jews’ ethnicity at the same time as diminishing other

¹³¹ Polybius, *Histories III*, 4.10-11, quoted by Phillip Freeman, 21.

¹³² De Souza, 128 quotes Appian *Mithridatica* 56, 63-64, 92-93; Plutarch *Lucullus* 2; Strabo, *Geography* 13,4,17.

¹³³ Plutarch, *Pompeius* 25.1 quoted by De Souza, 130.

¹³⁴ De Souza, 130.

peoples and cultures. The *Bereshith Rabbah, Midrash Rabbah; Pesahim. 113b*, commenting on Gen 9:18-27 and the curse of Ham/Canaan and the supremacy of Shem, states,

Rabbi Joseph has Noah say to Ham, “You have prevented me from doing something in the dark (cohabitation), therefore your seed will be ugly and dark-skinned.”... “The descendants of Ham through Canaan therefore had red eyes, because Ham looked upon the nakedness of his father, they have misshapen lips, because Ham spoke with his lips to his brothers, about the unseemly condition of his father, they have twisted curly hair, because Ham turned and twisted his head round to see the nakedness of his father, and they go about naked, because Ham did not cover the nakedness of his hater.”¹³⁵

Winthrop Jordan argues that this interpretation was based on colonial formations from centuries earlier by the Greeks, Romans, and later the Talmudic Jews. For example, he cites Giordano Bruno’s statement (1591) that “no sound thinking person will refer to the Ethiopians to same protoplast as the Jewish one.”¹³⁶ In so doing, the presuppositions of lust, bestiality, and ‘sinful’ sensuality of the darker skinned people were attributed mainly to the Negroes of Africa. He explains that such coloration was established by the curse of Canaan, son of Ham. Jordan summarizes that the *Midrash Rabbah* presents Noah as saying “You have prevented me from doing something in the dark, and (in the same source) as copulating “in the Ark”, and (again) copulating “with a dog... therefore Ham came forth black-skinned while the dog publicly exposes its copulation.”¹³⁷ Bible

¹³⁵ L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, (Philadelphia, 1925, p. 169. Quoted by Gene Rice, “The Curse that Never Was (Genesis 9:18-27), *The Journal of Religious Thought* 29. no. 1, (Spring-Summer 1972) 5-27.

¹³⁶ Jordan quoting Giordano Bruno, in Back and Solomons, 34.

¹³⁷ Jordan, 45, In a different footnote (note 47, page, 50) he adds, “I hope to discuss this complex matter more fully on another occasion and in the meantime

exegesis proves this argument as utterly baseless. Elsewhere, Jordan writes of the mystic Zohar of the thirteenth century, where Ham, it was said, “represents the refuse and dross of the gold, the stirring and rousing of the unclean spirit of the ancient serpent.”¹³⁸ Finally, Jordan states, “With the onset of European expansion in the sixteenth century, some Christian commentators, or rather some commentators who were Christians, suddenly began speaking in the same mode which Jews had employed a thousand years and more before.”¹³⁹

cite only the sources directly quoted. Freedman and Simon, trans., *Midrash Rabbah*, I, 293; Sperling and Simon, trans., *Zohar*, I, 246.” See also the case in Daniel Chanan Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment, translations and introduction*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983, 4), in which he states (concerning the Zohar), that “By the middle of the sixteenth century, it ranked with the Bible and the Talmud as a sacred text.” Matt in the *The Zohar* selection of “Moses and the Blazing Bush” comments about differences between Moses and Balaam as the special prophets, one for Israel and the other for the nations. Rabbi Shim’on responded to this question: “Black resin mixed with finest balsam?/ God forbid!/ Rather, this is the true meaning:/Among the nations of the world one did arise/ Who was that? Balaam/ Moses’ action were high; those of Balaam, low... //Balaam worked black magic with the nethermost crowns, unholy, below...” (102-3). Later Matt commenting on the Midrash and Talmud references explains that the Midrash in comparing Balam with Moses, states “God raised up Moses for Israel and Balaam for the nations of the world” (*Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:1; cf, *Tambuma, Balaq* #1). The Midrash quoted here (from *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy, #357 is more striking still: “Balaam was a great as Moses!” (238). Later, he continues, “black resin is the ultimate impurity. The Aramaic phrase, *qotifa deqarnetei*, is characteristic of the Zohar’s style. *Qotifa* is a variation on *qetaf*, which means resins from the balsam tree. *Qarnatei* is a neologism... the Spanish *carantona*: “ugly, false face” The phrase has been interpreted variously to mean:... “a bunch of resin dark and black”. (239). Later he adds, concerning Balaam and the donkey, “Rabbi Shim’on’s closing words are a mocking reference to this episode. But they also allude to Balaam’s method of attaining prophetic powers. According to the Zohar, Balaam was able to draw down upon himself the impure spirit by having sexual relation with his ass; see *Zohar* 1:125b; 3:207a; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 18f. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 105b” (239).

¹³⁸ Jordan, 45.

¹³⁹ Jordan, 46.

Conclusion

By considering even these few significant examples, it is possible to observe a repeated pattern through history in the understanding of a dichotomy between the civilized and its counterpart of barbarism. One validates and requires the other as if both were “twins” product of the “Athenian imagination.” Following empires such as Rome, Byzantine, even the Holy Roman Catholic hegemony and those representing the emergence of European colonialism of Spain, Portugal, Holland France, Italy, Germany and Britain “sanctified their own imperial struggles as the defence of ‘civilised’ order against ‘barbaric’ primitivism.”¹⁴⁰

Thus, European Christianity reinforces the concepts of difference and separation in its different attempts at expansion by conquest from Christendom (a Christianized Roman Empire), to the crusades against the Arab world, and in the discovery and “conquest” of the Americas in the fifteenth century, which was a combination of Christian mission and mercantilism, later to be transformed into a false Protestantism of superior imperialist isolationist (WASP) policy that finally—by way of two global wars of the twentieth century, and the execution of millions of Jews, Roma people, and “undesirable Others”—resulted in the modern and capitalist globalization that the world experiences today. It is a globalization in which the only superpower of the world and its current president, George W. Bush, have epitomized the Other as the “axis of evil” and “terrorist” and daily impose on the U.S. and world society talk of terror, including notification

¹⁴⁰ Ascherson, N. 1995. Black Sea. London. Quoted by Webster, 116.

of constantly changing levels of terrorist threat – which alone strikes terror (and often loyalty) into the populace.

Of course, it would be unfair for us to blame all the colonial discourses and their consequences on the Europeans or on Talmudic Jews without having adequately studied other kinds of colonial discourses and practices that also show the same behaviors.¹⁴¹ This seems to be a human condition of sinfulness which we use in order to establish our kingdoms.

My critique and some observations

Postcolonial strategies embrace the premise that many dimensions that exist in the text have been overlooked if not ignored by the traditional historical critical approaches, such as examining power structures, considering the subaltern, and reading from a social-location perspective. To that end, Fernando Segovia calls for a “decolonization” of biblical interpretation. In order to achieve this process of decolonization, first, there should be a willingness in the interpreter to do so. This is a serious problem because of the general disassociation of interpreter with the reality based on the fallacy of objectivity. There have been other reasons too, such as the self-justification of the atrocities committed in the name of evangelization during the last centuries by the Christian European empires. These atrocities have been ascribed to the

¹⁴¹ For example, Imperial Japan with the annihilations of Chinese, Koreans people, and the suffering and humiliation of the comfort-women; or the Chinese exploitation of the Tibet and other subcultures of China; or the former empire of Russia and its Republics through the domination of Communism; or the supremacy of the Muslim/Arabs-Ottoman Empire toward neighboring countries and peoples; or the prevalent Hindu and Buddhist majorities in India; etc.

stubbornness of the native in not complying with the plan of the colonizer. In addition, the progress and the good that these empires brought from the West to the peoples of the East has been too highly and uncritically praised as being the price of development and the affirmation of the divine will of God. Sugirtharajah criticizes missionary historian Stephen Neill, who affirms that “the history of the Christian mission in the colonial period must in the end be left to the judgment of God, who alone knows all the facts, who alone can exercise a perfectly objective and merciful judgment”¹⁴². Sugirtharajah responds caustically that “what is ironic about this statement is that the people, who passed indiscriminate judgments on other peoples’ cultures, manners, and customs, are unusually silent when it comes to scrutinizing their own.”¹⁴³ Furthermore, we need to be cautious in accepting completely without critical evaluation all these categories of ‘readings’, because we cannot accept the issue that somebody speaks for me. This is due to the fact that many of the ideological constructions keep very Eurocentric symbols of representation, identifying others en masse without differentiation and without acknowledging their resistance. As Ania Loomba criticizes, “Post-modernism in this view is a specifically Western malaise that breeds angst and despair instead of aiding political action and resistance.”¹⁴⁴

These issues demand what Segovia calls a “resituation” not only at the level of the texts but also at the level of the interpretations of readings and

¹⁴² Sugirtharajah, 27 quoting Stephen Neil, *Colonialism and Christian Mission* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966), 424.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 27.

¹⁴⁴ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism: The New Critical Idiom*, (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), xii.

readers of texts.¹⁴⁵ Resituating the interpretation in its proper/own social-historical context in power relations will help us to deconstruct and decolonize texts and interpretations of them that oppress, misportray, and invalidate, in doing so promoting false characteristics of the center and margin/periphery. Perhaps a first step toward such a solution and toward an informed reading is to demand that we cease using characterizations that oblige others to accept the nomenclature of the colonizer, that force one to be defined with the center still at the center. We must refuse to perpetuate both literary and ideological construct of self histories that continue practices that diminish and enslave the other simply by their definition.

Furthermore, as liberated-postcolonial readers we are challenged to look for a new self-identity which acts in resistance and stands on its own place in the battles of ideas. This is not to be transformed following the admonition of assumed roles, as Gayatri C. Spivak observes, "Once the goal of decolonization is won, the people want entry into the haunted house which the colonizers once inhabited."¹⁴⁶ Several interpreters indeed aspire to this option: Joerg Rieger argues that postcolonialism "is sometimes seen as a replacement of more traditional concerns for the margins."¹⁴⁷ I believe that it necessitates more than a replacement, to use Professor Patte's expression: it demands "a corrective reading of the margins" in order to obliterate the assigned position that the

¹⁴⁵ Segovia, *Decolonizing...*, 140.

¹⁴⁶ Gayatri C. Spivak, *The Spivak Reader* (ed. Donna Landry and GERAL MacLean. New York: Routledge, 1996), 27.

¹⁴⁷ Joerg Rieger "Liberating God-Talk, Postcolonism and the Challenge of the Margins" in *PCC*, 204

“center” has insisted upon for those people and their interpretations. Postcolonial discourse must criticize and resist the abject ‘center-margin’ dichotomy with its exclusive binarism, and advocate for a more mingled hybrid relationship among them. I concur with S. Connor who argues that, in order to do a proper analysis of colonial discourse, attention must be paid to the need for

[A] careful deconstruction of the very structures of dominant, and marginal. One of the forms which this takes is an analysis which, instead of *obediently adopting a marginal place* in itself, brings the margins in to the centre by applying deconstructive critique to the dominant self-histories of the West.¹⁴⁸

Similarly, in *Last stop Before Antarctica: The Bible and Postcolonialism in Australia*, Roland Boer preserves the problem of reading with colonial eyes.¹⁴⁹

He states, “Local resistance, alternative identities, valorization of the peripheral zone over against the centre,” these illustrate the core problem when using the categories of the colonizer. He writes, “My desire is to move from the periphery to the centre.”¹⁵⁰ I assume that he is still visualizing the center “as where the action is,” and giving it more priority than my place. Again, I would prefer to reinstate my place as the place where I write, without being offended or underestimated for being the margin. I would argue that if I accept the margin, it is only because I am still under the domination of center. Concerning the context of colonial myth of

¹⁴⁸ S. Connors, *Postmodernist Culture*. Oxford.1989, 232. Quoted by Jane Webster, « Ethnographic barbarity : colonial discourse and ‘Celtic warrior societies’ » in *Roman Imperialism*, 111, italics mine emphasis.

¹⁴⁹ Australia may be the last stop before Antarctica, if you are coming from England. But as a native of Chile, which claims sovereignty over part of the Antarctica, it is just a reading from my place, and not the last stop.

¹⁵⁰ Roland Boer, *Last Stop Before Antartica: the Bible and Postcolonialism in Australia*, The Bible and Postcolonialism Series, Vol 6, R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed. (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 7.

white/Western supremacy, C.L.R. James attests: “It is not that the myth is not challenged. It is, but almost always on premises that it has itself created, premises that (as with all myths) rest on very deep foundations within the society that has created them.”¹⁵¹

A reading from my place is in itself an act of resistance; however, coming to the center for a proper interpretation sometimes means adopting the same views as those of the colonizer. Another nuance is what Abraham Smith speaks of as historical colonialism (“the political, economic, and social domination of people of *less developed countries* by those from *more developed*”) one discursive colonialism (“the psychological domination of people through appeals to authority, based on the asserted superiority of one race, gender, class, or culture over another”).¹⁵² I think that both colonialisms are related when the literary-discursive continues the bad association with the historical. This is another example of accepting the nomenclature of the center. Kwok Pui-lan likewise rejects nomenclature such as the word ‘native’ which is the role-name that the master has assigned in the master-slave relationship and white-native dialogue. Of this, Uriah Y. Kim writes, “She (Kwok) argues that to be labeled the ‘native’ means that one will be forced to occupy, quoting Homi Bhabha, “the

¹⁵¹ C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 109.

¹⁵² Abraham Smith, “‘Hidden in Plain View’: Postcolonial Interrogations, a Poetics of Location, and African-American Biblical Scholarship” in *New Paradigms for Bible Study: The Bible in the Third Millennium*, eds Robert M. Fowler, Edith Blumhofer, Fernando F. Segovia. New York/London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 112 quoting K. O’Brien Wicker in *Searching the Scriptures...*, : 377. emphasis mine

space of the past of which the white [people] will be the future” and the space of the present predetermined by the others.”¹⁵³

I foresee a reading that will uphold my own identity, even in adopting a hermeneutics of the diaspora that calls for using some criticisms and tools developed by the colonizer. I envisage not assimilating myself as a reader/interpreter or submitting myself to the task of being the object, but of being the subject in total control of my own reading without leaving my place. As Jane Webster states,

As anthropological study of contacts has shifted from synchronic analysis to a renewed interest in historical process, and as it is increasingly recognized that so-called ‘marginal’ peoples make their own histories, it is at the same time acknowledged that this occurs in circumstances which are not ultimately of those peoples’ own choosing. This point must be acknowledged if indigenous histories and indigenous voices are to be heard.¹⁵⁴

Roland Boer presents similar quests of the center-margin for the positional-encounter of “three-way relation” among the Australian aborigine, settlers and colonizers. Boer adds that in Australia, “we are neither the first nor the third world.”¹⁵⁵

Perhaps Segovia’s methodology of intercultural criticism and a hermeneutics of diaspora may solve the problem. He states,

Diaspora theology – like any other contextual theology- was a theology that emerged from the margins, in this case from the margin within the West itself. Consequently, certain fundamental traits could be readily delineated as well. It was a self-consciously

¹⁵³ Uriah Y. Kim, *Decolonizing Josiah: Toward a Postcolonial Reading of the Deuteronomistic History*, 33-34, quoting Kwok, “Jesus/the Native”, 85, and Bhabha, *LC*, 237-8.

¹⁵⁴ Webster, 113.

¹⁵⁵ Roland Boer, 20.

local and constructive theology, quite forthcoming about its own social location and perspective; a theology of diversity and pluralism, *highlighting the dignity and value of all matrices and voices*.¹⁵⁶

This is the perspective for which I am looking assuming one's place, but giving "value to all matrices and voices"; I can perceive that at least this methodology helped some scholars to read "a very familiar text with new eyes."¹⁵⁷

More than fifty years ago, Frantz Fanon in the *Fact of Blackness* emphasized the importance of not being identified through reference to the colonizer, of not being referenced as the non-white, the non-self, the non-being. He calls this process "objecthood." He argues, "I found that I was an object in the midst of the other objects."¹⁵⁸ This is what I am pursuing. I agree with Fanon that the Other cannot be defined in "relation to"; as he rightly adds, "I say that this is false." Although this statement was made over forty-fifty years ago, postcolonial studies still seem to be defining the 'colonized' in terms of the 'colonizer.' Even the expression of 'Other' is defined in terms of the 'Self'. These are just the perpetuations of what Fanon argues are "legends, stories, history, and above all historicity."¹⁵⁹ Fanon put it succinctly in the following famous encounter-statement: "Look at the nigger!... Mama, a Negro! ... Hell, he's getting mad. ...

¹⁵⁶ Segovia, *Decolonization...*, 125.my emphasis.

¹⁵⁷ Adele Reinhartz, "The Colonizer as Colonized: Intertextual Dialogue Between the Gospel of John and Canadian Identity" in *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*, edited by Musa W. Dube and J.S. Staley. (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2005), 192. Previously Reinhartz asked in the article with useful irony: What corresponds to the center and the margin for the Johannine community?

¹⁵⁸ Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," quoted in *Race and Racism*, trans by Charles Lam Markman, in B&S, 257.

¹⁵⁹ Fanon, 258.

Take no notice, sir, he does not know that *you are as civilized as we...*¹⁶⁰ One is immediately contrasted and fixed as being different, or as Fanon puts it, “I am being dissected.”¹⁶¹ And so, I follow Segovia’s methodology of diaspora and hermeneutics with enthusiasm because at least these allow me to stand in my place without being objectified as margin/Other. I applaud Kwok’s views on not using the master’s tools, and envisioning more nativistic models of interpretation. However, my Protestant upbringing makes me suspicious of Kwok’s emphasis on the role of the Bible as just another partner in the cross-cultural conversation; equally, I am cautious about Sugirtharajah’s search for alternative voices.¹⁶²

In conclusion, in spite of the diverse critical engagement on the self-definition and representation of the Other, the search continues, to the extent that in reality it seems impossible to speak in terms of ‘universalism’ or a ‘globalized theology’. I think this is a positive quest. Trends such as Critical Theory, cultural and deconstructive criticisms, readings of liberation in gender, social-labor relations in the political realms—all these call for more progressive, expansive, and continual postcolonial decolonized constructions. In the following chapters I apply this methodology in a decolonized reading of the Acts of the Apostles.

¹⁶⁰ Fanon, 259, emphasis mine.

¹⁶¹ Fanon, 260.

¹⁶² Sugirtharajah, 36. He states “secular bias and assumptions of postcolonial discourse have not only increased the gap between the theory and religion, but have also failed to acknowledge alternatives rooted in religion.”

CHAPTER II

THE DEATH OF HEROD AGRIPPA I AS STARTING POINT

“Hate is a passion all tyrants are bound to arouse: but contempt is often the cause by which tyrannies are actually overthrown.”¹⁶³

Introduction

Acts 12:20-23 depicts the retributive death of King Herod Agrippa I (37-44 C.E.). This death is in the context of the king's anger with the people of Tyre and Sidon for its food dependence on the king's country. The passage has always puzzled scholars, who see it as unusual and unconnected material.¹⁶⁴ Hans Conzelmann¹⁶⁵ suggests that the significance of chapter 12 lies outside of Acts as an example of escape legends found in Greco-Roman literature.¹⁶⁶ I. H.

¹⁶³ M. E. Chamberlain. *Decolonization*. Second edition. Historical Association Studies, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 108 quoting David Keithly *The Collapse of East German Communism: The Year the Wall Came Down, 1989*. Praeger. 1992, 1; paraphrasing Aristotle.

¹⁶⁴ O. Wesley Allen, Jr, *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, SBL Dissertation Series 158, 1997), 3. He also states, “this appears to be a digression awkwardly inserted into this flowing narrative,” 2 and later he adds, “a conflict between Herod and the Phoenician cities (Tyre and Sidon) that appear nowhere else in the immediate context nor in the rest of Luke-Acts and are unrelated to the plot through the rest of the two-volume work,” 3. Also, *ibid*, 75. For more references in the context of scholarship see pages 5-27.

¹⁶⁵ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 94.

¹⁶⁶ According to Dennis R. MacDonald, the discussion has been dominated by the publication in 1929 by Otto Weinreich of “an extensive treatment of ancient escape stories.” [“Gebet und Wunder. Zwei Abhandlungen zur Religions- und

Marshall¹⁶⁷ states that “at first sight the story is unnecessary to the developing theme of the expansion of the church; had it been omitted, we should not have noticed the loss.” Some commentaries pass over the verses, while others interpret them only as an accurate historical allusion.¹⁶⁸

It is in this context that I analyze Acts 12 in terms of the history of interpretation. Second, I will review some historical observations regarding the life of Agrippa I as necessary background to support my case. Third, I will summarize the usage of type-scenes in the narrative context, exploring a number of useful models, such as the motifs of Exodus and Passion and the issue of food dependence. I examine these different type-scenes and models in order to bring out the key Lukan theme of self-exaltation and reversal, all of which are present in Acts 12. These type-scenes are intrinsically important for my postcolonial reading of subversion, alterity and final reversal insofar as they allow me to reevaluate the role and purpose of Luke-Acts from a postcolonial perspective.

Literaturgeschichte,” in Genethliakon, FS Wilhelm Schmid, TBAW 5 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1929), 169-464] quoted by MacDonald in *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?: Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 124, note 3 page 200.

¹⁶⁷ I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Tyndale NT Commentaries; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980), 206.

¹⁶⁸ For historical references, see Josephus account, in *Antiquities*, 19.8. Also Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.10. It is not the purpose here to discuss the differences between Eusebius and Josephus’ sign of an “owl” the angel of Acts. For an explanation see the note of William Whiston in *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, (Peabody, Massachusetts, 1987), 523.

Analysis of Acts 12 as Narrative Context

The application of historical critical methodology has resulted in the atomization of the text in the process of interpretation. Despite its brevity and supposed isolation from the remainder of the book, Acts 12:20-24 has not received sufficient critical attention. Some authors and commentaries ignore the passage as a coherent and unified narrative unit in its own right. Others explain it as an interpolation. Literary critics have argued-- not satisfactorily, in my assessment-- that chapter 12 serves as a dividing point in Acts, between the proclamation to the Jewish people and the proclamation to the Gentiles (Tannehill), thus marking the beginning of Paul's mission to the Gentiles. Although the concept of domination and supremacy versus the attribution of divine power has been somewhat analyzed (N.T. Wright), little attention has been given to the concept of the *kurios* of the Empire versus the proclamation of the *logos tou Theou*. Using a comparative model of analysis, O. Wesley Allen's thesis, *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts* (1997), has shown that the death of Herod represents a typical retribution of tyrants through history. However, other issues remain unexplored: the death as marking the end of an era; the fulfillment-continuation-triumph of the Word of God; the reversal of roles in bringing down the powerful versus lifting up the lowly; and the implicit representation and interaction of the Caesars and the Roman Empire.

I will argue that the passage plays a key role in Acts and that the death of Herod is used in the following ways:

First, Luke cannot write openly to the Diaspora Christians, Jews and Gentile Christians living in the Empire, about the boastful system of the Caesars (cf. 2 Thess 2:4). Although the referent of the statement “voice of God and not of mortal” (12:22) is Herod, I propose that Luke has in mind a double purpose: not only the end of the persecutor of the church in Jerusalem, but also the end of the “divine voice” of Nero and all other emperors as represented in the imperial cult, who ravage the land for food, since everyone in the Empire “depended” on the king’s country, namely, the Roman exploitation of commerce and trade in the Mediterranean Sea, the *Mare nostrum*.

Second, Luke never uses the name “Agrippa” for Herod because he wants to associate the king with the dynasty itself as a totalitarian and exploitative entity. Certainly, Nero did not destroy the temple in Jerusalem, but his successors did with the same spirit of contempt.

Third, Luke offers a fulfilled eschatology for the nascent Christian church: God really intervenes in worldly affairs. The passage is replete with eschatological nuances involving the great controversy between good and evil (Isa 14; Ezek 28) and the triumph of the Written Word, the legitimation of the Hebrew Scriptures (12:24, cf. 13:26-27). The climax of the theological theme is the triumph of the word of God.

My argument is that Luke uses Herod’s death as a type-scene to represent the destiny of the Empire and of anyone who shows allegiance to those who call themselves divine and rulers of this world. In this regard, again, Luke is absolute: God is in control of the affairs of the world and any cooptation

of the divine prerogatives will be punished. To be sure, Luke is not alone in this regard: several NT writers proclaim the fall of the Empire so that the apocalyptic Kingdom of God can be established. Further, the territorial expansion of the proclamation of the “Empire of God,” the Kingdom of God that reaches to the end of the earth, is opposed to a now-obsolete “Kingdom of Israel” (1:6). Its development proceeds in crescendo fashion against the opposition of the Roman officials, all the way to the seat of the Empire, and in open rejection of the Jewish leadership. The political-religious events of Acts show that the emperors are demanding worship as “gods in human form” (14); however, the statement “In the past God allowed all nations ‘to follow their own ways’” (14:16) makes it clear that “these are worthless things,” that God has “allotted [to the nations] the times of their existence,” (17:26) and that the “days of ignorance are over” (17:30; 3:17). In effect, the times have changed: “God allowed in the past, to all the nations,” but no longer. God working “according to a definite plan” (2:23) “now demands [from] all people everywhere” unconditional allegiance with a “divine necessity.” Such a proclamation suggests the community is fighting on two fronts. The phrase “in past generations” (14:16) invokes not only the Roman Empire and its imperial worship but also the end of the Jewish establishment, meaning the “ignorant rulers” that “did not recognize the Christ, or understand the words of prophets that are read every Sabbath” (13:27; 3:17).

Some observations regarding Herod Julius Agrippa I as a king of Judea

Following a series of Roman procurators, Agrippa I was the first king over Judea to have extensive territory and much power since the days of Herod the Great.¹⁶⁹ According to Josephus, these had been given him as a reward for helping Claudius to become emperor.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, he is also the last of the kings of Judea; after him there were no more heads of State as visible representations of the institution of the kingdom. Though his son Agrippa II is mentioned as a king in Acts 26, he is rarely referred to as a king of the Jews. Because young Agrippa II was seventeen when his father died, Judea was ruled by a series of procurators after this time until the destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus makes clear that in the year 49, Agrippa II received the territories of his uncle Herod Claisis (*Antiq.* 20.5.2 # 104), and later the tetrarchy of Philip and other cities.¹⁷¹ However, as E. Schürer shows Josephus “does not propose to describe the whole kingdom of Agrippa [II], but only those districts which were inhabited more or less by Jews.”¹⁷² H. Jagersma states that he was only

¹⁶⁹ This section does not plan to be a formal study of the life of Agrippa I. It is only some brief notes in order to understand Acts 12 better. For more information about Agrippa, see the excellent work of Daniel R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I: The Last King of Judaea* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1990). See also, E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), pp. 181-255. See also *Antiquities* 17-19; Philo, *Legatio* 186-304ff.

¹⁷⁰ Schwartz, 9, examining the sources of this section that called Agrippa I, “The Jew who saved the Roman Empire.” He adds, that “the purely Roman source” (Dio) states, “Claudius enlarged the kingdom of Agrippa of Palestine, who had cooperated with him in seeking rule, since he had then happened to be in Rome.”

¹⁷¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.8.4 # 159.

¹⁷² Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, vol 2, (USA, Hendrickson Pub., edition 1998), 201-203.

"entrusted with oversight of the Temple of Jerusalem and was given the right to nominate the high priest."¹⁷³

Jagersma argues that Agrippa I was a pious Jew observing the law only in Jerusalem in order to keep the peace and please the leaders of the Jewish establishment. Outside of Jerusalem, he acted as a patron of Hellenistic culture.¹⁷⁴ Likewise, according to the Mishnah, Agrippa I was very popular with both the rabbis and the masses and generous to all people, observing meticulously the tenets of Judaism.¹⁷⁵ The report is that King Agrippa “read the Torah at the public ceremony during the autumn festival (Tabernacles) at the end of the septennial sabbatical year.”¹⁷⁶ Yet some of his actions simply reflected state policy, as E. Schürer suggests about his minting coins—some contrary to the tenets of Judaism, adorned with his own image—and also adopting the family name of the *gens Julia* with the titles of *basileus megas philokaisar eusebes kai philoromanois* (Great King, Friend of Caesar, Pious, and Friend of the Romans).¹⁷⁷ In addition, Wolf Wirgin suggests that Agrippa regarded himself as

¹⁷³ Henk Jagersma, *A History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, 133. See also chart VII, page 202 where shows only "parts of Galilea and Perea."

¹⁷⁴ Jagersma, 130-31. Schwartz, 43 inform us, that from his upbringing and later as an adult in Rome, “It should be underlined that we hear of no contact whatsoever between Agrippa and the Jewish community of Rome.”

¹⁷⁵ *Mishnah Sotah* 7:8, quoted by L. H. Feldman, "Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism in the First Century" in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development*, edited Hershel Shanks, (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archeological Society, 1992),3. Also in *Ant* 19.330-331.

¹⁷⁶ Schwartz, 107, in the autumn of 41 C.E.

¹⁷⁷ Schürer, Vol 2, 162.

the Messiah, but according to Feldman this seems unlikely because Josephus does not recount it.¹⁷⁸

Josephus sees Agrippa as being fully devoted to Judaism, and as almost the perfect king compared with his predecessors. He writes: "Agrippa was entirely pure, nor did any day pass over his head without its appointed sacrifices;" with "compassionate temper;" "humane to foreigners and made them sensible of his liberality."¹⁷⁹ His offering sacrifices as a Jew is a highly disputed issue since the numismatic evidence depicts Agrippa offering pagan sacrifices on the coins commemorating the treaty with Rome in 41 C.E.¹⁸⁰ Smallwood presents this chameleon character of Agrippa as trying to satisfy both centers of power. She writes, "the dramatic end at Caesarea in 44, in circumstances utterly alien to Judaism, suggests that among his gentile subjects he wished to be regarded and treated as a normal Hellenistic king receiving divine honours."¹⁸¹ The appropriateness of Josephus paying homage to Agrippa for being such a virtuous human being is difficult to conceive when one takes into consideration other actions of his such as the incarceration of his friend and army commander the general Silas, where the king's indignation can be easily compared with the

¹⁷⁸ Wolf Wirgin, *Herod Agrippa I. Kings of the Jews* (Leeds, UK: Leeds Univ. Oriental Soc., 1968). Feldman, 2,327. For Herod Agrippa I as Messiah see Joseph Meyshan "The Coinage of Agrippa the First," *IEJ* 4 (1954), p187 n.2. See also the effects of the construction of the northern wall in Jerusalem, and much later the visits of those neighboring kings and the suspicion of C. Vibius Marsus, the empire representative at Syria (*Ant* 19. 338-42).

¹⁷⁹ Josephus, *Antiq.* 19.7.3-4.

¹⁸⁰ Smallwood, 195.

¹⁸¹ Smallwood, 195. She mentions also the erection of the statues of his daughters in Sebaste and Caesarea as argument against Judaism.

slaughtering of the sixteen guards who were taking care of Peter.¹⁸² Furthermore, his character as a virtuous man is cast into doubt by the events of the inaugural games celebrating the erection of the theater of Berytus, in which he had a shocking 1,400 gladiators-criminals fighting to the death at the same time.

G. Theissen suggests that

the Jews interpreted his death as a punishment for the tolerant acceptance of blasphemy, the Christians as a punishment for his persecution of them. The historian, however, will see the events at his death above all as an illustration of how hard it was to integrate Jews and Gentiles. Was this perhaps one reason why the Romans abandoned the experiment of a Herodian dynasty in Palestine?¹⁸³

After the incident of Acts 12, neither Acts, nor the Pauline Epistles, nor the rest of the NT writings describe any king as occupying the throne of David in Jerusalem. Acts also is the only source which calls him Herod and never Agrippa; the opposite is the case in the works of Josephus and Philo, “or more significantly, on any official documents.”¹⁸⁴ Definitely, Luke-Acts’ theology intends to portray him not as single king or individual but to associate him with the powerful, and particularly with the rage, of the Herodian dynasty.

¹⁸² Schwartz, 114 reminds us that “Agrippa’s army was not limited to Jews.” This is important to establish the connections that Herod as a vassal king had with Rome on the one side, but on the other as one of the favorite friends of Claudius. The excesses of his own military after his death against his own property—perhaps even against his own daughters (or statues of them)—shows that he was not very beloved by the masses/subjects. Schwartz, 115, writes, “Aside from the fact that Agrippa’s main military force was hostile to him, his situation as a client king prevented all military activity of his own, and we have no evidence or reason to suspect that he was asked to support any imperial efforts.” Surprisingly, Schwartz does not count the beheading of James or the death of the 1,400 gladiators as “military activity of his own.”

¹⁸³ Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestine Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 75-76.

¹⁸⁴ Smallwood, 193.

Two dates for his death have been proposed: between the months of September/October 43 and January/February 44 and March 44. Numismatic evidence on Agrippa favors the first one.¹⁸⁵ The second date occurs in the celebration of games in honor of Caesar Augustus for his victory in Actium (31 BCE) in memory of his *sotēria*. Acts coincides with this date as being around the time of the Passover.

Though Agrippa deposed the powerful Sadducean family of Annas from the high priesthood within a short time he restored them to office (37 C.E.). These changes in policy—making helped him to be recognized by the temple leadership and later to be acclaimed as “brother” in his disputable and theatrical performance at the time of the sacrifices.¹⁸⁶ Schwartz demonstrates that the following postulates are false assumptions:¹⁸⁷ a) That Agrippa’ piety was according to Pharisaic standards; (b) that his persecution (Acts 12) was an expression of Pharisaic policy; and (c) that Rabbinic literature (the Pharisees’ heirs) always views Agrippa in a very positive way. He concludes. “These three pillars are very weak reeds.”¹⁸⁸

Schwartz argues with reference to (a) “The Sadducean religion was closely bound up with the Temple cult” and that as a “priestly religion” it should not only be associated with the Pharisees. Further, with reference to (b) Schwartz cites Acts correctly that the Sadducees and the temple-party are the

¹⁸⁵ Schwartz, 109-110, shows the numismatic evidence as well for the games in Caesarea with sufficient bibliography (see note 12-15).

¹⁸⁶ Smallwood, 193-4.

¹⁸⁷ Schwartz, 116-119.

¹⁸⁸ Schwartz, 117.

persecutors, and that several times the Pharisees side with Paul (another Pharisee) as defenders. He rightly states,

And this is what would be expected given the logic of the situation: a party which denies resurrection and which is focused on the Temple should, as Acts claims, be hostile to a religious community which was premised on the reality of resurrection and whose founder and members had relativized, if not denied, the significance of the Temple and its cult.¹⁸⁹

Furthermore, Schwartz presents other cases in which the Sadducees took control with an 'absent' king, as, for example, in the punishment death of the "burning of a priest's daughter," in order to show that the Sadducean party was a powerful one. However, hesitantly he states, "it is very difficult to imagine it occurring under a Roman governor."¹⁹⁰ Yet, this "difficulty" – I think does not change the position of the Sadducean Sanhedrin stoning Stephen, as an act committed under a Roman governor. Finally, in the efforts to disassociate the Pharisees from its oppositional stance, Schwartz even tries to argue that, since the name Herod is not documented elsewhere, "the king is being viewed typologically, as another persecutor in the Church's Judean history."¹⁹¹ The only problem with this interpretation is that Josephus matches the same story to Agrippa I as found in Acts. In my view, Schwartz's arguments are extreme by asserting that "the persecution [of Herod against the Christian group] was instigated, accordingly, by Jewish reactionaries or by the conservative Jewish

¹⁸⁹ Schwartz, 117. Unfortunately, although he cites Robert Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation*. (Atlanta; Scholars Press, 1987) pp 84-132, Schwartz forgets to cite Acts 15:5, which clearly states that there some of the believers belong to the sect of the Pharisees.

¹⁹⁰ Schwartz, 118, He adduced literal exegesis for the passage of the burning, a typical feature of the Sadducees.

¹⁹¹ Schwartz, 118.

Christians, such as James, —who appears to have been the main beneficiary of Peter’s elimination.”¹⁹² Later he adds, “this explanation is not convincing,” meaning that since the facts do not clearly support the Herodian persecution, we should consider the persecution as “typological” rather than historical. I disagree with this reading.

One of the many contributions of Schwartz is the openness with which he perceives the Sadducees as part of the group of instigators; with this at least he is restoring some balance to the widespread Christian prejudice and bias against the Pharisees. I will return to this point more thoroughly in chapter 4.

¹⁹² Schwartz, 121-2. He cites, O. Cullmann, *Recherches de science religieuse*, 60 (1972), pp. 61-65. Cullman argues that these conservative Jewish Christians did not actually instigated the persecution, but he emphasizes that they stood aside, failed to demonstrate solidarity with Peter, and gained by his removal. See note 59.

Analysis of Acts 12 as Type-Scene

Acts 12 serves not only as a type-scene of a prison escape, but contains several type-scenes that are important for my reading of resistance. I will first explain briefly some usage and definition of type-scenes in general, and then look at the models of type-scenes in Acts 12 as models of the Exodus and the Passion of Jesus, food dependence, and self-exaltations.

Definition and Usage

Biblical scholars have followed Walter Arendt's example in his study of the narratives of Homer (*Die Typischen Szenen bei Homer*, 1933) to put the literary feature known as a "type-scene" to fruitful use. In antiquity, authors used repetitions of words, word-roots, and similar motifs in order to elaborate the thematic narrative. By contrast, today we use different words to emphasize a point, as a way of being more precise. This pragmatic difference has allowed Robert Alter¹⁹³ to pioneer in biblical studies, and especially in the Hebrew Bible, the analysis of different narratives – for example the type-scene of betrothal – for "certain prominent elements of repetitive compositional pattern."¹⁹⁴ He suggests that,

the consummate artistry of the story involves an elaborate and inventive use of most of the major techniques of biblical narrative : the development of thematic key-words; the reiteration of motifs; the subtle definition of character, relations, and motives mainly

¹⁹³ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Pub. 1981). Alter has a previous article, "Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1978), pp 355-68, among other successive publications on the subject.

¹⁹⁴ Alter, 50.

through dialogue; the exploitation, especially in dialogue, of verbatim repetition with minute but significant changes introduced; the narrator's discriminating shifts from strategic and suggestive withholding of comments to the occasional flaunting of an omniscient overview; the use at points of a montage of sources to catch the multifaceted nature of the fictional subject.¹⁹⁵

P.L. Thimmes defines type-scenes as "recurring stories/narratives that contain a number of conventional elements, and are themselves conventional in that they are small units contained in larger, complete works."¹⁹⁶ F. Polak speaks of a series of "determinant components" common to the type-scene which together form a matrix of ideas.¹⁹⁷ G. Savran defines type-scenes as "a recurrent scene within a story whose repetitions reveal both identity and difference: identity in the basic plot sequence which is described and difference in the deployment of certain motifs in varying fashion."¹⁹⁸

Regarding the use of these techniques, the Russian formalist school taught that there is "an unceasing dialectic between the necessity to use established forms in order to be able to communicate coherently and the

¹⁹⁵ Alter, 176. There is plenty of literature about *Leitwörter*, word-roots and word-plays. We will just summarize Alter's usage as follows: "A *leitwort* is a word or a word-root that recurs significantly in a text, in a continuum of texts: by following these repetitions, one is able to decipher or grasp a meaning of the text, or at any rate, the meaning will be revealed more strikingly... The measured repetition that matches the inner rhythm of the text, or rather, that wells up from it, is one of the most powerful means for conveying meaning without expressing it" (Alter, 93 quoting Martin Buber, *Werker, vol 2 Schriften zur Bibel* (Munich 1964), p. 1131).

¹⁹⁶ Pamela Lee Thimmes, *Convention and Invention: Studies in the Biblical Sea-Storm Type-Scene*. Unpublished Vanderbilt University Dissertation, 1990, 29.

¹⁹⁷ F. Polak, "Theophany and Mediator," in M. Vervenne (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Exodus*, 116; expanded definitions and concepts may be found in F. Polak, *Biblical Narrative: Aspects of Art and Design* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1994), 381-6 (Hebrew) quoted by Savran, 12.

¹⁹⁸ George W. Savran, *Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative*, JSOT Supplement Series 420, (London/New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2005), 12.

necessity to break and remake those forms because they are arbitrary restrictions, and because what is merely repeated automatically no longer conveys a message.”¹⁹⁹ In remaking these stories by using a repetitive pattern of inter- and intratextual motifs, concepts, and words, the author triggers for the reader a greater understanding of these narratives.

Alter clarified that the type-scene “is not merely a way of formally recognizing a particular kind of narrative moment; it is also a means of attaching that moment to a larger pattern of historical and theological meaning.”²⁰⁰ In this context, Stanley Fish has shown that the role of “interpreting communities” adds another component to the use of these “interpretative strategies” that are common to them and exist prior to the act of reading.²⁰¹ These strategies are grounded in a set of conventions that enable the reader to understand what we read; thus, “the meaning is public, because it is governed by conventions that are common to all who read with understanding.”²⁰² As J. Culler states, “If the text has a plurality of meanings it is because it does not itself contain meaning but involves the reader in the process of producing meaning according to a variety of appropriate procedures.”²⁰³ Thus, writers and readers are involved in strategies and procedures of self-recapitulations which consider not only the mere

¹⁹⁹ Alter, 62.

²⁰⁰ Alter, 60.

²⁰¹ Stanley Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 14.

²⁰² R. Scruton, “Public Text and Common Reader,” in *Reconstructing Literature*, ed. L. Lerner, (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), 44-46 quoted by Thimmes, 9.

²⁰³ J. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 243.

repetitions of words, word-roots, motifs or themes, but discover and expand the system of meanings of the founding models, giving them a sense of cohesiveness. As Alter states:

One reason for the cohesiveness of literary tradition over a stretch of almost three thousand years is its powerful impulse of self-recapitulation. Writers repeatedly work under the influence of a founding model, whether happily or not; they repeatedly return to origins, seeking to emulate, extend, transpose, or outdo some founder.²⁰⁴

In summary, I would argue that the use of a type-scene is just the starting point in the imaginative process of the readers/hearers in making new connections of inter- and intratextuality. In this manner, the reader/hearer experiences new motifs with different emphases; the type-scene creates changes, and sometimes even uses irony and derision as a mode of creating a reading of resistance, thus not conforming to the original patterns of the previous narratives. The use of these 'units' or part of the 'units' enables the author to expand the imagination or inventiveness of the hearers/readers. However, as Thimmes rightly concludes, "It is always accountable to the requirements of literature by the ancient: it educates, it entertains, it pleases."²⁰⁵

Biblical scholars have worked with different kinds of type-scenes: annunciation, rescue, prison-deliverances, dreams, meals or banquets, sea-storms, battles, messages-deliverances, well-betrothals, epiphanies, danger in deserts, etc. In the context of Luke-Acts, Phyllis Trible rightly asserts that Luke

²⁰⁴ Robert Alter, *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 27-28 quoted by Thimmes, 156.

²⁰⁵ Thimmes, 304

presents the stories 'juxtaposed and merged.'²⁰⁶ Referring to the annunciation type-scene for Zechariah and Mary, she explains that the narrator uses elements that are both alike and different from various different biblical allusions and references. In this manner, Luke combines the two scenes in order to summarize the crux of the passage. Using pair parallelism, a typical literary feature of Luke, he presents the participants, actions, and details drawn from a vast pool of biblical references that share vocabulary, themes, and images.

In the particular context of Acts 12, I agree with Tannehill who states that although this chapter "may seem rather isolated and unimportant for Acts as a whole. Yet... this story is an echo of other stories in Luke-Acts and in Jewish Scriptures."²⁰⁷ Some scholars, such as R. Pervo, D. MacDonald and Marianne Bonz²⁰⁸ for example have shown parallels with ancient Hellenistic and Roman works that resonate very well with the usage of type-scenes. However, the theological purpose of those connections seems at some point disjointed from the history of salvation in the Judeo-Christian interpretation. It is for this reason that I agree with Tannehill's look at the Jewish Scriptures. I would contend that

²⁰⁶ Phyllis Tribble, "Meeting Mary Through Luke," online article in *Pulpit.org*, Sept 2005, http://www.pulpit.org/include/reader.asp?File=/articles/meeting_mary.asp&Title=Meeting+Mary+Through+Luke+by+Phyllis+Tribble.

²⁰⁷ Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. Vol 2 The Acts of the Apostles. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 151-2.

²⁰⁸ Richard Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987); Marianne Palmer Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). Dennis R MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer: Four cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (2003). MacDonald has some early books on the subject: *Christianizing Homer: "The Odyssey," Plato and "The Acts of Andrew."* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

Acts 12 presents a concoction of different type-scenes such as: prison deliverance; rescue with motifs from the exodus story; the exodus and passion of Christ as a model of suffering for their followers; punishment and retribution for self-exaltation and hubris. In addition, it is a type-scene by itself, first, for the many miraculous events of God's triumph and rescue of those who belong and are obedient to him, and second, as the type-scene par excellence of the annihilation of those who wish to usurp divine prerogatives. I turn now to describe these models.

The model of the Passion

The narrative of Acts, Tannehill affirms, "was understood against the background both of the Scriptures and the story of Jesus."²⁰⁹ In Luke and Acts, the narrator presents Jesus and Peter's sufferings to the "expectations" of the people. He makes the connection explicit between Jesus' and Peter's sufferings with the repeated use of the phrase "bringing him to the people," at the same festivity, the Passover. The people *-laos-* of Acts 12:11 encapsulate the institutions and the religious/political authorities acting together. Something similar happens in Acts 4:25-27 where Luke clearly combines all authorities into one group: the city-*polis* - Jerusalem, Herod, Pilate, the nations (Gentiles –

²⁰⁹ Tannehill, 152. He presents several word parallelisms in both scenes: arrest (*sullambánō* –Acts 12:3, 1:16; Lk 22:54); the narrator interrupts the sentence in Acts 12:4 to indicate that the arrest takes place during the "days of the unleavened bread" and Passover. In both narratives, the rulers Pilate and Herod want to "bring the accused to the people" as if the people have any say in legal matters. Both scenes contains the words laid hands (*epébalen ...tas cheiras*; 12:1 cf. Lk 20:19). The verb "to do away with" (*anairéō*) used to describe the killing of James also is used in Lk 22:2; 23:43; Act 5:33; 9:23, 24, 29.

ethnesin), and a strange designation of “peoples of Israel” in the plural. This plurality of peoples may either suggest that the author has in mind more than one people with the same name, or may indicate those who accepted the Messiah and those who rejected him.²¹⁰ If this connection is correct, Peter’s imprisonment in a sense runs parallel to Jesus’ arrest, with the exception of the reversal at the end of Peter’s story. Peter experiences a greater and significant liberation, contrary to the persecutors’ plan. In addition, the head of the state as a representative of the kingdom suffers obliteration. Thus, the elements of the type-scenes of arrest and death are reversed. Among the gospels, only Luke presents Jesus on a special trial before another Herod, Antipas the tetrarch; in Acts 12, he again repeats several common elements:

(i) In the gospel of Luke, Herod plays the role of a frustrated investigator, “he questioned him [Jesus] at some length” (Lk 23:6), with no answer from the inferior. In contrast to this, Acts 12 infers that Herod gives no answer to the frustrated people of Tyre and Sidon, who depend for food on the “king’s country.” This inference may indicate an acceptance of the postulate of a possible “bribe” in order to win over Blastus, the king’s chamberlain.

(ii) Another repetitive literary element is the description of the characters of the chief priests and the scribes, who appear again in Acts (12:11, cf. 5:21, 33),

²¹⁰ M. R. D’Angelo has already demonstrated that Luke always works in pairs and parallelisms (cf. Lk 21:16, “you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death.”) in Mary Rose D’Angelo, “(Re)Presentations of Women in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke-Acts” in *Women and Christian Origins*, edited by Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D’Angelo, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 171-195.

but, at this time as one united group in expecting the death of Jesus' representative.

(iii) The soldiers who treated Jesus with contempt and mocked him are now getting their come-uppance in Acts, where they are killed (*apagein, paradídōmi*)²¹¹ by the intransigent Herod for not keeping the prisoner imprisoned.²¹² Here we see repeated the motif of Herod as the “frustrated investigator” (“Herod had searched for him [Peter] and could not find him, then he examined the guards” 12:19).

(iv) The gospel shows Herod himself putting a ‘brilliant’ robe (*esthēta lampran*) on Jesus, in a manner that ridiculed him by portraying him as a king. The reader still has in mind the conversation between Pilate and the Jews, who accused and asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews? (Lk 23:2-3). In Acts, King Herod Julius Agrippa I experiences the ultimate reversal, wearing the royal robe (*esthēta basilikēn*). In fact, Acts answers the questions and accusations of the chief priests: the apparently powerful tyrant king is banished for presumption, fulfilling the type of retributive death of many tyrants before him.

²¹¹ This verb “deliver” is present in Acts 12:4; it is also present in the Passion scene in the gospels (Lk 9:44, 18:32, 24:7; 23:25; 24:20). Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles: A new translation with introduction and commentary*. Anchor Bible, vol 31. (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 490, he compares the same verb “ordered them to be led off,” as in Lk 23:26. We are assuming the truthfulness of the soldiers as literary characters, rather than their historicity.

²¹² Charles K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 Vols. International critical commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 588 connects this passage with a case of similar punishment to soldiers that occurred much later in history, during the time of Emperor Justinian. He states “this rule would not automatically apply in Herod’s kingdom, but it would be surprising if it did not.”

The Messiah-king, rejected by the imperial, political, and religious authorities, is the real king.

(v) Finally, while the authorities ridiculed the *logos* of the silent Jesus, the Acts' narrative ends by exalting with two qualifiers the central theme of the fulfilled Scriptures; the growth (*auzanō*) and multiplication (*plēthunō*) of the *logos theos*.²¹³

Certainly, Luke's intent is to link Jesus' passion to that of the disciples, in this manner demonstrating that the rulers and principalities are involved in both sufferings. In other words, though the apostles explain to the rulers and the high priestly family the reasons why they preach in the name of Jesus, Luke portrays the religious leaders as having decided to remain "in darkness," as being subdued under "the power of Satan" (Acts 26:18), and as being "ignorant rulers" (Acts 3:17) who do not understand "the words of the prophets" (Acts 13:27). The notion of rulers and family conflict leads me to the analysis of the exodus model.

The model of the Exodus

Acts portrays both Jewish and Roman rulers as 'oppressors' of the apostles' cause, but also as men in need of liberation. The reference in the passion to the "unleavened bread and Passover" also evokes the intertextual connection with the liberation *par excellence* of the Exodus from Egypt that I will explain. The correspondence between Acts 12:11 and Exod 18:4 (LXX) is identical, except for the name of the ruler. Three times Acts cites the motive of

²¹³ Acts 6:7 is a verbatim repetition, 19:20 – change strong (*ischuen* for *eplethuneto*); cf. Lk 8:4-15, the parable of the sower.

“God leading the people out” (Acts 7:36, 40; 13:17). Luke presents Jesus making his “exodus” from Jerusalem. In the narrative of Joseph (Acts 7), Egypt initially serves as the place that rescues him from the hands of his brothers. Furthermore, in the development of the story, with the emergence of “new rulers,” Egypt reverses the course, moving from a place of security and protection to a place of oppression. Likewise, Jerusalem, the place where Jesus and his followers teach and proclaim the eschatological kingdom, is described as the “city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it” (Lk 13:34). In Acts the rulers of the establishment persecute the church and they must leave “for/to another place” (12:17). In fact, Acts irrefutably presents both centers of oppression, “For in this city, in fact both Herod and Pontius Pilate”, with the parallelism “the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel” (Acts 4:27).

Along with most other interpreters, Tannehill reads this event as the physical departure of Jesus through death and resurrection. Sharon H. Ringe and Susan R. Garrett have argued that Luke-Acts evokes the theological notion of the Exodus in an environment of liberation, rather than a merely as a literary paradigm. For Ringe, “the hallmark of Jesus' ministry is release from oppression: Jesus offers “liberation from the various *penultimate systems, rules, and patterns* of indebtedness by which humankind seeks to escape the transforming power of God's eschatological reign at hand.”²¹⁴ Garrett adds “Although Luke is indeed

²¹⁴ Sharon H. Ringe, “Luke 9:28-36: the Beginning of an Exodus,” *The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics* (*Semeia* 28; ed. Mary Ann Tolbert; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983) 83-99. pp. 96. Ringe, *Luke*. (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 141 states, “like Jesus’ impending journey, [the Torah] uses an ill-defined itinerary as a framework within which to present accounts of God’s saving work,

concerned with "systems, rules, and patterns of indebtedness," she regards these as "but several of various means used by the ultimate oppressor, who is Satan. Ringe's demythologization has concealed important nuances of Luke's story."²¹⁵

I believe that the important nuances of 'concealment' of which Garrett speaks suggest that the motif of the exodus is larger than just the oppression from Satan as the ultimate oppressor and the triumph of Christ over death and Hades. Garrett writes, "the bondage from which Jesus will deliver the people is bondage to Satan."²¹⁶ I would argue that this model allows for a more comprehensive picture of liberation for the followers of the Christian doctrine. It goes beyond the spiritual movement of liberating people from "darkness to light" (26:18). In Stephen's speech, the "house of bondage" (7:34, cf. Exod 13:3, 14; 20:2) is the physical Egypt. However at the end the discourse, he makes clear that the bondage itself is the spirit of rejection, as in the phrase, "you are forever rejecting the Holy Spirit" (7:51). Therefore, I think Luke contrapuntally wants the readers to experience the exodus from the "house of bondage" – meaning the continual rejection of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the text seems to suggest that Peter must leave the "house of bondage" not only in the spiritual sense, but geographically too.

as well as extended blocks of instructions to the travelers (but really to the subsequent audience or readers of the accounts.)"

²¹⁵ Susan R. Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1-24", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Oct 90, Vol. 52 Issue 4. 1990), 659.

²¹⁶ Garrett, "Bondage...", 666. Garrett believes with other scholars she cites (n.23) that this is a direct allusion to Lk 4:18, which is itself a quotation of Isa 58:6 and 61:1. See also, Susan R Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989).

In Acts 12:17 Peter leaves Jerusalem for an undesignated place referred to only as “another place.” Later, in verse 25, the variances in the manuscripts read differently as either “[they] returned *from* or *to* Jerusalem.” I prefer to use the preposition “from” since it ties in with 11:29-30, where Barnabas and Paul are commissioned to go with “relief to the ‘brothers’ living in Judea... to the elders.” In addition, Acts 13:1 reiterates the geographical movement with the presence of “prophets and teachers” in Antioch (cf. 11:27, “prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.”) I am not suggesting a supersessionist movement between Antioch and Jerusalem, but the movement is useful because it denotes Jerusalem as one of the center of oppression.

Thus, the exodus of Peter “coming to his senses” (12:11, cf. Lk 15:17) and leaving for “another place” in the context of liberation from the “hands of Herod and the expectations of all the people of the *Jews*” makes sense not in terms for the Jewish Christian church denying their Jewishness or leaving the people as such, as Acts clearly affirms that the apostles continue preaching and welcoming all (28:30, 11:12, 18) and that the designated apostle to the Gentiles – Paul – has “done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors” (28:17). The directional shift²¹⁷ must be understood as showing them leaving the representation of the institutions of Jerusalem.

²¹⁷ Robert W. Wall, “Successors to ‘the Twelve’ According to Acts 12:1-17,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991), 631ff , show different succession movements such as, geography : moving from Jerusalem to Antioch, from the twelve apostles to the James and the elders in Jerusalem, but never in terms of institutions using a postcolonial category.

In order to explain this directional shift, I will briefly describe some characteristics of Luke's theology of inclusivism in the parable of the destiny of Jerusalem (Lk 13) and the concepts of household (*oikos*) and the kingdom (*basileia*). The parable of exclusion and the destiny of Jerusalem begins with the question, "Lord, will only a few be [being] saved?" (Lk 13:23); Jesus answers with the parable of the narrow door,²¹⁸ which the "owner of the house" shut. Those who are outside the door claiming intimacy (eating and drinking, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets"²¹⁹) demand that the door be opened. Luke twice answers with the statement; "I do not know where *you are from*," emphasizing the knowledge of the place rather than of the person. The contrast highlights the difference with Jesus' answer in the gospel of Matthew, "I never *knew you*" (Mt 7:23).

In Luke, the conflict is the representation of the place, not the people. Luke's telling does not contain the Matthean phrase "the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness,"²²⁰ because this disagrees with his theology of partiality or preference. There are no "sons of the kingdom" indeed, to the contrary, Luke adds to the list of guests at the eschatological banquet not only the patriarchs, the inclusive "all the prophets," but also an unknown "they," meaning peoples from different places – a universality established in the comparison from the four cardinal points compared with the only "east and west" of Matthew. This theology of inclusivism and universality of place reinforces the

²¹⁸ There is no wide door for Luke, compare with Mt 7:13.

²¹⁹ Matthew adds the performance of miracles, and prophecy in your name (7:23).

²²⁰ Lk 13:29, cf. Mt 8:11-12, the eschatological banquet, Isa 25:6-9.

concept displayed at the beginning of Acts of bringing the gospel to the whole world until the end of the earth (1:8) and the multitude of nations present at Pentecost (2:9-11).

In the same manner, Luke presents Peter saying to the multitude at Pentecost that the Jesus crucified “according to the definite plan” epitomizes the eschatological successor to David’s throne. God now has exalted him to his right hand as the Lord and Messiah. Luke uses the term “the all/entire/complete house of Israel – *pas oikos Israēl*” (Acts 2:29-36) to refer to the same group that is described as “the rulers, elders and scribes; chief priests, his family, the temple police and the “whole council of elders”; “the entire council” (Acts 4:5-7; 22:5, 30). I will describe these institutions and their relationship in a more detail in chapter 4, and confine myself to a brief explanation here.

The concepts of house (*oikos*), kingdom (*basileia*), and throne are interchangeable in the narratives of 2 Sam 7:11, 13. When David set the task of building a house for the Lord to live in (7:5), God reluctantly accepts the proposal, with the declaration “that the Lord will *make you a house*,” meaning the establishment of a dynasty and the kingdom.²²¹ At the time of the dedication of Solomon’s temple, the agreement is reestablished with the condition of faithfulness (1 Kgs 9:6-9, “If you turn aside.... I will cast [you] out of my sight...”). This agreement coincides with the language of the Deuteronomistic historian and

²²¹ Following the MT 2 Sam 7:11, cf. 7:27, contrary the LXX 2 Kgs 7:11 reads *hoti oikon oikodomēseis autō* , “that you shall build a house to him” The Greek uses the future tense.

the prophets to designate the term “house of the king of Judah.”²²² In the parable of the Jerusalem exclusion, Jesus presages the symbolic ‘glory of Yahweh leaving the place’, with the avowal “this house is left to you”, the “owner” is leaving the house.²²³ This symbolic exodus contrasts with God’s declaration to Moses, “I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the hands of the Egyptians” (*exelesthai autous ek cheiros*, Ex 3:7-8).²²⁴ The concepts of ruler and people are repeated in both scenes.²²⁵

Stephen’s speech also presents to Moses a situation of brother pitted against brother, in the episode of the rescuing of the Hebrews from the Egyptians, though the Hebrews were not able to understand that he was the one “whom the Lord through his *hand* [would] will give salvation (*sōteria*) to them” (7:25). Again and again, Luke presents the internal conflict of a family rejection, either in a representation of patriarchs, the Sanhedrin, Herod, the Jewish people (*laos Ioudaious*), or brothers (*adelphos*). The rhetorical question of Moses-- “Men you are brothers, why do you wrong each other?”-- is the quintessential question of all the characters in Acts, asking themselves why their own people do not

²²² Jer 22:4, reads “for if you will indeed obey this word, then through the gates of this house shall enter kings who sit on the throne of David... but if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself ...this house will become desolation”. Interestingly, in the context of the prophet Jeremiah, he speaks of obedience from the leaders, the kings as “shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep” (23:1f) and the false prophets (23:9f). The concept of a house desolated in Lk 11 also speaks in terms of a “evil generation” and of someone greater than the king Solomon and the prophet Jonah, and scribes. (Lk 11:29-31, 50-52).

²²³ The word *aphietai* from the verb *aphiēmi*, Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, explain that it can be translated as “let fall”, or “let go.” However, in a legal sense it can be translated as “to release from an engagement”, 138.

²²⁴ Tannehill, 154 presents the Greek evidence in Exodus where the terms “rescued” from the hands” occurs four times (Exod 18:4, 8-10).

²²⁵ Notice also the parallel in Dan 3:95; 6:23.

understand what is read in the synagogue every Sabbath (13:27). The question resounds in the minds of the readers, with a sense of wonder and astonishment that the expectations of the people are only to kill and exterminate. The intensity of the persecution reaches its climax when the head of the political state seeks the death of the leaders of the church. Allen explains that death of tyrant type-scene conventions show that the death of the tyrant as punishment is always as a result of persecution.²²⁶

However, the type-scene is reversed in this context, since in Exodus the people are designated as being ‘my people’ (*laos mou*) and sons of Israel. Now the peoples (plural) are those who accept Jesus as the eschatological prophet, the Messiah as the “*kurios* of all” (10:36). Peter tacitly quotes Deut 18:19 (cf. Acts 3:23) to remind what will happens if anyone does not listen to the eschatological prophet-Messiah – “will be utterly rooted out of the people”. Acts understands the temporal proclamation of first/after, “time of Jews/times of Gentiles” (“he sent him first to you, to bless you” 3:36)²²⁷ and “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (3:25). Thus, the liberated Peter parallels those who “in every nation” have been “oppressed by the devil” but now they “fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:35, 38).

I do not agree with Barrett, who suggests that “since *laos* is usually sufficient to denote the Jewish people, he [Luke] adds *tōn Ioudaion* to emphasize the connection with v.3. Peter, a representative Christian is now separated from

²²⁶ Allen, 89.

²²⁷ Several texts in Luke-Acts denote this temporal position. See Acts 3:20, 26; 10:35ff; 11:17; 13:46; etc...Lk 21:24.

the Jewish people.”²²⁸ While God in the Exodus takes the people from the land of Egypt ‘into the place of’ (*eis ton topon*) seven nations, in Acts Peter leaves Jerusalem “into another place” (*eis eteron topon*, 12:17).²²⁹ The identification of the physical place is not important as is demonstrated with Peter’s return to Jerusalem for the council (chapter 15). However, I think the directional shift of leaving the place of the oppression, the house of bondage is vital for the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

In conclusion, Jesus and his church are not in conflict with the people but with the institutions that define and rule the place. Jerusalem and its leaders, as a centralized metropolis of power and hegemony, do not allow the people the food of the real interpretation of the Scriptures, thus preventing their entrance into the eschatological kingdom for their own “judgment” (“Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life,” Acts 13:46; cf. Lk 13:27-28, “I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers! There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when... yourselves [will be] thrown out”). Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that the new sect, the Jewish Christian group, considers itself to be the new “judges and rulers” (cf. 7:27) in the new eschatological understanding of the times. This presents a serious challenge, perhaps even competition, to the institutions that define the establishment: a proclamation that undermines the foundation of self-identity of the legitimate

²²⁸ Barrett, vol 1, 582-3, following Weiser 290.

²²⁹ The discussion about the “another place” has been the subject of much speculation. Theological reflection suggests Rome as the place. However, Fitzmyer, 489 alerts us that “there is no guarantee” that the place of Rome “is the correct interpretation.”

Israel—those who accept the eschatological Messiah, thus not hindering as well the definite plan of God (cf. 11:17, 2:23).

Another repeated element in the Stephen's speech is the hand which works as a symbol of deliverance and punishment. Examining the parallelism of the Magnificat with the Song of the Sea (Exod 15), Tribble attests that "both use warrior imagery and the anthropomorphism of 'arm' or 'hand' to describe God's power in destroying and 'scattering' the enemy."²³⁰ This parallelism technique is also present in the liberation of Peter from jail, in the death of the persecutor as predicted in the narrative of the Magnificat, and of the powerful who have been brought down from their thrones (Lk 1:52). God and the triumph of his prophetic Word are exalted as the one who has "saved and rescued us from the hand of the enemies who hate us" (Lk 1:71, 73.)

Acts presents a succession of divine rescue narratives (5:18-20; 12:1-17; 16:23-29; 27:1-44; 28:4). However, the word-play – rescue from the hand – is present only in the speeches of Stephen and Peter. Stephen cites the event of Joseph, first rescued from his own brothers, who strangely are called "the patriarchs," who, being "jealous of Joseph sold him into Egypt, but God was with him and rescued him from all his afflictions" (7:9-10). This incident parallels the phrase of 12:11, "the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the *hands* of Herod and from all the *loudaious*," where these groups by ignoring the warning of Gamaliel are in fact fighting against God (5:39).²³¹

²³⁰ Tribble, 330.

²³¹ The concept of *theomachy* – fighting against God is repeated with the rejection of the Holy Spirit (7:51).

Joseph, the archetype of the great deliverer of the world, the one whom the Lord caused “all that he did to prosper in his hands” (Gen 39:3, 8) is able to rescue the whole world from famine (7:10). In Acts 12, when the world experiences a comparable food crisis (11:28), Herod refuses to hear the demand of the people of Tyre and Sidon who depended on food from the king’s country. As a result, Herod receives the hand of punishment.

In addition, the mention of Joseph in Stephen’s speech evokes the conflictive multicolor robe that contributed to envy among the brothers. More important, the word-play with Acts 12 – now in reverse—shows the process/movement of Joseph’s ‘exodus’ from the palace to the jail leaving “the robe in her hand” (Gen 39:12)—that is, in the hand of the adversary who caused him to lose his position and sent him to jail. Similarly, in Acts 12, in the jail of the persecutor and apostle’s assassin, the undressed Peter receives the order to put on the robe, which in this case functions as a robe of restitution and deliverance. Later in the narrative, the king of the Jews presents himself to the crowd in Caesarea dressed up in a royal robe (cf. *Antiq* 19). In this case, it is a robe of disgrace and punishment.

The model of food dependence in Acts 12

Scholars are intrigued by the mention of the peoples of Tyre-Sidon in Acts 12²³² and its food dependence on the “King’s country.” I would like to suggest that this food dependence parallels the motif of those who are “under the table.”

²³² Allen, 3.

The gospel of Luke does not contain the pericope of the Syro-Phoenician or the Canaanite woman (Mk 7; Mt 15)²³³; however, it has a particular pericope of contradictions of binary oppositions (Lk 16), where one poor literary character, a human being named Lazarus, longs to satisfy his hunger with what falls from the table, “the crumbs under the table” of a rich person. This unnamed rich person “feasts sumptuously every day dressed in purple and fine linen” (16:19). This type-scene clearly illustrates those who are dependent for food on those who have plenty and are privileged—those who are in the center as opposed to those who are on the periphery. The parable contains the ultimate reversal of Luke’s theology: the arrogant and proud become destitute, and their demise includes even their inner circle. In the parable, the rich person seems to be more interested in the future of his five brothers than in making restitution to the poor.

I would like to propose that the general meaning of the parable is a reversal of roles because of the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, meaning the

²³³ Although I do not attempt to explain the pericope, a concise explanation is useful here. Mark shows a Syro-Phoenician woman represented as being ‘under the table’: she does not have a chance for the attention of or response from Jesus, much less for the opportunity to receive a “healing-food.” She understands the limitation of her littleness, and in a reiterative way she applies the word of Jesus for her own benefit. She remains the “subaltern,” an “other” who is “under,” who lives outside of the boundaries of Israel. (Jim Perkinson, “A Cannanite Word in the Logos of Christ: Or the Difference the Syro-Phoenician Woman Makes to Jesus”, *Semeia* 75, 1996, 81). She refuses to accept the ancestral boundaries and appropriates for herself the words of Jesus. In this manner, negotiating with Jesus, she reiterates the words in order to give to her “descendant” (daughter) the opportunity to receive salvation and the crumbs of the “healing-food of Israel,” the *logos*. Jesus here, as a Jew, is also a prisoner of time and of the ancestral traditions of bias that circumscribe him. He is still in the times of the Jews that I describe above. This is reinforced in the saying of Jesus in the spatial relationship of time, “first” and “after.” The first may be found in Jesus words, “let the children *be fed first... to take the children's food*” the “after”, in the woman’s words “*even the little puppies under the table eat the crumbs.*”

denial of the fulfillment of the Scriptures, the “Law and the prophets.” In this manner, the privileged leadership of the people of Israel is represented by the rich man dressed in purple and feasting daily with the blessings of the Scriptures and God. The second group, represented by Lazarus, is “the others,” those who are deprived of the blessings, those poor “under the table” longing to eat the crumbs that fall, those in the parable who are never satisfied. Those once deprived now enjoy the opportunity to receive the “food.” This concept is foreshadowed in Jesus’ prophetic discourse at the synagogue of Nazareth about “famine over all the land,” where Elijah and Elisha are sent outside of the boundaries of Israel, to Sidon (Lk 4:25-27; cf. Acts 11:28). In the same manner Luke typifies the universal proclamation of food – the clear and exact understanding of the Scriptures to the rest of the nations. Philip Esler argues that this section,

constitutes the key expression of Luke's argument that the Jewish leaders have failed to follow the Mosaic Law or to accept Jesus... the real point of this part of the story is that the five brothers of the rich man are leading sinful lives, just as he did during his lifetime, and the law and the prophets are not going to be effective in making them repent.²³⁴

I conclude that the relationship-pattern of the satisfied versus the needy is symbolized in all these cases. On one side, we have the Syro-Phoenician woman, Lazarus, the people of Tyre and Sidon referred to in Acts 12, and the Lukan community as a representation of the Gentiles. On the other, there is Jesus and the disciples in the times of the Jews, with its temporal dimensions of

²³⁴ Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 119.

“first—after”, the “rich man dressed in purple and linen who feasts very day”, and King Herod who is clothed in a regal garment and is enraged with the people of Tyre-Sidon for demanding ‘his food.’ The latter represent the institutions of Judaism as the depository of the spiritual food, meaning specifically the Scriptures. The refusal to satisfy those “under the table” is illustrated in the book of Acts with a series of rejections, persecutions, and denial by the Sanhedrin to preach in the name of Jesus, that find climax in the persecution of the head of the state, Herod, and the group which typify the phrase “all the expectations of the people of the Jews” (*Ioudaioi*- Acts 12:11).

Models of Self-Exaltation in Luke-Acts

The theme of self-exaltation and the process of reversal are widely present in the narrative of Luke-Acts (Lk 1:52, 78; 10:15; 14:11; 18:14; 24:46-9; Acts 2:32-33; 5:30-31; 13:17). Luke begins the gospel predicting the downfall of the proud (1:52); or in more general terms applied to all “For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humbled themselves will be exalted” (Lk 14:11). Those exalted humans are seen as an abomination to God (Lk 16:15). Luke stresses the relevance of this theme by the different usage of the Greek word proud (*hypsēlos*) compared to the gospels of Matthew and Mark, which use the term to describe things, places, etc. (cf. Mt 4:8, 17:1; Mk 9:2; “high mountain”). By contrast, Luke uses it only to depict the exaltation of human beings (cf. Lk 16:1; Acts 13:17). Furthermore, for Luke the only one worth of

exaltation is the “Most High” (*hypsistos*) (cf. Lk 1:32, 35, 76; 2:14; 6:35; 8:28; 19:38; Acts 7:48: 16:17).

Luke has in mind several self-exaltation models as possible intertexts when he illustrates the exaltation of the Herod. The triumph over the cosmic and historical adversary and oppressors is a common motif in the ancient Near Eastern myths concerning the great controversy between good and evil.²³⁵ In these myths the root problem of the fall and destruction of the characters is always the motif of self-exaltation, or the usurpation of qualities and privileges of the divine. As Garrett correctly states, “these ancient myths were ‘historicized’ in Isaiah and Ezekiel’s application to political rulers and then ‘remythologized’ when interpreted in or around the first century C.E. to refer to the devil.”²³⁶ However, as I have argued in the case of Acts 12, the political power represents both cases: fulfilling the symbolic representation of the myth of an oppressor as well as the historical representation of a “house of bondage.”

Allen shows that the retributive death/punishment of a tyrant is known to the hearers/readers of Acts in both contexts – the Roman environment and the Jewish Christian one. The Bible contains several typological allusions (Gen 3:5; Isa 14, Ezek 28, Dan 4, etc.) of mortals exalting themselves to assume the role or position of God. Similarly, these texts also show the subsequent fall and demise of those powers. As M. Fishbane has pointed out:

²³⁵ Garrett, 667 quotes the Ugaritic myth about Athar, a rebel god who went up to the “reaches of Zaphon” to overtake the throne of Baal”, (cf. Isa 14:12-15, esp. v 13).

²³⁶ Garrett, “Bondage...”, 667.

The appropriation by biblical writers of mythic structures sometimes functions to undergird a historical conception of existence: The historical representation of past and future in terms of cosmogonic paradigms discloses the deep biblical presentiment that all historical renewal is fundamentally a species of world renewal.²³⁷

Common theological motifs of exaltation always recur in the appropriation of these paradigms of cosmic representation. The reason for the fall and demise of these earthly political-religious powers always has to do with their self-exaltation, pride and hubris, their near denial of the existence of God. The first lie in the Scriptures is the self-pretension of the serpent in giving advice to the human couple, "You will be like god". In Exodus, Pharaoh asks "Who is the Lord? I do not know the LORD" (Exod 5:2). The answer from God is for both the king and the people of Israel: "You shall know that I am the LORD your God" (6:7); "By this you shall know that I am the LORD" (7:17). Bible writers use and concepts are attributed to God as: 'mighty hand" (6:1), "outstretched arm" (Exod 6:6), and "the finger" (8:19) in order to describe his supremacy over all temporal hegemonies, but especially over those who represent the leadership of the institutions of kingship and priesthood. For example, in the description of all the plagues in Egypt, the "mighty hand of God" is always directed to the leadership of the nation: "upon yourself, your officials, and your people" in that order. The reason for the plagues is to "know that the earth is the Lord's" (Exod 9:29), in contrast to the kind of Egypt's grandiose claims that "the Nile is mine and I made

²³⁷ Garrett, 678. quoting M. Fishbane, "The `Exodus' Motif: The Paradigm of Historical Renewal," in *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 136.

it” (Ezek 29:8). Likewise, in the oracles against Egypt, the prophet Ezekiel condemned the self-aggrandizement of beauty (Ezek 32:19).

Ezekiel’s punishment is in the same context of disdain, with the answer repeating the cry of Egypt, “Then they shall know that I am the Lord God” (29:16). Ezek 31 describes in an allegory of the exalted tree the fall of Egypt because “its heart was proud of its heights.” A similar allegory is used for Babylon’s exaltation: “The peoples of the earth went away from its shade and left it” (Ezek 31:12; cf. Dan 4:10-17). Self-exaltation brings “the end of the kingdom” (cf. Dan 4:31). For those who say “I am a god” (Ezek 28:2), God responds “You are but a mortal and no god” (Ezek 28:2, 9) and announces their fall with the figure of speech “casting you to the ground” (Ezek 28:17), with fatal consequences, “a dreadful end and shall be no more forever” (Ezek 27:36).

Comparing these with similar cases of self-aggrandizement—as in the example of the Kings of Tyre, Babylon, and Egypt—shows the end not only of the king but of the kingdom as well. Similarly, we infer a similar fall and demise for the institutions of the kingship for Herod and its dynasty. In a short article Mark R. Strom²³⁸ shows several linguistic parallels between Ezekiel’s oracles against Tyre and the dependence on Israel for food supplies (cf. 1 Kgs 5:11) with the death of Agrippa. He adds that importance of the argument is not in the number of parallels, neither in the destruction of the nations, but in the victory over hubris

²³⁸ Mark R. Strom, “An Old Testament Background to Acts 12:2-23” *New Testament Studies*, vol 32, 1986, 289-92. Also S. Garrett (1990), independently sees this connection even though she does not quote Strom.

as the “eschatological triumph and restoration” of God’s people.²³⁹ I think the general context of persecution from the different institutions of the establishment climaxes with the parallelism of the self-exaltation and demise of those who want to eliminate the logos, the church, and Christ’s followers.

Similarly, the context of Isaiah 14 describes the fall of the king of Babylon and his pretension of hubris, “I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.” Christianity has interpreted these verses, following the interpretation of Jesus in Luke 10:18, as a reference to the great controversy in heaven and the fall of Satan (cf. Rev 12:7-17). Marvin Tate reminds us that “obviously the tyrant in Isaiah 14 is not Satan, though his hubris, arrogance, and fall is described in terms influenced by ancient ideas about the rebellion of a lower divine being against the reign of a high god.”²⁴⁰ As suggested earlier, not every single component of one type-scene completely parallels other type-scenes. However, Isaiah 14 contains several “allusions” that can help us to associate this type-scene with the destruction of Herod Agrippa. Certainly, the terms “pomp,” “maggots,” and “worms” immediately create for the reader a connection with the deaths in the Herodian dynasty.²⁴¹ The phrase of the

²³⁹ Allen agrees with Strom in terms of the intertextual parallelism, however, I think that both fail to see this episode in terms of the whole chapter and book. Allen states, “though the ‘circumstantial striking parallelisms’ are significant, there is no reason to use this ‘intertextual proposal to advance the reading of Acts.’”, Allen, 96, quoting M.R. Strom, 289-292.

²⁴⁰ Marvin E. Tate, “Satan in the Old Testament” *Review Expositor* 89, (1992), 468.

²⁴¹ Josephus reports the distemper that Herod the Great suffered for a long time (JB 2, 33,# 656): “an inflammation of the abdomen, and a putrefaction of his privy member, that produced worms.” See also Antiq 17, 6, #146 , 168-169: “But now Herod’s distemper greatly increased upon him after a severe manner, and this by

judgment over the king of Babylon, “You have destroyed your land and killed your people” (Isa 14:20), is reminiscent of Herod Agrippa I and the killing of his own soldiers. As Tate concludes, “In truth the biblical narrative in Isaiah 14 seems to be a unique composition, making use of widely known traditional elements.”²⁴²

In conclusion, the purpose of these self-exaltation models or type-scenes is not simply to recall the stories from the Hebrew Bible, which were most likely very familiar to the hearers, but to use them in order to explain the importance of the new times with a prophetic sound and a legitimizing biblical foundation. In this manner, the actions of the biblical characters serve to re-actualize the current situation. In other words, the author’s strategy is not just that of retelling the story of Moses delivering the people, but of making connections with the description of the brothers fighting as a family conflict. Thus, Moses, fleeing and becoming a resident alien in a strange land parallels the exodus of Peter leaving Jerusalem for a mysterious “other” place. In the Exodus story, Moses leaves Egypt to begin the pilgrimage to Canaan, the promised land. In Peter’s liberation, he leaves the center of the Israelite life—Jerusalem. The repetitions of both verbs (LXX) made the comparison possible: God’s rescues his people (*exelésthai*,

God’s judgment upon him for his sins; for a fire glowed in him slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch outwardly as it augmented his pains inwardly... [169]... his entrails were also exulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also settled itself about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at his bottom of his belly. Nay farther, his privy member was putrefied, and produced worms, and when set upright he had difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, on account of the stench of his breath, and the quickness of its returns; he had also convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased his strength to an insufferable degree.”

²⁴² Tate, 469.

7:34). The spatial movement of God is also important here: God's coming down or going down (*katébēn*) are the exact opposite of the motif of the exaltation of Herod as the *archtypos* of the tyrant ruler which he represents. Meanwhile, God descends and the arrogant take their stand (*epistasaran*), a typical feature predicted in Luke's prologue in the Magnificat. God will exalt those who are humble and he will bring down the proud and powerful (Lk 1:51-2, 7). The Lucan Jesus has warned the followers that they will be led in front of kings and governors (Lk 21:12; cf. Acts 4:26).

The cosmic representation of the self-exaltation and demise of the head of power hegemonies such as Tyre and Babylon and is useful not only insofar as related, as Jesus did, to the fall and demise of Satan himself. It is also useful in two other ways: on the one hand, to establish a model of liberation for the oppressed nations/peoples; on the other hand, to make clear that it is God who is in charge of the affairs of this world. In the case of Herod Agrippa's death, Allen demonstrates that it belongs to the type-scene of the death of a tyrant, but with a "very different narrative function within the character of Luke-Acts."²⁴³ However, though he emphasizes the death as that of a persecutor, Allen states, "as we have noted, what is striking about Herod's offense in the type-scene is that it is an offense of omission. He is not described as intentionally attempting to evoke the praise he receives from the crowd, and yet he is the one who is punished instead of the crowd."²⁴⁴ It seems that he is expecting a different end to the story. Fortunately, later on Allen amends his conclusions, stating, "Clearly, Herod's

²⁴³ Allen, 74.

²⁴⁴ Allen, 88.

trespass into the realm of the Divine through his acceptance of the praise of Tyre and Sidon is more than just part of the convention of Death of Tyrant type-scenes.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Allen, 113. Several times in the reading of the thesis the reader is kept in suspense with his affirmations that later are negated. For example, Initially he argues that “Acts 12:19b-24 appears, at first glance, to be a digression” (75); later he states “the death of Herod is an integral part of the chapter” (91). Concerning the people of Tyre-Sidon, he adds, “to make matters worse, there are characters [Tyre and Sidon who]... are unrelated to the plot throughout the rest of the two-volume work... the most striking evidence of disconnectedness is that none of the Lukan heroes from the immediate context or from the entirety of Luke-Acts – indeed, no Christians at all – are present in the scene” (3); Again he adds later: “the conflict involves issues that seem unrelated to the rest of the plot of Luke-Acts” (75). He concludes suggesting that “Tyre and Sidon serve as a lens through which to view Herod better.” (87).

Role and Purpose of Acts 12 in Luke-Acts

It is absolutely vital to clarify the turning point in Acts in order to understand the proposed self-definition of the community. In Acts this decisive moment takes place not with the proclamation to the Gentiles or with the founding of the “first community in Europe” as many scholars suggest, but rather with the rejection of any power that seeks to usurp the prerogatives of God. For me, therefore, it is the narrative of liberation and divine punishment of Acts 12:20-24—the persecution by the “hand” of King Herod Agrippa I (44 C.E.) with “all expectation of the Jewish people” and the retribution for not “giv[ing] the glory to God”—that constitutes such a turning point, revealing the destiny of both the Empire and anyone who should show allegiance to those who call themselves divine and rulers of this world. Luke, I believe, is absolute in this regard. For Luke, there is no other name under heaven, even if such a name happens to be that of the Emperor himself and his Empire.

I would like to propose that Luke includes this section in order to legitimize Luke's community as the chosen depository of the promises of the Hebrew Bible. In order to accomplish this, Luke uses and reinterprets some elements of the pericope of the Syro-Phoenician woman of Mk 7, a pericope which is not found directly in Luke-Acts. However, I suggest that Luke used some elements in two unique passages in his narratives: the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16) and the death of Herod (Acts 12). These elements are vital to Luke's understanding of the purpose for his own community. The parallels are: a) the relationship between two groups: the rich/powerful and the poor, those who eat

at the table and those under the table²⁴⁶; b) the concept of food dependence mentioned in both episodes; and c) the directional and geographical shift that happens in the narrative after these two episodes, both of which mark the end and beginning of an era.

I believe Acts 12 serves as type of the climax of a succession of rejections by different groups of the institutions of Judaism and the revelation and fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. This climax takes place when the King, as head of State, persecutes the followers of the Way with the decapitation of James, the incarceration of Peter, the tyrannical death of the soldiers, and the pretentious attribution of divine prerogatives.

The situation becomes more intense, as Carl Holladay²⁴⁷ points out: The level of authority changes. The prisoner, who is the speaker for the group and another member of the inner circle, is isolated. The level of incarceration is increased: from overnight custody in a public prison, Peter is now being held by four squads of soldiers, sixteen in total—most likely, in this period, in a subterranean cell,²⁴⁸ bound with two chains between two soldiers. Despite all this, three are the doors that the angel and Peter go through; the last one opens

²⁴⁶ Luke illustrates this process of reversal when he cites: for those who say "we ate and drank with you" will not be recognized and the inclusion of peoples from different parts of the world. (Lk 13:26-29). I argue that this is the inclusion of the *ethnos* as Jews and Gentiles who "will eat" on the eschatological banquet. See also Lk 14:15-24, the eschatological banquet.

²⁴⁷ Carl R. Holladay, "Acts and the Fragments of Hellenistic Jewish Historians" in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claim upon Israel's Legacy*, edited by David P. Moessner, (Harrisburg:PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 181.

²⁴⁸ Against the mysterious "going down" or "descending" (*katebesan*)— the "famous seven steps" which are mentioned in D (Codex Bezae, Acts 12:10), that the Angel and Peter have to descend. For more see Conzelmann, 94.

'automatically.' This is also the third time Peter is incarcerated, and it is the third time he is rejected by a representative group of the Jews. First, it was the Sanhedrin; then, the Hellenistic Jews from the synagogues of Jerusalem, and now, the Head of State.

According to R. Pervo, the prison escape scenes are "one of the most widespread stock incidents of aretalogical literature. More than thirty such tales can be studied, in Acts, and Apoc[riphal] Acts, Dionysiac literature, Jewish narrative, historical and romantic novels, and novellas."²⁴⁹ The setting is ironic according to Pervo, because it is the Passover feast, a celebration of liberation. I do not follow some of his value treatment of the passage as "legend," I believe the aretalogical function should be read differently. This is the climax of suffering, a suffering that follows the typology of the Passion and Ascension Narratives and mainly of course also the Exodus of the church.²⁵⁰ This typological function is enhanced by some of the following examples: the alleged "kick"²⁵¹ of the angel which should be read in connection with the striking of Herod and Bar-Jesus by the hand of the angel; the process of putting on the dress should be contrasted with the robes that Herod wore; and the darkness of the imprisonment versus the bright light of the angel compared with the darkness of Bar-Jesus and the self-

²⁴⁹ Pervo, 21, By aretalogical literature, Pervo understands "various literary media and structures employed for proclaiming the virtues of a god or divine figures. The setting of aretalogy was in evangelism... by extension the term may apply to prose celebration of the highest virtue...Aretalogy is not a genre so much as a function", note 11, p. 146.

²⁵⁰ Rius-Camp, 46, quotes several authors whom also stress this issue. A.Strobel (1958), W. Dietrich (1972), J.Dupont (1984); R. Le Déaut (1963). Also described by Susan Garrett.

²⁵¹ According to Pervo.

exaltation of Herod²⁵² and its consequences. Susan R. Garrett demonstrates that not only in the Hebrew Scriptures, but also among the midrash writers and the writers of Qumran, prison and darkness were used to symbolize "sickness, death, or existence in Hades."²⁵³ This should be compared with Luke's theology of light (cf. Isa 42:6-7, "A light to the nations to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from prison those who sit in darkness")²⁵⁴. Luke uses it in Acts 26:18, contrasting it with the Satanic power, for it can "open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." This concept is strengthened by the deliverance from Satanic power, the escape, and the parallels of exaltation of Herod with the mythic pattern of the fall of Satan cast out of heaven (Lk 10:8).

Thus, Herod as the head of State personifies the rebellious rejections now intensified to the level of self-exaltation as a divine being. Consequently, he receives the typology of Lk 10, being compared with Satan cast down from the

²⁵² This parallel is more striking in light of the comparison with the narrative of Josephus, "On the second day of the show he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him' *Antiq.* (19.8.2 #344).

²⁵³ Susan R. Garret, "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1-24" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52, 1990, 670-673.

²⁵⁴ Allen, 97; although he criticizes Tannehill for "fail[ing] to give Acts 12:17-24 serious consideration", he uses his reference of Isa 42, as example of something that "strengthened the whole chapter... In both Isaiah 42 and Acts 12, release from prison is followed by God's rejection of idolatry, with specific mention of "glory."

privileged position. Someone else, the Righteous One, is in heaven representing the church. Herod's dynasty epitomizes the great persecutors of the Christian movement. Herod the Great killed innocent children in his search to extinguish the life of the announced Anointed. Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist and participated in the killing of Jesus.²⁵⁵ Agrippa I killed James and planned to destroy the church, but in dying in front of those who were dependent on him for food he received the death of a tyrant.²⁵⁶

In conclusion, the importance of chapter 12 is the directional shift in the narrative. The self-exalted are cast out as the epitome of those who “oppose God” *theomáchos*. As Peter is liberated and received by the skeptical church, he leaves for “another place,”²⁵⁷ giving the significant instructions to report these things to an unknown James (verse 17). The fact that the beheaded James is not restored to the group of the twelve and that Peter as well as Paul—later in the narrative—submits to another hierarchy foreshadows this shift.²⁵⁸ The unknown

²⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that Luke is the only Gospel to mention the mocking of Herod the king with the chief priest and scribes. Lk 23:11-12, "And Herod and Pilate became friends... before this day they had been enemies", equating in this way the three groups as the same level (cf. Acts 4:25-26).

²⁵⁶ Described *in extensu* by Allen, according to the patterns of antiquity.

²⁵⁷ For a detailed study of parallels between Peter's escape and the Exodus of Israel, in which Peter represents the persecution against the church from Herod and 'all the people of the Jews' compared to the Oppressor-Pharaoh, see “Four models from the Pentateuch in Acts in Josep Rius-Camps, "Cuatro Paradigmas del Pentateuco Refundidos en los Hechos de los Apóstoles", *Estudios Bíblicos*, 53 no 1, 25-54, noting especially the paradigm of Christ as the fulfillment of the Messianic Prophet. Rius-Camps did a fascinating comparison of words between the exodus of Peter from jail with the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, 46-52.

²⁵⁸ Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary*. Trans. John Bowden. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 140 writes, “The fact that there is no replacement for James son of Zebedee shows that in terms of salvation history the phase of the earliest community is over. The

James, one of the elders and the brother of the Lord, is the one who would lead in the Jerusalem Council (15:19); as Allen suggests, it seems as if the persecution by Herod results in the “disintegration of the Twelve.”²⁵⁹ The following chapters of Acts show Paul always reporting to “James and all the elders” (21:17), or, as The Epistle to the Galatians refers to him as one of the “reputed pillars” (Gal 2:9) of the church.

Though it is not our purpose to discuss the identification of the elders here,²⁶⁰ nonetheless we note that in chapter 11:1 this is the first time the word 'apostles' is linked with any other descriptive title. After this verse, the word is never again mentioned alone.²⁶¹ Structures of power are changing even in the interior of the movement: Acts 11:27 already recognizes the authority of the elders, the new leadership of the church received the gifts from the new name, a new reference for believers, "Christians." (26) It is "at that time" (cf. 11:27, 12:1)

future bearers of the mission to the Gentiles have already appeared in the scene” I do not subscribe completely to his understanding that the first disciples are ‘only’ in charge to the mission to the Gentiles. After all, Peter had already witnessed the proclamation to Cornelius. I will deal with this issue later in the following chapter.

²⁵⁹ Allen, 135.

²⁶⁰ For more on the elders see Robert Wall, "Successors to "The Twelve" according to Acts 12:1-17", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 53 (1991), 628-643. Wall parallels the pattern between the passion/exaltation of Jesus and Peter, suggesting that Peter appoints and authorize James as his successor. He states, "Authorization of such transition", 632. For a different view, see R.A. Campbell, "The Elders of the Jerusalem Church" *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS vol 44. (1993). 511-528. Campbell argues that "the elders are neither successors nor assistants of the Twelve, but are the Twelve themselves by another name", 516, and he suggests that "Luke is less concerned than we have supposed with apostleship as an office and more concerned with it as a commission", 527. See also, Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church", in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, Vol 4 , edited by R. Bauckham, (Grand Rapids: The Paternoster Press, 1995), 416-480.

²⁶¹ Campbell, 524.

that Herod laid violent hands against the church. "Hand" by "hand" is the consequence for one who does not recognize God's authority. The killing of the sixteen soldiers by Herod is an approval of the miraculous escape. The Christians have a new identity, new apostles, and new elders -- Jews and Gentiles. In 14:14, Barnabas and Paul, in that order, are recognized as apostles, and there are new elders in every city-church (14:23). The nature of the ensuing interaction between the Gentile churches and the Jerusalem church is difficult to elucidate, but as Bauckman concludes, James "was not merely [a] local leader, but the personal embodiment of the Jerusalem church's constitutional and eschatological centrality in relation to the whole developing Christian movement, Jewish and Gentile."²⁶²

The new movement is changing, leaving the metropolis, the depository of the spiritual food for the nations; the new group is leaving the structures of power that have oppressed the people. The apprehension for the place of Jerusalem is even perceived in the unbelieving church, which prays for the liberation of Peter but does not want to hear and recognize the testimony of those groups under the table, the women represented by the girl Rhoda²⁶³. Though even she reiterates

²⁶² Bauckham, 450.

²⁶³ For an analysis on Rhoda see, Ivonne Richter Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective*. (trans. L.M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) in terms of master-slave relations. See also James M. Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997); and Kathy Chambers, "Knock, Knock – Who's There?' Acts 12:6-17 as a Comedy of Errors" in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*. edited by A-J. Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 89-97. Concerning the silenced women, she states, "Luke, however is no social revolutionary. Attention to women and slaves is one thing: placing them ahead of men and the

the truth, those at the house make fun of her. Peter silences their unbelief and amazement by leaving that “place.”²⁶⁴

The contrasts between this prison-rescue and the initial incarceration of the apostles by the Sanhedrin at the beginning of the book, remind the reader to comprehend fully the ‘plan of God’. The plan of God is larger than what they think and expect. The followers will be in front of the authorities, rulers, and kings. Christians must take the message of liberation and hope to all the Empire, and yet will have to denounce those who alleged themselves to be divine or the *kurios* of the world. Christians must turn the world upside down, preaching that there is another *basileos* or King. I disagree with the traditional understanding of Christianity as protected and submissive to the Empire. Instead, I argue that Christians are called “to counter-cultural challenge to reject the dominant ideology and culture,” proclaiming the “times of refreshing” the “time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:20-21). Indeed, I maintain that the Christian community—given its almost imperialistic proclamation of a new empire and a different king (“to every nation

free is something else entirely,” 96. I will add: it is not Luke per se, but it is the new hierarchy, the new elite that is taking control and that is shifting in itself. I will return to these points in my the treatment of Acts 16.

²⁶⁴ Comparing this prison-rescue with Acts 4:3; 4:23-37; 5:18- we see the following contrast: a) although the church is praying fervently for him (12;5), Peter does not return to “his own” (*pros tous idious*) (4:23), but rather to the house of Mary and John Mark, who later the reader will know desert Paul; (b) On chapters 4 and 5 after the report, they praise God , in one mind (*homothumadon*), while in ch. 12, when Peter silenced them, we see there is no praise to God. Acts 12 gives the impression that Peter left during the same night v.18 “when morning came...” In Acts 4-5, the whole group continues preaching and most importantly stays together. The reader must remember also the death of the apostle James; perhaps this is the reason for the supposed unbelief.

under heaven,” 2:5)—constitutes a direct attack on the beliefs and tradition of imperial worship.

This emergent and swift phenomenon expands on all levels, from the political to the social to the religious. I believe, therefore, that the Roman authorities and their system of representatives are portrayed in Acts as usurping divine prerogatives (12; 14), as unjust (18:17—exemplified in the beating of Sosthenes in front of proconsul Gallio), as liars (23:27—the tribune Claudius Lysias who wrote in his letter that when he knew that Paul was a Roman citizen, he ran to rescue him”); and as Roman Governors Felix and Festus looking for bribes (24:26). In sum, I suggest that the Christian community in Acts stands in opposition to the Empire and thus as a highly politicized entity, not only socially but also spiritually, yet not to the point of violent revolution. This, I describe in the following chapters in relationship to the institutions of leadership that define Judaism and the Roman Empire and its imperial worship. To begin with, however, I will undertake a study of Roman imperial worship and its presuppositions, with a focus on the importance of the *neokoros* (temple-ward) as a representation of the sole cult for the emperor and not as a combined worship to god/dess and the emperor. This will serve as foundation for my view that Roman worship, commercialization, customs, and practices are represented in oppositional fashion in Acts.

CHAPTER III

ROMAN IMPERIAL WORSHIP – PRESUPPOSITIONS FOR THE STUDY

Roman Religion in History

Introduction and presuppositions

The tradition of the Emperor Cult in the Roman Empire is a vast topic. For my purposes here a brief description will help contextualize my reading of the Acts of the Apostles. The traditional perception among Classics and New Testament scholars “has been that there was no confrontation between Christians and Rome over the imperial cult until the end of the [first] century.”²⁶⁵ Given that mine is a postcolonial reading, we need to analyze not only the ancient texts about the Cult but also the interpreters of such texts. To this end, I review research that in particular (re)considers concepts and images of power structures. I evaluate presuppositions such as the following: (1) belief in emperors as divine compared with traditional readings that consider this perception to be purely political adulation; (2) the acceptance of Eastern ways of worship as a continual demand from the Eastern provinces in the erection/dedication of provincial temples; (3) the bias of interpreters in considering temples dedicated to both emperors and a local god/dess, but not

²⁶⁵ Bruce W. Winter, “Acts and Roman Religion” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, edited by David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf. Vol 2, *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*. (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1994), 97.

solely to emperors during their lifetime. The expansion of the Roman Empire through many centuries, from the days of the Republic (500-100 BCE) to the Christianized Empire (4th century CE), with its concomitant rituals and sacrifices establishing the imperial worship, increases this complexity. So here I limit the discussion to the period from the first century BCE to the first century CE.

It has been said that the Romans did not develop as complex a mythology as the Greeks, with their great stories about gods, goddesses and their interactions and adventures with human beings.²⁶⁶ Certainly, stories from the time of the Republic are scarce. J. A. North suggests that the main sources for the earlier centuries come from a handful of historians who lived in and after the Augustan age (Livy, Virgil, Suetonius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, etc.) who had “no personal knowledge even of the late Republic.”²⁶⁷ Other scholars, such as Brian Rapske, assume that “the structure and ethos of the Roman society remained constant despite remarkable political changes from Republic to Principate.”²⁶⁸ On the other hand, Jo-Ann Shelton speaks of the “Roman open-mindedness” to adopting the customs and beliefs of other cultures and incorporating them into Roman culture, especially when compared to the “fanatic intolerance” of Christianity in the following centuries.²⁶⁹ Thus, most scholars consider the purpose of religion in the Greco-Roman world to have been:

²⁶⁶ J.A. North, *Roman Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

²⁶⁷ North, *Roman Religion*, 8.

²⁶⁸ Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*, Vol 3, *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, Bruce W. Winter, Series editor, (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1994),38.

²⁶⁹ Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 453.

Useful to give a feeling of security to human understanding by 'easing the pressure' on the devout person who adhered strictly to the letter of the ritual. By fulfilling these religious 'scruples,' one is liberated from them, which is precisely what is implied by an expression such as *religione solvere (levare)* which occurs so often in Livy. In short, Roman piety was a form of therapy against superstitious fears.²⁷⁰

In addition, with the competitions for leadership among Sulla and Marius, Pompey and Caesar, Mark Anthony and Octavian, at the end of the late republic period, scholars suggest that a new process of mingling politics with religion was beginning. After a few years of war, Octavian became the sole victor and changed his name to Augustus ('the exalted'), and he began reviving and reforming politico-religious life by manipulating extant traditions and re-inventing or accommodating previous worship practices, all with the goal of solidifying these for his own political benefit. One such change was the reconstruction and renovation of existing temples, along with the erection of new ones, including one for his adopted father-god, *Divus Julius Caesar*.²⁷¹ In doing this, he essentially claimed for himself a new authority and position as priest-ruler, specifically Emperor-priest and *princeps*, cleverly consolidating his power in few years as the *pontifex maximus* (12 BCE).

This we know from the *Ara Pacis (Altar of Peace)*, a frieze relief from that period that shows a procession of four *flamines* (different kinds of priests) following Augustus. The same notion is reflected in the ideological agenda of his

²⁷⁰ Robert Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome: Religion in Everyday Life from Archaic to Imperial Times*. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 11.

²⁷¹ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 20.4 states, "I restored eighty-two temples of the gods within the city (of Rome) as consul for the sixth time (28 BCE) on the authority of the senate, not passing over any that needed restoration at the time."

posthumous literary work, the *Res Gestae*, an ideological document in which he portrays the constitution of the imperial worship, crafting the new position and the role of the Emperor as the sole advisor to the Senate. Not only that, it also depicts the establishment of a new world order with the Emperor acting as *Lord-Kurios and Saviour-Soter* of the *world-kosmos* and the bearer of the good news (*euangelion*). Thus, the hegemony of Augustus cemented the concept of the elite monopolizing not only political offices but also important priesthoods and colleges. As Cicero justifies it,

Among the many institutions, members of the college of *pontifices*, created and established by our forbears under the inspiration of the gods, nothing is more famous than their decision to commit to the same men both the worship of the gods and the care of the state interests.²⁷²

Later, as the imperial ideology becomes established throughout the Empire, through proclamations of games and festivals and so on, these notions of gods as separated from humans begin to dwindle. Gods and goddesses were not just mere statues at home or in temples but were paraded through the streets in processions of triumph after victory in wars—parades that always ended with sacrifices and rituals honoring the gods and the victors. These processions and celebrations created a new understanding of the gods and goddesses as now attending games held in their honor rather than remaining aloof in their temples.²⁷³ Power, state decisions, and religious life were all interpreted as part

²⁷² Cicero, *de domo* 1.

²⁷³ North, 37, 52. Scholars perceive that the new temple dedicated to Venus and Roma, with all its grandeur and majestic proportion, was innovative not only in the architecture itself but also in the idea of worshipping the goddess Roma in Rome itself (North, 43 quoting A. Claridge, *Rome*. (Oxford Archeological Guides,

of a new ideology of the supremacy of the divine (imperial) plan. During this period, literature records the existence and development of several groups of priests, such as the *haruspices*, the priest who guarded the Sybilline books, and other men – although female priests did exist – who were called to perform a variety of sacrifices in communal and private shrines and altars on behalf of the people. These increasingly elevated priests performed on behalf of a deliberately passive community which was now expressing its religious attitudes and experiences in terms of a collective or communitarian cult rather than through worship for which the individual was responsible. Increasingly, as North explains,

There was no important arena of private religious expression, separate from the public arena, because, unlike in a modern situation the individual citizen did not perceive himself as an isolated being who needed to consult his or her own conscience, to make his or her own peace with the gods, or to make life-determining decisions about his or her religious beliefs and identity.²⁷⁴

Yet other scholars are skeptical about the notion of an imperial or ruler cult as being tantamount to a new religion, much less about its being imposed from the center of the empire and spread to the provinces by imperial force. Such scholars believe that diversity in style of worship always requires “local initiative,” “without central consent,” and that thus “in many areas ruler worship seems to have been accepted quite uncritically and to have fitted into existing traditions and assumptions.”²⁷⁵ Although I agree that what was instituted was not entirely a

Oxford, 1988, 113-115; 201-7); Mary Beard, John North, Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume 2: A Sourcebook*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 257-8.

²⁷⁴ North, *Roman Religion*, 10.

²⁷⁵ North, 60.

new religion, in an Empire as tightly organized as the Roman one it is frankly difficult to imagine different renditions of worship without any unified control. The fact that only some of the Emperors – and not all - were deified indicates how centralized this process was.²⁷⁶ What we see is worship in which the “State cults were organized by the state; family cults by the (always male) head of the family; the cults of particular section of the city or country by the local authorities in the regions; and clubs based on work or neighborhood by their own chosen leaders.”²⁷⁷ Jo-Ann Shelton suggests that

Since the very existence of the state depended on the conscientious performance of religious rites, state officials assumed responsibility for the performance of these rites. Priests, therefore, were state officials, and temples and religious festivals received state funding.²⁷⁸

With this in mind, scholars suggest that it is only during the emergence of an imperial worship ideology with its reconstruction of history and myth that such a process can be established. In this chapter I trace the development of the Hellenistic ruler cult into this imperial ideology of supremacy in which emperors were worshipped politically, religiously, or both. Since the 1984 publication of Simon R. F. Price’s, *Rituals and Powers: The Roman imperial Cult in Asia Minor*²⁷⁹, the topic has generated extensive discussion. I conclude—along with Simon Price, Barbara Burrell, Steven Friesen, Ittai Gradel, and others—that in

²⁷⁶ After Augustus, Claudius is deified (or *Apocolocyntosis* according to Seneca), skipping Tiberius and Gaius.

²⁷⁷ North, 65.

²⁷⁸ Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Roman Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*. 2nd ed (New York /Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 359.

²⁷⁹ S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Powers: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

fact the Roman Caesar was considered to be divine not only after his death, but during his life as well, and everywhere in the empire including the West, particularly in Italy and therefore Rome.²⁸⁰

In conclusion, the long held assumption that the Roman religion was composed only of religious “scruples” based on a priest’s accurate and mathematically precise performance of ancient rituals has long been abandoned.²⁸¹ Today, scholars believe that at different times reflected the “political and social conditions of the society and its formations.”²⁸² This religious identity, structure, and maintenance had a solid correlation with the political life and the institutions in which they were based. The existence of diverse religious rituals at different levels of society—such as the paterfamilias, clubs, associations, colleges, priests, and other leaders (*magistri*)—confirms this supposition.²⁸³ P. Harland concludes categorically that

²⁸⁰ See the following sections for documentation, on Barbara Burrell, *Neokoroi: Greek Cities and Roman Emperors*, (Boston: Brill, 2004); Steve Friesen *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia in the cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden/New York: E.J. Brill, 1993); Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002). Manfred Clauss, *Kaiser und Gott. Herrscherkult im römischen Reich*. (Stuttgart/Leipzig: Saur 1999), 17. On how the reading of empire propaganda has influenced the literature, see David Quint, *Epic and Empire*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam and European Identities*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 40, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁸¹ North, 15; See also D. Fishwick, “The Development of Provincial Ruler Worship in the Western Roman Empire.” *ANRW* 1978, II.16.2:1201-53 who speaks of “a purely mechanical exercise.

²⁸² North, 19.

²⁸³ For more with and updated Bibliography on the topic see, Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), especially Part II, pp. 115-176.

Contrary to common scholarly depictions, the evidence of the imperial rituals within associations suggested the genuine importance of imperial gods within religious life at the local level. Far from being solely political with no religious significance for the populace, imperial cults and the gods they honored were thoroughly integrated at various levels within society.²⁸⁴

Others scholars, such as J. Nelson Kraybil, argue that imperial worship is seen as a conjunction of the “interplay of idolatry, military power and commerce,”²⁸⁵ and that the main characteristic of mercantilism was “economic and political ties with an Empire that had sold out to injustice, idolatry and greed.”²⁸⁶ I seek to describe in the following section some characteristics of this supremacy.

²⁸⁴ Harland, 266-7.

²⁸⁵ J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, 17.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 16.

Roman Self-identity and religion

Corporate Identity

Roman self-identity understood certain characteristics such as supremacy, nationalism, and moral virtues to have brought the Roman Empire its hegemonic success. In the Roman Empire and in successive European empires, this exercise of power, “bestow[ed] a value of universal validity.”²⁸⁷ This self-identity was never a product of the masses or a public expression of a set of common beliefs. To the contrary, the understanding of the term *religio* was always in reference to the “traditional honours paid to the gods by the state.” Likewise, Romans used the term *superstitio* as a counterpart to *religio*, expressed in “excessive forms of behaviour” as well as “irregular” religious practices, meaning not following the customs of the state.²⁸⁸

Likewise, when the Roman elite spoke of the inclusive collective as being the representation and desire of the entire community, the truth was that only the interests of those at the center of power were represented. Thus, for example, Cicero, in retelling the crimes of the Senator and Governor of Sicilia, Verres, (75 BCE), states “Our allies and friends were starved to death. Our finest and best equipped fleets were lost or destroyed. What an appalling disgrace for us, the

²⁸⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Nations and Empires: Recurring Patterns in the Political Order*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), 203, quoted by R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology*. (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), 147.

²⁸⁸ Beard, North, Price, *RoR*, Vol 2. 216-217.

Roman people!”²⁸⁹ This collective and corporate identity was managed in order to retain the control of society. For example, when the Roman priests took vows and performed sacrifices, these were on behalf of the entire—and absent—community. When a Roman general went to war, he did it in the name of the entire Roman people. Likewise, in the celebrations of the sacrifices and games, the majority of the inhabitants of the *oikoumenē* did not actively participate, perhaps with the exception of supplying the elements for the sacrifices. For example Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in *Roman Antiquities* 4.62.5.6 recalls that

After the expulsion of the kings, the Roman people assumed responsibility for the Sibylline oracles and entrusted their care to distinguished citizens. These priests [15 political men] have this responsibility for life, but are exempt from military service and other duties of a citizen. Public slaves are assigned to them.²⁹⁰

One might say that the differences between *religio* and *superstitio* were the most important factor in establishing what was legitimate and what was illegitimate. The Roman *religio* was never a “religion free for all”, much less an interaction of personal or even collective beliefs. The Roman religion was a set a superior system of cults, of rituals, and of form, rather than of ideas and beliefs, conceived by and for the elite in a very centralized political system which considered others’ rituals as anathema, to be avoided as defying tradition. Cicero reports that “Jupiter is Best and Greatest not because he makes us just or sober or wise, but because *he makes us healthy, and right and prosperous.*”²⁹¹ Such otherness may be referred to as foreign practices as well as any practices that

²⁸⁹ Shelton, 277.

²⁹⁰ Quoted by Shelton, 378.

²⁹¹ Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, 3.87, quoted by Shelton, 371.

perturb the order and the supremacy of a constructed “imagined community or nationalism”²⁹² of the Empire under the terms of political subversion. In short, any ritual or practice which challenged this view was against the hegemony of the political and religious identity.

Empires always work with the national and local oligarchies in order to gain the submission of the rest of the population. Therefore, it can by no means be said that the totality of the people favored the imperialist system. As Said cites Lord Cromer, one of the most famously redoubtable of British imperial proconsuls stated “We do not govern Egypt; we only govern the governors of Egypt.”²⁹³ Likewise, an empire controls the religious life of the peoples through their priests, liturgies, sacrifices, and ritual, which permeate and indeed support the sacredness of their own hierarchies. This primacy of imperial power reflects the establishment of a popular cultural formation. As Said states, “Most cultural formation presumed the permanent primacy of the imperial power.”²⁹⁴

Religio licita or illicita?

Another anachronistic presupposition is the discussion of whether the Jewish Christian movement of the first century was considered a *religio licita* or

²⁹² Beard, North, Price, 214 quoting Anderson (1983) phrase. In general Romans authors share a xenophobic reaction to other nations’ gods. Cicero writes, “let no one have separate gods, either new or foreign, unless they are officially allowed’ (Laws, II, 19). Turcan writes, “Varro was in indignant that the gods of Alexandria should be revered in Rome: it was nonsense!” quoted in Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, (Oxford, UK & Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1996), 10.

²⁹³ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 199.

²⁹⁴ Said, *CI*, 199.

illicita. Beard—North—Price have suggested that Tertullian's usage of the contrary term, *religio licita*, does not mean the term *religio illicita* existed. Judaism might be regarded as *superstitio*; however, the antiquity of its practices evoked and sanctioned some kind of special recognition. Yet, Christian intolerance of any rituals or sacrifices performed for the Emperor meant that Christianity was perceived as a threat to the Roman Empire. It is true that persecution of Christians in the first century was localized rather than widespread throughout the empire. However, I think that Christianity was far from being defined in terms of *religio*, either *licit* or *illicit*, in the first century, and would suggest that it was considered more of a *superstitio*. In this sense, Christianity was a threat to the establishment of the traditional Roman religion of the state. The persecution of the second and especially the third centuries show this process intensifying and changing to the point where Christianity is placed in this category of "illicit."

The Ruler Cult – Imperial Worship in History

Introduction

The ruler cult —transformed later into the imperial cult—dates back to the time of the Hellenistic rulers before Alexander and the establishment of the Greek empire. For example, the first case of a man offered honors “as to a god” was Lysander, a Spartan general, by Samos in 404 B.C. In addition, Demetrius Poliorketēs son of Antigonos, after liberating the city of Athens in 307 BCE, is referred to in a later cultic hymn as follows: “O Son of the mighty god Poseidon and of Aphrodite... First of all, Beloved one, bring about peace/for you are the Lord (kurios)”. In a previous section of the same hymn, he is also described as “serene as befits the god,” and with “all the friends in a circle/ and he himself in their midst/ just as if the friends were the stars, and he the sun.”²⁹⁵ In addition, Hellenistic rulers such as Antioch II are addressed as *theos*-god, yet scholars suggest this is no more than “another example of the civic cults, which must be distinguished from the imperial cults properly so called.”²⁹⁶ With regard to Antiochus Epiphanes IV, Klauck also speaks only of “attempts to promote Hellenisation and cultural alienation in general”²⁹⁷ rather than of a general acceptance of the term.

²⁹⁵ OGIS 6.28f., cited by Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 256-7.

²⁹⁶ Klauck, 276.

²⁹⁷ Klauck, 280.

During the development of the cult of rulers, benefactors, heroes, and so forth, Aristotle recognized that several elements and attributes of honor and cult were added to practices such as: “honors, literary monuments in verse and prose, sacrifices, honorary public office, first seats [in the theater], tombs, statues, public banquets, a piece of land, or – *as the barbarians do* – prostration to the ground [*proskunēsis*] and ecstatic acclamations [*ekstaseis*].”²⁹⁸ In addition, he notes: “Such a one seems to be counted as a god among human beings” (*Pol.* 3.8.1 [1284a 10f.]).²⁹⁹

The discussion therefore returns to whether the ruler cult ingrained in the Hellenistic culture and the honors to Alexander and the Hellenistic kings, really constitutes a new type of emperor worship or is mere adulation.³⁰⁰ Everett Ferguson, for example, writes that: “The cult of the Roman emperors had its proximate cause in the peace, prosperity, and flourishing of the eastern provinces during the first two centuries of the Christian era – but its background was much older.”³⁰¹ It is not until the time of Julius Caesar that similar evidence is conveniently found of the divinization of Romulus, the founder of Rome, thus helpfully “creat[ing] a model for the way in which he [Caesar] wished his own person to be treated.”³⁰² Likewise, it is only during the apex of the Roman Imperial propaganda (Virgil, Horace, Plutarch, 100 CE) that we find biographies

²⁹⁸ Klauck, 263, citing Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.9 [1361a 28-37]) my emphasis.

²⁹⁹ Klauck, 267.

³⁰⁰ See Miriam T. Griffin, *Nero: The End of A Dynasty* (London: Batsford, 1984), 218, who speaks of Nero as “adulation and elevation far above other men” rather than self-divinization.

³⁰¹ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Third Edition, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2003), 200.

³⁰² Klauck, 285.

of Alexander and other rulers produced, with acclamations of the “godlike supreme ruler” and so forth. In addition, it is the bias of Greco-Roman authors towards anything ‘*oriental*’ or eastern that leads them to produce fascinating stories about the conception of the ruler cult for Alexander based on his “assimilation to his new oriental-Persian environment”³⁰³. Thus, once more the West accepts and adopts submissively coded practices of the divine origin of emperor. In this manner, Klauck affirms that we basically do not find in Plutarch “the specific essence of the cult of the rulers, viz. the ritual veneration of Alexander while he was still alive... in the final analysis, Alexander’s role as founder of the cult of rulers appears modest.”³⁰⁴

Thus, we can see that there is still a dichotomy and irony at work in the interpretation of the imperial cult. Although there is strong evidence that the ruler cult and its tradition of sovereignty existed for almost three hundred years before the time of the Roman Empire, interpreters following the literature of imperial propaganda still believe that, during the time of the first emperors, “the Roman Emperors never demanded participation in the cult.”³⁰⁵ For example, such traditional interpreters consider the personification of the goddess Roma in the West, particularly in Italy, to be an “invented” concept. As Klauck puts it in rather misogynist language: “It was only in the Greek world, as a consequence of the Roman penetration of East and West, that this concept was developed – or

³⁰³ Klauck. 271.

³⁰⁴ Klauck, 272, 274.

³⁰⁵ David G. Horrell, “Introduction” in *JSNT* 27.3 (2005), 251-255, p 252. citing to James McLaren’s article in the same collection.

perhaps one should rather say, invented.”³⁰⁶ I seek to describe some of these presuppositions against anything originating in the East.

Understanding the Other in history

In this section, I seek to describe: (1) the understanding of the Other – especially the Easterner-- in general in history; (2) how this view influenced and transformed the ruler cult of Hellenism to imperial worship; and (3) the Romans in comparison with the ancient Egyptians.

Easterners and “Oriental religions” have typically being understood as the Other which were considered primitive insofar as based in nature or animal-worshipping cults.³⁰⁷ Contrary, Christianity was understood to be a Western phenomenon, though it derives directly from the Eastern religion of Judaism, both “were naturally omitted.”³⁰⁸ For example, Beard—North—Price present an orderly system of Roman religion completely isolated from its Eastern counterparts, which by contrast are always studied and analyzed *en bloc* and are generally referred to as exotic, noisy, and suspicious. The phenomenon and reality of the empire was that the majority of Romans citizens lived outside the city of Rome (the Urbs became the Orbis). Even Rome as a city was a hybrid society of mixed peoples and marginal groups who contributed to and participated in various kinds of cults and rituals. Robert Turcan presents a more dynamic relationship between

³⁰⁶ Klauck, 283.

³⁰⁷ Turcan, 7.

³⁰⁸ Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*. Trans. Antonia Nevill, (Oxford, UK; Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1996), 3. Turcan cites Franz Cumont as the originator of the term “Oriental religions.”

the “cold” and “strict formalism” of Roman worship and the “wild and frenzied rhythms of the Egyptians’ dances”, the “harsh and strident noise of the Isiac sistra, the hoarse cries of the priests of Atargatis”, or “the hymns sung in chorus beneath the vault of Persian caverns” of Mythraic ceremonies.³⁰⁹ The contrast of “color,” “violence,” “music,” and “the personal devotion of those followers of Osiris with bruised chests or with bleeding knees” shakes the representation of formalism and coldness of the Roman religion described by European scholars. This is contrasted with the often-hybrid Roman iconography, beginning with the breastplate of the emperors but also found in numismatic and syncretistic evidence.

Another category to describe the ‘irregular’ or ‘other’ was magic. Although initially considered as a “combination of medicine, religion, and astrology” derived from Persia, it typically described a system that sought public health, the control of the gods, and the knowledge of the future.³¹⁰ The prominence of magic practices throughout the empire as well as among the elite and emperors is well known. The main preoccupation and fear of the elite was the illicit alleged power that practitioners claimed to have, especially those excluded from the hierarchy of politico-social order. In this sense, practices that were not authorized or performed by those in power were considered to be subversive threats to the

³⁰⁹ Turcan, 17-18.

³¹⁰ Mary Beard, John North, Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: Vol 1: A History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 219.

establishment.³¹¹ I continue describing the understanding of the other as *Oriental* or *Eastern* in the ruler cult.

The *Oriental* or Easterner Perspective

The climax of the ruler cult came under the influence of Roman Emperors. The reasons for this are diverse, but three main ones have been noted. (1) Eastern influences – the pharaoh of Egypt was considered to be divine, the son of god or even a god incarnate. (2) Greek influences: Greek heroes who had become gods because of benefits conferred on others or because of significant achievements (a matter of status of rank). Aristotle noted the common opinion that “by an excess of *aretē* (excellence, virtue, glorious deeds) men could become gods.”³¹² (3) Traditional civic cult: the beliefs in and practices of the patron/client, or the ruler, as benefactor of the people. Thus, Ferguson states, “Cities came to be personified, and cult was offered to the personified people of the state.”³¹³ On this personification, ideas of nationalism, patriotism, territorial expansion, and favor from the gods were all present and interrelated³¹⁴ whereby loyalty was shown by participation. Ferguson concludes, “The cult of the emperor thus became something more than another phenomenon of idolatry.”

³¹¹ Tacitus recalls the consultation of a distinguished woman Lollia Paulina, once married to Emperor Gaius Caligula, who was accused of having consulted astrologers, magicians, about of her future as Claudius’s wife, as “pernicious plans against the state”. Quoted in *RoR*, i, 233.

³¹² Nicomachean Ethics 1145A; Rhetoric 1.5.9, Politics 3.8.1 “that a true king “seems to be accounted as a god among human beings”, quoted by Ferguson, 203. These three notions also belong to Ferguson, 200-04.

³¹³ Ferguson, 203.

³¹⁴ Ferguson, 203.

However, the Eastern influences were always located against all conventions of normalcy. For example, North discloses his own imperialist views when he states that the Romans were orderly and precise, while he labels the Other as pagans (although never defined) and therefore irrational, impulsive, and breaking normal conventions. Though he concedes that some Romans participated in pagan or *Oriental* mysteries during their stay in the provinces, those “leading Romans who played a part in the cult in the army seem not to have advertised any commitment back in Rome.”³¹⁵ For North, similar and common structures in other cults must have originated or derived in some form from Greece and “not from the East at all.”³¹⁶ In other words, it is impossible for him to conceive of any kind of structured foreign cult like the Greco-Roman order. Thus, Easterners remain uncivilized and unstructured, “odd or funny.” He concludes, “The pagans might think them odd or funny, but hardly menacing.”³¹⁷ Similarly, Robert Turcan favors the diversity of the Eastern (oriental) religions as the reasons for a development in mental attitudes for personal and collective models of piety in this way illustrating the religiosity of the people.³¹⁸

Zanker shows how the empire developed different cultic “forms of paying homage to the imperial house” and not necessarily to the ruler cult of the East. However, he reveals some bias against the East when he states that in the East,

people had long felt the lack of a genuine ruler and of an empire with which they could identify. It was inevitable that the West would

³¹⁵ North, 71

³¹⁶ North, 68

³¹⁷ North, 72. This observation is made in reference to the Jewish Diaspora as “other ethnic group living in pagan cities.”

³¹⁸ Turcan, 341.

take over the ruler cult, since it gave local aristocracies a new vehicle for expressing and maintaining their positions of power. The integration of the ruler cult into traditional religious ritual allowed each individual, and the community as a whole, to share the feeling of participation in the restoration of the state.³¹⁹

Thus, in addition to the temple inscriptions, practices, sacrifices, and other epigraphic evidence, one must be aware of these particular presuppositions of interpreters in the study of the ruler cult. They seem in general³²⁰ to argue that any cult or emergent forms of divinization must come from the East, where, “the very nature of Empire itself means that it can only be understood by starting from the provinces and looking inward.”³²¹ Thus, any concept derived from the East is seen immediately as pejorative and superstitious. Based on this concept, the notion that the imperial cult was practiced in Italy or in Western provinces must be disregarded as false.³²² Steven Friesen speaks of “imperial cults of Asia.”³²³ Therefore, the traditional view is that “a universal cult of ruler did not exist in the

³¹⁹ Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988), 330-31.

³²⁰ For more see: Duncan Fishwick *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West : Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*, (Leiden/New York: E.J. Brill, 1987-1992). A monumental series of eight books.

³²¹ F. Millar, “The Emperor, the Senate and the Provinces” now in H.M. Cotton and G.M. Rogers (eds.), *Rome, the Greek World, and the East, I. The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 291. quoted by C. Kavin Rowe, “Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way Through the Connundrum?” *JSNT* 27.3 (2005), 279.

³²² See Burrell, Friesen for examples. There is another group of scholars like Rowe, 280, who still follow the traditional predicament. He quotes “one of the most commonly accepted results in the study of the cult is the fact that the cult was different in the Latin West than it was in the Greek East” citing D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult in the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (2 Vols: Leiden; E.J., 1989, 1992) the quote is on Vol 1, p.1.

³²³ Friesen, 25.

Roman empire. Each city, each province, each group worshipped this or that sovereign according to its own discretion and ritual.”³²⁴

Another modern characteristic that permeates interpretation is the notion of non-evolving cultures, of unchanging continuity, and of universalism in philosophical practices and values in the rest of the Empire. Yet, the religion of the city of Rome in itself is quite different from the practice of the hundreds of city-states around the empire, including the acquired foreign and sometimes despicable practices of the thousands of legions and military men reverencing their living and dead emperors³²⁵ - especially in the East.

The idea the “the imperial cult was spread by soldiers, officials, merchants and immigrants, in cooperation with groups of prominent local citizens who aimed at a positive relationship with the Roman power” (325) diminishes the argument against the elite, as if the lower strata of the soldiers was able to exercise power over the higher—up officers, typically members of the aristocratic families of the senatorial rank. I think that more of the latter group demanded such worship and established ways to rule with a combination of religiosity and politics.

An Example Comparing the Romans with the Egyptians

Classicist Richard Alston, in comparing the Ancient Romans with their Egyptian counterparts, suggests how the West appropriates the Easterners

³²⁴ E. Bickerman , “Consecratio” in W. den Boer (ed.), *Le culte des souverains dans l’empire romain* (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1973), 9 cited by Rowe, 280.

³²⁵ Cicero and Varro, “both blame the negligence of the ruling class for this loss of traditional rites and activities” Beard, North, Price, *Religions of Rome I*, 125-134.

myths and system of beliefs, especially through the use of literature.³²⁶ The reasoning for this appropriation derives from the European mentality of divisiveness rather than integration, a divisiveness fed by the racism, monotheism, and evangelism of Christianity.

In his analysis of Roman writers on the religions of Egypt, Alston reaches the conclusion that the imperial literature transformed, appropriated, cleansed, and redefined the Egyptian myths in order to explain and use them in the Roman context. Based on this article of Alston, I can identify several assumptions typical of an imperial writer's view of an other's literature.

(a) The first characteristic is the differentiation between them. Using Derrida's and Foucault's terms, it is about establishing *différence*. In considering the religious cult of Isis and Osiris, Alston shows how Juvenal's and Plutarch's first endeavor is always to differentiate themselves as literate, rational Roman, those who do not participate in the practices of "alleged" cannibalism. Ridiculing the other and establishing the axial differences between "them" and "us"³²⁷ is a typical way of marking otherness and particularly the superiority of one's own practices. Consequently, the other—quite deliberately—becomes "objectified, classified, and discussed." Rather than simply analyzed, the other

³²⁶ Richard Alston, "Conquest by Text: Juvenal and Plutarch on Egypt" in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*. Edited by Jane Webster and Nick Cooper. Proceedings of a Symposium held at Leicester University, Nov 1994. (Leicester: UK: School of Archeological Studies", 1996, 99.

³²⁷ Alston shows that "in the ancient world, cannibalism was also used to designate the other." Although he clearly establishes that "there is no good evidence for Egyptian cannibalism at this date or any other." 101, 107.

in fact becomes separate, disempowered, and voiceless through such objectifications.

(b) Second, Alston shows how the process of “Greek acculturation” occurred. In other words, in order to validate the process of separation and distinction, Alston suggests that it was common to “distance the poet from the voice of the narrator” by means of a testimonial of mythologization. Thus “the audience is invited to consider the veracity of the tale.” Other practices include the quotation of endless citations of other Greek authors, explaining the object, the other. The sheer number of sources seems to give validity to the testimonial. This completes what I call the process of “appropriation.” The story, the myth, is no longer foreign; it is read in the context of the philosophical tradition of the powerful. Definitely, it is a purified or cleaned-up reading, one which makes the powerful one acceptable and respectable. The myth now becomes “universal”—“it is Greek”; knowledgeable; superior, with new and different meaning. The myth has been changed, and it is no longer the cultural possession of the other. As Alston shows, for the West it becomes “*interpretatio Graeca*.”³²⁸ it is ours.

(c) Third, after the process of ownership has been completed, it is used for teaching, purifying, enlightening the other with a process of redefinition. The course of action of induced self-definition of the other begins with “pseudo-integration.” Observing the bad and good elements that the other may present, the powerful readapt those elements through a procedure of

³²⁸ Alston, 104.

purification that guarantees and legitimates the practice of inculturation. The colonizer wants the other, the colonized, to become as they are. It is almost as a syncretistic definition, because, after all, the colonizer will never allow the other to become completely like the colonizer himself.

(d) At the end, therefore, the other, the native, remains the same, since it cannot be properly assimilated. Even though the process of “integrating the mentality” seems to work, and the meaning of the self-definition of the Other changes slightly, it is acceptable only as seen through the ideas and ideals of the powerful.

Alston explains how the modern Europeans differentiate from the ancient Romans, adducing for the latter a more nuanced interest in ‘integration.’ He states, “The Roman elite may have been far more willing to integrate aspects of the culture of their subject peoples.”³²⁹ Even in the wording of the previous statement, Romans remain subject to the issues of elite (us) and “subject peoples” (them).

The problem of Divinization or Deification

There is no general consensus in Classical Studies regarding the meaning of the deification of emperors. One group of scholars denies that the Caesars were ever deified as “god-like” by the Senate during or after their lifetimes. They interpret these acts just as “symptoms of the emperor’s vanity.”³³⁰ Among this

³²⁹ Alston, 107.

³³⁰ Christopher A. Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

group, there are some who claim that no intelligent person of the first or second century would accept real veneration/adoration of the emperor; the most they would do is to understand it as a form of adulation and imperial propaganda. There is another group that during the past two decades, especially since the publication of S. R. F. Price's *Rituals and Powers: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Oxford, 1984), have been challenging this view. In addition, scholars such as Barbara Burrell, Ittai Gradel, Steve Friesen, and others would consider this former postulate as an untenable view of the Imperial Cult, chiefly given the confirmation of innumerable inscriptions from all over the Empire testifying to the existence of temple, priests, and sacrifices to the living emperor. Thus, I suggest that the imperial cult was a sincere religious phenomenon and a key element of the "faith of fifty million people" as Clifford Ando has recently labeled it³³¹

The critique has been that scholars sometimes "ignored the sources or twisted the interpretation."³³² Gradel makes this statement especially related to scholars "from the 19th century onward." Hence, there have been persistent attempts to reconcile *conflicting evidence* and statements "claiming that worship of the living emperor in Italy was dedicated, not to himself in god-like fashion, but rather to his Genius" namely since all people possessed Genius, then he adds, "this worship did not impute divinity to its 'owner'."³³³

³³¹ Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*, University of California, 2000).

³³² Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*. Oxford Classical Monographs, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 77.

³³³ Gradel, 77-80 rebuts the position of worshipping only the Genius formulated by Lily Ross Taylor (1931) *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*.

Another topic of discussion is the difference between the process of “divinization” and “deification.” Both are related also to the hope of the afterlife of the individual, a central element of the mystery religions that were prominent during the imperial period.³³⁴ These were honors paid to the rulers—later to the emperors—either during their lifetime or only after their death. Klauck recognizes that the issue is “complicated” due to epigraphic evidence showing the practice was done to living emperors, beginning as early as 49 BCE, with citizens declaring the emperors as “*tēs theon epiphanē*”, “the god who has appeared visibly and universal saviour of the life of human beings.”³³⁵ He believes that the problem reside in several inscriptions in Greek where either the writer or the Greek language was “incapable of retaining the distinction between *divus* (‘deified’) and *deus* (‘god’).” Other examples are statements and titles such as “*theos ek theou*,” “literally ‘god from god’ or, better, in a paraphrase ‘a god himself, and the son of god.’”³³⁶ This is very much contrary to the example of the famous expression “Know yourself”, inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi, which reminds one to accept the boundaries of humanity in contrast to the realm of the gods.³³⁷ Therefore, in summary, the textual evidence expresses clearly the concept of a god; it is the modern interpretation of such titles that makes the matter conflictive, reducing the meaning to an adulatory and honorific title rather than an indication of acceptance of a divine reality.

³³⁴ Klauck, 315.

³³⁵ Klauck, 290. citing an Ephesian inscription, SIG 3/760.

³³⁶ Klauck, 293.

³³⁷ Klauck, 260.

This complexity can perhaps be explained as the literary invention of the Senatorial rank class as it looked for more favors from the Emperor and thus contributed to the spread of emperor worship. For example, Pliny the Elder writes, “To be a god means that a mortal human being helps another mortal and this is the path to eternal glory. This path was taken by the most noble of the Romans, and now Vespasian Augustus, the greatest ruler of all times, takes this path along with his children, coming to the help of the enfeebled world.”³³⁸ In addition, concerning the last words of Vespasian: “*Vae, puto deus fio* – Alas, I think that I am becoming a god,” scholars believe that these should be taken literally. Thus, for example, Klauck argues,

In view of all that he did [Vespasian] in other contexts to promote the imperial cult, it is hardly likely that he intended open mockery of the apotheosis as a naïve ritual; rather, his words should be understood ‘as the ironic legacy of a hard-boiled administrator who realized clearly that his eternal reward would consist in being caught posthumously in his own trap.’³³⁹

Klauck demolishes the two basic arguments that festivities were done only after the deification/consecratio of the emperor and that nothing of this kind ever happened in Italy. He cites the festal calendar of a temple of Augustus located in Italy, “although outside of Rome,” as early as 3 and 14 CE, while he was still alive.

Gradel concludes that this was a matter of semantics – that words used later meant something different at the time. For example, he discusses the sources of Cicero—a contemporary who calls Caesar Divus Julius as early as 46

³³⁸ Pliny the Elder, *Hist. Nat.* 2.18f cited by Klauck. 309.

³³⁹ Klauck, 309 citing Duncan Fishwick, 300 concerning the last words of Vespasian “*Vae, puto deus fio*’ Alas, I think that I am becoming a god”).

BCE—in contrast with Dio Cassius (180-205 CE) who prefers the term Jupiter Julius, thereby avoiding the divine appellation, because during his time such a title would indicate a deified emperor after his death. His discussion is based on the similar semantic distinction of the dogmatic theological system of Christianity. He states, “The words [Deus invictus] obviously did not exclude that Caesar really was a god in an absolute sense, but this question, one of dogma, was simply irrelevant. It was in fact generally irrelevant in pagan worship whether of Caesar or of Jupiter. What mattered was power, again relative divinity, and Caesar’s power was at this stage unquestioned, as was Jupiter’s.”³⁴⁰

Traditional posture of shared cult partnership between Emperors and local gods

Another long held posture states that when gods and emperors shared a temple, “the gods’ cult was considered primary whereas the emperors received lesser and more equivocal honors.”³⁴¹ This assumption of a shared partnership resides in Augustus’ hesitance to share the cult with the local gods, mainly the goddess Roma.³⁴² However, some scholars believe that statements such as that in Suetonius (*Augustus*, 52), rejecting any cult in any province unless accompanied by the goddess Roma can be considered as imperial propaganda or as an act of “politic modesty” in order to secure his position with the Senate.

The irony and paradox of classicist Roman historians is clear: On the one hand, they exalt the imperial worship common throughout the empire—even in

³⁴⁰ Gradel, 70-72.

³⁴¹ Burrell, 324a.

³⁴² Suetonius, *Augustus* 52. “He [Augustus] did not accept one (the erection of temples) unless it was in the name of Rome as well as his.”

Rome—including not only of the living or deified emperor but also of his family. On the other, at the end, some of them are hesitant to believe that living emperors were worshipped as gods. The presuppositions of these scholars are, to my mind, still biased, because they based their criteria on the writings of ancient historians who wrote with a distinct imperial propaganda in mind. It is worth noting that all these ancient writers belong to the senatorial rank, and, therefore, as Burrell states, “It is no accident that the sources that report a clear division between cults for Romans and for non-Romans, like most historical writings, emanate from the (usually senatorial) upper class.”³⁴³ Thus, for example, the Roman writer Tacitus states concerning Augustus: “Nothing was left as an honor for gods, since he wanted to be worshipped in temples and in the image of divinities by flamines and priests.”³⁴⁴

About Emperor Tiberius, Tacitus quotes him as follows: “Since the deified Augustus did not forbid that a temple to himself and to the city of Rome be built at Pergamon, I who view as law his deeds and words have followed his example all the more readily because reverence for the Senate was joined with my own cult.”³⁴⁵ Likewise, about the time of Nero, the senator Tacitus did not have any problem suggesting “the building of a temple to *divus* Nero, from the public funds.”³⁴⁶ Another much later testimony concerning the establishment of the provincial imperial cult in 29 BCE, documented by Cassius Dio two and half centuries later, recalls not only Augustus’ wishes but also Suetonius’ admiration

³⁴³ Burrell, 362a.

³⁴⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.10.6.

³⁴⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.37-38 in 25 C.E. Burrell, 362b.

³⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.74.3.

of the emperor for not accepting the cult. Burrell rightfully asserts that this must be interpreted as only one side of the information, since “we have no record of his outright refusal, as has been postulated from later refusals by his successors.” Indeed, his own deeds (*Res Gestae*) show that he did accept eighty silver statues of himself, later “converted into golden offerings to Apollo.”³⁴⁷

Another part of the problem is the long-held belief that the established Hellenistic ruler cult based on the *Koina*—or provincial and local associations with their political and adulatory interest in worshipping—used the cult ruler as a means of aggrandizement. This argument is used to illustrate the lack of imperial temples in mainland Greece or Egypt that did not have a “stable *koina* in imperial times.”³⁴⁸ The contrary is the case of places such as Crete, Cyprus, Lycaonia, or Syria, for although all had *koina*, they did not produce any *neokoroi*. Similarly, the Galatians, who were not Hellenes, also “may have built a provincial temple to Augustus and Rome as early as his life time.”³⁴⁹ The hardest case to discern is whether Italy and the Western provinces provided such honors and worship. There is no consensus about this among scholars. Some, like Burrell, state that “there are many cases where emperors were treated as gods in Rome, in Italy, and in the western provinces, however] not all such instances are the same; nor were they in the East, as this work tries to show” (359b).

³⁴⁷ Burrell, 362a.

³⁴⁸ Burrell, 344a.

³⁴⁹ Burrell, 344a.

However, the existence of temple inscriptions, life-size statues, colossi, and portraits of emperors and their family in the West and East has challenged the notion whether these representations were cult statues (*amalga*) or were the likeness (*eikon*) of them. Each case is complicated in that not even the style of hair and dress necessarily determine whether a statue represented the individual as god or mortal.³⁵⁰

Therefore, more recently one has begun to think that in the provincial temples the principal cult was for the emperors. Barbara Burrell's impressive work (2004) covers more than 37 cities bearing the title of *neokoroi* during the first two centuries. She demonstrates that in several imperial cities—such as Kyzikos, Smirna, and even Ephesos—worship was dedicated in some cases only to the emperor, including living emperors. She states, “We shall see that in the provincial temples, the principal cult was that of the emperors, and any gods who were introduced to share the temple were considered secondary.”³⁵¹ Yet, she challenges the idea of partnership in the cult, stating that “as early as 27 BCE, before the temple at Pergamon was even complete, the name of Rome could drop out and the temple be called simply that of Augustus, or later, the *Sebasteion*” (324a).

³⁵⁰ Burrell, 318a, states that some statues were made by locals, while others were sent by Rome. For example, in the temple and cellars of Ephesus two colossi have been found (others argue that there were five). In Pergamon statues of Zeus, Philios and Trajan have been found. In the temple of Augustus and Rome at Lepcis Magna (a city which was not *neokoros* in Tripolitania) – there were found two separate cellars which contained an enthroned acrolith statue of Augustus and goddess Rome, in the other cellar was an enthroned statue of Tiberius and one of his mother, Livia-Julia).

³⁵¹ Burrell, 324a.

Scholars have noted that during the times of Tiberius the subject of cult partners drops off. With Gaius, scholars see a resurgence in the stated connection of the god Apollo and his temple at Didyma. In Ephesos, Burrell states that, during the times of Titus and Vespasian, “there is no sign of any deity or personification sharing the cult of the Augusti” (325a).

Thus, many temples which celebrated an association between Augustus and the goddess Roma are later mentioned only as being the “temple of Augustus at Pergamon, and Ankyra, and Tiberius and Trajan” and that emperors and family members “could stand alone in depictions of their temples at Smyrna and Pergamon, with no sign of their cult partners Livia and the Senate or Zeus Philios” (3b). Burrell further attests that “the reverse is never true: the provincial temples initially dedicated to Rome and Augustus are never called simply temples of Rome.” (3b) For example in relation to Galatia, she writes:

It is noteworthy that between ca. 20 and 96 C.E. the former priests of the Galatians for the god Augustus and the goddess Roma became simply chief priests of Augustus sometime also called *sebastophantai* and limited to the cult of Augustus, “as it was specifically distinguished from the position of ‘hierophantes of the *theoi Sebastoi*’ for the other Augusti.”³⁵²

Similarly, her work also reopens the controversy about temples being called “municipal temple” rather than provincial, as in the case of Ephesus, whose “own second provincial temple, which made it twice *neokoros*, is called simply ‘the temple of the god Hadrian.’”³⁵³ A reference to the Hadrianeia festivals is useful here, “Hadrian was worshipped in those places neither with nor as Zeus: the

³⁵² Burrell, *Neokoros*, 346b

³⁵³ Burrell, 61b note 26, contra Friesen *Twice Neokoros* (Leiden, 1993), 37, n 27.

enormous temples built in these three cities were all dedicated to the worship of Hadrian himself, who showed no undue modesty in accepting such tributes.”³⁵⁴

She states:

Owing to the respect his scholarship has justly earned, Price's reattribution of the Kyzikos temple to Zeus has been widely followed; but in this one case his arguments were not firmly based, and are contradicted by the ancient evidence. Those sources that identify the temple at Kyzikos by anything but its size (Malalas, the epigram in the Greek Anthology, and the wonder lists of Niketas of Herakleia and the Vat.gr. 989) all call it the temple of Hadrian; and the church historian Socrates affirms that Hadrian was worshipped at Kyzikos as "the thirteenth god" (31).

In addition she argues,

This is not to deny that there was a temple of Zeus elsewhere in the city; Pliny the Elder mentioned an ivory statue of Zeus in a temple in Kyzikos (32), but as Pliny famously died in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79, that temple was already standing fifty years before Hadrian ever came to Kyzikos to grant the city a temple and the title *neokoros*.³⁵⁵

In the same manner, she continues, the *neokoros* at Smyrna allowed the inhabitants of the city and the province “to worship an armored imperial figure as the cult image within the temple,”³⁵⁶ as well as performing a sacred festival with associations of *theologoi* and *hymnodoi*, performing encomia and hymns to the cult object³⁵⁷

In addition, she concludes that “associations of *hymnodoi* to sing the emperors’ praises were established at specific provincial temples of Asia by

³⁵⁴ Barbara Burrell, “Temples of Hadrian, not Zeus”, in Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies, 2002/2003. Online edition: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3684/is_200201/ai_n9069470#continue

³⁵⁵ Burrell, “*Temple of Hadrian...*” online.

³⁵⁶ Burrell, “*Temple of Hadrian...*”, online”

³⁵⁷ Burrell, “*Temple of Hadrian...*” online article, page 32, 35.

imperial permission.”³⁵⁸ The most famous group was that for Augustus at Pergamon, an elite hereditary organization of up to forty men, supported by a levy on the entire province. I describe these titles of theologoi and hymnodoi in the following sections.

Concerning the controversy of worship in the East and West, again the conflictive late version of Cassius Dio causes some problems. He accepts the honors in the “preeminent cities” of Asia and in Bithynia, but denies the possibility for worship in Rome or even the West, making the line of separation between Rome and the rest of the world. He writes,

In the meantime Caesar, besides taking care of affairs generally, gave permission that there be established sacred areas to Rome and his father Caesar, whom he named the hero Julius, in Ephesos and in Nikaia; for these were at that time the preeminent cities in Asia and in Bithynia respectively. He commanded that the Romans resident there honor those divinities, but he permitted the foreigners, whom he called Hellenes, to consecrate precincts to himself, the Asians’ in Pergamon and the Bithynians’ in Nikomedia. From that beginning, the latter practice has been carried on under other emperors, not only in the Greek provinces but in the other as well, insofar as they obey the Romans. He wrote for example: For in the capital itself and the rest of Italy none of the emperors, no matter how worthy of fame, has dared to do this; still, even there they give divine honors and build shrines as well to dead emperors who have ruled justly.³⁵⁹

Burrell reminds us that “Dio did not mention the fact that the goddess Rome shared the cult not just in Caesar’s temple but in Augustus’s as well. Perhaps Dio omitted to name her because her presence would have obscured his point that Augustus was the model for the subsequent imperial cult; as Dio knew, later emperors did not consider themselves obliged to honor Rome in the temples

³⁵⁸ Burrell, *Neokoros*, 349a

³⁵⁹ Cassius Dio *Roman History*, 51.20.6-9

dedicated to them. It may also be that the personification of Rome was introduced into cults of Augustus sometime after he accepted these two temples”³⁶⁰ Another presupposition and conflictive issue is whether this worship was mandatory for every person in the empire, or whether it was offered as voluntary for certain elites. I pause to describe these relations in the next section.

Mandatory or voluntary worship

Another presupposition of the study of the ruler cult and imperial worship is the question of whether this was voluntarily offered by the cities/peoples or demanded by those in power. During this patronage of the Roman Empire in the political and cultural context, there was at one and the same time repulsion and admiration towards the center, as often happens in situations of unequal powers.

On the one hand, Yarbro Collins argues, the people show a “combination of hostility toward the local elite and toward the Roman authorities [that] is not surprising, since they cooperated with and supported one another.”³⁶¹ On the other, Price states that, “In the cult for the emperor... 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.”³⁶² Just Robert Turcan sees the cult of the family performed by the paterfamilias completely

³⁶⁰ Burrell, 275b.

³⁶¹ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 123.

³⁶² Price, *Rituals*, pp.2-3. Cf. G. Alfody, “Subject and Rule, Subjects and Methods: An Attempt at a Conclusion”, in Small (ed.), *Subject and Ruler*, pp 254-61 (255) quoted by Rowe, 282.

absent and disassociated from the cult-empire, Shelton explains that the 'state religion had developed as an expansion of the rites performed by individuals families."³⁶³

In contrast to this, other scholars such as Judge state that

The cult of the ruler, then, had never been felt to be an imposition on republicanism. It was an accepted method of recognizing the individual benefactor. The Romans now tactfully developed this into a cult of their own leadership in a universal and permanent form, thus creating a loyalty in certainly transcended that to the local republic. Its religious character was fundamental to its success.³⁶⁴

Regarding the differences between what was demanded and offered, Klauck states:

Originally, the cult of rulers and emperors was not something demanded, but something freely offered, as a reaction to the experience of being helped. At other periods there was a stronger social pressure to set up such cults, and they were also promoted by the imperial court itself. Nevertheless, the imperial cult never made any exclusive claims for itself, nor did it become a genuine competitor to the traditional belief in the gods; it was something added on to everything else. This meant that, as a rule, conflicts of loyalty did not arise.³⁶⁵

Zanker suggests that although Augustus "made a modest impression and never tired of reassuring his fellow Romans that he was a mere mortal" in the winter of 30/29 BCE, he allowed the provincial assemblies in Bithynia and Asia to celebrate "cult worship of his person"³⁶⁶ associated with the goddess Roma. The city of Rome seems to be the exception. However, he continues, "We may still ask how much difference it made for the worshiper – aside from the question of

³⁶³ Shelton, 360, Turcan, 17.

³⁶⁴ Judge, 25.

³⁶⁵ Klauck, 326-7.

³⁶⁶ Zanker, 302.

labels – that the genius of Augustus, and not Augustus himself, was worshiped together with the Lares in the local district sanctuaries of Rome.”³⁶⁷

Zanker reminds us that the cult of the emperor was “usually in the middle of the city, integrated into the center of religious, political, and economic life” (298). In both large and small cities, even in the country side, isolated altars were re-accommodated from former gods and rededicated to the imperial cult. Thus, Zanker categorically emphasizes that “every city dweller” participated in worship to the emperor. This process of conscientization was not only effected during the times of sacrifices, but also during “parades, public meals, and lavish games” as reflected in statuary, iconographical reliefs, and the numismatic evidence.³⁶⁸ For example, Zanker categorically states that

Men and women received even at death on their sarcophagus representations of the heroic triumphant role of the victorious emperor – though they never participated in battle. In the same manner, “middle-class women without any social standing employed the same forms created to honor those of the imperial family.”³⁶⁹

Contrary to voluntary submission to the imperial cult, Rapske argues that “with the full flowering of the Empire, it became possible to prosecute someone on the charge of treason for publishing or uttering libels against the Emperor, his

³⁶⁷ Zanker, 304.

³⁶⁸ See R.F. Price ; Zanker, 308 cites the example of the city of Pompey, the resort town of Rome, with “two new sanctuaries” as example of the West, since it is always adduced that in the East the people were more susceptible to superstition and religiosity. By the end of the Augustus’s reign, he argues “there was probably not a single Roman city in Italy or the western provinces that did not enjoy several cults linked directly or indirectly to the imperial house”, 304

³⁶⁹ Zanker, 336.

forebears or his relations... or showing disrespect for his image.”³⁷⁰ Though this may be argued after the first century, he warns us that, “in some sense, the category of offenses related to philosophy and/or the occult is connected with treason, for it encompasses actions which might unravel the fabric of the State or threaten its representatives.”³⁷¹

North restricts this mandatory worship to the East, with no presence in the Roman context, attesting “There is careful respect for the rule that living rulers do not receive sacrifice directly as gods; and that the sacrifices to their divine essences take the lowest place in the ritual order. But we have no reason to think that his precision had to be respected outside the Roman context.”³⁷² It is in this environment that the hidden transcript of the rituals of the imperial worship emerges fully with a combination of a mandatory and voluntary worship on behalf of the patron, or the local, regional, provincial and imperial order.

Imperial cult development during the time of Augustus

It is during the time of Augustus that power was consolidated in a sole rulership and military dictatorship of the elite Patrician class of the Republic, where only fifteen families exerted the control of the whole empire. It is during this period that political and religious offices—from emperors, through senatorial

³⁷⁰ Rapske, 43 quoting Suetonius, *Vit.* 7.14.14; Tacitus, *Ann.* 6:39.

³⁷¹ Rapske, 43.

³⁷² North, *Roman Religion*, 61.

posts, to the imperial priests—were occupied only by members of this hierarchical group. Scholars believe that it is not until Augustus, with the production of imperial literary propaganda (Augustus himself, Virgil, Horace, Plutarch and others)³⁷³ and the consolidation of the imperium, which the concept of the cult changed. It was Augustus himself who defined and consolidated the consecration of his adoptive father Julius Caesar, witnessing the soul of Caesar arising to heaven and insisting later that he should be worshipped as god and venerated in temples.³⁷⁴ The Roman writer Ovid writes concerning the relationship between Octavian and Caesar: “For none of all Caesar’s great deeds was greater than this: /that he was the father of this progeny.”³⁷⁵

Nikolaos of Damascus describes the reaction in the Greek world toward the new ruler cult figure: “The whole of humanity turn to the Sebastos (i.e.

³⁷³ Most of the writers belonged to the Senatorial rank and had a political career. For example, Tacitus c. 56/57 – ca 125, enter politics under Vespasian (in 77), reaches the praetorship in 88, and he becomes a member of some important priestly colleges. He is Consul in 97, and governor of a province in Asia (112-113). Of his *Histories*, unfortunately we do not have most of the material corresponding to the historical representation of Acts (Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and the final years of Nero). Similarly, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (ca. 70-ca. 135) was put in charge by Trajan of his personal library. Suetonius was also personal secretariat of the official correspondence for Hadrian (119-122). Finally, the historian Cassius Dio (156-229) a Senator himself writes extensively over the period of 983 years of Rome from the founding to 229. He gives some brief summaries after that period.

³⁷⁴ Klauck, 294.

³⁷⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.745-51 quoted by Klauck, 294. Klauck writes, “The act of consecration required a witness to arise in the assembled Senate and to swear that he had seen the soul of the Imperator ascend to heaven from the pyre, for example in the flight of an eagle up to heaven out of the flames. This ‘ascension’ of members of the imperial family – including wives, siblings and children of the emperor – became a popular motif on coins and in other works of visual art” (293).

Augustus) filled with reverence. Cities and provincial councils honor him with temples and sacrifices, for this is his due. In this way do they give thanks to him everywhere for his benevolence.”³⁷⁶

The establishment of the sacred festal calendar—including the birthdays of the emperors, family members, victories in wars, games, his genius, etc.—help to consolidate the repertoire and propaganda of the imperial cult. Even the name of Augustus—the exalted one—came from the sacral vocabulary. A good example is found in the prayer-vow to the god(s) of the commander in chief before taking the city of Carthage,³⁷⁷ which shows the interconnection between militarism, territorial extension, and the celebration of games and sacrifices as a commemoration. The prayer-vow states:

Whether you are a god or a goddess who hold under your protection the people and city of Carthage, and you also, almighty god, who have taken under your protection this city and this people, to you I pray, you I implore, you I respectfully ask to abandon the people and city of Carthage, to desert their structures, temples, sanctuaries, and urban area, to leave them. I ask you to instill in that people and city fear, terror, and oblivion, and to come to me and my people when you have left these. I agree to you and that you may take under your protection me and the people of Rome and my soldiers in such a way that we may know and perceive it. If you will do this, I vow that I will build for you temples and celebrate for you games.

Thus, this issue is difficult to analyze, since Classics scholars are not in agreement whether the Imperial worship was an innovation, a renovation, or a reformed style of the old rituals from the early times in the Republic. In addition, whether this manner of worship was a new creation, or a revamping of an

³⁷⁶ Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. by Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988), 297.

³⁷⁷ Macrobius, *Saturnalia Conversations* 3.9.7, 8, quoted by Shelton, 368

abandoned cult forgotten during the years of civil war³⁷⁸ that later flourished during the Augustan era with some new rites and practices, we do not know. Some believe that it is the emergence of the fame and power of Augustus as the supreme ruler that produces this great awakening of revival with the restoring of temples, rituals, priesthods. Another facet of these complications regarding the Imperial worship introduced by Augustus is whether these reformations or accommodations were made for the entire Empire or just the for city of Rome. It is known that the Imperial worship of Caesar and sometimes of his wife shows different practices in the provinces. On the other hand, it is widely recognized that, first, the majority of the poets writing about this period were not actual witnesses, but rather wrote many years after the events they describe, and, second, that they were intimately associated with the imperial system, which made it impossible to believe in anything akin to a free-press or in academic freedom.³⁷⁹ They were in fact in one way or another in the employ of the emperor.

So while Simon Price states that “the imperial cult, along with politics and diplomacy constructed the reality of the Roman Empire,”³⁸⁰ others argue for the objectivity and rationality of the Roman way, maintaining that

The principate may well have had its religion of the sovereign, its cult of Rome and Augustus, its flamines, pontiffs, augustal seviri and other official brotherhoods. It even had an ideology, but neither dogmas, theology, nor a ‘state religion’. For the imperial cult was but one religion among others, and was in no way exclusive. A true

³⁷⁸ North, 58.

³⁷⁹ Cicero, an augur himself, member of the senatorial class “a position of political matter as much as religious matter” Shelton, 376.

³⁸⁰ Price, 248.

state religion made its appearance with Constantine and the Christians Empire.³⁸¹

Thus, scholars have the tendency to minimize allusions of aggrandizement for the emperors by emphasizing instead a series of rejections of flattery and excessive honors paid to Tiberius, Claudius, and Trajan. However, other scholars disagree thinking that that “the reply does not formulate an explicit prohibition.”³⁸²

In conclusion, there is consensus that it is with Augustus and his participation in a kind of priesthood, often as high priest, that the imperial worship flourished in every corner of the empire.

Other emperors

There are two emperors that claim divinity and seem more serious in their claim: Gaius and Nero. However, since the Senate banned their decrees and legacy, historians have trouble analyzing them and their actions as representatives of the Roman aristocratic way. It is later that this ideological legitimation strengthens with Vespasian, who introduces the development of the imperial cult in the West as an explanation for the possibility of “overcoming this obstacle [his ascendancy not from a distinguished family] and establishing

³⁸¹ Turcan, 340.

³⁸² Klauck, 302 citing Price, 1984, p.72; C. Habicht “Die augusteische Zeit und das erste Jahrhundert nach Christi Geburt”, in W. den Boer, *Le culte des souverains dans l'empire romain* (EnAC 19), Geneva 1973. p.47f.

continuity with his Julio-Claudian predecessors.”³⁸³ In other words, historians demonize Vespasian and the Flavian dynasty as the Other for not belonging to the elite, therefore dismissing the seriousness about real claims for divinity. For example, they cite instances where people refer to Domitian as “dominus et deus noster” (Our lord and god), but dismiss all citations when anyone beginning with Augustus makes such claims.

After the exaltation of Nero, the emperor Trajan is referred to by Pliny the Younger as “son of an immortal father and son of a god. Some scholars affirm that Trajan asked Pliny not to “flatter him as god,” yet Klauck reminds us that “as proconsul... he would have the chance to reduce the imperial cult there, but on the evidence of his famous letter concerning Christians, he did not so. On the contrary, he continued to practice the established forms.”³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Klauck, 309.

³⁸⁴ Klauck, 312.

The Importance of *Neokoros* as sole cult for the emperor and not as a combined worship to god/dess and the emperor

Introduction to *Neokoroi*³⁸⁵

The definition of the term *neokoroi*—temple wardens—comes from the word ‘*naos*’, with the second part ‘*koros*’ meaning the “one who nourishes, maintains” (4a). This signified “that they possessed a provincial temple to the cult of the Roman emperor.”³⁸⁶ In this manner, “the word originally designated an official whose basic responsibility was the care, upkeep or practical daily functioning of a sacred building, and whose duties could include the control of entry, safekeeping of valuable items, and the enactment of ritual or sacrifice.” (1) In addition, the term later became an honorific and official title for a city.

A *koinon* (Gk. common) was simply an organization of cities, peoples, bound together by common interests and the practices of a particular cult. However, not all cities had their own *koinon*. During the first three centuries of imperial worship, these groups of representative individuals were composed and headed by chief priests, who presided over the province which did not have administrative or governmental capabilities. However, these chief priests were generally “not just Roman citizens but knights or sometimes even of senatorial

³⁸⁵ In the last years several significant works on the use of *Neokoroi* have been published: Barbara Burrell, *Neokoroi: Greek Cities and Roman Emperors*, (Brill, 2004) and Roselinde E. Kearsley, ed. with colab. of Trevor V. Evans, *Greeks and Romans in Imperial Asia: Mixed Language Inscriptions and Linguistic Evidence for Cultural Interaction until the End of AD III*, (Bohn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GMBH, 2001). Steve Friessen *Twice Neokoros* (Leiden 1993). I rely heavily on the work of Burrell and its new perspective.

³⁸⁶ Barbara Burrell, *Neokoroi: Greek Cities and Roman Emperors*. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004), 1.

family, and frequently they were friends of prominent Romans in power.” In addition, they received titles such as “Asiarch, Lysiarch, Pamphylarch, Pontarch.” Women also served as head of the koinon, as chief priestess, usually, the wife or relative of a high priest or koinon leader. The office was very costly and could involve a massive outlay of funds not only to add special magnificence to koinon festivals but for such things as gladiatorial games and feasts, special building projects, or even the payment of taxes for the entire province. For this outlay, and especially when presiding over the contests donated, the chief priest or chief priestess was often allowed the right to dress in purple, “to wear a crown set with busts of the Augusti, and to walk at the head of the ritual procession of the koinon.”³⁸⁷

Though the cult of the ruler came about several centuries before the establishment of the title, it is in Asia that “the koinon cult of the emperors started with the first emperor Augustus, and thus antedated the use of ‘*neokoros*’ as an official title for a city by about a century.”³⁸⁸ This is significant because it is only during the establishment of the empire as the new world order that Augustus is considered a living god. In this manner, according to Burrell, “we have gone beyond former attitudes: the Judeo-Christian concern for what was believed rather than what was done, and its accompanying disdain for flatterers who would call a man a god; and beyond a simple faith in Realpolitik, which can only ask who profits, whether politically or economically.”³⁸⁹ However, she explains

³⁸⁷ Burrell, *Neokoroi*, 344- 346b, this a summary of several quotations.

³⁸⁸ Burrell, 275a.

³⁸⁹ Burrell, 2b.

and states categorically that in her study “which is [in] the level of the koinon and the province, we shall see less contradiction: the living emperor was addressed as a god, sometimes second only to the chief and patron gods of the cities in which he was worshipped.” (2b)

Thus, she argues that these temples were not only named after the living emperor but sometimes were referred as the temple of the Augusti, passing from one emperor to the next. For example, at Ephesus the same temple is later referred as of the god Vespasian (2b). This shift has changed the understanding of ruler-cults in the Hellenistic world and the acculturation into the West. Burrell argues that the practice shows that “towns and individuals may have set up altars or statues to the emperor without even bothering to seek permission of a governor, much less to seek the nod of authorities at Rome” (3b). This is contrary to what Zanker maintains, that mostly aristocratic families did seek the permission from the emperor, and, when granted, set up their own statues.³⁹⁰ Thus, honorific titles were given to people, koinon, and even individuals who erected statues and honors to the emperors. She states that “equating a city or a people with a temple official is not a far-fetched comparison (6a). Inscriptions at Ephesus shows that the council or *boule* had the title of “*philosebastos*” (friend of the Augusti) specifying even the “*demos as neokoros*” (6b).

Perhaps a reason for this new approach is, as Burrell affirms, the fact of the extent/dissemination of the imperial cult in the early years of the Empire, so that “once such honors became typical, historians apparently felt no need to

³⁹⁰ Zanker, 331-332 as it is the case of M. Holconius Rufus in a copy statue of Mars Ultor in the city of Pompeii.

continue documenting them.”³⁹¹ I will suggest that this is the crux of the matter as an act of resistance for the author of Acts, as one seeing and living in a oppressive environment.

In conclusion, by the end of the first century C.E., some (but not all) of the cities that had a temple for this provincial imperial cult were called *neokoroi*. It is worth noting that the very title denoted a caretaker, not an owner of the temple: “ownership, at least in the beginning, was in the hands of the koinon, which assigned its chief priests to preside over the temples in *neokoroi* cities.”³⁹²

One therefore wonders whether the title of *neokoros* bears any reciprocity between the ruling Emperor as the ultimate patron-client and the benefactor city, giving the city higher standing among its peers³⁹³; or whether it served the purpose of restoring civic life, with public buildings attesting to past glory. In the next section I show some examples mainly from Ephesus, but also briefly from Smyrna and others.

Ephesus

The desire of emperors to set up cult worship in different cities across the empire included a long process of requesting, deliberating and granting in the Senate such honors to the cities, which points to the policy of political territorial control of imperial worship. Though this was not necessary, it certainly served the politics of supremacy in order to maintain hegemony. Every emperor wanted to

³⁹¹ Burrell, 7a.

³⁹² Burrell, *Neokoroi*, 2b.

³⁹³ Burrell, 283a.

establish his own worship: Augustus-Ephesos and Pergamon; Tyberius-Smyrna; Gaius-Miletos; the imperial family, later Hadrian in Kyzikos; and Vespasian-Perge in Pamphylia. In all, thirty-seven cities received the title of *neokoros* with reference to different emperors and their families—many of them as a second title, others even as the third time. This shows that the cult to the emperor was not just a way of ingratiating the superstitious Easterners (Hellenes of Asia), as has often been suggested.

Traditionally, the purpose of *neokoros* included: political favors; gifts to the cities; honors; retribution in titles; taxes and tributes exemption; altars for future sacrifices and offerings; giving the local native aristocracy future earnings. Certainly, all such were understandable circumstantial motivations for the cult to the emperor. However, there were other factors involved in the process. For the modern mind, any association with spirituality is eliminated from the onset. Questions such as: Did the emperor and the people performing sacrifices really believe that they were gods—or at least the emanation of some divine spirits? Were they able to heal through the process of incantations and prayers in the presence of the cult statues? I expect that the existence of temples, associations of priests, practices of sacrifices, and so forth actually shows that the motives were more along the lines of political control.

Another question about *neokoros* arises from the strange statement in Acts 19:35, “Who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the *neokoros* of the great Artemis and of the statue that fell from heaven?” This shows a different reality. Was the grammateus of Ephesus joking? Was Ephesus *neokoros* of

Artemis, or is this an indication of plans to honor Nero that never came to reality? Why do other temples and literature from that specific time of Nero not include the same information as we find in Acts? Burrell is not sure. She states, “calling a city *neokoros* of a god may antedate the title’s application to a *koinon* temple of an emperor, if in the mid-50s C.E. a grammateus of Ephesos actually asked.”³⁹⁴

The crux of the matter is that there are references to certain temples in the empire, “even in the lifetimes of the emperors in question” with the specific designation of temple of the god and the emperor. For example, the temple at Pergamon was called that of Rome and Augustus; that at Smyrna, of Tiberius, Julia, and even of the Senate; that at Miletos, of Gaius Caesar. Why then was the temple of Ephesus known later as “temple of the Augusti” (in plural) and not only by the name of the ruling emperor, as for example, the temple of Domitian? In trying to answer these questions, Burrell proposes that it is “possibly because there had been a delay in its constructions, and its original object of cult was not the current emperor... but no sign of the cult of any emperor previous to Vespasian has been found” (63b). For whatever reason, Ephesus seems to be an exception.

Gaius & Nero

Though Burrell cites the inscription at Kyzikos that uses the “term *neokoros* in connection with the city’s imperial cult as early as the reign of Gaius” and the existence of the ruler cult to the hero Julius as early as 29 BCE, she

³⁹⁴ Burrell, 63.

prefers the traditional dating for the book of Acts (77-79 CE)—and its reference to *neokoros*— “twenty-five years or more” after the visit of Paul in 52-54. Acts presents Paul around the years 52-54, which corresponds to the late Claudian and early Neronian period. She understands the words of the grammateus, “Who does not know that Ephesus is the *neokoros* of Artemis?” (19:35) to be a mere “metaphor, to illustrate the city’s relationship to Artemis’ temple and image”. She states that “the term ‘*neokoros*’ was not cited here as part of the city’s official titlature.”³⁹⁵ Later she states, “For very soon after, the title ‘*neokoros*’ was to become part of official civic titlature in Asia, identified exclusively with the provincial imperial cult, not the possession of the temple of Artemis.”³⁹⁶ Yet, contrary to this, in the footnote she clarifies that, as early as the second century, Ephesus was “officially *neokoros* of the Augusti, and only of the Augusti. Indeed the title would not have been appropriate again until Ephesus did become *neokoros* of Artemis, at the beginning of the third, not the second century” (60a).

However, numismatic evidence from Ephesus show that the title in later Neronian coins (65/66),³⁹⁷ as the “first appearance ever on a coin of the title ‘*neokoros*’ occurred at Ephesus.” She asks, “Why would so old a cult [hero Julius, 29BCE] suddenly be celebrated on coins of 65/66 C.E.? And is it only a coincidence that the Ephesian *kouretes*, an association dedicated to the cult and

³⁹⁵ Burrell, 60a.

³⁹⁶ Burrell, 60a.

³⁹⁷ Burrell, 60b.

rituals of Artemis Ephesia, added the title *philosebastoi* 'Augustus-loving' to their list of members just at this period?"³⁹⁸

She continues:

It has long been thought that Ephesos was declaring itself to be *neokoros* of Artemis on the Aviola coins, just as the grammateus declared the city *neokoros* of Artemis in Acts. But it is just possible that instead Ephesos was calling itself *neokoros* for a provincial temple that it had been seeking since the reign of Tiberius, and which it may have finally won in the reign of Nero. If that was so, it was a particularly unfortunate time for the establishment of such a temple. Some two years later, in June 68, Nero was declared a public enemy by the Senate and killed himself, after which his name, not to mention his cult, was condemned."³⁹⁹

She concludes: "Nero may have also granted a provincial temple to Asia, which made Ephesos, at least until his death, one of the first cities to call itself *neokoros*; but the grant is anything but certain, and the circumstances unknown" (363b).

The Augusti

This title of *philosebastoi* or friends of Augustus adds another component to the matter. With the new Flavian lineage, the apparent familiar ancestry/genealogy line of power was broken during the infamous year (69 CE). However, it is Domitian, as late as 88/89, who dedicated for "the koinon, the temple of Asia of the Augusti [Sebastoi] in Ephesos,"⁴⁰⁰ as if the title of friends of

³⁹⁸ Burrell, 61a.

³⁹⁹ Burrell, 61a, quoting *Roman Provincial Coinage 1*, RPC 1:433 of A. Burnett, M. Amandry, P. Ripollès. (London/Paris 1992).

⁴⁰⁰ Burrell, 61b citing E. Meyer, "Augusti" *Chiron* 5: 1975, pp 393-402 S Price, *Rituals of Power*, 1984, 58, 254-257.

Augusti and an earlier honor to the Augusti (the former emperors and its family) were still valid.

Theologoi

In addition to the reference of the title Augusti, the provincial temple of the Augusti at Ephesos contains some officers mentioned as: theologoi—in charge of prases in prose (nine or more); thesmodoi—deliverers of precepts or oracles; neopoioi—in charge of the temple’s fabric, “perhaps directed teams of craftsmen of the province”; Sebastoneos (of unknown office) and Sebastologos—in charge of eulogies, but specifically of Augustus or the Augusti.⁴⁰¹

Domitian

During the reign of Domitian, Ephesus was named twice *Neokoros*, given the establishment of a new provincial cult of the Emperors, the Ephesian temple of the Sebastoi.⁴⁰² with a base of 34 by 24 meters and a statue rising eight meters above worshippers inside the temple. The inscription read, “The demos of the Aphrodisians devoted to Caesar, being free and autonomous from the beginning by the grace of the Sebastoi, set up (this statue) by its own grace because of its reverence toward the Sebastoi and its goodwill toward the neokorate city of the Ephesians.” Burrell cites another inscription copied by Cyriacus of Ancona, “which joined the cult of the *theoi Sebastoi* with the ancient cult of Demeter at Ephesos in the proconsulship of L. Mestrius Florus (ca. 88/89,

⁴⁰¹ Burrell, 349.

⁴⁰² Price, *Ritual and Power*, 198, 255.

around the time of the dedication of the temple of the Augusti).⁴⁰³ Burrell concludes, “The first inscription to call the city *neokoros* is of uncertain date: though it may come from the Neronian period of the Aviola coins, it may on the other hand show that Ephesus was *neokoros* of the Augusti by late 85 to 86 CE.”⁴⁰⁴

Other elements: the different colossi and the worship of the Augusti

Another element in the Ephesus discussion of the worship of the Augusti has been the discovery at Ephesus of a colossal head, arm, knee, and three hands, which increased speculation among scholars that this was a statue of Domitian, though it is now more commonly accepted as being Titus. Scherrer has proposed “an overly speculative reconstruction of five statues (Augustus, Claudius, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian)”⁴⁰⁵ that may validate the worship of more than one emperor at the time. The discovery of at least three hands and the position of the knee/arm has suggested to scholars that at least these standing colossi mirrored each other, with a height of more than 7 m (21 ft) each.

Certainly for the author of Acts, it was appropriate to use the wording of “gods made with hands are not gods” (19:26). Burrell explains the “visual tricks” of the colossus head, how minimal details—as for example, the open mouth “as if breathing”—suggest that “all these traits are familiar from portraits of that paradigm for apotheosis, Alexander the Great, and were picked up by Asian

⁴⁰³ Burrell, 61b note 24.

⁴⁰⁴ Burrell, 62b.

⁴⁰⁵ Burrell, 64b, citing Scherrer 1997, 106-7.

sculptors to convey the same divine or divinely inspired leadership in their Roman rulers. So Titus the head of state at Rome has become the deity at Ephesos.”⁴⁰⁶

Hadrian

Perhaps another evidence of multiple worship (current and past emperors) is the inscription of the temples of Ephesus, where is found the name of a chief priest who was vital in the establishment of the worship of Hadrian. Concerning the inscription, Burrell suggests that: “The moving spirit behind the second *neokoria* was Tiberius Claudius Piso Diophantos, chief priest of the two temples in Ephesos, under whom the temple of the god Hadrian was consecrated, who first asked for (it) from the god Hadrian and obtained (it)” (I.Ephesos 428).” What is important for us at this point is not the reference to the “god Hadrian”, because the inscription clearly states it, nor is it to assume that this inscription dates after the death and deification of Hadrian “since in the East it was common to refer to the living emperor as a god;”⁴⁰⁷ instead, what is important is that the name of the chief priest contains only the names of Tiberius and Claudius, and not of the later but closer in date Hadrian. One may wonder about the dating of the inscription

⁴⁰⁶ Burrell, 64b.

⁴⁰⁷ Burrell, “temple of Hadrian...” online article. She states “Diophantos was likely rewarded for securing the new temple by being made chief priest (of Asia) when the temple of Hadrian was to be consecrated, thus becoming the first chief priest of two provincial temples in Ephesos (46). Likewise, she considers as “unfortunate” and “purely modern agglomeration” that the Ephesos-publication team chooses to name the temple complex as the “Olympeion of Hadrian”, since there is another Olympeion located elsewhere far from the temple complex”

(contra the clear statement of the god Hadrian), specifically whether the practice of naming the chief priests was based on earlier worship at the same place.

Conclusion

Regarding worship at Ephesus, Burrell finally admits that “much of its history has been obscured, however, by misinterpretations.”⁴⁰⁸ Neronian coins 65/65 show that perhaps 20-40 years previously the temple had been constructed to the Augusti, and this “may indicate that the koinon temple was originally to be for Nero” as a god. This would add strength to the Acts declaration regarding the human divinized. In regard to possible dates for temple dedication and the city as *neokoros*, Burrell’s notation is useful here, “It is unfortunate that the documents only show the result, not the process. That process can no longer be attributed without question to Domitian, For one thing, it is becoming clearer that Ephesos may have already been *neokoros* for Nero.”⁴⁰⁹

Several ancient projects show that, given the time usually needed to plan, request, and grant the petition, the actual construction of a temple and the implementation of worship oftentimes took more than twenty years—or forty six years as in the case of the Jerusalem temple; in other cases, (e.g. Didymaion at Miletos in honor to Gaius) such projects were never completed. Finally, Burrell states, “Unfortunately we have no direct evidence as to what happened in the interval to bring on this change. Perhaps it began with Ephesos’ request to make

⁴⁰⁸ Burrell, 315a.

⁴⁰⁹ Burrell, 278a.

official the title which the city was already using unofficially. However it was done, use of the title spread by emulation, especially among the largest cities.”⁴¹⁰

Examples from Other cities

Smyrna

Similar evidence is available regarding the cult in Smyrna in the times of Hadrian. The process for the title of *neokoroi* and its festivals took several years to implement, though it certainly also granted benefits to the city as a result. These were varied: immunity from taxes; gifts from the emperor; imported columns for the embellishment of the temples; cult-statues; the establishment of colleges of priests; and *theologoi* and *hymnodoi* who performed encomia and hymns to the cult object.

These associations of *hymnodoi* were established in specific provincial temples of Asia “only by imperial permission,”⁴¹¹ in order to sing the emperors’ praises. One of the most famous of these groups was that of Augustus at Pergamon: an elite hereditary organization of up to forty men, supported by a levy on the entire province. Another association allied with the *hymnodoi* was the group of *theologoi*, who celebrated the imperial god(s) in prose. It is believed that this group was of similar or elevated status.⁴¹²

Burrell suggests that the income generated at the times of festivals typically paid for the cost of the upkeep of such temples. For regular ritual and

⁴¹⁰ Burrell, 373a.

⁴¹¹ Burrell, *Neokoroi*, 349a.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

sacrifices, the provincial koinon covered the expenses, including the *hymnodoi* if any. Generally, the chief-priests and *agonothetai* made substantial contributions. Also, the business of temple-construction from the koinon-provincial arks gave the entrepreneurs' circulating money for at least ten years, and sometimes close to forty years (314b). She cites that, from time to time, 'special commissioners' went from the Senate to the sites to insure "not overspending their budget and misallocating funds, leaving the temple incomplete"⁴¹³; "The koinon's funding process" she adds, "did not exclude the grants of benefactors, however, whether imperial or private"(314a).

The importance of the permission—granting function of these associations of *theologoi* and *hymnodoi* can be seen in the epigraphical evidence of inscriptions stating clearly that there was an association of "the *hymnodoi* of the god Hadrian at Smyrna," where neither the name of Zeus nor that of any other god is mentioned. In addition, there is the numismatic evidence of coins with inscriptions containing the phrase "Smyrna twice *neokoros* of the Augusti" and showing only an armored imperial figure as the cult image within the temple."⁴¹⁴

In addition, in the case of Smyrna, the cult in this provincial temple shared the honors with the imperial family, even though they were recognized as *divi* at Rome. Burrell cites the case of Tiberius: Although he was never deified, he "continued as an object of the Asian provincial cult in Smyrna's temple at least into the third century, and his mother Livia, as Julia Sebaste, shared that temple

⁴¹³ Burrell, 313b, 312b.

⁴¹⁴ Burrell, "temple of Hadrian" article online, 35-6.

well before Claudius deified her.”⁴¹⁵ Therefore, it is improbable that these practices were established later in time, and more likely that they reflect earlier worship.

A similar case of honoring the Augusti-Emperors and family may be found in Galatia-Ankyra. As evidence we have some coins issued under Galba (68-69). These depict a temple “of the Augusti,” which may mean that, as early as that time, the cult of subsequent emperors had been introduced into what originally was a temple to the god Augustus and the goddess Rome at Ankyra. Indeed, the process may have begun well before Galba, since it is recorded that a Galatian priest of Augustus and Rome dedicated statues of Tiberius Caesar and Julia Sebaste around 23 CE, though these “were not necessarily cult statues within the temple.”⁴¹⁶ Therefore, at least in the late sixties, and before the Flavian Emperors, we can find the designation “temple of the Augusti” as a reference perhaps to earlier worship.

Kyzikos

The case of the *neokoroi* at Kyzikos in Mysia presents several challenges for scholars. It is well accepted that the temple of Hadrian at Kyzikos belonged only to the cult of Hadrian, where he was worshipped as “the thirteenth god.”⁴¹⁷ Hence, according to Burrell, it is a “miscall” to suggest that Zeus and Hadrian were connected, at least in Kyzikos. The problem is that later Hadrian is

⁴¹⁵ Burrell, 61b, the same practice is seen “in the inscriptions datable to the early third century, record a temple of the god Vespasian, probably referring to the main object of worship at the provincial temple of the Augusti at Ephesos.”

⁴¹⁶ Burrell, 366b-67a.

⁴¹⁷ Church historian Sokrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.23.59, cited by Burrell, 326a.

associated with the temple of Zeus Olympios; however, this happens in Athens, and occurs some years after the dedication in 123 CE for Kyzikos.⁴¹⁸ She suggests that previous scholars have misread the information. In relation to the temple of Kyzikos, she states:

Owing to the respect his scholarship has justly earned, Price's reattribution of the Kyzikos temple to Zeus has been widely followed; but in this one case his arguments were not firmly based, and are contradicted by the ancient evidence. Those sources that identify the temple at Kyzikos by anything but its size (Malalas, the epigram in the Greek Anthology, and the wonder lists of Niketas of Herakleia and the Vat.gr. 989) all call it the temple of Hadrian; and the church historian Socrates affirms that Hadrian was worshipped at Kyzikos as "the thirteenth god." This is not to deny that there was a temple of Zeus elsewhere in the city; Pliny the Elder mentioned an ivory statue of Zeus in a temple in Kyzikos, but as Pliny famously died in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79, that temple was already standing fifty years before Hadrian ever came to Kyzikos to grant the city a temple and the title *neokoros*.⁴¹⁹

The "ancient evidence" referred to here is a reference of Malalas, who observed that Hadrian "set up a marble portrait, a large bust of himself" on the roof of the temple, on which he wrote, "of the god Hadrian."⁴²⁰ The problem persists insofar as Hadrian belongs to the early second century, and the general consensus does admit that, after the Flavian emperors, Vespasian/Domitian, it became a regular practice to call the emperor "gods." However, in the case of the *neokoroi* at Kyzikos in Mysia, an inscription was found honoring Antonia Tryphaena, which is dated as earlier than 38 CE. In this inscription, the Kyzikenes call their city: "ancient and ancestral *neokoros* of the family" of the "greatest and most manifest god Gaius Caesar." Thus, it is possible to infer that, earlier than 38 CE, there

⁴¹⁸ For more discussion on the topic see Burrell, 325bff. And chapter 5, 86-100.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, Burrell, Temple of Hadrian, online article.

⁴²⁰ Burrell, Temple of Hadrian online article, 24.

were records in the empire of the emperor being called a god and not in association with the local god of a particular city or region.

This case parallels Ephesus where the priests of the cult could call his city “*neokoros* of the great goddess Artemis and of the heaven-fallen [image]” (Acts 19). Ephesus in the year 37 CE also celebrated festivals in honor of Gaius and his family calling him the new god Helios and giving to Drusilla—Gaius’ sister during her lifetime—the titles of ‘goddess, new Aphrodite.’⁴²¹

In other words, first of all epigraphic and numismatic evidence demonstrates the usage of titles as god/goddess, even for a living emperor and his family. Second, the study of these cases also shows that sometimes the names were erased, indicating that the imperial cult really existed in previous years. The fact that scholars cannot prove the historicity of the events in Acts does not mean that they did not occur.

⁴²¹ Burrell, 86a.

Excursus: Inscriptions bearing the names of emperors as gods

This brief excursus of some bilingual Greek–Latin Inscriptions demonstrates, first, the interchanging associations of the names of emperors with those of gods and goddesses. In addition, it shows the practice of naming them as gods for the ruling and living emperors. This excursus is based upon the fairly new work of Rosalinde A. Kearsley, with the collaboration of Trevor V. Evans, in *Greeks and Romans in Imperial Asia: Mixed Language Inscriptions and Linguistic Evidence for Cultural Interaction until the End of AD III*, published in 2001.⁴²² The format used here accords with Kearsley’s catalog, indicating the number of the inscription, location of the inscription, the name of the cited emperor, sometimes the person erecting the honor, and the possible assigned date to the inscription.

- Inscription #116. Ephesus. Titus, 1 January – 30 June AD 80. Text: “for Emperor Titus Caesar Vespasian Augustus, *son of god Vespasian*, pontifex maximus, in his ninth year of tribunician power, imperator fifteen times, consul for the eight time father of his nativelyland. Eutactus, freedman procurator of the provinces of Asia and Lycia dedicated it in accordance with the will of Claudius Symmachus⁴²³

In another inscription from Ephesus from different “fragments scattered in different parts of the theater” for a benefactor of Ephesos as well as a Roman equestrian official Gaius Vibius Salutaris (104 CE), a section that appears only in

⁴²² Rosalinde A. Kearsley ed. with colab. Of Trevor V. Evans, *Greeks and Romans in Imperial Asia: Mixed Language Inscriptions and Linguistic Evidence for Cultural Interaction until the End of AD III*, (Bohn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GMBH, 2001).

⁴²³ Kearsley, 86.

the inscription in Latin reads: “lover of Artemis and lover of Caesar.” That both appear on the same line, equates them in some sense, Kearsley explains referring to the base: “the foundation provided for the honouring of the imperial family, Artemis Ephesia and the public institutions of the city by a procession and by monetary distributions to a variety of civic groups. This statue base was one of several similar ones whose erection in the Artemision and at various points around the city was specified by Salutaris in the foundation document (I. Eph la.27 ll.84-88).”⁴²⁴

- Inscription #148. Ephesos. Augustus restores the sacred way. (29 BCE), Text: “by the goodwill of Caesar Augustus, from the revenues of the sacred lands which he himself gave to Diana (in the latin – Theai – goddess in the Greek), the road was paved when Sextus Appuleius was proconsul.”⁴²⁵

Kearsley explains than “Ephesos conceptualized its relationship to Augustus in the personal terms characteristic of a patronal relationship according to the use of the personal pronoun when referring to Augustus... this is a feature which is characteristically absent from the records of imperial gifts by other Roman rulers.”⁴²⁶

- Inscription #149, Found in Selcuk 1999. Imperator Caesar Augustus restored the boundaries for Diana” (K, 123).
- Inscription #150. Text: “Imperator Caesar Augustus, son of the god, consul for the twelfth time, in the eighteenth year of tribunician power, pontifex maximus,

⁴²⁴ Kearsley, 91.

⁴²⁵ Kearsley, 122.

⁴²⁶ Kearsley, 154.

from the revenue of Diana he saw to it that the temple and the Augusteum (Lt) Sebasteion (Gk) were protected by a wall; when Gaius Asinius Gallus was proconsul, under the supervision of Sextus Lartidius, legate.”

Kearsley explains, “Augustus’ restoration of the sanctuary and the building of the Sebasteion were part of a broad policy to re-establish the cult of Artemis; cf 148-9. Other inscriptions record the restoration of a canal and of roadways in the area of Artemision, also under the legate, Sextus Lartidius.”⁴²⁷ Another inscription shows the name of Augustus and Caesar combined in association with Diana/Artemis.

- Inscription #152 Ephesos. Gaius Sextilius Pollio and his family donate an aqueduct. Latin and Greek. Text: “For Ephesian Diana and for Emperor Caesar Augustus and for Tiberius Caesar, son of Augustus, and for the city of the Ephesos, Gaius Sextilius Pollio, son of... with the rest of the children provided for the making of a bridge from their own money.”⁴²⁸

In addition there are two more inscriptions of the Stoa Basilike # 152 154 where the family of Gaius Sextilius Pollio donate a basilica where the names of Artemis and Caesars are associated.⁴²⁹

Perhaps the most conclusive is Inscription #155. Ephesos. Claudia Metrodora and her husband donate a public building. Kearsley explains, “nine fragments of three blocks bearing Latin text built into the rampart at the southern end of the east hall beside the commercial agora. Three blocks bearing Greek

⁴²⁷ Kearsley, 124. concerning the Kaiserkult in Ephesos she quotes in note 9 to H. Engelmann, “Zum Kaiserkult in Ephesos”, ZPE 97 (1993), 279.

⁴²⁸ Kearsley, 126.

⁴²⁹ Kearsley, 128 . Catalogue # 154.

text re-used in a mosque at Selçuk by the road to Çamlık (Aziziye)” gives not only the identification of Augustus as *divi filius*, son of god, but it presents Caesar Claudius and Nero in association with Diana/Artemis, who is always named first in the list. The inscription reads: “For Ephesian Diana/Artemis, the god Claudius, Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, Agrippina Augusta, the city(L)/demos(G) of the Ephesians...with Claudia Metrodora, his wife/ furnished it from his own funds and dedicated it with Claudia Metrodora, his wife”⁴³⁰

Kearsley explains that “the name of first donor is unknown. Claudia Metrodora, his wife, is attested as a benefactor of Chios and as a sister of the *archiereus* of Asia, Tiberius Claudius Phe sinus. The east hall was possibly the structure known in antiquity as the *audeitōrion*. If so, it is likely to have been the place in Ephesos where the Roman governor and his consilium sat”⁴³¹ If we follow the accepted rule of the proenom indicating Tiberius and Claudius it indicates that Claudius was being referred to as a god.

- Inscription #164 Sardis. Tiberius donates a public monument. 34/5 AD. : “Sart, from the area of the synagogue... four joining marble fragments, and one untouched fragment... full length of the text c. 8.00 m.” The text reads: “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the god Augustus, grandson of the god Iulius, pontifex maximus, ...” (cf. Tacitus Ann, 2.47 showing the financial assistance). Kearsley explains, “Epigraphic evidence commemorating his generosity is preserved elsewhere and this inscription may, similarly, have

⁴³⁰ Kearsley, 129.

⁴³¹ Kearsley, 129.

been engraved in the later part of Tiberius's principate."⁴³² This is the same Tiberius who is seen in other places to be reluctant to receive honorific titles and acclamations. Kearsley explains regarding the catalogue of public donations, "Ten out of twenty-five inscriptions, were engraved on imperial initiative,"⁴³³ but, if this is so, then it cannot be attributed to the superstitious lives of the Asians as has commonly been assumed.

⁴³² Kearsley, 139.

⁴³³ Kearsley, 153.

Conclusion

A review on the subject of presuppositions is complicated and susceptible to many interpretations. However, some conclusions can be drawn regarding the presuppositions on the imperial worship representation in literature. I believe that scholars try to safeguard their reputations as postmodern, free-thinkers, and want to appear unbiased regarding such claims of divinity. Though they find enough evidence such as epigraphic, literary, numismatic remnants and compare original conflictive sources, in the end they refrain from reaching a conclusion and leave the case ambivalent. It seems to me that they do not want to be the laughing—stock of the rest of their peers. Yet, several scholars maintain that emperors were worshipped as gods, not for political allegiance.

In addition, one of the main problems that I see in historians' analysis is that they consider the period of Roman religion as a whole and not as separate and distinctive phases. In other words, they are still following the basic premise of objectivity and universalism for different periods of time and peoples. Thus, scholars continue in a state of skepticism regardless of the evidence: rituals in the form of bloody sacrifices, the erection and dedication of temples throughout the empire along with well-paid priests who also serve as political-religious leaders, performing processions, games, feast, banquets, athletics contest, musical competitions, imperial mysteries and so forth.

Another characteristic is the dichotomization of what scholars call the distinction between the materialism of the Romans and the so-called spirituality of Christianity. In this regard, Shelton recalls that since the "state religion was

worldly and materialistic and concerned with the success of the state” and Christianity was rather ‘otherworldly’; other historians have argued that the failure of state religion was due to the Christians’ efforts in forgetting the “problems of the present lives and contemplating only the blessedness of the afterlife.”⁴³⁴ According to Turcan, “traditional cults had no theology” and people “no longer believed in gods who did not protect them.”⁴³⁵ I disagree. During the early imperial time in which Acts develops, we are in the midst of a blending culture of politics and religion where gods and emperors are interchangeably addressed. They were always praised in literature using hyperbolic language, as, for example, in Aristides' speech, to the effect that “the Kyzikos temple competes with mountains, that there was more marble in it than was left behind in the quarry of Prokonnesos, and that navigators sailing to Kyzikos would no longer need beacon fires but could use it to guide them.”⁴³⁶ I think there was a construction of theology in place, a theology of power by association.

The hermeneutic of suspicion so vital during the reign of the historical critical method still plays an important role; it is easier to believe Roman writers—propagandistic and adulatory authors—rather than Acts. Did the imperial cult “come up” “directly” in Acts, where “travelers in the empire would not have been surprised to meet the cult?”⁴³⁷ I answer in the affirmative: I believe the characters of Acts confronted imperial worship and that Luke portrays it as a literature of

⁴³⁴ Shelton, 360.

⁴³⁵ Turcan, 336.

⁴³⁶ Burrell, “Temple of Hadrian...”, online article.

⁴³⁷ The quotations of “come up” and “directly” are from the article of C. Kavin Rowe, who states “the fact that the imperial cult is not discussed or dealt with directly in Luke-Acts. In fact, it never comes up”, 282.

resistance and it “comes up” declaring the empire as a false one. This is what I seek to describe in the next chapter—the associations of power, politics, and theology of power of the imperial cult in opposition to the development of this messianic Jewish Christian movement that “acts contrary to decrees of the emperors” (Acts 17:6), teaching “unlawful customs for Romans to adopt” (16:21).

CHAPTER IV

REPRESENTATION IN ACTS OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF JUDAISM

Introduction

This chapter explores Jewish Christian identity and proclamation as one of the manifestations of first-century C.E. Judaism represented in the Acts of the Apostles. Such identity and proclamation are not in opposition to the values of Judaism or any of the tenets of the sacred Hebrew Scriptures that are considered the fulfillment of the prophecies establishing the eschatological/apocalyptic Kingdom of God. Rather, this new first-century social group of Jewish Christians believes that any power that requires allegiance to anyone other than the eschatological prophet Jesus is in complete opposition to the “divine plan” of God. In order to demonstrate my reading, I present and evaluate the Jewish identity and institutions of the “rulers of the people.” Acts seems to show that the representations of the institutions that define Judaism as a center of power are among those that oppose accepting Jesus as the prophesied Messiah and eschatological prophet.

This chapter has two main parts: representations and evaluations of Jewish and Jewish Christian self-identity, first, in history broadly, and, second, in the book of Acts. I begin my argument with a brief general account and evaluation of Jewish and Jewish Christian self-identities as they are generally understood in light of the ramifications of the destruction of Jerusalem (70/132

CE). For example, I discuss the institutions and function of the Sanhedrin, the high priesthood and its families, as representatives of the dominant center-power in Judaism. Second, I describe the same account and evaluation but now in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. I argue that an all-encompassing reading of Acts suggests that there is transference of power to the exalted Jesus, who now sits at the right hand of God receiving and giving power to the believers in order that “all families of the earth shall be blessed.” This proclamation of witnessing has to be preached to the end of the earth; however, I explain that this concept of “end” refers also to the identity of the all-exalted situation of the Roman Empire and its client-kings—in short, the institutions that define Judaism. I look also at successive opposition groups to the followers of the Way in Acts, beginning with the case of Judas the betrayer as a model for those who oppose the exaltation of Jesus. I develop and explain several categories for my reading, for example, the mistaken general understanding of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and other concepts such as: the house of Israel, people of Israel, sons of Israel versus the establishment of the eschatological kingdom of God. Next, I evaluate the importance of the temple and the new house (*oikos*) to which the transfer of power continues. I conclude with an analysis of identity: first, what Luke portrays as the ideological reasons of the persecutors, including an explanation of the difficult term *Ioudaioi* - Jews; and second, the hybrid identity and representation of the Lucan Paul.

Jewish and Jewish Christian Self-Identity and the Institutions in history

It is of vital importance not to adopt supersessionist tendencies positing a dichotomy between the Jewish era and the Christian's era. Therefore, I visualize the Jewish Christian community of the late first century as being in harmony with the synagogues and the practices of ancient Judaism, (e.g., keeping the Sabbath; celebrating Pesach and other Jewish religious festivals [Passover, Pentecost, Nazarites vows, prayers in the temple, etc]; recognizing the sovereignty of God as the only ruler – the *malkut shamayim*' principle⁴³⁸; nationalism; circumcision; and so forth). Gedaliah Alon states, "This is good as confirmed by several Church Fathers who tell us that the bishops (*episkopoi*) of the Jerusalem Christian community right to the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt were all circumcised Jews."⁴³⁹ Hence, I argue that Jewish Christians belong within Judaism and hold firmly to their Jewish identity. In Acts there is no one who denies his heritage. Acts ends with a Paul, the Jewish-Pharisee, who is obedient and submissive to the customs of the ancestors and "welcoming to all" (28:30).⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ For more on the background of the sole rule of God as *malkut shamayim* in the Judaism of the first century, see, Obery M. Hendricks Jr. *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted*, (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

⁴³⁹ Gedaliah Alon, *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age (70-640 CE)*. Vol 1, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1980), 297-8.

⁴⁴⁰ I am very cautious about agreeing with Nils A Dahl's statement that "the majority of the Jews have disinherited themselves" Nils A. Dahl, "A People for His Name" *NTS* 4, 1957-8, 324.

It is well known that the identity of Judaism as well as of the new Jewish Christians changed considerably after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 and in 132 CE as well as in successive centuries. Gedaliah Alon states that:

In a political-legal sense, the country ceased to be the Land of Jews. True, the Romans soon granted a form of national autonomy, but this was given to an ethnos that lived in the Roman province of Judaea (or Syria Palestine, as Hadrian named the territory.)⁴⁴¹

However, the events of Acts in Jerusalem and in the Diaspora correspond historically with a time before the destruction, for the apostles and Paul perform sacrifices and prayers as would any other Jew, upholding the principles mentioned above.

In addition, in dealing with the testimony of Jewish Christians sects—such as the Ebionites, The Nazarenes, Gnostic Christians, and the Elkesaites— Alon writes regarding the Nazarenes in particular that “they were observant Jews, accepted the Christological theology; accepted the Epistles of Paul, they were on equal footing with Gentile Christians; they had a gospel of their own in “Hebrew” (Aramaic). He adds:

Probably what marks this sect out especially is its antipathy towards the Jewish Sages – “the Scribes and the Pharisees.” Jerome is our chief witness in this matter. When he comments on Isaiah VIII:14 (“He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem”) he says that the Nazarei apply this Scriptures to the Schools (‘Houses’) of Shammai and Hillel, “who interpret the Torah according to their own traditions and Mishnahs, and pervert the Scriptures... These two houses did not accept the Saviour so that He became a stumbling block unto them.”⁴⁴²

⁴⁴¹ Alon, 5.

⁴⁴² Alon, 300.

According to Alon, “during the last several decades of the Second Commonwealth, another sectarian group had emerged – the Jewish Christians. This movement was born, and had its first growth, within the bosom of Judaism and the Jewish people. It was only later, shortly before the Destruction of the Temple, that the decision was taken under the leadership of Paul of Tarsus that Christianity should become a Gentile faith.”⁴⁴³ However, I think Acts refutes this notion of Paul as against the customs. He states that “the intention of the ancient *halakhists* was to teach and to guide, rather than to legislate; to express opinions, rather than to hand down decisions.”⁴⁴⁴ To what extent does this view express the reality of Christianity at the end of the first century? Christians in Acts do not want to be or feel separated from the mainstream life of Judaism, including Sabbath keeping, worshipping in the temple, celebration of festivals and so on. Furthermore, the Pharisees as a group initially seem to defend Paul as their colleague during his trial.

Alon accepts that, after the destruction, the “religious identity of the people” was changed by the influence of “heretics” (*minim*) and sects (*kitot*) who challenged the religious identity of the people.”⁴⁴⁵ He refers to the Pharisees and Sages as “nurturing the faith that was both visionary and practical, combining prophetic idealism with *halakhic* realism, messianic yearning with the needs and duties of the hour.”⁴⁴⁶ Can such a general statement accurately portray the totality of the people’s “religious identity” or the “religious ideas that sustained the

⁴⁴³ Alon, 25-26.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid, 28.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid, 17.

⁴⁴⁶ Alon, 22.

national spirit"? Alon does not describe it plainly, but it is assumed that he speaks of what later will be rabbinical Judaism. Christian writers especially refer to the Jesus of the Gospels to challenge this position. Moreover, Acts shows that the number of Jewish believers is in the thousands in Jerusalem, including priests and Pharisees. Therefore, we may infer that the same spirit of nurturing the faith and nationalism continues among the followers of the Way.

The eschatological movement, with its adopted self-identity of a new kingdom, failed to realize the nationalism to which Alon refers. He states: "In moments of national crisis, the Jewish Christians turned their backs on the national cause of the Jewish people."⁴⁴⁷ The examples Alon gives are of Christians abandoning Jerusalem to Pella in 68 CE (citing Eusebius-Hegesippus, *Eccles. Hist III: 5:2-3*) and of their refusal to identify themselves with the Jewish side during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Alon also comments that, after the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple, "a sense of national emergency" emerges such that

It would seem that the nation could no longer afford the latitude previously allowed to a wide range of sectarians and schematics. (This may also account for the disappearance of the Sadducees and Essenes.) But perhaps some weight should also be given to intrinsic religious factors. Sadducees without the Temple were spiritually homeless; Essenes were exceedingly vulnerable to the new faith.⁴⁴⁸

He concludes that "the rejection of the old Israel was an insurmountable barrier."⁴⁴⁹ Later, he declares, "It will be seen that the *Beth Din* of Rabban

⁴⁴⁷ Alon, 305.

⁴⁴⁸ Alon, 306, and note 49.

⁴⁴⁹ Alon, 306.

Gamaliel at Yavneh took a fateful step, one that was to have far-reaching historical consequences. They declared in unequivocal terms that the Jewish Christians could no longer be considered part of the Jewish community nor of the Jewish people.”⁴⁵⁰

Concerning religious identity, J.A. North states that:

It is also true that Jewish religious identity was in the end incompatible with the practice of another religion, though that is not to say that individuals did not try to maintain their Judaism as well as attending pagan rituals. The truth is that we do not know the life of Jews in pagan cities well enough to judge how this was done. However that may be, in other respect Christians groups as they developed proved to be far more objectionable to Roman authorities than did the Jewish ones.⁴⁵¹

The reason, for being “far more objectionable” I think, was the denial on the part of the Christians of allegiance to other “pagan rituals” and participating in the imperial worship, hence making them in only loyal to God.

He continues:

There must have been a long period since which pagans, Jews and Christians lived together in the same cities without any conflict. On the other hand the combination of the high authority of the pagan paterfamilias with the Christians’ desire for converts must always have implied some threat of denunciations. The apparent rarity of serious conflicts suggest very strongly that many pagans took Pliny’s view that the Christians were harmless if over-superstitious and were therefore slow to provoke any serious actions against them. The pattern only changes in the third century AD, when action at last becomes more centralized and more determined.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Alon, 307 in a posthumous work in English 1980, (original `1967) Alon dies in 1950.

⁴⁵¹ J.A. North, *Roman Religion, Greece & Rome: New Surveys in the Classics* No 30 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 72.

⁴⁵² North, 74.

It is true that the Christians in general did not have problems in the cities. It is only when Paul appears on the scene that we see a degree of persecution reflected as a result of the new teaching. Acts does not present either the people of the cities that Paul visits or the people of Jerusalem reacting negatively to his message. It is only a group of the rulers and leaders who are depicted as rejecting his message. Perhaps this is due to the general message of Christianity opposition to powers and authorities, rulers and hegemonies. This paradoxical situation illustrates “a double-edged process within Christianity: disengagement from Judaism, on the one hand; and on the other, incorporation within itself of the Jewish theological and prophetic heritage.”⁴⁵³

In addition, recent studies⁴⁵⁴ on the Apostolic Constitutions and the Homilies of John Chrysostom show that even in the late fourth century (370-390 CE) Jewish Christian relationships were closer than previously assumed. The relationship shows prayers being used in common, some perhaps being appended or interpolated by Christian authors, maybe as a result of Christians' attendance of synagogues.

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 26.

⁴⁵⁴ Quoted in an excellent article by Pieter W. van der Horst, *Japhet in the Tents of Shem: Studies on Jewish Hellenism in Antiquity*. (Leuven: Peeters, 2002). “Jews and Christians in Antioch at the End of the Fourth Century” pp 109-118. See R.L. Wilkens, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). W.A. Meeks and R. L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), pp.83-126. M. Simon, *Verus Israel. A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (AD 135-423)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Pp232. (Attractions/competition) see L.H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 177-287. For the AC see, M. Metzger, *Les Constitutions Apostoliques*, vol 1 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1985), pp. 13-93. and vol 2 (1986) pp. 10-110.

On the other hand, Alon suggests that the Jews were radically resistant to the oppressive philosophies of the Romans as Saviors of the World and Rome as the Kingdom of heaven. While for other peoples, Rome was the “eternal and divine,” for the “Jews it was ‘Rome the Guilty’ (*romi hayyavta*). Though others spoke of “*Caesar divus*”, Jews referred to the “Kingdom of wickedness” (*malkhut ha-resha’ah*). Jews equated Rome with the “wild boar” of the Bible (Psalm 80:14). Robert Turcan argues that the purpose of religion in the Greco-Roman world was “to give a feeling of security to human understanding by ‘easing the pressure’ on the devout person who adhered strictly to the letter of the ritual.”⁴⁵⁵ However, this syncretism of adopting new practices, rituals, and even new (Roman) gods was incompatible for Jews as well as for Jewish Christians. As Turcan states, “Like the English, who would rather make a new law than abolish an old one, the Romans, adopted other gods without rejecting any from the old pantheon.”⁴⁵⁶ However, this principle was contrary to the self-identity of the new Jewish sect—the Christians, with its rejection to any allegiance outside of the new understanding of the Judeo-Christian faith, perhaps even to the point of becoming stricter than Judaism itself, or at least Diaspora Judaism. For although the new Christian group upheld the traditions of the ancestors, the law, the temple, and the Hebrew Scriptures, they were proposing a new way of interpreting scriptures that put them in opposition with the power systems. Turcan asks, “Why were this people unique in its rejection – even hatred – of Rome and

⁴⁵⁵ Robert Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome: Religion in Everyday Life from Archaic to Imperial Times*. New York: Routledge, 2000, 11.

⁴⁵⁶ Turcan, 13.

her Empire? No doubt because of the Jewish religion, unique in thought and action, distinctive in its concept of social ethics. These fundamentals of Judaism made unthinkable any compromise with the *Pax Romana*, or “heavenly order” which was Roman rule.”⁴⁵⁷ I see the Jewish Christian group as holding a similarly intransigent view. Alon even quotes from the Gospel of John, “We are seed of Abraham and have never been slaves to any man” (8:33), to emphasize his point of relentless opposition. Indeed, he adds, “with the exception of certain circles that were “close to the power that be” (*mequravim la-malkhut*)”⁴⁵⁸ the people never willingly submitted to the Roman yoke. I argue that it is against these groups of power that Jewish Christians are fighting, and not against the nationalism of being Jews.

Alon recognizes that the “overwhelming majority of the people” refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Roman government.⁴⁵⁹ Hence, there is no reason to believe that Christians as nationalist Jewish people would deviate from this norm. The attitudes towards Rome varied among the range of political allegiances and opinions. Alon states that “the whole spectrum of partisan views was represented in their ranks; they too had their zealots, half-zealots, realist-moderates, outright pacifists, and even apologist.”⁴⁶⁰ However, even the famous discussion among the three Rabbis can be read as a literature of resistance that

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 15.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, 23, Alon cites, R. Hanina the Deputy High Priest, who taught “Pray for the welfare of the ruling power...” (Av. III:2). R Jose ben Qisma, “this people (the Romans) are sovereign because it is God’s will?” (Av. Zar. 18a); and the famous discussion among R. Judah (bar Ilai), and R. Jose and R. Simeon (bar Yohai) and Juda ben Gerim about the “wonderful things this people has done!”

goes against the grain of the general acceptance of the colonizer. I go on now to describe the institution and function of the Sanhedrin and its role of antagonistic leadership in Acts.

The institution of the Sanhedrin

In order to understand the role of the Sanhedrin and its trials against the apostles, Stephen and Paul in Acts, a number of observations are in order regarding its composition, function, and role as a center of power both dependent on and independent of the Romans. It has been argued that the Sanhedrin was not able to take its own decisions regarding death cases. However, a brief historical review as well as the witness of Acts shows the opposite to be the case.

Thus, the case of independent power has created some confusion. For example, E. Mary Smallwood summarizes the composition and powers of the Sanhedrin as having two main functions: one political and the other religious/legislative. She states,

The question of the composition, powers and presidency of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem is intensely complicated... the majority opinion now appears to favor Büchler's view that there were [two] Sanhedrins: the Sanhedrin to which Josephus frequently refers was a political council with judicial functions, meeting under the presidency of the Hasmonean Priest-Kings and later of the High Priests; [the second one], the Great Sanhedrin of seventy or seventy-one members to which the Mishnah and the Talmud frequently refer was a separate council with primarily religious and legislative functions, though it had some rarely used judicial powers also, and unlike the other, survived the fall of the Temple in A.D. 70. The political Sanhedrin tended to be Sadducean, while the

religious Sanhedrin, after some vicissitudes, had developed into a predominantly Pharisean body under the preserve of the rabbis.⁴⁶¹

Here, however, Smallwood discusses the Sanhedrin in the time of Hyrcanus, the exiled High Priest in the final part of the almost independent reign of the Hasmoneans, which is quite different to what the Sanhedrin was like during the Roman occupation of the first century. In addition, the Mishnah and the Talmud are later documents that perhaps do not reflect altogether the reality of the first century. Furthermore, Acts and the gospels do not distinguish between two Sanhedrins. Acts 4-5 view the high priesthood, rulers, elders, and scribes not only as a political-judicial and religious group enforcing public order, but also as the representatives of “authority and power” (cf. 4:7, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”)

In Acts, the Pharisee Gamaliel recognizes that previously the Sanhedrin had dealt with other cases of supposed insurrection against the existing powers and authorities. Although Acts is silent regarding whether the Council was responsible for their deaths – the text just reads: “but he was killed,” Gamaliel does advise the group: “Consider carefully what you propose to do” (5:35). Acts shows that the Sanhedrin wields a variety of power: to arrest (4:3); to flog (5:40); to forbid public speaking (although failing to enforce it, “because of the people” (4:21); to kill by stoning (7:58); to accuse/defend prisoners in front of the Roman

⁴⁶¹ E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompei to Diocletian*. (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 32, footnote 36. She also states that although Josephus uses two different names: *sunedrion* in *Antiquity of the Jews* (Antiq XIV, 91) and *sunodos*, (BJ 1, 170) in *War of the Jews*, these “can be taken as synonymous, since neither work implies the formation of two bodies in each district” page 32, footnote 34.

Governor (23-24). In this manner, the institution of the Sanhedrin conflicts with the emergence of the new sect “the Way,” that “everything is spoken against it” (28:22).

This opposition has various causes. First, the apostles accuse the leaders as responsible for the death of the Jesus-Messiah (2:23). Second, the charges against Stephen and others that begins with accusations against the temple and about profaning it, or against the Law (6:11; 25:8), finish much more broadly with speaking against the customs of our ancestors (perhaps circumcision cf. 15:6) and even against the ancestors themselves (28:17). Of the twenty-two instances of the word Sanhedrin in the NT, less than half are found in Acts. Third, the new sect opposes the reality of the reestablishment of the kingdom of God to the physical or literal Israel of the rulers and leaders. Indeed, the new group seeks the eschatological “times of refreshing” and the “universal restoration” (3:20). The apostles’ accusation against the rulers as killers of the national Messiah, stubbornly refusing to accept the “eschatological prophet,” fulfills the “words of the prophets” who were sent “first” to them and “second” to be the “light to all the nations”, thus announcing the end of the rulers’ leadership and hegemony.

Alon argues that the Sanhedrin was never considered to “have symbolized any kind of territorial sovereignty. This was a socio-political sort of leadership... the element of statehood was distinctly lacking.”⁴⁶² However, they did have the

⁴⁶² Ibid, 5, the difference between the Sanhedrin and Patriarch as “institutions of leadership,” after the Destruction (70 CE) , Alon explains is “The Sanhedrin as a High Court was decisive in matters of private law and religion, and loomed larger in the internal life of Palestinian Jewry, whereas the Patriarch took first place in social precedence and public law” (8).

position of power and control over the matter of authority. He suggests that we can learn the function of these institutions by looking at how much later practices after the destruction functioned because these derived from previous practices.

He states that leadership

In the Homeland over the Jews in the Diaspora derives from the long-established hold of the Jewish authorities – the High Priest and the Sanhedrin – over the scattered Jewries abroad *before* the Destruction. That situation, which had prevailed during the Second Commonwealth, was itself a politico-legal anomaly. Jews who held Roman or Alexandrian citizenship should not, in all reason, have had the right to be judged under the Judean state.⁴⁶³

We see in Acts that during the trial of Stephen confirmed this perspective. There, the Jewish leaders do not always expect Roman approval to proceed with their trials. Nonetheless, Alon demonstrates that the Jewish leadership after the destruction of Jerusalem in general continued previous practices, where the Sanhedrin, high priests, and so forth—which he calls the “establishment”—were vital and independent. He states:

Leadership ... was not an entirely new phenomenon. Earlier, during the days of the Second Commonwealth, the influence of the scholar-judges, the spokesmen of the Pharisees, had been decisive in matters affecting religious life. They had participated in the Sanhedrin, and had played a role both direct and indirect in social and political life. Of course they had shared the power with the other elements in *the establishment*, namely the High Priesthood, the ordinary priesthood, and the leading families – in effect, the aristocracy.⁴⁶⁴

Although the Priesthood’s central role changed after the destruction of the temple, this does not mean that “there was no role left for the priest to play... from time immemorial they had served as judges and popular leaders; age-old

⁴⁶³ *ibid*, 9 (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁶⁴ Alon, 21. emphasis mine.

tradition endowed them with authority; and the people continued look up to them.”⁴⁶⁵ Acts demonstrates the true antagonism of the Sanhedrin in authorizing Saul to persecute the Christians in Jerusalem, as well as in other surrounding cities including Damascus. Almost a hundred years later, Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, claims that the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem repeated the process by sending delegates and missives to the Diaspora denouncing the Christians.

Similarly, Acts attests to this process --at least with respect to the synagogue of Rome-- when the elders claim that “they have not received letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything evil about you” (Acts 28:21). This shows at least the common practice of circulating letters and communication between the Jerusalem base and the Diaspora, although the rest of the synagogues are not mentioned. Furthermore, Acts even shows Gamaliel (Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, to Alon) “successfully defending the Apostles against the death penalty which the Sadducees and the High Priest wanted to impose,”⁴⁶⁶ again demonstrating the power of the religious-civic body of law.

Moreover, Acts shows that the Pharisees were defending one of their own—Paul—, from the attacks of the Sadducees. Josephus in *Ant XX* also relates the Pharisees’ complaint about the death of James the brother of Jesus, mentioning that the “men of Jerusalem” – “that is the Pharisaic Sages”— considered him to be a “just man.”

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 21.

⁴⁶⁶ Alon, 305.

In conclusion, the Sanhedrin as a center of power during the first and following centuries exerted a singular power of leadership over the socio-political and religious life in Judaism that was not absent from the interactions among the Jewish members represented in Acts.

Representation and Evaluation of Jewish Establishment in Acts

The Prologue of Acts

Acts introduces Jesus as the one who exercises authority, as the receiver and giver of power (2:32), as the one who shares his rule with the Father and the Holy Spirit. There are several concepts of power and authority in Acts 1 that invite a postcolonial reading. In order to situate the reader, the prologue of the book begins with the presentation of the absent character of Jesus, who “has been taken up to heaven,” while at the same time adding that he continued “doing and teaching” – in the present rather than in the past – in this world as a spatial-temporal space. Acts 1 presents a list of locations and the movements among them, for example: the distinctions of above and below; the extension of the proclamation from the city of Jerusalem to other localities, concluding with the end of the earth (in the singular). The author locates Jesus in heaven⁴⁶⁷ without describing in detail what he is doing there.⁴⁶⁸ However, any Greek-Roman or even Jewish reader would have understood that this is the place where gods dwell, or at least where powerful human beings reside.

Whereas Acts describes Jesus initially as having already ascended to the heavens, the narrative goes on to complete the movement from a previous temporal situation of Jesus on earth before the event of the Ascension. This

⁴⁶⁷ Verse three reads “taken up”, however verse 10-11 explains that is the heaven.

⁴⁶⁸ In Acts 2, Peter will quote the Psalms describing “the Lord at my right hand” (2:25 cf. Psalm 16:8-11) and “being exalted at the right hand of God” (2:32; cf. Psalm 68:19).

particular description occurs twice: first, at the end of the Gospel of Luke (cf. Lk 24:51); and second, in Acts. These repetitions serve as a caution not to disregard an important theological message: that the human Jesus was carried up to the heavens, exalted to the place of the gods, but continues his work among mortals. His ascent from a mountain recalls several similar Hebrew experiences—Moses, Sinai, Elijah, and others; it also marks the place where the Greek and Roman gods live and operate, receiving and giving divine revelation.⁴⁶⁹ More important, the ascension-to-heaven motif parallels the process of divinization of the Caesars, who receive admission into the heavenly realm. In imperial Rome, witnessing the soul of the Emperor or any of his family ascending to heaven obliged one to later publicly testify to the “ascension” in the Senate, thus guaranteeing the event as authentic.⁴⁷⁰ Likewise, Acts intentionally shows the testimony of those who experience the reality of Jesus as one “exalted at the right hand of God” (2:33). Notably, this ascension is confirmed by one hundred and twenty people, the number necessary to constitute a local Sanhedrin, according to *Sanh* 1:6. Perhaps this fact indicates the new Senate-*Gerousia* of the new movement.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁹ C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*. The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. General editors J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield and G.N. Stanton, in two volumes (London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 81-82 makes the connection with Greek-Roman authors, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Roman Antiquities, about Aenas, Romulus); Philostratus with the ascent of Apollonius, etc., representing the departing from a mountain, flying through the sky in a cloud.

⁴⁷⁰ Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*. Translated by Brian McNeil, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 294. I explain more about this process in the following chapters.

⁴⁷¹ See the explanation below.

The particular mention of the “two men” as witnesses to Jesus’ ascension, rather than angels as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke (1:26) for the annunciation of the birth of Jesus, may suggest – in addition to the fulfillment of a true testimony according to Jewish law (Deut 17:6, 19:15) – that this event marks more than the sovereignty of an exalted typological eschatological-type figure. I suggest that it also refers to the Roman tradition of the human soul leaving the body in order to be accepted into the realm of the divine, thus also marking that person’s divinization.

That the process of ascending is described as “coming up here” in a cloud also has similarities in the apocalyptic literature, both biblical (Dan 7:13: Rev 11:22; Mk 14:62) and non-biblical (1 Enoch). In this manner, the context of a supernatural figure is created and understood. Later in the narrative, Acts shows angelic beings descending from the Lord, who acts on behalf of the apostles and followers.

Transference of Powers

Therefore, the whole process of the ascension shows that there is transference of power reflected in being taken up; going up or being elevated to a special rank of authority. This is clearly seen in the mention of exercising commands and giving orders (ἐντέλλω , 1:2); (παραγγέλλω , 1:4); in the authority to choose (ἐκλέγομαι) followers or clients; and in the expression “give power from on

high” (v.8).⁴⁷² More importantly, the transference of power to Jesus also marks the restriction of the powers of others and the falling of others who have been deprived of their own authority. Acts draws etiologically on the case of the fallen betrayer Judas and the process of his desolation, abandonment, and replacement in order to demonstrate what will happen with any hegemony that acts against the principles and doctrines of God and the institution of his eschatological kingdom. In this regard, the narrative of Acts shows transference of powers – both the imperial hegemony of the Romans as well as the institutions that define Judaism (the kingship and the ruling priesthood) – to the exalted eschatological Jesus and his followers, because they cannot accept the testimony of the ascension and exaltation of Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of the World. These systems of supremacy are depicted as centers of power whose leaders are opposed to the new group of believers of the Way.

The succession of the transfer of power continues when Jesus is compared with the historical figure of David – a man after God’s own heart (13:22), except that his tomb lies here on earth, because “he did not ascend to heaven” (2:34). On the other hand, Jesus is presented as a king (13:22), a prophet (1:16; 4:25), an ancestor (2:29; 7:45), the receiver of holy promises (13:34), and the recipient of a metaphorical and typological “tent of David” which has fallen to ruins (15:16). This conflictive passage of Amos quoted in Acts 15 states that the physical tent of the temple of David will be rebuilt, although in the literary context and timing of this passage during the council of Jerusalem (48-49

⁴⁷² Fitzmyer, 205 translates that power must come from “on high of which Jesus spoke in Luke 24:49.”

CE), it has actually not yet been destroyed by the Romans, and so the house or tent of David must be understood as a corporate representation of those who have killed Jesus (13:27).

The most significant element in the comparison between the death, burial, and ascension of Jesus and of David is that this latter “did not ascend into the heaven” (2:33) and that therefore his body “experienced corruption” (13:36). These verses do not only reflect the doctrine or concept of the mortality of human beings, they also emphasize the ascension of Jesus into heaven, where the powerful live, in order to offer the freedom of forgiveness of sins (13:38-9) through this “Holy One” (13:35)—and as a Savior (13:23) not just to the people of Israel, but as an eschatological Savior, “Lord to all” (10:36). According to Luke-Acts, Jesus’ ministry fulfilled the Messianic prophecies: the reception of “the year of freedom, giving liberty to the slaves” (cf. Luke 4:16-19); the messianic “times of universal restoration of all things” (3:21); and the reversal signified by the statement to the effect “the powerful will be thrown down from their thrones and the lowly will be lift up” (Lk 1:52-3; cf. Acts 12:20-24). The time of the universal blessing has arrived for “all the families of the earth” (3:25; Gal 3:8; cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18; 26:4—“And you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south”). During the initiation of this “divine plan,” the reversal of the rebuilding of a people occurs, not in a restoration of a temporal kingdom known as the physical kingdom of Israel, but directed to every one “who is turning toward God” (15:19). This worldwide reversal applies also to the powerful

of the earth and their systems of worship, since the “Most High cannot dwell in houses made with human hands” (7:48).

Luke’s contrapuntal reading of power is against those who have claimed power and authority, those “rulers of the people” (ἄρχοντες τοῦ λαοῦ)⁴⁷³, “rulers who have gathered with kings together against the Lord and against his Messiah” (4:26). The term ἄρχοντες *archontes* in Lk-Acts always has a negative connotation. Luke portrays such people as “ignorant” (3:17); as scoffers (Lk 23:35, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!”); and as betrayers (παραδίδομι) in the death of Jesus (Lk 24:20). He mocks the fact that “they do not even understand the words of the prophets which are read every Sabbath” (13:27).

Robert Tannehill hesitantly writes concerning the arrest of Peter by the political rulers, “both the religious rulers and the political rulers can be dangerous, and *sometimes* these threatening forces work together.”⁴⁷⁴ I would insist that in the first century both the imperial order with its hierarchy and the institutions of Judaism as a system of religion and politics were all amalgamated in one system of rule. The Roman establishment is supported by the presence of legions enforcing the worship of emperors and by celebrating games and rituals as part of the proclamation of the *Pax Romana*. Likewise, the Jewish leaders, who were part of the religious establishment of the temple in their capacities as priests and high priests, not only represented but also broadcast the idea of a special identity

⁴⁷³ Acts 4:8; Cf. Jud 10:18; Neh 10:15;11:1; Isa 28:14.

⁴⁷⁴ Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of the Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. vol 2, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 152.

as a people with a higher destiny. As Milton Moreland states, “The author’s interest in depicting an ideal, virtuous group that was both accepted and eventually rejected by the Jewish leaders of the temple [was an idea that] was shown to fit well with the needs of a religious association that was struggling to gain acceptance in the Roman Empire.”⁴⁷⁵

In addition, C. Penner rightly calls for us to “heighten the need for a postcolonial challenge to oppositional rhetoric in any form... [in order to] ground the legitimization ...[in] final topics of social and cultural discourse.”⁴⁷⁶ However, I argue that this oppositional rhetoric or narrative of conflict that Penner suggests should not be used to create the ‘bridge’ between the Jerusalem Jewish Christians movement with the Paul-to-the-Gentiles reading. Again, I think scholars mistakenly continue analyzing Acts as the product of a dichotomy between Jews and Gentiles. This “narrative of conflict” must reflect the conflicts inside the same family, as one of the groups among the Jewish-messianic movement seeking an identity and legitimation against the representation of the Other—the Jewish authority—the elite. This process must include a proper interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures as the only foundation for the rule of faith, but it must be separated from the elite and center of power’ interpretation of supremacy and exclusivity.

⁴⁷⁵ Milton Moreland, “The Jerusalem Community in Acts: Mythmaking and the Socio-rhetorical Functions of a Lukan Setting” in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, edited by Todd C. Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2004), 310.

⁴⁷⁶ Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity. (New York/London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 335.

In summary, Acts begins by introducing the human Jesus' transference of powers into the heavens, where he receives authority and dominion to give his followers the orders to witness to and invite everyone to participate in the establishment of the eschatological kingdom, where "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (3:25). However, the same chapter clearly manifests the example of retributive divine justice with the death and replacement of Judas. The statement concerning the replacement of Judas "to take his own place" (1:25) should not be interpreted as a "euphemism for the journey to hell,"⁴⁷⁷ but instead should be related to the *klēros* - the share, the inheritance (1:17). On the one hand, Luke prepares the Jewish Christian group to be a cohesive group in order to be able to withstand attack from the institutions. On the other hand, the whole story of the destiny of Judas functions to maintain discipline inside their own group by warning traitors about the "the terrors of the divine judgment."⁴⁷⁸ This process of electing a replacement for the traitor Judas serves as a warning to those who would likewise desert or who do not want to accept the sovereignty of Jesus as the eschatological prophet, for "anyone who does not listen to the prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people" (cf. 3:23).⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. Translated by Eldon J. Epp with Christopher R. Matthews, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 12.

⁴⁷⁸ Barrett, 93.

⁴⁷⁹ The theme and warnings of judgment of those will not accept the eschatological prophet, they "will utterly rooted out of the people" (3:23). The story of Ananias and Saphira (5); Simon the magician (8); Jesus "ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead" (10:42); Herod Agrippa stricken to death – "eaten by worms" (12:23).

Therefore, this judgment scene of replacement represents and ratifies the movements in the process of the exaltation of Jesus up to heaven and the consequences for the followers who now share the power with the one who sits at the right hand of God. Jesus continues instructing the disciples to remain in Jerusalem, the city of “his sufferings,” until they receive the “promise of the Father.” The assembled group receives the baptism in the Holy Spirit—as an act of transference of power.⁴⁸⁰ The whole group—numbering one hundred and twenty persons including men and women assembled in the upper room—partakes with the exalted heavenly court in the confirmation of the people in the establishment of the Kingdom of God, thus resembling the formation of a local Christian Sanhedrin. Though Conzelmann saw that this was the number required to constitute a local Sanhedrin according to Sanh 1:6, he disclaims this connection based on the sexist affirmation that “since women are also included in the group... Luke does not have this requirement in mind.”⁴⁸¹ It is true that women were not part of the male-dominated society in the first century; however, I believe that the number assembled is significant, because of the development of oppositional groups later in the narrative when Christians will have to counter-attack and defend their constituents against the real Sanhedrin (Gk: *gerousia* – literally the Senate, best known as the Jewish Supreme Court). Perhaps the

⁴⁸⁰ The preposition *en* should be read in the literal sense of “in” rather than being baptized “with” or “by” the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁸¹ Conzelmann, 10. The majority of the scholars disqualified these connection based on sexism. For some examples see, Barrett, 96. The Jewish Virtual Library in its edition of the Talmud, Sanhedrin speaks of “one hundred families” <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Talmud/sanhedrin1.html>.

awkwardness of the statement can remind us that, in the constitution of the new Jewish community, women are counted as active and rightful participants.

From the Center of the World to the End of the Earth

One of the most intriguing movements involving places in Acts 1 is that from the center of the world to the *end* of the earth (in the singular). This progression of witnessing begins with the miracle of *glossolalia* and the preaching of the Apostles during Pentecost when “they began to speak in other tongues” (Acts 2). Segovia, who uses this phrase in order to explain the necessary paradigm shift that occurred in the development of methodology in biblical criticism, illustrates how now the disciplines have become “for the first time, truly global.”⁴⁸² He understands this process, paraphrasing Acts (2:4-5) as,

Men [men and women, readers and critics] from every nation under heaven [from all corners of the world and all configurations of social location in the world] began to speak in their own tongues [to read and interpret the biblical texts out of their own contexts, addressing not only one another but also the world at large].⁴⁸³

Similar to the plurality of readings in the realm of biblical criticism, this new social group within Judaism of Jewish Christians begins the process of creating new interpretations. This plurality of readings does not result from one single reading done from the “center”-- meaning from a centralized powerful entity; rather, the reading comes from peoples of many places outside of the center, who came together to receive the good news of decentering and decolonizing the institutions that have monopolized the interpretative discourse. The phrase “from

⁴⁸² Segovia, *Decolonizing*, 6, emphasis mine.

⁴⁸³ Segovia, *Decolonizing*, 7.

Jerusalem to the *end* of the earth” may suggest that Jerusalem is still the center of the world; another reading shows that this center can be easily decentered, toppled from its position of primary influence. Acts 2 demonstrates this plurality that “*all the people* from under heaven” now are those who are experiencing the power of the proclamation of the established kingdom of “the last days” (2:17), where “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (2:21).

The Lucan emphasis on the inclusion of all the people – “both Jews and proselyte” (2:5, 11) from many places “*under heaven*” (2:5)—suggests that there is a clear reversal of the *status quo* which creates a diversity of new interpretations and manifestations. The proclamation begins at Jerusalem by Jews and proselytes – a fully converted Gentile to Judaism⁴⁸⁴ — but this time it is not the center or the elite who are in charge of producing the proclamation. Rather, it comes from the different voices that are emerging to extend the power of the proclamation to anyone to the end of the earth. The book’s much later assigned title of “Acts of the Apostles” does not even reflect the fact that only few apostles are the ones going out to every place in the world. The text mentions by name only four of the original apostles (Peter, John, James, and the discussable Phillip, who may correspond to one of the deacons). Of these, it is only Peter

⁴⁸⁴ Karl Georg Kuhn, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*, editors G. Kittel, G.Friedrich, Translated by G.W. Bromiley, Vol VI, (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 742 states, “Unlike the other names on the list, these two terms [Jews and proselytes] do not denote geographical origin but the relation to Judaism.” The term is also in contrast to the God-fearer – *sebomenos/phoboumenos* , a synagogue attendee and sympathizing of Judaism but not circumcised yet. The word appears only 4x in the NT: Mt23:15, Acts 2:11, 6:5; 13:43 – the last instance the word *prosēletus* is accompanied by *sebomenos* of God (another typical phrase of Acts with *phoboumenos*).

who has a voice; the rest of those on the short list are voiceless. Even more so are the rest of the disciples-apostles, including the enigmatic Matthias (the successor of Judas), who are not even mentioned, let alone reported as talking. Yet, the narration speaks of “all the people under the heavens” as later returning to their own towns and villages preaching the word. Later the narrative includes: Philip in Samaria; the Jewish-Hellenist who spoke against the admonition to non-Jews (11:19); Barnabas, Apollo, Priscilla and Aquila, and the apostles “to the Jews and Gentiles” – Paul, and so forth.

The term End of the Earth

The term “end of the earth” (*eschatou tēs gēs*) in the singular fulfills the expectations of the Messianic hope and salvation for all, as expressed in the Hebrew Bible. This expression appears eighteen (18) times, as for example, in Isa 48:20, 49:6, Jer 16:19.⁴⁸⁵ It also appears in the Apocryphal book of the Psalms of Solomon (8:15), an apocryphal collection of eighteen psalms attributed to Solomon and written in Hebrew in the first century BCE. This Psalm of Solomon twice quotes this phrase and the last two psalms (17-18) of the book have a direct thematic connection with the canonical Psalm 72, which foretells the coming of the eschatological king, “who lives as long as the sun, the moon and through all generations” (72:5), reports that “all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service” (72:11), and predicts that his dominion will be from “sea

⁴⁸⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible Vol 31, (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 206 attests that the “allusion to Isa 49:6 and its use in 13:47 (cf. Lk 2:32) is not certain.”

to sea, and from the River to the end of the earth”⁴⁸⁶ (72:8). The most important characteristic of the Psalm of Solomon is the motif of self-exaltation of the oppressor power, referring either to the power of the Seleucids or that of the Roman Empire under the general Pompey (66 BCE).

Psalm Sol 1:4-5 reads “Their wealth spread to the whole earth / and their glory unto the end (singular) of the earth; they were exalted unto the stars/ they said they would never fall...” The motif of self-exaltation is prominent again in 2:33; it states concerning the oppressor power: “He said, ‘I will be lord of the land and sea / and he recognized not that it is God who is great.” Chapter 8 begins with a lament of “distress and a sound of war”, later introducing the sins and unrighteousness of a group, denoted as “they,” who defile sacrifices, plundering the sanctuary and trampling the altar (8:12-13). However, in verse 16, the narrative introduces God bringing a new character: “he” who is from the “end of the earth.” This one smites mightily, decreeing war against Jerusalem, killing the “princes” that came “to him with joy” and invited him in peace. There is no explanation in the Psalms regarding who this “he” is who smote mightily; generally, this character has been explained as the Roman General Pompey, who came to Palestine invited by the rival Jewish factions (Hyrcanus and Aristobolus) to end the civil war.

The parallel of this intertextual text may have so impressed Luke as to use it as a reference for this unique expression in the singular. Thus, I would argue that the phrase “end of the earth” in Acts does not denote the generally accepted

⁴⁸⁶ Although the Hebrew and Greek words are different in this case.

extension of the mission of the church but refers to the location of the seat of the hegemonic power. There are also other parallel concepts between the Psalms of Solomon and Acts, for example, the “casting down” of those proud sinners (2:1) who are identified as the “sons of Jerusalem” who are cast down (2:3, 4) because “he has left them” (2:7). The description of the sins, iniquities, and transgressions may indicate also that these “sons of Jerusalem” are related somehow with the high priesthood and the ability to perform sacrifices, and to have access to the sanctuary and altar. The narrative contains at this point a section in which there is a rapprochement between Jerusalem and “her land” and the princes of the land “of Jerusalem” who convene with the oppressor power opening the “gates and crowning its walls” (8:19).

There is no complete consensus regarding whether and what Luke was thinking of this passage. Scholars always connect the two on the basis of the missionary work in Acts but never on the basis of an allusion to a transference of power, or the end of hegemony and reversal. In this regard, I think that the similarities are striking.⁴⁸⁷ Perhaps the Psalm of Solomon helped Luke to speak

⁴⁸⁷ I was not able to find a single reference that follows my reading. Fitzmyer, 206 quotes several commentators who maintain that the place is Rome; however, the only connection is as the final itinerary of the “missionary plans” and not as in the struggle for power. He also quotes (207) other scholars who think that the term is a reference to “Ethiopia”-Cadbury; “Spain”- Aus, Ellis (see also Conzelmann, 7); Furthermore, others think it “does not mean... earth, but only “land.” Bruce, 39 in note 30 warns, “we need not limit the sense of the words in the present context” referring to Pompey. Bruce interprets the book as dealing with the progress of the gospel per areas (Jerusalem, ch 1-17; Judea and Samaria ch 8:1-11:18; and the remainder “outside the frontiers of the Holy Land until at last it reaches Rome”, 39. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 143 gives another “groundplan” ch 1-7 Jerusalem; 8-9- Judea and Samaria; 10-28 – the mission to the “ends of the

up for the position of the all-exalted Empire of Rome and its clients Kings as Herod Agrippa I and the system that he represented. There is another allusion to Tyre (2:13) as being “exalted unto the stars”; then, the psalmist prays to God for revenge in order “to turn the pride of the dragon into dishonour” (2:29), and here the motive of divine retribution of the “insolent one” (2:30) is present again, “bringing down the proud to eternal destruction in dishonour, because they knew Him not.” This is a situation that any reader of Acts would easily understand (cf. Acts 12:24; 13:26; 3:17).

earth”; Barrett, 79-80, states that ‘the truth probably is that the phrase does refer to Rome, but to Rome not as an end in itself but as a *representative* of the whole world’; (italics my emphasis, However, he does not make the connection against the Empire).Gerd Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles: What really happened in the earliest days of the Church*. Assisted by Tom Hall, (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), 106.

The kingdom of Israel and Kingdom of God

The mistaken restoration of the kingdom to Israel versus the establishment of the eschatological kingdom of God

Timing and seasons in kingdom restoration seem to be a crucial matter in the theological agenda of Luke. Acts 1 contains an important question regarding the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel, but Jesus does not offer a response to the misleading inquiry. The apostles ask: “Is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” The phrase βασιλείαν τῷ Ἰσραήλ is unique in the NT. In fact, Luke does not use the term kingdom of Israel, but kingdom of God. Of the 34 times that the term βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ appears in the NT, Luke uses it thirteen times in Lk-Acts, with three of those instances in Acts (14:22; 28:23, 31). The book of Acts begins with the “convincing proofs” of the kingdom of God and ends in Rome at the seat of the ruling Empire, with the hierarchical representation of the power of Jewish leaders in their efforts to be “convinced” (πείθω) by the “law of Moses and the prophets” about the role of this exalted Jesus. In fact, this term “convince/persuade” seems to be key in Acts, where it is used several times with different conjugations.⁴⁸⁸

This persuasion proves necessary in relation to the advent of the announcement of the “kingdom of God” (v. 3) in a special post-resurrection period of a typological forty days. What is important here is Luke’s effort to show his readers the “convincing proofs” of this kingdom. However, according to Acts,

⁴⁸⁸ Acts 18:4; 19:8; 28:23; 13:43; 26:28; 12:20; 14:19; 17:4; 21:14; 26:26; 28:24; 5:36; 23:21; 27:11; 5:39.

Jesus prepares a reversal, with no restoration for the physical Israel, or at least for what the apostles mistakenly understand for such a concept. In explaining this misleading question Fitzmyer, I think, misses the mark when he states: “Though the disciples who pose the question are Christians, they still speak as Judean Jews on behalf of Israel.”⁴⁸⁹ The first observation deals with the semantics of the statement. For Fitzmyer it seems that there is a division between the Judean Jews and their identity as Christians. In the literary context of the book, the term Christians comes only in chapter 11, in other words, several years after this particular incident. The return to the temple as one of the first activities of the disciples after this event indicates clearly their state of mind as Judean Jews. Hence, there is no such dichotomy in time. Nevertheless, the trouble is that Luke does not deal with the restoration of Israel, unless one understands it in eschatological and spiritual terms. So until the powers of Judaism accept the eschatological prophet there is no collective hope, the prophetic hope of Israel.

However, I think that Fitzmyer rightly explains the political context of the inquiry when he states that “the risen Christ refuses to answer the political question posed by his followers.”⁴⁹⁰ Considering the context of the term Israel in Acts, the disciples’ quest should be understood as a political concept. What Acts will show is a combined presentation of religio-political powers, which are against the followers of the Way. The political terms “this city”, “Herod” and “Pontius Pilate”, “Gentiles”, and “peoples of Israel” are weighted equally, indicating a sharing of responsibility in rejecting the eschatological prophet. I will pause to

⁴⁸⁹ Fitzmyer, 205.

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid.*

describe some of these signifiers and the relationship between the Kingdom and Jerusalem, and the concept of House of Israel and sons of Israel.

Relationship of the Kingdom to Jerusalem versus the concept of House and sons of Israel

Since Acts admonishes that everyone, who does not listen to the eschatological prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people (3:23), it is of vital importance to know those who belong to such people/house. In Luke-Acts, and specifically in the Gospel of Luke, the journey into the kingdom of God functions as the central theme as Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem (Lk 9:53ff). In addition, I think Luke wants to portray in his twofold work the theme of the kingdom, as containing the crux of “knowing the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed” (Lk 1:4). Furthermore, the phrase following “according to the Way” (Acts 24:14; Luke 13:22-30, Acts 16:17) proposes the salvation metaphor as equivalent to entering into the kingdom. In the Gospel of Luke, we are told, “Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many will try to enter and will not be able.” In this pericope, which Luke shares with the Gospel of Matthew, this admission or entrance belongs first to those who are part of the house, “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets.” The other group corresponds to the “few” who are “being saved.” In this manner, people from all points of the world, “east and west, from north and south,” are welcome to the eschatological banquet of the peoples. In the Gospel of Luke, the response of the “owner of the house-kingdom” is to rise up and shut the door to the people knocking outside. What is surprising is that Luke does not include the Matthean

phrase “I do not know you” (Mt 25:12; 7:23), but he does states twice “I do not know where you come from,” (Lk 13:25, 27). I suggest that by doing so he emphasizes the location rather than the individuality and identity of the people.

Location seems to be the key for Luke. In this pericope, the desolated house represents the city of Jerusalem as the center of power of the Herodian dynasty, in co-participation with the temple party, all of whom are seen as those responsible for acting against the divine desire to “gather your children together.” In this case, it shows the same dichotomous relationship of the family who form part of the house but at the same time does not want to be part of it. Acts speaks repeatedly of Paul as prisoner defending himself as doing “nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over the Romans” (28:17). Likewise, Peter and the Twelve also strive to clarify to the multitudes that the center of oppression is in Jerusalem: the leaders “acted in ignorance” (3:17; 13:26-27), they insist. Though this process of rejection happened according to a conflictive “definite plan of God,” the identity of the new group expresses allegiance to “the God of our ancestors” and demands “obedience to God rather than any human authority” (5:29).

Similarly, Marianne Palmer Bonz argues that in the case of the prophecy of Simeon in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’ “causing the falling and rising of many in Israel” (Lk 2:34) corresponds to the division “within the house of Israel” where “Luke is speaking of two distinct groups of Israelites.”⁴⁹¹ She concludes that the division within the house of Israel should be interpreted by the “nucleus of the

⁴⁹¹ Marianne Palmer Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 121 and note 139.

opposition group within Israel” with the “Sadducees and, with them, the scribes, chief priests and elders.”⁴⁹² She stresses the use of the verb *antilegō*, to speak against (cf. Lk 20:27; Acts 13:45, 28:17-22), in order to show the opposition found within the one and same house. I agree partially with this reading; yet, the whole concept that God wants to establish a “true Israel” does not make sense to me. I think that the continual use of highly supersessionist concepts such as “new,” “old”, “true,” meaning there must be a “false” does not represent the sentiment that Luke has in mind. It is true that Acts speaks of a “fallen tent (*skēnē*) of David” (15:16), but I think this must be interpreted not in terms of Davidic dynasty (the argument contra Strauss)⁴⁹³ exemplified in Jesus’ resurrection and exaltation, but as a reference to the institutions of the Jews in the first century, which fail to represent the people of God and simply continue the supremacy of the elite as the structure of power.

For Bonz, the “house of David” must refer to the “house of Israel” as in Acts 2:36. The issue is that the qualifier adjective in 2:36 of the “entire” house of Israel still represents those who are outside the temple hearing the message of Peter – a combination of Jews, Gentiles and others – who are receiving the invitation that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (2:21). The prophets Joel, Amos, and Isaiah speak of the inclusion of many people which will be taking place “among them” (15:14). In other words, this process of inclusion does not recall a “true” much less a “new” people. In order to

⁴⁹² Bonz, 121.

⁴⁹³ Mark L. Strauss, “The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts,” *JSNTSup* 110. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, 181-187.

understand the puzzled term of the “house of David,” I suggest that what is meant is not the totality of the Davidic dynasty but that rather a more familial grouping such as relatives. However, the relatives that appear in Acts are the families of the Sadducees and priesthood, the leaders, the center, the elite, those who represent and safeguard the hegemony of the Romans, the ones who are accused of conspiring against the Messiah (2:21; 3:17; 13:26).

In this regard, I disagree with Bonz who proposes that Luke based his work on epic literature in order to illustrate the creation of a “new” or a “true” Israel, following the pattern of Virgil in the Aeneid, who describes the Roman people as coming out of the Trojans. Though this may be a novel and perhaps even plausible solution in the literary realm, it is can hardly be true in all its details. I argue that Bonz exaggerates in suggesting that this “new” or “true” Israel is a “faithful remnant, the true descendant of Abraham”; and that it is “called by a new name and ultimately destined to form a new cultic center in the very heart of the Roman world.”⁴⁹⁴ I think this literary dependence illustrates principles of self-definition and identity of neo-colonial expression expecting that Romans are now destined to take part or be part of the “cultic center” of this “new” Israel. Concerning the creation of a new Israel, Bonz states:

Even though the Trojans will relinquish their native language and customs, their nobility and courage, the true virtues of ancient Troy will live on in their Romans descendants. In an analogous manner, even though the identity and cultic practices of the eschatological people of God will reflect their new cultural and ethnic composition.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁴ Bonz, 128.

⁴⁹⁵ Bonz, 128. She adds in the note, “Negatively, in its abandonment of circumcision and *other cultic exactions* of the Mosaic law, but also positively, in

In a note Bonz surprises the reader when she states, concerning the adoption of “new cultic practices” for the establishment of this new identity of Israel, that these are “positive” because they are “more congenial with a Hellenistic milieu.” I believe that it is one thing to argue for a certain literary dependence based on “certain themes and dramatic devices borrowed from the repertoire of Greco-Roman epic,” but quite another to validate the creation of any kind of Christianity based on the “nobility, courage and true virtues” of the Romans and Greeks. In conclusion, I maintain that any solution concerning the identity of the house of Israel fails when we completely ignore the understanding of Luke-Acts as the continuation and fulfillment of the plan and will of God “known from long ago” (15:17) as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁴⁹⁶ I suggest instead that an approach that demonstrates that God will prepare a house/people “so other peoples may seek the Lord” is more valid.

Another misleading concept in the mind of the disciples regarding the initial question about the restoration to the Kingdom of Israel are the terms “house of Israel” and “sons of Israel.” Fifteen times Acts uses the term Israel with the following signifiers: house of, people of, sons of, repentance to, the God of

its adoption of new cultic practices that are *more congenial* with a Hellenistic milieu” (emphasis mine).

⁴⁹⁶ For more on the divine necessity see Charles H. Cosgrove, “The Divine *dei* in Luke-Acts: Investigations into the Lukan Understanding of God's Providence” in *Novum Testamentum* 26 no 2 Ap 1984, pp 168-190.

this people (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου Ἰσραὴλ), hope of, a Saviour for Israel.⁴⁹⁷ I will pause to describe these relations as foci of power, resistance, and identity.

Acts introduces the term “house of Israel” in two speeches – those of Peter and Stephen. Acts 2 presents Peter in a very familial terms (*adelphoi*), addressing the whole multitude regarding the prophetic interpretation of Joel’s words about the outpouring of the Spirit. Peter includes a political diatribe about Jesus’ assassination attesting that, although it was the plan of God, it was done by “those who are outside the law.” Acts presents Stephen (7) retelling the story of Moses, urging his hearers “to have care” of his brothers, again addressing them in the very familial terms of “sons of the Israelites.” Nevertheless, it seems that Acts presents this term in opposition to the work of the apostles.

In addition, Acts 9:15 shows Paul as the baptizer in the name of Jesus for both Gentiles and kings and before the sons of Israel (ἔθνῶν τε καὶ βασιλέων υἱῶν τε Ἰσραὴλ). Thus, I think there is a parallel between the term “kings” in the plural with the term “sons of Israel.” Barrett opines that Acts presents Paul in front of the nations and kings and “then, almost as an after thought, attached by *te*, of course the sons of Israel too.”⁴⁹⁸ Polhill explains this verse by making the connection with the trials of Paul before the “Gentile rulers like Felix and Festus (chaps. 24-25), and before the Jewish king like Agrippa (chap 26), and before

⁴⁹⁷ Kingdom of Israel 1:6; house of 2:36; 7:42; people of 4:10, 27; 13:17, 24; repentance to 5:31; sons of 5:21; 7:23, 37; 9:15; 10:36; to Israel a Savior 13:23; hope 28:20.

⁴⁹⁸ Barrett, 456.

local Jewish synagogues and even the Sanhedrin (chap 23).⁴⁹⁹ In this manner, we can see how this parallel works and may be applied to the Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel. The term υἱων - sons may refer to the high priests family (cf. 5:21 “the whole senate of the sons of Israel”; 7:23, 37); to the entire house (2:38) or the entire council (cf. 22:30); or perhaps comparatively to the entire people as a people’s group. I am avoiding the nomenclature of “nation” or even “land of Israel,” since these are modern taxonomies. Likewise, the Lukan Paul preaches about the kingdom but never about the kingdom of Israel (cf. 20:25).

Acts speaks also of a group of disciples and saints (*hagioi*) in contrast to the term “sons of Israel.” Here the terms “disciples” and “saints” refer to the members of “the new community in other cities in Palestine – Lydda (9:32) and Joppa (9:41), as well as Paul’s reference to his persecution of the Jerusalem community (Acts 26:10).⁵⁰⁰ These disciples and saints seem to be in opposition to those who continue as “sons of Israel,” who represent those who are against the chosen instrument of God. Compare this to the text of Acts 21:28: “Men of Israel come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere *against our people*, and the *Law*, and this *place*; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” Acts uses the term “men of Israel” (ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλιταί) only five times,⁵⁰¹ with reference to either

⁴⁹⁹ John B. Polhill, *Acts: The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol 26. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 237.

⁵⁰⁰ Howard Clark Kee, *To Every Nation Under Heaven: The Acts of the Apostles*, (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 118.

⁵⁰¹ Acts 2:22, 3:12, 5:35; 13:16; 21:28.

to the people of Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin, or the people in the synagogue in Antioch Pisidia.

In addition, the author is careful not to compare Paul's identification as an Israelite with his testimony in his letters (cf. Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:2). I am not arguing that the followers of the Way are denying their heritage, since most of them are Jews or Israelites in the theological sense. To the contrary, Acts forcefully called the ones who accepted the eschatological prophet of Deut 18 (cf. 3:22, 7:37), and "all the prophets, from Samuel and those after him" as "sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to our/your⁵⁰² ancestors...[where] all the families (*patriai*) of the earth shall be blessed" (3:25). However, perhaps the author's presentation of these groups in separate fashion might correspond to an oppositional pattern that is both significant and intentional. Therefore, Kee concludes that the term "disciple"—"*mathetes* [and *mathetria* – a female disciple] is used as a general term for those who have joined the new community"; This term seems to be "standard"⁵⁰³ in Acts for the community of followers of the Way in different places such as: Joppa (9:38), Antioch (11:26), Antioch-in-Pisidia (13:52), Lystra (14:20 and 16:1), Derbe (14:22), Ephesus (19:1, 8-9), and Tyre (21:4).

In conclusion, we can see that the signifiers "city of Jerusalem", "sons," and "house of Israel" serve as a representation of those in power in contrast to the disciples of the Way. I will pause to describe the related concept of the temple as house or *oikos* of those in power.

⁵⁰² Some mss have *humōn* – your and other have *hemōn* – our.

⁵⁰³ Kee, 119.

The importance of the temple

The temple signified God's dwelling with His people. It was the subject of ethnic pride and also served as a way of marking the difference between those who were "in" and "out" – those who were eligible to access God's presence and those not privy to such blessings. It took a long time for King Herod to rebuild and renovate the temple. Considering this social reality for those builders who for almost eighty years rebuilt and expanded the temple with "their own hands,"⁵⁰⁴ we can surmise that the temple was a great source of income for the Jerusalem population, and that, as Gerd Theissen suggests, perhaps as much as twenty percent of the population was "directly *dependent* on the building."⁵⁰⁵ The financial contributions from the Diaspora during the festivals, plus the sacrifices, money exchanges, offerings, and so forth (cf. Lk 19:46) together signified great profits for the elite in charge. In addition, any possible threat of destruction to the temple could incite the Romans not to consider Jerusalem as a Holy Place—yielding taxation on the population as consequence. Thus, any accusation against the temple directly affected the economy and the well-being of the population. Such false charges would parallel the Ephesians' opposition to Paul's preaching (cf. 17:24-25, 19:25-27, "... You know that we get our wealth from this business"). In both cases, such accusations would threaten not only the religious

⁵⁰⁴ Josephus, *Antiq.* 15.390; 17.260ff, 20.219. J.W. 2.49ff. From 20/19 B.C.E. to 62-64 C.E. (cf. John 2:20, the leaders complained: "It has taken forty six years to build this temple....")

⁵⁰⁵ Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology, Ethics and the World of the New Testament*, translated by Margaret Kohl, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 110 italics mine, the general context is on pages 95-114.

realm of cultural and national identity but also the political-economic status of a temple-city.

Acts shows that, after Pentecost, Jerusalem, and specifically the Solomon Portico of the Temple, became the center of preaching for the disciples (3:11; 4:12). It is here that they encountered opposition from the temple-party (4:1, 5) for the first time. The temple-party arrested, incarcerated, threatened, and prohibited the apostles from continuing to use the temple for this 'teaching.' Luke identifies these persecutors in the following trial episodes beginning in chapter 4 with a series of rejections represented by the institutions of Jerusalem. The list is exhaustive and includes: rulers- *hoi archontes*, the elders- *hoi presbuteroi*, the scribes- *hoi grammateis*, Hannas the high priest- *ho archiereus, Kaiaphas, Ioannes Alexandros* and those from the family of the high priests- *ek genous archieratikou* (4:5-6).

Furthermore, these rulers and leaders attempt once more to silence the apostles with a new incarceration and trial before the Sanhedrin (5:12-42), resulting in another humorous disappearance from jail. This time by an angelic command they are delivered from prison and come back to "tell the people the whole message about His life." This episode is full of mockery and resistance, a combination of strange irony and humor⁵⁰⁶ against the beliefs of the Sadducees, who did not even believe in angels. Luke is thus poking fun at them. Thus, the group of antagonists now includes the whole Sanhedrin (*συνέδριον* - Sadducees with Pharisees, Gamaliel invited) in addition to the hyperbolic "entire senate" or

⁵⁰⁶ Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts*. Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1986), 126.

body of elders of the “sons of the Israel” – *gerousian tōn uiōn*, as another special group of leaders (5:21; cf. 22:5). If these constitute more than one council, Acts is not specific;⁵⁰⁷ the verse mentions the high priest and his entourage, later perhaps identifying the rest of the Sanhedrin with “all the Senate of the sons of Israel.” Definitely, this is a political reference to the sons of Israel of the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁰⁸ Ernest Haenchen cites Preuschen who refers to this group as “analogous to the Roman Senate and distinct from the college of titular judges”; however, Haenchen dismisses the connection explaining, “Luke had no accurate notion of Jerusalem’s institutional structure.”⁵⁰⁹ I think this is odd, given the

⁵⁰⁷ Barrett, 285 calls this *kai* “an intrusive *kai*” and adds that it is “doubtful whether this was in Luke’s mind”. Fitzmyer, 335 translates the *kai* as an adverb “even,” in this manner equating both terms, “merely another way of designating the Sanhedrin”. For Haenchen, 249, the inclusion of the *gerousia* as the Senate is just a repetition of the same term as exegetical. Conzelmann, cites Exod 12:21, and explains that *gerousia* denotes the Sanhedrin in 1 Macc 12:6. He asks, whether Luke understand the Sanhedrin to be a committee of the *gerousia*?

⁵⁰⁸ A brief review of these institutions based of the understanding of the Hebrew Bible is useful here. Scholars argue that, after the Judean Exile (5th century BCE) and during the process of compilation of Deuteronomy, it is possible to see the development of the traditions during the emergence of Judaism. The book mention several institutions: (1) the judiciary – local judges and officials (16:18-17:13); (2) the king (17:14-20); (3) the priesthood-clergy (18:1-8); (4) the prophet (18:19-22). The kingship is the one institution in Jewish tradition that deals at the same time with the civil and religious authorities (Deut 16:18-18:22). Of these groups Victor Hamilton argues that only the “issue of kingship is optional.” Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 229-230. He continues, “All four units emphasize the duties of the respective office holders, but only the other three mentions the rights and authority of the office holders ...No such warning appears for disregarding the word of a king... Nothing is said about the role of the king in government or any exercise of royal power.” Concerning the kinship, Deut 17:20 states that “neither [he should] exalt himself above other members.” Therefore, we can argue that since the days of old, either historically or the time of composition, these institutions were present in the establishment of an elite.

⁵⁰⁹ Haenchen, 249-50. Quoting Preuschen (31).

detailed description of all the members in verse 21 and later even that of the *stratēgos* as captain of the police, being also a member of the family of priests. Second, we cannot just assume that Luke is ignorant of what he states he has researched well.

It is certainly easier to associate these groups with the institutions that represent the religious Judaism of the time: the priesthood; the elders; scribes, and those people who were under their authority (as Saul) as part of the high priesthood. Luke's emphasis clearly includes the council with all the high-priest family. Providing a detailed list of its members indicates that the main characteristic of belonging is that they are related intimately to the temple. As John Kilgallen and others affirm, “even the captain of the temple (*stratēgos tou hierou* – 4:1) is an *archiereus*⁵¹⁰ sympathetic to the Sadducees’ anger against the disciples, for *archiereoi* were very often Sadducean in theology and belief.”

The purpose of the temple- *oikos* in Stephen's speech

The peculiar speech of Stephen has produced countless interpretations. Acts 6-7 follows a series of rejections and oppositions from the Sanhedrin and leaders of Jerusalem. Now, the narrative introduces a dispute in a new setting—the synagogues of Jerusalem with a new oppositional group, the Hellenistic Jews. So far in the book, the believers have encountered a succession of rejections from the leaders of the Jews as a consequence of following Christ's

⁵¹⁰ John J. Kilgallen, “Persecution in the Acts of the Apostles”, in *Luke & Acts*, edited by Gerald O’Collins and Gilberto Marconi. Trans. by Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1991/93), 145.

command to preach, beginning in Judea and Samaria and going to the end of the earth. After these incidents described in chapters 4-5, there will be no more proclamation from the temple, and it is in the context of the temple and its function as a "holy place" (6:12-13) that the dispute of Acts 6-7 is located. The new antagonistic group are Hellenistic Jews from the Jerusalem synagogues (6:9-10) who charge against Stephen the Hellenist. Unfortunately, Acts does not record the teaching/preaching of Stephen, and so the reader has to deduce them from the accusations made against him.

The false accusations against Stephen have to do with core matters of the Jewish faith: the law and the temple (6:11, 13-4). Luke makes clear in both the Gospel and in Acts that Jesus and Stephen are not against these sacred pillars of Judaism. Acts calls the law "living oracles," (7:38) and describes the temple as the place where God's presence dwells; the latter is also the place for preaching, meeting, and prayer for the followers of the Way. However, in Stephen's speech I see a double movement in the argument: First, a transcendence of God's presence is affirmed that is not attached to a 'single place.' Second, the rulers of the people have a history of rejecting God.

The first argument begins with the concept of a movable glory and theophany, which is initially associated in Mesopotamia with Abraham (7:2). Later, this glory is transferred to Moses at Mount Horeb, the mountain of God (Ex 3:1-12), in the event of the burning bush, "for the place where you are standing is holy ground." The concept continues, now broadened into the mobile tent and ark of the wilderness (v. 44 *skēnē tou martyriou*), and finally to the temple

building (*skēnōma*). The chapter concludes with the glory transferred to the heavens. This is the place where God and Jesus live, because it is a temple which cannot be made with human hands, a thought later stressed by Paul to a Gentile audience (17:24-25). Thus, the issue of the glory of the temple in Jerusalem is a problem for Acts, since Judaism has created a dependency on its temple, a core of the institutional-national identity that is now no longer in place. This is a situation known to every reader of Acts, given the physical demise of the temple.

It seems that the Israelites of the narrative have worshipped “the place” but rejected God through idolatry. Stephen reminds them that in the same way “God [has] turned away from them” (v.42).⁵¹¹ God has turned from them because they do not accept the Righteous One, and they continue, “Forever opposing the Holy Spirit.” The narrative shows that even though they have received the manifestations from God himself, his law and commandments (the “living oracles”) they have not “kept them.” Due to their stiff-neckedness, they replaced the tent of the testimony with the ‘tent of Moloch.’ The emphasis here, again, is not on the place itself but on where God is. Francis D. Weinert attests, “God does not receive human service as though he needed it. This certainly does not mean that any human service of God is irrelevant, but that while he demands such service, he is not dependent on it.”⁵¹²

⁵¹¹ *estrophō*, turn and its derivatives is a favorite word of Luke.

⁵¹² Francis D. Weinert, “Luke, Stephen, and The Temple in Luke-Acts”, *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 17, (Jl 1987), 90. See also, “The Meaning of the Temple in Luke-Acts”, *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 11 (1981), 89.

I think Dennis Sylva is correct when he suggests that Acts 7 is not a "statement of rejection of the Temple, but rather an assertion of God's transcendence of the temple."⁵¹³ However, I would argue that this transcendence was historically associated with definitive periods in time. This is an obsessive and surprising characteristic that Luke shows in his retelling of the stories from the past, showing how God has worked with specific periods and times.⁵¹⁴ The "time" has come now when the movement-transference must

⁵¹³ Dennis Sylva, "The Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46-50", *JBL* 106/2 (1987) 265 Also, Weinert, 88 has similar view that Luke has not an antagonistic position toward the temple; he recalls more than sixty references in Luke-Acts are "either positively accepting or neutral". Sylva, 261, shows that the text of Acts 7:46-50 has been interpreted as 1) replacement of the temple, 2) a rejection and condemnation of the temple and 3) an affirmation of God's transcendence of the temple. For more information regarding other authors, see also the bibliography of the different interpretations in Sylva. In opposition, Conzelmann sees the rejection and replacement of the temple based on his hermeneutical frame of Christian freedom from the Law and temple, see Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, English translation of *Die Mitte der Zeit*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 165.

⁵¹⁴ Luke uses more often than any other writer in the NT the terms *chronos* (*time*) and *kairos* (*season/period*). He seems to have in mind the fulfillment of specific times through history. This may seem contradictory of Jesus' answer: "It is not for you to know the *times or periods* that the Father has set by his own authority" Acts 1:6-7. However, the emphasis here lies in the authority to set the time, in contrast to the "but" of verse 8 compared to Lk 21:29-31, "...so also, when you see these things taking place..." that suggest the believers must study the signs of the times associated with the fulfillment of words of prophecy.

Some examples of the term "time" are: Acts 3:18-21, "in this way God fulfilled what he foretold through all the prophets...so *that times of refreshing* may come...the Messiah... Jesus, who must remain in heaven *until the time* of universal restoration" (cf. Luke 21:22, 24 "for these are *days of vengeance*, as a fulfillment of all what is written... Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles* are fulfilled."); Acts 7:17, "as the *time drew near* for the fulfillment of the promise"; 7:45, "it was there *until the time of*"; 12:1 "about that time" cf. 11:27, "in those days"; 13:20, "*until the time of*"; 14:16 (implicit cf. 17 'periods, seasons'), "In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways"; 17:26, "*he allotted the times*"; 17:30, "while God has overlooked *the times of human ignorance*, now...."

continue. Stephen is not rejecting Judaism per se, but "calling Israel as a nation back to a relationship with God [the righteous one] that was characterized by leaving behind the structures."⁵¹⁵ Therefore, the marks that describe the temple as the '*axis mundi*' are no longer in place.

I now turn to a brief discussion on two concepts of judges and rulers related to transcendence of the glory of God of the temple in time and space, and the topic of abandonment.

Rulers and judges as leaders in relation to Stephen's speech and the temple

The theme of the glory of God appears several times in the narrative and is also related to the concept of the judge and ruler. Acts 7:7 says, "I will judge the nations"; verse 9 shows that, despite the brother's jealousy, God's presence is with Joseph, who is appointed as 'ruler over Egypt'; in verse 27, Moses becomes a 'ruler and a judge' in spite of the initial rejections of the Israelites (v.35). Later, the chapter describes the rule and throne of kings David and Solomon. However, the speech finishes with a movement of thrones from the temporal sense to the spatial: "Heaven is my throne" (v.49). In this transference of rulers and thrones, Stephen now contemplates the glory of God, recognizing Jesus at His right hand as ruler and Lord-kurios. In all these instances, Luke shows that God's rulers received jealousy and rejection. In this final case, Jesus is rejected as Lord, as is Stephen as His witness.

⁵¹⁵ David A. deSilva, "The Stoning of Stephen: Purging and Consolidating an Endangered Institution", *Studia Biblica et Theologica*, Vol 17 N2, 1989, 184.

Acts 7 narrates the climax of the rejection of the Jewish leaders—the Sanhedrin who join the Hellenistic Jews as accusers, both now transformed antithetically “in one mind” (*homothumadon*) (7:57), in a wild crowd that kills Stephen by stoning. In this manner, they are compared to the Gentiles/nations fulfilling the typological role of those rejecting Jesus in the church’s prayer/song of deliverance (4:25-26) “Why did the *ethnos* rage?”—a verbatim quote of Psalm 2:1-2 LXX. Fitzmyer notes that “this Psalm is a royal psalm, composed for the enthronement of some (unknown) historical king of the Davidic dynasty, whose subject peoples are plotting against their *new ruler*. Their action is understood as a conspiracy against God and the king, who is called God’s ‘Anointed.’”⁵¹⁶ R. Pervo classifies this incident as the “apex of rage” which displays the Sanhedrin as “ravenous for blood.”⁵¹⁷

In summary, I maintain that Luke understands Jesus as Lord-Kurios, God’s Anointed, and a ruler of the house-*oikos*, but not in association with the physical temple, but rather as Stephen declares: “Heaven is my throne... what kind of house will you build for me says the Lord...”, and also “I see heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (7:49, 55-6). This statement of transference from a temporal house to a spatial one transforms the Sanhedrin as a representative institution of legality and justice into one that is “ravenous for blood” when with one mind they rush to kill Stephen. Because of

⁵¹⁶ Fitzmyer, 309. Psalm 2 is also quoted in Paul’s first sermon (13:34ff) Italics mine.

⁵¹⁷ Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 21,146. Pervo sees an establish parallelism of *dieprionto* in Acts 5:33 and 7:54.

this outrageous behavior, I believe that Luke equates the rage of the Sanhedrin with that of the Gentiles described in the church' song of victory: "Why did the Gentiles rage... the kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers have gathered together against the Lord" (cf. 4:25-6, 19:28-34). An exact parallelism is found in the riot of Ephesus in the incident of the Artemis-Temple (19:28-34), where the words *krazo* (rage), *phōne megalē* (great voice), and *ōrmēsan homothumadon* (rushed in one mind) are repeated again.

In addition to the concept of rejection, I believe that the context of *oikos* in chapter 7 also relates to abandonment. However, this abandonment is temporal, since later the character transforms himself, into a ruler. Thus, Acts 7 depicts the abandoned one as becoming the ruler in charge of a *new house and people*. This it does in keeping with the following typological pattern: a) Joseph is abandoned and rejected by his brothers because they were jealous (*zēlōsantes*); nonetheless, God was with him and he became the liberator, ruling over "all the Egyptian *oikos*" (v. 10) the savior of both the Egyptians and Israelites. b) Moses the abandoned child also became the liberator, "brought up in his father's house," later leading as ruler the exodus from the old way of life into the covenant. Though rejected as ruler and judge by the people of Israel (v35), Moses became the ruler and *liberator* of the *ekklesia* in the wilderness,—a term that Luke uses once to describe the nascent church.⁵¹⁸ It is a term that in "contrast to the

⁵¹⁸ K.L. Schmidt, in Kittel ed., *TDNT*, Vol 3, 504 informs us that this is the second time that Luke uses the term in Acts. Also "this is not a literal quotation, though there *is allusion* to Dt 9:10" (LXX) (italics mine). This is a very interesting passage were Moses as representative of the *ekklesia* is entering into a new covenant relation with God. The other term liberator is *lutrotes* lit. redeemer (only

secular *ekklesia*, ... is not a quantitative term; it is a qualitative... it is in being when God gathers His own."⁵¹⁹ c) Jesus, the abandoned and rejected Messiah,⁵²⁰ receives the legitimization of God at the heavenly *house* as the Son of Man in the apocalyptic and eschatological terms of Dan 7, "as the Representative of the people of the saints of the Most High [verse 48], who has set Himself the task of representing this people of God, ie., the *ekklesia*."⁵²¹

The concept of house-*oikos* compared to the rending of the veil of the Temple in Luke-Acts

I will make one more reference to house-*oikos* in relation to the rending of the veil in the temple (cf. Lk 23:44-45) and the saying of the desolate house (Lk 13:35) in the Gospel of Luke. These texts have been used to explain the destruction of the temple. Three main interpretations regarding the veil rending have been proposed: a) a future sign of the destruction of the temple; b) a sign of the abrogation of the temple and its sacrifices; and c) a spiritual "sign that through Jesus' death the way to God was open."⁵²²

Dennis Sylva explains that the reason Luke (Lk 23:44-48) reverses the order of the event, so that the rending of the 'curtain temple' comes before Jesus'

once in the NT, the LXX translation of *go'el* ex. Psalm 19:14, 78:35 cf. Ruth 2:20).

⁵¹⁹ *ibid*, 505, in this manner, I am reading *ekklesia* as a signifier of the new group rather than the connection to the ancient *demos* in the secular world.

⁵²⁰ Verse 37. Cf. Dt 18:15-18, Acts 3:22.

⁵²¹ *Ibid*, 521. This is ratified by the only use of *ekklesia ... en ouranois* in Heb 12:23, "the only verse in which the term e. occurs with reference to the heavenly Jerusalem", 513.

⁵²² This idea is found in Heb 10:19, 20; a classification by Dennis D. Sylva, "The Temple Curtain and Jesus' Death in the Gospel of Luke", *JBL* 105/2 (1986), 239-50. See also the Bibliography of the different interpretations.

death is because this is related to the ninth hour as the hour of prayer.⁵²³ For Sylva, this is a sign that Jesus maintains this special communion with his Father (his presence at the temple)⁵²⁴ at the time of death. Since this is the time of prayer, Luke uses the ripping of the curtain to designate the connection with the temple, but unfortunately he does not explain completely the importance of the rending. In order to ratify his thesis he shows some “unnoticed” parallels with the death of Stephen: a) the saying about the forgiveness of Jesus and Stephen (which we only find in Luke among the Synoptics); b) the burial for 'devout or righteous men'; c) the communion of both characters with the Father; d) the words “Receive my spirit”; and e) the 'openings' "into a place of God's presence" (temple/heavens). He concludes, "Jesus' commitment of his Spirit is an address to the God revealed to him by the tearing of the temple curtain, as Stephen's commitment of his spirit is an address to the Lord revealed by the opening of the heavens."⁵²⁵

Yet, the question remains: what is the meaning of the ripping of the veil? Sylva suggests it is all about 'openings.' J.B. Green, reinterpreting the “novel

⁵²³ Sylva stresses the importance of the ninth-hour, quoting Acts 3:1 (Peter and John at the temple), Acts 10:30 (Cornelius), and Lk 1:8-10 (the hour of the incense -although Lk does not relate it with the hour of prayer). See also Francis D. Weinert, "Luke, the Temple and Jesus' Saying about Jerusalem's Abandoned House (Luke 13:34-35), in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 44:68-76,77, where he also interprets the rending of the temple veil "as a dramatic lead-in for Jesus' dying prayer of self-dedication to God" (70).

⁵²⁴ Dennis D. Sylva, "the Temple Curtain and Jesus' Death in the Gospel of Luke", *JBL* 105/2 (1986) 243, he states, "It is my thesis that Luke 23:45b is primarily connected with 23:46a and that the image that 23:45b, 46a presents is that of Jesus' communion at the last moment before his death with the Father, who is present in the temple".

⁵²⁵ Sylva, 245.

thesis" of Sylva, suggests that Jesus is already communing with the 'God of the temple' and that the death of Jesus has repercussions for both Gentile and Jew. For Green, according to Acts, in order for salvation to move out beyond the borders of the people of Israel, Jesus must be rejected. He states that Jesus is rejected first by "the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, then by 'some' Jews in other locales, then this leads to widening of the mission to embrace all peoples both Jews and Gentile."⁵²⁶ I disagree with Green, for though Acts retells the rejection of the leadership of Jerusalem, does it do so 'in order' to take the mission to the Gentiles? Certainly not! Moreover, I think that in the theology of Luke, the ripping of the veil is a special event. Green attests that the veil was a barrier separating Gentile and Jew, like the temple itself, although he is not suggesting that Luke requires the destruction of the temple. However, regarding its role in salvation history, he states "The power of the temple to regulate socio-religious boundaries of purity and holiness had to be neutralized."⁵²⁷ Green emphasizes that the boundaries and holiness of the compartments of the temple are no longer in place, in this way segregating "Gentile from Jew; Jewish female from male, Jewish priest from non-priest; and high-priest from other priest". This symbolism, he advocates, was formalized later in *m. Kel* 1.6-9 where it

describes degrees of holiness as concentric circles around the Holy of Holies; the land of Israel is more holy than the other lands, the walled cities of Israel holier still, the rampart holier still, the Court of Women holier still, the Court of the Israelites holier still, the Court of the Priests holier still, the area between the porch and the altar

⁵²⁶ J. B. Green, 505.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*, 506.

holier still, the sanctuary holier still, and the Holy of the Holies holiest of all.⁵²⁸

The problem with this interpretation is that this is the same 'holiness and purity' that creates difficulties for Paul later, when, acceding to the petition of the leaders of the Jerusalem church, he is falsely accused and arrested (21:28). Thus, the rending of the curtain did not serve the purpose of incorporating and including the Gentiles into the life of the temple. In order to satisfy this question, Green proposes the demise of the physical temple, the 'cultural center', as a sacred symbol of socio-religious power.

J. Bradley Chance suggests another approach. He states:

Luke wished to bring into close proximity the motif of darkness (representing the satanic character of the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem), the rending of the veil (representing the destruction of Jerusalem), and the death of Jesus (representing the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders). In so doing, he has affirmed once again the direct relationship between the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and the rejection of Jesus.⁵²⁹

The problem with this reading is that the temple continued for almost forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus; in addition, the same apostles, disciples, and Paul, continued preaching and worshipping in the temple.

Perhaps what seems important in the connection of the rending of the veil is the darkness predicted by Jesus during the arrest: "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Lk 22:53). The rending of the temple veil begins a period of

⁵²⁸ Ibid, 508.

⁵²⁹ J. Bradley Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Macon:GA: Mercer University, 1988) 120. See also, Michael A. Goulder, *Luke: A New paradigm* (2 vols.: JSNTSS 20; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989)2. 769 quoted by Green, 497 that states sees both as "portents together: both signify God's anger with Jewry, the second the coming destruction of the Temple."

three hours of complete physical darkness,⁵³⁰ symbolic of the satanic hour. This symbolism of darkness may parallel the period of darkness of the Jewish pseudo-prophet Bar-Jesus who refused to hear the word of God. Ignorance or rejection of God is also expressed in Acts 26:18 where Paul receives the commission "to open the eyes [of your people and Gentiles] so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God."

Concerning the transposition of Luke's period of darkness, I agree with Sylva and Green that Luke changes the sequence in order to better reflect his theology of the temple. The darkness certainly should be interpreted with 'this is your hour of darkness and the power of darkness (Lk 22:53) as a consequence of the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. However, we must also consider the antithetical theme reflected many times in Acts of the Glory of Yahweh shining on everybody, including the Gentiles. This is a fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah 40:5 that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all people shall see it together. I read this passage in conjunction with Lk 13:35 (Your house is forsaken) as referring to the glory of Yahweh symbolically and prophetically leaving the temple. Thus, the nexus between heaven and earth is represented with the rending of the veil destroying the sacrality of the presence of Yahweh, the place of the Shekinah, the place where God rests. This place is where symbolically in the old covenant the sinner asked for forgiveness and received redemption, where once a year the high priest entered the Most Holy Place and standing made intercession for the people.

⁵³⁰ It is irrelevant for this paper to consider the positions of interpretation of the darkness as a 'failure or eclipse of the sun' - Green, etc.

Luke-Acts does not present a strong argument for such a concept of atonement, and yet I see the atonement sacrifice of Jesus as the representation and fulfillment of the services of the temple. Luke includes the astonishing remark "They did not understand" referring to the parents after the words of boy-Jesus: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house or about my Father's interest?" (Lk 2:49).

Thus, I would argue that the rending of the veil prefigures the symbolic presence of Yahweh leaving the temple to bring it later to its destruction, as happened to the first temple after the rejection of the Israelites. The hierarchy, order, and divisions that the temple had symbolized until now are no longer in place. Now the good news of salvation and the glory of God are accessible to everyone.

In conclusion, the long unfinished speech-defense of Stephen, rather than the kind of speech usually given Lucan characters, is a defense of the fulfillment of the Scriptures in which the theology of the temple is clearly seen. The place where God is, is holy (7:33). God had dwelt in different places according to the times. Now, says Stephen, Jesus as the Son of Man is standing at the right side of God in the heavenly temple.⁵³¹ The tent/tabernacle was made according to

⁵³¹ It is significant that the issue puzzling scholars is about Jesus standing rather than sitting at the right hand of God. Sylva writes, "It is a puzzlement why Luke writes that Jesus is "standing" instead of "sitting" at God's right hand. A frequent explanation is that the standing signifies the Lord's readiness to receive Stephen, the martyr." Note 13. I believe this is a false idea based in the Greek dualistic concept of the immortality of the soul and the after life in the ascension to heaven. I believe that the standing is the significant contribution of Luke to the typology of the New Testament, plainly expressed in the book of Hebrews of

the heavenly pattern (v. 44). This indicates that at least there were some 'blueprints' or that the biblical writer believed in the concept of a heavenly temple from where God shows the pattern to Moses (Ex 25:8). Stephen, recognizing his time, makes explicit to the temple-party that God cannot dwell in houses made with human hands. The temple that Luke considers worth mentioning through Stephen is the place where God and Jesus are: Primarily such a temple is in the heavens; secondarily, it is found through the witnessing and the presence of the Holy Spirit among the church.

Jesus interceding as 'the High Priest' in the heavenly sanctuary. However, this is not our topic here.

The identity of the Jews – the rejection

Who are the persecutors and the *Ioudaioi* in Acts?

The first chapters of Acts (1-8) show a variety of characters and motives for persecuting and being hostile to followers of the Way: a) The Sadducees as a group who are against belief in the resurrection of Jesus and hence reject the claims of Jesus as the Messiah of God and his followers. b) The Jewish Sanhedrin as a group who believe the accusation that the Jewish Christians deny the importance of their temple and the validity of the Mosaic traditions to which the religious group of the Pharisees are fully devoted. c) The former persecutor Saul who worked under the authority and auspices of the temple-party, with the same motifs in mind. I argue that these characters act out of sincere religious convictions, a sense of nationalism, and even perhaps fanaticism. I suggest that tones of nationalism and religious hatred permeate the opposition groups, because it is only after the death of Stephen, a Hellenistic Jew with hybrid identity, that the rest of the Jewish Christians seem to become the target of persecution (8:1, 11:19-21). After the council of Jerusalem, the text introduces the Jews of Asia, who are against Paul and the Hellenistic Christians. The accusation is that the Christians' proclamation is a direct attack on the core of Judaism and its institutions, beginning with a predicted-fulfilled destruction of the temple in the proclamation of these mostly sectarian Jews (21:20) called Christians or followers of the Way.

The important question is whether the early Jewish Christians and their preaching were – using today's nomenclature – anti-Semitic or even anti-Jewish. Certainly not! These Christian groups are Jews fully immersed in their culture. Were they also against the national interest of Judaism? I do not think so. Paul demonstrates his association with the synagogue, including his respect for their leaders. His breach with them lies in his different interpretation of the 'Law and the Prophets', particularly his belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Acts 12 introduces a completely different scenario to the earlier persecutions. A new character emerges among the rulers: Herod Agrippa I, the king and head of state himself, is introduced as antagonist and persecutor. However, here the motives seem more political than religious, as I explained in a previous section. Herod persecutes the church just to please the Jews- *hoi Ioudaioi*. This is not because of religious or even nationalistic convictions; it is simply a political maneuver to gain the Jews' favor! Luke later repeats the same pattern, with the Roman governor Felix acting because "he wanted to grant the Jews a favor" (24:27). It is likewise said of his successor, Festus that he wished "to do the Jews a favor" (25:9). The real issue here for Luke is to show the dominance of these power structures—that the "Jews" are so important and powerful that even Kings and Governors want to please them.

Another problematic issue of antagonism is the frequency of the phrase, "all the people of the Israel/Jews." Some examples are useful: in Peter's words, "I am sure the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from *all expectations of the people/laos Jews*" (12:11). Peter likewise is reported

to say "let it be known to *all of you and to all the people of Israel*" (4:10). In the same manner: "Therefore let the *entire house of Israel* know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom *you all* crucified." Some commentators defend the statement that "Luke is blamed for postulating a collective guilt limited to the Jewish people."⁵³² However, I think Wilch goes too far by stating that "the murdering of the prophets is not be taken factually, but as a hyperbole" and that "the persecution of the Christians by Jews is reported only as a historical fact, and not as polemic."⁵³³

I think that Luke insists in representing the totality of the group, families or people, in this case the Sanhedrin. Using the Roman Governor Festus' words, Luke states that it is "the whole Jewish (crowd/assembly)" (*hapan to plēthos tōn Ioudiaion*) that once again represent the entire Sanhedrin as the institution of Judaism which seek Paul's death. Yet, I do not think this should be read as meaning the totality of the Jewish people. Others argue that when Festus uses the expression "all Jews", he is deliberately exaggerating. To the contrary, I believe that Luke has different motives. I would argue that Luke portrays the Romans in an unfavorable way and that according to Luke it is very difficult to believe the Romans, despite the contrary argument of Walaskay⁵³⁴ and others

⁵³² John R. Wilch, "Jewish Guilt of the Death of Jesus", *Lutheran Theological Journal* (Lutheran Church of Australia: North Adelaide) vol 18, 1984, 51. Following Lake & Cadbury, 291; Conzelmann *Apostelgeschichte*, on 3:13.

⁵³³ Wilch, 54.

⁵³⁴ Paul W. Walaskay, *'And So We Came to Rome': The Political Perspective of St. Luke*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

who read Acts as favoring the Romans. Here, I show only a few examples of the Romans officer's mendacious behavior in my reading.⁵³⁵

To begin with, for example: Luke exposes the lying on the part of the tribune Claudio Lysias (23:27) by making the false statement that: "When I had learned that Paul was a Roman citizen, I came with the guard and rescued him." The story actually informs us that the Roman officer did not recognize Paul. Furthermore, Lysias is confused to see the hybrid-identity of this pseudo Egyptian, who speak Greek with him but Aramaic with the accusing crowd. Later when Lysias orders him to be flogged without knowing that he is a Roman citizen (cf. 22:29), he is shocked and changes the orders, knowing the complexity of the issue. Therefore, this first case is already an example of Luke at the very least portraying Lysias as liar.

A second example of mendacious behavior occurs when Governor Felix repeatedly calls Paul to him, not only to discuss matters with him, but also in fact because he "hoped for money... for that reason he used to send for him" (24:26). This text shows how common was the practice of Roman Governors looking for bribes as a path to riches. It is true that Luke shows an ambivalent tendency of presenting the characters with both desirable and detestable practices at the same time. However, it is simple and naïve to conclude that Felix' motives are to protect the evangelist.

Luke shows another incident when quoting the orator-attorney Tertullus, who, in representing the high priest Ananias and some elders in front of the

⁵³⁵ These and other examples will be explained in detail in the next chapter.

Roman Governor Felix accuses Paul as follows, “A pestilent fellow, an agitator, among all the Jews of the world” (24:5). Again, Luke uses an all-encompassing term to highlight completeness. The interpretation of this term is difficult: does he mean the Jews as an ethnic designation, or is he referring to all synagogue members throughout the world? Tertullus, as a representative of the elite, recognizes that even their circle has been ‘agitated.’ Furthermore, it is impossible to decipher whether the term “the Jews” refers to the group of those who accept or who reject the Messiah. The most one can perhaps say is that it refers to the totality of a group.

Likewise we see this pattern in Acts 12, during the incarceration of Peter, when Luke reports the inclusive statement that God rescued him from “all” the people of the Jews in company with Herod Agrippa (12:11). At least in this reference Peter, the apostles, and the church are not included in the hyperbolic statement, since there were many “Jews” who believed and were part of the church. Kilgallen argues that it seems that “only after chapter 9 (v.22-23) does the term begin to appear as an inimical word to designate those who oppose the preaching of Jesus as Messiah.”⁵³⁶ Augusto Barbi states that the Greek term *laos* (people) has a very favorable connotation in 2:47, 4:21, 5:13, 26. However, it is only in the episode of Stephen (ch. 7) and the Herodian persecution (ch. 8; 12) that *laos* changes in meaning when the narrative shifts back to Jerusalem. Thus the term *Ioudaioi* at this point comes to mean the elite at Jerusalem-- the king and leaders as symbols of the establishment. For Barbi “the term *Ioudaioi*

⁵³⁶ Kilgallen, 148 See also note 20.

[is] attach[ed] in a significant way to the unbelieving people of Jerusalem, once the city has ceased to be the scene of evangelizing activity and Peter, primary witness, is about to abandon it.”⁵³⁷

In light of this, perhaps we may argue there was a specific period of time that was allotted for Jerusalem and the “people of the Jews”, in this manner fulfilling the initial mandate of Jesus to witness in Jerusalem and surrounding cities. Now, the disciples are encouraged to go out to new people including Gentiles and other ethnic Jews living in the Diaspora, located in other geographical places beyond Jerusalem. Furthermore, the narrative finds Paul speaking in the synagogues where once again we find the divisive topic of the acceptance or rejection of Jesus as the messianic fulfillment of the prophets and the qualifications of Jesus to fit such a definition. It is in the synagogue of Iconium (14:2) that the term *hoi Ioudaioi* is associated with the description of *apeithesantes* - unbelieving. Their new title or designation is not based on ancestry, nation, or culture, but on their disposition to accept the message of the apostle. The opposition and persecution comes from the group that remains the perennial disbeliever. Barbi concludes, “Luke seems to want to show by use of this model the ongoing rupture among Jews in relation to the gospel. When Jews accepted the gospel they simply become “believers among the Jews” (21:20) and

⁵³⁷ Augusto Barbi, “The Use and Meaning of (*Hoi Ioudaioi* in Acts”, in *Luke & Acts*, edited by Gerald O’Collins and Gilberto Marconi. Trans. by Matthew J. O’Connell, (New York: Paulist Press, 1991-3), 135.

join the Christian community. When they reject the gospel, they become *loudaioi* in the adversarial sense."⁵³⁸

Another example of the term “Jews” occurs during Paul’s trial in Jerusalem: in the Sanhedrin forty Jews “pledge not to eat or drink” until they kill Paul – again as the epitome of those opposed to this agitator. Kilgallen argues that this is “a salutary consideration in trying to estimate just who is meant in Acts by *hoi loudaioi*.”⁵³⁹ The very number is highly symbolic in Judaism as a sign of probation and period of trouble. Two years later, at the end of the period during which the elite of Jerusalem act against the representative of the sect of Nazarenes, the narrative identifies the same group as found in the beginning of

⁵³⁸ Barbi, 141. The term *loudaioi* appears, 79x in Acts; 5x in Luke, 5x in Mk, 6x in Mt, and 71x in Jn. Barbi mentions in the article several interpretation of the term. The following is a summary of such interpretations: For Gutbrod, these are opponents of the preached Christ and of the Christian community but not necessarily with the name Jews. For Conzelmann, the meaning is polemic. It is more than a simple ethnic designation. For him the semantic shift occurs in 14:1-4 and later in 18:5-12, 14-19; 17:1-5, 10-17 representing those who rejected the gospel as stereotypical enemies of the church. George believes that in the chapters 2:5, 11 and 14, it only refers to the Jewish nationality with no religious overtones, but from 12:3, 11 it takes a polemical meaning of unbelievers and enemies. He states, “Those among them who have rejected the gospel will continue to make up ‘the Jewish people,’ a secular people who having renounced their own mission, have lost their title of people of God.” For Zehnle, the word has a disparaging meaning in 9:23, 12:3 and 11. Once the Jews of the Diaspora join the Jews of Jerusalem, it becomes a ‘technical term’ (as in John) – the opponent of Paul. Lohfink is surprised by the expression *laos tōn loudaiōn* in 12:11, and observes that becomes increasingly frequent and not by chance after the story of Stephen “marking a distancing from the church of Judaism.” Hauser recalls that starting with 9:23 in a good twenty-six cases has a negative meaning, and it becomes the label of the enemies of the gospel. Slingerland argues that, it is a pejorative name describing their behavior marked by jealousy, rioting, and intrigue; and fits in with an anti-Jewish *topos* that is found in contemporary literature. Sanders believes that from 9:22, the term is used with an adversarial meaning, enemies of Christianity.

⁵³⁹ Kilgallen, 152.

the book: the high priest, the elders, the chief priest's families, and the Sadducees. Though the Pharisees are mentioned in this episode, they defend the accused one (23:7). In general, Acts presents an ambivalent representation of the group of the Pharisees, though they are represented with the Sadducees in the Sanhedrin. On the few times that they are mentioned in Acts they are portrayed almost positively, and indeed some of them are depicted as being part of the group of believers (15:5-6).

During the first opposition of the Sanhedrin mentioned in chapters 3 through 5, an interesting and enigmatic term appears: *loipos* – the rest (cf. 5:13), which is contrasted with the terms depicting the followers of the Way – *homothumadon* (those of one mind) and *ho laos* – the people. One should note that all of these appear without any reference to the term “the Jews.” The text reads: “And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were happening among the people; and they were all with one mind in Solomon's portico. But none of the rest dared to associate/join with them; however, the people held them in high esteem” (5:12-13). The previous context portrays a series of miracles and wonders that are taking place, including the almost magical incident of Peter's shadow falling on some of the sick resulting in their healing. Luke makes sure to clarify that, in addition to the multitude of people at the Solomon Portico, there is a new crowd that comes from the cities “around” or in the vicinity of Jerusalem in order to be healed. It is at this point that another conjunction—*de* or “but”—occurs to introduce the high priest and “all who were with him – Sadducees,” who are filled with jealousy. The reader wonders about

who the enigmatic “rest” were who dared not to join the apostles, and perhaps finally assumes that this is a reference to the Jerusalem party. Interestingly, the term *loipos* is used in the Bible as a reference to the remnant – generally a faithful one; however, in this case, it seems to indicate the opposite: while the *laos* of Jerusalem and from other cities around are coming to join the disciples, the elite as a center of power refuse to believe.

The believers, both “*men and women*,” together with the apostles, are of “one mind” participating in the fulfillment of the words of Jesus that “greater things you will do.” Thus, the people held them in high esteem; miracles and wonders extend from the temple to the streets. However, the temple-party, the “rest,” the rulers, the Sanhedrin, and the council are presented in complete isolation and in opposition to the people of Jerusalem and vicinities. They are “full of jealousy,” –another technical term describing those who repeatedly oppose the apostles and later Paul. Though reading the “rest” to mean the elite may be considered an overly simple way of translating the conjunction *de* as 'but' rather than 'then' (v.17 as in NRSV), I think that such a move causes the two passages to be read together as a unit and in context from verse 12 onward and not as an “apparent contradiction” or “clumsiness” of the author, as some scholars suggest.⁵⁴⁰

⁵⁴⁰ I am following the suggestion of Joseph Fitzmyer, 328, “It is not clear, however, to whom the term *hoi loipoi*, “the rest” refers. Since *ho laos*, “the people,” occurs in the next clause, “the rest” seems to be different from “the people”. Perhaps it refers to members of the three classes mentioned in 4:5, the leaders, elders and scribes.” This argument reads contra Conzelmann, 39 that interprets verses 12, 13, and 14 as an “apparent contradiction... is mere clumsiness on the part of the narrator.” Although he supports the idea of *luptoi*

In conclusion, I argue that Acts sees the *laos tōn Ioudaiōn* (people of the Jews) as being only those who oppose the proclamation to the gospel, exemplified by the Sanhedrin and the temple party who have rejected the message of the apostles. The last mention of the Sanhedrin is as those who pledge "not to eat or drink" until they kill Paul. This action contrasts with the symbolism of the petition of the Tyrians and Sydonians (cf. Acts 12) who depended on the king and country for food for physical survival. Likewise, these forty Jews who have food decided to not share it with anyone else. The leaders of the Jews, those who were called to be a light to the nations and to proclaim the coming of the Messiah, did not want to feed the people. The temple state representatives, the elite in the power of social structures, reject the Messiah's message. Similarly, the King as the head of the State, also representing the elite rulers, becomes the target of divine retribution and punishment by being eaten from the inside by worms. Now, the *Ioudaioi* symbolize their own death because they refuse "to eat."

New Opposition Groups, the Pseudo-Prophet and the directional shift

Acts 13 presents a new development of opposition in the narrative that introduces a shift from the usual preaching and speeches to multitudes. The

as non-Christians and he reads *de* as but in v. 17. I disagree also with the option of "non-joining sympathizers" of Ben Witherington that states: "It is not convincing to argue that 'the rest' is a technical phrase for non-Christians," Also, he notes that since verses 12 and 13 begin similarly, "... it is natural to take the two verses together speaking of the leaders of the group, followed by a reference to the rest of the same group... the Non-joining Sympathizers." in *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: W. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998), 225-6.

author introduces a sequence of encounters with members of the center groups: kings, proconsuls, priests, prophets, and magicians illustrating thereby the new composition of opposition groups. This directional shift also introduces the encounter with a certain *magos* – a Jewish false prophet appropriately named Son of Jesus or Bar-Jesus (13:4-12), and does so in an environment completely different from the synagogue, thus presenting two quite different worlds. This unique *new individual character* serves as a *tipos* of the *new opposition* from the Jews outside of Jerusalem to the message of the new apostle– Paul. Bar-Jesus seems to represent the syncretistic Judaism of the Diaspora.⁵⁴¹ The purpose of this story is to show the transition in the shift from the establishment of the institutions of Judaism to the establishment of the church.

The first element presented in the story is the role-play involved in the shift of names from Aramaic to Greek, Bar-Jesus to Elymas. This is not “odd” as some have suggested, and it is not the product of combining two stories.⁵⁴² Rather, Luke’s intention is to make clear to his readers that the new magician was not of gentile origin, but Jewish. The reader should not feel perturbed because of associations with the name of Jesus. On the contrary, this is done to emphasize that the one who is falsely called “son of Jesus” will be unmasked by the Holy Spirit, as a “son of the devil.”

⁵⁴¹ Jürgen Roloff, *Hechos de los Apóstoles* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1984), 263, attests, “Fundamentally all is reduced to the controversy between Christianity and the ruling syncretism of the Jews living in a pagan environment” (my translation from the Spanish). Quoted by John J. Kilgallen, “Acts 13:4-12: The Role of the Magos” *Estudios Bíblicos* ns 55 no 2 (1997), 226.

⁵⁴² Kilgallen, 226-227 quotes Marshall, *Acts*, 218, Turrado, *Biblia*, 121, and others following the theory of H. Conzelmann, in *Acts*, 99-100, that regards this as two different stories combined.

A parallel move may be seen in the play on names from *Saulos* to *Paulos* – again from the Aramaic to the Greek. This is not designed to introduce the preaching of Paul, as has been suggested by traditional interpretation. After all, chapter 9 has already narrated the calling and initial preaching of Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem. Luke uses this story to show Saul's change from being a persecutor to being a true prophet. In the same manner, Luke uses chapter 13 as the transference from a true to a false Jewish prophet, reinforced by the exodus of prophets and apostles from Jerusalem, as a center to other cities. We do not find here any supersessionist movement from Jewish to Gentile, but rather witness a movement inside the family. The prophets and teachers leave Jerusalem for Antioch (11:27, 13:1).

After the persecution by the head of the State (Acts 12), the reader immediately encounters a false prophet opposing and “turning away from the faith” (cf. the supportive term “from the word of God” [*ton logon tou Theou*]). Paul proclaims to a Roman proconsul and to a Jewish false prophet, the unquestionably Jesus as the prophesied Messiah of the Jews. In this sense, Bar-Jesus is opposing his own God. Some have argued that the dispute is perhaps really because Bar-Jesus explains the messianic prophecies in a different way from Paul. However, it is difficult to imagine Paul cursing Bar-Jesus and calling him “son of the devil full of deceit” just for sake of voicing a different opinion. A counter-example is provided by Apollos and the proper instruction of Priscilla and Aquila.

Perhaps the change of names from Saul to Paul is also meant to accentuate the image of rejection in the Hebrew Bible of King Saul as the anointed leader of Israel. The persecutor of David is no longer the anointed one: God has left him. Now, with the beginning of the Davidic kingdom, a new dimension of the same kingdom enters the scene but with different leadership, because the first leaders failed to fulfill the plan of God. I do not think that Luke wants to continue using Saul's name in order to show that there is a change from being Jewish to being Jewish Christian, since there are no such elements of supersessionism elsewhere; rather, I would suggest that he is drawing attention to a new rearrangement inside the same family. In addition, Paul, who is "full of the Holy Spirit", now displays the true charismatic characteristic of a Hebrew Bible prophet in rebuking the false prophet, as indicating by the term '*pseudoprophetes*', common in the prophetic tradition of Judaism.⁵⁴³

In addition to given prophetic characteristics, Kilgallen demonstrates that the language of the curse upon Bar-Jesus follows the language of the Septuagint. Here are some examples:⁵⁴⁴

- The term *dolos* (deceit) is not Lucan vocabulary. It only appears in this passage (13:10), but is "very evident" in the LXX. Kilgallen mentions Sir 1:30, "Do not exalt yourself, or you may fall and bring dishonor upon

⁵⁴³ Perhaps the intertextual imagery of Jer 23 may help here. Jeremiah 23 describes themes of ungodly 'priest and prophets' (9-11), the promises of 'new shepherds' with new leadership, and the announcement of a new exodus (7-8). In addition, it describes similar vocabulary and phrases such as 'eating wormwood and drinking poisoned water' (15), perhaps parallel to the diagnosis of the death of King Herod; and 'in the latter days you will understand it clearly' (22c), used by Peter to days of the Pentecost.

⁵⁴⁴ Kilgallen, 229-230.

yourself. The Lord will reveal your secrets and overthrow you before the whole congregation, because you did not come in the fear of the Lord and your heart was full of deceit” (*kardia sou plērēs dolou*), and Sir 19:26. The first text is significant,⁵⁴⁵ given the situation of Herod, who is struck by the hand of the Lord, compared with “the hand of Lord” that also is against Bar-Jesus.

- The term *huie diabolou*, he argues, “clearly identifies the source of the *magos*’ evil in Jewish terms. It is the source of evil known to the Jews, that is the cause of the *magos*’ thwarting the word of the true God, the Jewish God.”

- The term *pasēs dikaiosunēs* (enemy of “all righteousness”) corresponds to another term well known in Judaism, requiring perfect obedience and behavior.

- The phrase “turning crooked the ways of the Lord” contradicts the background of Isa 40:5 (Lk 3:4-6), the bringing of the glory of the Lord to all people, where everyone “shall see it together”. Kilgallen states that “the manner “describing the “*magos*’ obstruction is totally Jewish, and understandable only with knowledge of the Jewish prophets.”

An additional component is the blindness of Bar-Jesus as the result of “the hand of the Lord” striking for the third time in the narrative: First, the angel smote Peter; then, Herod; finally, Bar-Jesus. Although the parallel with the temporary

⁵⁴⁵ Kilgallen does not mention this connection. Jeremiah 5:27 also contains the expression “full of deceit”: Like a cage full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit; Therefore they have become great and rich.” Note also Paul’s usage of the term “deceit” in 2 Cor 12:16; 1 Thess 2:3, 2 Cor 4:2.

blindness of Saul cannot be denied, it is interesting to note the differences. First, the “light from heaven” in conjunction with the words of Jesus, “He is a chosen instrument to bring my name before the Gentiles,” recalls the prophecy of Isa 40:5 and the glory of God himself. The latter blindness is only a repetition of retribution and punishment on Bar-Jesus. Second, the Greek terms are different: *lepidas* (scales falling) compared to mist and darkness (*achlus kai skotos*).⁵⁴⁶ The extension of Bar-Jesus’ blindness is not mentioned, however is intended as temporary, since the phrase *tuphlos mē bleptōn* (blind do not see) is redundant and it is used only as a theological explanation. *Tuphloi* (blind people) by definition do not see. I believe Luke employs it for emphasis. I suggest that Luke has in mind the text of Isa 6:9-10 that he quotes at the end of Acts (28:26-28) when he describes those Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah “both from the Law of Moses and the prophets.” Third, the terms *achlus kai skotos* (mist and darkness) are not associated with physical sight, as in the case of Saul. Rather, they are descriptions of the environment. Someone may have no physical limitation in the eyes, but, because of the great darkness surrounding them, may seem as if blind nonetheless. Though Bar-Jesus was “groping for someone to lead him by the hand,” he remains in the world of darkness—a world describing the powerful word ‘*skotos*’ of the magos. Thus, this blindness is an

⁵⁴⁶ Some scholars find more resemblance with the Apocryphal story of Tobit, where in both stories there is a heavenly intervention for healing. However the terms are different: *leukomata en tois ophthalmos* Tobit 2:10 (LXX).

externalization of the religious experience of *some unbelieving Jews*— those who oppose and turn away the Gentiles.⁵⁴⁷

From Synagogues to Gentiles?

I disagree with commentators who only see Bar-Jesus, and later the preaching to the synagogue in Psidia, as an example of opposition, leading to a turning toward the Gentiles. The fact is that Paul always comes back to the synagogue. The mission-model instructed by Jesus and followed by Paul reflects a paradigm of first the Jews and then the Gentiles. This is the true of every single city Paul visits until Rome.⁵⁴⁸ For example, in Corinth (18:5-8) Paul tries to convince both Jews and Greeks (*sebomenos*) but instead he experiences once more the rejection of the word of Jesus as the Messiah. In a prophetic and symbolic gesture, he shakes the dust off his clothes and moves to a paradoxical “next door neighbor”—from the synagogue to the house of Titius Justus, a real “worshiper of God.” What is strange is that the one who believes (*epipisteuo*) is Crispus—the *archisunagogos*, along with his entire household.⁵⁴⁹ The

⁵⁴⁷ See also Zechariah in Lk 1, when as the product of disbelief was a temporary condition of mute.

⁵⁴⁸ Perhaps the only incident where this pattern is not followed is in Lystra 14:8-19; the text does not state specifically where Paul and Barnabas are preaching and performing the miracle of the paralytic “who had faith to be healed.”

⁵⁴⁹ I am making a significant distinction in Acts about between a *proselytos* to Judaism and “to believe” (*epi+ pisteuo, + peitho, epistrophe, aparche*, and other verbs) in order to indicate that the modern word “conversion” as used today, reflecting the experience of changing religion, is not appropriate for those Jews who accept the message of Jesus as Messiah. I am persuaded by the concept of K. Stendahl that Paul had a calling and not a conversion [K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles: And Other Essays*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976)].

frustrated Paul repeatedly threatens that he will turn to the Gentiles, but he never does, and those who accept the message are again Jewish believers. Therefore, it is not justifiable to claim, as many do, that it is because of the rejection of the Jews that Paul turns to the Gentiles.

Paul understood his mission to be to “all people,” not just, as some suggest “Paul for the Gentiles” and “Peter for the Jews.” These assertions are not altogether true. Both Peter and Paul resist such a description. Peter in Acts 15:7 states, “I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message.” Likewise, Jesus' words about the mission of Paul regards him as “an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel” (9:15). In addition, we should recall that the words of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:46-48 are spoken in the context of the *Ioudaioi*, who, full of jealousy and blasphemy, reject the message.⁵⁵⁰ Hence, one cannot accuse Paul or Luke of being anti-Jewish.⁵⁵¹

The Jews of Asia

The Jews of Asia have a character different to the Jerusalem-Jews. They are able to convince the “whole city” (*holē polis* 21:30). The term is significant, since *polis* and *laos*, city and people, are the terms generally used by Luke to

⁵⁵⁰ It is also interesting and significant from the standpoint of numerology there are 12 instances in which Luke describes the Jewish hostility from the diaspora against Paul. See Richard J. Cassidy “The Non-Roman Opponents of Paul”, in E. Richard (ed) *New Views on Luke and Acts*. (Minnesota. 1990), 150-153. For more on Cassidy position see, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

⁵⁵¹ Or following today's nomenclature of anti-Semitic. See Acts 22:3, Phil 3:4-6.

designate the people of Israel, or better the Judean/Jerusalem institutions of power, and are employed in deliberate contrast to the term ‘crowd’ or *ochlos* that Luke generally uses for the multitude at large, whether Gentile or Jew, but in opposition to *laos*. The NSRV, to my mind, wrongly translates *plēthos tou laou* (multitude of the people, 21:36) as “crowd”, interchanging the terms. However, I argue that the term *laos* refers to those Jerusalemites and leaders who shout the same words in reference to Jesus, Stephen and Paul, “Away with him” (21:36; 22:22; “Away from the earth such a fellow, because, he does not deserve to live.”

The character *laos*—people is a clear reference to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Luke uses the term 48 times in Acts. It is used always to refer to the Jerusalem multitude, which initially welcomed the message of the apostles to the extent that even the captain and the police of the high priest, when arresting the apostle, refrained from using violence for fear of the people (5:26). Later, it is the same group, in company with the elders and rulers, who take Stephen to the Sanhedrin. Some textual versions even include the expression “Jewish people” for *laos* in Acts 10:2, when introducing the Roman centurion Cornelius. Acts 12:11 presents the term *laos* in conjunction with the opposition – the state king and rulers. Even in vision at Corinth (18:10), Jesus promises, “There are many in this city who are my people,” and the narrative introduces a new leader of the synagogue—Sosthenes. In 26:17 Luke makes a distinction and at the same time equates two groups, following the translation of *kai* in “out of the people” and (*kai*) “out of the nations/Gentiles” (ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν). In 26:23 Luke again introduces both clauses with the particle *te*, making them at the same time

two independent groups but with the same privileges, “both to the people and to the nations” (τῷ τε λαῷ καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). Luke concludes by presenting Paul as not being against “the people, customs or forefathers” (28:17).

Conclusion

In spite of Luke’s stated intention to write “everything in order” (Lk 1:3), this purpose must be understood in a theological rather than historical sense. Nevertheless, Luke describes: on the one hand, what is essentially out of his control: the facts of the dispute between the full-body Jewish identity of Christianity; on the other, the reasons for the rejection. Theologically, in the two volumes the rejection does not begin in Acts but in the Gospel, where it is prophesied (Lk 2:34) concerning the destiny of Jesus, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed.” In addition, Luke explains that other people deprived of the metaphors of spiritual food and light will be included in the symbolic words of Mary, “He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty” (Lk 1:53). It is this understanding that reflects Lukan theology and the Lukan effort to show that the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus or understand the words of the prophet read every Sabbath: they “fulfilled” those words by condemning him. Though the leaders failed, a new leadership continues with the same establishment of the kingdom of God.

The Lukan Paul

In this section I discuss the representation and evaluation of the identity of the Lukan Paul. He has a hybrid self-identity— a Jew born in the Diaspora; educated and trained as a Pharisee in Jerusalem; with close ties to the religious and political institutions; and a Roman citizen by birth. In general, this Paul differs from the one depicted in the Epistles, for at the beginning of Acts his identity is shaped by his voluntary submission to the Jewish authorities— as a zealous Pharisee persecuting the followers of the Way. He continues later in the narrative as a passive and submissive apostle of the Jewish Christian institution. Therefore, any traditional reading of the Epistles as an antinomian, anti-circumcision, exclusivistic message to the Gentiles lacks any foundation in Acts. However, though such self-identity seems not to be a problem for this “chosen instrument” to the Jews and the Gentiles, others are troubled by his mission. People from both his own group—the Jerusalem Jewish Christian group, from Jewish institutions, and from Roman officer ranks with whom he comes in contact see him as an “agitator” and “trouble maker” with a hybrid conflictive identity. I pause to describe these associations.

The Jewish-Pharisee Paul

Acts presents Paul as a member of the social elite: highly educated, trained in the philosophy and rhetoric of the Greco-Roman context. Jerome H. Neyrey, discussing the social education and location of Paul, writes: “He is a typical male of considerable social status; he regularly appears in public space;

he frequently performs traditional elite male tasks such as arguing, debating and speaking boldly in public. Luke would have us think of him as a person at home in places reserved for elites.”⁵⁵² This view contradicts how most scholars see Luke: a defender of the oppressed, the poor, women, and the disinherited in general. Acts presents Paul as a member of the elite, educated under Rabbi Gamaliel (5) and with a special affinity for association with the higher social caste in both the Jewish and the Roman systems. Before his call, he has direct communication with the high priesthood, which authorizes and sends him out as their representative (9:1-2; 22:5). Later, he is in the company of the Roman proconsuls Sergius Paulus (13:7-12) and Gallio (18:12-15); he also speaks in front of Roman Governors such as Felix (23:23-24:27) and Festus (25:1-26-32), who invite him for ethical and philosophical discussion. He associates easily with leading citizens of the Greek cities – “leading man of the island” (28:7) and in Thessalonica with “not a few of the leading women.” He is able to organize churches in the Diaspora and among Gentiles, convincing them even to send financial support through him to the establishment in Jerusalem. The cosmopolitan and extrovert figure of Paul thus clashes to some extent with the self-effacing Jesus, his Lord and Savior.

⁵⁵² Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Social Location of Paul: Education as the Key” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, edited by David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson. (Harrisburg/London/NY: Trinity Press International, 2003), 162. See also in Neyrey, “Luke’s Social Location of Paul,” 275-76.

The identity of Paul and the Jews

Paul does not have any animosity against any Jews in general, nor against the Jewish community, its boundaries, or marks of identification. Rather, Acts shows that the term *loudaioi* (Jews), accompanied by a specific location, are his opponents. For example, the text clarifies that the identity and markers of identity of Paul are not an issue. He is a Jewish man, acknowledged by both centers of power. The Sanhedrin attorney, Tertullian, identifies him as a “ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (24:5). Paul represents himself as a Jew (21:9; 22: 3) as a member of the “strictest sects of our religion and [one who] lived as a Pharisee” (21:39; 22:3; 26:5; 28:19-20).

Acts contains more references than any other book in the NT (including John) to the term *loudaioi* (79x). The identifier “Jews” must be read as a compound phrase demonstrating provenance with the connotation and condition of accepting or rejecting the apostles: For example, they are described as “disobedient/unbelievers Jews” (14:2); as Jews of Thessalonica (17:13); as Jews of Berea (17:11); as Jews of Asia (21:27; 24:19); as Jews from Antioch and Iconium (14:19); as Jews of Jerusalem (21:11; 25:7), compared with the Jews who accepted the proclamation of the apostles during Pentecost and the “thousands of believers among the Jews.” During the first chapters in Jerusalem, involving Peter and the rest of the apostles, there is no prejudice of being called Jews; indeed, they accept the message. It is only with his work and appearance in the Diaspora that Paul once again has to defend his citizenship and religion. In all the instances of the word *loudaioi(os)*, the term is positive and acquires a

negative connotation only in the encounter with Paul. Luke does not include the term *Ioudaismos* of Gal 1:13-14, nor the famous inclusive phrase (a baptismal formula) “There is neither Jew nor Greek” (Gal 3:28; Col 3:1; cf. Rom 10:12; 1 Cor 10:32; 12:13), so familiar in the Pauline corpus.

Thus, two conclusions can be reached: i) Jewish Christians in general do not suffer any kind of discrimination or rejection by their own people; ii) Luke tries to portray Paul as being always submissive and obedient to the customs as a faithful Jew. Avoiding any problem related to circumcision and being loyal to the customs, Paul submits himself to the general opinion of the Jews of Lystra regarding the hybrid ancestry of Timothy, his disciple of Jewish-Lystran-Greek ancestry. We read in Acts 16 that he circumcised him, “because they knew that his father was a Greek.” Later in Jerusalem, he submits voluntarily to the wishes of the Christian council performing the rite of purification in the temple that brings the arrest and end of the career for the apostle.

Paul and Other Groups

Acts always introduces the Cyprian believers as a different group than those from Jerusalem (11:19; 12- House of Mary; Barnabas; Mnason, etc). Paul is brought by the Cesareans brothers to the “house of Mnason of Cyprus” in Jerusalem. There seems to be a distancing here from the organized church in Jerusalem. It is also a Cyprian – Barnabas-- who convinces the Jerusalem church to accept the former persecutor, Saul/Paul. Again, it is he who went to Tarsus “until he found him” in order to fulfill the Antiochian mission. In addition,

Cyprus is also important, because it is the place from where Barnabas and Saul begin the first of only two organized commission journeys.⁵⁵³ “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (13:3).

There are also the Cyprian brothers living in Antioch who decided, against orders from Jerusalem, to proclaim the word “among the Hellenistic/Greeks” (11:19). In this manner they created a hybrid and ambivalent identity for a new believers-group—from fixity to fluidity—of the followers of the Way, who from this moment onward are called and receive a new signifier term, “Christians.” After an entire year of confrontation and discipleship, there is a shift of identity and leadership from the church in Jerusalem to Antioch, where prophets (11:27) and teachers (13:1) are moving to what seems another seat of the Christian movement. Later, when Paul visits Jerusalem (21), the ambivalent dialogue of “them” vs. “us” becomes the discussion of Paul in front of “all the elders” in Jerusalem (21:17-26). It is ironic that the hybrid Paul, before having the trial in front of the Jewish Council – the Sanhedrin, must first testify in front of what seems like a Christian Sanhedrin where Paul is judged, or at least evaluated, and even sentenced to “what is then to be done.” The criteria of the Jerusalem Christian council seem to indicate that somebody has to pay for and repair the

⁵⁵³ I speak in terms of commission rather than the common missiological and colonial term of “Paul’s missionary journeys.” I see only twice that Paul is commissioned by the church to visit the churches with a specific message. The rest of the travels, or itinerant preaching –though visitation for reinforcing the churches- are without any definite plan or pattern, by sometimes prived by the Holy Spirit, while others denied time to continue in the city and leaving from place to place as a result of persecution rather an elaborated and prayerful “missionary journey”. Furthermore, the organized missional plans of Paul to Rome are never accomplished.

damage wrought by the accusations against this itinerant preacher and that this should be done in front of the thousands of Jerusalem believers or in front of “all who are zealous for the Law.” At this point, the reader wonders if the same Jerusalem-Christian Sanhedrin is part of the “them” or the “us.” Luke again introduces the enigmatic figure of James together with “all the elders,” though in Acts James is not identified as the brother of the Lord (cf. Gal 1-2), but as the one who seems to be in charge of the church of Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12; 15.)⁵⁵⁴ The odd and ambivalent position of being in two places that obliged them to speak as “they” (impersonal plural) rather than in the first person plural, “we”, creates a conflict in the identity of these groups. The narrator describes the process like this: “When they heard it; they said to him”: “You see, brother, how many thousands of believers are among the Jews (with the re-aparition again of the conflictive hybrid term *loudaioi*,) and ‘they’ are zealous for the law.” It is interesting that the reference is to people outside of this group. It is not clear whether Luke really wants to portray the Jerusalem Christian council as “zealous” for the law or whether in fact this is intended to be ironic and ambivalent.

The reader has to be aware that the term “zealots for the law” should not be confused with the political uprising by the Zealots (the same term) of the year 66 CE against the Romans.⁵⁵⁵ However, the issue is that the political-religious stand of the Zealots in “maintain[ing] Israel’s set-apartness to God, [in order] to avoid or prevent anything which smacked of idolatry or which would adulterate or

⁵⁵⁴ Acts 1:14 includes in the list of those present in the upper room, “Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers” but without describing them by name.

⁵⁵⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 285.

compromise Israel's special relationship with God as his peculiar people"⁵⁵⁶ shares the same characteristics with the Jerusalem church and its leaders, including James the brother of Jesus and the elders, as "zealous" for rightful adherence to the customs and Moses. Paul described himself as zealous for God rather than zealous for the law (cf. 21:20). Dunn cites Philo and the *Mishnah*.⁵⁵⁷ Philo in *Special Laws* 2.253 states similar circumstances: "There are thousands who are zealots for the laws, strictest guardians of the ancestral customs, merciless to those who do not anything to subvert them." In addition, the *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 9.6 warns and threatens, "If a man... made an Aramean woman his paramour, the zealots may fall upon him. If a priest served (at the altar) in a state of uncleanness his brethren the priests did not bring him to the court, but the young men among the priests took him outside the Temple court and split open his brain with clubs." Most likely, these are traditions that reflected the general practice in these circumstances. It is not therefore surprising to read that the mob literally wants to kill Paul.

Paul yielded to the exigencies of the Christian-elite. Fitzmyer argues, "This was not a compromise that Paul makes of his own beliefs or teachings... he performs the Jewish ritual acts in effort to keep peace in the Jerusalem church, because he knows that those rites do not undercut his basic allegiance to the risen Christ."⁵⁵⁸ I think that Fitzmyer is trying to ridicule such adherence to the Christian-elite as the center. Personally, I do not see Paul making a

⁵⁵⁶ Dunn, 286.

⁵⁵⁷ Dunn, 286.

⁵⁵⁸ Fitzmyer, 692.

“compromise” as a way of negating Jewish values, for to affirm this implies that Paul is lying to the Christians elders. Acts never portrays Paul as denying any of his Jewishness. I think that there is no conflict or problem for him in his Jewishness, since he still follows all these rites in a voluntary manner without the pressure of any institution (cf. 18:18).

The compromise to which Paul submits, perhaps as a result of the jealousy of the party of Jerusalem, which includes James, fails completely. Whatever were the motivation and intentions of the leadership, a fragile combination of sacredness, and preservation of purity laws, and commercialism were required of Paul in order to show allegiance to their authority and supremacy—performing sacrifices and vows, paying for offerings and purifications. Paul has already presented to the Jerusalem church the generous offerings of the Asian churches, but now additional conditions involving the temple and its activities must be completed. What is ironic in the narrative it is that it is not the Jerusalemites or the “thousands among the people” who denounce Paul but another group of Jews from Asia who are completely outside the reality of the Jerusalem church. This makes it necessary to establish if these accusations or presumptions against Paul were made in complete isolation from the normal routine of the church that was initially led by Peter and the apostles (cf. chapters 4-5).

Thus, using the postcolonial category of mimicry, we may read that Luke is, on the one hand, accusing the Christian church of not being really zealous for the law – a characteristic that the Lucan Paul has never invalidated—and, on the

other, of not recognizing that the admittance of non-Jews (or Gentiles) into the Christian movement is at the same time a denial of the law, for which Luke, I believe, blames the Jerusalem church. The text can be also read as Luke pointing the finger at the Jerusalem church for not being “zealous enough” in their fulfillment of the law and the inclusion of the Gentiles in the eschatological salvation movement. Read this way, Paul becomes a critic of resistance.

In contrast, the reader continues wondering whether the accusation against Paul is real and accurate, since there is no denial of it. The elite of the Jewish Christian church cite the ambivalent group—identified as “them”—saying: “You teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs” (21:21). The imposition on the submissive Lucan Paul is irrefutable. The accused one just hears the sentence: “What then is to be done? – We will tell you.” The power of the Christian Sanhedrin is unquestioned, even by the narrator. This is the penalty in order that “all will know” that the Jerusalem church portrays itself as still upholding the law and the customs, at least in sight of the others, even when an answer is inadmissible, the traditions must be kept and the accused must submit to the authorities.

In this regard, I see Luke as laughing at the Christian Sanhedrin because of their accommodationist attempts to keep everyone happy and because of the unparalleled ambivalence in the identities of the three groups. The narrator makes no effort to clarify who these three groups are: a) The elite of the Jerusalem Jewish Christian group identified as “we” perhaps a faction of the

leadership of the Christian Sanhedrin. b) The unidentified group of the thousands of Jerusalem-Christians referred to in the phrase “they will hear” (21:20, 22) – probably the same Christian group which contains several representatives of the civil religious authorities (“many priests” 6:7) and Pharisees mentioned in previous chapters (15:5). It is difficult to believe that the general population of Jerusalem, let alone the civil and religious authorities as a group would be preoccupied with the development of the Way among the Gentiles. Therefore, this term “they” cannot refer to them. It must be read as another segment within the inside group of the Jewish Christians. Perhaps, this “they” must be associated with those who previously went from “us”, “though with no instructions”, disturbing and unsettling “your” minds (15:24). c) Finally, the third party corresponds to Paul and the rest of his delegation. However, the accusation incorporates another group of passive and absent believer “Jews” who live “among the Gentiles” (21:21). These are Jewish people of the Diaspora. The accusation is not that Paul is teaching Gentiles not to circumcise their children or to forsake Moses. Though Gentiles are being converted to the Christian Way, the Lukan Paul does not reflect the same antagonism found in the Epistles. Furthermore, the council’s decision also includes, regarding the “Gentiles/peoples/nations who have become believers” (21:25), a repeated statement of the previous decisions not to trouble them (cf. 15:19-20) by imposing further burdens other than the four essentials.

Thus, the structures of power in the Christian group are clearly established: the elite of the group as *another center* are the ones imposing rules

on everyone, to the point that they seem to make of Paul an observer and keeper of the Law. This is ironic, since Acts has always portrayed Paul as not being against any custom but simply as a careful observer. The sentence has a dual meaning: it orders Paul to participate in a rite of purification, which the submissive and obedient apostle follows strictly; and it rectifies a previous judgment (cf. Acts 15) to the rest of the passive and absent group of Gentiles, “We have sent a letter with our judgment.” There is no doubt how to follow procedure for the conversion of the Gentiles.

The ratification of the previous judgment does not leave the reader puzzled about whether Paul participated or not in the previous decisions of the Jerusalem Council on behalf of the conversion of Gentiles, as some have suggested. The basic problem in Acts 21 is not the Gentiles who are converting but the “Jewish people living among the Gentiles.” Paul satisfies the sentence of the elite by fulfilling the vow and participating in the rite of purification in the temple, which in turn provokes his arrest and incarceration, due to an *accusatio* by a new antagonist group, the Jews from Asia. The accusations of this new group are contrary to those of the Christian Sanhedrin: they claim that Paul is “teaching everyone, everywhere against our people, our law, and this place (temple 21:28)”, including the profanation of the temple by bringing Gentiles to it. The reader again wonders if this arrest was a setup, a kind of conspiracy theory against the preacher to the Gentiles. After this point, the Christian Sanhedrin and the thousands of Jerusalem believers are absent from the narrative. There is no prayer-intercession groups as there were earlier (cf. chapters 3-4). There is no

defense of Paul to the Gentiles. The sinister silence of the Jerusalem church works as a rapprochement with the powerful Christian-Jerusalem group, who did not even have to leave the city during previous persecutions (cf. 8:1), because they seemed to enjoy good a relationship with the city authorities. The situation continues calm for the thousands of believers and this power group. This is inferred from the response of the Jewish leaders in Rome, who state that they have not received any letters from Judea, although they “know that everywhere, with regard to this sect, it is spoken against” (28:22).

Paul’s Hybridity

Luke has been presenting the complex situation of hybridity among the believers since Acts 6 with the inclusion and division of the widows of the Hellenists and the awkward designation of Hebrews (Ἑλληνιστῶν πρὸς τοὺς Ἑβραίους) as well as the grumbling of the Hellenists to the Hebrews (6:1). Acts 11 introduces the contrasting designation of *Christianoi* compared with those from Cyprus, who decided to contravene the ruling by speaking outside the regular groups of Jews. It seems that there is another sub-group within the group. Now, Paul arrives in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost (21); he visits the elders in order to report the progress of his labors. However, it seems that the visit becomes another council of the church involving “all the presbyters” and the “bishops.” The aorist form of the verb, παρεγένοντο (“they also came” 21:18), seems to indicate that perhaps the presbyters are also coming to this special meeting.

At his arrival in Jerusalem for Pentecost, Paul has to face the institution of a church already organized with “James and *all* the presbyters-elders.” A suspicious reader will distinguish this group from that of Mnason and the “brothers” who welcome them warmly. The Cypriot Mnason is identified as “an early disciple”, as if a separation should now be made between those who have long been disciples and those who have only recently come to believe. Perhaps the constituency of the Jerusalem group has changed since the early days, and perhaps these new members are not as “zealous” compared to the “many thousands”, including some believers among the priests and Pharisees (cf. 15:5; 6:7). This Cyprian group -- probably Jews of the Diaspora-- offer a place for lodging. It is interesting that Paul himself is a Diasporic Jew, and that he is better received by this group.

I see Acts as suspicious concerning the rest of the Jerusalem Jewish Christian group— a group of disciples who remain completely silent after the arrest of Paul in Jerusalem. This scenario of suspicion regarding the leadership is reminiscent of the situation during the early persecution in Jerusalem (chapter 8), where everyone suffered persecution except another “the rest”, identified as the Jewish Christian leaders who continue immune to any sufferings and perhaps also with good relationship to the authorities. As we read: “All except the apostles were scattered” (8:1-2). Thus, the silence after Paul’ arrest makes these circumstances very suspicious and suggest a cover-up from the Jewish Christian elite or the Christian council of elders (or what I term as Jewish Christian Sanhedrin). This stage leads the Jerusalem group to question Paul’s identity. It is

true that Jews from Asia present the accusation to the Jewish authorities; however, their attitude is no different from that of the zealots among the Jerusalem disciples.⁵⁵⁹

In addition, there is no church vigil of prayer or intercession for this arrested member of the community, as there had been for Peter earlier (cf. 4; 12). It seems that the Jerusalem church does not exist at all. Are these new characters – the Asian Jews – just the perfect alibi for the leadership in order to continue their supremacy and eliminate Paul? Perhaps, if Luke had not indicated that the accusers are Asian Jews, the chances of an internal conflict among the Jewish Christian, Paul included, would be significant.

The great mockery of Luke is to present Paul as fulfilling the customs and as made *almost* or “*not quite*” “holy to the LORD” (cf. Num 6:5ff) – perhaps expressing the relationship of trying to mimic but not being good enough? Acts 21:27 explains that the arrest occurred almost at the end of the seven days of purification. The narrative interrupts the celebration of the vow and the festival, in celebration of the reception of the blessing of God, the first fruits (Num28:26), and the “renewing of the God’s covenant.”⁵⁶⁰ However, Paul is accused of profaning and desecrating or defiling this “holy place.” Paul submits himself to the jealousy of the Jerusalem Jewish Christians but when he is almost perfect/holy (according to the fulfillment of the rite)—similar to the postcolonial category of

⁵⁵⁹ Dunn, 289.

⁵⁶⁰ Fitzmyer, 233-34, shows that “in pre-Christians period, some Judeans Jews were celebrating the Feast of Weeks... as the renewal of the Sinai covenant (*Jub* 1:1; 6:17-19; 14:20; in Gen 22:1-10 even Abraham is depicted on the feast of the first fruits speaking of God ‘renewing his covenant with Jacob’”

hybrid mockery, “almost the same, but not quite”—the temple doors are shut for this teacher of apostasies. Neither the Jewish Christians nor the Jew accepts him, although he is behaving and doing the same rituals as the rest of them.⁵⁶¹ Most likely, the Asian Jews were completing the similar ritual of purification. The center does not accept competition or mimicry.

In relation to the first Lukan Pentecost, Fitzmyer writes, “When Peter stood up with the eleven (2:14) and confronted the Jews, the twelve apostles confronted the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29; cf. Acts 2:36, the whole house of Israel) and functioned as their judges.”⁵⁶² Now, in this second Pentecost, the hybrid-mimic Paul cannot be accepted by any of the groups, he is without any alliance and left to suffer alone. The narrative shows the typological shutdown of the temple with the interruption of the vows and festival. This interrupted Pentecost, which commemorated and celebrated the renewing of the Sinaitic experience of liberation and the receiving of the Law, shows the contrast with the previous Pentecost narrated at the beginning. The ambassador and representative, the one who initially was sent by those authorities of the same temple, is expelled. In this interrupted Pentecost narrative, there is no *shofar* imitating the voice of God from the heavens giving the blessing. The only voice is Paul’s proclamation in Aramaic, which mentions Ananias, who, in this repetition of the explanation of the calling episode (cf chapter 9), is described as “a man according to the law well spoken of by all the Jews living there.” The description

⁵⁶¹ Either this vow corresponds to the Nazarite ritual - as I believe it was-- or to the purification of seven days coming from foreign lands.

⁵⁶² Fitzmyer, 234.

of Ananias' character acquires other functions in this particular retelling of Paul's calling episode, all of which are later to be excluded completely in the third narration in chapter 26, where Ananias is no longer even needed for the story. The purpose seems to contrast with the Jews of Jerusalem and Asia, who are no longer "men according to the law."

These men who are not acting according to the law are mentioned twice with the expression ἐπέβαλον ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας (lit. laid hand upon him), as a technical term describing the arrest of the authorities of the temple (4:1-3, 5:17-18). The temple functionaries as part of the *ochlos* (crowd) have the authority to arrest him publicly. Here, I believe, Luke parallels the Mishnah passage cited earlier to clarify why Paul was expelled and beaten outside the temple. The profane and unclean must be banished outside the perimeter of sanctity. I would argue that Luke mocks the division between those who are common (*koinon*) and pure reflected in the *thanatos* of Herod, who avoids the entrance of Gentiles to the inner places of the temple demanding death.⁵⁶³ Luke explains that this misunderstanding is a mistake: Paul did not bring Gentiles into the temple. However, the emphasis shows that perhaps ethnic and religious purity are contrasted with the destroyed barrier for those who belong to the Way (cf. 10:15; 11:9 *Katharizomai* and *koinon* (clean and common distinctions) are contrasted and compared to *akathartos*—unclean and profane, which seem to be issues of the past. Again, there is submission of the subaltern to the authorities; yet, they

⁵⁶³ The inscription reads "No one of another nation may enter within the fence and enclosure round the Temple. Whoever is caught shall have himself to blame that his death ensues" Fitzmyer, 698.

do not acquiesce completely. There is a hidden script and agenda in the narrative: distinctions of clean and common are not part of the new group's underlying ethos.

Conclusion

Luke presents the hybrid Paul as not only concerned for himself, nor as a rebel revolutionary against the customs of the ancestors, but also portrays him as a submissive disciple, perhaps along the lines of the postcolonial category of mimicry—accepting the assigned role, obedient to the structures of leadership even inside of the church in order later to declare his independence. This would indicate that the Jerusalem church elite is not really convinced by his teaching. Yet, the powerful elite accept the monetary gifts and enable the continuous commitment of raising money for the poor of Judah (cf. 15; 24:17). It is in these matters that I see the hybrid and ambivalent complex situation of Paul: checking into his teaching system and seeing him as competition in regard to numbers of believers and public recognition by the center, here the Christian Council of elders. The author makes this confusion escalate not only within the circle of James and the elders, but reaching as well the hyperbolic “whole city”, “the temple”, which is publicly shut down for the disciple, thus impeding everyone else's access in the preparations for the Pentecost feast.⁵⁶⁴ The mob, full of adrenaline, beats the profane one who tacitly has desecrated the temple.

⁵⁶⁴ Fitzmyer, 686 affirms that “he arrives in Jerusalem (21:17) in time for the feast of Pentecost.” “A.D. 58,” 691.

Finally, as we will see in the following chapter, even the pseudo protectors of order and peace— the Romans through the Tribune Claudius Lysias— are confused as he gets into the horde in order to arrest the Egyptian leader who has come back.⁵⁶⁵ The crisis of identity continues for Paul in the testimony that the representatives of the Roman system are not able to discern his hybrid condition of Roman citizenship and as faithful Christian Jew.

⁵⁶⁵ Josephus dates the situation of the Egyptian years before. *Ant* 20.8.5; *JW* 2.13.5. with an active participation of Felix.

CHAPTER V

ROMAN REPRESENTATION IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Introduction

In this final chapter, I examine how the Roman authorities are portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles. It is against their oppression that the followers of the Way have to defend their message of subversion and resistance: first, in general terms, by confronting the rampant idolatry in the principal cities of Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia; second, in particular terms, as a counter-reading to the imperial practices of worshipping the human emperor as divine. By advocating practices that were counter to Caesar's decrees, and therefore practices that Romans could not legitimately follow, the Christians were effectively turning the world upside down. Luke uses these encounters as cases of mimicry and mockery, in so doing subverting the false representation of salvation, peace, security, and prosperity of the Roman *kurios*-Lord.

The chapter follows the outline given in the Acts of the Apostles—across the Aegean Sea to four important Roman outposts: Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus. In Philippi (Acts 16), a Roman *kolōnia*—colony, Paul and the apostles are accused of “advocating customs that are unlawful for Romans to adopt.” In Thessalonica (Acts 17), the capital of the province of Macedonia, they are accused of “acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor.” In one of the most religious city—Athens— Paul is tried in the Roman Areopagus. In Corinth,

the capital of Achaia, the apostles are brought before the proconsul Gallio. In Ephesus, the capital of Asia (Acts 19), the whole city is in danger of a public riot. I describe these events following the pattern of “public accusation dragging – trial – violent reaction of the crowds” found in all these instances.⁵⁶⁶ I conclude the chapter with the appearances of Paul before the Roman governors of Judea in Caesarea Maritima (21-26), where the Romans are represented as liars, looking for bribes and political favors.

As the story unfolds, we see the Roman authorities portrayed in ever-increasing order of importance: beginning with city officials (*politarchs*) and the judicial system of the colony (jailers, lictors, floggers as system of torture, etc); moving on to magistrates (*stratēgos*), centurions, tribune, provincial officials (*asiarch*), temple-keepers and builders (*neokoros*, *poenoros*), priest-scribes (*grammateus*), proconsuls, and governors; and finally arriving at his imperial majesty—Caesar, designated here as Kurios or Lord. Of course, Acts describes more than just these few cases of conflict with Roman authorities, but these suffice to depict the Jewish Christian movement as unstoppable “according to the definite plan of God” (2:23)⁵⁶⁷, and underline the understanding that any structure of power that defies this movement is “fighting against God” (5:39).

⁵⁶⁶ Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, Volume II, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 201-3.

⁵⁶⁷ For more see John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*. (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). “We cannot keep from speaking” (4:19-20).

In the Roman Colony of Philippi: Proclaiming “unlawful customs for Romans to adopt”

Introduction

Acts 16 describes the encounter in the Roman colony of Philippi, where the apostles are accused of disturbing the public peace by advocating unlawful customs that Romans cannot adopt. This episode follows another instance of a celestial vision—a Macedonian man calling for help—with the irony that women are the main beneficiaries of such help. Luke uses the narrative as a model of how the structures of power in the colony are represented as being reversed and subverted. I will highlight how the identity, the ethnic and social boundaries, of the participants in the structures of power are represented in comparison with that of those at the margin, who—though dragged, beaten, and incarcerated in supposedly the most secure of all cells—are depicted as agents of salvation. I begin by explaining the general context of Acts 16-22, giving a brief description of Philippi as a Roman colony.

Traditionally, chapters 16-22 of Acts have been classified as a section on “missionary journeys.” Acts 16 marks the beginning of the “second missionary journey” and is considered a “special” or a “major journey”⁵⁶⁸ because it describes the gospel arriving in Europe. Justo González reminds us that such a “name[title] is not quite accurate”⁵⁶⁹ for several reasons: first, Paul had already begun his missionary activity in the regions of Syria and Cilicia close to his hometown before Barnabas came looking for him; second, this designation of

⁵⁶⁸ Francis Martin, *Ancient Christian Commentary: Acts Vol 5*, 195.

⁵⁶⁹ Justo González, 151-2.

missionary journeys essentially illustrates the tendency of the “missionary societies and movements in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries finding in Acts guidelines for their own work”⁵⁷⁰ –a notion easy to understand when one recalls that this is the same period during which European commercialism and imperialism dominated.

In addition, this shift to Europe is premised on the prohibition of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, where the missionaries have been working.⁵⁷¹ However, was Macedonia so different from Asia as to be justifiably designated as part of Europe in the first century? In describing and challenging the variety of arguments for the “missionary journey” to Europe⁵⁷², Jeffrey L. Staley cites R.B. Rackham as one of the few commentators from the last century to have questioned the identification of Macedonia with Europe, “Here we have to be on our guard against the influence of modern ideas of geography. The crisis of the work was not, as is popularly supposed, the crossing over from Asia to Europe. The Macedonian did not say “Come over into Europe”, but “into Macedonia.”⁵⁷³

⁵⁷⁰ See also J.T. Townsend, “Missionary journeys in Acts and European missionary societies” *AngThRev*, 68 (1986), 99-104, who states, “Ancient and medieval commentators know nothing of a threefold *missionary journey* scheme in Acts.” The Church Fathers do not emphasize the issue of Europe as recent commentators have done. See Martin, *Ancient Commentary*, 200.

⁵⁷¹ Gaventa, 235 suggests, “It is almost as if they wander around Asia Minor until God grants them a direction.”

⁵⁷² Jeffrey L. Staley, “Changing Woman: Toward a Postcolonial Postfeminist Interpretation of Acts 16:6-40, previously published in *JSNT* 73 (1999) pp. 113-35. A second version in, *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, edited by A-J. Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, (T&T Clark International), 2004, 177-192.

⁵⁷³ R.B. Backham, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition*. (London: Methuen & Company, 1906), p 272. quoted by Staley, 178 note 5.

Thus, what has been interpreted as God's Word being spread to Europe is better approached as a distortion of the imperial power's desire to present itself as benefactor, ready to help those in need, with the Other portrayed in an attitude of submission, as one in need of peace and salvation from the outside. In addition, if the mission to Europe was about making Gentiles the "first converts," we forget that both the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius were of Gentile origin.⁵⁷⁴ To say otherwise is to resort to the colonizer's tactic of rendering the Other invisible. Furthermore, the paradox of crossing over to Europe responds to a dream where a Macedonian/local (native?) man⁵⁷⁵ calls for help; however, women are the beneficiaries of the invitation. Moreover, it is ironic that Lydia, the so-called "first convert on European soil," is not even a European; she is a God-fearer (*sebomenē*) of Thyatira who "opens her heart" and is faithful to the Lord.

All these reasons suggest that these journeys in Acts do not seem to be well-planned evangelistic trips from a home-base but rather desperate and sporadic movements of the apostles trying to save themselves from further persecution.

⁵⁷⁴ For example, Lüdemann states, "The first real Gentile convert to Christianity is a Roman centurion," (L,301) making the Ethiopian the first "unreal" Gentile. Others, in order to suppress the Ethiopian own heritage, make him a dark-skinned Jew (cf. Virginia Burrus, "The Gospel of Luke-The Acts of the Apostles" in *The Postcolonial Commentary on New Testament Writings*, edited by Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah (London: Routledge, 2007). Though the proposal that some Ethiopians might be Jews is exciting, and an old tradition, it denies the self-identity of the Ethiopian.

⁵⁷⁵ This is strange, since in Luke-Acts previous agents in visions and calls have included angels and Jesus, but not 'local' men.

Philippi as a Roman Colony: Instances that depict its structures of power

Philippi was an established Roman *kolōnia*, in existence for almost 100 years, since, the victory of Antony and Octavian.⁵⁷⁶ Though not the capital of the province, it was nevertheless a “leading city,” like Thessalonica. As a *kolōnia Romana*, it was independent, free of tributes and taxation, and operating according to Roman law—a place where, though in the minority, the Romans nonetheless held the power. Latin was the administrative and spoken language of the colony.⁵⁷⁷ Philippi was the only *kolōnia* that Luke identifies as such among the seven or eight other Roman colonies,⁵⁷⁸ presumably because of its particular “Romanness.”⁵⁷⁹ Luke highlights this in order to contrast the powers of the Empire with the power of the Lord of all. It is with the incidents at Philippi that for the first time there is a clash between the Roman Empire and the followers of Jesus. One of the motives is the Philippi-Roman accusation that these “Jews”

⁵⁷⁶ The Roman Colony was called in 27 BCE, “Colonia Julia Augusta Philippensis”, 65-66. For more see Joseph H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum*. Society for New Testament Studies, Monograph Series 132. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See especially chapters 3-5, pp. 64-128. According to Hellerman, the hymn of Philippians (2:5-11) serves as subversion against the imperial worship in the “most Roman of the cities,” where “no region east of Rome was more quintessentially Roman in this regard than the colony of Philippi”, 63. Also, he argues that “The link between Philippi and Augustus can be illustrated by the association of the emperor with the goddess Victoria on coins minted in connection with the refounding of Philippi in 30 BCE... and not only as the founder, but now as the initiator and overseer of a new world order”, 67.

⁵⁷⁷ Rapske, 116.

⁵⁷⁸ Johnson, 291 goes so far as to state that “Luke goes into the unusual detail in describing Philippi... Roman colonies were originally garrison of soldiers, and always, retained special privileges connected to their direct relationship with the Roman imperium. Other cities visited by Paul, such as Antioch of Psidia, were also Roman colonies.”

⁵⁷⁹ Joseph H. Hellerman, “The Humiliation of Christ in the Social World of Roman Philippi, Part 2”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (Oct-Dec 2003), 421-33. (422).

were disturbing the city with customs that were unlawful for the Romans to adopt. One such custom was the use of the title of *Kurios*, Lord, for someone other than the Emperor.

The term “Lord Jesus” occurs 96 times in Acts⁵⁸⁰ and has implications for the understanding of *Kurios* in the Greco-Roman setting/audience. Early in the book, during the conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius, Luke already uses the title of Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah) with reference to the “sons of Israel.” However, in the same passage, Jesus is also spoken of as “Lord of all,” making clear thereby that allegiance to this *kurios* means more than allegiance to the Roman Emperor. Indeed, Jesus is also described as *theos kai kurios*. In Philippi, the jailer receives the invitation to “believe in the Lord Jesus” (16:31); accepts the “word of the Lord,”⁵⁸¹ and finally becomes a believer in God (16:34). In addition, during the early episode with the slave girl in Philippi, Paul rebukes the spirit “in the name of Jesus Christ” without using the term *kurios*. In doing so, he is in essence presenting Jesus Messiah directly to them. I believe that here Paul intentionally leaves out the titles of *kurios* to distance Jesus from possible associations with the Roman system. Likewise, to avoid making connections with Zeus, he avoids the use of the title “Most High” in talking about Jesus/God.

The incidents at Philippi will lead to the liberation of two women (Lydia and the slave-girl), and the salvation of a man (the jailer) and his household from “darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18). As Borgman puts it, “the jailer has been serving the Lord – believing in the Emperor,

⁵⁸⁰ Borgman, 376. I come back to this title in the next section, In Thessalonica.

⁵⁸¹ Most version contain the term *kurios*, and only few the term *theos*.

... [but now he] *needs to be taught what “Lord” means...* As Lord, Jesus is shown to be God’s “holy servant” (Acts 4:27, 30).⁵⁸² This once more corroborates the central theme of Luke-Acts: complete allegiance must be given only to the God-*Kurios*, Savior and Messiah, for “there is salvation in no one else, there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (4:12).

In the Roman colony of Philippi, the apostles interact with several groups that represent the structures of power. These groups are: (a) Lydia and her household. She is a Gentile woman of economic means and is identified as a God-fearer, along with her household. (b) A commercial divination enterprise of master-*kurios* exploiting a slave—a girl/woman. When the girl/slave receives liberation through the action of the apostles, the diviner’s business dwindles. (c) A Roman judicial group that includes magistrates (*stratēgoi*), police-lictor-rod-bearers (*rabdouchos*), soldiers who flog, and a jailer (*desmophulaks*). (d) An unnamed crowd that affirms the complaints of the commercial group and revolts against the Jews—the Other, because they are preaching customs that are unlawful for Romans to follow.

It is possible also to identify members of groups belonging either to the *kolōnia* or to believers, represented respectively as insiders and outsiders. The insiders are represented by institutions of commerce and as keepers of public order. The outsiders are depicted as God-fearers who operate “outside the city,”

⁵⁸² Borgman, 377. my emphasis. He shows that in the opening sentences of Luke’s gospel we find eighteen references to the God of Israel as “Lord” (Lk 1:1-2:9).

along the river. The outsiders God-fearers ask the powerful apostles for inclusion or at least acceptance, “if they have judged us to be faithful to the Lord.” This rhetorical question is important from the standpoint of the diverse groups presented in the narrative. It seems that this marginal group feels the tension between being those with power and authority and those who operate outside the designated areas. Certainly these issues bring to mind images of representation and separation: of colonizer and colonized; of men and women; of the powerful and the powerless; and of those judged faithful and unfaithful.

I continue by describing the events of exorcism-liberation of the slave-girl as a narrative depicting the structures of power in Philippi and leading to the arrest of the apostles and their trial before the Roman authorities.

In front of the Roman Authorities: The Arrest and Trial

The slave-girl’s unusual exorcism⁵⁸³ in the “name of Jesus Christ” demonstrates the opposition of two powers. The text connects demons and unjust economic profit as at work together in the commercialization and exploitation of the slave-girl by her kurioi-masters. The shouted statements of the girl that “these are sons of the Most High God, proclaiming a way of salvation” contrast with the understanding of imperial worship in the colony and the rest of the Empire regarding who is considered to be the Most High and the giver of

⁵⁸³ Most of the exorcisms in the gospels occurred in first encounter (cf. Lk 4:33-35). In this particular case, it is “after many days,” Although Johnson, 294 makes the connection that the “exorcist formula” is the same. The pythian, serpent-pyhton diviner spirit is associated with the Delphic Rites and the serpent/dragon slain by Apollo (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1:438:447) in Johnson, 293.

salvation. At issue is what is the real Way, or who are the ones showing the real way of salvation,— *hodos sōtēria*. Thus, the daily proclamation of the slave-girl is more than an “unwitting announcement of the only God’s salvation for all people.”⁵⁸⁴ Gaventa continues, “The pagan bystanders of the narrative audience could understand it to claim priority for a particular god over other gods.” I think that the title “Most High” tacitly describes the power, authority, and activity of “Zeus or other pagan deities.”⁵⁸⁵ It is not the case that Luke is “sensitive to the pagan usage,” or that the story’s purpose is to enlighten pagans.⁵⁸⁶ Neither, as Rapske attests following Trebilco, is it the case that the message of the demon “implicitly denies an exclusive way of salvation.”⁵⁸⁷ On the contrary, I argue that the author specifically wants to compare the actions and oppositions of two very different systems and that this is why Luke introduces the formula “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Paul did not exorcize the woman using the same words (“the Most High”) as the demon does to prevent confusing the bystanders, who had a different cultural understanding of them. Paul is annoyed because he does not want a mix-up of meanings in those hearers. After all, the impersonated demon is not engaged in free propaganda.

Another element that most interpreters overlook in the liberation-exorcism of the slave-girl is the fact that the one who has been exorcized and supposedly

⁵⁸⁴ Gaventa, 238.

⁵⁸⁵ Rapske, 116. P.R. Trebilco, in *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTSMS 69: Cambridge/New York: CUP, 1991), 127-444, opposes the notion that most pagan instances of this title in Asia Minor and elsewhere derive from Jewish influence” cited by Rapske, 117, n 5.

⁵⁸⁶ Trebilco, *ibid*, 130f

⁵⁸⁷ Rapske, 117, note 13, citing Trebilco, “Paul and Silas”, 64f.

liberated in fact continues in a state of slavery. Not only that, her state is now worse since neither she nor her masters can any longer profit from what she does. Though Paul is not preaching directly against slavery in Acts,⁵⁸⁸ the physical liberation of this one woman may serve as condemnation of a system that sustains and promotes widespread slavery in the Empire. As Mauck puts it: “Any social movement or religious faith which threatened the foundations of slavery would be seen by the aristocracy as a threat to their economy and lives... If found to be dangerous, such a movement or faith would be repressed forcefully, brutally.”⁵⁸⁹ Likewise, Arlandson argues that slaves “had the lowest status of any class,”⁵⁹⁰ though this is debatable. Others view slaves as better off than day laborers, for they at least were provided food and shelter.⁵⁹¹ However, I think this misses the point Luke is trying to make: he is not interested in slavery

⁵⁸⁸ Slavery is part of the everyday life in Jerusalem and the institutions of the High Priesthood, the Herodian family, the elite, and the in general in Judaism. David Fiensy cites Jeremias and Krauss to the effect that “Jeremias and Krauss note that slaves were sold on a special platform in Jerusalem” David Fiensy, “The Composition of the Jerusalem Church” in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, 224ff. Fiensy cites several examples in the gospels and Josephus.

⁵⁸⁹ John W. Mauck, *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as Defense of Christianity*. Foreword by Donald A. Hagner, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 126.

⁵⁹⁰ James M. Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 98.

⁵⁹¹ See S. Scott Bartchy, “Slavery (Greco-Roman),” in the *ABD*, online edition. In reality, Luke does not speak at all about slavery; he rarely uses the word slave-servant, *doulos*. Acts 7:6-7 perhaps is the only text that portrays some negative connotation. Here, it refers to the time when Israel was in slavery in Egypt, then Luke citing God states without explaining: “But I will punish the nation/people they serve as slaves.” Furthermore, the famous baptism formula of Gal 3:28 and other Pauline passages: “There is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, male nor female” is absent in the narrative. To the contrary, the usages of *doulos* recall the humble and willing disposition of the believer as God’s servants (Acts 20:19; 2:18; 4:29; 16:17).

as such but in being slaves of the Most High. If slavery is deliberately brought up in this episode, I would argue that it is so because Romans do not consider themselves slaves of anyone.⁵⁹² That this is the likely interpretation is underscored by the fact that Philippi is a Roman colony and, therefore, not open to another way of salvation that might contradict the status quo of the colony, which represents the hegemony of the empire. The crux of the matter is the public dishonor associated with slavery.⁵⁹³

At the end of the perícope, the question remains: who are the ones being helped, and who remains in the state of slavery? There is no punishment of those *kurioi*-owners of the slave-girl, unless the text is trying to suggest that they are the magistrates who are forced to descend from their position of power and honor and who are humiliated in the narrative by being forced to ask the “servant of the Most High God” to leave their space.⁵⁹⁴ Moreover, is it possible that these *kurioi*-owners (in plural) are also part of the systemic structures of the city, perhaps priests or political-religious officers, who transform the accusation

⁵⁹² Perhaps, this may be explained as a parallel situation to John alluding and its notion of the Jews as not being slaves (John 7).

⁵⁹³ Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 60, quoted in Hellerman, 426, cites “For in the mind of the ancient elite, ... it was origin, first and above all, that determines status.”

⁵⁹⁴ Klauck, *Magic...*, 66, 67 makes a connection with priests and prophets doing this kind of job of oracles manifestation when he affirms that “this passage informs us inter alia that oracular priests and priestesses were also called prophets among the Greeks.” He also cites Plutarch, “For it is simple-minded, indeed childish to believe that the god himself, like those ventriloquist who now go by the name of ‘Python’, enters the bodies of the prophets and speaks from within them, employing their mouth and tongue as instruments.” Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum* (‘On the decline of Oracles’) 9 (441e).

against the apostles from one of anti-Judaism into one that is a “combination of religion and commerce”?⁵⁹⁵

Acts calls the evangelists “servants” (*douloi*). When they receive their release from prison, they do not want to be dismissed in secret—not for the sake of their own honor, but as a manifestation of resistance and reversal. They are the servants of the Most High, but it requires the intervention and recognition of the high-ranking officers of the city to ask them to leave. The reversal/inversion hymn of Philippians (2:5-11) perhaps reflects this too: that Jesus—God himself—is willing to take the form of a servant (*kenōsis*) is contrasted with how the powerful earthly rulers behave. As Tellbe suggests, the title of *kurios* for Jesus is tantamount to “an imperial figure with universal authority”⁵⁹⁶ and would have been considered a direct challenge to the establishment. Yet, John H. Elliott reminds us that “the focus of Jesus’ social teaching was not the elimination of status but rather the inversion of status.”⁵⁹⁷ Erik M. Heen concludes—after comparing the expression of Phil 2 of being “equal to God” (*isa theō*) in the context of imperial worship are the claim to divine honors—that “Jesus in replacing the emperor as cosmocrator in the hymn, also assumes his lordship over the *archontes* of the city (Acts 16:19). Again from the perspective of the

⁵⁹⁵ Klauck, 67.

⁵⁹⁶ Mikael Tellbe, *Paul between Synagogue and State*, (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2001), 253-59, quoted by Hellerman, 431.

⁵⁹⁷ John H. Elliot, “Jesus Was Not an Egalitarian: A Critique of an Anachronistic and Idealist Theory,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32 [Summer 2002], 82.

hymn, the exaltation of Jesus means that the decurions of the city themselves are subordinate to Jesus rather than the Princeps.”⁵⁹⁸

Therefore, it is surprising that the *kurioi*-masters recognize the apostles as Jews, because this is part of the accusation. Do the owners recognize the apostles as Jews because of the use of the expression the “Most High”, because of the reference to keeping the Sabbath, or because of the use of the formula “in the name of Jesus” (which the reader would recognize as a prohibition in the text to this point [cf. 2:22; 4:17, 18; 5:28,40])?⁵⁹⁹ The scene occurs at the margins of the *kolōnia*, but the reader understands that what they are witnessing is the confrontation with several elements of Judaism: the Sabbath day; the *proseuche*-synagogue or place of prayer;⁶⁰⁰ the term “the Most High”; the formula “in the name of Jesus Messiah” (*Xristos*); and the expression “a way of salvation.” At issue here is the supremacy of these powers. Luke unmask the powers of divinization that profit the *kurioi*-masters: they are a representation of the false system of salvation based on the false oracles of the Most High (Emperor) who

⁵⁹⁸ Erik M. Heen, “Phil 2:6-11 and Resistance to Local Timocratic Rule: *Isa theō* and the Cult of the Emperor in the East” in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, edited by Richard A. Horsley, (Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2004), 151.

⁵⁹⁹ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is a favorite term in Lk-Acts, (2:21, 38; 3:6,16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18; 5:28, 40; 8:16, 9:14, 15, 21, 27, 28; 10:48; 15:14, 17; 16:18; 19:5, 13, 17; 22:16; 26:9. Even the contrary is expressed, in the name of Bar-Jesus, as a false prophet (13:6).

⁶⁰⁰ Ivone Reimer clarifies that the absence of men is not an impediment for the women to gather in a synagogue. After all, the text does not say that there were no men present; perhaps the women were the only ones welcoming the evangelist. It is not completely clear if the day of the exorcism happens on a Sabbath day - I prefer that option. The verse 16 speaks of going to the place of prayer; verse 18, repeats the term “doing this for many days.” if this is so, the visit was at least for several weeks in Philippi.

ruled the colony. The rest of the story will show who has the supernatural control of nature, being capable of removing the “foundations” of the prison system—doors, chains, and stocks. Indeed, that control is so impressive that the very guard and representative of the false system of salvation later will ask: “What shall I do to be saved?”

The rest of the accusation is crucial, the charge serious: “We are Romans”—this is the first self-assertion of the Romans as a group in Acts. This self-identification presents them as the guardians of order, lawfulness, and the standards of the town (the customs or ethos, as Luke terms them), which cannot be changed.⁶⁰¹ This emphatic identification of themselves as norm and norm-givers, therefore, establishes those who are different as Other—as disturbers (*ektarassō*), bringing confusion, disorderliness, and lawlessness. This is ironic, since it is the spirit of divination that makes these *kurioi*-owners rich and disrupts Paul and Barnabas and disturbs their peace. Thus, the accusation is transformed of one coming from a subjugated ethnic group, the Jews against the Romans’ customs.

Daniel R. Schwartz speaks of the accusation at Philippi as “anti-Romanism, which however, the Roman authorities recognize as unfounded.”⁶⁰² He continues:

⁶⁰¹ Luke uses ethos 6 times of the 8 times in the NT. The reader already has encountered the same accusation of “changing customs” in the narrative of Stephen (6:14).

⁶⁰² Schwartz, Daniel R. “The Accusation and the Accusers at Philippi (Acts 16:20-21) *Biblica* 65, no 4. 1984, pp. 357-363; 357. He cites the accusation of Acts 17:5-7 and 18:13, 24:5 as deliberately vague. Furthermore, he sees the Roman

The accusation at Philippi, however, is taken to be exceptional, for according to the virtually unanimous interpretation of the incident, while charges of anti-Romanism and apparent official recognition of their baselessness (vv. 35-39) are present, those who bring the charges are Gentiles and the accusation is not [that] Christianity is anti-Roman, but that Judaism is.⁶⁰³

I do not think that Schwartz's argument is correct when he states, "The Romans are accusing Paul and Silas of teaching not Judaism, but Christianity." First, this seems to adopt a supersessionist reading of Christianity, which I do not accept to be the case. Second, the charges of upsetting the peace of the city and the accusation that they are Jews show that there is a problem with the identity of both groups. Rapske observes that the accusation follows some anti-Judaic attitudes of the edict of Claudius (49/50). This may be so, but I think that the attack on local customs does not refer to the traditional and general list of lifestyle customs such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, the impossibility of Roman military service, and the observance of specific food laws. No doubt it was inconvenient for the Romans to adopt Judaism in its entirety.⁶⁰⁴ Though the Way is not a supersessionist movement of Judaism, the reader understands that the decisions of the Jerusalem council in the previous chapter⁶⁰⁵ clarify that Gentiles who become Christians are required to follow only four essential laws or customs. What is being disputed is the proclamation of the message with its claim to be supremacy of Jesus' name over against any other name under

recognition of guiltlessness in Acts 13:12, 18:14-16; 24:24-25; 25:25 (cf. 26:31-32; 28:18-31).

⁶⁰³ Schwartz, 358.

⁶⁰⁴ Some scholars show all the cons for the Romans to become Jews. (cf. van Unnik, quoted in Rapske, 118, n17). "The Accusation", 375f).

⁶⁰⁵ Of course, we understand that the chronology of the narrative is the more important factor here and not the historicity of the events.

heaven. I think this is the “unlawful” impediment that Romans see in their relationship to Judaism and the Way.

Similar charges are brought in the accusation at Thessalonica, where a crowd of professional agitators, urged by some Jews of the city, complain that the apostles are “turning the world upside down,” describing explicitly that this proclamation is “contrary to the decrees of the Emperor,” simply because of its assertion that there is another *basileus*, or King-emperor, the one named Jesus. (17:6-7). Thus, that the Other is demonized through racial slurs regarding their Jewishness is an excuse that inflames both the crowd and the magistrates—*stratēgoi*—. The text clarifies that Paul is not trying to start a new religion with the formula of the exorcism, the reference to Sabbath, and looking for place of prayer, which for some may have “triggered a Jewish association to the first-century reader.”⁶⁰⁶

The accusation is done before the rulers/magistrates (*archōntas/stratēgoi* in the plural) as top civic officers of the city operating in the marketplace.⁶⁰⁷ However, what astonishes the reader is the power of the *kurioi*-owners to “seize and drag” the accused ones, as if they had the political power and authority to do so. In addition, the existence of a crowd in the presence of the rulers in the marketplace points to some sort of political agitation/commotion rather than a judicial action. Some see the crowd as functioning in a quasi-judicial capacity

⁶⁰⁶ Contra the position of McDonald and others who understand Paul to be teaching a new religion and following the model of Hellenistic literature, Mauck, 124-5.

⁶⁰⁷ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 496.

and not as an illegal mob, one containing “a substantial number of Romans”⁶⁰⁸; others see it as more for the benefit of “a legal minded reader than for [a] Christian reader.”⁶⁰⁹ Furthermore, the terms *agora* and *archontes* should not be understood as a general marketplace for commerce and rulers, but as involving the place of judgment of the city.⁶¹⁰ This inference is possible since the rulers (*archontes*) are transformed into magistrates (*stratēgos*) of the Roman colony. It is the city (the *polis*, another political term) that is “overturned,” and the Roman crowd claims: Your teachings are disturbing our mental peace.⁶¹¹ At the insistence of the masters and the crowd, the powerful magistrates order a beating with rods and secure the apostles in the innermost cell of the prison, for good measure fastening their feet in the stocks. The use of stocks as a form of torture was legally forbidden to all except the lowest social classes: “slaves, debtors and freeborn felons.”⁶¹²

This method of suppression and torture by the magistrates has led some scholars to argue that, “Perhaps, in fact, they simply had placed them in protective custody to save them from a worse fate at the hands of the mob”⁶¹³ –

⁶⁰⁸ Brian Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 121-3. Harry W. Tajra argues, “As symbols of law, order and justice they were representatives of the sovereign power of the Roman people itself” in *The Trial of St. Paul: A Juridical Exegesis of the Second Half of the Acts of the Apostles*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe. (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1989), 11-12.

⁶⁰⁹ Mauck, 136.

⁶¹⁰ Johnson, 295.

⁶¹¹ Johnson, 295 quotes Josephus usage of *ektarassō* with “civic disorder and mental confusion” *Jewish War* 7:41; *Antiq.* 17:253).

⁶¹² Rapske, 125-7. also quoting Marindin, “Nervus”, 299.

⁶¹³ Johnson, 303 following “a possibility suggested by the longer Western Text Tradition.” The Western Text adds material to verse 39 making the magistrates

apparently forgetting that they are then flogged. Other scholars defend the magistrates as “fair” suggesting that because they “were not Emperors, tribunes or provincial governors, they were relatively unimportant and would thus be expected (and feel the need) to stay well within the law.”⁶¹⁴ Rapske outlines some scholars’ suggestions, including Cadbury’s, that perhaps the magistrates were not “heard” or “ignored.” Yet, he also criticizes Cadbury for considering the magistrates as “high-handed” and “stuffy” and for “knowingly abus[ing] self-declared citizens.”⁶¹⁵ Yet, because the narrative only recalls the claims of citizenship after torture and imprisonment, it may well be that the magistrates did not hear the claim of citizenship before meting out punishment. However, later on I offer examples of how Acts depicts improper behavior by the Romans⁶¹⁶ Modern cases of abuse of power suggest that it is ridiculous to believe that magistrates are innocent; it is typically those with more power who can and do abuse those with less.⁶¹⁷

Thus, Luke uses this pseudo-trial in the agora to mock or parody the representation of those who are in power and who are later identified as being

follow the impulse by the crowd, much as it is suggested in Lk 23:23-24 that Pilate did: “swayed to their injustice by the anger of a mob.” Johnson, 302 in the paragraph of swayed by the mob, the phrase “even in a Colony.”

⁶¹⁴ Rapske, 128. As these officers of Emperors and other were fair.

⁶¹⁵ Rapske, 128, contra Cadbury, *The Book of Acts in History*, (1955), 77.

⁶¹⁶ I show some representations of the Roman officers as liars (23:26, letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix), as looking for bribes and personals favors (24:25-27), and as showing incredible apathy in front of their tribunal of judgment when the crowd takes justice in their own hands and beats Sosthenes in front of Gallio (18:17).

⁶¹⁷ For example, the case of the Abu-Graib jail’s abuses in Iraq were at the beginning denied by the Army, but were later accepted, even to the point to justify torture when needed. No oppressed people will ever accept the excuse of a just retaliation.

“afraid when they heard they were Roman citizens.” The elements of the trial-judging scene—magistrates, rod-bearers, police, prison-jailor, shackles, and flogging—describe daily life in the powerful Roman system. A real and thoughtful description of any of these elements could not affirm that the Romans remained neutral to the proclamation of the gospel according to Luke-Acts. The peoples, cities, and others—such as the families of “los desaparecidos,” tortured people in modern prisons as of Abu-Graib, Guantanamo, etc.— who have experienced such treatments will very easily make the connection between how the powerful act toward the powerless. Thus, in the narrative, after the arrest, the pseudo-trial, and torture, the apostles are locked in the innermost cell, where they experience a process of pseudo-liberation that allows the jailer as a representative of the Roman system to receive salvation. This process can also be described as another mocking reversal of status: though they receive salvation and deliverance, they are not yet quite accepted as part of the group of believers that meet at Lydia’s house when the apostles finally leave the city.

Incarceration and deliverance

The *Pax Romana* castigates the disturbers of the peace and preachers of customs unlawful for Romans to follow; in so doing the Romans torture the agitators with flogs and confine them to inexcusable incarceration.⁶¹⁸ However, it

⁶¹⁸ I write these lines at a time when in the Prison System of “occupied” Guantanamo, (on the island of Cuba, but under the jurisdiction of the United States), the US Army is completing five years of unexplained imprisonment of adherent of the Al’Quaeda, and the Taliban movements who were fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

is the Most High God who controls even nature; by means of a violent earthquake, the jail and almost everything else—except people⁶¹⁹— are destroyed, and yet this violent action enables the jailer to receive salvation. These events portray a process of reversal and mimicry. I see hybridity and mimicry at work in the encounter of the apostles with the Roman representatives: the jailer and those terrified magistrates who have to descend from their position of power to the steps of the jail to visit and apologize to the former tortured prisoner, who to their embarrassment happens to be a *bona fide* Roman citizen.

Luke mocks those who are in power as being full of fear and ready to commit suicide. Spencer argues that Paul warns the jailer not to kill himself as perhaps an act of resistance and violence.⁶²⁰ Others may argue that the scene serves to contrast the important differences in how the systems promote peace. However, it is difficult to view this supernatural earthquake—so violent that it unfastened stocks, chains, and doors⁶²¹— as anything but divine retribution. In this context, the contrast continues between those who really have the power and those who think they do but are afraid. The jailer’s plan of killing himself is in harmony with his sense of justice and retribution.⁶²² He knew his masters well. Some argue that the jailer “is quick to call and seek salvation from Paul and

⁶¹⁹ Barrett, 776 questions the truthfulness of the earthquake incident. Luke does not clearly state that God sent the earthquake in contrast to the Codex Bezae which affirms God does. It is clear from the previous context that God has control over nature, especially chapter 14.

⁶²⁰ Spencer, 178 perhaps similar to Jesus’ words directed to the disciples that they not try to solve problems with the sword (cf. Lk 22:49-51).

⁶²¹ See in Johnson, 300 who speaks of “earthquake (*seismos*) as a sign of theophany in Hellenistic religion, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9:782-3; 15:669-78).

⁶²² Perhaps as “shame and honor” virtues?

Silas, knowing the Roman retribution,⁶²³ as if recognizing the salvation of the apostles could give him some kind of help and way out in facing predictable punishment by his superiors.⁶²⁴ Other scholars defending the attitudes and practices of Romans behavior speak in terms of “unRomanlike fashion”⁶²⁵ or being “swayed by mob hysteria.”⁶²⁶ The Western Text extends this magnanimous response of the jailer by adding that, before he led the apostles out, “he secured the other prisoners.”⁶²⁷

Whatever the case, whether or not they accept the way of salvation, Luke generally portrays the Romans as being afraid and not in control. The jailer is described as “trembling” (ἐντρομος, in full terror 16:29), the magistrates as “terrified” (ἐφοβήθησαν 16:38), and later in the narrative this pattern of being afraid repeats itself.⁶²⁸ The jailer at the feet of Paul and Silas resembles the other member of the system, in this case a devout God-fearer, Cornelius – also previously terrified (ἐμφοβος 10:4) at the feet of Peter (10:25).⁶²⁹ The mimicry consists in the fact that the apostles protect the Roman pseudo-protectors against their own self-destruction. The ultimate paradox is: Who in the narrative is in need of salvation? The jailer at the feet of the apostles recognizes them as

⁶²³ Johnson, 303.

⁶²⁴ Johnson believes that the apostles “have become his benefactors” and that they may “save him from shame... with gratitude”, 301-2.

⁶²⁵ Gaventa, 241.

⁶²⁶ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 152.

⁶²⁷ Johnson, 301.

⁶²⁸ Similar expressions describe the cases of Cornelius, Felix, Centurion Julius, etc. The same pattern is repeated also in Luke (cf. Lk 8:35).

⁶²⁹ The other member of the Legion who is *emphobos* or full of fear is Governor Felix: “And as he discussed justice, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away...” (24:25).

kurioi-masters and so follows the customs and practices of the Romans to worship the ones in authority. Those who are associated with power are ultimately unable to remain under self-control. Certainly, Luke seems to enjoy the irony of portraying the representative of the colony as fearful and as asking for the way of salvation; What should I do to be saved?

The prisoners liberated by means of the earthquake impart the good news, the way of salvation, and teach the jailer and his household about the new Lord. Yet, these formerly flogged and now washed apostles remain hybridally in the same condition of prisoners of the Empire, in so far as they are still subject to the pseudo-authority of power. Fulfilling the commission of Jesus, they have accomplished their task in liberating others (Acts 1:8; cf. Lk 4:16-8), but they have to wait for their own final release. This condition parallels the category of mimicry: being almost the same, liberated, but not quite. However, it is in this condition of reversal and mimicry that the apostles are able to instruct not only the reader but the powerful who continue to imprison people but remain in darkness. The movement of reversal continues when the Gentile serves his food before these sons of the Way. As Chrysostom put it, “The prison shook to disrupt the mindset of the faithless, to set the prison guard free and to proclaim the word of God.”⁶³⁰ The ones being served and washed are now the instructors. Salvation runs both ways. The ‘spirit of divinization’ was right: this God is the “Most High” who erases nations, cultures, border-lines, and positions of power, thus fulfilling the Lukan reversal-model that “those who are humbled will be

⁶³⁰ Chrysostom, *Catena on the Acts of the Apostles* 16.26 (CGPNT 3:275-6), quoted in Martin, 207.

exalted” and those who exalt themselves will be humbled, in order that “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (cf. 3:25, Lk 1:51).

Thus, the identity of “Jews” earlier imposed on the prisoners, marking them as fitting recipients of punishment due those of low-status, is later reversed, and the Jews in the end have the *dignitas* of Roman citizenship. Paradoxically it is through the colonizer, the one with power, that those who were humble have been exalted.⁶³¹

The Release – A Conclusion

The reversal continues when morning comes, when darkness disappears. All protagonists return to their former positions and roles of power-subject relations, as if the events of night had not changed anything. The powerful magistrates— seemingly unaware of the earthquake—send the order to release the prisoners with the accustomed propaganda of the colony “to go in peace.” The reader has to laugh at such a request. The apostles reverse the order in open defiance: from the ambivalent status of being discriminated as Jews to now appropriating the values of the powerful claiming, “We are also Romans—Let them descend to us and take us themselves” (16:37).

⁶³¹ These movements of humiliation-exaltation constitute the focus of the Epistle of Philippians (2:5-11), which display the new *politeuma*-citizenship in heaven (3:20). For more on the term *politeuma* in Philippians, see Richard J. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the letters of Paul*. (New York: Crossroads, 2001. John Koenig reviewing this book concludes: “Cassidy has convinced me that it contains material highly critical of Roman rule”, *Anglican Theological Review*, 85, no 1 Winter 2003, 187.

The issue of claiming citizenship is complex. Ideally, Roman citizenship protected persons from being beaten and being imprisoned without a trial.⁶³² The practice of binding a Roman citizen was considered to be a crime, to flog a Roman an abomination.⁶³³ So scholars are justified in speculating why Paul delayed in claiming his citizenship.⁶³⁴ Though there were several cases of dual citizenship in antiquity, for some scholars it seems that being Jew and a Roman was “mutually exclusive, [for] to be a Jew is not to be a Roman and vice versa.”⁶³⁵ For others, “The question of who in fact reflects the ideal of Roman citizenship here receives an ironic answer.”⁶³⁶ Some commentators think that the magistrates apologized out of fear of Roman reprisal; thus, e.g., Spencer, “fearing reprisals from Rome, [that] the Philippians judges promptly apologize[d] to the missionaries and escort them from the city.”⁶³⁷ I think this portrayal of the Romans is biased—as if Rome would deal with such minor legal cases from the provinces. In addition, such bias reflects to my mind, an effort to protect the real identity of the magistrates by naming them as “Philippians” and forgetting that this is a *kolōnia Romana*.

The narrative here cannot be more intolerant of and resistant to the status quo represented by the order and peace of the powerful Romans, who are now in

⁶³² Spencer, 179; (cf. Livy, *History* 10.9; Cicero, *The Republic* 2.31.54).

⁶³³ The complete statement of Cicero reads “To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him an abomination, to slay him almost an act of parricide” (*Against Verres* 2, 5, 66.).

⁶³⁴ Rapske, 130. Others like W. Stegemman, “War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?”, 223f; Lentz, *Luke’s portrait of Paul*, 131, 133 quoted by Rapske, 130, asserts that the issue of citizenship is a fiction.

⁶³⁵ Rapske, 133.

⁶³⁶ Gaventa, 241.

⁶³⁷ Spencer, 179.

submission and fearfully imploring the apostles to leave. The narrative finishes on that note, leaving the powerful Romans of the colony at the door of the jail, whose power they represent, while the followers of the Way and servants of the “Most High God” of the city go forth encouraged. The apostles’ departure introduces them to events in the capital of Macedonia Thessalonica, where they are dragged again and again accused of turning the world upside down by proclaiming the existence of a new Emperor.

Against the decrees of Caesar in Thessalonica

Introduction

After leaving the Roman colony of Philippi, the apostles arrive in Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, “explaining and proving” for three weeks to Jews and devout Greeks, including “not a few” of the leading women of the city, that Jesus/Messiah is the new king/emperor in the Empire. By doing so they are subverting the peace and rebelling against the decrees of Caesar. The apostles along with the group of followers of the Way are unmasking the powers in this Roman post; in response, they are accused—accurately in my estimation—of acting against the decrees of the Romans.⁶³⁸ The accusation is made by a mob of Jews and a crowd. In this section, I explain the issue of self-identity in the conflictive group of instigators (represented in the text as being Jews) who are able to convince the crowd, which, I would argue, is comprised of professional political agitators and not a spontaneously created throng. I also review the importance of some of the decrees that motivate this accusation of un-Roman character. By way of conclusion, I revisit the issues of Lordship/Kurios in the imperial worship in relation to such decrees. Luke presents a succinct summary of the proclamation of the apostles; however, following the outline of the type-scene of accusation, dragging, trial and sentence, it can be inferred that

⁶³⁸ I am using the expression of Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determines Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) in the article of Abraham Smith, “Unmasking the Powers: Toward a Postcolonial Analysis of 1 Thessalonians” in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, edited by Richard A. Horsley, (Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2004), 47.

their proclamation caused an agitated period of turmoil, and, as a result, the believers of that city decided to send the apostles out of the city the same very night.

The accusation: Turning the world (*oikoumenē*) upside-down

The accusation of Thessalonica that the apostles are deliberately going against the decrees of Caesar by proclaiming that there is an emperor other than Caesar reflects a hybrid relationship between the jealous Jews, the local crowd of political agitators, and the apostles. The city officials (*politarchs*) and the people are greatly disturbed because this is a charge of treason deserving death.

The identity of the “evil men”—or ruffians in the marketplace (τῶν ἀγοραίων ἄνδρας τινὰς πονηροὺς)—is conflictive. The adjective “evil” (*ponēroi*) does not carry much meaning, until it is associated with *agoraioi*: these men are deliberately related to the agora, the center of public and political life as well as the marketplace. I think that Barrett dismisses too quickly the reference of Plutarch (*Aemilius Paulus* 38.4) when he writes, “An explanation is not needed here.” The whole quotation reads, “The *agoraioi* might be professional agitators, but the meaning is not supported and is not needed here.”⁶³⁹ I think that the professional agitators may be political members of the agora who, after hearing

⁶³⁹ Barrett, 813. the whole text reads, 4: “When, therefore, Appius saw Scipio rushing into the forum attended by men who were of low birth and had lately been slaves, but who were frequenters of the forum and able to gather *a mob and force all issues by means of solicitations and shouting*, he cried with a loud voice and said:” cited in http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Aemilius*.html (my emphasis, 38.4). Tajra, 33 translates this unique verb in the NT *ochlopoiēō* as “to collect a mob with a view to causing a tumult.”

the complaints of the zealous Jews, transform the accusation into one of treason given the proclamation of a new Emperor.

I explain my reasons: The text of Plutarch reflects the power of the mob, which is able to convince or “force” decisions, though the other party has the support of the nobles of the city. This group might be compared to modern-day professional lobbyists. In addition, it is worth noting that in the text of Acts the participle *proslabomenoi* reflects the working together of both parties. The act of proclaiming as king or emperors any one other than the Roman Emperor and the goddess Roma violates the prohibition against pronouncing such oaths of allegiance.⁶⁴⁰ Yet scholars in the past, even so great a Roman legal expert as A. N. Sherwin-White, who generally defended Luke’s historical accuracy, tended to dismiss the accusation against the apostles as “obscure and possibly garbled,” arguing that “this is one of the most confused of the various descriptions of charges in Acts.”⁶⁴¹ Barrett speaks in terms of a questionable misunderstanding of Jesus as king and rival to Caesar.⁶⁴² He also points out that the “use of the correct word ‘politarchs’ suggests either contact with or a good knowledge of Roman provincial administration.”⁶⁴³ However, recent scholarship has paid more attention to the accusation as a historical event.⁶⁴⁴ In this context newer studies

⁶⁴⁰ Dio Cassius 56.25.5-6; 57.15.8, Cf. Augustus, *Res Gestae* 25, all Italy taking voluntary “an oath of allegiance to himself as *ēgemōn* after Actium” Harrison, 79.

⁶⁴¹ A.N. Sherwin-White. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament: The Sarum Lectures 1960-1961* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 96, 103.

⁶⁴² Barrett, 808.

⁶⁴³ Barrett, 807.

⁶⁴⁴ See Karl P. Donfried, “The Imperial Cults of Thessalonica and Political Conflict in 1 Thessalonians” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, edited by Richard A. Horsley, (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press

see the practices as a reflection of imperial worship—in the form of coinage, inscriptions praising priests of the emperor, and public games in honor of the Emperor Caesar Augustus. Abraham Smith writes that the evidence “suggests that the Thessalonians were actively cultivating the patronage of the emperor and imperial figures in seeking political leverage.”⁶⁴⁵

Another common reason for neglecting or avoiding this political connection might very well be the assumption that Luke only writes in the context of Judaism. For example, Johnson reminds us that “Luke’s story is one that must argue for the legitimacy of the Gentile mission within a context dominated by the symbols of the Torah and the people that can lay first claims to those symbols.”⁶⁴⁶ I would go further and argue that Luke writes not only in the context of institutional Judaism but also contrapuntally, in relation to the Roman Empire as a center of oppression and in control of any changes in the status quo. Indeed, this is particularly the case when those of high political and economic standing accept the message of the Hebrew Scriptures (“not a few of the leading women...”; “not a few, Greek women and men of high standing” Acts 17:4, 12).

So, although the accusation is initially one about points of disagreement with the Jewish Scriptures (concerning the Messiah’s sufferings, death and resurrection) the synagogue attendants are find themselves, after three weeks of debate, incapable of creating an uproar in the city without the help of the

International, 1997), 215-223.; J. Taylor, *Les Actes des Deux Apôtres* (EtB Nouvelle série 23; Paris: Gabalda, 1994) 266–79; G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1989) 184–88.

⁶⁴⁵ Abraham Smith, “Unmasking the Powers”, 57.

⁶⁴⁶ Johnson, 310.

professional political figures of the agora. After all, it is not only the disturbance of the *Pax Romana* that motivates the rulers of the city; according to Luke the final accusation is justified because “they are acting contrary to the decrees of the Emperor.” The *kai* compares and equates the accusing crowd with the *politarchs* who are now in a state of commotion. For some scholars, the degree of agitation seems unwarranted, particularly if it is merely an invention of Luke that reflects his theology regarding the supremacy of the new *Basileus* in the Empire over the establishment. Others, for example, suggest that the “mild response”⁶⁴⁷ of the city officials in asking only for bail does not reflect such urgency or turmoil. However, I think that the eagerness of the believers to send Paul out of the city that “very night” shows that this is not a minor event. Luke uses repeatedly the noun *thorubos* (disturbance, uproar) or the verb *thorubeō* (agitate and other inflections [17:5, 20:10; 20:1; 21:34; 24:18]) to emphasize the seriousness of the case.

That the whole city is in an uproar is confirmed by additional elements. Paul has already spent more than three weeks there, either this means three Sabbaths days or preaching every single day, meaning more than 21 days; he preaches often, and the “whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord” (13:43-44). This reception might understandably have caused jealousy among the Jews. Though in Thessalonica, the text is silent regarding whether the whole city welcomed the message: the fact is that the preaching results in “devout women of high standing and leading men of the city” being added to the believers. Thus,

⁶⁴⁷ Barrett, 807.

Luke repeats the phrase and concept of many “devout” (*sebomenos*) with the clear qualifier of “Hellenes” and the repeated term “not a few” (*ouk oligoi* –cf. 12:18; 14:28; 154:2; 17:4; 17:12; 19:23; 19:24; 27:20). Even if this is simply a hyperbole characteristic of the narrative, it still describes the seriousness of the situation.

Perhaps the gravity of the charges is best seen outside Acts, in the context of imperial worship in the Empire and Thessalonica, as only one instance of the threat of a “new” *basileus* turning the world upside-down. Perhaps also it is helpful to consider such charges in the context of oaths of allegiance to the Emperor that cities and functionaries throughout the Empire had to swear—as reflected in Augustus’ *Res Gestae*, his autobiography and recollections of deeds. It would not be difficult for a reader of Acts to believe that this group of Jewish Christians is indeed turning the world upside-down, attacking the decrees of Caesar. A brief review of such decrees is useful here.

Trial and sentence—Acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar: A brief excursus on some of the decrees

Acts does not elaborate on which decrees of Caesar the apostles are contesting, but it describes how the crowd and city officials are extremely alarmed and disturbed.⁶⁴⁸ As previously explained, the ruler cult was widespread

⁶⁴⁸ For more on the decrees against Caesar, see E. A. Judge, “The Decrees of Caesar at Thessalonica. *Reformed Theological Review* 30 (1971). See also the articles in the volume 27.3 Mar 2005 of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, “The Imperial Cult and the New Testament.”; Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*. trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Richard A. Horsley (ed.) *Paul and Empire*, (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity

at this time in Thessalonica. Oaths of allegiance, worship, libations, and other rituals directed to the emperor were practiced extensively throughout the Empire.⁶⁴⁹ Two important representative compositions were the *Res Gestae*, a posthumous work of Caesar Augustus, commenting on the deeds of Caesar, and the Asian League decree in celebration of the implementation of the new provincial calendar.

In *Res Gestae*, Augustus only cites members of the imperial family, with the exception of the names of consuls given for dating purposes. Furthermore, he avoids mentioning his own generals, his opponents in war, and other distinguished citizens. Regarding this choice W.L. Westermann (1911) argues,

It is evident that Augustus desired during his lifetime to keep the names of the male members of the imperial family before the people and made use the public spectacles for that purpose... to recall the benefactions and the fact that they were given by the Princeps acting in the name of members of his household... Clearly he wished to lay emphasis upon these spectacles as coming not from himself alone, but from himself as head of the imperial family.⁶⁵⁰

Westermann continues, "Evidently the honors paid to Augustus were, according to the impression he would leave, honors paid to his family, and the honors of his family were honors bestowed equally upon him."⁶⁵¹ In addition to emphasizing the importance of family names, the imperial nomenclature in decrees as well as

Press International, 1997); Neil Elliot, *Liberating Paul*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).

⁶⁴⁹ See Simon Price, *Ritual of Powers*. Quoted extensively in a previous chapter. For a good summary see Peter Oakes, "Re-Mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1Thessalonians and Philippians." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 2005, 27.3, 311-12.

⁶⁵⁰ W.L. Westermann, "The Monument of Ancyra" in *JSTOR: American Historical Review*: Vol 17, No. 1, p.5 accessed online.

⁶⁵¹ WIBid, 6

in the *Res Gestae* includes the epithet *neos* (new), which apparently was an important part of the legitimization process.⁶⁵² For example, Harrison cites instances of such use: Tiberius Caesar, addressed as the new Augustus, son of god (P. Oxy. 240); Caesar Gaius Caligula, designated as a “new god” (IGR IV 1094) and a “son of Augustus, a new Ares” (CIA III 444). Other mention of personalities and of the imperial family includes: Antony, who received the epithet of a “new Dionysus” (CIA II 482); Livia, Augustus’ wife, named as the “new Hera” (IGR IV 249); and Julia, who was called the “new Aphrodite” (IGR IV 114). We have seen that this nomenclature, while serving the wider purpose of adulation, secures the continuance of the honors and privileges of hegemony.⁶⁵³ Further, the *Res Gestae* insists that the name of Augustus must be “sacrosanct for ever,” or as W. S. Davis puts it, “as if Augustus were a god.”⁶⁵⁴ Likewise, the

⁶⁵² Harrison argues, “Both the imperial propaganda and the early Christians highlighted eschatological newness in speaking about their respective *sotēres*. The difference in eschatological nuance is that the imperial propaganda concentrated on the accession of the god-like ruler and his family to the throne, whereas the early believers focused on the effects of Christ’s work in their lives” in “Paul and the Imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki” in *JSNT* 25.1. (2002), 91 note 75.

⁶⁵³ For example, Westermann concludes, “In like manner the publication of the document before the mausoleum of Augustus would, as the aged Princeps no doubt hoped, accustom the people of Rome to the idea of the *inherited monarch*. It would be folly to assert that this purpose was the sole or even the most important one which animated Augustus in writing the *Res Gestae*. *My only claim is that this political motive was in his mind* when he wrote the document and that it played a considerable part in the composition and in the manner of publication of the *Res Gestae*.” *Ibid*, 10-11 (my emphasis). For more on *Res Gestae*, see “*Res Gestae Divi Christi: Miracles, Early Christian Heroes and the Discourse of Power in Acts*”, in *The Role of Miracle Discourse in the Argumentation of the New Testament* (ed. Duane F. Watson, SBLSymS: Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming).

⁶⁵⁴ William Stearns Davis, ed., *Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources*, 2 Vols. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1912-13, Vol II: Rome and

document states that “all the citizens,” both in “private” and as “a city” must “unanimously and continually” pray to Augustus and worship both the individual as well as the holder of office, as if were intended for the future Augusti.⁶⁵⁵ Despite the wide use of technical terms having to do with the Empire (games of celebration; public and private prayers,⁶⁵⁶ vows involving “all the citizens”, both in private and in the city, and “unanimously and continuously”), scholars continue to insist that this is a mark only of imperial propaganda rather than of worshipping the office holder in the empire. C.S. de Vos is surely right in saying of Thessalonica, “in a city that was acutely aware of its dependence on Imperial benefaction it would be quite surprising if such expressions of loyalty were not performed enthusiastically.”⁶⁵⁷

the West, pp 166-172, quoted by Paul Halsall, accessed online: <http://www.fordham.edu/HALSALL/ANCIENT/14resgestae.html>.

⁶⁵⁵ *Res Gestae* 10 “By a senate decree my name was included in the Saliar Hymn, and it was sanctified by a law, both that I would be sacrosanct for ever.” *Res Gestae* 9, “...In fulfillment of these vows they often celebrated games for my life... also both privately and as city all the citizens unanimously and continuously prayed at all the shrines for my health.” Furthermore, the *Res Gestae* show vows of allegiance which were made “voluntarily” in “all Italy”, in addition to the “provinces of Gaul, Spain, Africa, Sicily and Sardinia swore the same allegiance” Augustus also mentions: the rebuilding of eighty-two temples in Asia (*Res Gestae* 19, 24); the “honor of the statues to me” (24), and his own name, “I was called Augustus and the doors of my temple” (34).

⁶⁵⁶ Another important point notes the practice of praying to the “deified Augustus,” considered among the “immortal gods” as part of the imperial family worship. Temple inscriptions; inscriptions of appointment of priesthoods for the “Imperator Caesar Augustus son [of God]; numismatic evidence; practices of traditional benefactors and local gods—all show interconnection with the imperial cult. Harrison quotes IG [X] II/I 31, ll. 5-7; IG [X] II /1 130-33. For discussion of the texts, see H.L. Hendrix, “Thessalonians Honor Romans” (unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1984, pp 99-139.

⁶⁵⁷ C. S. de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian and Philippian Churches with their Wider Civic Communities* (SBLDS, 168; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 156-7.

In addition to the *Res Gestae*, Harrison identifies the oath sworn by the people of Aritium to Emperor Caligula (37 CE), dated “only thirteen years before 1 Thessalonians was written,” vowing to defend the physical as well the political safety of the emperor up to the end as “a political commitment.”⁶⁵⁸ This oath reads:

On my conscience, I shall be an enemy of those persons whom I know to be enemies of Gaius Caesar Germanicus, and if anyone imperil or shall imperil him or his safety.... I shall not cease to hunt him down by land and by sea, until he pays the penalty to Caesar in full... if consciously I swear falsely or am proved false may Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the deified Augustus and all other immortal gods punish me and my children with loss of country, safety, and all my fortune.⁶⁵⁹

There is no doubt as to why the whole city and the politarchs of Thessalonica are disturbed by the charges implied in the accusation presented by the apostles. If any particular offense against Caesar produced such a furious response, how much more so would announcing or proclaiming the establishment of a new Emperor, who is alive, indeed who rose from the dead, and who will usurp the allegiance of the dynastic lines of the Caesars by establishing a new eschatological kingdom.

Another example of acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar in the context of Thessalonians is the decree of the Asian League concerning the new provincial calendar (Priene: 9 BCE), which erupts in effusive praise as it recounts the merits of Augustus. This decree⁶⁶⁰ contains statements regarding Augustus

⁶⁵⁸ Oakes, “Re-mapping the Universe”, 312.

⁶⁵⁹ Harrison, 80 citing *CIL* II 172.

⁶⁶⁰ The decree reads: “Since Providence (*pronoia*), which has divinely (*theiōs*) disposed our lives, having employed zeal and ardour, has arranged the most

such as: “The most perfect culmination of life”; a savior who brings peace to the world; one whose appearance exceeds all hopes of the good news. It further represents his birth as the “birth of a god”. All such declarations clearly speak of complete allegiance to Augustus and the future Caesars.

In a similar way to oaths and decrees, there is an inscription from the island of Phylae which honors “Augustus’s conquest of Egypt some 23 years after the event and accorded him [with] a quasi-mythological status.”⁶⁶¹ The inscription reads: “The emperor, ruler of oceans and continents, the divine father among men, who bears the same name as his heavenly father – Liberator, the marvelous star of the Greek world, shining with the brilliance of the great heavenly Saviour.”⁶⁶²

perfect (culmination) for life (*to telēotaton tōi biōi*) by producing Augustus, whom for the benefit of mankind she has filled with excellence (*aretēs*), as [if she had granted him as a saviour (*sōtēra charisamenē*) for us and our descendants, (a saviour) who brought war to an end and set [all things] in peaceful order (*kosmēsonta de [eirēnēn]*); [and (since) with his appearance (*epiphaneis*) Caesar exceeds the hopes (*tas elpidas [huper]ethēken*) of all those who had received [glad tidings (*euangelia*)] before us, not only surprising those who had been [benefactors] before him, but not even [leaving any] hope [of surpassing him] (*elpid[a] hyperbolēs*) for those who are to come in the future; and [since] the beginning of glad tidings (*euangeliōn*) on his account for the world was [the birthday] of the god...” in V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), #98b (ll. 32-41). The editor uses the square brackets in the Priene inscription indicating certain or probable restoration of letters that are not longer legible on the original stone. Cited by Harrison, 89. For more on the subject, see G.H.R. Horsley, “The Greek Documentary Evidence and New Testament Lexical Study: Some Soundings”, *NewDocs 5* (1989). See also *NewDocs 2*(1982) #4,6; A. Deissmann, *Light Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (repr.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978 [2nd edn, 1927]); pp.349-57.

⁶⁶¹ E. Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars: Historical Sketches* (London: SCM Press, 1955), 99 quoted by Harrison, 90.

⁶⁶² Another inscription from a temple in Italy to the heirs of Augustus, Gaius, and Lucius Caesar, has this verse dedication to Augustus: “When the time summons

These decrees and their implementation guarantee resolute and unyielding fulfillment in the Empire (*oikoumenē*). Luke makes sure that the reader understands the seriousness of the charges involved in speaking against the decrees of Caesar (17:6). I agree with Harrison when he concludes, “It would be reasonable to suppose that the eschatology of the imperial gospel competed for the loyalty of the Thessalonians citizens with the same aggressiveness at Thessaloniki as elsewhere in the empire... [Paul] alternative eschatology was a blend of traditional Jewish apocalyptic and as I have argued, a radical subversion of Roman eschatological imagery and terminology.”⁶⁶³

So when Acts presents Jesus as the *kurios*-Lord “who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration” (3:20), Luke is quite clearly overturning the status quo of Roman imperial rule through mimicry and through the ambivalent complaint of “turning the world upside down.” As Harrison puts it: “The irony is that [Paul] has outperformed the Caesars at their own game.”⁶⁶⁴ Certainly the Jewish Paul preached an apocalyptic and popular message of a

you, Caesar, to be god/And you return to your place in heaven from which you can rule the world, / Let these be the people who in your stead govern the earth/ and rule us, having their prayers to you heard” Insc. lat. sel. 137. See also S.R.F. Price, ‘Consecration’, in Cannadine and Price (eds. *Rituals*, pp 80-81, cited by Harrison, 93.

⁶⁶³ Harrison, 91.

⁶⁶⁴ Harrison, 95. Reading the Thessalonians correspondence Harrison finds that Paul is fighting against an “aggressive imperial eschatology and the widespread circulation of Augustan apotheosis traditions” (71). He favors this interpretation in contrast to the traditional reading of the Christ parousia as an spiritualizing Gnostic reading, which he considered as an “anachronistic reading” and as “methodologically unsound” (73 quoting E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* (London: Tyndale Press, 1973) and R. Jewett, *The Thessalonians Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 147-49).

new *Kurios* Messiah – *Basileus* (17:3, 7) who will come to establish his kingdom, replacing old empires and annihilating everyone who “exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God” (2 Thess 2:4, 8).

This message of the new Emperor/king and Lord disturbed the politarchs. It is this *kurios* who in the context of the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians reveals an important contrasting role to the man of lawlessness.⁶⁶⁵ Furthermore, the combined title Lord Jesus (κύριος Ἰησοῦς) is more typical of Luke-Acts than of any other author in the NT. The title appears only in the post-resurrection context. James A.G. Dunn in 1997 writes that the “term *Kurios* in Acts has received little attention both in Christological studies of the New Testament and in commentaries on Acts itself.”⁶⁶⁶ Yet, the title is particularly relevant for Acts because “*kurios* with the name of the emperor is used in the absolute: a first

⁶⁶⁵ Harrison, 78. He cites that 1 Thess mentions 23 times the word *Kurios*, and how it is associated with the parousia. He cites also more information about inscriptional references to *kurios* as an honorific for Claudius, Nero, and Vespasian; he states “From the time of Augustus onwards, *kurios* was transferred as an honorific from the eastern ruler cult to the imperial cult. So thoroughly had the Julian-Claudians eclipsed their political rivals that talk of ‘another Lord,’ without any deference to or incorporation into their power base, was inconceivable.” See also T.H. Kim, “The Anarthrous υἱος θεου in Mark 15:39 and the Roman Imperial Cult”, *Bib* 79.2 (1998). Pp 221-41 (235).

⁶⁶⁶ James D.G. Dunn, “KYPIOS in Acts” in *Jesus Christus Als die Mitte der Schrift: Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums*, hrsg. Von Christof Landmesser et al., (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1997), pp 363-378. For more see J.A. Fitzmyer, “The Most frequently used title for Jesus in Luke-Acts” in *The Gospel according to Luke 1-9*, AncB 28, (Garden City, N.Y, 1981, 200f.); and J.C. O’Neill, “The Use of KYRIOS in the Book of Acts,” *SJTh* 8, 1955, 155-174; H.J. Cadbury, “The Titles of Jesus in Acts,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I. The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. F.J. Foakes-Jackson/K. Lake, vol 5, Additional Notes, ed. K. Lake/H.J. Cadbury, (London 1933, 359-362).

example” (25:25-26) as “administrative terminology”⁶⁶⁷ that reflects the imperial practices of worship. However, these practices do not require explanation of the political term when applied in Acts during Paul’s trial in front of Festus and Agrippa II; later in Jerusalem the Governor Festus called the *Sebaston* (the exalted) Augustus Caesar as his lord meaning that the title of Lord for the Caesar was something to which even king Agrippa II did not object.

The importance of the title in Acts is also emphasized by the fact that the post-resurrection Jesus receives exaltation as the divine Jesus the Messiah and Lord (cf. 2:36) and Lord of all (cf. 10:36).⁶⁶⁸ In so doing Luke combines in these titles the focus of resistance against both centers: the institutions of Judaism with the acceptance of the Messiah of the Scriptures, and the empire-wide acceptance of Jesus as the Lord of all. To the Roman Empire, Jesus the Lord and new King in charge of the *oikoumēne* (17:7) appropriates and subverts the title that has been used politically for the Caesars, using it now to represent the universality of salvation to all peoples.⁶⁶⁹ For the people of Israel, Jesus is the Messiah who fulfills the expectations and prophecies from long ago of the Jewish Scriptures.

⁶⁶⁷ Foerster, 1055.

⁶⁶⁸ Dunn 372, states, “The only anarthrous uses which undoubtedly refer to Christ are 2,36 and 10,30, which highlights the distinctiveness of these two passages.” Contra N.T. Wright *Climax and Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), chapters 2-3 where he argues that “It should perhaps be noted that for Paul as for the rest of the Second Temple Judaism, “Messiah” carries no connotations of “divinity”, quoted in N.T. Wright, “Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium and Interpretation*, edited by Richard A. Horsley, (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 166.

⁶⁶⁹ Conzelmann, 83.

To conclude, Acts repeats the accusation found in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus is presented as having said, “that he himself is another Messiah/Christ the king (*Xriston Basilea*),” thus acting against the decrees of Caesar (cf. Lk 23:2).⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁷⁰ Abraham Smith, 60 makes the association of Jesus as Lord and not the emperor with the commitment of the Fourth Philosophy, to honor only God as their sole Lord and Master versus Caesar regarding the payment of taxes and tributes to Caesar; and of the group of Sicarii holding out on Masada that regardless of the torture they would not confess that Caesar was their lord (Cf. Josephus, Jewish War 2.118; 7.418).

Cases of Idolatry and mockery of the Roman Representation – In Athens

Introduction

The established pattern for the apostles—leaving a city in a hurry because of hostile persecution; then arriving in a new city and proclaiming the gospel first in the synagogue, subsequently being forced by the authorities to leave again—continues in the journey from Thessalonica to Berea and Athens. The inhabitants of Berea welcome the proclamation of the apostles; the narrative tells us repeatedly that here “many believed including not a few Greek women and men of high standing” (17:12). The authorities’ pattern of accusing the believers for inciting the crowds makes the believers take Paul “as far as Athens.” His speech in Athens and its aftermath not follow the usual pattern, though Paul is “taken” and “brought” before the Roman Areopagus so that he can explain his philosophy. I would argue that Luke uses this incident to describe Paul’s strategy of mimicry—appropriating the message of the philosophers of the “unknown god” and re-adapting it to proclaim the “resurrected man,” who will judge the world. Paul’s speech has some parallels with the proclamation at Lystra (14): he speaks of the creator God, of this God as overlooking the times of ignorance, and of this God’s incarnation in “human form,” in the representation of a man (in the singular) who has the power to judge the world as a counterattack to the system of the Caesars.

Athens and Lystra

The experience of Paul in Athens is the product of “an accident rather than a set missionary plan,”⁶⁷¹ the result of his having to leave Thessalonica and Berea in a hurry. As explained previously, there is no such a thing as organized “missionary travels,” as many interpreters would have us believe, with a center (Jerusalem or Antioch) sending missionaries to “virgin lands” or “dark territories,”⁶⁷² ready to “penetrate” them with the Gospel. During this visit to Athens Paul delivers a speech that has been generally interpreted as directed against idolatry. Yet, the speech can also be interpreted as a reading of resistance, mockery, and irony with regard to the entire system of worship rampant in the city. In what follows I describe some of these characteristics.

Barrett rightly attests that Paul considers Athens “not as a city of art but as a city of false religion.”⁶⁷³ That there is no synagogue mentioned in Athens – typically, Paul would visit the synagogue in each city—shows a connection with the city of Lystra, where there is also no mention of synagogues. Scholars have connected these episodes in order to speak of universalism, or at least to show the contrast between rustics and intellectuals.⁶⁷⁴ For example, scholars suggest that “the Greek spirit reached its highest religious development, not in the cults of the gods...but chiefly in philosophy, assisted by the Greek gift for constructing

⁶⁷¹ Johnson, 312.

⁶⁷² This, it is sad to report was the language many Christian’s missionaries societies used to refer to the so-called the natives, primitives, or savages of the virgin lands to which they brought the gospel.

⁶⁷³ Barrett, 828.

⁶⁷⁴ Dean Philip Béchard, *Paul Outside the Walls: A Study of Luke’s Socio-Geographical Universalism in Acts 14:8-20* (Rome: Editrici Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 351-31.

systematic theories of the universe.”⁶⁷⁵ Both the passages on Lystra and Athens have been interpreted following this criterion. However, I would argue that the topic can also be seen in light of the false systems of worship, given the mention of Zeus, priests, and religious people (17). I propose that Paul’s words the “foreign deities” (*xenos daimonion*) should not be understood as meaning foreign in the sense of other ethnic gods, but in the absolute sense of ‘another,’ or different to the former representations. I think Luke corrects this false assumption by clarifying the suggestion of the philosophers: “What does this babbler want to say, He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities” (17:18), when he speaks in terms of a plurality of gods (*xenōn daimoniōn*), with movement from the plural to the singular, in so doing introducing Jesus and the resurrection (*anastasis*), but in the singular. Barrett demonstrates that it is unlikely that *anastasis* corresponds to a second female deity (contra Bultmann).⁶⁷⁶

Johnson states, that “The charge of introducing ‘foreign deities’ not only resembles the charge of changing customs brought at Philippi (16:21), but more particular, it echoes the charge made against Socrates.”⁶⁷⁷ I would add that this happened not only in Philippi but also in Thessalonica, where clearly the evangelists are accused of turning the world upside-down by acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor in proclaiming the existence of a new *basileus*. Barrett clarifies that “the objection of introducing new deities may have been

⁶⁷⁵ Werner Jaeger, 1939, 2:43 (emphasis added by Pelikan), cited by Pelikan, 190.

⁶⁷⁶ Barrett, 831. Luke does not talk in terms of a plurality of gods, but in the singular. Pausanias recalls the inscription in the plural, but not in the singular. Perhaps this is another proof of the shift from the plural to the singular.

⁶⁷⁷ Johnson, 313.

partly political [following the argument of Dio Cassius 52.36.1f, that noting] that records that Maecenas advised Augustus to hate and punish those who bring in new ideas about *to Theion*.⁶⁷⁸

Paul emphasizes the existence of a creator God who is the Lord of heaven and earth, who does not live in shrines made by human hands. Furthermore, this God “allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live” (17:26). I think that Paul is here not dealing primarily with idolatry and monotheism, as the traditional interpretations have suggested, but with other concepts such as: time-frame, repentance-world-judgment, resurrection, and the call for an eschatological/apocalyptic framework. The *kurios* of heaven and earth, who made all humans equal, gives the same essential elements of life and breath to all peoples (*ethnoi*). This argument seems to be more than a general interpretation of Paul as apologizing for the real god. I see the emphasis here being more on stressing the humanity rather than the divinity of god. Thus, I view this event not as a failure of Paul’s preaching against the philosophical stance of their time but rather as an attack on their system. For example, I think that Paul employs mimicry when he states that the ‘gods’ are not far away (17:27) but here, when he argues that this *Kurios* of heaven is “known” and not “an unknown” as the altar inscription reads. Likewise, I see concepts of mimicry and mockery at work when Paul/Luke compares and contrasts the boastful system of the Caesars who are represented and worshiped as gods and who live in shrines made with human hands, with the presentation of

⁶⁷⁸ Barrett, 831.

the “man” who will judge the world. The issue here is not whether these gods are similar to the God of heaven, but that the *Kurios* that exists in both heaven and earth (οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος , 17:24) is now transformed into a human, “a man.” While the system of the Caesars aims to exalt humans as gods living in human-made shrines, the reverse happens when God, the creator of heaven and earth, transformed and incarnated himself in a resurrected man who will judge the world.

The reader has to keep in mind that even in Athens Caesar was also worshiped in temples and shrines. In addition, Paul’s movement from the place of encounter with the philosophers (*Stoa basileios*) to the midst of the Areopagus, before the “sitting council on the hill,”⁶⁷⁹ is significant, because the Areopagus “seems to be the effective government of Roman Athens and its chief court. As such, [it represented] the imperial Senate in Rome.”⁶⁸⁰ The importance of this move is that Luke consistently uses the correct local terms for council, officials, and places. Furthermore, Gill emphasizes that whatever the place in which Paul finds himself, it is controlled and run by the Romans:⁶⁸¹ “Rome forced certain

⁶⁷⁹ Timothy Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial” JTS 20 (1969), 410. In addition, Tapweti-Taduggoronno, I.N.A. *Paul In Athens: The Athenians Agora*. His unpublished Th.D. dissertation to Harvard University, 1992, 171; he argues: “Our discussion of the origins and the functions of the Council of the Areopagus indicates that in the later stages of the Council many, if not most, of the Areopagites were members of the jury. All the people who were once archons later became members of the Areopagus. So one can even say that at a later stage the members of the Areopagus were a collection of archons.”

⁶⁸⁰ T.D. Barnes, (JTS 20 (1969), 413 quoted by Barrett, 832. He is citing the reconstruction of the Agora by Taylor (5.304-6).

⁶⁸¹ Barrett, 832 cites the *Areopagus* at Athens, the *stratego*i at Philippi, the *politarchai* at Thessalonica, the *anthupatos* at Corinth, and he states, “and gets it right every time.”

political changes which included the imposition of the Areopagos as the main governing body.”⁶⁸² This ratifies the move from the general *stoa* (the place where the philosophers discuss their ideas) to a judicial place under the authority of the Romans.

Gill shows how, during the time of Claudius, several Roman temples were erected in Athens and other old shrines were appropriated for Emperor worship. He states, “Certainly Augustus built a circular Ionic temple to Roma and Augustus on the acropolis, next to the Parthenon and on the same axis.” Later, during the adoption of Tiberius, the latter erected four statues—of Augustus, Tiberius, Germanicus, and Drusus. Another link to the cult of the emperor is the transposed temple of Ares, “which may have served as the centre for the worship of the heir Gaius Caesar, who is described in an inscription as the ‘New Ares’.” Finally, Gill argues that the “agora itself was the site for numerous dedications to the imperial family. Many of the thirteen small altars dedicated to Augustus, with implications for his divinity, were found in the agora area.”⁶⁸³

In addition, concerning the objects of worship (*sebasmata*), Gill states, “Although this word [term] may merely reflect the numerous altars and visual images related to cult at Athens, it also resonates with the worship of the imperial family.”⁶⁸⁴ I make this connection between the Roman Agora and the temples, shrines, and places of worship for the imperial family, because interpreters tend

⁶⁸² David W.J. Gill, “Achaia” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, vol 2, edited by David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub Co.1994), 441.

⁶⁸³ Gill, 442-3, 444.

⁶⁸⁴ Gill, 447.

to forget that the Romans occupied the city, in this manner idealizing and associating Athens only with the time of Pericles and Socrates (Barrett, for examples, makes several comparison of the speech with the style of Socrates, which began with the typical salutation of “*Andres athenaioi*”).

Another element to consider is Paul’s appropriation of the expression “the unknown god,” with the rebuke that such a God is not “far away,” as the Epicureans and Stoic philosophers would have it. For this reason, I believe that both the episodes at Lystra and at Athens should be read in light of the thematic use of the statement “the gods have come down in to us in human form.” I think that in one sense Luke laughs at the system that believes humans share the same nature as the gods. In another sense, Luke expresses this as a hidden transcript—a reading of resistance. I envision a sarcastic and ironic manner of presentation here. Likewise, he uses the statement about “finding god” (“if perhaps find/feel him” εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὕροιεν 17:27) to express the idea of a closer God, one that can be felt and touched (ψηλαφήσειαν) rather than a god who is “far away.” This phrase also evokes the words of Jesus in Luke about seeking and finding, which is another favorite Lukan way of converging his theology of the incarnated God/Jesus. He cites statements of the resurrected Jesus such as, “Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see” (Lk 24:39). As Pelikan puts it, “with a *grammatically trivial* but *metaphysically overwhelming* change from the plural to the singular,” Luke changes from the statement “the gods have come down to us in the likeness of

men!” [14:11c] to “God has come down to us in the likeness of a man!” [17:31].⁶⁸⁵

The concept “likeness of man” compared with “likeness of God” in the expression *homoio* (of the same nature) is similar to the nature of God in 17:29 as Divine Nature (τὸ θεῖον εἶναι ὁμοιον) denoting the same identity or nature of this man who is the eschatological prophet, indicating the reversal in the identity of this God-man. Thus, this argument of the speech given in Athens should be read in relation to humanity rather than divinity and idolatry. Becoming like God is the first cause of the fall of humans, and for Luke anyone who exalts himself or claims prerogatives of divine allegiance to any one other than the Creator shall be punished (cf. Acts 12).

Other intertextual parallels suggest that these chapters (14; 17) should be read in connection to the phrase “in the past” (14:16 and 17:30), which recalls in both cases the eschatological timing in the establishment of the kingdom of God (1:6; 14:22). In both instances, we learn that in the past “God has overlooked the times of human ignorance,” but that God will no longer accept such ignorance in worshipping what they do not know—the unknown, or in the acceptance of “worthless practices” rather than the “living God.”⁶⁸⁶ The condemnation and guilt of the people of both Lystra and Athens reside in the fact that whether they know God through a ‘natural theology’ or by being religious (given to superstitious

⁶⁸⁵ Pelikan, 164. my emphasis.

⁶⁸⁶ Johnson, 320, states that “their ‘times of ignorance’ are not treated any different than the ‘ignorance’ that excused the first rejection of Jesus the Prophet by the Jewish people. Indeed, it might be argued that just as the Greeks are called from the ‘ignorance’ that sees an adequate representation of the divine in physical form.”

beliefs (δεισιδαίμονες 17:22), they are without excuse. Though the proclamation of the empire of God is now, the establishment of such a kingdom is still in the future, when “he will judge the world.” However, God commands all people everywhere to repent now (17:30).

In conclusion, I think that Paul’s pronouncement that “You do not know what you worship” is ironic and mocking. It is a reproof—as if he would follow it up by saying, “But I/we do know.” The statement is humorous when compared to the opening lines of this section, that “he was deeply distressed to see the city was full of idols” in the center place of the representation of religion and politics—in the Areopagus, Mars Hill— “where under the open heaven the supreme council would gather.”⁶⁸⁷ Therefore, I see in the episode at Athens several elements of irony/mimicry: the immortality of the resurrected man as a Lord of heaven and earth versus the mortal divinities (Caesars); the place full of idols contrasted to the worship of an unknown god; the emphasis on humans rather than on the gods. The concepts of mimicry/mockery in the statement “Gods are not far from each one of us” should be read in connection with Lystra’s attempt to worship humans/mortals as gods— “The gods have come down to us in human form” (14:11). The ironic response of verse 15, “We are also men, of same/like nature with you” (ἡμεῖς ὁμοιοπαθεῖς ἐσμεν ὑμῖν ἄνθρωποι), emphasizes, as Pelikan puts it, that “necessarily... the one true God was not ‘of like nature’”⁶⁸⁸— in this manner once more stressing the mimetic relation of humans demanding/seeking divinity in opposition and contrary to the plan of God.

⁶⁸⁷ Lopuchin 1895, 655 cited by Pelikan, 193.

⁶⁸⁸ Pelikan, 196.

The God of Acts is the God of the history of salvation, and is so not only since the days of Abraham and “our ancestors” (cf. chapter 7) but rather from the time in which God allotted time for existence to all human beings, including the “times of ignorance” (17:30). If this concept is new, then Luke employs irony in describing the conditions of the “Athenians and the foreigners living there that would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new” (17:21). The author looks back for his argument to the doctrine of the creation of the universe and human beings—that the one everyone should be worshipping is the creator and God of all.⁶⁸⁹ Paul compares the ignorance of the Greek and Roman philosophers and knowledgeable elite (17:30) with that the ignorance of the Jewish elite who are likewise classified as being “ignorant” (3:17; 13:26, etc).

Another final consideration regarding the “times of ignorance” relates also to “the allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation” (17:26). This reflects the language of an eschatological framework of empires in succession up to the final establishment of the kingdom of God. I think that Martin Dibelius is right when he states that the “entire groups of motifs must be understood as a whole, or it will not be understood at all.”⁶⁹⁰ I see it as a reference to the fulfillment of the Scriptures through the succession of worldwide empires described by Daniel—Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. This

⁶⁸⁹ The term Lord of “heaven and earth” (in that order) also belongs to the creation story and the eschatological realm (cf. Lk 16:17; 21:33, Rev 14:7 and many other texts in the HB).

⁶⁹⁰ Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style and Theology*, edited by K.C. Hanson, (Minneapolis: MN: Fortress Press, 2004),97; original 1956. Dibelius suggests that “we can only refer to Daniel 8 and think of the periods of time that are granted by God to the individual empires as they superseded one another.”

eschatological call is also fulfilled with the completion of the term “times of the Gentiles,” which is another Lukan term (cf. Lk 21:24) for the Day of Judgment, when the Lord of “heaven and earth” will “have the world judged in righteousness by a man, whom he has appointed... raising him from the dead.” (17:31).

“Who does not know?”: Idolatry and Imperial Worshipers in Ephesus

Introduction

Paul remains in Ephesus, the capital of Asia, for an uninterrupted ministry of almost three years—the longest he has spent anywhere. After the events of the public riot regarding the cult of Artemis, he decides to leave Ephesus, never to return. Acts 19 begins with a summary of a succession of extraordinary miracles, including a description of a failed exorcism performed by ‘seven sons of a high priest Sceva’ with a hyperbolic result and a double descriptor that “all the inhabitants of the city” and “everyone” was “full of fear and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised” (19:17). As a consequence of this fear, many decided to disclose their magic practices with the burning of a valuable collection of books of incantations, perhaps related to the great goddess Artemis. These events serve as preamble to the uproar that seizes the whole city because of issues involving commercialism and identity. There is an accusation against the followers of the Way by the artisan builders of temples made of silver. There is a meeting of the political *dēmos*, the assembly in the theater, where they “drag” some of Paul’s friends. The city becomes full of confusion as it listens to the complaints of the crowd. For two hours we do not hear from Paul or any other follower of the Way; the only cry has to do with the self-identity of Artemis and the city dwellers, as the temple keepers shout, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” I would argue that Luke uses this incident to describe the system of worship of the goddess and the imperial cult, and the related issues of self-identity and commercialism.

The burning of Incantation and magic books

The public burning of magic books serves as both preamble and premise for the climactic confrontation in Ephesus, which holds the title in the NT as the temple keeper (*neokoros*) of the “great Artemis and the statue that fell from heaven” (Acts 19:35). In this section, I argue that this episode involving magic, sorcery and superstition must be read in conjunction with the imperial cult and the ability of the gods and their surrogates, including the emperor, to perform miracles. I think that Pelikan is right in saying that “Acts is not only the one New Testament book that describes in great detail the Christian conflict with magic, sorcery, superstition and other Satanic powers, but also... tells us more about the Greco-Roman religion than any other New Testament writer, even the Apostle Paul.”⁶⁹¹ In addition, the real issue in the confrontation (and conflagration) at Ephesus is socioeconomic: the collection of magic books that is burned has a high commercial value. Indeed, Walaskay reminds us that “to be called an Ephesian was synonymous with magician, and magical books were called Ephesian scriptures.”⁶⁹²

The apostle’s message that “gods are not made with human hands” and the outcome of the burning of the books among the people, bring about a feeling that “all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, everyone was awestruck” (19:17), full of fear when they recognize and praise the Lord Jesus. This introduces the main obstacle to commercialization for Demetrius and

⁶⁹¹ Pelikan, 214.

⁶⁹² Walaskay, 179.

associates. The people are drawing away from buying their *miniature*⁶⁹³ silver-temples, to the extent that Demetrius fears for the “reputation” of the temple and the “danger of the trade.”⁶⁹⁴ The reader still remembers the socioeconomic confrontation and loss of profit in Philippi. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, holding the title of *neokoros* also implies an association with the imperial cult. Thus, any reading against magic, sorcery, and superstition could be potentially related to idolatry as well as to the imperial cult.⁶⁹⁵ Likewise, any careful reader will also recognize the thematic similarities in the mention of Zeus in the episode at Lystra (14)—wanting to offer an oxen with garlands as a sacrifice and the ironic call that “gods in human form have descended” (*katabēsan*)— with the Ephesian claim that the great Artemis and the image/statue/rock has fallen from Zeus (καὶ τοῦ διοπετοῦς). This construction in the genitive with the conjunction *kai* literally means fallen of Zeus/Jupiter (*Dio*) thus equating the fallen element with Artemis.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹³ Interpreters use the words: miniatures, replicas, shrines, etc., to translate the literal phrase “maker of temple” made of silver for the expression of *neopoioi* (builder of temples—as *poiōn* [made] *naos* [temple]). However, these replicas represent effectively the god(s).

⁶⁹⁴ For the social context see Robert F. Stoops Jr, “Riot and Assembly: The Social Context of Acts 19:23-41” in *JBL* 108/1 (1999) 79-91.

⁶⁹⁵ This reading disagrees with the traditional posture that considers only the religious dimension. For example, contra Pelikan, 214 who view the concern, “Exclusively with the religious rather with the socioeconomic dimension”.

⁶⁹⁶ The Liddell-Scott and Thayer Lexicon explain that the term also appears in Euripides, *Iph. T.* 977; Herodian, 1, 11,2 as the *agalma* that fell from the heavens. (διοπετούς. Διοπετές ονόμαζαν το άγαλμα της ρετμης, που κατά το μύθο, είχε ρίξει ο Δίας από τον ουρανό.)

The result of the apostles' work of teaching and healing includes: "humorous"⁶⁹⁷ miracles—even aprons which had touched Paul's skin are referred to as agents⁶⁹⁸; public exorcisms made in the name of the Lord Jesus⁶⁹⁹; — and the burning of a valuable collection of magic books⁷⁰⁰ triggering the "incendiary speech"⁷⁰¹ of Demetrius. This trade-leader and his associates become incensed to the limit (*plēroō*) with rage when they experience such direct competition, perhaps because they realize that they are incapable of producing similar results. Without doubt, such competition discredits the entire system of beliefs of the city, including the cult of Artemis and the fallen statue from Zeus.

⁶⁹⁷ Pelikan, 211.

⁶⁹⁸ The "humorous" element attached to the pieces of clothes performing healing, reflect in no way the miracles of Jesus and previous healings in Acts (perhaps only recalling of Peter's shadow [5:15] as a direct manifestation of the Spirit—incarnated one [cf. Lk 1:35]). However, I think this seems more like a mockery of the system of healing or superstitious "popular religiosity" of the Ephesians, with their innumerable books of magic and sorcery. In addition, Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 98 states that "the cloths take on the function of the amulets and talismans which were so common in magic antiquity."

⁶⁹⁹ The importance of knowing the "name" (in the incident of the high priest's sons) makes the burning of the books relevant for the incantations of magic and allusions to formulas that the temple personnel traditionally try to exploit. Traditions of incantations or "recipes" (*Antiq.* 8.42) and healing using specific names was a regular practice even in Judaism going back to Solomon. Klauck speculates that since the name of Scaeva or Scaevola "never existed," perhaps Luke confused the origins of these men of the Jerusalem aristocracy, and that really these are sons "of a provincial priest of the imperial cult who had Jewish ancestry: this is the 'stage-name' of the seven" (100). In Acts, the context of the incidents of magic and healing in the name of Jesus, Simon Magus, Bar-Elimas, and the Jewish priests have something to do with financial profit.

⁷⁰⁰ Without giving references Walaskay states, "To burn such books was thought by some to release into the air the spirits and powers embedded in the text. By their action these new Christians deny that there is any power whatsoever inherent in the pages of these Ephesians' scriptures", 180. Klauck states that "the reaction to the 'exorcism' in v.17 effects a transition to the theme of magic."Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, (97).

⁷⁰¹ Klauck, 102.

Thus, Paul, by performing “not ordinary” but “powerful deeds,” demonstrates a real visitation from the heavens, compared to a piece of stone that has fallen from heaven/Zeus and is used for divination and magic purposes, giving the keepers and builders of the temples (the *neokoros* and *neopoios*) the ability to commercialize with illness and healing. E. Haenchen informs us that the builders of temples – little replicas (*neōpoios* [*naos poieō*])— were “twelve in all, [they] were named annually by the city and had supervision over the incoming votive offerings, and necessary repairs of the temple.”⁷⁰² This argument proves that one can readily see Demetrius as a city official related to the cult.

Accusation: “Gods are not made with hands” – A case of disrepute

After this development of preaching, healings, and exorcism, the narrator hyperbolically states that “all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks heard the word of the Lord” (19:10). Later, the narrator repeats the statement, but now stating that “all residents of Ephesus” are praising the “name of the *kurios* Jesus.” Finally, the preamble stories are brought to an end with the acclamation that the “word of the *kurios*” grew mightily and prevailed (19:20). The intensification in geographical terms that everyone is hearing about the message and the name of Lord introduces the accusation against Demetrius and associates, “Gods are not made with human hands.” In reality, it is a true statement. The reader has encountered this accusation since the beginning of Acts with Stephen in Jerusalem, later in Lystra and Athens and other narratives of Acts, where it

⁷⁰² Haenchen, 572.

constitutes more than a simple accusation of general idolatry, but is directly related to the *kurios* of worship.

Generally, Luke creates a confrontation between, on the other hand, commercialism and personal profit (*ergasia*) and, on the other hand, the message and the reception of the Way (cf. Lk 12:58; Lk 16:1-13; Acts 1:17-20; 5:1-11; 8:20-22; 16:16-18; 19:23ff). The followers of the Way are not blasphemers or temple-robbers, nor are they burning incantation books that do not belong to them. The people decided by themselves to burn their books as a way of admitting their previous practices. Klauck reminds us that the perfect participle “have believed” (πεπιστευκότων) indicates that “these have been members of the Christian community for some time already; they are not Jews and Greeks who [have] entered the community only now, under the impact of these events.”⁷⁰³ The scenario changes when these new Christians, perhaps as former adherents of the imperial cult, disclose their previous practices. This understanding explains the difference between the name and significance of the *kurios* Jesus vis-à-vis the books of incantations that I view as related somehow to the cult of the power of the goddess Artemis and the imperial cult regarding the performance miracles. As Haenchen states, “The Christians do not blaspheme the goddess – they only deny her divinity,”⁷⁰⁴ in so doing reclaiming superiority on behalf of Jesus’ name and emphasizing that gods made with human hands are not real gods, despite popular belief.

⁷⁰³ Klauck, 101.

⁷⁰⁴ Hanchen, 577.

Luke gives a keen description on the uproar in the city: “full of rage crying out in a great voice” (19:28). The strong terms of rage and crying out have been introduced before in the narrative (7; 14). Whether Demetrius is the *neopoiois*—maker of images rather than a “temple official,” as the Ephesians’ Inscription of the British Museum recalls—remains obscure.⁷⁰⁵ However, his incendiary speech creates an uproar and mass hysteria in the city, with people meeting in the theater and shouting for more than two hours. Issues of commercialization, business losses, idolatry, and the superiority of the name of *Kurios* Jesus impinge on the reputation of the temple and the city, which holds the title of *Neokoroi*. This turmoil, therefore, produces a crisis of self-identity not only for the citizens in their understanding of the role of Artemis but also for the city in its association with the former and present role of the Augusti (the Caesars) as co-regent recipients of worship.

I think that Luke uses the cult of Artemis not as a public attack on the goddess, but as a referent for the imperial program. After all, the *grammateus* of the city, probably a priest himself, corroborates that these people are not robbers of temples, nor blasphemers of Artemis. Thus, the accusation should be understood in a broader sense—as against its character as signifier of the imperial cult in the whole world (19:27). At stake here is the much-discussed question of whether the statues, the miniatures, the silver temples, and so forth

⁷⁰⁵ Johnson dismisses the importance of Demetrius as *neopoios* asserting that the first-century inscription designates him as “temple official rather than a maker of images” (347).

are only material objects or in fact gods.⁷⁰⁶ L. A. Kauppi provides conclusive evidence that silver shrines used in votive offerings, souvenirs, amulets or grave goods display elements of public “virtue and wealth” and “shame and honor,” illustrating thereby issues of self-identity regarding both cult and worshippers.⁷⁰⁷ I would argue that ostentatious religiosity reflects the entire religious-economic state of affairs of temple-commercialism and of the imperial cult. I see in such representations of the goddess as well as of imperial worship the reasons why Demetrius and associates perceive the message of the apostles as a threat, a “drawing away of considerable number of people” (19:26).

Luke is not interested only in idolatry, but also in the economic religious problem of the system of power. A naïve reading may indicate that the *grammateus*-scribe does not reflect the whole religious-economic disaster for temple-commercialism when he states, “Who does not know?—these things cannot be denied” (19:35-36). However, another way to read this statement is as a cry of mockery from Luke. This is exactly what is happening in the whole world, which now knows that there is another name which is superior and more powerful than the representation of double worship of Artemis with its *neokoroi*

⁷⁰⁶ Barrett, 925.

⁷⁰⁷ Lynn Allan Kauppi, *Foreign But Familiar Gods: Greco-Romans Read Religion in Acts*. Library of New Testament Studies 277, editor Mark Goodacre, (London: T&T Clark International, 2006), 94. However, I disagree with her view that “the Christian community can benignly ignore the Greco-Roman gods as a threat.” (106). For more on the Ephesian Artemis cult, see Paul Trebilco, “Asia” in David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (eds), in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, vol 2 – Bruce W. Winter (ed.), *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1994), 316-57.

representing the imperial worship. To this end, Lynn R. Lidonnici suggests that Artemis of Ephesus,

Could be understood as the legitimate wife of the city of Ephesus itself: protectress and nourisher; “trustworthy warden” not only the things in people’s houses, but also of the financial resources on deposit at the Artemision; guardian of legitimate marriage; overseer of the birth of the next generation, *kourotrophos*. These are categories of power, intimately connected with the stability and continuation of the family, the city, the empire, and, conceptually, the universe.⁷⁰⁸

In this sense, what is in jeopardy is the category of power and security of both, of the city and of the rest of the empire, insofar as it represents the establishment of the imperial cult.

The ambivalent “some” of the Asiarchs

Another element that has been difficult to interpret is the presence of the Asiarchs or officials of the province (*koinon*), including the mention that some of them are friendly to Paul. Commenting on the identity of the Asiarchs, Barrett states, “The meaning of this term is disputed, and the question is complicated by the fact that it seems to have changed in the course of time... the main problem lies in the relation (if any) between the office of Asiarch and that of the High Priest of the cult of Rome in the league (*koinon*) of Asia.”⁷⁰⁹ Scholars in the past have thought that the “Asiarchy was quite separate from the provincial high-

⁷⁰⁸ Lynn R. Lidonnici, “The Images of Artemis and Greco-Roman Worship: A Reconsideration” *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol 85, No 4, 409.

⁷⁰⁹ Barrett, 930. He also quotes other scholars and the discussion continues today.

priesthood.”⁷¹⁰ Contrary to this, Steven Friesen holds that they were “a special category of *agonethe* – an official who sponsored athletic or musical competitions.” In a previous work, *Ephesus: Double Neokoros*, Friesen suggests that the evidence of sacrifices on behalf of the emperor as independent in the imperial cult of the provinces did not reflect an imperial figure.⁷¹¹ Similarly, in a recent book he argues that, “the widely held view that the Asiarch was identical with the high priesthood of Asia is rejected in this study.”⁷¹²

The problem for Friesen is the early associations with the imperial worship. Some scholars do not hesitate to call it imperial worship, but only if takes place after the Flavian period and not during the times of Augustus, Tiberius and the Claudians (Gaius, Claudius, Nero). For example, Friesen’s open bias toward the imperial cult or temple reflects his unclear definition of the term *sebastoneos* as of “meaning unknown.”⁷¹³ Kearsley states, “Clearly the title was in use throughout the whole of the first century A.D., and was also firmly

⁷¹⁰ Barrett, 930, citing R. A. Kearsley, in ND 4.46-55, where the discussion is based upon the martyrdom of Policarp

⁷¹¹ Friesen, *Double Neokoros*, 150.

⁷¹² Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cult and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) whose first 100 pages are dedicated to the imperial cult. Friesen still sees the difference between Asiarchs and high priests, See also, Steven Friesen, *Twice Neokoros* (Leiden, 1993); and in “Asiarchs” in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 126: 275-290; “Highpriests of Asia and Asiarchs: Farewell to the Identification Theory” in P. Sherrer, H. Taeuber, and H. Thür, eds., *Seine und Wege: Festschrift für Dieter Knibbe*, 303-307. Vienna.

⁷¹³ Friesen, *Imperial Cult*, 222. He defines Sebastophant as “an imperial cult official similar to a hierophant [(priest) where the] responsibilities would have included sacred actions, speaking, or the revelation of sacred objects.” The closeness of the word *sebasma* (worship) to *sebastos* (the transliterated name of Augustus) and his own use of Sebastophant as imperial cult reflects his open bias of denying any connection with the cult.

established before that... and it is no longer possible to argue that the title Asiarch underwent some sort of transformation in meaning after the time it was recorded by Strabo and Acts.”⁷¹⁴ Similarly, Barbara Burrell states that the “koina were generally headed by chief priests, who presided over the provincial imperial temples and their ceremonies.”⁷¹⁵ Rosalinde Kearsley also separates the offices of the Asiarch only at the municipal level, especially for the inclusion of women as chief priestesses in the imperial cult.⁷¹⁶ Nevertheless, scholars recognize that “there are many *neokoroi* in Asia that are never documented as having a provincial chief priest, chief priestess, or Asiarch of their temple(s).”⁷¹⁷

However, the existence of different officials of the imperial cult, like the associations of *hymnodoi* who participated in the cult singing praises to the emperors as early in the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, and Gaius, confirms such an argument. These were a select group of up to forty men who belonged to the aristocracy as officials of the imperial cult, some of them even of senatorial ranks

⁷¹⁴ R. Kearsley, “Leading family...”, 50-51

⁷¹⁵ Burrell, 346a. Women also served as chief priestess: “Often she was the wife or relative of a chief priest or of a koinon leader. It has been suggested that her chief responsibility was the cult of the Augustae; in Asia at least, Tiberius’ mother shared his cult in the provincial temple in Smyrna from 26 CE.”

⁷¹⁶ Burrell, 21b; Kearsley, 51, states, “My recent discussion of the *archieieiai* of Asia has shown that their appearance as wives of both *archieieis* of Asia and of *asiarchs* can no longer be used as an argument in favour of the identity of the offices.” Rosalinde Kearsley has a list of articles on the topic; the most known of which perhaps are: “Some *Asiarchs* of Ephesus” in R.G. Horsley, ed. *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 4:46-55 (Sidney, 1987); and “The *Asiarchs*” in D. Gill and C. Gempf, eds., *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, (Grand Rapids, 1994), 363-376.

⁷¹⁷ Burrell, 348; the issue is that she is doing the study of *neokoroi* covering a period of three centuries.

in the office of high priests.⁷¹⁸ Other officers were: the *theologoi* who celebrated the imperial god(s) in prose; the *thesmodoi* who were deliverers of precepts or oracles, under the direction of the chief priest; and the *grammateis* of Asia. It is also confirmed that, during the time of Gaius, the “craftsmen who were in charge of the temple’ fabric” were officers of the imperial cult. This evidence *may* point to Demetrius, the silver-temple maker (ποιῶν ναοὺς ἀργυροῦς) of Ephesus as imperial officer. The whole citation in the time of Gaius reads:

Miscellaneous other officers are known from particular temples in Asia. The short-lived provincial temple of Gaius Caesar at Miletos (i.e. the Dydymaion) had *neopoioi* from all Asia, one from each judicial district. Such officials were in charge of the temple’s fabric, and in this case the group probably oversaw funds for the new construction, and perhaps directed teams of craftsmen of the province. The *neopoioi* inscription also specifies a chief priest of Gaius’ temple at Miletos (whose third term as chief priest of Asia this was); a *neokoros* who had also been chief priest of Asia twice; and a chief *neopios* who was also *sebastoneos* (an otherwise unknown office) and *sebastologos* (who like the theologos delivered prose eulogies, but specifically of Augustus or the Augusti).⁷¹⁹

Acts 19 cites some of these officials as working during this time. Burrell concludes,

when one looks back at what we have seen of the koina, there is staggeringly little information concerning the participants, much less the practices, of institutions that lasted for three centuries and more... Yet the koina were the major intermediaries between

⁷¹⁸ R. Kearsley, “A leading family...”45-46 describes the case of several families of Cybra which for several generations played a dominant role as lyciarchs and asiarchs from the first to third century. Including some “unnamed” women, “who was twice archiereia of the temples of Ephesus” later in 253/4 “probably of senatorial rank herself.” In note 15 she states, “The rank of Rupillius’ wife is not certain because the text is broken [an inscription from Ephesos – *I.Ephesos III,714*]. If *hypatikēn* is the correct restoration, it is not clear how the archiereia achieved this rank since Rupillius her husband is not described as a man of senatorial rank”

⁷¹⁹ Burrell, 349a-b.

emperors and cities, and *their temples were the reasons why the title 'neokoros' was initially given.*⁷²⁰

Following this reasoning, it is possible to affirm that Luke seems to know the effects of the title *neokoros* and its representation of the imperial cult. Thus, he mockingly presents the city as confused and enraged in rioting. Further mimicking the system, the *grammateus* who probably is another scribe-priest of the temple/city asks: "Who does not know the power and extent of Artemis?" He adds, "If you want to know more," there are the proper ways of courts and proconsuls to "bring charges against each other." I think that Luke is ridiculing the system, since the whole city and the *dēmos* have been in an uproar for more than two hours and "nobody knows why they have come together" (19:32). Stoops argues, "...the earlier appearance of the term *dēmos* and the role of the Asiarchs have suggested a political element but the phrase *ēn gar ekklēsia sungechumenē* [19:32 because the assembly was confused]" makes that element unavoidable."⁷²¹

Treating identity and commercialism

The preaching in Ephesus has touched two inseparable elements of the Romans: self-identity and commercialism. Fifty thousand silver coins had been destroyed; trade had diminished; and the reputation of the city was falling into disrepute. All these issues altered the tranquility of the city. The passionate crowd of Ephesians cannot accept any offense to their system of worship and

⁷²⁰ Burrell, 357b. my emphasis

⁷²¹ Stoops, 86.

cult, which gives them a sense of self-identity as temple keepers of the goddess and as a main city of Asia. I would argue that Luke mocks the question of the *grammateus*, “Who does not know?” In this context, I see Luke using irony and mimicry toward the cult and the assembly. He uses the term (*ekklesia*)–(assembly) to describe the riotous crowd in the theater and introduces the *grammateus*-scribe-priest as one of the cult who feels threatened by their own. The irony continues, for the *grammateus* realizes and declares that even stones which fall from god (*dio=dues*) are made without hands. There is ambivalence in the political regular assembly (*dēmos*), as being almost the same but not quite, because it is now transformed into a riotous group. The city in riot merely reflects the attitude toward the famous Artemis, but it speaks against the symbol that it represents—the system of *pax* and *securitas* of the Augusti. The system that proclaims peace and security cannot remain peaceful when the object of their cult, a mainstay of identity and commercialism, is threatened. Thus, the literary movement in the selection of words from *dēmos* to *ekklēsia* makes the reader wonder whether Luke wants to move from the lawful, orderly *dēmos*, to an ironic, laughable false *ekklēsia*, not the real one.

It is not the identity of Jews or Christians that is in jeopardy. Aristarchus the Macedonian, Gaius the Pergamene, Alexander the Jew or even Paul the Jew-Roman are all treated as the same.⁷²² On the other side are the officials of

⁷²² The argument that Alexander is trying to present an apologia in front of the *dēmos* lacks any support. The identification of this character as a member of the Way is conflictive. Acts mentions different Alexanders; Acts 4:6 mentions early in Jerusalem one who belong to the high priest family. What a better representative of the Jewish system to present a defense? This would make a good context for

the temple system: Demetrius, perhaps as *neopios* in charge of commerce at the temple; and some Asiarchs who recognize that the problem is not Paul, that everyone acknowledges the superiority and power of the name of *kurios*, whether they are Jews or Greeks, or even evil spirits (cf. 19:15). Thus, the elements of *dēmos*,⁷²³ *Asiarchs*,⁷²⁴ *grammateus*; *neopios*-Demetrius, god-given/fallen from Zeus (*diopetēs*); *ekklēsia*,⁷²⁵ *stasis* (sedition-riot),⁷²⁶ theater—all belong to the language of the Empire in its development of the imperial cult. When it adds the

Asiarchs as high priest and the two systems together, but it is just mere speculation. The Epistle to Timothy (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 4:14) also presents an apostate Alexander, and the connections with silversmiths to coppersmiths are again interesting but speculative. Is this apostate Jew or Christian part of the guild of Demetrius, part of the work force of cults of Artemis and the imperial Romans gods? Is this the reason for the act of “blasphemy” and the “turning over to Satan” reaction of the Paul-author of Timothy?

⁷²³ The term *dēmos*, translated as crowd or populace in most translations, is not completely accurately and is for the reader in suggesting political misleading connotations. The *dēmos* was the general assembly where important discussions and decisions took place. It is true that the city is in chaos. In addition, how can one create or speak of confusion in the 24,000 seats, since the *grammateus* declared that it was not a regular meeting? According to Chrysostom (*Hom XLII 2*), “the regular assembly of people was held three times a month”, Haenchen, 576.

⁷²⁴ It is important to clarify that only “some” of the Asiarchs are involved. It is not the “office of the Asiarchs” in itself which urges Paul not to propose himself as responsible for the tumult. The title of the Asiarch as Burrell, Kearsley and others have concluded—was a title that family members could hold for generations. These friendly Asiarchs or members of the family perhaps were new adherents of the Way, as Luke-Acts and the Pauline Epistles reflect regarding “important women” (17:4,12); “city treasurer Erastos” (cf. Acts 19:22; Rom 16:23; 2 Tim 4:20); friendly centurions, etc. It is important not to confuse the “office of” with some (*tines*) individuals.

⁷²⁵ Barrett, 931 attests the importance of the word *ekklēsia* (19:32) as “the duly constituted assembly of citizens,” but he disregards the use in verses 32, 40 as “doubtful, since the assembly seems to be informal, unofficial, and riotous.”

⁷²⁶ And the term disturbance (*sustrophē*) can “have the sense of a seditious gathering... which would clearly make it even more dangerous in an empire chronically suspicious of any unregulated assembly” (Johnson, 350-1). See also Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10:34.

terminology of the “name”, the *kurios*, and the problem of magic, the question remains: Where are the elements of the Way? I would argue that these are the tools of the center, which have been once more re-appropriated by Luke in order to de-center the powerful, to bring into them ill repute, and to show the worthless (*apelegmos* – another only Lukan word) ways of the Romans.

The problem of self-definition continues in Acts 19, where the silent Paul and the rest of the Jewish Christian group are ignored. Those arrested and “dragged” to the assembly (Gaius and Aristarchus) are identified as Macedonians—what is more Greek than Macedonians?⁷²⁷ Paul is silenced by the disciples and “some” friendly Asiarchs, who are perhaps disciples. Nobody speaks except the *Asiarchs*, the *naospioi*, the *grammateus*, and the crowd. Later, an official of the imperial cult, the *grammateus* or city-clerk, threatens the whole *ekklesia*—congregants of the Theater (if we are to believe the Codex Bezae and other mss with their hyperbolic “the entire city in confusion”) and accuses them of treason in order to establish the public order, the Pax Romana of the imperial worship. I think this is the issue at stake-- the reputation of the imperial cult in Ephesus in the representation of the worship to Artemis. These people who are crying and running around the street (following D) fill the theater with commotion and reject any explanation. Luke thus mocks their own system of order and rules. The issue here is that the system in place is incapable of understanding what is going on. After all, the *grammateus* acknowledges that this is an “illegal” meeting and perhaps, as Barretts ironically suggests, “it seems that some of the wealth of

⁷²⁷ Though Acts and the Pauline corpus will identify one as from Derbe (Acts 20:4).

Artemis got into the city treasury and that the town clerk might not have welcomed an inquiry”⁷²⁸ into how it got there.

To conclude, the incidents at Ephesus show the conflict between two systems of power. The believers and followers of the Way upset the peace and security of the *neokoros* city as they preach against the representation of the cult. If it is accepted that the Asiarchs may be the high priests of the imperial cult, then they may be compared with the sons of Scaeva, members of another priesthood, but both denied of power. Perhaps Luke wants to show that both systems in opposition are powerless when set against the power of the word of God and the name of the Lord Jesus.

The representation of the cult as *neokoros* with its stone that fell from Zeus/heaven may also parallel the term *diopetēs* (falling from god) with the ‘fall of Satan’ (Lk 10:18)⁷²⁹ as an object falling from the realm of the gods. Though it is a reference that is “very tentative” and “hypothetical [in] nature,”⁷³⁰ I think both boast of being “great” exhibiting demonstration of exaltation. In addition, the cult of Artemis and the imperial system of worship might be more aptly compared to the demonic forces as fallen and defeated. A demonic creature from the realms of the gods is different from a “mere meteorite” that is worshipped, unless it is

⁷²⁸ Barrett, 935.

⁷²⁹ There may be connections also between the fall of Satan and the demonic spirit falling upon the priests (“leaping upon”); if so, there is an added irony because the LXX usage of this word unique in Luke is for leaping of the Spirit of the Lord (1 Sam 10:6; 11:6; 16:13) see Johnson, 341.

⁷³⁰ Kauppi, 103, note 38, responding to Scott Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19* (BZBW, 133; Berlin: Walter deGruyter, 2005, n. 422; the criticisms are of his unpublished dissertation (Lutheran School of Theology, 1999 – the book is a revision of the diss).

understood as a “piece fallen from the heavens” which is associated with magic, sorcery, books of incantations, and formulas. I think this is exactly the purpose of the preamble and explanation of the event. After all, any associations or “allusions” of self-exaltation as great and majestic will point readers to the case of Acts 12 with the defeat of any system that exalts itself as gods. Acts shows once more that old representations of idolatry in combination with the imperial cult are mere human creations that do not honor the creator of the universe (cf. 14).

In front of the Roman Authorities – A final conclusion

Introduction

The final part of the book of Acts (21-28) describes the return of Paul to Jerusalem, his arrest by the Roman authorities, his several trials at the hand of both centers, the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman Governors Felix and Festus, and his final appeal to their lord Caesar. I would argue that Luke includes these incidents to display the real character of the Romans officers as liars, looking for bribes and political favors.

Paul returns to Jerusalem in order to report the collection from the world-wide offerings, looking for a conciliatory relationship with the leadership in Jerusalem.⁷³¹ As explained earlier, he receives a trial from the Christian group that functions as a Christian Sanhedrin, at which he is judged and sentenced to participate in vows of ritualistic practices. As a consequence, he is arrested by the Romans and ordered to stand trial by both the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman authorities.

⁷³¹ For some, Paul's defense outside the temple was seen as "a failure and this failure can be directly assigned to his claim that God had called him to take his mission to the Gentiles" Lüdemann, Acts, 300. Unfortunately Lüdemann seems to ignore that his missionary call also included work among the Jews, which he did in every city that he visited; even at the end of the book, in chapter 28, we see Paul still welcoming "all". For more on this inclusion, see Robert Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology and Conciliation*, Monographs Series, Society of Biblical Literature (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987).

The Arrest in the Temple by the Roman Tribune -- Seeing the Other

The arrest occurs after the Jews from Asia form a mob in the temple accusing Paul of the following charges: teachings and positions antagonistic to the law, the people, and their customs; and profaning the sanctity of the temple by admitting Gentiles. After being expelled from the temple, Paul is almost killed, but the Roman authorities intervene. Some scholars suggest that Tribune Claudius Lysias adopted an ambivalent position by “rescuing” Paul from the hands of the mob.⁷³² Others, such as Cassidy, state that “it is not the sense of Luke’s account here that Lysias intervened in the situation for the purpose of rescuing Paul.”⁷³³ This potentially ambivalent position of the Roman towards the apostle in the text merits closer examination, and it is to this that I now turn.

⁷³² Walaskay, 201, for example, speaks of the “compassionate approach of the Roman tribune”: “The compassionate tribune asks the identity of Paul to the crowd who is beating Paul, since he is not able to find out, he bound him.” Dean Béchard argues that “ironically, the tribune’s order to bind the prisoner ‘with two chains’ actually secures Paul, on this occasion as in subsequent settings, giving [him] the freedom to complete his divine commission by confronting persistent misunderstanding and embittered hostility with fearless proclamation” Dean P. Béchard, “The Disputed Case Against Paul: A Redaction-Critical Analysis of Acts 21:27-22:29. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65.02 p, 250

⁷³³ Cassidy, *Society and Politics...*, 97; he cites Walaskay, 53, Maddox, 94 as examples of the ‘protective custody’ argument. Other comments that reflect the position of pro-Roman apologia of Walaskay: “Finally, inside the relative *quiet* of the Roman fortress” (W, 202 my emphasis). The tribune causes confusion for those “*assassins* who brutally murdered members of the pro-Roman Jewish aristocracy” (W, 202 my emphasis). Likewise, Lüdemann, 301 states, “The way Roman officials treat Christians ... is *exemplary*.”; the protection from the “Jewish violence under the protection of the Roman state”, (L, 301 my emphasis). Even F.F. Bruce states that Paul was “encouraged” to seek the “impartiality of Roman courts.” He writes, “If he was apprehensive about the result of a trial before Festus in Jerusalem, it was not because he had lost his confidence in Roman justice, but because he feared that in Jerusalem Roman justice might be overborne by powerful local influences” (Bruce, 478).

Claudius Lysias' intervention reflects a biased attitude against the Other. He arrests and binds Paul with a "double chain" because he thinks Paul is another agitator, a terrorist, such as the famous Egyptian leader.⁷³⁴ There is no such thing as protective custody or tact in pursuing the reasons for the riot. Lysias does not even release Paul after he knows that he is not the Egyptian. Luke makes sure that the reader notices the process of the ignorant, confused, and later fearful Roman authorities. The 'tactful' Roman methods of seeking for truth are displayed by the tribune when he orders: 'Let's make him speak by flogging him.' The judicial system requires an accusation for the binding and the arrest, which the tribune does not have. Thus, this 'compassionate' tribune decides the method: 'torture first, questions later.' Some readers perceive the system as unjust by nature, while others perceive it as protective, because Paul as a Roman has the "full legal protection of the Roman Empire."⁷³⁵

The confusion continues in the hybridity of Paul, who experiences the changes in identity in front of each interlocutor. Paul is first represented as being a ritualistic observant Jew who fulfills a vow in the temple; then, he is described as becoming an agitator and apostate. Later, he is confused as an Egyptian who knows Greek, before he himself discloses that he is a Jew from Tarsus. Finally, at the moment of flogging, he defends himself as a Roman citizen. This hybrid and mimetic relationship between captor and captive emphasizes the reality of the followers of the Way: On the one hand, he takes advantage of both systems

⁷³⁴ The Roman officer does his job, especially if he comes to arrest a famous insurrectionist. Josephus informs that Felix and Festus also had to deal with for the revolt of "four thousand assassins". See Josephus, *Antiq.* XX.5; *BJ* II.13.2-4.

⁷³⁵ Walaskay, 205.

to “counter... the balance of power.”⁷³⁶ On the other hand, the mimicking Paul does not receive the opportunity to be released from prison because he is a Roman citizen; in fact, the prisoner remains under custody and chained until the end of the book.⁷³⁷ R. Pervo states that “after eight chapters (Acts 21-28) focusing on Paul’s legal problems, the reader no longer understands why he is under arrest, of what he is really charged... [or] why he did not withdraw his appeal later.”⁷³⁸

The text is not clear whether Lysias believes Paul’s self-identity as a Roman citizen. The additional question of Codex D makes the tribune ask “Do you claim so easily to be a Roman citizen?”⁷³⁹ calling into question the way he

⁷³⁶ Pelikan, 241. Cassidy, 103 states, The “Acts narrative does not portray Paul attaching particular importance to his Roman citizenship.”

⁷³⁷ Luke makes sure that the responsibility for the binding in chains falls on the Roman system as a quasi-fulfillment of Agabus’ prediction. The prophecy states that “the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man ... and will hand him over to the Gentiles.” The question is why Luke does not correct his sources, since the event has been read differently. I think Luke sees both systems as working together (cf. 4:27). It is important to note that the institutions of the temple are the ones who “shut down” the doors of the temple for Paul and perhaps also the followers of the Way. The text shows the Jews of Asia as initiators, later he includes the temple personnel, and “all the city”, with the “people” (*laos* as a technical term, which is hyperbolized as *plethou tou laou* [the fulfill/plenitude/perfected number of the people]), in this manner symbolizing the Lukan pattern that Jerusalem kills the prophets.

⁷³⁸ Pervo, 46-47.

⁷³⁹ For more on citizenship see Rapske, 108 where he reminds us, “It is unnecessary to reduce Paul’s claim in Acts to something less than full citizenship or to suggest that Paul clothed himself (or was clothed by Luke!) in the prestige of a falsely claimed Tarsian citizenship.” In addition, he shows several cases where the “cry: I am a Roman citizen” helped the prisoner gain a lesser punishment or even absolution. However, he also cites some cases when the magistrates did the contrary: for example, a case that Suetonius quotes in which a man invoking the citizenship before governor Galba (60-68 CE) receives a heavier sentence after stating his Roman citizenship. Rapske, 53-55 citing Suetonius Gal 9.1. He also cites the governor Gessius Florus (64-66 CE) in

acquired citizenship. The unbelief or curiosity continues when the tribune wants “to find out” the reason why Paul was accused by the Jews. The lapse of time between the arrest and the trial in front of the Sanhedrin is not mentioned; however, the Roman officer does not exonerate his own co-citizen.

The reader wonders whether the Romans are interested in knowing Jewish Christian affairs. The narrative has described the apathy of the Roman proconsul Gallio, who allows the beating of a leader of the synagogue, Sosthenes, in front of his tribunal (*bema*—seat of judgment, 18:17) by a mob, an action which is contrasted with the unusual curiosity of Claudius Lysias. Barrett has, to my mind, correctly suggested that the Romans would not have taken the time to understand all the details of the case, and that “it is rubbish” to presume such knowledge and interest.⁷⁴⁰ Regardless of the outcome, the tribune also has the power to convene the entire Jewish Sanhedrin,⁷⁴¹ which becomes so violent as a result of dissensions between the parties that Lysias ordered the soldiers “to

Palestine, Capito (68 CE) and later cases in Dio Cassius, Tacitus, and Josephus, etc.

⁷⁴⁰ C.K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study*, (London; Epworth, 1961), 63. He states “No Roman official would ever have filtered out so much of what to him would be theological and ecclesiastical rubbish in order to reach so tiny a grain of relevant apology.” For more on the history of scholarship regarding apology, see the excellent introduction in chapters 1-2 of Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the “Acts of the Apostles”* Monograph Series 121, (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-42.

⁷⁴¹ Haenchen, Acts, 640 states that “it would be naïve to believe such a stance.” Other scholars disagree. It is true that that this tribune, “commander of a Roman guard” (Haenchen presents him only as a low class soldier), is not the governor of the city, but the one who represented the empire in that city. Moreover, Josephus informs us that the Romans even kept the vestments of the high priest showing power and dependence. Josephus, *Antiq* – for the vestments.

go down and take Paul by force into the barracks” (23:10).⁷⁴² Luke’s representation of the Romans by way of Lysias, the mercenary soldier who acquired honor (citizenship) by means of commerce and money and now faces the serious accusation of pederasty and bribes, is one that I now proceed to address.

The narrative describes a plot by a special group of forty men to kill Paul with the problematic identifier as “Jews”—a reference to the “high priests and elders” (23:14). A well-informed young man, the “son of Paul’s sister,” by which the previous interaction of Paul and his family (cf. 9:1: 26:10-12) with the Jewish establishment is recalled, is sent by Paul to the Tribune Lysias through a centurion. I would argue that the full description of the centurion’s words must be read as full of mockery and suspicion: “The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, he has something to tell you” (23:18). The full system of bribes, favors, and patronages is in place. After all, Luke has already warned the reader how the tribune has acquired his citizenship and later explains why Governor Felix used to call Paul repeatedly—“expecting some bribes.” What surprises the reader is the tribune’s reaction: “Taking him by the hand, he took and drew him aside privately and asked him.” Of course, it is impossible to determine the character and seriousness of his intention. However, the selection of verbs and words (take by the hand, drawing to his private place, etc) make the

⁷⁴² The terms *stasis* (dissension – 9 times in NT, 7 times in Lk-Acts) and *diaspaō* (tear apart) (1 time in NT) are strong. Luke uses almost all of them in reference to trials in front of Roman authorities (the exception is the dissension between Barnabas and Paul). The verses are; Lk 23:19, 25; Acts 15:2; 19:40; 23:7, 10; 24:5.

suspicious reader wonder whether he is suggesting either bribes or pederasty as a way to gain freedom. Pervo asks whether this section is “pure entertainment”⁷⁴³ or whether Lysias is siding now with the confirmed identity of Paul as a Roman citizen.

When Lysias writes a letter to his superior, Governor Felix, it proves of no help either. Interpreters doubt the ‘historicity’ of the letter, claiming it as an invention and product of the Lukan hard work of research.⁷⁴⁴ However, if this is the case, why then would Luke want to present the tribune as a liar? Luke introduces this Roman officer as a liar, as ignorant, and as writing the “epistle of rhetoric [in] self-defense.”⁷⁴⁵ Lysias’ ambivalent attitude of political correctness is contrasted with the terms he uses to describe Paul. He writes: “This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them but when I had learned that he was a Roman citizen, I came with the guard and rescued him” (23:27-28). Certainly, he changes the truthfulness of the report; he did not in fact come to rescue Paul but to arrest and chain him. A cautious reader will note, as Cassidy suggests, that Lysias has initiated steps to scourge Paul and “would have completed if Paul had not spoken up.”⁷⁴⁶ Lysias continues affirming that in some sense Paul must be guilty, since he was “being accused or charged.” If he believes that he is completely innocent, why not release him in Caesarea?

⁷⁴³ Pervo, 32.

⁷⁴⁴ Ludemann, 310; Barrett, 1071 states “it hard to imagine how Luke could have obtained access to Roman archives.”

⁷⁴⁵ Pelikan, 250.

⁷⁴⁶ Cassidy, 100.

Consequently, it would be fair to suggest that Luke represents the tribune at least as being ignorant, a curious liar. More problematic is the inability to protect another fellow Roman citizen. Certainly, Lysias' words make a mockery of the whole Roman system trying to establish worldwide peace: "When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once" (23:30). How can the powerful be intimidated only with the oath of forty men? Is Luke not laughing at the system of "peace and security" when Lysias has to order a guard to "take him safely" under the protection of 200 soldiers (two centurions, 70 cavalry, and 200 spearmen listed separately), and leaving at night for the Caesar's city – Caesarea Maritima?

In summary, the process for Paul in Jerusalem comes to close with an apology before the Sanhedrin as a client-institution of the Romans, which gives way to a riot. Luke does not clearly state whether violence was directed against Paul or against each other. It is the narrator that makes us presuppose that the fearful tribune "would tear Paul to pieces" (23:10). Whatever should be the case, the tribune does what he is accustomed to do: "enter by force," using force to drag his prisoner. The reader wonders whether the night vision approves the apology or whether this is the appropriate future martyr—witness formula, since Luke understands that Paul must testify in front of the two systems—the prophetic Lord in a vision states, "As you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome" (23:11). Furthermore, it seems that such witness and defense will also end in violence during the second apology in front of the other "center" of power—the Emperor. Jesus' words—"You have to testify

also in Rome” (23:11)—presuppose a violent confrontation in the council of Caesar. This confrontation begins with a defense before reluctant Roman Governors. I continue by describing these Roman representations.

In front of the Roman Governors

The High Priest and some elders representing the Sanhedrin, with the help of a special attorney, make the case for an accusation and defense in front of the Governor Felix. The Jewish council (*gerousia*, lit. Senate), being subordinate to the authority of the Romans, looks to their own self survival, given the accusation of improper behavior toward a Roman citizen, perhaps even of rioting and disturbing the peace. After the expected proper flattery⁷⁴⁷ the charges are issued: first, in relation to worldwide peace, Paul is an agitator; and second, he is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes and someone who profanes temples. Sherwin-White states, Tertullus tries “to induce the governor to construe the preaching of Paul as tantamount to causing civil disturbance throughout the Jewish population of the empire. They knew that the governors were unwilling to convict on purely religious charges and therefore tried to give a political twist to the religion charge.”⁷⁴⁸ Perhaps Paul understood this political charge as referring to the emperor himself, or perhaps these are Luke’s motives, when he categorically makes Paul state, “I have in no way committed an offense (sin—

⁷⁴⁷ Shelton, *As the Roman Did*, 277 states that in cases of accusation “it was quite acceptable in Roman court procedure for a lawyer to use exaggeration or insinuation to prejudice a jury; hence the very great importance of having a skillful lawyer argue your case.”

⁷⁴⁸ Sherwin-White, 50.

hamartanō) against the Emperor.” How can someone sin against the emperor? The reader has encountered this accusation in Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus and now in Caesarea by the Jewish council. Paul knows that his life and preaching has done nothing against the Jews—“I have done no wrong to the Jews as you very well know” (25:10).

In front of Felix

After hearing Paul’s detailed and elaborate defense, the Governor Felix vacillates in making final decision; instead, he waits for the Tribune, as if Lysias would produce more evidence. Luke with his normal precision informs the reader that only twelve days have passed since Paul arrived in Jerusalem. With the same precision, Luke reveals that “Felix is rather well informed about the Way,” summoning Paul for several private discussions on the ironic topic of faith in Jesus Christ, justice, self-control and coming judgment,⁷⁴⁹ leaving the Roman with its national counterparts “full of fear and frightened.”⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁹ These are favorite Lukan’ words that he appropriates from the Roman system in order to mimic and represent the characteristics of the Empire of God (Wisdom, *Sophia-sapientia* 7:22; justice, *dikaïosunē* – *iustitia* 13:38-39; law, *nomos* – *lex* 10:15; *logos* – *alōgon* – reason/absurd 25:27). In this regard, the scene cannot be but ironic: to see the powerful Roman, probably of the equestrian rank and thus just lower than the Senatorial rank, discussing justice, self-control, and judgment with a chained prisoner. Scholars explain his interest in the theological realm by an allusion of his third marriage to an almost sixteen-year-old Jewish girl – Drusilla, youngest daughter of King Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12). I think this is not necessarily what Luke has in mind.

⁷⁵⁰ Whether we should believe Tacitus and Josephus is something else, but they wrote about Felix: Tacitus on Felix, “He believed that he could commit all kinds of enormities with impunity” (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.54); “Practicing every kind of cruelty and lust, he wielded royal power with the instincts of a slave” (Tacitus, *Histories* 5.9). Josephus on Felix, concerning some leaders of a band of

The image of a terrified (*emphobos*) Roman is repeated in Acts. The Roman military men are described as always being afraid (the centurion Cornelius; the magistrates of Philippi (16:38); the tribune Lysias with the centurions and soldiers ready to flog Paul (22:29); Felix). Even if the term *emphobos* is understood as indicating reverence and humility (cf. Lk 24 shows two more instances), the term indicating immediacy in the next verse—“at the same time” (*hama*)— shows Felix’s actual desire for bribes, and this certainly changes our perspective of his motives. Furthermore, leaving the case incomplete after a period of two years denotes a political compromise in the supposed fairness of the Roman system. Luke cannot portray a cynical image of Felix, declaring that he “wants to grant a favor (a political or religious) to the Jews”⁷⁵¹. Perhaps this is the how business was actually conducted in the empire.⁷⁵² Cassidy, commenting on the political favor of Felix the high priest

brigands, “Not a day passed, however, that Felix captured and put to death many of these impostors and brigands. He also by a ruse, took alive Eleazar the son of Dinaeus, who had organized the company of brigands; for by offering a pledge that he would not suffer no harm, Felix induced him to appear before him; Felix then imprisoned him and dispatched him to Rome” (*Antiq* 20.160-64).

⁷⁵¹ Josephus (*Antiq*, 20.9.5) shows the practices of governors regarding political favors: “But when Albinus heard that Gessius Florus was coming to succeed him, he was desirous to appear to do somewhat that might be grateful to the people of Jerusalem; so he brought out all those prisoners who seemed to him to be most plainly worthy of death, and ordered them to be put to death accordingly. But as to those who had been put into prison on some trifling occasions, he took money of them, and dismissed them; by which means the prisons were indeed emptied, but the country was filled with robbers (*Antiq* 20.9.5).

⁷⁵² These incidents are not unfamiliar to the political situation of favors, patronage based on friendship, and succulent bribes. Just one example: Cicero relates the business dealing of Scaptius with the Salaminians, to his friend Atticus, concerning him, “I order the Salaminians, when they and Scaptius came to see me at Tarsus, to pay off the debt. They complained at length about the loan and about their mistreatment by Scaptius. I refused to listen. I urged and begged

Ananias and his allies states, “Clearly [this incident] does not portray an impartial Roman governor but rather one in collusion with Paul’s enemies.”⁷⁵³

In front of Festus

Paul had to wait two more years for the new governor, Festus, to receive a new trial before the Roman authorities. This event has been called “the most political chapter in the book of Acts”.⁷⁵⁴ Thanks to Luke’s fascination with precision, we are informed that, after three days after Festus’ arrival in Jerusalem, the Jewish council “gave him a report” and requested as a favor that they be allowed to bring Paul back to Jerusalem, Luke reminds the reader of the oath of the forty men, probably dead at that time, and the possibility of a new ambush⁷⁵⁵. Paul presents another defense against unproved charges. However, Festus, mimicking his predecessor, wishes to do a favor to the political authorities of the Jews (25:9). Luke goes on the attack with words of resistance,

them to settle this matter in respect for my good services to their community. Finally I said that I would force them. These men then did not refuse to pay, but even declared that they would be paying at my expense, since I had not accepted the money which they usually gave to the governor ... ‘Good’, said Scaptius, ‘let us calculate the total amount owed.’ Now I had, in my praetor’s edit, stated that I would observe an interest rate of 1 percent per month compounded annually. But Scaptius demanded 4 percent according to the terms of his loan. ‘That’s ridiculous’, I said, ‘I can’t act in contradiction to my own edict!’ But he produced a decree of the Senate, passed in the consulship of Lentulus and Phillipus [56 BCE] which ordered the governor of Cilicia to make his judgments according to the term of this loan contract!... These friends of Brutus, relying on his political influence, had been willing to lend money to the Salaminians at 48 percent if the Senate would protect them with a decree.” Cicero, Letters to Atticus, 6.1.3-6,16. quoted by Shelton, 273-4.

⁷⁵³ Cassidy, 106.

⁷⁵⁴ Pelikan, 263.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid, Pelikan states “This ambush is yet another illustration of how much of the narrative in the book of Acts is taken up with violence, plots, and intrigue.”

“No one is able or powerful enough to give him up as a favor (*charis*)” (25:11)⁷⁵⁶. The play on words between *charis* (favor) and *charizomai* (forgive, give up) recalls the pattern in the attitude of the Roman governors.

Luke uses the tools of the powerful as a hidden transcript of resistance, dismantling the irony by later citing Festus, “It is not the custom of the Romans to hand over (*charizomai*) anyone before the accused has met the accusers face to face and has been given the opportunity to make a defense against the charge” (25:16). The reader who has seen the continued pattern of political apathy and cruelty (Gallio), changing of the facts (Lysias), and seeking of bribes and political favors (Felix, Festus) has no other option but to laugh at their system of fairness. After all, Paul insisted that Festus’ “face to face” accusation is false, since the Asian Jews should be the one presenting the charges. Cassidy argues strongly, “His appeal to Caesar also simultaneously constitutes a further rebuke to Festus. By claiming his right to be heard by Caesar, Paul is indicating his conviction that Festus is no longer capable of handling his case impartially.”⁷⁵⁷

Luke presents several misrepresentations of Festus’ account of the facts as described to Agrippa II. Festus states, “Since I was at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem” (25:20). The reader becomes infuriated with this biased summary, which fails to mention Festus’ real motive for wanting to shift the trial as a political-financial favor. There is a hidden transcript in Festus’ initial request to the leaders: “Let

⁷⁵⁶ Cassidy, 201 note 33 gives the translation given by ZG, p. 441, “No one can hand me over to them as a favor,” indicating that this nuance of meaning communicates Luke’s use of *charissasthai*.

⁷⁵⁷ Cassidy, 109.

those of you who have the authority (the powerful – *dunatoi*) *come down with me* (συγκαταβαίνω) ... let them accuse him” (25:5), which reflects his original intention. Luke does not simply write *katabainō* (come down—from Jerusalem to Caesarea), but he purposely includes the preposition *syn* (together). In this manner, requesting the company of the powerful ones from the Jewish Sanhedrin. Verse 6 also presents the conflictive phrase “after staying/remaining among/with them,” which seems to indicate that Festus remained with the powerful elite in Jerusalem during these days.⁷⁵⁸

After all the precise references given by Luke, the reader expects no mistakes in the story. However, later in the opening discourse of the pompous trial before the Governor, King and Queen, military tribune, and prominent men of Caesarea (likely other Romans), Festus entering the audience hall with an almost comical representation of grandeur and pomp, makes either a false statement—or at least one omitted in the narrative when he mentions that the “entire Jewish communities of Jerusalem and in Caesarea” made the petition “that Paul ought not to live any longer.” There is no doubt that this reflects the extravagant staging of the events, because the narrative has said nothing about the Jewish community at Caesarea. Was Festus accusing his predecessor by stating, “It is not the custom of the Romans to give up (the same word for favors) anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face?” It seems that he is not even following his own “custom,” since there is no delegation from the

⁷⁵⁸ Luke uses the suspicious verb *diatribō* literary “rub away, spend time” that is always used to describe the evangelistic efforts of Paul. Now he uses the term as the two centers of power combined against Paul.

priesthood of the Jews present as opponents in this trial before Festus – just Agrippa and the Roman officers of Caesarea.

Once more, Festus' behavior evokes the cases of Lysias and Felix by lying in his letter and desiring favors for political gain. Definitely, Luke mimics and mocks the Roman system by contrasting the entire pompous processional entrance with the solitary chained prisoner. Luke laughs at the system that controls such an opportunistic and self-serving situation, making Festus acknowledge that he “found nothing deserving death”, but later he reached a conclusion desperately complaining: “But, I do not know what to say.” Luke even appropriates Festus' words: “It seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner without indicating the charges” (25:27). When Paul appeals to Caesar as a last resort, he implies that Festus is guilty of conspiracy, since he “knows very well” what is going on; in so doing, Paul seems to be accusing Festus of being a liar.

Luke makes sure that the apostle lives with a “clear conscience” according to the laws of the nations (Jews and Romans) and God (24:16). Before Festus, Paul declares again, “I have in no way committed an offense against the law of the Jews (nation), or against the temple, or against the emperor” (25:8). However, when the law of the nations confronts the law of God, Paul claims that he must have a “clear conscience before God.”⁷⁵⁹ Paul admits later, “I have done no wrong to the Jews,” referring to the ceremonial and ritualistic laws (cf. 10:15,

⁷⁵⁹ As Pelikan, 265 states, “The tension between these three species of ‘law’ [reason, nations, God] has also been responsible for some of the more radical expression of Christian obedience – which has often entailed disobedience to a specific human authority in the name of the still higher authority of the law and the will of God.”

28; 11:17; 15:9) or the temple desecration. In fact, the statement “No one can turn me over to them” is an accusation of double purpose. First, it implies the response of the movement. Paul presents the apologia from the Hebrew Scriptures, “I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place... proclaiming light to both our people and to the Gentiles” (25:22). Second, it shows the immoral decisions of Festus to send Paul back to Jerusalem in order to eliminate him. In this context, appealing to higher authorities creates a problem for Festus who will have to investigate “reasonable arguments” to present to his *kurios*, the Emperor. Paul, as a hybrid Jew-Roman, is confident that he has done nothing against the law of God or his nation to admit that his allegiance goes with his *kurios*-Lord Jesus. Luke validates the stance of the Jesus’ movement, faithful to the interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures and even to the ritualistic representation of the temple, but this creates an ambivalent confrontation between the lords—*kurioi*. Paul in presenting his defense is not allowed to finish. Once more, we have the powerful silencing of the subaltern and the biased comment: “You are mad” – a similar reaction among many hearers of Paul (cf. 17:32).

In front of Agrippa II – the Client-King of the Romans

Herod Agrippa II is a client-king of the Romans,⁷⁶⁰ a king of the usurper dynasty of the Idumeans. Although not Jews by birth, they become a part of the *Ioudaios* in Acts as the corporate/institutions that negates and rejects the

⁷⁶⁰ Cassidy calls him “a Roman officer.”

message of the kingdom of God and the teaching of the Lord Jesus Messiah. Cassidy argues that Agrippa's statement, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor," "at least implicitly criticizes the course that Festus has followed. For, according to Luke's earlier report, Festus had not come to the conclusion that Paul should be set free. Indeed, his specific proposal for transferring his case to Jerusalem was more oriented to Paul's death than to his liberty."⁷⁶¹ Similarly F.F. Bruce states, "Agrippa could supply corroborating testimony and assure Festus that Paul's arguments were sane and well founded... but the King was embarrassed."⁷⁶² The references "testifying to both small and great" in combination with the common appeal to "not only to you" implies "both" fronts, Jews and Romans, receiving the invitation of "turning from the power of Satan to God."

Paul's rebuts the powerful silencing voice of the Romans with two public discourses: "As you well know," due to the fact that "this was not done in a corner."⁷⁶³ This is a call to stop feigning ignorance and to find "something reasonable to say." It seems that both authorities are in open denial. Their whimsical dismissal that "He has done nothing to deserve death" and that he might be free if he had not appealed to the Emperor are mere excuses. Agrippa quickly stops Paul, inferring that the second question, after the one about

⁷⁶¹ Cassidy, 115.

⁷⁶² Bruce, 495.

⁷⁶³ All chronologies indicate Festus's procuratorship lasting between 60-62 CE. Close to thirty years have passed since the crucifixion events, but the author still thinks that these events are fresh in everyone's memory. The latter is still true, at least in the memory of the leaders of the institutions, the High Priests and leaders of the Jews (25:2, 8, 15, 24).

“believing in the prophets,” would be “Do you believe in the *Kurios* Jesus?” This is deliberate mockery, knowing where allegiance resides for these fearful authorities, who get up quickly to finish the inconclusive defense. Once more, the messenger of the *Kurios*-Lord Jesus has been silenced by Rome through Festus and Agrippa.

Scholars have noticed the differences between the three testimonies of Paul’s call in Damascus. In the episode before Festus-Agrippa, Luke adds new expressions and concepts such as light brighter than the shining sun and references to “from darkness to light” to illustrate the current position of the center of power. The counter-*kurios*, Jesus, states the mission of rescuing Paul from “your” people and Gentiles in order that they may “open their eyes so that they may turn from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (26:18). The allusion of darkness, the power of Satan, represents much more than an accusation against the systems—it is an accusation against the realities of the power of the center who decided to remain in darkness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Ephesian *grammateus* has clearly demarcated the process to be followed: “The courts are open and there are proconsuls... If there is something further” (19:39)—meaning if these processes so far have “failed to give satisfaction”—there is another process—that of the “regular assembly.” The charges by the Sanhedrin now have been dismissed as “questions about their

religion/superstition.” Felix was frightened and was not successful, leaving the case open. Festus and Agrippa II are doing the same. Paul is forced to appeal to their lord (25:26). The book finishes without the proper process having been completed. Perhaps this is a reminder of the advice of Gamaliel— early in the story—“to keep away from these men... for you will not be able to overthrow them and will find yourself fighting against God himself.” This seems to be the realization of those who are representing the Empire and are fighting the confrontations against the only name (“Lord of all,” 10:36) under heaven by which men and women can be saved (4:12), and in so doing not giving glory to God (12:24).

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

I should like to bring this work to an end by presenting a number of general conclusions and observations regarding my postcolonial reading of the Acts of the Apostles. Postcolonialism is a polysemous way of reading. It is an optic whose objective it is to decolonize assumptions and practices of interpretations that have come to be considered normative. As such, it does not advance a single way of reading but a variety of such ways—all, however, bearing a slant in favor of readings and views from the margin. Thus, as expressed in chapter I, such a way of reading is not objective and universal. It is an optic that seeks to disrupt, to unsettle, and to interrogate established positions. In this regard, my upbringing as a South American *nortemaraucano*, theologically educated in the *North*, shapes a different reading on issues of power and identity in the Acts of the Apostles. Such a reading is not better or worse than others, but it is a reading from my particular location.

Reading the Acts of the Apostles using postcolonial criticism offers a new perspective in understanding the ideological representation and role of one among many Jewish Christians groups, the *Christianoi*. This is a sect that belongs within the development of a plurality of Judaisms in the late first century CE. This Lucan group represents one of the Christianities that succeeded the Jesus movement in Palestine and later, in successive expansion, through the empire. It is a group whose members consider themselves as the legitimate heirs of the promises and tenets of the Hebrew Scriptures, proclaiming the

establishment of an eschatological/apocalyptic Kingdom of God with a new Emperor/king named Jesus.

This message challenges any structures of power or hegemonies that would defy such proclamation. This it does on two fronts. First, it opposes the decrees of the all-encompassing superpower of the first century: the Roman Empire and its demand of imperial worship as personified in the ruler cult of the current and previous emperors, family, and relatives—the *Augusti*. Such imperial worship based its supremacy and hegemony on decrees, the erection of temples, *neokoroi*, and the establishment of games, calendars, rituals, and so forth. This propaganda was carried out throughout the empire but included the center as well, Italy itself. Second, it conflicts with the institutions that defined first-century Judaism, given its acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior and Lord of all people, the eschatological prophet predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures: the kingship, the high priesthood, and the council—the Sanhedrin as representatives of the political-religious system of the temple.

The characters of Acts are constantly under accusation: disturbers of world peace; turning the world upside down; worldwide agitators; profaners of temples; acting contrary to Roman and Jewish laws. Luke emphatically refutes all these accusations. This Jewish Christian group is not in open opposition to the Romans in general or to many of their customs. Jewish Christians who hold Roman citizenship, like Paul and others, are law-abiding citizens, peacemakers, not robbers of temples. However, the message of a new empire and a new emperor/king clashes with the postures of the establishment.

I argue that, in his ideological representation of the Roman Empire and its officers, Luke uses the narrative as a hidden transcript of resistance, not, therefore, as either an *apologia pro imperium* or an *apologia pro ecclesia*. Thus, Luke does not present the empire as the benefactor of the Christian proclamation, through its establishment of worldwide peace and its extensive program of roads, tolls, bridges, as commonly argued by traditional interpretations of Acts. Similarly, Luke does not write Acts in order to defend the church or to make it known to the Roman authorities. Rather, I argue, Luke presents Acts as a reading of resistance, utilizing the postcolonial categories of hybridity, mimicry, mockery, and alterity. In so doing, the positions of authority are accepted and respected until they collide with the teachings and postulates of allegiance and supremacy. For Luke, it is necessary to obey God rather than human powers (4:12, 5:29).

The case of the death of Agrippa I (Acts 12), analyzed in chapter II, works as a combination of different type-scenes, enabling Luke to expand the imagination of readers. The use of type-scenes is particularly important, given the typological motif of self-exaltation and divine retribution, especially with respect to the boastful system of the Caesars, which, I believe, represents a hidden transcript regarding the announced end of the dynasty and the triumph of the word of God. Such use shows the fate of those who persecute and kill the followers of the Way, including the kingship and the Sanhedrin, thereby proving that they are indeed “fighting against God.” Additional examples described in chapter V—in Philippi, Thessalonica, Lystra, Athens, Ephesus, and before the

Roman authorities in Caesarea—show, through mimicry and mockery, that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures rules the world as the Most High (16), the supreme ruler who controls nature and who intervenes in worldly affairs, and that he is the known God among mortals (17). The representation of God as unable to dwell in temples made with human hands (19) further functions as a mimicry of the whole system of *neokoroi* and the rituals of imperial worship, as set forth in Chapter III, as well as of all those who would call themselves divine and rulers of this world. Any cooptation of divine prerogatives, even through representation in rituals, Luke argues, will be punished.

The counter-theology of fighting against God mimics the theology of power and supremacy through a blending of politics and religion in the representation of Romans. A pro-Roman reading of Luke collapses when the representation of individual Romans is taken into account, since all are portrayed as full of fear, liars, and seekers of bribes. Even the positive case of Cornelius, who is portrayed as worshipping a mortal, works as a mocking representation of the system of imperial worship. Cornelius worships what he knows, a man! The accusation against the Jewish Christian group of acting in revolutionary fashion against the Emperor's decrees and with a subversive proclamation that Romans cannot follow embodies a clear manifestation of the counter-attack mounted against the system that the empire represents.

There is consensus in the view that the Romans avoided the terminology of “king” (*rex*) for the emperor, given the tyrannical association of the term during the period before the establishment of the empire. I argue that Luke uses and

combines the titles of *kurios* (Lord), *basileus* (King), and *sebaste* (Exalted; a reference to all the *Augusti*) to the same effect by way of mimicry. The first title is transformed into an impressive designation of Jesus as the “Lord of all” (10:36), involving a clear theology of inclusion within a territorial kingdom that expands and counterattacks from Jerusalem toward the seat of Empire—Rome. The references to those who call upon the name of Jesus as “Savior” and “Lord” must be read in conjunction with the acclamations of the *theologoi* of imperial worship, a daily practice in any of the temples-*neokoros* and a ritual representation throughout the empire, including the commercialization by association of Ephesus. In Acts Jesus’ lordship does not stop with Rome: not only does it reach the “end of this earth,” in the singular, as a matrix and reference of power, it also situates Jesus as Lord of all and Saviour in the heavens—the place of the gods, ruling the whole *oikoumenē*. In this manner Luke subverts the times of ignorance through representations of empire in which they worship what they do not know, as illustrated in the case of Lystra and Athens.

Luke is the only NT writer who calls several Emperors by name: Caesar Augustus (Lk 2:1); Caesar Tiberius (Lk 3:1); Claudius (Acts 18); and Nero, by association (25:8, 11, 21, 25, 26), who is addressed as *sebastos* (Exalted, Revered) and as “our *kurios*,” a title that Agrippa II, as client-king, does not deny. The majestic court with all its great pomp at Caesarea before the Romans—Agrippa II, military tribunes, and prominent men of the city in full parade—

symbolizes and evokes the rituals of imperial worship.⁷⁶⁴ During such occasions, the participants understood perfectly that the titles *Kaisar*, *Sebastos*, *Kurios*, and *Basileus* were interchangeable; the same applies to the expression “anointed-Messiah-Christ king” in Luke 23 (χριστον βασιλεα; cf. John 19:12, 15). In the gospel of Luke, the fact that Pilate decided to send this kingly representative to the current king of the Jews, Herod Antipas, and that the latter sends him back to Pilate with a rich royal garment completes the mockery, since in Acts 12 Herod Agrippa is portrayed as wearing the same royal garments (ἔσθητα βασιλικήν 12:21).⁷⁶⁵ Therefore, I argue that, for the Lukan community, the reference to the “other king” (Acts 17:7) amounts to a mockery and mimicry of the real emperor, who denies in theory the title of *rex-king-basileus* but embodies in practice the same tyrannical concept of power. The ever-increasing representation of Roman officers—centurions, tribunes, governors, and, at the end of the list, the Emperor himself as “their Lord” in contraposition to “our” Lord—demonstrates the contrapuntal and reversal reading and destiny of the empire.

To conclude, the representation of Rome, with a Lord who is acclaimed daily throughout the empire as divine, is by no means innocent, much less simply adulatory; it reflects, rather, a politico-religious theology of domination and power. Paul acknowledges that he has not “sinned against Caesar” (25:8), the same claim that he makes with respect to the Jewish law or the temple. I argue that

⁷⁶⁴ By political implication, I would imagine that the court also included a statue/bust of the Emperor himself. Unfortunately, Acts 25 has not been studied diligently; a search in ATLA database shows only 6 articles in the reference.

⁷⁶⁵ The word *esthēs* (robe, vest) occurs seven times in the NT; Luke-Acts uses it 5 times, always in the context of royalty or heavenly dress (Lk 23:11, 24:4; Acts 1:10; 10:30; 12:21).

Acts does not criticize a particular person or even the imperial structure, but the symbolism of the system that it represents when it takes on divine attributes, as reflected in the ritual practices of imperial worship, and obliges everyone to submit their will and not speak against the emperor.⁷⁶⁶

The proclamation of the Jewish Christian group should not be seen as a version of Christianity that is otherworldly, escapist with respect to the realm of this world. To the contrary, though eschatological and based on the Jewish Scriptures, such a version installs an imperial structure, based on the Savior-Lord-King Messiah. Such a sense of nationalism accepts, on the one hand, the proclamation of all (“anyone who calls in the name of Jesus,” Acts 2:21), and, on the other hand, the traditional customs of Judaism, which are never denied. It is as if ethnicization continued with the acceptance of the Scriptures, but with rejection of all present worldly leadership, Roman or Jewish. My reading of Acts is also contrapuntal, in opposition to the traditional posture of the Pauline Epistles. It advances a “corrective reading” of Paul: on the one hand, Paul submits himself to the Christian Jewish authorities of Jerusalem, who act even as a Christian Sanhedrin; on the other hand, Luke presents them as part of the institutions of Judaism, as I show in chapter 4. Therefore, I argue, Luke proposes an exchange of power structures: the new imperial structure is not otherworldly

⁷⁶⁶ For similar views, I have referred to scholars such as Richard Horsley, Richard Cassidy, Fernando Segovia, R.S. Sugirtharajah, and others. For a dissenting opinion on the critique of the structures of power as the replacement of one by another, see Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

but universal, waiting for the “universal restoration that God announced long ago.”

Therefore, concerning the establishment of the kingdom of God and its territorial expansion, the political-religious events of Acts show how the new group disassociates itself from, resists, and implicitly attacks two different fronts: On the one hand, through its ideological representation of imperial worship and the demand of “gods in human form” (14). On the other hand, through its proclamation regarding the function assigned to the institutions of Judaism: establishment as leaders in charge of the correct interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures and the restoration of the Kingdom of God, with the inclusion of the Gentiles and the designation of Jesus as Saviour of all, rather than a restoration of the physical kingdom of Israel. In addition, Acts announces in this contrapuntal reading that the “days of ignorance are over” (17:30, 14:16; 3:17). Thus, God, who works “according to a definite plan” (2:23), “now demands from all people everywhere” unconditional allegiance with “divine necessity.” Again, it is important to note that the conflict is not with the representation of the people, but with the representation of the place, their leaders, and the institutions they represent.

This relationship disagrees with the Luke-Acts theology of partiality or preference. There is no such referent in Acts as the “sons of the kingdom.” Luke understands that everyone who does not accept the eschatological prophet as the “*kurios*-Lord of all” (10:36) will be utterly rooted out of the people. In addition, Luke understands the temporal proclamation of first-and-after. This proclamation

must go, first of all, to the “sons of Israel,” in light of the “hope of Israel”; it also includes, however, the time of the Gentiles (“He sent him first to you, to bless you” [3:36], and “All the families of the earth shall be blessed” [3:25]). Therefore, the internal conflict belongs and remains in the family, in a correct understanding of the Jewish Scripture. The rhetorical question of Moses in Stephen’ speech, “Men, you are brothers, why do you wrong each other?, is the quintessential question of all characters in Acts, who seek to understand why the leaders, their own people, do not understand what is read in the synagogue every Sabbath (13:27). This conflict, using postcolonial categories, also includes a division within the same group of Jewish Christians and the Jerusalem church with the so-called Jewish Christian Sanhedrin that try Paul and decide for him, “This is what you should do,” as I show in chapter IV.

Thus, at the end, the much expected reversal of all things, the end of the empire and the establishment of the eschatological kingdom of God, finds no fulfillment in the narrative. Acts finishes with marked hybridity: always presenting characters who submit to hegemony and superiority, law-abiding citizens who respect the authorities; doing so with mimicry and mockery at work, acting contrary to the decrees of the establishment. In this manner, the reversal is achieved through the rescue of his people and the proclamation of a better future: God, given the triumph of the prophetic Word, is exalted as the one who has “saved and rescued us from the hand of the enemies who hate us” (Lk 1:71, 73). The book abruptly concludes with this hybrid position regarding the legitimation of the Scriptures: denying any power to those who would lay claim to

supremacy on the basis of divine attributes, thus remaining loyal to the national customs; expecting the establishment of the eschatological/apocalyptic kingdom of God, while continuing in this hybrid condition of living in two worlds.

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