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Ethnic Negotiations:
The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16

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Abstract

Ethnic Negotiations: The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16 By Eric D. Barreto

Biblical scholarship has recently begun to explore the complex notions of race and ethnicity. However, the book of Acts has not received the full attention of such efforts. Focusing on Acts 16—a chapter teeming with the language and discourse of ethnicity—this dissertation inquires as to the function of ethnic identities in Luke’s composition. After developing a working definition of ethnicity, the dissertation turns to three critical moments of ethnic discourse in Acts 16.

First is the condensed account of Timothy’s circumcision as the child of an ethnically mixed marriage of a Hellene father and a Jewish mother. Throughout the narrative, Timothy’s ethnicity remains an ambiguous matter, and he thus represents a potent ethnic seam through the end of Acts. Next are the cartographic and narrative transitions of 16:6-15. Opting against imbuing the arrival of proclaimers of Christ on European soil as a consequential theological moment, I suggest instead that these verses play a crucial function by claiming that these early followers of Jesus are not mere pretenders on the grand stage of ancient culture and history. Finally the dissertation turns to the closing verses of Acts 16, which record a dramatic conflict of ethnic visions. To suggest that Paul’s claim to be “Roman” is solely an assertion of certain legal protections misses the contrast in ethnic discourse between the merchants’s accusations and Paul’s defense.

Ultimately, current study of Acts curtails a full appreciation of Luke’s expansive theological vision by either neglecting racial and ethnic categories or construing them as relatively static designations. I contend instead that race and ethnicity were theologically vital yet flexible notions in Acts. Luke does not imagine the creation of a new ethnicity of Christians, gathered from among the many peoples of the world; instead, he projects an interstitial ethnic space between the competing and overlapping ethnic claims of Jews, Romans, Greeks, and the other peoples that populate the pages of Acts. Luke does not erase ethnic difference but employs the flexible bounds of ethnicity in order to illustrate the wide reach of the early church movement.

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Chapter One

Introduction

“What mixed names and backgrounds have the people that Paul meets!”¹

Race and ethnicity are intractable, inexorable notions amongst us. On the one hand, human efforts to differentiate one another on account of phenotype, perceived genetic difference, or, more comprehensively, along lines of “fictive kinship”² continue to be central and consequential characteristics of human culture as is evident in the fractures that inspire war, hatred, or even mere dislike. Yet, despite their centrality and consequence, race and ethnicity are constantly in flux and perniciously difficult to comprehend and then define. Historical efforts to encapsulate them have failed in dramatic and tragic ways. The essentialization of ethnic difference has validated innumerable forms of oppression and condoned historical tragedies from the Atlantic slave trade to the modern plague of genocide. Yet despite the long shadow of the crimes subsidized by supremacist ideologies, the twin concepts of race and ethnicity, when properly and critically construed, have continued to maintain a central and positive role in historical and cultural analysis.

In recent years, the complexities of race and ethnicity have tended either to foreclose their inclusion within New Testament studies or invite unsophisticated applications. Unease with the dangerous conclusions of scholars in the past³ has led

¹ Henry J. Cadbury, *The Book of Acts in History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 28.

² See Jonathan Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1997).

³ See Emma Dench, *Romulus' Asylum: Roman Identities from the Age of Alexander to the Age of Hadrian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5-11 for an analysis of how modern racial ideologies imbued study of antiquity in the modern period, ultimately distorting the data of Roman history. Early in the twentieth century, for example, some scholars of antiquity tended to assign Rome's demise to the manumission of slaves and admissions of foreigners within the ranks of citizenship despite a number of

some to hope for a new day in which race and ethnicity are no longer a factor in historical analysis; such wishes, however, are naïve in a world where the social functions of race and ethnicity have proved persistent. In other cases, race and ethnicity are employed too loosely, without sufficient critical reflection on the defining features of these difficult notions. In the end, such efforts only repeat the mistakes of past scholars though they intend to bridge and not to exacerbate ethnic strife. The recent “irruption”⁴ of ethnic minorities within the guild of biblical studies may have sharpened some sensitivities but not necessarily honed methodologies or presuppositions. While ethnic minorities within the guild have brought vital and new perspectives upon the texts of scripture and have forced the guild to reassess how ethnicity functions powerfully even in traditional scholarship, critical reflection upon the very meaning of race and ethnicity and the methods by which they are brought to bear upon the Bible remains scarce. Specifically, the tendency to construe Christianity as a movement that diminishes and even eliminates the import of race and ethnicity has unfortunately circumvented the very questions this dissertation will explore. Such universalizing proclivities are drawn especially sharply in the study of the book of Acts, and this dissertation broaches anew what function race and ethnicity play in this text.

instances in which ancient Romans reflected on this same phenomenon as emblems of Roman superiority. She furthermore notes the close linking of modern questions of personal and national identities and historical analysis of Roman antiquity: “In simple terms, late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century reception has involved a peculiarly intense and sometimes very personalized relationship with the classical world. Ancient societies can thus be imagined in a number of ways that reveal the especial importance of the classical world for the construction of our own, modern identities” (8). She warns that too facile links between our world and the Roman world are apt to oversimplify the historical data.

⁴ A movement identified particularly well by Fernando Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000). For an excellent collection of essays demonstrating the significant strides made by biblical critics from minority ethnic populations in the US, see Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism* (SemeiaSt 65; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

This dissertation argues that efforts to interpret race and ethnicity in Acts have mismatched exegetical method and the means of ethnic construction. While acknowledging that ethnicity is a constructed, discursive category, scholars have yet opted to analyze a particular ethnicity via primarily lexical and geographical study. Such approaches tend to reify the notion that ethnicity actually “exists” instead of allowing the valuable insight of ethnicity’s social construction to bear exegetical fruit. Ethnicities are, in fact, honed at the edges of social discourse, concocted in the cauldrons of cultural conflict. Therefore, exegetical analyses concerned with discerning the bounds and negotiations of race and ethnicity ought to begin with texts saturated with such. Consequently, I will focus my efforts on Acts 16, a text in which Jewish, Greek, Roman, and multiple hybrid ethnicities are deployed, manipulated, and contested. My reading of Acts 16 demonstrates that current study of race and ethnicity in Acts pares down Luke’s expansive theological vision either by not attending to racial and ethnic categories or by treating them in exegesis as relatively static designations. I contend instead that race and ethnicity are theologically vital yet flexible notions in Acts, referring to a wide array of cultural factors amenable to shifting contexts. Acts does not erase ethnic difference but employs the flexible bounds of ethnicity in order to illustrate the wide demographic ambitions of the early church movement but also the uneasy negotiations of ethnicity such a religious movement required.

Race, Ethnicity, and the Acts of the Apostles⁵

⁵ There are a number of studies of ethnicity in the NT outside of Acts worthy of critical attention. In the Gospels, see Dennis C. Duling, “Ethnicity, Ethnocentrism, and the Matthean *Ethnos*,” *BTB* 25 (2005): 125-43; Markus Cromhout, *Jesus and Identity: Reconstructing Judean Ethnicity in Q* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2007); Markus Cromhout and Andries van Aarde, “A Socio-Cultural Model of Judean

Ethnicity: A Proposal,” *HTS* 62 (2006): 69-101; Joseph H. Hellerman, *Jesus and the People of God: Reconfiguring Ethnic Identity* (New Testament Monographs 21; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), whose argument that the Jesus movement sought to transcend the narrow confines of Judean ethnic identity instituted after the Maccabean revolt by proclaiming a universal “people of God” runs contrary to the general aim and perspective of this dissertation; and Halvor Moxnes, “Galilee in Cultural Complexity?: Constructing the Galilee of Jesus in an Age of Ethnic Identity,” forthcoming.

In Pauline studies, see John M.G. Barclay, “‘Neither Jew nor Greek’: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 197-214; Brad R. Braxton, “Paul and Racial Reconciliation: A Postcolonial Approach to 2 Corinthians 3:12-18,” in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay* (ed. Patrick Gray and Gail R. O’Day; NovTSup 129; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 411-28; idem, “The Role of Ethnicity in the Social Location of 1 Corinthians 7:17-24,” in *Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Randall C. Bailey; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 19-32; Denise Kimber Buell and Caroline Johnson Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 235-51; Charles H. Cosgrove, “Did Paul Value Ethnicity?” *CBQ* 68 (2006): 268-90; Dennis C. Duling, “2 Corinthians 11:22: Historical Context, Rhetoric, and Ethnic Identity,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (ed. John Fotopoulos; NovTSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 65-90; idem, “‘Whatever Gain I Had . . .’: Ethnicity and Paul’s Self-Identification in Philippians 3:5-6,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2003), 222-41; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 40-76; Paula Fredriksen, “Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 232-52; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); idem, “Olive Trees and Ethnicities. Judeans and Gentiles in Rom. 11.17-24,” in *Christians as a Religious Minority in a Multicultural City: Modes of Interaction and Identity Formation in Early Imperial Rome* (ed. Jürgen Zangenberg and Michael Labahn; JSNTSup 243; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 77-89; Carl R. Holladay, “Paul and His Predecessors in the Diaspora: Some Reflections on Ethnic Identity in the Fragmentary Hellenistic Jewish Authors,” in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald, Thomas H. Olbricht, and L. Michael White; NovTSup 110; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 429-60; Jae Won Lee, “Paul and Ethnic Difference in Romans,” in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism* (ed. Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia; SemeiaSt 65; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 141-59; Joseph A. Marchal, “Mimicry and Colonial Differences: Gender, Ethnicity, and Empire in the Interpretation of Pauline Imitation,” in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 101-27; Calvin J. Roetzel, “IOUDAIOI and Paul,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (ed. John Fotopoulos; NovTSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 3-15; Love L. Sechrest, “A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2006); James C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul’s Letters to the Romans: Changing Self-Definitions in Earliest Roman Christianity* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1993) which actually has very little to do with a fully developed concept of ethnicity; Sze-kar Wan, “Collection for the Saints as Anticolonial Act: Implications of Paul’s Ethnic Reconstruction,” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2000), 191-215; idem, “Does Diaspora Identity Imply Some Sort of Universality? An Asian-American Reading of Galatians,” in *Interpreting Beyond Borders* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 107-31; idem, “‘To the Jew First and Also to the Greek’: Reading Romans as Ethnic Construction,” in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 129-55; and Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul’s Jewish Identity and Ephesians* (SNTSMS 130; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

For wider studies, see Denise Kimber Buell, “Race and Universalism in Early Christianity,” *JES* 10 (2002): 429-68; Mark G. Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008); idem, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996); idem, “Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996);

The Acts of the Apostles has been a natural home for exegetes hoping to conduct ethnic analyses of biblical texts.⁶ For here we have a book that thematically

Zeba A. Crook and Philip A. Harland, eds., *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others: Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson* (New Testament Monographs 18; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2007); Nicola Denzey, "The Limits of Ethnic Categories," in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches* (ed. Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime, and Paul-André Turcotte; Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira, 2002), 489-507; Cain H. Felder, "Race, Racism, and the Biblical Narratives," in *Stony the Road We Trod* (ed. Cain H. Felder; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 127-45; Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (London: T&T Clark, 2009); J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2003); Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds., *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009); and Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin, eds., *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition* (WUNT 210; Tübingen: Mohr and Siebeck, 2007). Also instructive is the work of Judith Lieu on identity in ancient Judaism and Christianity; see *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and *Neither Jew Nor Greek?: Constructing Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2002).

For a brief examination of the question of ethnicity in early Israel, see John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 43-46. For a more extensive review of ethnicity in Hebrew Bible, see James C. Miller, "Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible: Problems and Prospects," *CBR* 6 (2008): 170-213, especially his bibliography in pp. 206-13. See also Timothy K. Beal, *The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998). For a pair of more recent approaches, see Neil Glover, "Your People, My People: An Exploration of Ethnicity in Ruth," *JSOT* 33 (2009): 293-313 and Anselm C. Hagedorn, "Looking at Foreigners in Biblical and Greek Prophecy," *VT* 57 (2007): 432-48. For an approach to the question in rabbinic studies, see Jacob Neusner, "Was Rabbinic Judaism Really 'Ethnic'?", *CBQ* 57 (1995): 281-305.

Finally, note several studies focused on the influence of race and racism in the guilds of biblical and theological studies. See Denise Kimber Buell, "God's Own People: Specters of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Christian Studies," in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 159-90; J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Shawn Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology, and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (New York: Routledge, 2002); and Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves, eds., *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁶ Tessa Rajak, "The Location of Cultures in Second Temple Palestine: The Evidence of Josephus," in *The Books of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2 observes, "The reader of Acts can scarcely fail to notice the abundance of attributions of ethnic, cultural and religious identities present in the text." Hays, *From Every People*, 157 argues, "More than any of the other gospel writers, Luke includes aspects of race in the most central elements of his theology in Luke-Acts" though he provides little evidence besides the citing of a pair of commentaries for such a sweeping statement. See also Laura Nasrallah, "The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian's Panhellenion," *JBL* 127 (2008): 533-66 who, drawing on the work of Buell, contends "that Acts, embedded in a world negotiating Greco-Roman 'barbarian' relations, creates a story of the origins of a Christian city league that might be comprehensible and attractive to Rome, and in its logic offers seeds for a Christian empire that resembles the Roman Empire" (536).

Note two examples dealing with the focal chapter of this dissertation: Daniel Rakotojoelinandrasana, "The Gospel in Adversity: Reading Acts 16:16-34 in African Context," *WW* 21 (2001): 191-97 and Jeffrey L. Staley, "Reading Acts 16:6-40 on the Edges of the Navajo Reservation," *WW* 24 (2004): 296-304.

advocates the multicultural dimensions of the gospel and its spread in the early years of the church and thus naturally invites reflection upon the question of ethnicity in the ancient world. When seeking to clarify the generic classification of Acts, Aune argued, “Luke’s dependence on the conventions of general history made it natural to conceptualize Christianity on analogy to an ethnic group.”⁷ Later in a postcolonial analysis of Acts, Virginia Burrus summarized, “Luke-Acts is notably preoccupied with power, pulsing with the energy of charged exchanges between centre and periphery—

See also Thomas S. Moore, “‘To the Ends of the Earth’: The Geographical and Ethnic Universalism of Acts 1:8 in the Light of Isaianic Influence on Luke,” *JETS* 40 (1997): 389-99. Though Moore titles his article including the term “ethnic,” the article actually grapples very little with the content of this concept. In contrast, cf. Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2006), 123-41 in which he makes a case that Luke subverts an “ethnographic method of physiognomy” evident in the progymnasmata in the telling of the tale of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. See also Carlos R. Sosa, “Pureza e impureza en la narrativa de Pedro, Cornelio y el Espíritu Santo en Hechos 10,” *Kairós* 41 (2007): 55-78 who links ancient notions of ritual purity with ethnic and geographical distinctions and Jorge Pantelis, “Etnias e Iglesias en Hechos de los Apóstoles,” *Apuntes* 24 (2004): 109-18 who compounds religion and ethnicity, arguing that circumcision is an act of religious conversion with few if any ethnic implications. I challenge this latter position in ch. 3. Lawrence M. Wills, *Not God’s People: Insiders and Outsiders in the Biblical World* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 195-209 begins his analysis of insiders and outsiders in Acts by claiming that Luke’s Paul is “post-Jewish” (195), meaning presumably that this Paul is largely deracinated from his originating ethnic culture for the purpose of extending the gospel to all nations; I disagree with this conclusion. In contrast, Cynthia M. Baker, “From Every Nation under Heaven’: Jewish Ethnicities in the Greco-Roman World,” in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 79-100 argues by looking at Philo and Acts 2 that early Christian communities took the multiethnic and multicultural makeup of Judaism for granted. Cf. also Aaron Kuecker, “Luke’s Use of Ethnic Language in the Formation of Trans-Ethnic Social Identity” (paper presented at the annual meeting of Society of Biblical Literature. Boston, Mass., November 23, 2008), 14 who concludes, “Luke’s use of ethnic language constructs an identity for his hearers that transcends ethnicity with simultaneously affirming ethnicity as a nested identity of penultimate value.” Finally, see an analysis of Acts with a postcolonial lens dealing somewhat with issues of race in Rubén Muñoz-Larrondo, “Living in Two Worlds: A Postcolonial Reading of the Acts of the Apostles” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2008).

Others have turned to the question of race, ethnicity, and Acts with explicit appeal to their particular cultural contexts. Mbachu Hilary, *Inculturation Theology of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15: An Inspiration for the Igbo Church Today* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995) argues for the applicability of the concept of “inculturation” in both Acts 15 and among the Igbo people. See also Randee O. Ijatuyi-Morphé, *Community and Self-Definition in the Book of Acts* (Bethesda, Md.: Academica Press, 2004). Finally, note the early twentieth-century recognition that Acts was a book colored by its setting in the ethnically diverse regions ringing the Mediterranean in Cadbury, *History*, 15: “Even if the [Pentecost] story is not be accepted as exact history, it does offer us as the beginning a reminder of the cultural amalgam of the scenes in which the book moves and shows to us an author who as the historian of early Christianity is impressed with its catholic character and mission.” In more recent scholarship, the “universal” mission of Acts now seems to describe the “catholic” impulse Cadbury describes here.

⁷ David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 140.

rich and poor, urban and rural, Jew and Gentile, the Jerusalem temple and the land of Israel, Rome and those subjugated under imperial rule.”⁸ In both cases, notions of ethnicity in antiquity play a critical role in the composition of Acts, a text that one reads with the aid of a map of the ancient world and its peoples.⁹

Unsurprisingly, the pericope of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 has been at the center of debates about the function of race and ethnicity, for in these verses a guild traditionally dominated by white interpreters was forced to reckon with a “black” presence in the pages of scripture. In fact, “Ethiopia” was also the path through which many of the classicists discussed below entered their studies of ancient conceptions of race. Therefore, the *Forschungsbericht* of this crucial passage as well as the wider scholarly concern with Ethiopia in the imagination of the ancients fittingly represents the various trajectories and shortcomings of scholarly enquiry into the function of race and ethnicity in biblical studies.

The pericope of the Ethiopian eunuch will here function as a test case that can succinctly display the gaps in the study of Acts my dissertation hopes to fill. In sum, while previous generations tended to neglect or gloss over the race of the eunuch,

⁸ Virginia Burrus, “The Gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles,” in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 133.

⁹ The geographical orientation of Acts was classically stated by Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); repr. of *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; New York: Harper, 1960); trans. of *Die Mitte Der Zeit* (2d ed.; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1957). For more recent efforts—many of which are informed by contemporary studies of the ideological dimensions of cartography—see Loveday Alexander, “Mapping Early Christianity: Acts and the Shape of Early Church History,” *Int* 57 (2001): 163-73; idem, “Narrative Maps: Reflections on the Toponymy of Acts,” in *The Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson* (ed. M.D. Carroll et al.; JSOTSSup 200; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17-57; Nasrallah, “Hadrian’s Panhellenion,” 533-66; James M. Scott, “Luke’s Geographical Horizon,” in *The Books of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (ed. David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf; vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 483-544; and Matthew Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts* (SNTSMS 146; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Particularly apt is the description in Nasrallah, “Hadrian’s Panhellenion,” 534 of the Acts narrative as “restless and urban.”

African American scholars such as Gay Byron,¹⁰ Clarice Martin,¹¹ and Frank Snowden¹² have brought a critical perspective infused with acute ethnic awareness.¹³ However, these developments demonstrate that such efforts have reached something of a methodological and exegetical dead-end. To be sure, the very recognition that a variety of ethnicities populated the ancient world and that the study of these ethnicities cannot simply import modern racial prejudice is profoundly valuable; for that, scholars such as Byron, Martin, and Snowden must receive credit. However, new insights into the construction of race and ethnicity in the ancient world invite a fresh and fuller approach as this brief review of scholarship will reveal. New methods, focal texts, and definitions are in order.

That Luke communicates any concern about ethnicity in Acts 8:26-40 is dismissed in Conzelmann's commentary when he notes, "Luke certainly has no geographical or ethnological interest in the area."¹⁴ A more subtle, but equally problematic, example is Robert Tannehill's treatment of the passage; strikingly, he devotes only one sentence to the Ethiopian's ethnicity: "When told that a man was Ethiopian, people of the ancient Mediterranean world would assume that he was black,

¹⁰ Gay L. Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹¹ Clarice Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey and the Challenges of Interpretation for Liberation," *Semeia* 47 (1989), 105-35 and idem, "The Function of Acts 8:26-40 within the Narrative Structure of Acts: The Significance of the Eunuch's Provenance for Acts 1:8c" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1986).

¹² Frank M. Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983) and idem, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970).

¹³ For a review and assessment of African American biblical scholarship, see Michael Joseph Brown, *Blackening of the Bible: The Aims of African American Biblical Scholarship* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2004). Using Brown's categories, I would argue that the efforts of Byron, Martin, and Snowden in relation to Acts properly belong to that initial step in African American biblical interpretation to rediscover and prioritize an African presence in scriptures. To be sure, however, Byron and Martin in particular do so with a nuance associated with later generations of scholarship.

¹⁴ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel; ed. Eldon Jay Epp with Christopher R. Matthews; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 68.

for this is the way that Ethiopians are described by Herodotus and others.”¹⁵ An otherwise sensitive exegete, Tannehill here neglects to elaborate on what importance, if any, this recognition adds to the narrative or even to mention what role Ethiopia might have played in an ancient person’s imagination.

In another, far earlier work on ancient views of Ethiopia, the failure to develop more fully the significance of Ethiopia is unfortunately not so benign. Grace Hadley Beardsley commences her study of *The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization* with the preface that “no barbarian race held as continuous interest for the Greek and Roman artist as the Ethiopian.”¹⁶ After citing the mythical origins of the Ethiopian in Greek literature, she observes that the fourth century BCE saw a dearth of artistic interest in Ethiopia and Ethiopians as subjects in the Greek world. A shift occurred alongside the cosmopolitan rise of Alexandria in the third and second centuries BCE during “which the Ethiopian is delineated with a realism which occasionally crosses the boundary of caricature and the grotesque.”¹⁷ However, Beardsley does not establish criteria for discerning when an accurate representation becomes caricature, nor at what point beauty shifts into the grotesque. In fact, such distinctions are unreflectively subjective and are especially problematic when scholars appeal to these perceived negative portrayals as proof of prejudice. Lloyd Thompson disavows such conclusions:

The “prejudice” is in fact nothing more than an aesthetic evaluation, based on ethnocentric canons of beauty, and expressed as an attitude of open distaste on the part of some, many or most Romans for what they

¹⁵ Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986-1990), 2:109.

¹⁶ Grace Hadley Beardsley, *The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization: A Study of the Ethiopian Type* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1929), ix.

¹⁷ Beardsley, *The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization*, 77.

would have described as the somatic appearance of the “typical” Aethiops.¹⁸

In other words, levels of caricature or grotesqueness are mostly in the eyes of the beholder, in this case a twentieth-century scholar entrenched in a racist society. Such unspoken assumptions become clear when Beardsley stereotypes blacks *en masse*: “Their Greek masters evidently appreciated what are now considered to be among the best of the negro qualities—personal loyalty, ready laughter and a gift for song and dance.”¹⁹ While Beardsley collates vital data about ancient artistic depictions of Ethiopians, her conclusions are suspect, even fatally flawed, for modern prejudice plays a definitive, if unacknowledged, role in her analysis.

Snowden’s work also reacts to the subjectivity of the perception of negative or prejudiced renditions but reaches yet another extreme. In an effort to dispel scholarly notions of ancient prejudice, he emphasizes the discontinuities between modern racism and the ethnic relationships reflected in Greco-Roman art, art which reflects a time *Before Color Prejudice*. He assails conclusions similar to Beardsley’s arguing,

But those scholars who have allowed ancient art to speak for itself argue that the so-called ugliness or comic exists primarily in the minds of the modern beholders, not in the eyes of the ancient artists, and that Negro subjects are among some of the finest and most sympathetically executed pieces to have come from the workshops of ancient artists.²⁰

How exactly art “speaks for itself” remains unanswered in Snowden’s argument, and here is where its greatest weakness lies. On the one hand, his careful argumentation that the kind of racism so alarmingly common in the modern world has imbedded itself in scholarship concerning blacks in the ancient world is a vital corrective. Additionally,

¹⁸ Lloyd A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (London: Routledge, 1989), 31.

¹⁹ Beardsley, *The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization*, 111.

²⁰ Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice*, 64.

his contention that one cannot simply assume that modern racist and ethnic constructs will find direct analogues in the ancient world has reshaped the study of this complicated subject. However, Snowden's sweeping claims need tempering. Consider for example, his conclusion to *Before Color Prejudice*:

Reports of imaginary creatures or “uncivilized” tribes inhabiting the extreme south, the somatic norm image of “Mediterranean white,” and standard black-white symbolism—all contained the potentiality for the vastly different roles that these factors obviously played in the later development of anti-black sentiments. But the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and early Christians were free of what Keith Irvine has described as the “curse of acute color-consciousness, attended by all the raw passion and social problems that cluster around it.”²¹

In other words, Snowden argues that while the roots of racism were beginning to arise in the ancient world, these tendencies did not manifest themselves as full-blown color prejudice.²²

Ultimately, however, evidence is just not available to validate such an encompassing claim.²³ To a degree unjustified by extant witnesses, Snowden idealizes the ancient world's construct of race. The interpretation of extant art remains a profoundly subjective matter, and available ancient literature that is self-conscious about racial attitudes is fragmentary at best. Additionally, the very nature of the literature available to modern scholars only perturbs any reconstructive project as ambitious as Snowden's. Thompson explains,

²¹ Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice*, 108. He also adds, “In sum, in the early church blacks found equality in both theory and practice.” Such a glowing assessment finds incisive and extensive critique in Byron, *Symbolic Blackness*, 53-121 who outlines how “ethno-political rhetorics” reflect a far more conflicted situation.

²² An argument recently rejected by Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). See David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) and Denise Eileen McCoskey, “On *Black Athena*, Hippocratic Medicine, and Roman Imperial Edicts: Egyptians and the Problem of Race in Classical Antiquity,” in *Race and Ethnicity: Across Time, Space and Discipline* (ed. Rodney D. Coates; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 297-330.

²³ See the critiques of Snowden by Dench, *Romulus' Asylum*, 8-9.

A certain air of indifference is suggested by the very nature of much of the written evidence, in which blacks receive only coincidental notice and are not treated as social objects attracting the writer's interest of concern *qua* blacks. To the indifferent, an *Aethiops* was just a humble slave, a musician, an *auriga*, and so on, meriting no more attention than was ordinarily deserved by persons of such a social station—that is to say, little or none. This indifference did not, to be sure, extend to learned blacks like Memnon or to foreign black dignitaries like the Kushite royal treasurer mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles*.²⁴

According to Thompson, blacks are simply not of great concern to most ancient writers. While Snowden argues for a great deal of amicable contact between Greeks, Romans, and Ethiopians, the general dearth of literature specifically interested in ethnic difference suggests otherwise. In fact, we know very little about the lives, thoughts, and experiences of ordinary Ethiopians living within the Greco-Roman world; nearly all our knowledge is refracted through elite styli and chisels.²⁵

In light of such work, Clarice Martin wrote an important doctoral dissertation focusing wholly on the pericope of the Ethiopian eunuch and its wider function within the book of Acts.²⁶ Noting that previous efforts have construed the pericope either as a story meant for edification, an additional step in the early Christian mission, or yet another example of OT prophecy fulfillment, Martin argues that the passage plays a far more important role in the narrative of Acts. First, she examines the notion of “the ends of the earth,” concluding that Ethiopia properly fulfills the promise of Jesus in Acts 1:8. Then, she argues that the passage anticipates the inception and breadth of the Gentile mission, which comes to dominate the second half of Acts. Throughout the work, her argument is groundbreaking in prioritizing the Ethiopian's racial identity. In

²⁴ Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 160.

²⁵ Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 157-64. Nevertheless, as Hall has argued and I will summarize below, literary evidence will ultimately stand as the best evidence of ethnic discourse available to us, for it is in literary efforts themselves in which the construction of ethnicity is most evident.

²⁶ Martin, “The Function of Acts 8:26-40.”

a later article, Martin outlines three basic approaches to the eunuch's race.²⁷

"Uncertainty" is the first interpretive strategy. Unsure and perhaps even uncomfortable with questions of ethnicity, some scholars argue for the eunuch's ethnic ambiguity and, more important, question whether his ethnicity has any function in the narrative.²⁸ In the end, "uncertainty" resembles neglect. A second kind of effort acknowledges the eunuch's ethnic provenance "but usually with only a cursory discussion of Nubia, and rarely with any explicit identification of Nubians (or 'Ethiopians') as they were called in the Common Era) as black-skinned people."²⁹ Finally, the third overarching approach fully and explicitly acknowledges the eunuch's ethnic identity and the various corresponding—especially physical—marks of Ethiopian ethnicity. Of course, Martin's own approach falls within the third category, and she ultimately concludes "that the story of a *black* African Gentile from what would be perceived as a 'distant nation' to the south of the empire is consistent with the Lucan emphasis on 'universalism,' a recurrent motif in both Luke and Acts, and one that is well known."³⁰ Thus, the presence of a black person within the narrative of Acts is one way in which Luke indicates the universal reach of the gospel. No matter how exotic, there is no land or person that cannot come to know the goodness of God.

In 2007, Demetrius Williams contributed a chapter on Acts in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* representing a synthesis of African American perspectives on this book.³¹ In turning to the Ethiopian eunuch, Williams

²⁷ Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey," 105-35.

²⁸ Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey," 110.

²⁹ Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey," 111.

³⁰ Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey," 114.

³¹ Demetrius K. Williams, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* (ed. Brian Blount; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 213-48.

largely follows Martin's conclusions. His primary contribution is in detailing several reasons for the general neglect of Africa in the study of Acts. First, he argues that both the NT and early Christianity operate on "a decided ideological and geographic shift" from Jerusalem to the northwest, tending to circumvent the African continent.³² Second, he deems problematic the cartographical bounds of most maps of the ancient world, for they tend not to extend farther south than Egypt. Finally, he points to what Martin has called the "politics of omission," wherein the narrow ethnic vision of modern scholarship deems certain peoples generally irrelevant. In other words, the underlying problem is primarily cartographical and ideological. The trajectories of early Christianity's mental maps are not varied enough. Our own mental maps are too constricted. The overarching problem is an entrenched racist perspective. While these three factors are certainly in play, are there other scholarly problems that must be unveiled? Have the identification of these particular shortcomings taken scholarship as far as it can go?

The very recognition of the importance of ethnicity in the analysis of the biblical texts is a welcome development and one that promises to reshape the field. Exposing the latent prejudices that clouded the vision of previous generations of scholars invites us to reread previously neglected texts such as Acts 8:26-40. Yet we have reached an exegetical dead-end. One final commentator on the pericope of the Ethiopian eunuch demonstrates well the need for a new approach to ethnicity in biblical studies:

A reasonable case can be made for seeing this narrative as being about the reaching of those from the parts of Africa that were at or beyond the

³² Williams, "Acts," 226. He concludes, "Thus the New Testament authors' conceptualization of the world scarcely included sub-Saharan Africa."

borders of the Empire, those that were at the ends of the earth. Indeed, this story is about the reaching of these sorts of people of color apparently before the gospel comes to what we call Europe today.³³

Though clearly sensitive to the pervasiveness of racism and hoping to contribute a liberating interpretation, Witherington's exegesis is insufficient, for it lacks clear reflection on the nature of ethnicity in the ancient world and today. The ancient and modern worlds, ancient Africa and modern Europe are too easily melded together. After the initial step of establishing the presence and importance of ethnicity in the ancient world, we must now address a whole new set of questions.

For example, each of the studies outlined above is ultimately not focused on *ethnicities* in the plural but on a single ethnic construction. In the case of the eunuch, the *crux interpretum* is this individual's ethnic identity, not the discursive, negotiated construction of such. Thus, his ethnicity is static or somehow objectively found on the edges of the ancient cartographic imagination. Ethnicity remains primarily a geographical marker, and exegetical method primarily revolves around lexicography. "Ethiopia" and "ethnicity" are inextricable and seemingly interchangeable. In contrast, my argument suggests that ethnicities are not constructed in isolation but are sharpened in the encounter and troubling combinations of various and hybrid ethnicities.

The value of the line of inquiry I am proposing is also demonstrated by an additional, brief example.³⁴ The opening chapters of Acts narrate the early days of a

³³ Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 293.

³⁴ Though here I focus on the Hellenists, an analysis of scholarship on the "table of nations" in Acts 2:5-13 or the Lystran episode in Acts 14 would have served a similar purpose. For the former, see among many Baker, "From Every Nation under Heaven," 91-99; Gary Gilbert, "The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Propaganda and the Lukan Response," *JBL* 121 (2002): 497-529; Joel B. Green, "In Our Own

harmonious community; at the same time, Luke warns that this harmony will not continue unabated. For instance, while members of the community willingly share their possessions (4:32-37), the duplicity of Ananias and Sapphira suggests that the community's ideals do not always inspire absolute adherence (5:1-11). Growing discord reaches a critical mass when the "Hellenists" and "Hebrews" dispute over the proper care of the latter's widows (6:1). Unfortunately, Luke does not provide any explicit clues as to which social groups these potentially ethnic terms refer. Perhaps the referents of these terms were evident to Luke's readers, but for modern scholars, these terms have invited a great deal of study.³⁵ Fitzmyer outlines concisely the most common solutions for the identity of the Hellenists.³⁶ While Cadbury advocated that Hellenists were simply "Gentile members of the Jerusalem Christian church, others (e.g. Chrysostom, Hengel, Haenchen) have suggested that the two terms are primarily linguistic descriptors: Hebrews spoke Aramaic, Hellenists Greek."³⁷ Fitzmyer, however, believes a more complicated situation is in view; citing C.F.D. Moule, he argues,

Languages': Pentecost, Babel, and the Shaping of Christian Community in Acts 2:1-13," in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays* (ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 198-213; and Martin Hengel, "Ιουδαία in the Geographical List of Acts 2:9-11 and Syria as 'Greater Judea,'" *BBR* 10 (2000): 161-80. On the latter, see, for example, Dean Philip Bechard, *Paul Outside the Walls: A Study of Luke's Socio-Geographical Universalism in Acts 14:8-20* (AnBib 143; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000) and Amy L. Wordelman, "Cultural Divides and Dual Realities: A Greco-Roman Context for Acts 14," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; SBLSymS 20; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 205-32.

³⁵ See the bibliography in Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 352-54. See also Craig G. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Divisions within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) and Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity; New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

³⁶ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 347.

³⁷ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 347. Cf. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, "Varieties of Thought and Practice in Judaism," in *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles* (5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1933), 1:83 who in distinguishing between "Hebrews" and "Hellenists" draw upon an overly simplistic distinction between "nation" (an ethnic designation of sorts) and "church" (a religious designation belonging strictly to Christianity). Such a problematic contrast imports modern notions into the study of antiquity and thus highlights how ethnic discourse is better able to read such texts in ways more faithful to the complex ethnic geography of antiquity.

“Hellenists’ would refer, then, to Jerusalem Jews who pray and read their Scriptures in Greek, whereas ‘Hebrews’ means Jews, who can speak Greek, but who pray and read in Aramaic or Hebrew”; ultimately, “the distinction is not ethnic, but linguistic.”³⁸ Even in this brief summary, the potential value of a developed understanding of ethnicity and its pliable boundaries can be seen. Initially, Fitzmyer’s position collapses the various markers of ethnicity to a single one: language. By focusing solely on the lexicography of these two terms as seemingly linguistic markers, Fitzmyer precludes a wider appreciation of the potential ethnic dimensions of the Hellenists; his linguistic explanation for the division between Hebrews and Hellenists proves insufficient. Furthermore, confusion about the overlap between religion and ethnicity problematizes interpretations of the passage.

The example of the interpretation of the Hellenists buttresses this dissertation’s exegetical rationale that interpreters of ancient notions of race and ethnicity are far more likely to find success by focusing on texts within which ethnicities come into conflict but most especially when overlapping ethnicities must be negotiated. Fortunately, there are a number of resources available to frame such an approach, especially in the field of classics.

Race, Ethnicity, and the Ancient World

The hope that the postcolonial period and globalization would eventually make ethnic distinctions archaic has proved vain, for the importance of race and ethnicity in

³⁸ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 347.

an ever smaller world has become only that much more acute.³⁹ In particular, historical studies in various eras and places have embraced race and ethnicity as critical historiographical lenses. Fundamentally, the scholarship outlined below shares several important conclusions. First, that ethnicity is a socially constructed discourse is a veritable consensus. The objective, biological roots of ethnicity are no longer an unexamined presumption rooted in imperial ideologies of the modern world. Even more, the bounds of racial and ethnic identity are no longer deemed rigid and impermeable but flexible and porous. Second, each of these scholars convincingly demonstrates that, although race and ethnicity only bloomed into fully developed concepts relatively recently, these concepts find fruitful and fully viable applications in the study of antiquity. To be sure, the developed models of our time cannot simply be imported into the ancient world; however, the division of peoples along racial and/or ethnic lines is not an innovation of modernity.⁴⁰

In the field of classics, perhaps no other scholar of antiquity has treated ethnicity with more care and precision than Jonathan Hall.⁴¹ Focusing on the

³⁹ Mark G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 3 and Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 17.

⁴⁰ Contra Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1990). See John Chasteen and Sara Castro Klären, eds., *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, 2003) for a critique of Anderson from the perspective of Latin American historians. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity* (ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3 argue, "Though the term 'ethnicity' is recent, the sense of kinship, group solidarity, and common culture to which it refers is as old as the historical record." See the efforts of Isaac, *Invention of Racism* who argues that not only was ethnicity a palpable phenomenon in antiquity but also that while "scientific racism" emerged in the modern wake of nationalism and Western empires, "proto-racism" was already thriving in the ancient world.

⁴¹ See Hall, *Ethnic Identity* and idem, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002). For other examples of classicists tackling the difficult concept of ethnicity, see Richard Alston, "Philo's *In Flaccum*: Ethnicity and Social Space in Roman Alexandria," *GR* 44 (1997): 165-75; Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Per Bilde, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Lise Hannestad, and Jan Zahle, eds., *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992); Altay Coskun, *Bürgerrechtsentzug oder*

construction of Greek ethnic identity, Hall commences by arguing that ethnic analyses of ancient Greece are not a scholarly avant-garde. At least as early as the eighteenth century, classicists have searched for the “specific ‘character’” of the number of ethnic groups that populated the Greek world; however, the methodological and ethical limitations of such approaches were borne out in World War II and especially the Holocaust.”⁴² Moving forward under this dark shadow, students of ethnicity “practised a studied circumspection in this regard or else attempted to recast the ethnic groups of antiquity in a more sanitised role by substituting lexical terms such as ‘linguistic groups’ or ‘cultural groups.’”⁴³ Anthropologists, for example, discovered an overarching solution in “instrumentalism,” a theory advocating that ethnicities are constructed to function as facades for “aims that were more properly political or economic.”⁴⁴

Fremdenausweisung? Studien zu den Rechten von Latinern und weiteren Fremden sowie zum Bürgerrechtswechsel in der Römischen Republik (5. bis frühes 1. Jh. v. Chr.) (Hermes—Einzelschriften 101; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009); Dench, *Romulus’ Asylum*; Ton Derks and Nico Roymans, eds., *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition* (Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 13; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009); Koen Goudriaan, *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1988); Patrick J. Geary, “Barbarians and Ethnicity,” in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (ed. G.W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar; Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1999), 107-29; Erich Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Shelley P. Haley, “Be Not Afraid of the Dark: Critical Race Theory and Classical Studies,” in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 27-49; Hayim Lapin, ed., *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine* (Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture 5; Bethesda, Md.: University Press of Maryland, 1998); Irad Malkin, ed., *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Denise Eileen McCoskey, “By Any Other Name? Ethnicity and the Study of Ancient Identity,” *Classical Bulletin* 79 (2003): 93-109; idem, “On Black Athena,” 297-330; Louise Revell, *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); A.N. Sherwin-White, *Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Edward CH.L. van der Vliet, “The Romans and Us: Strabo’s *Geography* and the Construction of Ethnicity,” *Mnemosyne* 56 (2003): 257-72; and David E. Wilhite, *Tertullian the African: An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian’s Context and Identities* (MSt 14; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007) among many others. Peyton Randolph Helm, “Races and Physical Types in the Classical World,” in *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome: Volume 1* (ed. Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger; New York: Scribner’s, 1988), 137-54 is dated but still instructive.

⁴² Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 1.

⁴³ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 1-2.

⁴⁴ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 2.

Though instrumentalism has now been resoundingly critiqued, Hall argues that three basic insights remain. Initially, the cataclysm of World War II discredited the biological roots of ethnicity in favor of its social basis; that is, ethnicity is “distinguished from other collectivities by its subscription to a putative myth of shared descent and kinship and by its association with a ‘primordial’ territory.”⁴⁵ Additionally, the impermeable, invariable bounds of ethnicity are no longer an unexamined scholarly presumption; instead, scholars have now reached a studied consensus that ethnicities are pliable, their boundaries porous. Finally, and as a consequence of the preceding points, the definitive core of ethnicities ought not to be sought in “genetic traits, language, religion or even common cultural forms,” for these are but manifestations or “important symbols of ethnic identity.”⁴⁶ In contrast, the discursive dimensions of ethnic constructions prompt the historian to examine principally the origin of ethnicity in literary sources.

To further clarify his denotation of ethnicity, Hall draws upon the crucial distinction between “emic” and “etic” perspectives. The former is that of an insider, the latter of an outsider. As one might expect, emic accounts opt for a primordialist vision, etic an instrumentalist vision; too often, these distinctions have devolved into a “sterile debate between ethnic truth and ethnic fiction.”⁴⁷ That is, a scholar’s unexamined preference for one perspective or the other has diminished her analytical power, for while ethnicities are unquestionably constructed and discursively negotiated, we diminish the “reality” of these “imagined communities”⁴⁸ at our own

⁴⁵ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 2.

⁴⁶ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 2.

⁴⁷ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 19.

⁴⁸ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

peril.⁴⁹ Ultimately, the scholar must carefully distinguish not only the claims of both emic and etic perspectives but also how both function discursively in the construction of ethnicity.

With these theoretical backdrops in place, Hall then proceeds to outline a working definition of ethnicity. Because “ethnic identity is *socially constructed and subjectively perceived*,” absolute or objective definitions for ethnicity have been fruitless.⁵⁰ Instead, the flexibility of ethnic identities requires an equally adaptive definition. To attain this, Hall distinguishes between criteria and indicia of ethnicity.

The criteria of ethnicity are the definitional set of attributes by which membership in an ethnic group is ultimately determined. They are a result of a series of conscious and socially embedded choices, which attach significance to certain criteria from a universal set while ignoring others The indicia, on the other hand, are the operational set of distinguishing attributes which people tend to associate with particular ethnic groups once the criteria have been established.⁵¹

Otherwise stated, indicia are but markers or symbols of ethnic criteria. For Hall, physical attributes, language, and religion are far too transitory, contingent, even “volatile” to provide a firm definitional foundation for ethnicity. Ultimately, Hall deemphasizes the “content” of ethnic identities in favor of “ascriptive boundaries,”⁵² represented primarily in his work by a “common myth of descent” and by “the connection with a specific territory.”⁵³ As Hall further concludes, “Above all else, though, it must be the myth of shared descent which ranks paramount among the

⁴⁹ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 19 argues, “There is little to be gained, and much to be lost, by denying that the ethnic group does possess its own realm of reality.”

⁵⁰ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 19.

⁵¹ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 20-21.

⁵² Here, Hall is influenced by Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (ed. Fredrik Barth; Bergen: Universitets Forlaget, 1969), 9-38.

⁵³ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 24-25.

features that distinguish ethnic from other social groups, and more often than not, it is proof of descent that will act as a defining criterion of ethnicity.”⁵⁴

Hall has extended and amplified his arguments in his more recent work.⁵⁵ First, he details the double valence of ethnicity: “The term ‘ethnicity’ denotes both the self-consciousness of belonging to an ethnic group (‘ethnic identity’) and the dynamic process that structures, and is structured by, ethnic groups in social interaction with one another.”⁵⁶ Ethnicity stands at the intersection of internal constructions of ethnic identity and external encounters with other ethnic identities. Therefore, to study ethnicity as either simply the former or the latter would prove insufficient; a fuller understanding emerges when texts show evidence of both sides of ethnic construction. Hall further outlines several key points in identifying ethnic groups⁵⁷: he retains several key conclusions of his previous work including the distinction between indicia and criteria of ethnicity; the propensity of definitions of ethnicities to shift in varying contexts; the fact that ethnicities are not always the most important marker of personal identity though they tend to reemerge powerfully when the group is imperiled; and, most important, the centrality of myths of common descent.

My brief review of Hall’s work summarizes the numerous critical questions with which one must grapple prior to dealing fully with this complex subject. As I will note below, Hall’s work has been a touchstone for other scholars engaging this field.

⁵⁴ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 25.

⁵⁵ Hall, *Hellenicity*.

⁵⁶ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 9.

⁵⁷ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 9.

While Hall's work centers upon Greek identities, Shaye Cohen turns his critical acumen to the development of Jewishness in antiquity.⁵⁸ In an eminently readable text, Cohen tests how and why the bounds around Judaism were constructed (Part I), crossed (Part II), and transgressed (Part III). In Part I ("Who was a Jew?"), Cohen argues that no single, "objective" definition of Jewishness existed in the ancient world. Jewish identities were "subjective . . . , constructed by the individual him/herself, other Jews, other gentiles, and the state."⁵⁹ In fact, there is no evidence that individual Jews were easily recognizable in antiquity; somatic difference, clothing, accents, distinctive names, ritual participation, nor circumcision were reliable ethnic markers. Cohen concludes, "How, then, did you know a Jew in antiquity when you saw one? The answer is that you did not. But you could make reasonably plausible inferences from what you saw."⁶⁰ Closing Part I, Cohen examines the Greek term Ἰουδαῖος, seeking to determine its valence via a diachronical approach.⁶¹ Initially, the term was primarily ethnic and geographical ("Judean"), referring to "a member of an association of those who hailed originally from the ethnic homeland."⁶² The term's meaning shifted only during the Hellenistic period when "Judaism (the ways of the Judaeans) and Hellenism (the ways of

⁵⁸ Shaye Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁵⁹ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 3.

⁶⁰ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 67.

⁶¹ Cohen's work has stimulated debate on how best to translate the term Ἰουδαῖος. See my discussion in ch. 3. Additionally, the topic has been discussed on several weblogs oriented around biblical studies. See AKM Adam (http://akma.disseminary.org/archives/2007/10/judeans_in_the.html), Michael Bird (<http://euangelizomai.blogspot.com/2007/11/being-jew-or-judean.html>, <http://euangelizomai.blogspot.com/2008/05/judean-and-syrian.html>, and <http://euangelizomai.blogspot.com/2008/08/daniel-schwartz-on-ioudaioi-debate.html>), Phil Harland (<http://www.philipharland.com/Blog/2007/10/23/was-there-such-a-thing-as-ancient-judaism-steve-masons-recent-article-on-judeans-ioudaioi-in-antiquity/>), Loren Rosson (<http://lorenrosson.blogspot.com/2008/05/outsider-and-insider-language-both.html>), and David Miller via Michael Pahl's website (<http://michaelpahl.blogspot.com/2007/12/david-miller-on-jew-vs-judean.html>).

⁶² Cohen, *Beginnings*, 104.

the Greeks)” came into cultural conflict.⁶³ Initially, political alliances during the Maccabean period invited people who were not ethnically and geographically related to Judea to become a Ἰουδαῖος. Later, after the fall of the Hasmoneans, Ἰουδαῖος took on more cultural or religious valence as “a non-Judaeian could become a *Ioudaios* by joining the Judaeans in venerating the one true God, the God whose temple is in Jerusalem.”⁶⁴

Part II of Cohen’s book illustrates the porous boundaries of Jewishness that emerged as the term Ἰουδαῖος moved from a primarily ethno-geographical term to a cultural/religious designation. These chapters question the underlying assumption of many scholars that terms such as Ἰουδαῖος and “judaizing” have set definitions. Instead, Cohen argues, “The boundary was fluid and not well marked; we must allow for a variety of competing definitions and for the influence of the perspective of the observer.”⁶⁵ Finally, Cohen’s Part III is concerned with the transgression of ethnic boundaries via intermarriage and all the ethnic confusion that such marital arrangements precipitated. Particularly pertinent to this dissertation is Cohen’s extended discussion on the matrilineal principle of Jewishness, a critical component in the interpretation of Acts 16:1-5. He concludes that the matrilineal principle was not in effect in the Second Temple Period but was only codified and enacted in the rabbinic period. Ultimately, Cohen’s subtitle encapsulates well the main theses of the work. *Boundaries* between Jews and non-Jews or Judaeans and non-Judaeans were porous. *Variety* marks how ethnic identification was determined. *Uncertainty* defines reflections on ethnicities.

⁶³ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 105.

⁶⁴ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 105.

⁶⁵ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 4.

Though focused on a chronologically later text than this dissertation, Aaron Johnson's recent study argues for the centrality of ethnic discourse and argumentation in Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica*, demonstrating well the promise of applying ethnicity in the interpretation of ancient texts.⁶⁶ Couching Eusebius's apologetic efforts within the wider context of the Greco-Roman world, he argues that ethnic reasoning was a rhetorical ploy common in the ancient world, a ploy in which early Christians frequently and astutely engaged. Johnson defines "ethnic argumentation" as "the concern to formulate ethnic identities strategically as the basis for an apologetic argument."⁶⁷ For Johnson, Christian apologetics revolved around the construction of identities and thus ethnic discourse proved productive in the defense of Christian identity. Eusebius is not engaging in innovation when his arbitration of ethnic identity plays an apologetic function in the work. Such negotiation of ethnicities according to Johnson is a strategy common to many ancient groups struggling to define their ethnic identities:

This was a world of contested identities and divided loyalties as members of subject nations manipulated and reformulated their representations of themselves and each other amidst the fray of competing claims to cultural, religious and historical superiority. Boundaries between the nations (*ethnē*) were redrawn, re-articulated, enforced, or even erased on the pages of animated and often polemical sophists, priests, and philosophers—if not also in the streets (or hills) of east Roman cities. It was within the context of these nationalistic visions of the world, which articulated racial tension, interaction, and discombobulation, that the writings of the early Christian apologists and their interlocutors arose.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Aaron P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argumentation in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 10.

⁶⁸ Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 5.

Johnson argues that Christian apologists wrote in an era and a culture in which ethnicity was inescapable and a powerful tool in the creation of identity.

Christianity was defended, therefore, within and against a world of nations; in other words, Christianity was conceived not merely as one among many separate religious positions, but, rather, was mapped into the imaginary and constructed national and ethnic landscape. And hence, Christians themselves were often represented as such.⁶⁹

The question in this dissertation is whether similar patterns are evident in the apologetic dimensions of Acts. I will argue that Acts 16 engages in just such a discursive creation of ethnicities that does not eradicate ethnic difference but deploys it as a powerful effort to craft the identities of the early followers of Jesus.

Additionally, Johnson voices important critiques of the works of Hall and Cohen. As outlined above, Hall maintains that ethnicity requires two fundamental notions—a common myth of origin and a shared territory—lest this category become indistinguishable from other ancient associations or groups. “Cohen had similarly recognized the importance of a discursive approach to ethnicity, yet (paradoxically) maintained the necessity of biological connectedness for ancient Jewish ethnic identity.”⁷⁰ Johnson notes that the tension evident in both their works between central, requisite facets of ethnicity and the pliable, contingent definition of ethnicity have faced a great deal of criticism from other scholars for seemingly seeking to reconcile the irreconcilable notion of ethnicity as both objective and pliable. While Hall refrains from such criticism, steadfastly insisting that a “‘polythetic’ approach (one that did not hold on to territory and myths of descent, or some other characteristic, as necessary for defining ethnicity) would be too open-ended and vacuous,” Johnson

⁶⁹ Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 9.

⁷⁰ Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 29.

claims that “if the markers of ethnic difference can change or be adapted over time within a discourse of ethnicity, then all that is necessary is the ancient authors’s claims for peoplehood.”⁷¹ Such a “polythetic” approach does not impose from the start the parameters within which ethnicity must be defined but permits ancient authors to draw those lines themselves. To be sure, Hall’s concern that ethnicity becomes a far too cumbersome, loose category is not without merit; nevertheless, drawing upon variable ethnic markers will prove more consistent with the flexible constructions of ethnicity that are now nearing a consensus in scholarship.

Nevertheless, the contributions of Hall and Cohen provide vital methodological and theoretical touchstones for the study of early Christianity. A review essay by Buell covering both their contributions suggests how these studies of antiquity proffer critical insights into my efforts.⁷² Near her conclusion, she argues,

Ethnicity has been underexamined as a discursive category for early Christian self-definition. In the study of early Christianity, scholars have generally restricted their consideration of ethnicity to three types of sources or questions: studies that contrast Christianity with Judaism, studies that discuss ethnic language as a marker of Christian sectarianism (particularly among so-called Gnostics), and studies that discuss the small number of Christian texts in which the term *genos* (Lat. *genus*) is used to designate Christians. These studies have much to offer; their limitations emerge in part from disciplinary and subdisciplinary conventions as well as some enduring theological and historical models and tendencies (including the liberal appeal of positioning Christianity as a non- or trans-ethnic movement, the assumption that Christian history can be written as a story about one core mainstream with many fragmentary “heretical” offshoots, the language skills required to master the Nag Hammadi corpus, and Christian anti-Judaism).⁷³

⁷¹ Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 29. While I largely agree with Johnson on this point, I would add that Hall is correct when he highlights the dual valence of ethnicity. Ethnicity is not just a group’s claim to peoplehood but also those negotiations, clarifications, and encounters that occur when the ethnic claims of different groups engage one another.

⁷² Denise Kimber Buell, “Race and Ethnicity in Mediterranean Antiquity,” *RelSRev* 26 (2000): 243-49.

⁷³ Buell, “Race and Ethnicity in Mediterranean Antiquity,” 247.

Ethnicity as a conceptual category in the study of early Christianity goes right to the center of the discipline, exposing problematic presuppositions and asking foundational disciplinary queries in new ways. Queries about the function of ethnicity in Acts hold significant promise in aiding the scholar to reassess the genre, function, and theological vision of a book, which, more than any other text in the NT, resembles a Christian myth of origins.

Buell's work will be vital to the task of this dissertation, and she will be one of my primary interlocutors. While she has conducted a great deal of research focusing on other early Christian writers, Luke-Acts has yet to draw her critical inquiry. However, the research agenda she has set coheres well with my own. In her recent monograph, she asks a subtle yet provocative question: "Why this new race?"⁷⁴ Though a question some early Christians asked of themselves, it is unthinkable to many scholars who consistently represent early Christianity "as an inclusive movement that *rejected* ethnic or racial specificity as a condition of religious identity."⁷⁵ In contrast, Buell argues

that early Christian texts used culturally available understandings of human difference, which we can analyze in terms of our modern concepts of "ethnicity," "race," and "religion," to shape what we have come to call a religious tradition and to portray particular forms of Christianness as universal and authoritative.⁷⁶

As outlined above, a concern for ethnic categories is not innovative by itself; however, Buell introduces a vital step in scholarship by eschewing a simple lexicographical

⁷⁴ Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

⁷⁵ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 1. See also, Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self Definition," *HTR* 94 (2001): 449.

⁷⁶ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2.

approach that identifies the presence of ethnic terminology with a nuanced examination of the “*rhetorical situations* in which early Christian texts use ideas about peoplehood to communicate and persuade readers about Christianness.”⁷⁷

Buell then specifies four modes of ethnic reasoning employed by early Christians. First, Christians deployed the ancient belief that religion and race were frequently inextricable and mutually constitutive. Second, “early Christians capitalized on [the] dynamic character of ethnicity/race as being both fixed and fluid in a range of ways.”⁷⁸ Third, Christians were thus able to construe Christianity as a “real” distinction between peoples—that is, they were able to argue that Christians were a people much like Jews, Greeks, and Romans—but also a fluid, embracing category that invited conversion. Fourth, “early Christians wielded ethnic reasoning both to authorize their own visions of Christianness and to caricature and exclude competing alternatives.”⁷⁹ These four modes of ethnic reasoning invite a critical reassessment of basic questions about generic distinctions in Christian literature and, more important, of how intra- and extra-Christian relationships are understood.

If such an approach is so promising, what has curtailed scholarship from following these vital paths? Buell avers that the problem is endemic to scholarship:

We have failed to recognize the importance and functions of ethnic reasoning in early Christian self-definition largely because of how dominant *modern* ideas about race, ethnicity, and religion inform our approaches to and presuppositions about the meanings of those three terms (including their possible relationships).⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2.

⁷⁸ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 3.

⁷⁹ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 3.

⁸⁰ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 5.

While ambivalence is evident in the paradoxical view that race is both a “given” and socially constructed, religion tends to be perceived as a “voluntary” designation though religion is so often “given” in our own experiences. These tensions evoke powerful, if unspoken, assumptions to which Buell offers a critical alternative:

In many interpretations of early Christianity, race and ethnicity continue to be treated as if they connote a fixed or given facet of identity, while religion is primarily viewed as voluntary. When these assumptions are unquestioned, race and ethnicity appear to be in tension with Christianity because Christianity is understood to be not only a “religion” but also a category open to all people and gained through conversion. Universalism and conversion both imply a fluidity that race and ethnicity seem to lack (when viewed as “fixed”). *An understanding of race and ethnicity as concepts that are fluid and subject to change even when they are depicted as fixed allows for a different interpretation of the relationship between race/ethnicity and religion in early Christian texts and imagination.*⁸¹

Drawing upon scholars such as Ann Stoler, Irad Malkin, and Gerd Baumann, Buell outlines a complex but persuasive definition of ethnicity. Eschewing a static view of race and ethnicity, she “suggest(s) that we view each as concepts to which fixity is *attributed* but that are nevertheless malleable.”⁸² In other words, race and ethnicity are inherently volatile, always subject to the varying needs of shifting situations. Though appeals to the concrete are central to their rhetoric, “ideas about race and ethnicity gain persuasive power by being subject to revision while purporting to speak about fundamental essences.”⁸³ Therefore, the scholarly question before us is not whether ethnicity exists or from whence it comes; rather, such binary queries oversimplify a far more complex picture. The question before us is *how* an author can make such a paradoxical claim.

⁸¹ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 6. Italics added.

⁸² Buell, *Why This New Race*, 6.

⁸³ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 7.

Therefore, unlike Hall but in agreement with Johnson, Buell rejects the search for an ethnic *sine qua non*. Instead of separating indicia and criteria, she opts for a single, open-ended criterion: “I define the necessary criterion of race/ethnicity as the dynamic interplay between fixity and fluidity.”⁸⁴ In fact, I would extend Buell’s argument a bit further and contend that Hall’s indicia and criteria are actually mutually constitutive, that ethnic discourse collapses reality and fiction so that a single index or criterion is insufficient to denote ethnicity. One of the defining marks of ethnicity and race is their ability to elude comprehensive definition from one moment to the next.

My dissertation will seek to harness the best of the insights outlined above and explore the text of Acts 16 in light of them. Hall and Cohen have laid crucial groundwork for the study of ethnicity in antiquity. First, they both stress that ethnicity is a social construction but an incredibly powerful one; in the case of ethnicity, a social fiction is nonetheless quite “real.” Additionally, they both prove that even though ethnicity is a thoroughly modern category, it nonetheless proves a valuable concept in the study of antiquity. Finally, they both stress the flexible bounds of ethnicity. However, both Buell and Johnson provide important critiques, particularly of this last point. In the end, a polythetic approach to ethnicity that does not rest on any particular aspect of ethnic definition will prove more accurate and far more exegetically beneficial in the study of Acts 16 and the wider narrative of Luke’s second volume.

⁸⁴ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 9.

Negotiating Ethnicity: A Proposal on Race, Ethnicity, and Acts 16

In Acts, an interest in ancient ethnicity propels most scholars to examine one of two passages. Either they turn to the Ethiopian eunuch and explore how blackness was constructed in the ancient world, or they grapple with the ethnic identity of the Hellenists in 6:1-6. Both have produced a number of positive results but ultimately face the same obstacle. Neither treats ethnicity as a fully discursive, negotiated category as the research question is framed around the exploration of a particular ethnic construction. This dissertation proposes to study ethnicities in the midst of full discursive negotiation. Rather than opting for a primarily lexicographical approach that focuses on a specific ethnic term or identity, the dissertation suggests that it is more effective to take a slice of dense material with “ethnic texture” describing how a particular author constructs a narrative reality in which various ethnicities are deployed, negotiated, and manipulated. An exegetically thick analysis that incorporates the insights of Hall, Johnson, and Buell would advance ethnic analyses of Acts beyond the current stalemate.

The rich text of Acts 16 invites this very kind of ethnic analysis. Its textured language and enigmatic narratives provide important glimpses into the internal logic of Luke’s ethnic construals. Acts 16 is truly a crucible of ethnic negotiation. First is a pericope that has baffled scholars: 16:1-5 reports that Paul circumcises Timothy despite the conclusions of ch. 15. The rationale of Paul’s actions centers upon the negotiation of problematic ethnic boundaries. Who is a Jew? Who is a Greek? What are the identifying marks of these ethnicities? Next, Luke leads us to the city of Philippi, a metropolis characterized in 16:11-40 by its “Romanness.” At the close of this narrative,

Paul's claim of Roman identity requires further study. How does Luke construe the boundaries of Roman and Jewish ethnic identities? How are these same boundaries transgressed for political and/or theological advantage?

Acts 16 provides an exegetical roadmap for this project. Chapter two will develop methodology, criteria, and definitions for discerning the function of race and ethnicity in the ancient world, especially in literature. This chapter will develop more fully the discussion prompted by Hall, Cohen, Johnson, and Buell, making a case for a “polythetic” approach to defining ethnicity that stresses its flexible bounds. The chapter will revolve around developing a working definition of ethnicity: race or ethnicity is a socially constructed, discursive,⁸⁵ pliable claim to be a group of people defined around myths of putative commonality of kinship or ancestry including origins, language, culture, religion, geography, and other organizing principles. An indispensable qualification of this definition is that an ethnicity—while asserted by its members to be natural, inherent, and unchangeable—is actually malleable and even mutable.

The next chapter is the first of three chapters devoted to a close reading of Acts 16. Chapter three focuses on the enigmatic narrative of Timothy's circumcision and asks how bodies, multiculturalism, and religious identities were negotiated in the ancient world. After a review of four basic approaches in the history of interpretation to Timothy's disputed ethnicity, I clarify how Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην are deployed in Acts, concluding that both are misinterpreted if read statically, especially as solely religious terminologies. Like ethnicities, ethnic terminologies are flexible and subject

⁸⁵ By discourse, I mean the internal logic, the organizational principles of ideas and ideology of a social structure like ethnicity. See Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and the Present* (London: Routledge, 1997), 55.

to change in different narrative contexts. For Luke, the pliability of ethnic identities and their attendant terminologies are inherently flexible and negotiable. Thus, I conclude that Timothy's disputed ethnic identity remains just that: disputed. At no point does Luke append a clarifying ethnic term to Timothy, only referring to his circumcision or lack thereof. Timothy remains in that liminal ethnic space between Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλληνην and thus represents an ethnic seam running through the concluding half of Acts.

Chapter four turns to the geographical hinge that brings Paul and his companions from Troas, across the Aegean, and on to the city of Philippi. After critiquing the all too prevalent tendency in scholarship to imbue this geographic shift with significance as the advent of Christianity on European soil, I examine three critical passages in this admittedly critical narrative and cartographic transition. In the Macedonian dream vision, the text critical difficulties around the description of Philippi, and the conversion of Lydia, Luke stresses the ambiguity of identities and augurs the consequential controversies of the closing verse of Acts 16.

Finally, chapter five focuses on the travails of Paul and Silas in Philippi. The exorcism of the profitable mantic girl precipitates an accusation from her owners dealing not with the loss of their lucrative enterprise but the ethnic threat they claim Paul and Silas pose to the ethnic fabric of the colony. Later in the narrative, Paul will claim ironically to be Roman, undercutting completely the trumped up charges. The claim to be Ῥωμαῖος, I argue, is not solely a juridical demand of certain legal rights but a substantive ethnic claim. The postcolonial concept of "hybridity" helps provide a conceptual framework for understanding Paul's claims in Acts to be both a Ἰουδαῖος

and a Ῥωμαῖος. Overall, in the intervening space between the peoples of Judea and Rome, Luke is carving out a space for this emerging Christian community, not by effacing the differences between these quite different ethnic alternatives but by embracing the ambiguities of a hybrid posture.

Ultimately, current study of Acts curtails a full appreciation of Luke's expansive theological vision by either neglecting racial and ethnic categories or construing them as relatively static designations. I contend instead that race and ethnicity were theologically vital yet flexible notions in Acts that referred to a wide array of cultural factors amenable to shifting contexts. Luke does not imagine the creation of a new ethnicity of Christians, gathered from among the many peoples of the world⁸⁶; instead, he projects an interstitial ethnic space between the competing and overlapping ethnic claims of Jews, Romans, Greeks, and the other peoples that populate the pages of Acts.⁸⁷ Luke does not erase ethnic difference but employs the flexible bounds of ethnicity in order to illustrate the wide grasp of the early church movement.

⁸⁶ See, Nasrallah, "Hadrian's Panhellenion," 535, n. 7.

⁸⁷ Cf. Vernon K. Robbins, "Luke-Acts: A Mixed Population Seeks a Home in the Roman Empire," in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; JSOTSSup 122; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 202-21.

Chapter Two

Negotiating Race and Ethnicity in the Ancient World: The Challenges of Method and Definition

“In concentrating on the oriental, or indeed on any of the cultural strands in Acts, one ought not to forget how closely they are interwoven. Homogeneity was not characteristic of [the] population in the Roman empire, even locally.”¹

To a large degree, race and ethnicity are basic social reflexes. Though certainly not biologically innate, the conceptualization of others along racial and ethnic lines is communicated to us in both subtle and explicit ways from our earliest days. Ethnicity is a powerful tool of social discourse because it is densely meaningful shorthand; much is said when we engage in ethnic reasoning though little is actually spoken. At the same time, race and ethnicity remain opaque to most of us. Their persistence does not translate into comprehension, for ethnic constructions are generally treated as givens, one of the most basic of assumptions about the functioning of the world around us. Only rarely do we tend to analyze both the internal logic and seemingly invisible inconsistencies of our ethnic constructions. Many biblical scholars have certainly not escaped this cultural trap. This chapter will examine anew race and ethnicity, their definitions, their characteristics, and, most importantly, how we can best read ethnic discourse in ancient texts.

Building on the *Forschungsbericht* I outlined in chapter one, I will suggest here that race or ethnicity is a socially constructed, discursive,² pliable claim to be a group of

¹ Cadbury, *History*, 12.

² By discourse, I mean the internal logic, the organizational principles of ideas and ideology of a social structure like ethnicity. Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 55 defines “discourse” as “a clustering of

people defined around myths of putative commonality of kinship or ancestry including origins, language, culture, religion, geography, and other organizing principles. An indispensable qualification of this definition is that an ethnicity—while asserted by its members to be natural, inherent, and unchangeable—is in practice malleable and even mutable. As Denise Kimber Buell suggests, such interplay between “fixity” and “fluidity” is a defining mark of an ethnic group.³ Thus, I disagree with the position that any of the individual markers of ethnicity are a *sine qua non*, and instead choose to define ethnicity polythetically. In various contexts—whether spatial, cultural, or temporal—different ethnic characteristics will come to the forefront of an ethnic group’s sense of distinctiveness. This working definition of ethnicity helps resolve the all-too-common, but ultimately unproductive, debate between primordialist and instrumentalist approaches or the distinction between emic and etic perspectives on ethnicity. In fact, ethnicity trades upon both sides of these binaries; an analysis of race and ethnicity requires attention to both the primordialist, emic claims of ethnic groups as well as the instrumentalist, etic strategies these same groups engage when changing contexts require ethnic and racial bounds to flex. Ethnic discourse—or using Buell’s terminology, “ethnic reasoning”⁴—is that cluster of ideas and arguments revolving around “fixed and fluid identity in the service of constructing peoplehood.”⁵

How then have I arrived at this working definition of race and ethnicity? I begin this chapter with a clarifying excursus on the disputed terminologies of “race”

ideas, an ideological configuration, which structures knowledge and experience in a particular domain, in this case the construction of group identity.”

³ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 9. Cf. Judith Lieu, “Impregnable Ramparts and Walls of Iron’: Boundary and Identity in Early ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity,’” *NTS* 48 (2002): 302.

⁴ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2.

⁵ Nasrallah, “Hadrian’s Panhellenion,” 535.

and “ethnicity.” Then, I will review three previous efforts in conceptualizing ethnicity that have been particularly influential in biblical scholarship dealing with race and ethnicity. Though helpful touchstones in the study of ethnicity, the common division of the study of race and ethnicity between primordialist and instrumentalist approaches, Barth’s ascriptive model, and Hutchinson and Smith’s six features of ethnic groups are no longer sufficient. Instead, the scholarship in race and ethnicity in antiquity I outlined in chapter one—especially the efforts of Denise Kimber Buell,⁶ Caroline Johnson Hodge,⁷ and Aaron P. Johnson⁸—provides a better starting point for my study. Supplemented by the innovative studies of archaeologist Siân Jones, these studies help establish a baseline definition of ethnicity that highlights the complexity, ubiquity, and importance of ethnicity in Acts. The remaining chapters of this dissertation will consequently model the applicability and utility of this pliable understanding of race and ethnicity in reading Acts 16, demonstrating that such a self-conscious treatment of ethnicity reveals a vital part of Luke’s theological aim. Specifically, Acts aims not to eradicate ethnic and racial differences under a homogenizing Christian identity but to demonstrate how the flexibility of ethnic identities played a critical function in the spread of the Jesus movement.

Excursus: On the Terms “Race” and “Ethnicity”

Before moving forward, however, a word is in order about terminology. Though scholars for more than half a century have attempted to create a clear distinction between the terms “race” and “ethnicity,” many of these efforts are a scholarly attempt

⁶ See especially Buell, *Why This New Race*.

⁷ See especially Hodge, *If Sons*.

⁸ See Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*.

to leave a dark past behind. The Shoah discredited the scholarly endeavor to map the biological roots of “race”⁹ as did the conquest of the Americas by casting their native inhabitants as less than human.¹⁰ Hoping to escape this legacy, scholars opted for a new term, “ethnicity,” in which culture, not biology, was the primary determinant in the distinguishing of groups of people.¹¹ Buell, however, notes how closely the terms “race” and “ethnicity” are wedded in the history of scholarship.¹² She suggests that the watershed publication of *Black Athena* in 1987¹³ only embroiled scholars further in contentious disputes about the meaning of race, ethnicity, and culture—the controversy over Bernal’s thesis only drawing scholars away from the term “race.” Those who affirm the scholarly bankruptcy of the term “race” do so primarily for three reasons: (1) the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity” actually refer to two different notions, the former a biological claim of the objective commonality of a group of people and the second a cultural claim of group unity; (2) “race” is a modern notion infected

⁹ On the philosophical and theological repercussions of the Shoah, see *inter alia* Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985) and Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism* (2d ed.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ See for example Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992). The literature in Latin American historiography dealing with the complex negotiations of race and ethnicity is extensive.

¹¹ See for example, Hagedorn, “Looking at Foreigners,” 436: “Determining the exact function of these oracles is notoriously difficult but simply pointing to the apparent ‘racist’ nature of the words against foreigners is probably too short-sighted. Rather than using such problematic and highly charged terminology, I would prefer to continue taking up one of the main aspects of current anthropological research into ethnicity and stereotypes and utilize the insights that both concepts have strong relational aspect. Therefore anthropologists have been able to move beyond seeing ethnicity as a purely biological phenomenon—the use of the rather problematic term “race” can thus be avoided” (italics added). I concur with the initial point Hagedorn puts forward: the complexities of ethnic discourse cannot simply be boiled down to the rather inflammatory charge of “racism.” However, the problem is not terminology; sliding one’s terminology from race to ethnicity does not alleviate the problem. Only paying attention to the many nuances of ethnic reasoning can do so.

¹² Buell, *Why This New Race*, 13-21.

¹³ Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (3 vols.; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987). See Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, eds., *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996) for a collection of essays assessing anew the influence and shortcomings of Bernal’s work. Finally, see Dench, *Romulus’ Asylum*, 6-11 and McCoskey, “On *Black Athena*,” 297-330.

by the eugenic ideologies which underwrote racism in the past while “ethnicity” refers to a cultural phenomenon evident throughout history; and (3) the notion of “race” in the past stoked the flames of racism and is thus an inappropriate notion today.¹⁴

Buell responds to these three concerns in turn. First, while not wholly equating “race” and “ethnicity,” she opts to use race and ethnicity interchangeably in order to “provok[e] attention to their inexactness—both in the contemporary moment and in their relationship to ancient categories of cultural difference.”¹⁵ Both terms are problematic, difficult to define, too often deployed with little attention to their meaning, and, to a large degree, modern notions. In most cases, “race” and “ethnicity” refer to a virtually identical ideological division of peoples. As Denzey correctly notes, “often . . . it is difficult to distinguish between the two categories, since both ethnic and racial groups perceive their ties of commonality as deriving from a shared ancestry or kinship.”¹⁶ Furthermore, as I will continue to demonstrate below, the rejection of “race” because of its supposed orientation to biology tends to neglect the emic, primordialist perspective on ethnicity still present in ethnic discourse.

Second, both race and ethnicity are modern concepts. Ethnicity cannot function as a trans-historic notion while race is solely a product of the modern project; in some sense, both are impositions upon an ancient world that did not have terminology or notions wholly consonant with these modern concepts.¹⁷ However, historical study cannot help but speak of the past in the terms of the present in order

¹⁴ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 13.

¹⁵ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 14.

¹⁶ Denzey, “The Limits of Ethnic Categories,” 489.

¹⁷ Isaac, *Invention of Racism* has argued recently for the presence of “proto-racism” in antiquity, claiming that race was an active notion in antiquity and modern racism has its roots in Greek and Roman civilization. Contra Jan N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (NovTSup 41; Leiden: Brill, 1975) who challenges whether there is any element of “racial” animosity evident in ancient feeling against the “strangeness” of Judaism and Jews.

that the former may be comprehensible in the latter. There is a thin, precipitous line between, on the one hand, imposing our notions onto a past in a way that distorts it or too easily elides the distinction between the present and the past and, on the other hand, discovering how modern notions can illuminate history. As Buell sums up, “we can place modern categories into conversation with ancient ones without effacing their differences, even while we must also acknowledge that we can only understand those differences through the lens of our present.”¹⁸

Finally, simply erasing “race” from our scholarly lexicon will not erase the longstanding and unabated force of racism. The notion of “ethnicity” can just as easily indemnify an ideology of ethnic hatred. Contrary to the hope that we might leave “race” as a relic of a misguided scholarly effort, simply switching terminology only expunges a problematic history of interpretation whose consequences continue to be felt.¹⁹ Ultimately, Buell concludes,

Because our interpretive models for studying the ancient past have been formulated and revised within racist cultures, we need to keep the term active so as to be able to examine how our interpretive models encode, and thus perpetuate, particular notions about race. By using the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably I signal my view that neither term has a one-to-one counterpoint in antiquity; moreover, this choice indicates that these terms cannot be neatly distinguished even in modern parlance. I also want to keep modern readers alert to the contemporary stakes of historical work. By excluding the category of race from work on classical antiquity, we risk implying that our modern legacy of racial thinking can be shut off when we examine ancient texts and that our versions of ancient history are either irrelevant or alien to the ways that we handle questions of human sameness and difference in the present.²⁰

¹⁸ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 14.

¹⁹ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 20 argues, “If we want to move beyond racism, we cannot wait for it to outgrow its troubled past on its own; rather, we need to confront the elusive elasticity of race, since racism persists even when race has been exposed as a construct.”

²⁰ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 21.

For these reasons, I too have chosen to use the terms nearly synonymously, often preferring to use both terms together especially when I am speaking broadly of these twin topics. However, I tend to use the term “ethnicity” more frequently than “race” in this study in a concession to common scholarly practice at the moment but not as an admission that race and ethnicity point to vastly different notions.

Previous Efforts in Conceptualizing Ethnicity

The term “ethnicity” is a modern invention, but the notion has ancient roots.²¹ First appearing in English dictionaries sometime in the 1950s, the term “ethnicity” has complex origins and its definitions are similarly complex.²² The history of critical inquiry into the complex dimensions of racial and ethnic identity is unfortunately littered with unintended consequences. The intellectual underwriting of Nazi racist ideology by a wide range of academic fields nearly ended any hope that an accurate, constructive, and critical study of racial and ethnic difference might be possible. The disastrous construal of “race” promulgated in the Western conquest of the Americas and other portions of the world propelled a naïve hope that modern globalization would make obsolete racial and ethnic identities, tempering their ability to divide us. Yet the importance of race and ethnicity has only increased, for better or for worse: “Given the longevity and ubiquity of ethnic ties and sentiments throughout history, it would be rash to make predictions about the early transcendence of ethnicity or to imagine that a world of so many overlapping but intense affiliations and loyalties is

²¹ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 3.

²² Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 4. For a psychological perspective on the construction of race and ethnicity, see Herbert W. Harris, Howard C. Blue, and Ezra E.H. Griffith, eds., *Racial and Ethnic Identity: Psychological Development and Creative Expression* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

likely to be able to abolish ethnic conflicts.”²³ Even more, we might ask whether there is not some overarching benefit to the proper understanding of the flexible bounds of ethnicity and the preservation of ethnic differences. Instead of transcending ethnic difference and homogenizing the various peoples of the world under a single, monopolistic rubric of self and communal understanding, the importance of racial and ethnic difference in the constitution of group identities may be reoriented around an acknowledgement of ethnicity’s pliability. While our communal distinctives are vitally important in the maintenance of identity in an increasingly fractured world, racial differences are not absolute but plastic social constructions. They are both real and fictional. How then can we reach a definition of race and ethnicity flexible enough to account for their plasticity but precise enough to distinguish them from other affiliative notions? Most importantly, how do we grapple with these notions in an ethically responsible manner? How can we analyze ethnicity in a way that respects ethnic differences while advocating the cessation of ethnic hatred?²⁴

In this endeavor, the review of recent research into ethnicity plays a critical part by both demonstrating well-trodden paths of critical scholarship down which one may continue but also by pointing out past shortcomings we can now hope to overcome. Before I turn to Acts 16 in the ensuing chapters, I will here grapple with other theorists of ethnicity who do not focus primarily on antiquity. This

²³ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 14.

²⁴ Dench, *Romulus’ Asylum*, 11 notes the intertwined ethical and methodological challenges: “It is inevitable, and indeed often desirable, that our experience of the present should inspire the questions we ask of the past. But when we come to answer them, we should both have some awareness of the socio-specific nature of our own concerns and, indeed, those of the theoretical models that we invoke. Just as importantly, we should expect ancient societies to do more than simply mirror our aspirations for our own; for to counter images of Roman cosmopolitanism and ‘do-it-yourself’ ‘Romanization’ with images of domination and discrimination, creating a nightmare world, is still to place modern dreams too much at the centre.” Cf. Baker, “From Every Nation under Heaven,” 81.

interdisciplinary effort will not only provide fuller coverage of the *status quaestionis* but also, and more importantly, allow for new insights to emerge.

A Common Heuristic Division of Critical Inquiry into Race and Ethnicity

Though the study of ethnicity is complicated deeply by various disciplinary, methodological, and ideological approaches, a common division of these myriad approaches into a pair of heuristic categories is prevalent and initially instructive.²⁵ Though it admittedly oversimplifies a far more complex landscape, the distinction between “primordialist” and “instrumentalist” approaches captures relatively well two ends of a spectrum of approaches.²⁶ The former tends to treat ethnicity as an unchanging biological given. Ethnicity is the collection of certain primordial human features, passed on through blood or genetics, which together distinguish one group from another, especially by physiology. Ethnicity thus emerges from within as an internal, atavistic impulse to recognize the group’s objective distinctives. As Hutchinson and Smith note, however, “Frequent migration, colonization, and intermarriage, particularly in the modern world, have undermined the view of ethnic communities in immemorial, discrete, persisting units.”²⁷

²⁵ See Denzey, “The Limits of Ethnic Categories,” 490; Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 56-83; Tattiong Benny Liew, “Margins and (Cutting-)Edges: ON the (IL)Legitimacy and Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and (Post)Colonialism,” in *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 119; and Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 8-10.

²⁶ Sam Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” in *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion* (ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić, and David N. Edwards; London: Routledge, 2005), 95 construes this division “as an inherent ‘primordial’ quality, or as something designed to maximise self-interest.” However, Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 79-83 warns about the “sterility of this debate” (80). See below.

²⁷ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 8. They also point out the presence of new sociobiological approaches that have enlivened anew the primordialist perspective. “[These sociobiologists] suggest that [wider kinship-based groupings like *ethnies*] are bonded through mechanisms of ‘nepotism’ and ‘inclusive fitness’, and that the myths of descent which underpin *ethnies*

The instrumentalist, on the other hand, “treat[s] ethnicity as a social, political, and cultural resource for different interest- and status-groups.”²⁸ Characteristic of the instrumentalist approach is an assumption about ethnicity diametrically opposed to primordialism; that is, ethnicity is a *product* or a *social construction* of a particular group’s efforts to distinguish itself along ethnic lines. What defines ethnicity is not ontological but functional, what is important in the study of ethnicity is not what it *is* but how it *functions*. Motivations for ethnic distinctions vary broadly from material, economic concerns to the maintenance and exercise of political power, but the impulse for ethnic association is primarily external. It is such a factor beyond the bounds of the ethnic group that is the actual source of ethnic cohesion. In many instrumentalist approaches, ethnicity is but a mask for some other imbedded, tacit communal interest.

A veritable consensus now holds that the primordialist position is a relic of an unfortunate past.²⁹ Tinged with the problematic consequences of imperial, oppressive, and nationalistic ideologies, the notion that biology and race are one has now been thoroughly discredited. The ascendancy of approaches to ethnicity that recognize it as a social fiction are welcome and have allowed for a clearer examination of this ubiquitous human phenomenon. The recognition of ethnicity’s fictive origins have nonetheless emphasized the very real influence ethnicity brings to bear. Though human concoctions, race and ethnicity still play a distinct function in human interaction. For this reason, instrumentalist approaches have been heavily critiqued for diminishing ethnicity’s social function as a mere cipher for the “real” social

correspond with such nepotistic reproductive strategies.” Such a modification of primordialism still falls prey to previous critiques that point to the social construction of malleable ethnic identities.

²⁸ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 8.

²⁹ See, for example, the devastating critiques of Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 68-72.

problematic. An instrumentalist approach tends not to treat ethnicity as a critical end but as a means to the real social dynamics that prompt ethnic thinking. As Jonathan Hall has detailed and I have summarized elsewhere,³⁰ the instrumentalist approach emerged in the wake of the Holocaust as an alternative to racial theories of the past but ultimately only represented a shift in terminology instead of a substantive theoretical move.

Most problematic, however, may be how the facile division between primordialist and instrumentalist approaches neglects the nuanced admixture of both approaches within the articulation of ethnic identity. As I began to argue in the definition which opened this chapter, ethnic actors tend to propound their ethnic identities as biological, ancestral, and/or genetic inheritances while their deployment of ethnic identity in practice and even discourse belies this claim as hints of the instrumentalist view of ethnicity emerges, especially when ethnic bounds are tested. Similarly, as anthropologist Gil-White has argued, “ethnic actors’ instrumental considerations—and by implication their behaviours—are conditioned and constrained by this primordialist core.”³¹ Gil-White goes on to argue that the nearly universal scholarly consensus on the circumstantial function of ethnicity may have too hastily dismissed how the enunciation of primordialist views of ethnicity within ethnic groups continues to hold sway even when ethnic boundaries are porous or mutable.

Ethnicity then is a social phenomenon perhaps akin or analogous to the physical properties of light. Physics has long grappled with the paradox of light exhibiting the

³⁰ See Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 1-2 and ch. 1 of this dissertation.

³¹ Francisco J. Gil-White, “How Thick Is Blood? The Plot Thickens . . .: If Ethnic Actors Are Primordialists, What Remains of the Circumstantialist/Primordialist Controversy?,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (1999): 789.

characteristics of both particles and waves. Light is an essential, daily presence of human life; we can safely and simply assume its daily appearance. At the same time, light is an incredibly complex phenomenon that even contains within itself an irreconcilable physical signature. Nevertheless, one need not ponder this paradox of physics in order to appreciate the light of day or its many benefits; light is a natural “given,” a daily presence, which does not require us to ponder moment by moment whether it is a particle or a wave.

Similar to light, ethnic actors exhibit characteristics of two seemingly diametrically opposed modes of ethnic reasoning. While ethnic identities find primordial roots in ancestry and descent and though from an emic perspective these identities are *viewed* as natural and inherent, these same identities also find themselves being muted, nuanced, or reshaped as changing contexts require. At the complex, even seemingly irreconcilable, intersection of primordial and circumstantialist perspectives lies the rich discourse of ethnic reasoning. Ultimately, I would argue that this tension is one of the primary reasons we have such difficulty comprehending ethnicity, one of the primary sources behind the long and sometimes sordid history of scholarly inquiry into this pervasive human social element.

Barth's Ascriptive Model

An introductory essay by Fredrik Barth has proved persistently influential in the study of ethnicity as a critical touchstone on the subject.³² Barth's work was part of

³² Barth, “Introduction,” 9-38. See the summary of Barth's position in Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 9, where they label this approach “transactionalism” and three archaeologists' perspectives on Barth's influence on the study of ethnicities in Gil-White, “How Thick Is Blood?,” 791-94; Siân Jones, “Discourses of Identity in the Interpretation of the Past,” in *The Archaeology of Identities: A*

a wider argument against the “‘culture area’ view of ethnic groups” which argued, broadly speaking, that “an ethnic group . . . understood itself as such, was labeled by ‘others’ in like fashion, had a particular and distinctive culture (including a dialect), and whose members preferred each other to non-members (that is, endogamy, discrimination, ingroup solidarity, etc.).”³³ Countering these views, Gil-White writes:

these studies complained that ethnic identities did not map neatly to the distribution of cultural material, and proposed a shift from “objective” indicators of groupness, such as measurable discontinuities in the distribution of artifactual or ideational culture, towards a more “subjective” focus that relied heavily on the labelling process of ethnic actors themselves.³⁴

Therefore, Barth observes that while previous study had examined the cultural facets of individual cultures, much less attention had been paid to “the constitution of ethnic groups, and the nature of the boundaries between them.”³⁵ Barth in two ways critiques the notion that separation, whether geographic or social, has fueled cultural difference. First, social boundaries are porous—allowing the movement of people and their accompanying ethnic identities—but persistent. The transgressing of social boundaries does not invalidate them but actually perpetuates them. Second, the persistence of boundary-crossing interrelations demonstrates that such contacts are not challenges to ethnic difference but “are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built.”³⁶ For these reasons, Barth’s focus is less on the

Reader (ed. Timothy Insoll; London: Routledge, 2007), 47; idem, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 59-60; and Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” 94-95. Also, see the assessment of biblical scholars in Mark G. Brett, “Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; Biblical Interpretation Series 19; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 13-15 and Liew, “Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and (Post)Colonialism,” 118. Finally, see Goudriaan, *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt*, 8-13, whose methodology explicitly relies on Barth.

³³ Gil-White, “How Thick Is Blood?,” 791.

³⁴ Gil-White, “How Thick Is Blood?,” 791.

³⁵ Barth, “Introduction,” 9.

³⁶ Barth, “Introduction,” 10.

defining features of individual ethnic groups but on the construction, maintenance, and perpetuation of the boundaries that separate them. Ultimately, it is the interaction and encounter of ethnic groups that sharpen and even institutionalize their differences; the maintenance and the substantiation of ethnic boundaries is the *sine qua non* of ethnic groups. For this reason, what is valuable in the study of ethnic groups is their own “subjective and ascriptive”³⁷ conceptualization of the group. Nevertheless, Barth opts to reject the sharing of a common culture as a *marker* of ethnic groups but to treat it as an “*implication or result*”³⁸ of the forming of ethnic bounds. Barth argues, “The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.”³⁹ In the end, therefore, Barth promotes a view of ethnicity that is less concerned with the facets of ethnic identity or the exotic particularities of any individual ethnic group and more concerned with the lines of demarcation ethnic groups draw around and between one another. As Gil-White summarizes,

Thus, the labelling processes of local ethnic actors themselves are the only guides to the limits of the group, for “the [cultural] features that are taken into account are not the sum of ‘objective’ differences, but only those which *the actor themselves* regard as significant.” Any aspects of culture not recognized by local ethnic actors as significant will not necessarily covary with different ethnic labels.⁴⁰

To be sure, ethnic boundaries are an invaluable facet of ethnic identity construction; however, the maintenance of boundaries is not constitutive of ethnicity. Furthermore, ethnic identity is not simply an expression of difference precipitated by the encounter with the other. That is, ethnicity is not only an etic enterprise

³⁷ Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 60.

³⁸ Barth, “Introduction,” 11.

³⁹ Barth, “Introduction,” 15.

⁴⁰ Gil-White, “How Thick Is Blood?,” 791, citing Barth, “Introduction,” 14.

concerned with differentiating “us” from “them”; if so, ethnic reasoning would continually look outward. Ethnicity is also an emic process of communal introspection that can be precipitated within the ethnic group. Challenges to ethnic cohesion can emerge not just from external dangers but also from internal inconsistencies brought to light by a new generation, for example. Furthermore, ethnicity can exist without the countervailing pressure of an external boundary challenge; these transgressions of ethnic boundaries can, however, make explicit, challenge, and/or cause the ethnic group to redefine its own self-understanding. Yet such boundary threatening events are not solely responsible for the construction and proliferation of ethnic identities.

Taking into account these internal forces also opens the way for primordial views active within ethnic groups to become part of ethnic analysis. As Gil-White rightly points out, Barth’s conclusion that ethnic groups “are in the first instance collections of individuals sharing a common self-ascription, but with no necessary relation to any particular cultural content” has become a veritable scholarly consensus, but a question still remains: “are ethnic groups rational associations of self-interested actors, . . . or are they irrational ‘primordial’ groupings governed by emotional attachments, as others maintain?”⁴¹ One of the methodological aims of this chapter and of the dissertation as a whole is to test whether collapsing these distinctions actually aids our efforts to read the text of Acts. In the interplay between Jewish, Greek, and Roman ethnic identities, does Luke’s portrayal of ethnic identities exhibit the weaving together of both primordialist and circumstantialist views of ethnicity?

⁴¹ Gil-White, “How Thick Is Blood?,” 792.

Hutchinson and Smith's Six-fold Criteria of Ethnicity

Though Barth regularly merits a bibliographical note in much biblical scholarship dealing with ethnicity, the work of Hutchinson and Smith is much more influential, particularly because of the relative accessibility of their definition of ethnicity.⁴² They provide a productive starting point by outlining six defining elements of an ethnic community or “*ethnie*”:

1. a common *proper name*, to identify and express the “essence” of the community;
2. a myth of *common ancestry*, a myth rather than a fact, a myth that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and that gives an *ethnie* a sense of fictive kinship, what Horowitz terms a “super-family”;
3. shared *historical memories*, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration;
4. one or more *elements of common culture*, which need not be specified but normally include religion, customs, or language;
5. a *link* with a *homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation by the *ethnie*, only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples;
6. a *sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnie*'s population.⁴³

In this typology of ethnicities, Hutchinson and Smith prioritize two elements: the communal glue of common “myths and memories” as well as a retrospective focus on the community’s common historical roots.⁴⁴ Clearly, therefore, they have focused on the “contents” of ethnicity, unlike Barth whose focus remains on the boundaries of ethnic identities.

Though a heuristically profitable set of criteria for ethnicity, Hutchinson and Smith’s definition remains unbalanced, for they still give certain factors of ethnic identity more weight than others. Ultimately, a sharing of common myths of origins is

⁴² Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 3-14.

⁴³ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 6-7.

⁴⁴ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 7 summarize, “The destiny of the community is bound up with its ethno-history, with its own understanding of a unique, shared past.”

the *sine qua non* of ethnic identity; such an approach prioritizes certain facets of ethnic identity, not permitting other factors on the list to emerge as the organizing principle of any particular ethnic construction. Better yet would be a matrix of criteria or a pliable definition that does not eliminate as a presupposition the multiple and complex negotiations that ethnic identities undergo. The methodological risk endemic to Hutchinson and Smith's criteria is that we may create a too definitive and inflexible checklist that closes off the complex negotiations which I propose are inherent in ethnic discourse.

New Developments in Conceptualizing Ethnicity

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the efforts of my primary interlocutors in the study of ethnicity in antiquity. First, Jonathan Hall advocates a flexible, discursive, subjective definition of ethnicity, which, however, prioritizes myths of origins as the definitive feature of ethnicity, differentiating it from other affiliative groups. Second, Aaron Johnson provides some important critiques of the approaches of Hall and Cohen, specifically questioning the joining of a requisite central feature of ethnicity and flexible, negotiated boundaries. The former contradicts the latter, leading to a basic inconsistency. Finally, Buell argues, "Ideas about race and ethnicity gain persuasive power by being subject to revision while purporting to speak about fundamental essences."⁴⁵ Like Johnson, she advocates a polythetic approach to ethnicity that does not rely on myths of origins or territoriality as a primary requisite of ethnic identity. Instead the defining mark of ethnicity is the dynamic, reciprocal interaction between

⁴⁵ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 7.

the pliability in practice and prescribed fixity of ethnicity. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Hall has critiqued such polythetic approaches for their definitional laxity; this imprecision, he argues, makes ethnic groups indistinguishable from other affiliative groups. Nevertheless, I side here with Buell and Johnson that a social phenomenon that functions so flexibly needs a correspondingly flexible definition. Ethnicity is best defined not by focusing on an absolute, central organizing feature such as a common myth of origin but by a creative, negotiated matrix of ethnic notions related to common geography, myths, history, appellation, cultural and religious commitments, etc. Fortunately, such questions about the difficulties of pinpointing the distinctive features of ethnic identity have not been solely the province of historians of antiquity.

Beyond the Primordialist/Instrumentalist Divide: Siân Jones's The Archaeology of Ethnicity

Recently, archaeology has continued to contribute a vital and critical perspective on the question of ethnicity,⁴⁶ a perspective which biblical scholarship on Acts has yet to engage fully. Most influential in this dissertation is the acclaimed work of Siân Jones. Her *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, a revision of her doctoral thesis, reviews the history of archaeological contentions with ethnicity and introduces an innovative, adaptable, and precise definition of such a difficult notion.⁴⁷ In discerning “the

⁴⁶ Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*; idem, “Identities in Practice: Towards an Archaeological Perspective on Jewish Identity in Antiquity,” in *Jewish Local Patriotism and Self-Identification in the Graeco-Roman Period* (ed. Siân Jones and Sarah Pearce; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 29-49; Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” 86-109; and a pair of essays in Timothy Insoll, ed., *The Archaeology of Identities: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007): Siân Jones, “Discourses of Identity in the Interpretation of the Past,” 44-58 and Lynn Meskell, “Archaeologies of Identity,” 23-43. Professor Loveday Alexander first pointed me to the work of Jones.

⁴⁷ Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*. See also the distillation of her dissertation in idem, “Discourses of Identity.” The importance of Jones’s work in the archaeology of antiquity is noted in C. Thomas

conceptual and theoretical terrain” of archaeological definitions of ethnicity, Jones describes particularly aptly the primary challenge posed by a term which eludes easy conceptualization but can also slip so quickly into an amorphous category. She explains, “Definitions of ethnicity are also characterized by a tension between specificity and generality; that is between generic definitions which are considered to be too broad to be of any analytical use in the analysis of particular cases, and definitions that are so narrow that their comparative potential is minimal and their principal function is descriptive.” Jones argues that this tension is inherent to a lack of theoretical precision about ethnicity and to the mistaken generalization of local or particular ethnic characteristics. Both the primordialist and instrumentalist approaches receive her critique for such theoretical shortcomings, both being guilty of different but related reductionisms.⁴⁸ Searching for a perspective that consolidates these two approaches, Jones suggests,

In addition to the absence of a coherent theory of human action that can transcend the primordial-instrumental dichotomy, both perspectives share a critical gap in their explanatory logic: they fail to address the question of how people recognize commonalities of interest or sentiment underlying claims to a common identity. As Bentley points out, “ethnic identity claims involve a symbolic construal of sensation of likeness and difference, and these sensations must somehow be accounted for.” In order to address such issues it is necessary to

McCollough and Douglas R. Edwards, “The Archaeology of Difference: Setting the Stage,” in *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and The “Other” in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers* (ed. Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough; AASOR 60/61; Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), 1-11. For an archaeologist’s critique of Jones, see William G. Dever, “Ethnicity and the Archaeological Record: The Case of Early Israel,” in *The Archaeology of Difference*, 49-66 who argues that archaeological remains can provide sufficient correlations to specific ethnic groups and thus proposes a tentative “archaeological trait list” of ethnicity: “(1) Environmental setting; (2) Settlement type and pattern; (3) Demography; (4) Technology, adaptation, and subsistence, especially food systems; (5) House type; (6) Burial customs; (7) Dress; (8) Language; (9) Social organization; (10) Political structure; (11) Religion and cult; (12) External relations” (53). Dever specifically identifies one of the motivations of his study when he concludes, “The current ideologically driven trend to deny the earliest Israelites their ethnic identity is ominous—the first step in an agenda that would erase ancient and biblical Israel from history, from memory, and from any claim to moral authority” (60).

⁴⁸ Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 65-79.

reconsider the relationship between culture and ethnicity without resorting either to the idea that culturally determined ethnic affinities possess an innate primordiality or to a teleological, functionalist argument which assumes that cultural boundaries and associated ethnic identities come into being on an arbitrary basis in order to serve instrumental purposes.⁴⁹

The question is how to construe ethnicity in a way that accounts for its malleability, ubiquity, and purported permanence within ethnic groups, and the features that distinguish it from other affiliative groups.

Jones then provides an excellent working definition, one that has sharpened my own: “*Ethnic groups are culturally ascribed identity groups, which are based on the expression of a real or assumed shared culture and common descent (usually through the objectification of cultural, linguistic, religious, historical and/or physical characteristics).*”⁵⁰

Moreover, for Jones, the maintenance of ethnic identities requires the promulgation and often alteration of the group’s distinctives over time. Ethnicity is not simply a natural feature of groups but a continually propagated, negotiated, and reassessed notion. Yet, for Jones, these definitional specifications still lack analytic power in the same way that primordialist and instrumentalist definitions fall short. This working definition still does not address two key points. First, how are culture and ethnicity related one to another, or “what is the relationship between agents’ perceptions of ethnicity, and the cultural contexts and social relations in which they are embedded?”⁵¹ Second, how do we explain how particular groups *began* to see each other as ethnic kin?

⁴⁹ Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 82-83.

⁵⁰ Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 84.

⁵¹ Jones, “Discourses of Identity,” 48. This issue is of particular importance in archaeology which in previous generations presumed the direct correlation of cultural remains and clearly circumscribed ethnic groups or tribes.

To bridge these critical gaps in previous approaches, Jones turns to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus*, which

. . . is made up of durable dispositions towards certain perceptions and practices . . . which become part of an individual's sense of self at an early age, and which can be transposed from one context to another. As such, the *habitus* involves a process of socialization whereby new experiences are structured in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, and early experiences retain a particular weight. In this way, structures of power become embodied, resulting in certain dispositions (cognitive and motivating structures) which influence practice often at an unconscious level.⁵²

The *habitus* is for Jones the unifying factor between cultural practice and ethnic feeling:

Ethnicity is not a *passive reflection* of similarities and differences in the cultural practices and structural conditions in which people are socialized, as traditional normative and primordial approaches assume. Nor is ethnicity, as some instrumental approaches imply, produced entirely in the process of social interaction, whereby epiphenomenal cultural symbols are consciously manipulated in the pursuit of economic and political interests. Rather . . . it can be argued that the intersubjective construction of ethnic identity is grounded in the shared subliminal dispositions of the *habitus* which shape, and are shaped by, objective commonalities of practice . . .⁵³

For Jones, the *habitus* provides a conceptual middle ground that properly but indirectly links culture and ethnicity as well as primordial and instrumentalist views of ethnicity.

One of the vital aims for Jones in appending the notion of *habitus* to her definition of ethnicity is to avoid equating ethnicity and culture as previous archaeologists had done. The difference lies in the *habitus* or “structured [and structuring] dispositions” as the organizing principles of an ethnic group as opposed to “the objectified representation of culture *difference* involved in the production and

⁵² Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 88-89.

⁵³ Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 90. See also idem, “Discourses of Identity,” 49.

reproduction of ethnicity.”⁵⁴ Ultimately, therefore, the habitus, communal practices, or structured and structuring dispositions are mutually constitutive of ethnic identity. The habitus provides the cohesive logic for ethnic reasoning while shifts in the former demand a new logic to the latter. Once the unspoken, shared ethnic assumptions of a group are questioned, the habitus must reorient to incorporate these new concerns. As Jones details, “It is at such a discursive level that ethnic categories are produced, reproduced, and transformed through the systematic communication of cultural difference with relation to the cultural practices of particular ‘ethnic others.’”⁵⁵

This notion of habitus does not play as significant a role in this dissertation as the first two components of Jones’s definition of ethnicity, but it does provide an important clarification of what ethnic identity entails. I have included the notion of habitus in this preliminary discussion to present Jones’s argument more fully. I have done so because habitus provides a bridge between the performative and interpretive acts of ethnic contrasts and “the context of specific cultural practices and historical experiences which provide the basis for the perception of similarity and difference.”⁵⁶ In other words, habitus helps conceptualize those internal dispositions of commonality that make possible a cohesive contradistinction with the outsider. We know who we are as an ethnic group not just because we are not like others but because of our own unique dispositions. Though complicated, the notion of habitus helps nuance ethnicity by differentiating between the communal dispositions that provide the basis of ethnicity and ethnic feeling itself. To be sure, these distinctions are perhaps more

⁵⁴ Jones, “Discourses of Identity,” 49.

⁵⁵ Jones, “Discourses of Identity,” 49.

⁵⁶ Jones, “Discourses of Identity,” 51.

applicable in the discipline of archaeology but it nonetheless helps complete a full-blown model of ethnicity. Jones concludes,

From a “bird’s-eye view” the construction of ethnicity is likely to be manifested as multiple overlapping boundaries constituted by representations of cultural difference, which are at once transient, but also subject to reproduction and transformation in the ongoing processes of social life. Such a view of ethnicity undermines conventional methodological approaches which telescope various spatially and temporally distinct representations of ethnicity onto a single plane for the purposes of analyses and attempt to force the resulting incongruities and contradictions into an abstract conceptualization of the ethnic group as a discrete, internally homogeneous entity characterized by continuity of tradition. The theoretical approach developed here suggests that such a methodological and conceptual framework obliterates the reality of the dynamic and creative processes involved in the reproduction and transformation of ethnicity.⁵⁷

The definition of ethnicity proposed in this dissertation therefore begins not with the fixity of ethnic identities but their fluidity, not their homogeneity but rather their diversity in shifting contexts, not their arbitrary deployment but rather their ubiquitous appeal in the definition of communal self-understanding.

In an article applying her work in *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* to the construction of ancient Jewish identity, Jones clarifies and applies her theoretical work to an area of research that is close chronologically, culturally, and ethnically to the composition and contexts of Acts.⁵⁸ She begins by contextualizing her work within the emerging scholarly consensus that there was no single, homogenous, “orthodox” Judaism that militated against the encroachment of Hellenism but that ancient Judaism was a complex, diverse phenomenon that interacted in various ways with Hellenism. Archaeologists have contributed to evidence supporting this view, but—Jones argues—

⁵⁷ Jones, “Discourses of Identity,” 51.

⁵⁸ Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 29-49.

more consideration has to be directed toward how material culture may inform study of the formation of Jewish identity. Specifically, she argues that there is no direct correlation between “particular types of material culture and particular identities.”⁵⁹ Arguing against the “culture-history” archaeological approach, which posited precisely such a direct correlation, Jones also notes that archaeology of ancient Judaism has often relied too heavily—or better, relied without sufficient methodological rigor—on historical and literary sources to help contextualize material culture finds, resulting in a fatal circular logic.

In contrast, Jones proposes “a practice theory of ethnicity,”⁶⁰ drawing again on Bourdieu’s notion of the habitus:

The concept of the habitus can be used to explain the way in which subjective ethnic classifications are grounded in the social conditions characterizing particular social domains. Ethnicity is not a passive reflection of similarities and differences in the cultural practices and structural conditions in which agents are socialized. Nor is ethnicity entirely constituted in the process of social interaction, whereby cultural characteristics are manipulated in the pursuit of economic and political interests. Rather, drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of practice, it can be argued that the construction of ethnic identity is grounded in the shared subliminal dispositions of the habitus which shape, and are shaped, by commonalities of practice⁶¹

How then do habitus and ethnicity differ? Jones explains that the habitus undergirds the “objectified representations of cultural difference involved in the expression of ethnicity.”⁶² More precisely, the shared habitus of any community in isolation tends to be viewed as natural; when one encounters differences in communal dispositions, what was once deemed “natural” now becomes evidently discretionary or “arbitrary.” Such

⁵⁹ Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 31.

⁶⁰ Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 42.

⁶¹ Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 42-43.

⁶² Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 43.

encounters precipitate “a reflexive mode of perception involving a conscious rationalization of cultural practices which had previously constituted subliminal, taken-for-granted modes of behaviour.”⁶³ In the midst of this discursive justification of particular cultural practices and notions, ethnic discourse emerges in order to systematize the now evident cultural differences. This is precisely why we cannot simply list a single or even a set of absolute ethnic criteria, for the types of encounters that require the justification of communal cultural practices and dispositions vary greatly.⁶⁴ Jones details,

Such a theory accounts for the dynamic and contextual nature of ethnicity at the same time as addressing the relationship between people’s perceptions of ethnicity, and the cultural practices and social relations in which they are embedded. Furthermore, it suggests that there are likely to be significant differences between discursive literary representations of ethnicity and its manifestation in social practice which have important implications for the interpretation of ethnic groups in historical archaeology.⁶⁵

I would add that these theoretical reflections also have significant implications for an exegesis of Acts that is mindful of the complex negotiation of ethnic identities evident therein. While Jones’s archaeological efforts focus on “the cultural practices and social relations in which [ethnicities] are embedded” as well the evidence of ethnic reasoning in “social practice,” my attention turns to the “perceptions of ethnicity” evident in a particular piece of literature infused with concerns about porous ethnic boundaries.⁶⁶

⁶³ Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 43.

⁶⁴ Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 44 notes, “Moreover, expressions of ethnic difference are a product of the interrelation between the particular cultural practices and historical experiences activated in any given social context, and broader discourses of ethnicity. Consequently, the cultural content of ethnicity may vary substantively and qualitatively in different contexts, as may the importance of ethnicity.”

⁶⁵ Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 45.

⁶⁶ Cf. Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 48: “Material culture and literature may be intertwined in common representations of cultural identity. I have argued, however, that there are important qualitative differences between the representation of cultural identity in literature, and the expressions

Again, this dissertation does not concern itself primarily with archaeological finds or how material culture may provide glimpses into the daily practices of ethnic actors or the ideological construction of ethnic identities. For an archaeologist, Jones's work quite convincingly demands that the one-to-one link between ethnic identities and material remains be severed. However, the archaeological model Jones propounds along with the discussions outlined above pay significant dividends in the study of the literary construction of ethnicities in Acts 16. First, Jones proves that primordial and circumstantialist perspectives are not mutually exclusive; a critical focus on either side of this binary results in significant analytical blind spots. Thus, any valid working definition of ethnicity must find a way to incorporate both of these perspectives. Second, Jones emphasizes the adaptive nature of ethnic identities; such identities change over time and adjust to cultural changes and challenges. Finally, Jones's deployment of Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* demonstrates the importance of separating clearly the practices of ethnic activity and the discourse of ethnic reasoning from the wider cultural markers of any particular group of people. I now take a step back and reassess how the foregoing discussion has shaped my definition of ethnicity.

A Summary of Implications for a Study of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16

As a whole, the work of the scholarly interlocutors collected in this chapter has significant implications for the study of ethnicity in Acts 16 that helped shape the definition with which this chapter opened.⁶⁷

of identity embodied in the cultural practices which have contributed to much of the archaeological record.”

⁶⁷ Revell, *Roman Imperialism*, 7-8 provides a similar and excellent distillation of the consensus in archaeology about the “nature of identity” in her discussion of Romanness.

1. *Ethnicity is a social construction.*

Contrary to supposedly scientific approaches to determine the objective physiological, genealogical, or genetic origins and boundaries of racial groups, a growing consensus of scholarship across fields and disciplines has now concluded that ethnicity is a social construction, a fictional product of a people's common imagination.⁶⁸ As Lucy summarizes,

In this light, ethnic groupings as continually imagined (though not imaginary) groupings, can have no fixed boundaries. They are not things, in the sense of solid, bounded categorisations, but are rather “ideational beings”, and are a reflection of the fluid and situational aspects of individual and group identities. Like a reflection in water, if one delves too deeply, the image of solidity disappears.⁶⁹

Rather than being discerned in the strands of genes or the sizes and shapes of skulls, ethnicity is manifest in discourse, especially literary discourse.

2. *Ethnicity is a real social factor.*

The fictive character of ethnicity does not relegate it to social irrelevance. Like other social fictions, ethnicity helps shape the perception of selves and others. Perhaps race and ethnicity's most powerful component is the subtle and implicit ways it influences daily interactions and imbues them with great social significance. One need not plumb the depths of ethnic reasoning in order to engage in ethnic discourse and thus define so significantly how one conceives of the world. Ultimately, the designation of race and ethnicity as social fictions does not free us from the need for careful analysis.

⁶⁸ Even, the appeal of Hall, *Ethnic Identity* to “fictive kinship” itself may be redundant, as kinship itself—like ethnicity—is an “ideational being.”

⁶⁹ Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” 98.

3. *Ethnic reasoning characteristically includes elements of both primordial and circumstantial theories.*

Despite the distinction of these seemingly irreconcilable theories in previous approaches to race and ethnicity, I argue along with several recent studies that this is not a bright line distinction. At the same time, ethnic identities adapt to circumstances while ethnic actors continue to promote the primordial roots of their ethnicities. Analysis therefore requires an attention to this inherent tension in ethnic discourse.

4. *Ethnicities are flexible, even mutable.*

Racial and ethnic identities are not absolute notions. They shift through time, especially when changing circumstances require a new discourse of identity. In these changes, race and ethnicity do not lose their social power nor do they lose legitimacy in the eyes of their actors. Instead, changes in ethnic identity precipitate a new logic that justifies anew the group's primordial ties to its progenitors despite its shifting boundaries.

5. *The elements of ethnic identity are not fixed.*

The social glue that concretizes ethnic identity may vary from group to group or even from moment to moment. The fundamental assertion of ethnic identity is that a people or kin-group can be constituted by common ancestry, common tongue, common rituals of initiation, or any number of common practices. No single one of these ethnic markers can be highlighted as a *sine qua non* of ethnicity. Instead, ethnic identity is rooted in the constellation of factors leading to a communal sense of peoplehood. This ethnic feeling is necessarily concerned with the past, e.g., how those who preceded us became who they were and how we now continue to be part of these

people. As Lucy summarizes, “The role of history, and interpretation of the past does, however, seem fundamental to the creation and maintenance of ethnic feelings and identities, for a number of reasons. Notions of shared origins are usually very important for ethnic identities.”⁷⁰ Ultimately, it is this interpretation of the past that grounds ethnic reasoning while the various facets of ethnic identity (language, culture, physiology, religion, etc.) are manifestations of this shared narrative of the past and present of an ethnic group.

These five theses together orient the working definition of ethnicity around which this dissertation is constructed: race or ethnicity is a socially constructed, discursive, pliable claim to be a group of people defined around myths of putative commonality of kinship or ancestry including origins, language, culture, religion, geography, and other organizing principles; a particularly important qualification of this definition is that an ethnicity—while asserted by its members to be natural, inherent, and unchangeable—is actually in practice malleable and even mutable

Reading Ethnicity in Acts

The remaining chapters of this dissertation will explore Acts in light of this view of ethnicity. At this point, nonetheless, I intend to provide some preliminary criteria for analyzing ethnic discourse in Acts to buttress the theoretical work conducted in this chapter.

As I argued in chapter one, past NT scholarship hoping to grapple with the complexities of ethnic discourse has been unduly limited by a focus on single, isolated

⁷⁰ Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” 98.

ethnic identities (e.g. the Ethiopian eunuch) or isolated ethnic nomenclature (e.g. Hebrews and Hellenists).⁷¹ My focus then in this preliminary entry into the use and function of ethnic reasoning in Acts will need to look for another methodological and exegetical entrée.

Fortunately, there are a set of scholarly criteria developed by Colin Hemer that can serve here as a propaedeutic guide. Comparing the use of place-names and ethnic titles in Acts and ancient inscriptions, Hemer offers a series of theses that can help guide the efforts of this dissertation: “So many confusions and sceptical shibboleths have been festooned around Luke’s usage of toponyms that it seems desirable to make a separate summary statement of some features of ancient nomenclature”⁷² To be sure, my dissertation eschews an exclusive focus on terminology and opts to analyze the wider literary creation of ethnicity in Acts without denying the importance of also analyzing ethnic terminologies. I include Hemer’s criteria convinced that the principles underlying them also apply to the fuller ethnic identities Acts develops beyond the narrow focus on ethnic terminologies.

⁷¹ Equally problematic would be fixing one’s attention on the terminology of ἔθνος in Acts. Such an approach would suffer from serious methodological debilitations. Most important is that ethnicity and ἔθνος while linked semantically are not linked conceptually. There is not a fixed correlation between modern notions of ethnicity and the multiple, context-specific use of ἔθνος in ancient literature. As I detail further in ch. 3, in Acts, Ἰουδαῖος is counted as an ἔθνος, Ἰουδαῖος and ἔθνος are paired to encompass broad swaths of people, and Ἰουδαῖος live within or among an ἔθνος. Thus dissecting how and why Luke deploys the term ἔθνος would not prove as effective as one might initially hope. The multiple uses of ἔθνος in Acts and, more importantly, the problematic link between the term and the concept of ethnicity prevent such an analysis from serving a productive exegetical purpose.

The problematics revolving around too closely linking ἔθνος and ethnic groups as we define them today are well-rehearsed by Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 34 and McCoskey, “By Any Other Name,” 97-98, the latter of which concludes, “There may ultimately, then, be no clear way to determine the presence of ethnic identity in the modern sense through ancient linguistic terms alone (i.e., given that language is embedded in historically specific social structures and institutions, it seems dangerous to assume that any ancient term is capable of encapsulating the precise meaning of modern ethnicity).”

⁷² Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (ed. Conrad H. Gempf; WUNT 49; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 241. Toponymy has been a site of contestation on Acts at least as early as Conzelmann, *Theology*, who argued for the theological significance of Lukan geography. More recently, Loveday Alexander has produced a series of fascinating articles on Luke’s mental maps. See Alexander, “Mapping Early Christianity,” 163-73 and idem, “Narrative Maps,” 17-57.

First, Hemer notes that geographical and ethnic terminology are “patterned and flexible, and their interpretation must be studied in relation to documents of the appropriate date, with due recognition that the patterns of usage may be remarkably complex.”⁷³ Second, the classification of “Greek” and “Roman” uses of such terminology incorrectly simplifies a far more complex situation. Third, he critiques *LSJ* for its “haphazard, fragmentary, and badly misleading”⁷⁴ treatment of these terms. Fourth, Greek tends to utilize ethnic terminology where English opts for place-names (e.g. “the city of the Ephesians” versus “the city of Ephesus”). Fifth, in a specific reiteration of the first principle above, Hemer warns, “At various levels of the pattern the name of a city or country and its ethnic correspond closely to each other across the flexible range of application of both.”⁷⁵ Sixth, “there are considerable trivial variations in the formations of ethnics, local eccentricities and alternative forms.”⁷⁶ Seventh, shifts in the forms of ethnic terminology (e.g. spelling differences) are like “the variation between synonyms.”⁷⁷ Eighth, despite the previous two points, the scholar must allow for all-too-common spelling and scribal errors; not all changes in terminology are necessarily purposeful. Ninth, “the attempt to make theoretical distinctions between supposedly ‘substantial’ and ‘adjectival’ territorial names, as being anarthrous or articular . . . is misconceived.”⁷⁸ Finally, “where real semantic

⁷³ Hemer, *Hellenistic History*, 241.

⁷⁴ Hemer, *Hellenistic History*, 241-42.

⁷⁵ Hemer, *Hellenistic History*, 242.

⁷⁶ Hemer, *Hellenistic History*, 242.

⁷⁷ Hemer, *Hellenistic History*, 242.

⁷⁸ Hemer, *Hellenistic History*, 243.

conclusions are to be drawn, those conclusions must be based on the broadest possible description of usage and the application of clearly relevant examples.”⁷⁹

In summary, then, Hemer sounds a much-needed caution for us to become acutely aware of the complexity and flexibility of ethnic terminologies and—I would argue by extension—ethnic identities, and the related necessity to read the deployment of ethnic identities in a wider social and literary context. As he notes in the very first point, ethnicities are “patterned and flexible”⁸⁰; understanding the difference between patterns and shifts in ethnic identity in Acts requires a proper grounding in the theory of ethnicity, an understanding of wider patterns of ethnic discourse in antiquity, and a careful eye to the ways in which Luke sometimes plays into and at other times contradicts these wider patterns.

Recurring throughout Hemer’s list of principles is the vital conclusion that ethnic terminologies are pliable but patterned. While ethnicity is a flexible category, there remains a cohesive—though perhaps not immediately evident—logic that frames and supports ethnic discourse. A crucial component of the pattern of ethnic discourse returns once again to the definition with which I opened this chapter. Ethnicities commingle primordial views (the patterns) and the circumstantialist perspective (flexibility).

Ethnic Fictions, Racial Realities

This dissertation is not concerned primarily with purportedly “real” ethnic identities or a historical reconstruction of who ancient Jews, Romans, and Greeks

⁷⁹ Hemer, *Hellenistic History*, 243.

⁸⁰ Hemer, *Hellenistic History*, 241.

were.⁸¹ Instead, I argue that in Acts ethnic identities are literary projections with roots in historical realities, but these literary projections are ultimately social fictions. As Hall asserts, “ethnic identity is not a ‘natural’ fact of life; it is something that needs to be actively proclaimed, reclaimed and disclaimed through discursive channels. For this reason, it is the literary evidence which must constitute the first and final frame of analysis in the study of ancient ethnicity.”⁸² The production of ethnic reasoning in Acts resides in the constructed literary world Luke posits for his readers. The narrative theological claims propounded by Acts are fertile ground for the development, questioning, and exploitation of ethnic identities and difference.

Ultimately, however, ethnicities are interstitial phenomena, residing in the small yet complex conceptual space between socially constructed ethnic identities and the implementation and performance of these ethnic identities in tangible social spaces, like the production of literature.⁸³ Though the practice of ethnicity evident in archaeological remains that draw Jones’s attention are not identical to the discursive production of ethnic reasoning in literature, there is a certain interdependence between the two to which she has alluded.⁸⁴ The ethnic reasoning present in literature depends on some degree of fealty to “real” ethnic ideas embodied in practices that mark one group over against another in order to prove persuasive, which is ultimately the aim of the literary production of ethnic identities. In this way, the distinction between “fictive” and “real” dimensions of ethnic identities is not entirely clear-cut. This dissertation focuses on the former but must grapple with the latter in order to

⁸¹ Contra Helm, “Races and Physical Types,” 137-54 whose analysis begins with skeletal remains and continues to rely on physical attributes as the core of racial identity.

⁸² Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 182.

⁸³ Cf. Lieu, “Impregnable Ramparts,” 298-99.

⁸⁴ See Jones, “Identities in Practice,” 48.

comprehend the full range of Luke's ethnic argumentation and whether and/or how it would prove persuasive to an ancient audience.

When I turn in the next chapter to the complex ethnic identities of Timothy and the potentially transformative effect of his circumcision as an adult, I am less concerned about the historical likelihood that the historical Paul would have undertaken such an action or whether the "historical Timothy" would have been viewed as a fellow Jew by his ancient brethren. Instead, I propose to delve into the complexities of the literary depiction of Timothy's disputed ethnic identity and how it contributes to Luke's theological program.

Chapter Three

Negotiating Identities upon Timothy's Body: Circumcision, Multiculturalism, and Jewish Identity (Acts 16:1-5)

“Except for part of Philo I can think of no narrative preserved from the same period whose scene is laid so largely in the Jewish circles of the eastern Mediterranean outside of Palestine [than the Acts of the Apostles].”¹

Immediately following the climactic apostolic accord in Acts 15 deeming unnecessary the circumcision of Gentile converts but requiring that they follow fundamental behavioral guidelines, the circumcision of Timothy by Paul appears problematic.² A difficult passage to incorporate within the wider narrative of Acts and even Paul's own testimony, the opening verses of 16:1-5 bring to the forefront the complexities of ethnic discourse. Perhaps for this very reason, the passage has intrigued scholars looking for coherent theological positions on the part of Paul, but it has also precipitated a great deal of confusion and uncertainty, even something resembling benign neglect. For example, a monograph titled *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* mentions this passage only once; moreover, that one reference does not explore Timothy's disputed relationship to Jewish identity but his mother's identification as Jewish.³

¹ Cadbury, *History*, 86.

² As succinctly, though perhaps understatedly, summarized by C.K. Barrett, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary* (London: Continuum, 2002), 244, when considering whether Luke recounts a historically accurate piece of Pauline biography, “It is a question on which students of Acts are divided.” Cf. Justin Taylor, *Les Actes des deux Apôtres: Commentaire historique V (EBib 23)* (Paris: Gabalda, 1994-2000), 231: “Cette affirmation a toujours embarrassé les commentateurs” This chapter suggests that these scholarly disagreements are at least partly rooted in misunderstandings of ethnic discourse.

³ Joseph B. Tyson, “The Problem of Jewish Rejection in Acts,” in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. Joseph B. Tyson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1998), 131. However, cf. Rajak, “The Location of Cultures,” 2 who correctly notes the critical Lukan themes which this passage exemplifies:

In this chapter, I argue that Acts 16:1-5 engages directly in ethnic discourse that plays upon Timothy's disputed ethnicity. His mixed heritage is an immediate test of the preceding chapter's consensus that Gentile converts were not required to follow the full strictures of Judaism, yet the text exhibits no dissonance between this theological compromise and Paul's circumcision of Timothy. In contrast, scholarly efforts to disentangle the ethnic reasoning behind this passage demonstrate unease with the pliability of ethnic bounds, an unease betrayed not only by insufficient exegesis but also by a seeming unwillingness to grapple directly with the constructed nature of ethnicity. In this passage, scholarship has tended to bifurcate religion and ethnicity whereas antiquity blended the two. As defined in chapter 2, race or ethnicity is a socially constructed, discursive, pliable claim to be a group of people defined around myths of putative commonality of kinship or ancestry including origins, language, culture, religion, geography, and other organizing principles; an ethnicity—while asserted by its members to be natural, inherent, and unchangeable—is actually malleable. Thus, I argue that Luke's Paul engages precisely in this definitive ethnic discourse that posits the rigidity of ethnic distinctions yet admits their pliability; from Luke's perspective, Timothy's ethnicity is concrete and embodied but also pliable and negotiable. Reflecting the flexible ethnic boundaries of ancient identities, Luke's ethnic discourse posits that ethnic distinctions and complexities are neither an obstacle to the early followers of Jesus nor an irritant in need of remediation. Ethnic differences are not in need of transcendence, effacement, or elimination. Instead, they are a critical

“Equally, the question of who is a Jew and who a Gentile is of prime importance throughout Acts, theologically and anecdotally. Thus Timothy's delineation as a half-Jew, child of a Jewish-Christian mother and a non-Jewish father (16:1) is made with unparalleled precision for the literature of the period, and constitutes one of our rare pieces of evidence for intermarriage.”

component of ancient life around the Mediterranean and thus of a burgeoning movement hoping to find a place in its diverse environs.

Following a prefatory reading of the passage, I then turn to a history of interpretation of this passage, discerning four basic approaches to Timothy's disputed ethnic identities. Next, I define the two crucial ethnic appellations in this text: What might Luke have meant when he drew on ethnic terminologies like Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλληνας? These questions grapple directly with the complex function of ethnic terminologies, exemplified best by the ongoing debate about the translation of Ἰουδαῖος as "Jew" or "Judean." In fact, Acts 16:1-5 demonstrates particularly well the complexity of a debate that extends well beyond a simple question of translation. As a subset of this far-reaching debate on the question of the proper English rendering of Ἰουδαῖος, I demonstrate the ambivalence and ambiguity that surrounds the ethnic marker of circumcision. Ultimately, I will conclude that both Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλληνας are misread if defined exclusively as being either solely geographic or solely religious in referent; instead, ethnic terminologies such as these exhibit overlap, mutuality, and synchronicity.

Finally, in light of these terminological determinations, I provide my reading of 16:1-5 which begins by noticing that Luke's use of ethnic language reflects an ambiguous understanding of ethnicity and its attendant terminologies; his is a use of ethnic categories that are pliable and not rigid. Therefore, the character of Timothy defies a single ethnic categorization; asking whether he is "Jewish" or "Greek" is an exegetical red herring, for Luke never clarifies whether Timothy is Jewish or Greek prior to or after his circumcision. Neither does Luke explain whether Timothy's

circumcision makes his ethnic identity certain. Throughout the narrative, Timothy remains “in-between” the binary of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην thanks to the mixed ethnic heritage of his parents. In fact, Luke only characterizes Timothy’s ethnicity by referring to his circumcision or lack thereof; Luke never refers to Timothy as a Ἰουδαῖος or a Ἕλλην precisely because the ambiguity surrounding Timothy’s mixed parentage and unusual circumcision does not bring full clarity to his ethnic identity. Instead, his circumcision is an open ethnic symbol, apparently sufficient for those Ἰουδαῖοι that precipitated Paul’s actions but not necessarily a conclusive clarification of Timothy’s irreducibly mixed ethnic identity. Ultimately, asking whether Timothy was a Jew or a Gentile is a false option. In fact, he was both.

A Preliminary Exploration of Acts 16:1-5

Acts 16 opens with a compact travel itinerary and then seemingly contradicts the climactic consensus of the previous chapter. Luke introduces Paul’s traveling companion and a disciple (μαθητής) named Timothy by detailing his familial heritage. While his mother is described as being a Jewish member of the nascent Christian movement (γυναικὸς Ἰουδαίας πιστῆς), his father is described simply as Greek (Ἕλληνας). The description of Timothy’s parents is compact, a conflation of ethnic and religious reasoning; that is, ethnicity and religion are inextricably and subtly mixed. Thus, Timothy’s mother is called both Ἰουδαία and πιστή. An ethnic term like Ἰουδαία can function in a number of ways in Luke-Acts.⁴ Here, Luke identifies Timothy’s mother as a member of the people that call the God of Israel their own, in an admixture

⁴ See below.

of both ethnic and religious identity. The latter term (πιστή) probably identifies her as a member of the Christian community.⁵ In contrast to Timothy's mother then (δέ), his father is Ἕλληνας.⁶ Timothy, therefore, is of mixed ethnic and religious parentage. The ambiguity of both these identities could precipitate the conflicts Paul hopes to elude by circumcising Timothy.

The rationale for Timothy's circumcision is spelled out in v. 3, but Luke does so within a form of ethnic reasoning not immediately evident to us. What are the unspoken assumptions that link family and ethnic identity? What is Timothy's ethnicity or perhaps his multiple ethnicities? Does his ethnic identity shift when his body bears the ethnic marker of circumcision? Unfortunately, we are not immediately privy to how Luke or other ancient readers would answer these questions. Instead, Luke simply states that the circumcision of Timothy was precipitated by the Ἰουδαίους they would encounter on their travels. Paul assumes that the well-known ethnicity of Timothy's father would somehow prove unpalatable to them (ἤδεισαν γὰρ ἅπαντες ὅτι Ἕλληνα ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ ὑπῆρχεν).

The text does not resolve a number of questions: why was Timothy not circumcised as a child? How and why would Paul or certain Ἰουδαῖοι they would

⁵ Cf. Acts 10:45 and 16:15. The former seems to differentiate Peter's compatriots as fellow circumcised believers (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοὶ). The latter use, however, seems more descriptive than substantive; that is, Lydia characterizes herself as faithful but does not seem to be specifying herself as a believer. Is it possible then that the description of Timothy's mother as πιστή does not specify that she is a follower of Christ necessarily but a woman of faith, that is, faithful to the traditions of the Ἰουδαῖοι? Notice that the use of πιστός shifts from the Gospel to Acts. Luke 12:42, 16:10-12, and 19:17 all use the same term in the context of faithfulness in business transactions in the parables of Jesus and not a marker of Christian faith.

⁶ The contrast between "Jew" and "Greek" is prevalent in the NT. See Acts 14:1; 17:4; 18:4; 19:10, 17; 20:21; and 21:28 as discussed below. See also Rom 1:16; 2:9; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor 1:22, 24; 10:32; 12:13; Gal 3:28; and Col 3:11. Finally, cf. John 7:35 and 2 Macc 4:36, 11:2. The common contrast suggests that δέ here plays an adversative function rather than a simple equation; however, the contrast between Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλληνα may not be as great as previously assumed. See below.

encounter require an ethnic marker that would be wholly invisible during most everyday social interactions? Furthermore, why must Timothy undergo circumcision though the Jerusalem concord that both Paul and Timothy propagate suggests it might be unnecessary?⁷ These questions have produced four basic approaches to the question of Timothy's identity.

Trending toward Ethnic Discourse: Four Basic Exegetical Approaches

This problematic text has stoked the exegetical imaginations of many commentators seeking coherence between the concord of Acts 15 and the seemingly contradictory circumcision of Timothy in ch. 16.

Conzelmann – An Explanation via Rabbis

In his classic commentary, Hans Conzelmann proposes a traditional approach to this pericope which scholarship has challenged only recently.⁸ From the very first, Conzelmann argues that Jewish law would have viewed the marriage of Timothy's parents as illegitimate; yet, just as quickly, he concedes that a child of a Jewish mother inherited her identity. Both assertions, however, rely on much later rabbinic conclusions. I will argue throughout this chapter that the concern with Timothy's parentage is not primarily juridical (Conzelmann goes so far as to suggest that "Luke does not have a precise understanding of Jewish laws"⁹) but ethnic. Timothy's identity is not clarified via legal reflection but in the discursive creation of ethnicity, especially

⁷ Yet cf. v. 4 which records the successful promulgation of the apostolic concord. For Luke, there seems to be no inconsistency between the concord of ch. 15 and Paul's circumcising of Timothy.

⁸ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 125.

⁹ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 125.

in this case when seemingly exclusive ethnicities are embodied in one individual. Ultimately, however, the necessary implication for Conzelmann of the rabbinic conclusions about maternal lineage results in a particular theological rationale for the circumcision of Timothy: “For Luke, Timothy’s circumcision is required because of the schematic portrayal of Paul’s mission in Acts which requires that Paul always go first to the synagogue.”¹⁰ In Conzelmann’s view, a narrative imperative—one that purportedly schematizes the movement of the gospel from synagogue to Gentiles—necessitates the circumcision of this unconsummated Jew. One finds Conzelmann’s approach still reproduced in a number of commentaries¹¹ despite the anachronistic error of importing later rabbinic conclusions to the text of Acts; more important, such an approach neglects the complexities of ethnic negotiations.

Fitzmyer – A Theological Explanation

Paralleling Conzelmann, Joseph Fitzmyer consistently points to strictly theological or religious explanations for the exegetical gaps in this passage.¹² For example, he concludes that Timothy was a “Jewish Christian, and this would provide the background for Paul’s decision to have him circumcised,”¹³ even though his Jewishness is precisely what is disputed in the text! Fitzmyer theorizes that it was because of his father that Timothy was not circumcised, though the text gives no support for this conclusion. Similarly, he delimits to his religion Timothy’s father’s designation as

¹⁰ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 125.

¹¹ Cf. Justo L. González, *Hechos* (Miami, Fla.: Editorial Caribe, 1992), 233; Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEKNT 3; 17th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 412; Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* (rev. William F. Albright and C.S. Mann; AB 31; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1967) 155; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (rev. ed.; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 137.

¹² Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 573–76.

¹³ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 574.

Greek: “‘Greek’ would mean that his father was a heathen, not a Jew.”¹⁴ However, this explanation seems overly concerned with religious identity and gives little heed to ethnicity. Finally, we ought to take note of Fitzmyer’s characterization of this entire section of Acts as “Paul’s *Universal Mission and Testimony*.”¹⁵ This encapsulating characterization naturally leads to a reading of Acts that imagines the transcendence and thus relative unimportance of ethnicity.

Johnson – An Apologetic, Cultural Explanation

Luke Timothy Johnson’s commentary takes important steps beyond both Conzelmann and Fitzmyer. Instead of citing later rabbinic strictures, Johnson observes the general unease with intermarriage expressed in Judaism “since the time of the restoration.”¹⁶ This unease likely extended to Timothy’s own life as we consider why he was not circumcised as a child. Johnson outlines three possibilities:

- a) the mother’s commitment to this new cult was stronger than had been her commitment to Judaism; b) according to custom at the time, as a son of a Gentile father, Timothy would not be considered Jewish and therefore have no need of circumcision; c) the Greek father (who had sway in such matters) had prevented her from having Timothy circumcised.¹⁷

¹⁴ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 576. See also Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 387 and Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; HTKNT 5; Freiburg: Herder, 1980-1982), 2:200, n. 13 where he points to Acts 11:20 and 21:28 as other locations in which “Ἕλληνα” was equivalent to “Heide.” In both cases, however, a wider ethnic meaning seems more than plausible.

¹⁵ Italics added.

¹⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 283 cites Neh 13:23-27, Ezra 9:1-10:44, Mal 1:10-16, and *Jub.* 30:7-17. Whether such unease continues into the early centuries of the Common Era remains uncertain to me.

¹⁷ Johnson, *Acts*, 284. At least one miniscule manuscript 104 and a few others seem to opt for Johnson’s third suggestion by adding *χήρας* immediately after *γυναικὸς* in v. 1. The implication of this addition is perhaps that Timothy’s mother is now a widow; previously, while her husband still lived, he might have stood in the way of Timothy’s circumcision. Similarly, other manuscripts (gig p vg^{ms}) substitute *viduae* in place of Ἰουδαίας; see C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994-1998), 2:760. Another variation is E, which omits Ἰουδαίας. See Reuben Swanson, ed., *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1998), 274. To these alternatives, Josep Rius-Camps, *El camino de Pablo a la misión de los paganos:*

Pointing to v. 3, Johnson argues that this third alternative is most likely. However, Luke shows no concern to explain why Timothy was not circumcised but instead focuses on his tenuous ethnic identity; the various alternatives Johnson proposes, though clearly tenable, are not particularly helpful in the interpretation of the passage. What is clear is that Timothy's ethnicity is highly questioned in this passage both because of his mixed parentage but also because he never underwent this defining Jewish ritual.

Despite such uncertainties, Johnson makes a strong case that Luke must have considered Timothy to be Jewish:

If Timothy were Jewish (which is what Luke seems to want us to think), then his circumcision is not a condition for discipleship (he is already called that) but rather a means of assuring acceptability among the Jews with whom (together with Paul) he will work.¹⁸

That is, Luke views Timothy's circumcision as a practical expedient that confirms and clarifies his ethnic and religious identity. Thus, "... the act of circumcision signifies loyalty to the ancestral traditions (the *ethos* of the Jewish *ethnos*)."¹⁹

We ought to take special notice of Johnson's emphasis. For instead of querying whether the historical Paul would have plausibly taken such steps, Johnson consistently turns his attention to *Luke's* perceptions:

Our reading cannot hope to settle the historical issue of Paul's views or moral consistency, but can only address the question of Luke's

comentario lingüístico y exegetico a Hch 13-28 (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1984), 91 adds a fourth: "Su calidad de incircunciso revela que, en esta comunidad, no se han hecho concesiones a la casuística rabínica, sino que ha prevalecido el hecho de que su madre era «creyente» sobre el de ser «judía», es decir, que se trata de un grupo «cristiano» de discípulos, a pesar de su ascendencia «judía»; de un grupo que ha roto manifiestamente con la Ley, gozando en consecuencia de buena reputación entre los hermanos paganos."

¹⁸ Johnson, *Acts*, 284.

¹⁹ Johnson, *Acts*, 284. Throughout this section of his commentary, Johnson verges upon language of ethnicity but tends to opt for the Greek term *ethnos*, though that term is not found in these verses.

perception. Here, everything depends on two factors: a) whether Luke wants the reader to perceive Timothy as a Jew, and b) whether Luke regards circumcision as a legitimate expression of national *ethnos* for Jews.²⁰

Johnson, as we saw above, answers both in the affirmative: “. . . as the *ethos* of the Jewish people, it is a legitimate expression of identity and their ancestral commitment to God.”²¹ Not only does Luke consider circumcision a genuine mark of the Jewish *ethos*, but his construction of this passage also creates literary and theological coherence with the rest of his narrative. First, Johnson argues that the passage actually elucidates rather than obfuscates the apostolic council’s decisions of Acts 15, which did not prohibit Jewish Christians from expressing their identity via circumcision but only concluded, “It was to have cultural rather than soteriological significance.”²² Furthermore, the passage is a narrative defense of Paul against those who would accuse him of abandoning the tenets of Judaism.²³ Finally, Timothy’s circumcision contradicts a charge that James will voice later in the narrative: “You [Paul] teach all Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe their customs” (21:21).²⁴

Yet these three conclusions ultimately do not cohere well with the passage. The first conclusion presumes Timothy’s clear Jewish identity (that he is a *Jewish* Christian) though Luke actually plays on the disputed nature of his ethnicity. Second, it is unavoidable that the ritual of circumcision is not just a religious statement but also an important—though disputed—ethnic marker. Thus, I am not certain that this passage

²⁰ Johnson, *Acts*, 288-89.

²¹ Johnson, *Acts*, 289.

²² Johnson, *Acts*, 289.

²³ See Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:201: “Die Tendenz der lukanischen Darstellung ist hier, Paulus als gesetzzetrenen Juden und treuen Übermittler des Jerusalemer Dekrets (V 4) zu schildern.”

²⁴ Cf. Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 137.

confirms Paul's Jewish *bona fides*, for it presents the unusual circumcision of an individual with unusual ethnic credentials. The circumcision of Timothy is ultimately not a representation of fealty to Jewish law as much as an attempt to clarify Timothy's disputed ethnic identity. Finally, I am not certain that vv. 1-5 actually answer the charge leveled in 21:21, for Timothy is not a child that Paul ensures is circumcised on the eighth day of his life. Moreover, the response deemed appropriate by James and the elders in Jerusalem has nothing to do with circumcision but calls upon Paul to join four men in a ritual of purification (ἀγνίσθητι σὺν αὐτοῖς) and pay for their expenses. Having done so, they argue, no one will be able to question your Jewish *bona fides* (21:24). Timothy's circumcision is thus never introduced as evidence to defend Paul's ethnic and religious integrity.

Though Johnson's interpretation verges on the kind of attention to ethnicity this dissertation advocates by beginning to discuss the *ethos* and *ethnos* of ancient Judaism, he does not develop this vital aspect of the text fully. That he opts for the language of *ethos* and *ethnos* without utilizing the label of "ethnicity" might suggest his unease with an ethnic analysis of this pericope or, more likely, an acknowledgment of the complexity of applying contemporary categories to antiquity. However, like Fitzmyer, Johnson's broad conceptualization of this section of Acts reveals a particular blind spot. For Johnson, 15:36-16:10 represents "The Mission to Europe," even though such a cartographical shift is not in view in these verses.²⁵ Even more telling, Johnson concludes, "Finally, Luke shows us how, having *transcended ethnic limits*, the Messianist

²⁵ David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 452 labels the geographic move similarly. See ch. 4 where I argue that Luke imbues the crossing into Macedonia with a profound theological impetus and ethnic significance not associated with Europe.

movement crossed still another geographical boundary.”²⁶ This dissertation disputes both halves of this conclusion. First, the text in no way “transcends” ethnic limits. If anything, the text trades on ethnic discourse toward a particular theological end. What is also clear is that that theological end is not the spread of the gospel to Europe but that pliable notions of ethnicity are a lived reality for the early church and an opportunity for the gospel to take flesh in the multi-ethnic environs of the ancient world. Ethnic difference is not according to Luke an obstacle to be overcome or an inconvenience to be remediated in the formation of a Christian community unencumbered by ethnic difference. Instead, Luke’s vision is of a community united around Jesus without the requirement of ethnic effacement.

Cohen – An Ethnic Binary Explanation

Before we turn to my reading of these verses, one more scholar’s efforts deserve our attention since they represent an important step toward the type of reading I advocate in this dissertation. Timothy’s ethnic identity was clearly a vital touchstone in Shaye Cohen’s *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, for it merited an appendix discussing whether Timothy was himself Jewish; Cohen ultimately concludes that there is no evidence that anyone in the ancient world would have considered Timothy to be

²⁶ Johnson, *Acts*, 290. Italics added. See also Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 427: “Die Mission in Europa fängt in einer römischen Kolonie mit römischer Verwaltung an, in Philippi” and Pervo, *Acts*, 389. Cf. Josep Rius-Camps, “Jesús y el Espíritu Santo conducen la misión hacia Europa (Hch 16, 1-18,22),” *EstBib* 52 (1994): 517-33 who posits the same directional and geographical conception. Most problematic is James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity, 1996), 215 who argues, “This section [Acts 16:1-10] is *primarily intended* to demonstrate how it was that Paul first brought the gospel to Europe, or at least into the Aegean basin” (italics added). The virtual equalization of Europe and the Aegean basin finds little basis in ancient sources; more importantly, the off-hand admission that Europe may be the geographic focus of this narrative transition finds little exegetical basis. See ch. 4.

Jewish.²⁷ Overall, I hope not so much to challenge Cohen's conclusions as to contend that asking whether Timothy was Jewish may miss a wider point about the pliable bounds of ethnicity.

Having pointed out the oft-cited incongruities between Paul's strict adherence to this rite and the contrasting concessions of Acts 15, Cohen determines that the narrative tensions evoked by this passage extend to the author himself: "Although the Paul of Acts never preaches freedom from the Law and never denigrates circumcision, the author of Acts 16:1-3 seems a *little uneasy* with the circumcision of Timothy."²⁸ Yet, Cohen never specifies the source nor points to particular literary evidence of Luke's purported discomfort. Instead, Cohen cites fifth-century evidence from Ammonios that, strangely enough, fails to confirm Luke's unease.²⁹ Indeed, Acts 16:1-3 exhibits no problem in engaging in such ethnic discourse; if discomfort exists anywhere, it may lie with assumptions about race and ethnicity this dissertation hopes to contest.

For Cohen, the crux of Timothy's Jewish identity actually depends on his mother; the basic question is whether there is evidence that the matrilineal principle is in effect in Acts.³⁰ In other words, does Luke assume that a mother's ethnicity determines her child's identity? Verse 3 is, therefore, definitive for Cohen as it "implies that Timothy was a gentile like his father." Furthermore, ". . . Acts 16:1-3 cannot refer to the circumcision of a Jew. The phrase *because of the Jews in that vicinity* implies that,

²⁷ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 363-77. See also idem, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1-3)? Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinic Law, and Matrilineal Descent," *JBL* 105 (1986): 251-68. Cf. Christopher Bryan, "A Further Look at Acts 16:1-3," *JBL* 107 (1988): 292-94, who briefly but directly responds to Cohen's argument.

²⁸ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 363. Italics added.

²⁹ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 363, n. 2.

³⁰ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 366. See also Barrett, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:759 and David Daube, *Ancient Jewish Law: Three Inaugural Lectures* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 22-32, esp. 25-26.

were it not for them, Paul would have left Timothy uncircumcised.”³¹ To be sure, Cohen acknowledges that such arguments are not proof of his position, only that they are potentially significant. Nevertheless, his reading is certainly not the only alternative. Here, Cohen may lean too heavily on an essentialist model of ethnicity, in which ethnicities are firm, immutable. Instead, “the Jews in those places” indicates not that Timothy was clearly a Gentile but that his father’s ethno-religious identity brought his Jewishness into question because there was no simple ethnic equation that would clarify his ambiguous position. Thus, I disagree with Cohen’s assertion that “the author of Acts 16:1-3 thought that he was narrating the circumcision of a gentile who had a Jewish mother” and suggest instead that Luke was recounting the ethnic travails of an individual with competing identities within himself. Though physically unmarked as a Jew, Timothy in some sense must have had a share in Jewish identity; otherwise, as Johnson suggested above, Paul’s actions would have been transparently artificial.

Yet Cohen’s argument expands beyond these initial exegetical queries. Having combed through the history of interpretation of this passage, Cohen finds in the patristic era a veritable consensus buttressing his argument: “Timothy was not a Jew.”³² The earliest dissenting voice comes from Ambrosiaster in a collection of Latin commentaries whose provenance remains difficult to trace. Ambrosiaster contrasts Paul’s refusal to circumcise Titus (Gal 2:4-5) with his acquiescence to circumcise Timothy. Titus was a Gentile; according to the apostolic consensus of Acts 15, therefore, he was not expected nor required to receive circumcision. Timothy,

³¹ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 366.

³² Cohen, *Beginnings*, 367.

however, was Jewish because of his mother and thus could legitimately receive circumcision. Despite this problematic exception, Cohen argues

that the vast majority of exegetes, from the second century to the eighteenth, did not explain Paul's conduct by appeal to Timothy's Jewishness. As the son of a gentile father Timothy was a gentile. The reference to the Jewishness of Timothy's mother was considered by these scholars to be inconsequential and virtually irrelevant.³³

Yet, Cohen himself seems to demur from this uncompromising position. In a footnote near the end of this appendix, he not only indicates that the ethnicity of Timothy's mother is important to the interpretation of this text, but he also seems sympathetic to a position advocated by J. Louis Martyn: "Luke imagines that the early Christians confront a world consisting of three groups: Jews, gentiles, and those in between Timothy, by virtue of his mixed lineage, is a member of the middle group."³⁴ Despite the concessions in this footnote, Cohen's concluding paragraph is far more direct:

Was Timothy Jewish? In all likelihood Luke did not think so. The vast majority of ancient and medieval exegetes did not think so. Ambrosiaster and his medieval followers did think so, but in all likelihood this interpretation is wrong because there is no evidence that any Jew in pre-mishnaic times thought that the offspring of an intermarriage follows the status of the mother. Was Timothy Jewish? The answer must be no.³⁵

The rest of this chapter will suggest that Cohen's footnote citation of Martyn may prove a better interpretation of 16:1-5 than his concluding paragraph. In the end, asking whether Timothy was Jewish excludes an additional and fitting alternative: that ethnicities are not either/or propositions but pliable constructions. Asking the

³³ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 376.

³⁴ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 376, n. 35. Cf. Rius-Camps, *El camino*, 91: "Lucas pretende ir más allá del personaje real, conocido por el nombre de Timoteo (cf. 17,14.15; 18,5; 19,22; 20,4), describiendo por su medio un grupo de discípulos con doble ascendencia, judía y pagana."

³⁵ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 377.

question expecting one or another side of a binary pair belies the complexities of the construction of ethnic identities, especially in this text.

Summary

These readings represent four basic approaches to the function and/or presence of ethnic discourse in Acts 16:1-5.³⁶ Conzelmann's rabbinic explanation relies on interpretations that significantly post-date the composition of Acts to conclude that Timothy must have been Jewish and that Paul's primary, if not sole, motivation was theological, thus maintaining consistency with the apostolic council's decision that Gentiles need not be circumcised.³⁷ Fitzmyer's religious explanation focuses nearly

³⁶ None of these approaches is necessarily mutually exclusive. Nor are interpretations that combine these various approaches uncommon. See, for example, González, *Hechos*, 233: "Timoteo era hijo de madre judía y padre pagano (<<griego>>). Según la ley judía, los vástagos de madre judía eran considerados hijos de Israel." Via an appeal to a rabbinic explanation as well as an equating of pagan and "Greek," this interpretation embraces two of the categories outlined above. See also Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 412: "Ob dieser zur Gemeinde gehört, wird nicht gesagt, was offenbar bedeutet, dass er Heide ist. Kinder aus einer solchen, nach jüdischem Recht ungesetzlichen Ehe, einer Mischehe, gelten als Juden."

³⁷ Cf. Str-B, 2:741; González, *Hechos*, 233; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 412; Irina Levinskaya, *The Books of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (vol. 5 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 12-17; Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:200, n. 13; and F. Scott Spencer, *Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 169. Munck, *Acts*, 155 argues, "As a Jewess, Eunice [Timothy's mother according to 2 Timothy 1:5] could not according to the Mosaic law have contracted a legal marriage with a Gentile. Therefore her children must have been considered illegitimate; since such children followed their mother's nationality, they were thus Jews. For this reason Timothy was not a Gentile whom Paul had circumcised but a Jew." Talbert, *Acts*, 137 acknowledges that the "principle of matrilineal descent" postdates the composition of Acts but that this text still "seems to assume it. Luke considers it to be the case." Witherington, *Acts*, 475-76 dismisses Cohen's arguments for the later development of the matrilineal principle: "The latest this principle became a rule was in the first quarter of the second century A.D., as Cohen admits, and surely it is reasonable to assume it was already widely recognized as a valid idea by early Jews in the first century." Cf. Bryan, "Acts 16:1-3," 292-93 who nuances the problematic of relying on data postdating the composition of Acts: "If Luke wants to tell us nothing more than that Paul circumcised a Gentile, why begin with a statement that artistically (even if not, at this date, legally) directs our thoughts in another direction? Why is it so important for us to know that Timothy's mother was Jewish that Luke tells us this before telling us anything else?" Bryan, "Acts 16:1-3," 292; Dunn, *Acts*, 216-17; and Witherington, *Acts*, 476-77 also cite consistency with Pauline theology found in Gal and 1 Cor. While acknowledging that the principle of matrilineal descent was not operative in the first century, Barrett, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary*, 244 still argues that the marriage was illegal and that his mother's lineage was determinative for Timothy's identity. Finally, without noting the rabbinic dictates upon which his argument rests, Robert

exclusively on the religious aspects of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην and thus excludes ethnicity as a presupposition.³⁸ Johnson takes important though tentative steps to admit ethnicity to the interpretation of this passage, acknowledging the intersection of the Jewish people (*ethnos*) and Jewish culture (*ethos*), in what I would call the preemptive apologetic explanation; that is, a preemptive refutation of charges later levied against Paul that he subverted the foundational customs of Jewishness.³⁹ Finally, there is Cohen's binary explanation which, while broaching more explicitly than other attempts outlined above the importance of ethnicity in the interpretation of this passage, ultimately works out of a concept of exclusive ethnicity. That is, at least in Timothy's case, he does not admit the possibility that ethnic identities may not be mutually exclusive; Timothy was clearly not a Jew.⁴⁰

W. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *Acts, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, Romans, 1 Corinthians* (vol. 10 of *New Interpreter's Bible*; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 226 writes, "Even though his Jewish identity is *guaranteed through his mother*, Timothy is the product of a mixed marriage and his birthright is imperiled for this reason; indeed, he has Jewish ancestry but is not yet circumcised!" (italics added). Similar is John Gillman, "Timothy," *ABD* 6:560.

³⁸ Cf. Barrett, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary*, 244 who writes, "She was a Jewess, his father was a Greek—that is, a Gentile"; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 232-33; Gillman, "Timothy," *ABD* 6:560 speaks of "regularizing his *religious* status" (italics added); González, *Hechos*, 233; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 478, 481; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 412; Peterson, *Acts*, 450-51; Rius-Camps, *El camino*, 91; Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:200 who comments, "Timotheus ist der Sohn einer gläubig gewordenen Jüdin und eines heidnischen Vaters"; and Wall, *NIB*, 10:226.

³⁹ See Gaventa, *Acts*, 233: "[Paul's] deed also anticipates the charge in 21:21 that he undermines the law of Moses; even at this point he is revealed to be innocent"; also Wall, *NIB*, 10:226.

⁴⁰ See also Daube, *Ancient Jewish Law*, 26. In opposition to Cohen, Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 113 argue that Timothy was clearly an "Israelite"; however, they base this argument on what appears to me an idiosyncratic interpretation of Ἕλλην. They argue that Ἕλλην does not refer to the ethnicity of Timothy's father but to the level of his accommodation to Greek culture. However, such a novel rereading of the text strikes me as too speculative to be considered plausible. Even more difficult is the contention that Timothy's circumcision involved a small cut that drew blood, not the surgical removal of the foreskin. See also Bruce J. Malina, *Timothy: Paul's Closest Associate* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008), 100-5.

Between Geography and Religion: (Re)defining Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην

Much of the interpretation of 16:1-5 hinges on understanding the referents of the passage's ethnic terminology. Who is a Ἰουδαῖος? Who is a Ἕλλην? Are these mutually exclusive categories? In the case of the ethnic identity of a Ἰουδαῖος, what role does circumcision play? And, most importantly, does Luke actively redefine these terms in this passage? Such ethnic terminologies encompass a range of identity markers including geography, religion, myths of origin, and other factors. To narrow the scope of either term to just religion or geography misses their full nuance and discursive ability.

Judean or Jew?: Defining Ἰουδαῖος

The translation of the contested term Ἰουδαῖος has long been at the center of scholarly debates,⁴¹ the dark shadow of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism only exacerbating the problematic translation of Ἰουδαῖος as “Jews.”⁴² The debate is not simply lexicographical or translational; the concern is not just what English term best matches this slippery Greek ethnic term. Instead, the debate around Ἰουδαῖος challenges core aspects of New Testament scholarship: the definition of Jewishness in antiquity, the problematics revolving around modern reconstruction of ancient history, and the ethical implications of scholarly conclusions.

A distinction between the scholarly use of “Jew” and “Judean” first began in the nineteenth century with the distinction between the religious and geographic

⁴¹ As Hodge, *If Sons*, 11 notes, “If ever there were a can of worms in New Testament scholarship, the translation of *Ioudaios* is one.”

⁴² See for example, Malcolm Lowe, “Who Were the IOYΔΑΙΟΙ?,” *NovT* 18 (1976), 130.

dimensions of Ἰουδαῖος.⁴³ Unlike “other ethnic terms such as *Hellēn* and *Aigýptos*” which were translated with a single English term, the double translational option for Ἰουδαῖος “both reflect[s] and reinforce[s] the assumption that religious commitments are separate from particularities of identity such as homeland.”⁴⁴

New Testament scholarship grew particularly concerned with these distinctions in the study of the Gospel of John when concern arose that the internecine polemic against “the Jews” had given currency to a wholesale derision of all Jews.⁴⁵ Noting that many translators still opted for “Jews” though “almost the only point of agreement between commentators is that this cannot in general be its meaning,” Lowe writes,

Commentators tend either to force one of these meanings upon every occurrence of the word, or to use a mixture of different possibilities without attempting to establish any systematic connexion between the variety of meanings proposed. In neither case is the result convincing.⁴⁶

Lowe, therefore, proceeds to outline the various ways in which Ἰουδαῖος was used in antiquity. Its three basic meanings are primarily oppositional: a particular tribe, area, or religion as opposed to any other tribe, area, or religion.⁴⁷ He argues further that there was a distinction between the use of Ἰουδαῖος in Palestine and in the Diaspora; the former emphasized geography whereas the latter appealed mainly to religion.⁴⁸ Yet, he contradicts such a clear distinction just a paragraph later when citing

⁴³ See Hodge, *If Sons*, 12.

⁴⁴ Hodge, *If Sons*, 12 concludes, “Using two terms for ancient Jews, one that referred to territory and one that referred to religion, maintains this bifurcation.”

⁴⁵ See for example, Lowe, “Who Were the IOYΔAIOI?,” 101-30. Cf. John Ashton, “The Identity and Function of the IOYΔAIOI in the Fourth Gospel,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 40-75; Hodge, *If Sons*, 12; Luke Timothy Johnson, “The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 419-41; and Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 87-117.

⁴⁶ Lowe, “Who Were the IOYΔAIOI?,” 101.

⁴⁷ Lowe, “Who Were the IOYΔAIOI?,” 102-3.

⁴⁸ Lowe, “Who Were the IOYΔAIOI?,” 104. To be sure, such a sharp distinction between so-called Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism is easily overemphasized.

Josephus's dual use of the term as both "Judean" (geographic) and "Jew" (religious); in fact, "[Josephus] even uses the word in *different* senses in the *same* passage, supposing that the reader can easily guess the correct sense from the context."⁴⁹ In the end, however, Lowe concludes that it is geography that predominates in the use of Ἰουδαῖος in both Josephus and the New Testament, though authors such as Luke that Lowe identifies as situated in the Diaspora tend to have "a greater incidence of Ἰουδαῖοι meaning 'Jews in general'" ⁵⁰ He concludes, ". . . rendering οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as 'the Jews' is not only incorrect (and inconsistent with rendering Ἰουδαία as 'Judea') but also pernicious."⁵¹

Lowe identifies the basic initial concerns about the translation of Ἰουδαῖος, especially the ethical and lexicographical dimensions of the debate. However, he also imports the modern tendency to separate ethnicity from religion, the former being natural and inherent and the latter a matter of choice. Ultimately, as I will demonstrate from my reading of Acts 16:1-5 below, ethnic terminologies such as Ἰουδαῖος are neither solely geographic nor religious but inherently flexible.

The debate around Ἰουδαῖος continues and is further complicated by the inclusion of theories of ethnicity and its construction.⁵² For example, Cohen has

⁴⁹ Lowe, "Who Were the ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ?," 104-5. A possible parallel exists here between Josephus' flexible use of the term and that of Luke in Acts 2. See below.

⁵⁰ Lowe, "Who Were the ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ?," 129.

⁵¹ Lowe, "Who Were the ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ?," 130.

⁵² See A.K.M. Adam, "According to Whose Law? Aristobulus, Galilee and the ΝΟΜΟΙ ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ," *JSP* 14 (1996), 15-21; John M.G. Barclay, "Constructing Judean Identity after 70 CE: A Study of Josephus's *Against Apion*," in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others: Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson* (ed. Zeba A. Crook and Philip A. Harland; New Testament Manuscripts 18; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2007), 99-112; Shaye Cohen, "Ioudaios: 'Judaean' and 'Jew' in Susanna, First Maccabees, and Second Maccabees," in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Volume 1: Judentum* (ed. Hubert Cancik et al.; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996), 211-20; idem, "Ἰουδαῖος τὸ γένος and Related Expressions in Josephus," in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith* (ed. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers; StPB 41; Brill: Leiden, 1994), 23-38; John H. Elliott, "Jesus the Israelite was Neither a 'Jew' nor a 'Christian': On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature," *Journal*

provided critical and historical nuance to the vicissitudes of ethnic terminologies. Tectonic historical events and movements can quickly shift how and why a people define themselves along ethnic lines. Thus, he has concluded that before the second century BCE Ἰουδαῖος meant only “Judean,” whereas afterwards it was used to include both “Jew” and “Judean”:

Behind this semantic shift lies a significant development in the history of Judaism. It was only in the Maccabean period that the “ethnic” or “national” self-definition was supplemented by a “cultural” or “religious” self-definition. “Judaean,” the citizens of Judaea, gradually become “Jews,” the followers of a certain way of life or religion.⁵³

Yet other scholars have pointed to other momentous historical junctures. Pilch points to the rise of Rabbinic Judaism as the chronological marker indicating the shift from

for the Study of the Historical Jesus 5 (2007): 119-54; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 63-74; idem, “From Ioudaioi to Children of God: The Development of a Non-Ethnic Group Identity in the Gospel of John,” in *In Other Words: Essays on Social Science Methods & the New Testament in Honor of Jerome H. Neyrey* (ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn, Zeba A. Crook, and Eric Stewart; Social World of Biblical Antiquity, Second Series 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 106-37; Naomi Janowitz, “Rethinking Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity,” in *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity* (ed. Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex; London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2000), 205-10; A.T. Kraabel, “The Roman Diaspora: Six Questionable Assumptions,” *JJS* 33 (1982): 454-55; Ross S. Kraemer, “On the Meaning of the Term ‘Jew’ in Greco-Roman Inscriptions,” *HTR* 82 (1989): 35-53; Levine, *Misunderstood Jew*, 159-66; Malcolm Lowe, “IOYΔΑΙΟΙ of the Apocrypha: A Fresh Approach to the Gospels of James, Pseudo-Thomas, Peter and Nicodemus,” *NovT* 23 (1981): 56-90; Timothy Luckritz Marquis, “Re-Presenting Galilean Identity: Josephus's Use of 1 Maccabees 10:25-45 and the Term *Ioudaios*,” in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition* (ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin; WUNT 210; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 55-68; Steve Mason, “Jew, Judaean, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457-512; John J. Pilch, “Are there Jews and Christians in the Bible?,” *HTS* 53 (1997): 119-25; Anthony J. Saldarini, “The Social World of Christian Jews and Jewish Christians,” in *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine* (ed. Hayim Lapin; Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture 5; Bethesda, Md.: University Press of Maryland, 1998), 115-54; Daniel R. Schwartz, “Herodians and *Ioudaioi* in Flavian Rome,” in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James Rives; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63-78; Heikki Solin, “Juden und Syrer im westlichen Teil der römischen Welt,” *ANRW*, 2.29.2: 587-789; and Peter J. Tomson, “The Names Israel and Jew in Ancient Judaism and in the New Testament,” *Bijdr* 47 (1986): 120-40.

See also blog entries by AKM Adam (http://akma.disseminary.org/archives/2007/10/judeans_in_the.html), Michael Bird (<http://euangelizomai.blogspot.com/2007/11/being-jew-or-judean.html>) and <http://euangelizomai.blogspot.com/2008/05/judean-and-syrian.html>), Phil Harland (<http://www.philipharland.com/Blog/2007/10/23/was-there-such-a-thing-as-ancient-judaism-steve-masons-recent-article-on-judeans-ioudaioi-in-antiquity/>), and David Miller via Michael Pahl's website (<http://michaelpahl.blogspot.com/2007/12/david-miller-on-jew-vs-judean.html>).

⁵³ Cohen, “Ioudaios,” 212. Cf. idem, *Beginnings*, 69-106.

Judeans to Jews.⁵⁴ Adam opts for the Bar Kochba revolt.⁵⁵ In other words, several scholars concur that antiquity saw a shift in the connotation of Ἰουδαῖος but suggest different chronological pivot points for the ancient lexicon. This may suggest that the referent of Ἰουδαῖος was extremely flexible throughout the period in view in this dissertation and, more important, that seeking to pinpoint a turning point for these flexible definitions may be an artificial historical conclusion.

Moving beyond such chronological and lexical calculations but ultimately proving problematic, Mason has contributed significantly to this debate by arguing that the translation of Ἰουδαῖος as “Jew” uncritically mixes distinct conceptual categories.⁵⁶ According to Mason, the exegete in this way imports a religious valence to a term which in the ancient world was primarily ethnic; in fact, the ancient world would not have fathomed the distinctions modernity so easily construes between religious associations and ethnic identities. He concludes,

It is quite proper that modern histories of the Jews should track the vicissitudes of this people across millennia, in the same way that one may write histories of the English, Greeks, Italians, Germans, and Christians over twenty or more centuries. But in all such cases we recognize that ancient conditions, terminology, and categories were different from our own [A]lthough “Jew” and “Judaism” have developed from Ἰουδαῖος / Ἰουδαϊσμός and cognates, the Greek and Latin terms carried a different charge in their ancient contexts. In many of these cases, there is no great harm in using the familiar terms for popular studies, which can gently explain the historical situation. For academic purposes, the simplest solution is often to use the ancient terms themselves in transliteration, as we often do for *princeps* and *imperator*. But this is of dubious merit in translation projects, and cumbersome in other efforts to make the fruits of scholarship more broadly accessible. In the case of *Ioudaios* / *Iudaeus*, the most adequate

⁵⁴ Pilch, “Jews and Christians,” 122.

⁵⁵ Adam, “According to Whose Law?,” 19.

⁵⁶ Mason, “Problems of Categorization,” 457-512.

English option is “Judaean,” by analogy with the other ethnica alongside which ancient writers consistently place it.⁵⁷

Mason is correct here on several fronts. First, within an academic context, our best choice may be to transliterate Greek terms without a proper analogue in English. Second, we must be constantly mindful of the considerable differences that mark the ancient and contemporary worlds and, by implication, the different ways each deploys ethnic terminologies. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether Mason’s proposal that we translate Ἰουδαῖος as “Judean” rather than “Jew” actually solves the historical, lexical, and ethical problems he outlines. Mason concludes,

The *Ioudaioi* of the Graeco-Roman world remained an ἔθνος; a people associated with a place and its customs—no matter how far, or how long, they had been away from Judaea There was no ready alternative, since the Graeco-Roman world knew no category of religion, no *-isms* denoting religious allegiance, and no “Judaism.”⁵⁸

The key is, however, that a Ἰουδαῖος would be known as a part of “a people associated with a *place and its customs*.” Ἰουδαῖος, therefore, is not a geographic marker⁵⁹ but an ethnic marker encompassing a multitude of social and cultural facets: place, customs, religious practices, and a number of other factors. I am not convinced that “Judean” encompasses these various factors any better than “Jew.”

The distinction between these various solutions is whether translators retain “Jews” while acknowledging the word’s limitations or shift to “Judeans.” While these debates continue, in the seminal and long-awaited 2001 publication of the third edition

⁵⁷ Mason, “Problems of Categorization,” 510-11.

⁵⁸ Mason, “Problems of Categorization,” 511.

⁵⁹ Tying Ἰουδαῖος to a geographic orientation is particularly problematic. As Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (3 vols.; rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973-1986), 1:140-42 and 2:1-15 argues, the boundaries of ancient Judea were consistently in flux yet the term Ἰουδαῖος was still deployed to refer to a particular group of people.

of BDAG, the translation of Ἰουδαῖος as “Judean” shifted from a contested notion to a seeming consensus. Danker writes,

Since the term “Judaism” suggests a monolithic entity that fails to take account of the many varieties of thought and social expression associated with such adherents, the calque or loanword “Judean” is used in this and other entries where Ἰ. is treated Incalculable harm has been caused by simply glossing Ἰ. with “Jew”, for many readers or auditors of Bible translations do not practice the historical judgment necessary to distinguish between circumstances and events of an ancient time and contemporary ethnic-religious-social realities, with the result that anti-Judaism in the modern sense of the term is needlessly fostered through biblical texts.⁶⁰

But let us keep in view the aim of this dissertation: the goal is not so much to provide an alternative in the dispute between “Jews” and “Judeans” or to solve this translational conundrum but to emphasize the *function* of ethnic discourse in Acts 16. In this dissertation, the more important point is that Ἰουδαῖος is an ethnic term, influenced but not determined by religion alone. Ultimately, I concur with Hodge that neither of these scholarly alternatives is particularly satisfactory:

Now should come the moment when I unveil my neat solution to these problems. Unfortunately, I have none. I have a clear idea of what we need: one term, not two, that operates in English the way *Ioudaios* (and *Hellēn* and *Aigyptos*) operate in Greek. It should be multivalent, complex, context-dependent and it should include various facets of self-understanding: religious practices, geographic homeland, shared history, ethical codes, common ancestry, stories of origin, theological positions. We need a term that does not already connote specific, limited meanings (like things religious or things ethnic/geographic) and one that comprises both ancient and modern Jews, in all various manifestations and self-definitions. Neither “Jew” nor “Judean” does the job without problems.⁶¹

⁶⁰ BDAG, s.v. Ἰουδαῖος.

⁶¹ Hodge, *If Sons*, 15.

To be sure, “Jews” is profoundly problematic not only because of the sordid history of Western anti-Semitism but also because it does not give sufficient weight to the ethnic dimensions of Ἰουδαῖος.

At the same time, as Amy-Jill Levine has argued, “Judean” is itself a limited, if not equally problematic, translation: “The Jew is replaced with the Judean, and thus we have a *Judenrein* (‘Jew-free’) text, a text purified of Jews. Complementing this erasure, scholars then proclaim that Jesus is neither Jew nor even Judean, but Galilean.”⁶²

Furthermore,

The *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon*, although promoting the translation “Judean,” observes that *Ioudaios* includes “one who identifies with beliefs, rites, and customs of adherents of Israel’s Mosaic and prophetic tradition.” The translation “Judean” will not convey to modern readers anything regarding practice or belief. The translation “Jew,” however, signals a number of aspects of Jesus’ behavior and that of other “Jews,” whether Judean, Galilean, or from the Diaspora: circumcision, wearing *tzitzit*, keeping kosher, calling God “father,” attending synagogue gatherings, reading Torah and Prophets, knowing that they are neither Gentiles nor Samaritans, honoring the Sabbath, and celebrating the Passover. All these, and much more, are markers also of traditional Jews today. Continuity outweighs the discontinuity. To translate the New Testament term as “Judean” rather than “Jew” will lose, for today’s readers, the specific sense of religious affiliation and religious practice. Doran concludes, correctly: “In modern English ‘Judean’ retains only the connotation of geographical origin, without maintaining the religious and cultural significance that a point-of-origin term would have retained in antiquity. I have therefore opted to keep the traditional translation,” that is, “Jew.”⁶³

In the end, then, “Judeans” remains insufficient as it excludes the central importance of religion in the defining of this people as well as the historical continuities which an ethical consciousness requires scholars to maintain. As Daniel R. Schwartz has

⁶² Levine, *Misunderstood Jew*, 160.

⁶³ Levine, *Misunderstood Jew*, 162. Cf. Bengt Holmberg, “Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity,” in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (ed. Bengt Holmberg; WUNT 226; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 4.

concluded, “. . . Jewish identity in antiquity was anything but unambiguous. It would not seem to be a good idea, when we come to represent ancient notions and realities by translating ancient books, to lean over backwards to make it sound as it were.”⁶⁴

At this point, my options are three-fold. First, I could simply pick either one of these problematic terms, constantly reminding the reader of its inadequacies. The constant refrain of caveats may prove too distracting and ultimately not take seriously enough the problems these terms pose in historical inquiry.⁶⁵ Second, I could use both terms at the same time (Jews/Judeans) or interchangeably; again, however, the limitations of these terms may then only be relegated to footnotes when their importance properly belongs at the forefront of this discussion. Third, following Hodge I could opt for “Ioudaios,” thus emphasizing that there is not a term in English that lines up well enough with the Greek term, while at the same time reserving the right to use “Jew” or “Jewish” in order to remind the reader of the historical links between these ancient and modern peoples.⁶⁶ While I tend to prefer the latter in this dissertation, ultimately, this work cannot resolve these irreducible ambiguities and irreconcilable tensions. The focus of this dissertation on Acts requires me to ask specifically what the author of this text might have meant by the ethnic term Ἰουδαῖος and be prepared to discover that Luke takes advantage of the multivalent potential of this and other ethnic appellations. With that in mind, how does Luke actually deploy this term?

⁶⁴ Daniel R. Schwartz, “‘Judaean’ or ‘Jew’? How Should We Translate *Ioudaios* in Josephus?,” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World/Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt* (ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripentrog; AGJU 71; Boston: Brill, 2007), 22.

⁶⁵ Hodge, *If Sons*, 9 compellingly argues against such an approach, “While some can-of-worms issues are handily set aside, acknowledged in a note in order to move on, in a study of ethnic and kinship discourses in Paul, this one demands attention. For the debates about translating *Ioudaios* illustrate just how entrenched the religion/ethnicity dichotomy is in our thinking, just the notion I aim to challenge.”

⁶⁶ Hodge, *If Sons*, 15.

The Uses of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts

Despite the critical and informative nuances outlined above, my aim to determine the flexible uses of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts requires a careful analysis of its use in this text with a specific concern for the complex dimensions of ethnic discourse. Overall, I find that Luke does not tend to use the term Ἰουδαῖος generically. The term nearly always refers to specific people instead of an amorphous group. Here, we find a telling parallel with a set of terminologies frequently debated in Acts scholarship:

The terminology, then, shows some fluctuation. *Phoboumenoi*, *sebomenoi*, and *theosebeis* can all on occasion refer to Gentiles who are associated with Judaism in some way, but none of these terms is unequivocal, and each occurrence must be interpreted in its own context.⁶⁷

In the same way, the use of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts is equally unequivocal; if anything, its meaning is even more volatile as a multivalent ethnic terminology. What tends to be consistent in the use of the term in Acts is the specificity of its referents. The immediate contexts are simply indispensable, for each individual narrative in which the term is found shapes the meaning fundamentally; in fact, Ἰουδαῖος is used flexibly throughout the narrative of Acts and even within individual pericopes. In the end, the fear that “Jew” too narrowly circumscribes the referent of Ἰουδαῖος is also true of “Judean.” The solution, therefore, is not a single, universal English translation for Ἰουδαῖος but exegetical acknowledgement that ethnic terminology refers to a fleeting reality constantly in negotiation, and so that Luke constantly draws and redraws the referent of Ἰουδαῖος. Thus, the solution to this exegetical puzzle is eschewing the

⁶⁷ John J. Collins, “A Symbol of Otherness: Circumcision and Salvation in the First Century,” in *To See Ourselves As Other See Us”: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 182-83.

generalization of Ἰουδαῖος and instead paying careful attention to its individual instantiations.⁶⁸

To be sure, a cataloging of these instantiations is not innovative, but an awareness of the complexities of ethnic discourse requires a second look at such a catalog. Conzelmann seemed to set the scholarly stage when he noted:

In the very usage of Ἰουδαῖος we can trace a certain hardening. Here two motifs are joined—the collective polemic and the fact that the starting-point of the mission is always in the synagogue. There is a link between the two. That the starting point is in the synagogue is of course required by redemptive history (cf. Acts xiii, 46: ἀναγκάϊον). On the other hand there is at the same time a reference to the cutting off of the Jews from redemptive history (ibid., πρῶτον). We can say that the Jews are now called to make good their claim to be “Israel.” If they fail to do this, then they become “the Jews.” For the individual the way of salvation is open, now as always. The polemic is at the same time a call to repentance; the continual reminder that the Church is grounded in redemptive history prevents the connection with Israel from ever being forgotten.⁶⁹

Thus, in Luke’s deployment of the term Ἰουδαῖος, Conzelmann finds part of a significant theological project. About this, there is little doubt.

Several decades later, in a more detailed analysis, Augusto Barbi sought an orderly classification of *Ioudaioi* in “The Use and Meaning of (*Hoi*) *Ioudaioi* in Acts.”⁷⁰ From the first, Barbi marks his interest in the term as a concern for how Luke views Jews and Judaism in the text of Acts. Noting that previous scholars had tended to consider Luke’s increasing use of *Ioudaioi* throughout the narrative of Acts as a signal that the term has become increasingly polemical, Barbi hopes to analyze specifically

⁶⁸ Cf. Kraemer, “‘Jew’ in Greco-Roman Inscriptions,” 35-53 who argues for the flexible, multivalent use of Ἰουδαῖος in Greco-Roman inscriptions.

⁶⁹ Conzelmann, *Theology*, 145.

⁷⁰ Augusto Barbi, “The Use and Meaning of (*Hoi*) *Ioudaioi* in Acts,” in *Luke and Acts* (ed. Gerald O’Collins and Gilberto Marconi; trans. Matthew J. O’Connell; New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 123-42. Cf. W. Gutbrod, “Ἰουδαῖος,” *TDNT* 3:379-80 which provides a brief discussion of the term’s usage in Acts and Muñoz-Larrondo, “Living in Two Worlds,” 242-51.

the occurrences of the term and determine whether each instance carries a negative valence. Furthermore, he hopes to find a narrative turning point for when the term may have shifted from a neutral to a polemic designation. Barbi divides the uses of *Ioudaioi* into two broad categories. First are those instances “which display no interaction between Jews and evangelizers,”⁷¹ followed by the majority of passages in which some encounter is evident between the two groups and which may evince “an adversarial meaning.”⁷² Using this basic decision as well as additional sub-categories, Barbi concludes,

The classification I have presented has made it possible not only to set forth the interaction between the preachers of the gospel and *Ioudaioi* but also to show when the term (*hoi Ioudaioi*) has an ethnic and religious meaning and when, on the contrary, a negative connotation may be assumed.⁷³

His conclusions are fourfold.⁷⁴ First, his classification has revealed that while successes among the “Jews” were quite frequent, more common and climactic was the growing opposition to the “evangelizers” this group inspired, especially during Paul’s trial scenes. Second, when there is no interaction, *Ioudaioi* is a neutral ethnic and religious designation; however, the intrusion of opposition to the evangelizers in Acts means that the *Ioudaioi* are increasingly those obstinate or even violent opponents of the early Christians. Third, Barbi notes a recurring narrative pattern: proclamation, mixed success amongst the Jews, and the materialization of *Ioudaioi* as antagonists. “When

⁷¹ Barbi, “*Ioudaioi*,” 125. A problem already emerges here, for Luke certainly would have viewed many of the early followers of Christ as “Jews.” Timothy’s mother is a prime example along with Paul’s own ethnic claims.

⁷² Barbi, “*Ioudaioi*,” 133.

⁷³ Barbi, “*Ioudaioi*,” 133. Here, Barbi implies, I think, that “an ethnic and religious meaning” would be descriptive and objective while uses with “a negative connotation” are polemical and subjective.

⁷⁴ Barbi, “*Ioudaioi*,” 140-42. He actually includes a fifth conclusion though it consists of leading questions for further research.

they reject the gospel, they become *Ioudaioi* in the adversarial sense.”⁷⁵ Fourth, the narrative pattern allows Barbi to counter those scholars who see the martyrdom of Stephen or the preaching of Paul as narrative fulcrums in Luke’s use of *Ioudaioi*; “the opposition of the Jews is thus viewed as constant and present from the outset.”⁷⁶

The problems with Barbi’s approach are significant and call for a reassessment of Luke’s use of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts. From the first, his analysis presumes a contentious dispute between the *Ioudaioi* and the “evangelizers”; to be sure, such a conflict may exist, but Barbi takes its presence for granted in the divisions of uses of *Ioudaioi* to two broad categories. It is thus no surprise that his basic “criterion” divides the uses of *Ioudaioi* in precisely this way:

The criterion is this: if even when the author is aware that preaching addressed to the Jews is to some extent successful, he nonetheless uses (*hoi*) *Ioudaioi* without restriction, or other expressions even more indicative of a totality, to describe the opponents of the gospel and its preachers, then the term certainly does not have a neutral ethno-religious meaning but refers to those members of Israel who have closed their minds to the preaching of the gospel.⁷⁷

This quotation further leads to a second, even more comprehensive, problem. Barbi fundamentally misunderstands the function and use of ethnic discourse. Ethnic distinctions are not neutral, and a simple binary between neutral, detached ethnic designation and a polemic against opponents oversimplifies the complexity of ethnic discourse.⁷⁸ One wonders whether for Barbi Luke’s *Ioudaioi* are no longer ethnically *Ioudaioi* when they oppose the gospel. There seems to be an unspoken assumption that identity as *Ioudaioi* is traded for another *Christian* identity with conversion. In these

⁷⁵ Barbi, “*Ioudaioi*,” 141.

⁷⁶ Barbi, “*Ioudaioi*,” 141.

⁷⁷ Barbi, “*Ioudaioi*,” 134.

⁷⁸ Barbi, “*Ioudaioi*,” 130 refers to “. . . simply an ethnic designation.”

ways, Barbi confuses religion and ethnicity; though the two are related, they are not equivocal.

Furthermore, on an exegetical level, Barbi's treatment of this term is wanting. First, he only treats the plural *Ioudaioi*, neglecting the relatively small but telling uses of singular Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰουδαία. Second, he tends to treat these terms in isolation so that the term *Ioudaioi* is universalized when it may only refer to a particular people at a particular place and time. Finally, within the narrative of Acts, *what* is spoken is as important as *who* is speaking. The narrative context not only delimits the literary referent of Ἰουδαῖος but also gives us literary clues as to the attitude and perspective of the character that is speaking.

Therefore, let us turn to an alternative catalog of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts. First, we ought to note the relative infrequency of Ἰουδαῖος in Luke's Gospel. Appearing only five times in the Gospel of Luke and only at its opening and conclusion, the term appears in exactly two contexts. First, in 7:3, Luke reports that a Roman centurion urged the πρεσβυτέρους τῶν Ἰουδαίων to ask Jesus to heal his servant. Then, the term disappears until the trial scenes. It reappears in 23:37 when the crowd derides Jesus for not saving himself if he is truly ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων and when the sign affixed above him declares him as such. The term's final appearance in the Gospel is its description in 23:51 of Joseph of Arimathea's hometown as a πόλις τῶν Ἰουδαίων. In two of three instances in ch. 23, synoptic parallels diverge.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ In the following table, synoptic similarities are underlined, divergences indicated in boldface.

Chart 1: Synoptic Comparisons of Luke 23:37-38, 51 / Mark 15:26, 32a, 43 / Matt 27:37, 24, 57

<p>Luke 23:37 καὶ λέγοντες· εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, σῶσον σεαυτόν.</p>	<p>Mark 15:32a ὁ χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεύσωμεν.</p>	<p>Matt 27:42 ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι· βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ ἐστίν, καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ πιστεύσομεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν.</p>
<p>Luke 23:38 ἦν δὲ καὶ ἐπιγραφή ἐπ’ αὐτῶ· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος.</p>	<p>Mark 15:26 καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφή τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.</p>	<p>Matt 27:37 Καὶ ἐπέθηκαν ἐπάνω τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ τὴν αἰτίαν αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένην· οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.</p>
<p>Luke 23:51 οὗτος οὐκ ἦν συγκατατεθειμένος τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῇ πράξει αὐτῶν -- ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας πόλεως τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ὃς προσεδέχετο τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ,</p>	<p>Mark 15:43 ἐλθὼν Ἰωσήφ [ὁ] ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας εὐσχήμων βουλευτῆς, ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν προσδεχόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, τολμήσας εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πιλάτον καὶ ἠτήσατο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.</p>	<p>Matt 27:57 Ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης ἦλθεν ἄνθρωπος πλούσιος ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας, τοῦνομα Ἰωσήφ, ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐμαθητεύθη τῷ Ἰησοῦ·</p>

In the immediate context of v. 37, Luke seems to have made a pair of changes related to the crowd’s mocking of Jesus. First, only Luke identifies the revilers as the Roman soldiers; Mark 15:31 identifies them as the “the chief priests, along with the scribes” while Matthew 27:41 calls them “chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders.” Both Mark and Matthew identify the crowd as Jesus’s own people; only Luke identifies them as members of the foreign invading force. At the same time, all three agree on the basic verbiage of the sign placed above him.⁸⁰ Lukan editing is also evident in v. 51

⁸⁰ See Mark 15:26, Matt 27:37, and Luke 23:37.

where, unlike Mark and Matthew, he specifies Arimathea as being a “city of the Jews” (πόλεως τῶν Ἰουδαίων).

Might we then provide a hypothesis for why the term Ἰουδαῖος makes only fleeting appearances in the Gospel according to Luke but then is so widespread in Acts as I will detail below? I believe the answer is context. Only when the orbit of Luke’s narratives extends beyond the confines of Judea does Luke feel compelled to specify this people with ethnic terminology. Notice especially that the five instances of Ἰουδαῖος in the Gospel all appear in contexts involving Roman military and political authorities. Until the centurion and Pilate enter the scene, a specifying ethnic term like Ἰουδαῖος seems superfluous to Luke’s story.⁸¹ It is the encounter with outside Roman authorities that first precipitates Luke’s use of Ἰουδαῖος. At least in the Gospel, Luke’s use of Ἰουδαῖος is precipitated by the need for an etic, rather than emic, perspective.

To the Gospel evidence, we can add a far larger number of instances in Acts. Its preponderance ought not to be surprising since Acts narrates the emergence of this movement in a number of lands around the Mediterranean. Ἰουδαῖος, including all grammatical genders and numbers, occurs a total of 79 times, the most among the books of the NT though the term occurs slightly more regularly in the Fourth Gospel.⁸²

⁸¹ One possible exception is Luke 23:37 when the crowds try to cajole Jesus to save himself if he is truly the king as asserted in the sign nailed above him. I suspect, however, that Luke here differs from Matt and Mark for the sake of narrative consistency. Why would the crowd mock him with the title βασιλεὺς Ἰσραήλ, as Matt and Mark describe, when the sign above him reads ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, as all three Synoptic Gospels report?

⁸² See chart 3 below. The 79 occurrences of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts exceed the 71 instances in John. However, counting the number of occurrences relative to the total number of words in the books gives John a slight edge in the relative use of the term (3.78 instances per 1000 words in John versus 3.67 in Acts).

John and Acts contain three-fourths of the term's instances in the NT. The following graph and table illustrates the distribution of the term in the New Testament.⁸³

Chart 2: Graph of the Occurrences of Ἰουδαῖος in the New Testament

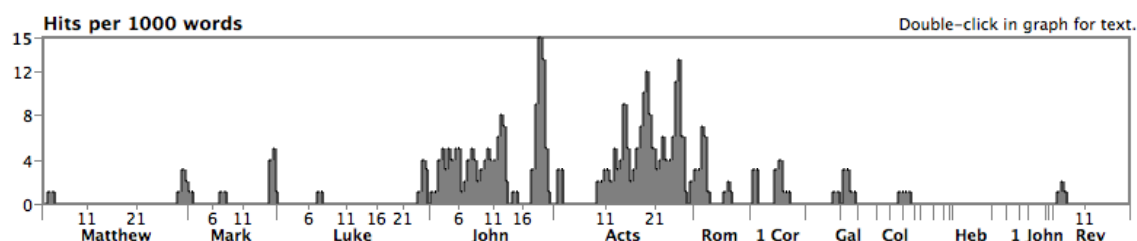


Chart 3: Table of the Occurrences of Ἰουδαῖος in the New Testament

Book	Total Hits	Hits per 1000 words
Matt	5	.23
Mark	6	.44
Luke	5	.21
John	71	3.78
Acts	79	3.67
Rom	11	1.28
1 Cor	8	.95
2 Cor	1	.18
Gal	4	1.44
Eph-Phil	0	0
Col	1	.51
1 Thess	1	.57
2 Thess	0	0
Rev	2	.17

It is thus little surprise that, as reviewed above, many scholarly efforts to grapple with the proper translation and interpretation of Ἰουδαῖος focus on the Fourth Gospel. At the same time, one wonders why more and specific attention has not been paid to the use of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts.⁸⁴ Perhaps it is that the use of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts resists easy

⁸³ Graph and table produced with Accordance software.

⁸⁴ To make this lack of attention even more curious is the intense scholarly attention given to the question of the treatment of Jews in Luke-Acts. As Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander," 419 notes, "Because of its 'super-sessionist theology,' Luke-Acts has recently been targeted as the NT's most anti-Semitic writing; so J.T. Palikowski in a review of N. Beck's *Mature Christianity*: 'Acts is by far the most anti-Jewish book in the New Testament, posing far more difficulties in the long run than the celebrated Fourth Gospel' Something of a rhetorical nadir is reached by J.T. Sanders when he

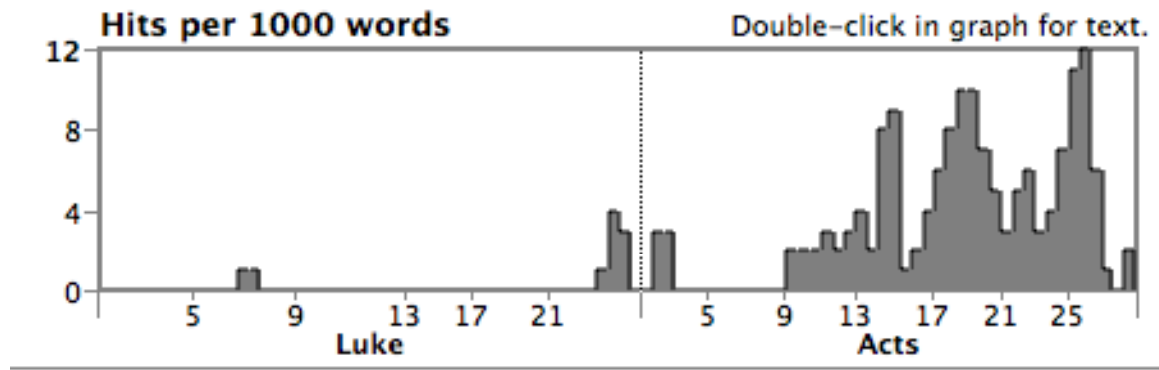
compartmentalization.⁸⁵ Simply to ask whether Luke's use of the term suggests that he either rejects the Jewish people as those who have missed the moving of God or embraces the Jewish people as the proper recipients of the first proclamations of Jesus's followers might miss the complexities of such ethnic terminology entirely. A text that narrates the spread of this new faith into the wider Mediterranean orbit where nations and peoples are constantly in flux requires a correspondingly pliable set of terminologies. In the end, Luke's narrative settings may require a much broader scope of meaning than the Fourth Gospel and thus ask for the interpreter to be equally flexible when discerning the term's many uses.

Finally, the graph helps make visually evident that there is a gap in the use of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts between chs. 2 and 9; the following graph displays the occurrences of the term in Luke-Acts and makes clearer this lexical gap.

says, ' . . . the Gentile mission therefore served to attest the truth displayed in the martyrdom of Stephen, which Paul finally and for the last time announces at the end of Acts. *A final solution of the Jewish problem* has been indicated'" For works concerned with these difficult questions, see the dueling viewpoints of Robert Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews* (SBLMS 33; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1987) and Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) as well as idem, "The Salvation of the Jews in Luke-Acts," in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (ed. Charles H. Talbert; New York: Crossroad, 1984), 104-28. See also Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the "Acts of the Apostles"* (trans. Ken McKinney, Gregory J. Laughery, and Richard Bauckham; SNTSMS 121; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 129-54; Joseph B. Tyson, ed., *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988); and idem, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

⁸⁵ Speaking more broadly of the exegetical puzzle of Luke's view of Judaism, Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 129 notes, ". . . of all the New Testament writings, Luke-Acts presents not the most negative image of Judaism but the most difficult to grasp."

Chart 4: Graph of the Occurrences of Ἰουδαῖος in Luke-Acts⁸⁶



Consistent with its use in the Gospel Ἰουδαῖος disappears as a necessary piece of clarifying nomenclature in contexts not marked by ethnic diversity. Thus, Acts begins in a Jerusalem populated by Ἰουδαῖοι from every corner of the world but remains

⁸⁶ Graph produced with Accordance software. Though I will not explore further this phenomenon, the comparison of the use of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰσραήλ/Ἰσραηλίτης is also striking:
Chart 5: Graph of the Occurrences of Ἰσραήλ/Ἰσραηλίτης in Luke-Acts

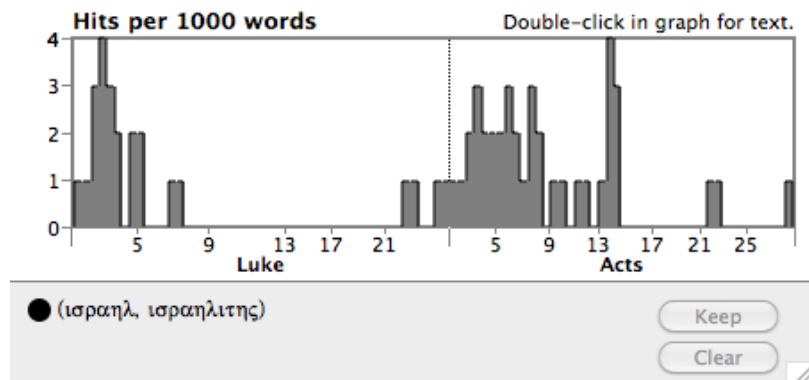
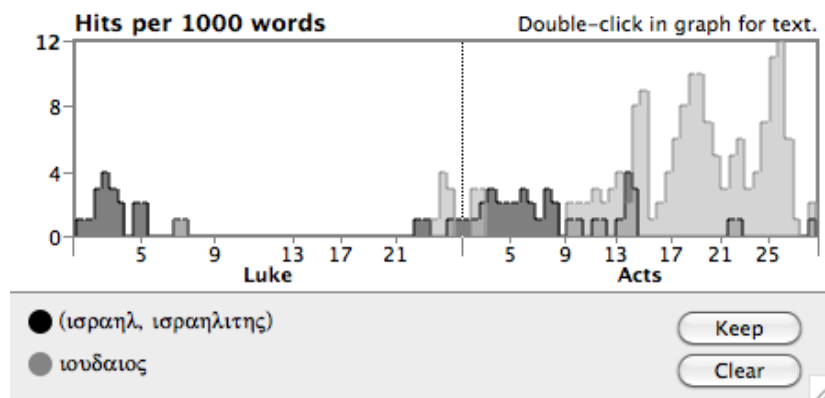


Chart 6: Graph Comparing the Occurrences of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰσραήλ/Ἰσραηλίτης in Luke-Acts



within a primarily “Jewish” context until Saul/Paul begins preaching in Damascus (9:22).

Having conducted a careful reading of Acts and analysis of its use of Ἰουδαῖος, I have found that each of these uses is best categorized under one of seven heuristic headings (Note: citations with asterisks are listed under more than one category):

(1) Naming individuals (13:6; 16:1; 18:2, 24; 19:13, 14, 34; 22:3; 24:24)

In each of these cases, Luke provides named and anonymous individuals an ethnic label; thus in each of these uses Ἰουδαῖος refers to a very specific person.⁸⁷ These uses of the term are neither generic nor polemical but descriptive. For example, our first instance is in 13:6 when Luke introduces the sinister counsel of Sergius Paulus, ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον ᾧ ὄνομα Βαριησοῦ. Later named Elymas, this character clearly plays a negative role but the catena of three descriptors provides only one clearly negative marker: ψευδοπροφήτην. Here, there is no negativity attached to the use of Ἰουδαῖος but to his prophetic chicanery in seeking to draw Sergius Paulus away from the faith.⁸⁸ Similar are the seven sons of Sceva (19:13-14) whose deeds as illegitimate exorcists—not their ethnicity—are responsible for their being attacked by the demons.

That Ἰουδαῖος does not in any of these cases function negatively but descriptively is buttressed by its use in 16:1 to describe Timothy’s mother. Here she is described as both Ἰουδαία and πιστή; that is, her positive evaluation is in her faith not her “Jewishness,” demonstrating that one can be a Ἰουδαῖος whether one is faithful or false. Similarly, there is no evaluation implicit in the introduction of Aquila (18:2), his

⁸⁷ Cf. Gutbrod, “Ἰουδαῖος,” *TDNT* 3:379: “Acts . . . is recounting specific dealings with specific Jews”

⁸⁸ Gutbrod, “Ἰουδαῖος,” *TDNT* 3:380 concurs.

eventual student Apollos (18:24), or Drusilla (24:24). These instances parallel Paul's own ethnic self-identification in 22:3, a fascinating comparison to his claim that both he and Silas are Ῥωμαίους in 16:37.⁸⁹

The only instance in Acts where the identification of an individual as a Ἰουδαῖος is potentially polemical is in 19:34. Amidst the uproar in Ephesus over the threat posed by Paul and his followers to the worship of Artemis, a certain Ἰουδαῖος named Alexander tries to defuse the rabid crowd, but when it becomes evident to the crowd that he is a Ἰουδαῖος, they will not bear to hear him any longer (19:34).⁹⁰ The description of Alexander as a Ἰουδαῖος, however, in an etic designation imbued with an accusatory edge. The conflict in Ephesus occurs at the disruptive confluence of local traditions, religion, and economic interests, paralleling the scene in Philippi which I will describe in ch. 5. Similar to the Philippian accusations against Paul and Silas, the designation of Alexander as a Ἰουδαῖος is meant to discredit his witness; it is fundamentally an *ad hominem* attack. Moreover, the identification in Ephesus mingles a religious accusation with an ethnic indicator; the accusation is that Alexander is not one of us, not an Ephesian and thus not a worshipper of Artemis. In this particular case, the intertwining of religious and ethnic identity is clear. This single instance of an etic deployment of a polemical use of a Ἰουδαῖος ought not become the rule with which we interpret other, more benign, and more frequent occurrences of the term.

(2) Ἰουδαῖοι specified by place (2:14; 9:22, 23; 11:19; 14:19; 16:3; 17:13; 18:5 [cf. v. 1], 28 [cf. v. 27]; 19:17*; 21:11, 27, 39; 22:12; 24:19; 25:7)

⁸⁹ See ch. 5.

⁹⁰ Curiously, Luke does not explain exactly how the crowd knew he was a Ἰουδαῖος, especially since Cohen, *Beginnings*, 25-68 has demonstrated so convincingly that "Jews" would not be easily identifiable due to appearance, dress, or any other visible marker

This second category is significant both in number and its representation throughout the narrative of Acts. In each of these cases, immediate contexts provide the term Ἰουδαῖος a particular geographical content. These then are not generic Ἰουδαῖοι, sketched by Luke broadly and indiscriminately, but particular communities living around the Mediterranean.

(3) References to the prerogatives and/or possessions of the Ἰουδαῖοι (10:39; 13:5, 43*; 14:1a; 17:1, 10, 17*; 18:19; 19:14; 25:2, 8, 15; 28:17)

In this third category, Ἰουδαῖος pairs up with various prerogatives, forming descriptive technical terminology. Most common are the specification of a συναγωγή belonging to a group of Ἰουδαῖοι (13:5, 43; 14:1a; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:19), followed by identifications of religious and/or political leaders of the Ἰουδαῖοι (19:14 - ἀρχιερέως; 25:2 - οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρῶτοι, 8 - τὸν νόμον; 15 - οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι; 28:17 - τοὺς ὄντας τῶν Ἰουδαίων πρῶτους). One final instance is the reference in 10:39 to τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, which is paralleled with Jerusalem as a pairing similar to those listed below. English translations of this verse demonstrate some uncertainty about how to treat this ethnic term. The NRSV renders the whole phrase “Judea” while the CEV opts for “Israel.” In both cases, therefore, “the land/country of the Jews” included within most translations is interpreted as a geographic marker of a larger area.

(4) Pairings between Ἰουδαῖος and other groups (2:11; 13:43*; 14:1b, 4, 5; 17:17*; 18:4; 19:10, 17*; 20:21)

In several cases, Ἰουδαῖος represents half of a composite whole.⁹¹ Paired with Ἑλληνας, the duo represents the full expanse of humanity (14:1b; 18:4; 19:10, 17; 20:21); paired with προσήλυτοι and/or σεβόμενοι, the duo represents the populations of synagogues (2:11; 13:43; 17:17). In only one case is Ἰουδαῖος contrasted with ἔθνος, which is usually translated as Gentiles (14:5). Finally, in one case, Ἰουδαῖος is contrasted with the apostles, the former as opponents of the latter (14:4).

(5) Ἰουδαῖος and the political powers (12:3; 18:12*, 14; 22:30; 23:27; 24:5*, 27; 25:9, 10*, 24; 26:2*, 3*, 4*, 7*, 21*)

Paralleling its uses in the closing chapters of Luke, when the characters of Acts become involved with Roman political agents, this use of Ἰουδαῖος is prevalent. In these cases, Ἰουδαῖος is typically not specified by place or tied to a particular person but used broadly in a context centered on political machinations. Also, there is significant overlap between this category and the next specifically because so many of the conflicts in Acts occur before the political actors of the time. This consistent pattern in both the Gospel and Acts suggests that generic ethnic terminologies like Ἰουδαῖος are rhetorically appropriate to such contexts. Furthermore, that this practice does not extend into other narrative contexts buttresses the notion that the use of Ἰουδαῖος is highly context-driven. These particular political contexts necessitate generic ethnic terminology, but such instances of Ἰουδαῖος are not representative of the other categories outlined above.

(6) Sites of contestation (12:11; 13:45, 50; 16:20; 17:5; 18:12*; 19:33; 20:3, 19; 21:20, 21; 23:12, 20; 24:5*, 9; 25:10*; 26:2*, 4*, 7*, 21*; 28:19)

⁹¹ See Chart 7 and discussion below.

As mentioned above, conflicts involving the inchoate Christian movement often posed Ἰουδαῖοι as its primary opponents. Thus, like political contexts, the struggles narrated in these verses are not precise in ethnic discourse, opting instead for generic uses of Ἰουδαῖος. These specialized, contextual uses of Ἰουδαῖος in political and/or disputational settings cannot be generalized to homogenize the lexical range of the term. The significant number of uses of the term outlined above is far more precise and specific and thus must be treated differently than those introduced into such contentious situations.

(7) Wide ethnic appeals (2:5; 10:22, 28)

These final instances provide the most serious challenge to my conclusion that Acts, relatively speaking, rarely uses Ἰουδαῖος generically and only does so in particular contexts. In each of these cases, Acts pairs Ἰουδαῖος closely with ἔθνος, perhaps indicating that these uses of Ἰουδαῖος are intended to be expansive, even all-encompassing in scope. Yet even in these cases, the generic appeal is softened by their immediate contexts.

For example, 2:5 serves as an introduction to the oft-discussed table of nations found in vv. 9-13.⁹² In describing the crowds gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, Luke parallels Ἰουδαῖοι with ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ

⁹² See the extensive bibliography in Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 244-46. I believe that additional illuminating evidence pertinent to this topic can be found in inscriptions and statues of various peoples from the sebasteion of Aphrodisias. See the illuminating article of R. R. Smith, “*Simulacra Gentium: The Ethne from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias*,” *JRS* 78 (1988): 50-77 and an incredible online resource containing indexed descriptions of inscriptions found in Aphrodisias in Joyce Reynolds, Charlotte Roueché, and Gabriel Bodard, *Inscriptions of Aphrodisias*, n.p. Online: <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007>. One of the ἔθνη Smith reports is the Ἰουδαῖοι. At least from an etic perspective, the Ἰουδαῖοι were simply one amongst the many peoples of the Roman Empire.

τὸν οὐρανόν.⁹³ Are then the Ἰουδαῖοι a subset of the many ἔθνους of the world? Or are the ἔθνη subsumed under a broader category called Ἰουδαῖοι? We may further ask how we sort out the three different uses of terms derived from Judea. First, Ἰουδαῖοι is an umbrella category covering the whole list of nations. Second, Luke refers to individuals who live in Ἰουδαία (v. 9).⁹⁴ Third, Ἰουδαῖοι is paired with προσήλυτοι. In other words, in the span of a single paragraph, Luke utilizes an ethnic term in three very different ways. I suggest that we may search, but only in vain, for a single definition or use of Ἰουδαῖος in Luke-Acts, let alone a single paragraph of text.

Two of our instances are found in the extended Cornelius narrative in ch. 10. The emissaries of Cornelius introduce their master to Peter as one who is honored ὑπὸ ὅλου τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Ἰουδαίων. Here it is clear that the Ἰουδαῖοι are definitely one of the world's ἔθνη.⁹⁵ Also important to note is that the speakers here are presumably not Ἰουδαῖοι but are representatives of an official of the Roman state. The generic use of Ἰουδαῖος here may have much to do with its narrative speakers. Then, however, the narrative shifts to Peter where in 10:28 he distinguishes between ἀνδρὶ Ἰουδαίῳ and ἀλλοφύλῳ by indicating what he assumes is a well-known dictum that a Ἰουδαῖος cannot share intimate social space with a “foreigner” (ἀλλοφύλῳ).⁹⁶ Curiously, the NRSV opts to translate ἀλλοφύλῳ as “Gentile” even though what is in view here is not

⁹³ Though note the omission of Ἰουδαῖοι in κ^c and κ^* and the different places in which the term is found in C and E. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 251 and Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, 16.

⁹⁴ The inclusion of Ἰουδαία here in the table of nations has long caused text critical and exegetical difficulties. Several church fathers suggest various conjectures of better geographical fits. Tertullian and Augustine suggested *Armeniam*, Jerome *habitants in Syria*, and Chrysostom Ἰνδίαν. Modern scholars have advocated a number of other conjectures. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 253-54.

⁹⁵ Cf. also Acts 2:5, 10:22, and 28:19. See also Smith, *Simulacra*, 50-77 who describes a Roman imperial inscription that refers to ΕΘΝΟΥΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΝΑ alongside other people groups governed by the empire.

⁹⁶ Cf. Lieu, “Impregnable Ramparts,” 305 who discusses the deployment of similar language in 1-2 Macc.

simply a religious distinctive (“Gentile” vs. “Jew”) but an ethnic distinction with religious overtones (Ἰουδαῖος vs. foreigner or us vs. them).⁹⁷ In fact, the thrust of the Cornelius narrative is the subversion of this facile ethnic divide. For Luke, the opposite of Ἰουδαῖος is not consistently “Gentile” (ἔθνος).⁹⁸ Indeed, only in three verses—two of which are closely paired at 14:2, 5 as well as 21:21—does this contrast appear explicitly (vv. 2 and 5); in a number of other instances, the contrasting term varies significantly.

Chart 7: Contrasting Terms Used with Ἰουδαῖος in Acts

Contrasting Term(s)	Citation(s)
ἔθνος	14:2, 5; 21:21
προσήλυτος	2:11
οἱ κατοικοῦντες Ἱερουσαλήμ πάντες	2:14 ⁹⁹
ἄλλόφυλος	10:28
Substantival participle of σέβω	13:43; 17:17
Ἕλληνα	14:1 ¹⁰⁰ ; 16:1, 3; 18:4; 19:10; 19:17; 20:21
ἀπόστολος	14:4
Ῥωμαῖος	16:20-21 ¹⁰¹

Overall, then, the most consistent contrast to Ἰουδαῖος in Acts is Ἕλληνα, the very ethnic contrast present in Timothy’s parentage.¹⁰² Thus, in Timothy, Luke narrates an

⁹⁷ See BDAG, s.v. ἄλλόφυλος. Cf. especially Jdt 6:1, 1 Clem. 55:4, and Diogn. 5:17. See also Rajak, “The Location of Cultures,” 11 who notes the various ways Josephus uses such terminology both to label others as foreign but also to label himself as foreign in certain contexts.

⁹⁸ Going even further, Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 12 challenges whether the common translation of ἔθνος as “Gentile” is now defensible in light of studies of the ethnic discourses of antiquity. Though Esler is dealing specifically with Romans, I argue the same can be said of Luke-Acts.

⁹⁹ At least in this pairing, Luke may be making a slight distinction between Ἰουδαῖοι and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Is he suggesting that there are some residents of Jerusalem who are not also Ἰουδαῖοι? Is he suggesting that residents of Jerusalem though part of the same ethnic group as the other Ἰουδαῖοι are somehow distinct? Or, as I think most likely, is the pairing here a hendiadys referring to one undifferentiated group? See Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (rev. Gordon M. Messing; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), § 3025 and BDF § 442(16).

¹⁰⁰ In 14:1, both Ἰουδαῖοι and Ἕλληνα are found together in the synagogue. These are two groups who worshipped under the same roof. This is also the first time that the term Ἕλληνα appears in Luke-Acts.

¹⁰¹ See ch. 5.

¹⁰² Rajak, “The Location of Cultures,” 8 observes a similarly common pairing of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλληνα in the works of Josephus: “For the Jews of the Second Temple period, the Greek-Jewish polarity

exemplary hybrid individual who may represent the most complex of ethnic identities by embodying the full span of humanity between Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην.

Ethnic Discourse in Acts 15

Before turning to some conclusions about the use of Ἰουδαῖος in light of these heuristic divisions, we must consider a final source of exegetical material. Ethnicity is a constructed social discourse that goes beyond single terms. This dissertation hopes to avoid the atomistic study of ethnic terms divorced from context; therefore, Acts 15 cannot escape our attention. A bit surprisingly, the term Ἰουδαῖος does not appear in the fifteenth chapter of Acts when the dividing lines between Jews and non-Jews within the nascent Christian movement were drawn by apostolic fiat. However, this chapter is fundamentally concerned with ethnic claims on the proper boundaries of the identity of Ἰουδαῖοι. In at least three cases, ethnic discourse anchors the narrative of Acts 15. The opening verse sets the stage by reporting that certain individuals (τινες) came from Judea and were teaching the soteriological necessity of circumcision according to the custom of Moses (τῷ ἔθει τῷ Μωϋσέως). These Mosaic imperatives are not just religious strictures but ethnic claims for a particular people. Despite our modern tendency to distinguish between religious and ethnic identities, ancient writers did not

was, in fact, a central part of the way they constructed their own identity.” She later adds, “The polarity, far from being consistent, shifts dramatically” (11). At points, Josephus contrasts Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην in order to highlight the ethnic and cultural differences that separated the two; other times, Josephus would include Ἰουδαῖοι as members of the larger group, Ἕλλην. Ibid., 12 argues, “Josephus is able to deploy a linguistic and cultural rather than an ethnic definition of what is Greek. In terms of such a construction, Greekness, far from being alien to Judaism, can be something in which Jews shared.” Yet, I am not certain what criteria one would use to separate a “cultural and linguistic” versus an “ethnic definition” of Greekness. At first glance, at least, the only criterion being applied is that by presupposition Jews cannot also be ethnically Greek. In ch. 5, I propose that the postcolonial notion of hybridity provides a better model for holding seemingly distinct ethnic identities in a productive tension.

so easily separate these inextricable components of identity. In fact, Luke provides telling parallels to τῷ ἔθει τῷ Μωϋσέως showing that these customs are not solely religious in nature. In Acts 25:16, Luke records Paul's appeal to Roman custom (ἔθος Ῥωμαίοις), which did not permit anonymous accusations and required the opportunity to defend oneself in criminal proceedings. In this case, ἔθος Ῥωμαίοις is not a religious more but a distinctive feature of a particular people. Similarly, 16:21 includes the accusation that Paul was teaching anti-Roman customs (ἔθη). As I will show in detail in ch. 5, though scholars tend to couch the incidents in Philippi in terms of religious conflict, the stakes in these verses are primarily ethnic. Thus, from the start, the soteriological requirements that precipitate the conflict of Acts 15 appeal to a particular ethnic configuration. What does it mean to be one who lives τῷ ἔθει τῷ Μωϋσέως? According to these individuals, it requires maintaining circumcision as a crucial marker of ethnicity and religious fealty. More important, the extension of the requirement of circumcision to the Gentiles represents a protective posture against the eroding of Jewish ethnic identity precipitated by the inclusion of Gentiles amongst the followers of Jesus.

James then counters this ethnic argumentation with ethnic discourse of his own via an appeal to the prophets (vv. 13-18). According to Simeon's testimony and the prophets, God's work includes the reconfiguration of ethnic lines. Citing most closely Amos 9:11 (LXX), James relates a scriptural imperative for opening the nascent church's doors to Jew and Gentile alike. The relevant texts are paralleled below. Differences between Acts and Amos (LXX) are in bold face.

The parts of the texts highlighted in grey reveal a change made by the LXX translators and maintained in Acts. The MT reads quite differently by suggesting that “the booth of David” (a metonym for Israel; *סֶכֶת דָּוִד*) will one day take possession (*יִירְשׁוּ*) of the remnant of Edom (*שְׁאֵרֵי אֶדְוֹם*) and “all the Gentiles” (*כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם*). In stark contrast, both Acts and the LXX of Amos allude to “the rest of the world”¹⁰³ (*οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων*) and “all the peoples” (*πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*) seeking out the Lord. In these texts, those outside of Israel become actors in the plan of God instead of mere spoils of victory. Clearly, the MT would not serve the purposes of James’s defense of the Gentile mission as a foretold divine ordination. The ethnic discourse of the MT on one side and Acts and the LXX version on the other are wholly opposite.

The words set off inside borders highlight a significant change likely made by Luke himself since both the MT and LXX share them against the text of Acts. The former record that the house or tent of David would be reconstituted, its walls rebuilt just as it was in “the days of old” (MT: *כִּי־יִבְנֶי עוֹלָם* and LXX: *αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος*). For our narrator, Luke, and his character, James, it seems, the promise enunciated by the prophets was not a retroactive restoration but a proactive reconstitution of the people of God including both Jew and Gentile.

¹⁰³ NRSV reads “all other peoples.”

Chart 8: Allusions to Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:16-17

<p>Acts 15:16-17 μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέψω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀνοικοδομήσω καὶ ἀνορθώσω αὐτήν, ὅπως ἂν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν κύριον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐφ’ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς, λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα γνωστὰ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος.¹⁰⁴</p>	<p>Amos 9:11-12 (LXX) ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἀναστήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀναστήσω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτὴν καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐφ’ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Amos 9:11-12 (MT)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶקְיִם אֶת־סֶכֶת דָּוִד הַנִּפְלֹת וְנִבְרַתִּי אֶת־פְּרִצֵיהֶן אֶקְיִם וְבִנִיתִיהָ כִּימֵי עוֹלָם׃ לְמַעַן יִירָשׁוּ אֶת־שְׂאֲרֵית אֲדוֹם וְתִרְסְתִי וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עָלֵיהֶם נֶאֱמַר יִתְּנָה עֲשֶׂה זֹאת׃ פ </p>	

Ultimately, then, James’s rationale is twofold. First, the testimony of Simeon has reconfigured the ethnic composition of God’s people. Second, this testimony concurs with the prophetic promise edited by both the LXX translators and Luke’s redaction that the ethnic division between Jew and Gentile evident in the MT would not disappear but be reconfigured under the Lord’s name.

Finally, the opening of the letter composed in the summation of the council’s findings is addressed τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν ἀδελφοῖς τοῖς

¹⁰⁴ Not present in Amos 9:12, this final line has several textual variants probably due to scribal emendations of “so elliptical an expression.” See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2d ed. (New York: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1994), 379. As Barrett, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:728 notes, some scholars have theorized that this final line can be traced to Isa 45:21 “though the resemblance is far from close.”

ἐξ ἔθνῶν (v.23). For the first time in Acts, an explicitly non-Jewish audience is addressed as ἀδελφοῖς,¹⁰⁵ this widening of kinship language marking an important shift in the community's ethnic self-perception. As I argued in ch. 2, kinship, whether “fictive” or “real,”¹⁰⁶ is one of several facets of a sense of common ethnicity. However, despite the expansion of kinship language to clearly non-Jewish letter recipients, ethnic difference is still maintained. These addressees are not simply ἀδελφοῖς but ἀδελφοῖς τοῖς ἐξ ἔθνῶν. Additionally, the geographical markers κατὰ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν are delimiters of the broad category of ἔθνῶν. What is left unclear is what connections may have existed between these ἔθνῶν and the regions of Antioch, Syria, Cilicia; in other words, would these individuals have viewed themselves as Antiochenes, Syrians, or Cilicians? If so, in what sense would they see these regions as markers of identity? Despite the inclusive impulse to call these individuals ἀδελφοῖς, the letter as preserved in Acts 15 does not invite the complete elimination of ethnic lines. If anything, the letter demands the maintenance of certain moral and religious requirements emblematic of Jewish ethnic identity: an aversion to idolatry, its practices, and the sexual deviance so commonly linked to it (v. 49 - ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε).

In the end, therefore, even though Acts 15 provides a means to maintain the unity of the inchoate church that excludes the seemingly telltale ethnic marker of

¹⁰⁵ In other occurrences prior to ch. 15, ἀδελφός describes either kin or a common relationship as followers of Jesus; in the latter case, ἀδελφός always refers to fellow Ἰουδαῖοι until ch. 15 (see Acts 2:29, 37; 3:17, 22; 6:3; 7:2, 23, 25, 26, 37; 9:17, 30; 10:23; 11:1, 12, 29; 12:17; 13:15, 26; 14:2). After ch. 15, one can no longer assume that the ἀδελφοί to which Luke alludes are ethnically homogenous. See the fuller development of this shift in kinship language in Kuecker, “Luke’s Use of Ethnic Language,” 8-12.

¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, “kinship” is an entirely concocted social notion much like ethnicity. In social systems of both ethnicity and kinship, bloodlines are fluid.

circumcision, Jewish mores ultimately remain the central cohesive force; in short, Jewish ethnic distinctives remain the common glue of this burgeoning community. Curiously, however, Luke does not dwell on these topics as defining features of the many Christian communities emerging around the Mediterranean or of the Jewish communities into which Christian missionaries enter.

While the term Ἰουδαῖος is absent in Acts 15, the ethnic identity to which it refers provides the conceptual ground for the inclusive, prophetic impulses propounded by James as well as the boundary maintenance rooted in ethnic differentiation that is the sole requirement demanded of Gentile converts. In the end, the tension between inclusivity and exclusivity are maintained by, on the one hand, deciding against the “burden” (παρενοχλεῖν) of circumcision yet maintaining a set of moral imperatives rooted in Jewish ethnic identity to continue distinguishing this particular group of peoples.¹⁰⁷ If the pattern established here echoes the requirements of Lev 17-18 that “aliens” or “foreigners” must help maintain the religious and ethnic integrity of the community in which they live, the apostolic council can find scriptural grounding for their efforts to include non-Jews within their number without collapsing entirely those exclusive features that signal their communal distinctives. The underlying aim of Acts 15 is the maintenance of a people called Ἰουδαῖοι that can nonetheless welcome outsiders amongst them without effacing their ethnic identities.

¹⁰⁷ Contra Daniel R. Schwartz, “God, Gentiles, and Jewish Law: On Acts 15 and Josephus’ Adiabene Narrative,” in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag: Volume 1: Judentum* (ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 264 who argues, “In short, Luke argues that God is for everyone but Moses and his laws are for the Jews; they are Jewish customs, not God’s laws.” Yet the explicit requirements enunciated at the close of the letter are still part of τῷ ἔθει τῷ Μωϋσέως. See Lev 17-18 wherein “aliens” or “foreigners” (גֵּרִים) are expected to abide by certain moral and religious strictures, which would maintain the religious and ethnic integrity of Israel. In these opening verses of Acts 16, circumcision has been marginalized as a communal marker but not these other religious and ethnic strictures.

Summarizing the Uses of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts

Ultimately, the number of uses of Ἰουδαῖος in Acts is a marked contrast to the dearth of instances in the Gospel of Luke. Cosmopolitan settings in Acts require the use of ethnic terminologies in both precise and generic ways. Reading each instance of Ἰουδαῖος with a single or narrow definition pays insufficient attention to literary context.¹⁰⁸ The clustering of the term in the opening verses of ch. 14 is particularly telling. In the span of a mere five verses, Ἰουδαῖος is paired with Ἑλληγν to describe believers in the movement, Ἰουδαῖος is modified by ἀπειθήσαντες to refer to the movement's opponents in Iconium, Ἰουδαῖος is contrasted with the apostles, and Ἰουδαῖος is paired with ἔθνος to represent the joint opposition of the apostles in Iconium.¹⁰⁹ In similar fashion, Luke also deploys the ethnic term ἔθνος variously to refer to a "nation," "people," or "Gentile." At least in Acts, Ἰουδαῖος is counted as an ἔθνος,¹¹⁰ Ἰουδαῖος and ἔθνος are paired to encompass broad swaths of people,¹¹¹ and Ἰουδαῖος live within or among an ἔθνος.¹¹²

Even more important, however, is that the tenor of the questions we pose cannot be predisposed to delimit the semantic range of such a pliable term. For example, asking from the first whether Luke's use of Ἰουδαῖος is positive or negative eliminates the possibility that the term is used descriptively, ambiguously, or

¹⁰⁸ As Cohen, *Beginnings*, 4 has argued concerning the fluid definitions of both Ἰουδαῖος and "judaizing," "The boundary was fluid and not well marked; we must allow for a variety of competing definitions and for the influence of the perspective of the observer." Even the very boundaries of the place called Ἰουδαία were in flux; see Hengel, "Ἰουδαία," 161-80 and Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 1:140-42, 2:1-15.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Gutbrod, "Ἰουδαῖος," *TDNT* 3:380.

¹¹⁰ Acts 10:22, 26:4, and 28:19. Cf. John 18:35.

¹¹¹ Acts 14:5.

¹¹² Acts 2:5 and 21:21.

ambivalently. Overall, in a large number of cases in Acts, the term Ἰουδαῖος is specifically populated despite those relatively rare cases when the term is used more generically and perhaps polemically. In any case, Ἰουδαῖος functions precisely as one would expect ethnic terminology to do so.

Most importantly, the above analysis suggests that the multivalence of ethnic terms is not a problem for Luke. For Luke, there is no essentialist meaning of Ἰουδαῖος, only a wide meaning potential befitting the ethno-cultural complexities of the ancient world. The study of 16:1-5 below demonstrates both Luke's ease with pliable terminologies of ethnicity and the advantageous leverage Luke exerts from the flexible bounds of ethnic identities. Our passage, however, grapples not only with terminological designates of ethnic identity but also with a vital physical marker: circumcision.

Diverse Opinions on the Ethnic Functions of Circumcision

With the multiple dimensions of Ἰουδαῖος in mind, we can now turn to the critical physical marker of ethnicity in play in this passage. After all, Paul's circumcision of Timothy apparently resolves Timothy's problematic ethnic identity in our passage; in response to the rumblings of certain Ἰουδαῖοι, Paul turns to a seemingly clear but problematic ethnic marker. The function of circumcision in antiquity as an ethnic marker was full of ambivalence, especially in reference to individuals on the margins of Jewish ethnic identity.¹¹³ On the one hand, there is a great deal of evidence

¹¹³ Cf. Margaret Williams, "Being a Jew in Rome: Sabbath Fasting as an Expression of Romano-Jewish Identity," in *Negotiating Diaspora: Jewish Strategies in the Roman Empire* (ed. John M.G. Barclay; Library of Second Temple Studies 45; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 8-18 who focuses on Sabbath-keeping in Rome as an instance in which a local Jewish community shaped the wider tradition according to their

that circumcision was perceived as a definitive marker of Jewish identity; at the same time, there is evidence that on the margins of Judaism there were debates about the necessity of circumcision to denote Jewishness, especially among converts. In the end, therefore, Timothy's circumcision is itself rife with uncertainty. Did it clarify fully his ethnic identity or only further complicate his disputed ethnicity? Did it assuage all doubts about his mixed parentage or broach more questions than answers? What exactly did Timothy's circumcision achieve? I argue that Acts 16:1-5 wades directly into contested ethnic ground, reflects these ambiguities, yet ultimately leaves largely unresolved these critical questions. In this way, Acts reflects and exploits the ambiguities surrounding this contested ethnic marker. The ambiguities of the circumcision of Timothy are both a prime example of the diverse ways in which Jews understood this ethno-religious mark and a means by which Luke can make a particular theological case: ethnic diversity and hybrid identities are not an obstacle for this movement of Christ followers but an opportunity to reach all peoples not by erasing their differences but by participating in the complexities of ethnic discourse. Timothy, the product of a mixed marriage between a Ἰουδαῖος and a Ἕλληνα, is an emblem of this theologically rich negotiation of ethnic difference.

After analyzing Jewish views about the necessity of circumcision formulated in cultural settings that were increasingly hostile and in response to those who viewed circumcision as a barbaric act, Robert Hall finds three basic strategies of response.¹¹⁴ First were traditionalists who sought to reify the importance of circumcision as a marker of religious fealty and ethnic identity. This view is represented especially by

particular needs and experiences. In this case, Roman Jews may have imbued the Sabbath feast with mourning *and fasting* as a means of remembering their exile.

¹¹⁴ R.G. Hall, "Circumcision," *ABD* 1:1027-29.

Jubilees.¹¹⁵ Second were assimilationists who treasured Greek education, culture, and institutions and thus either ended the practice within their families or went so far as to reverse the marks of circumcision via epispasm (e.g. 1-2 Macc). Finally there were apologists who sought to defend the practice of circumcision to an audience predisposed against it. Hall includes as representatives of this view Josephus, Philo, and the Jewish historian Artapanus.

More detailed are the efforts of John J. Collins, upon which Hall, at least partly, relies.¹¹⁶ Focusing on the inherent diversity of the Jewish Diaspora, Collins ask three interrelated questions: what were the requisite steps a Gentile must take to worship the God of Israel; how and when did a Gentile become “Jewish” in some significant, if incomplete sense; and how did those individuals who straddled the line between Gentile and Jew (e.g. “God-fearers”) fit into this complex puzzle?¹¹⁷

On the first question, he turns to the textual evidence of the Third Sibylline Oracle, the Letter of Aristeas, Pseudo-Phocylides, and the Fourth Sibylline Oracle, each of which he labels “Jewish propaganda literature” as “compositions which were ostensibly addressed to a Gentile audience.”¹¹⁸ In comparing these four texts, Collins hopes to garner “some specific indications of what Diaspora Judaism wanted from the Gentile world.”¹¹⁹ Ultimately, he concludes that, though each text represents some distinctive perspectives, all four of these documents share a common response to what Jews might expect of their Gentile neighbors: abandoning idolatrous practice and

¹¹⁵ Hall, “Circumcision,” *ABD* 1:1028 cites *Jub.* 1:23-35, 15:25-34, and 30.

¹¹⁶ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 163-86.

¹¹⁷ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 164.

¹¹⁸ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 164. He also acknowledges that though “ostensibly” directed towards a Gentile reader, many of these texts were most likely consumed by other Jews.

¹¹⁹ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 164.

embracing “an ethical code with special emphasis on avoiding adultery and homosexuality,” while remaining strikingly silent on the question of circumcision.¹²⁰

While providing these basic parameters for some degree of acceptance within the Jewish community of belief, these texts are not primarily efforts at proselytizing

but show a desire to share and be accepted in the more philosophically sophisticated strata of Hellenistic culture. Salvation is seldom restricted to membership of the Jewish people. This literature may not represent all strata of Jewish society, but it represents a substantial body of opinion nonetheless.¹²¹

In other words, these texts provide substantial evidence that when some Jews reflected on what they might expect of Gentiles, rather than requiring circumcision, they advocated instead avoiding the intertwined sins of idolatry and immoral sexual practice. These texts represent a significant trend of thought that focused on Gentile observance of Jewish ethical practice rather than circumcision or other ethnic marks of distinction.

Similarly, in response to the second question (“ . . . at what point [did converts] cease to be ‘others’ and were accepted as members of the Jewish people [?]”¹²²), Collins discovers that circumcision was a debated identity marker. While the Talmud is unequivocal in the threefold necessity of circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice, Philo does not explicitly denounce certain Jews in Alexandria who viewed circumcision solely as an allegorical imperative but instead “accords primacy to its allegorical significance (the excision of pleasure and conceit).”¹²³ Philo does not fully eschew circumcision as a Jewish religious requirement but seems more sympathetic to those

¹²⁰ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 169.

¹²¹ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 169-70.

¹²² Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 171.

¹²³ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 172. See *Migr.* 89-94 among several other citations.

who value the allegorical significance of circumcision more than its literal observance. In the end, “in view of Philo’s comments on the allegorists, we must allow that there were some ethnic Jews who abandoned circumcision without repudiating Judaism, however much other Jews may have ‘blamed’ them.”¹²⁴ The tale of *Joseph and Aseneth* is yet another example in which a Gentile finds acceptance within the Jewish family not through ritual initiation but by turning from idols. Finally, Collins points to the circumcision of Izates, which I discuss further below.

Third, Collins turns to the “God-fearer.” He rejects the view that the various terminologies describing individuals somewhere between Gentile and Jew corresponded to specifically delineated and technically ascribed groups. While the evidence suggests the presence of “adherents who stopped short of circumcision . . . it does not, however, corroborate the description of this class.”¹²⁵ God-fearers represented a spectrum of diverse attachments to the Jewish community, not a homogenous set of dogmatically prescribed obligations.

Ultimately, Collins argues, “There is no doubt that circumcision was widely perceived by Gentiles as a symbol of Judaism’s otherness Yet Jewish views on circumcision and on the salvation of the Gentiles were not entirely uniform, so the conflict within the Christian community has been said to reflect an ‘internal Jewish debate.’”¹²⁶ Though Collins’s article deals more with the question of the circumcision of Gentile followers of Jesus, his conclusion holds more widely as well: whether circumcision was a requisite marker of “Jewishness” was highly debated in antiquity. A

¹²⁴ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 173.

¹²⁵ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 184. Contra, inter alia, Neil J. McEleney, “Conversion, Circumcision and the Law,” *NTS* 20 (1974): 325.

¹²⁶ Collins, “Symbol of Otherness,” 164.

range of opinion is recorded in the extant evidence, especially when it comes to individuals on the margins of the Ἰουδαῖοι. Even more, the lack of uniformity on circumcision as a practical matter also means that the modes of discourse around the topic varied in significant and meaningful ways.

Before discussing some textual examples, a crucial distinction must be kept in mind. As I argue throughout this dissertation, ethnicity and religion, while interrelated, are distinct categories, which scholars have tended to collapse. Therefore, when discussing the *ethnic* function of circumcision and the modes of discourse that defended, relativized, or rejected it as an ethnic marker, we must do our best to articulate the difference between orthodoxy/orthopraxy and identity. In an article reflecting on the modern reconstruction of ancient Jewish “orthodoxy,” Lester L. Grabbe makes a vital distinction between these two notions:

We have to distinguish between the question of the definition of “who is a Jew?” and the question of “orthodoxy/orthopraxy.” It seems to me that McEleney was really dealing with the definition of Judaism as such rather than of orthodoxy within Judaism. Presumably no one will disagree that there was some common denominator for the diverse elements included under the umbrella term “Judaism” during that time. But common elements are not the same as orthodoxy. Would one who denied the God of Israel be only “unorthodox” or really “un-Jewish”?¹²⁷

The same might be asked of Timothy. Would someone who was uncircumcised, such as Timothy, be considered “unorthodox” (that is, one whose identity as Jewish challenges standards of belief and practice of Judaism) or “un-Jewish” (that is, outside of the ethnic bounds of this particular people)? The distinction is subtle but vital to this project, for as I will demonstrate the stakes in 16:1-5 are ethnic in nature and far less concerned with orthodoxy since the importance of circumcision as a religious requisite

¹²⁷ Lester L. Grabbe, “Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism: What Are the Issues?,” *JSJ* 8 (1977): 150.

had been relativized, though not eliminated, in the previous chapter of Acts. To be sure, in the case of a Ἰουδαῖος, questions of orthodoxy and identity in relation to circumcision would be related but not identical.¹²⁸

The distinction between identity and “orthodoxy/orthopraxy” is vital here. A stress on the former demonstrates that while the prevailing “orthodoxy,” if such even existed, demanded the circumcision of all Jewish males, the function of circumcision in the definition of ethnic identity might have been far more pliable. Previous discussion of the significance of Timothy’s belated circumcision may have confused these two dimensions of the social function of circumcision by privileging the question of orthodoxy and neglecting the more problematic puzzle of identity. To be clear, my reading of 16:1-5 focuses much less on whether Timothy’s lack of circumcision marked him as “unorthodox.” Perhaps he was still a Jew though not very a good one. This does not seem to be the question in this passage. Instead, the primary question is how he fits in the complex web of ethnic identity.

A pair of examples from other ancient authors will help demonstrate that the meaning of Timothy’s circumcision is entangled in a complex web of ethnic discourse. Although there are a number of ancient texts dealing with circumcision to which I could turn, I have chosen to narrow the focus of my efforts to a pair of examples: the

¹²⁸ Grabbe, “Orthodoxy,” 149-53 ultimately labels circumcision as a matter of fundamental identity; an uncircumcised man was not simply unorthodox but truly not Jewish. He chides the two articles to which he responds for neglecting to mention explicitly “one of the major features of Judaism . . . the rite of physical circumcision” (150). To him, “circumcision seemed to be a *sine qua non* for being a Jew,” “one of the major distinguishing marks of a Jew,” and the ultimate dividing force between Christians and Jews (150-51). This chapter of my dissertation questions Grabbe’s conclusion that circumcision was an essential ethnic marker; instead, I argue that circumcision’s force as an absolute ethnic marker was frequently questioned within Jewish antiquity and that the special cases of what I might call “marginal” Jews—that is, Jews whose ethnic *bona fides* were uncertain—demonstrate particularly well the ambivalence of many ancient Jewish writers when it comes to the necessity of circumcision.

circumcision of Achior the Ammonite in Judith and the conversion of Izates in Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.34-48. In both of these cases, an individual's relationship to Jewish ethnic identity and some other ethnic identity are in conflict. These texts witness to debates about the necessity or propriety of circumcision in these particular situations, and circumcision plays an important role in clarifying the individual's ethnic character. In addition, both cases are literary, carefully constructed, emic narratives instead of offhand remarks made by outsiders or explicitly apologetic defenses of the practice of circumcision. In this way, these two examples parallel Timothy's story in striking and instructive ways, as we will see below.

To set some sense of the contexts for these marginal figures, however, I first turn to Molly Whittaker's catalog of "Greco-Roman views" of Jews¹²⁹ as well as Menahem Stern's extensive collection of *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*.¹³⁰ Of course, of particular interest are citations of various writers's perspectives on circumcision.¹³¹ These etic perspectives help contextualize the emic expressions found in other literature nearly contemporary with Acts. Rather consistently, the extant evidence in Whittaker's volume demonstrates that circumcision was expressly linked

¹²⁹ Molly Whittaker, *Jews and Christians Graeco-Roman Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For an analysis of these relevant texts, see Cohen, *Beginnings*, 39-49.

¹³⁰ Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-1984).

¹³¹ See the listing in the index of Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 3:114 and Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 80-85. See also Allen Kerkeslager, "Maintaining Jewish Identity in the Greek Gymnasium: A 'Jewish Load' in CPJ 3.519 (= P. Schub. 37 = P. Berol. 13406)," *JSJ* 28 (1997): 12-33 for analysis of a papyrus depicting the tension involved in maintaining Jewish identity via circumcision in the Greek gymnasium: ". . . circumcision stands out as the distinguishing feature of male Jewish identity recognized by the Gentile author of the text, the actors, and the theater audience. Our text presents the rather ironic image of a Jew whose very devotion to an expression of Greek identity makes his Jewish identity all the more inescapably obvious. This should give warning to Kasher, Feldman, and others who tend to equate 'Hellenization' with either 'apostasy' or some type of compromise on 'orthodoxy,' whatever those terms may have meant in antiquity" (33).

with Jewish males.¹³² At the same time, the primeval origins of circumcision are complex as they trace back to the Egyptians and/or Colchians.¹³³ While viewed as an absolute marker of Jewish identity, circumcision's origins amongst other peoples demonstrate the pliability of the rite as an ethnic identifier. These outsiders tended to view circumcision as superstitious,¹³⁴ barbaric,¹³⁵ contemptible,¹³⁶ or merely laughable.¹³⁷

What is not evident in this list of citations, however, is the number of Latin references to Jews or Judea that *do not* mention circumcision. As Cohen details, “Circumcision is not mentioned by Cicero, Varro, Ovid, Valerius Maximus, Seneca, Pliny the Elder, Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, Quintilian, or Statius, although all of these Latin authors living in Rome have something to say about Jews or Judaea.”¹³⁸ To the list

¹³² Horace, *Sat.*, 1.9.68-70 ties circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath as definitive markers of Jewishness; Petronius, *Satyricon*, Fragment 371 argues for the necessity of circumcision lest Jews simply meld into the surrounding culture (“Granted that a Jew worships the pig-god and calls upon the highest ears of heaven, yet unless he also cuts back his foreskin with a knife he will leave the tribe and emigrate to Greek cities and will not tremble at the Sabbath with its ordinance of fasting”); Martial 7.30.5; Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5.5.8-9; Suetonius, *Dom.*, 12 provides a curious case in which the author reports seeing in his youth an elderly man examined by the authorities to determine whether or not he was circumcised.

¹³³ Diodorus Siculus, *World History*, 1.55; Origen, *Cels.*, 1.22 and 5.43. Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.*, 2.104 (Godley, LCL) who notes that “Colchians and Egyptians and Ethiopians are the only nations that have from the first practiced circumcision”; Herodotus argues that the practice of circumcision was evidence that the Colchians and the Egyptians were once one people, discounting that they were both “dark-skinned and woolly-haired” people because others people shared these same somatic features. Thus, Jews were not the only peoples who had or continued at the time to practice circumcision as 2.104 specifies, Φοίνικες δὲ καὶ Σύριοι οἱ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ καὶ αὐτοὶ ὁμολογεῖσιν παρ’ Αἰγυπτίων μεμαθηκέναι, Σύριοι δὲ οἱ περὶ Θερμῶδοντα καὶ Παρθένιον ποταμὸν καὶ Μάκρωνες οἱ τούτοις ἀστυγείτονας ἔδοντες ἀπὸ Κόλχων φασι νεωστὶ μεμαθηκέναι. οὗτοι γὰρ εἰσὶ οἱ περιταμνόμενοι ἀνθρώπων μούνοι, καὶ οὗτοι Αἰγυπτίοισι φαίνονται ποιεῦντες κατὰ ταῦτά. Strabo, *Geogr.*, 16.4.9 (Jones, LCL) notes that the “Creophagi” men “have their sexual gland mutilated” (κολοβοὶ τὰς βαλάνους) and their women practice excision “in the Jewish fashion” (αἱ γυναῖκες ἰουδαϊκῶς ἐκτετημέναι); he later (17.2.5) reaffirms that both Egyptians and Jews practice circumcision and excision.

¹³⁴ Strabo, *Geogr.* 16.2.37 who links circumcision with the demise of the Jerusalem priests into superstition and tyranny; Persius, *Sat.*, 5.184.

¹³⁵ Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5.5.8-9.

¹³⁶ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 2.137 reports Apion’s ridicule of circumcision. See also Juvenal, *Sat.*, 5.14.96-106 and Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5.5.8-9.

¹³⁷ Petronius, *Satyricon*, 68.8 and 102.14.

¹³⁸ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 41.

of characteristics associated with circumcision we might add one: to many Roman authors, circumcision was simply and literally unremarkable.¹³⁹

The first of the examples I will detail is the eponymous story of Judith, in which we find recorded a remarkable story of Jewish struggle against the imperial and cultural encroachments of the Assyrian commander Holofernes, though it was likely composed much later, perhaps during the Maccabean period. Having set aside the garments of her widowed grief, Judith plies her faithfulness to God and her feminine wiles in order to infiltrate the Assyrian military camp and eventually behead the nemesis of Israel. On her triumphant return to Bethulia, Judith asks to see Achior the Ammonite, who played a crucial role in the beginning of the narrative by recounting for Holofernes the story of the origins and tribulations of Israel. Achior stressed that unless Israel sinned before their God, they would remain invincible.¹⁴⁰ Holofernes

¹³⁹ In one particular instance, even when we might expect circumcision to emerge in a Greco-Roman author's discussion of Jewish ethnic distinctives, it is simply not mentioned. The Stoic Epictetus's *Dissertationes* speaks glancingly about Ἰουδαῖοι, noting how their dietary practices differed from Syrians, Egyptians, and Romans (Epictetus, *Diatr.*, 1.11.12-13 and 1.22.4). He also mentions Jews as he reflects on what it means to be authentic and consistent in one's moral thinking (Epictetus, *Diatr.*, 2.9.19-21). To illustrate that "mere knowledge" is no substitute for moral practice, Epictetus uses an inauthentic Ἰουδαῖος as a test case.

The brief passage found in *Diatr.*, 2.9.19-21 reaffirms the complexity of the term Ἰουδαῖος discussed above. In a single sentence, Epictetus seems to equate Stoics, Jews, and Greeks (2.9.19); the question remains whether he sees each of these as philosophical options or, in some way, ethnic designations. In the very next sentence, Epictetus then contrasts Jews, Syrian, and Egyptians. Again, are these all ethno-geographical designations or appellations for philosophical schools of thought?

More important, however, for our discussion of circumcision is the following discussion in which Epictetus seems to highlight what makes one a real Ἰουδαῖος and not an actor (2.9.20). Though much attention has been paid to baptism as an indispensable marker of Jewishness (see e.g. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:543-44), the primary determinant of a true Ἰουδαῖος is a particular "attitude of mind" and "choice" (ὅταν δ' ἀναλάβῃ τὸ πάθος τὸ τοῦ βεβαμμένου καὶ ἡρημένου, τότε καὶ ἔστι τῷ ὄντι καὶ καλεῖται Ἰουδαῖος).

Circumcision is nowhere mentioned in Epictetus. Though as W.A. Oldfather, LCL, 272-73 theorizes, Epictetus may be commenting on followers of Jesus who were still viewed as Ἰουδαῖοι by outsiders. Ultimately, however, Epictetus' treatise is little concerned with the ethnic and/or religious identities of ancient Jews (or Christians) and thus does not play a significant part in my analysis. Instead, Epictetus argues that the life of the mind of a Ἰουδαῖος illustrates the importance of consistency of thought and action.

¹⁴⁰ On the literary function of Achior, see Mercedes Navarro Puerto, "Reinterpreting the Past: Judith 5," in *History and Identity: How Israel's Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History* (ed. Núria Calduch-

received such “prophecy” (6:2) poorly, thinking that his military abilities could overcome any deity’s supposed protection, so he turns Achior over to the Israelites in Bethulia, where Achior informs a grateful, worried, but faithful community of the impending invasion. Achior then is not heard from until Judith beckons him in ch. 14 in order to show him the head of her defeated enemy.¹⁴¹ Having witnessed the deeds of this God (14:10 - πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραηλ), Achior shifts his allegiance to the God of Israel (ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ σφόδρα) and permanently enters the community (προσετέθη εἰς τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραηλ ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης) by means of circumcision.

As an Ammonite, Achior was strictly forbidden from ever joining the assembly of YHWH.¹⁴² As Lawrence Wills concludes, however,

It is probably simply the case that this Jewish novel allows for a romanticized, but fictionalized, entry of the famous Achior into the Israelite fold, as in Tobit. The same novel that could demonize “Nebuchadnezzar the king of the Assyrians” could idealize “Achior the Ammonite.”¹⁴³

Exhibiting no concern over the deuteronomical prohibition or the preservation of the community’s ethnic integrity, this foreigner joins the community by believing in their now common God and by undergoing a seemingly definitive rite of initiation. At least in Judith, circumcision is capable of shifting one’s ethnic identity: Achior the Ammonite is now Achior the Israelite. The novelistic genre of Judith may sanction authorial

Benages and Jan Liesen; DCLY 2006; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 115-39 and Adolfo D. Roitman, “Achior in the Book of Judith: His Role and Significance,” in *“No One Spoke Ill of Her”: Essays on Judith* (ed. James C. Vanderkam; SBLEJL 2; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1992), 31-45.

¹⁴¹ Even though Achior makes only two appearances in Jdt, his character is vital to the story. See Roitman, “Achior,” 31-32.

¹⁴² Deut 23:3 forbids Ammonites and Moabites from entering “the assembly of the Lord . . . even to the tenth generation” (NRSV), which is certainly an eternal prohibition, not a time-conditioned probation.

¹⁴³ Lawrence M. Wills, “The Book of Judith: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Tobit, Judith* (vol. 3 of NIB; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 1168.

license, but the narrative envisions ethnic transformation as conceivable and circumcision as the means by which a non-Israelite could become an ethnic convert, a newborn Ἰουδαῖος. In this narrative, while ethnic boundaries are porous, the means of ethnic conversion are seemingly concrete. Circumcision marks the transition from Ammonite to Israelite.

Second is Josephus's account of the Adiabene narrative in *Ant.* 20.17-48.¹⁴⁴ Set during the reign of Claudius, Josephus's narrative recounts the concurrent, though geographically disparate, conversions of mother (Helena) and son (Izates) to τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη.¹⁴⁵ Izates's father, Monobazus, favored this "unique" (μονογενῆ)¹⁴⁶ son more than his many siblings, starting from the moment when Monobazus heard a voice asking him to remove his hand from atop Helena's womb so as not to crowd the child. As is wont to happen when fathers have favorites, Izates's siblings looked at him with potentially murderous envy. Therefore, Monobazus sent his favored child to another trusted kingdom for his safety. There he encountered a Ἰουδαῖος named Ananias. Having already compelled the local king's coterie of wives to worship God ὡς Ἰουδαίοις πατριον ἦν, Ananias taught Izates these same ways. When Monobazus died and Izates was cleared to ascend to the king's throne, Izates ordered Ananias to accompany him back to Adiabene. There, Izates discovered that his mother had also encountered a Ἰουδαῖος who had similarly convinced her to live according to the Jewish νόμους.

Discovering that his mother had also embraced the way of life of a Ἰουδαῖος, Izates felt compelled to authenticate his conversion by means of circumcision. Izates

¹⁴⁴ See Schwartz, "God, Gentiles, and Jewish Law," 263-82 who compares this narrative to the apostolic council of Acts 15. However, the more apt comparison may be found in the very next chapter of Acts where the circumcision of an adult with an ambiguous ethnic identity is in play in narrative form.

¹⁴⁵ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.17.

¹⁴⁶ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.20.

believed that only this rite would make him truly Jewish (βεβαίως Ἰουδαῖος),¹⁴⁷ but Helena, mindful of the *Realpolitik* of a tenuous bequeathing of political power,¹⁴⁸ cautioned her newly regnant son. Were the people to discover that Izates had embraced a foreign and strange way of life (ξένων ἐπιθυμήσειεν καὶ ἀλλοτρίων αὐτοῖς ἐθῶν),¹⁴⁹ they would likely reject his authority. Despite her political wisdom, it was only Ananias who could compel King Izates not to seek circumcision. In a narrative aside, Josephus tells his readers that simple self-interest played a part in Ananias's counsel as he believed that he too would be embroiled in a bloody coup as the proponent of Izates's new identity.¹⁵⁰ To the king, however, Ananias only says that authentic worship of God did not rest on circumcision but on Izates's fealty to the traditions of the Jews (ζηλοῦν τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων).¹⁵¹

For the moment, Izates was only half-heartedly convinced. The presence of yet another Ἰουδαῖος, Eleazar, reignited Izates's desire. A Galilean renowned for his meticulous commitment to τὰ πάτρια, Eleazar condemned Izates's faithlessness, noting that the laws of the Jews were not just to be read but enacted by its adherents.¹⁵² Izates acted immediately, much to the dismay of Ananias and Helena whose previous fears had not abated. Yet God, according to Josephus, would not allow these political threats to come to fruition for "those who fix their eyes on Him and trust in Him alone do not

¹⁴⁷ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.38.

¹⁴⁸ See Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.26-33

¹⁴⁹ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.39.

¹⁵⁰ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.41.

¹⁵¹ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.41.

¹⁵² Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.44.

lose the reward of their piety.”¹⁵³ Izates thus reigned triumphantly, his people seemingly accepting this new religious and ethnic identity.

Questions abound around this narrative. Schwartz identifies the near consensus that the story represents a spiritual progression “from Gentile, to God-fearer who kept all Jewish practices except circumcision, to Jew.”¹⁵⁴ Concurring with Cohen¹⁵⁵ but challenging Gilbert,¹⁵⁶ Schwartz concludes that Izates was in no way a Jew prior to his circumcision; he had not taken on any of the practices characteristic of a Ἰουδαῖος prior to his desire for and eventual execution of his circumcision. In fact, Schwartz argues that circumcision only becomes an issue in contrast to the conversion experience of his mother, Helena, who could clearly convert and practice Judaism without this physical rite.¹⁵⁷ The advice of Ananias and Helena, according to Schwartz, is not to practice a private Judaism that eschews circumcision but not to practice Judaism at all!

I am sympathetic with Schwartz on at least two points. First, I concur that the usual interpretation that Izates represents the gradual progression through various stages of “Jewishness” is inadequate. Though Izates seems to inhabit some sort of in-between state in the process of his conversion, institutionalizing this process or labeling each step with technical terminology like “God-fearer” may create sharp distinctions where ambiguity pervades. After all, the narrative is not a self-conscious description of the process of a generic or idealized conversion but the specific, literary

¹⁵³ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.48 (Thackeray, LCL).

¹⁵⁴ Schwartz, “God, Gentiles, and Jewish Law,” 265.

¹⁵⁵ Shaye J.D. Cohen, “Respect for Judaism by Gentiles According to Josephus,” *HTR* 80 (1987): 420.

¹⁵⁶ Gary Gilbert, “The Making of a Jew: ‘God-fearer’ or Convert in the Story of Izates,” *USQR* 44 (1991): 299-313.

¹⁵⁷ Schwartz, “God, Gentiles, and Jewish Law,” 270-71.

experience of a regal family. The conflicting opinions of Ananias and Eleazar only add to the ambiguity of Izates's identity throughout the narrative. Second, Schwartz is correct in arguing that circumcision by itself was not the primary objection Ananias and Helena held. For Schwartz, circumcision is a cipher of sorts for a whole host of practices that would label one a Ἰουδαῖος. Izates's desire for circumcision was concomitant to his desire to live the life of a Ἰουδαῖος. I would add that the fundamental problem Helena and Ananias fear is that Izates's countrymen would refuse to be governed by one who is now perceived as a foreigner.¹⁵⁸ On the level of politics within the narrative, circumcision was a gateway to a whole series of religious practices that would distinguish King Izates's new ethnic identity.

For the purposes of this dissertation, therefore, I focus less on whether or not Izates was practicing the life of a Ἰουδαῖος prior to his circumcision but what this rite might have represented. For Cohen, this text has nothing to do with ethnicity and everything to do with religious affiliation: "In this passage, which speaks about conversion to Judaism, the ethnic-geographic meaning of *Ioudaios* is entirely absent, and only a religious meaning is intended."¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Schwartz discounts that the narrative advocates that conversion requires a shift in "national" allegiance:

Finally, what is striking about Josephus' narrative is that it emphasizes in an exemplary manner that becoming Jewish has no relationship to one's national affiliation. Izates was, after all, king of Adiabene (not Judaea!), yet the point of the story is that his people only gained from his conversion, due to God's resultant watchful providence. Anyone reading this story comes away with the conclusion that worship of God need not affect one's national status. When combined with the premise that Jewish law is only a matter of national *ethê*, an obvious conclusion is that

¹⁵⁸ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.39

¹⁵⁹ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 79.

those who choose to worship God need not become Jews nor, consequently, observe the practices of that people.¹⁶⁰

Attention to the complexities of ethnic discourse points to the opposite. The potential that Izates would be viewed by his subjects as a foreigner was the threat voiced by his Jewish counselors. That he might be viewed as an ethnic other might delegitimize an already tenuous claim to power. Thus, the narrative binary represented by Ananias's "liberal" stance and Eleazar's "conservative" stance are not concerned solely with religious duties but with attendant questions of identity. The τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη and τὰ πατρία τῶν Ἰουδαίων are not just religious options one may adopt but an entire system providing a discursive ethnic logic to a particular people. As Janowitz concludes in disputing Cohen's reading of this narrative,

Since the royal house was not native to Judaea, Cohen argues that this is evidence for a religion definition of the term "Ioudaios." However, other than a reference to circumcision we do not learn the religious content of the royal family's new beliefs; we remain within the general boundaries of customs. *We appear to be confronted with the familiar process of a group acquiring a new ethnicity by adopting the customs of a foreign ethnos.*¹⁶¹

Since circumcision is the sole explicit marker of a shift in identity—whether religious or ethnic—the internal narrative debate about circumcision broaches a fundamental question: when does one become a part of these people called Ἰουδαῖοι? The actors in the narrative give diametrically opposed responses, neither of which receives Josephus's explicit sanction. In this case, unlike the story of Achior in Judith where circumcision was a sure sign of a new ethnic identity, circumcision is an ambiguous marker, for some negotiable and for others irreplaceable. However, as in Judith, ethnicities are porous and mutable.

¹⁶⁰ Schwartz, "God, Gentiles, and Jewish Law," 274.

¹⁶¹ Janowitz, "Rethinking Jewish Identity," 208. Italics added.

As illustrated by these two narratives, opinions about the function of circumcision as a marker of ethnic identity in antiquity varied when it came to those on the margins of Jewish identity.¹⁶² Ultimately, there was a broad range of parameters for its social, cultural, and ethnic functions, particularly when shifting the ethnic other to the kinship of fellow Ἰουδαῖοι. Whereas to many outsiders, circumcision was an unequivocal sign of Jewishness, debates raged over its historical provenance, its necessity to religious and ethnic identity, and its symbolic import. In fact, from an emic perspective, there is no evidence that circumcision was a useful marker of ethnic identity. Thus, Cohen concludes, “Whether or not circumcision is an infallible or a usable indicator of Jewishness, there is no evidence that the Jews in antiquity ever actually used it as a means of detecting fellow Jews.”¹⁶³ Furthermore, I would add that the requirement of circumcision in the conversion of outsiders did not reach the level of ethnic dogma and that these debates over circumcision did not foreclose the ability of outsiders to become in some sense fellow Jews.

¹⁶² Cf. Alan F. Segal, “Conversion and Universalism: Opposites that Attract,” in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd* (ed. Bradley H. McLean; JSNTSup 86; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 162-89 who argues, in reference to Gentile conversion and universalism in ancient Judaism and Christianity, “As with all deceptively simple questions, there is no single answer. For instance, *Judaism* did not have a single policy on the status of the Gentiles; there was no single Judaism of the day. *Jews* did have options about Gentiles but that is not the same as policy. Various Jewish sects had policies or theologies that involved Gentiles in some way. And most Jews and Jewish sects had ambivalent opinions” (162). He continues, “A major point of this essay will be that the NT evinces the same ambivalence on the issue of the inclusion of Gentiles as do other Jewish sects. Indeed, the history of early Christianity is a history resolving that ambiguity after a great deal of conflict. So the easy contrasts made between the early Christian community and the variety of Jewish sects do not work. It is not just a question of Jewish parochialism being replaced by Christian universalism” (162-63). It is precisely these kinds of “border” disputes that characterize ethnic discourse according to Barth, “Introduction” (see ch. 2). It is little surprise that the question of circumcision—whether of children born into the tradition or converts to it—would have inspired ambivalent reactions as did the potential disintegration of difference between Jew and Gentile represented by both conversions of Judaism and early Christianity’s increasingly Gentile composition.

¹⁶³ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 48.

Greek or Pagan? Defining Ἕλλην

The heightened pitch surrounding the discussion of the proper translation of Ἰουδαῖος is not replicated when one turns to Ἕλλην. However, for the sake of this investigation, I now turn to the ethnic character of this term.¹⁶⁴ As I demonstrated above, scholars have tended to subsume the ethnic implications of the labeling of Timothy's father as Ἕλλην under the conclusion that he was a "pagan." Like Ἰουδαῖος, however, Ἕλλην is a multivalent ethnic term; to read it solely as a religious marker misses its full nuance.¹⁶⁵ Ἕλλην is not just geographic (Greek) or religious ("pagan") nomenclature but a synthesis of the two along with other cultural factors. Ultimately, therefore, I propose that "Hellene" might be a viable translational alternative that does not rely so heavily on geography or suggest ties to polytheistic religion. Instead, to be Ἕλλην is to be at the center of intersecting markers of ethnic identity.

¹⁶⁴ Contra Malina, *Timothy*, 101 who treats Ἕλλην here as a marker of social status, neglecting its ethnic tenor. While I would commend Malina's careful outline of emic and etic terminologies, his arguments require a specific assignation of Luke's authorial perspective instead of focusing on the world projected by the text. He argues, "Most commentators presume that Timothy's father, being a Greek, was therefore a non-Israelite; however, the word 'Greek' referred to a social status. And in Israelite in-groups, 'Judean' meant 'barbarian,' that is, following the customs and language of Judea, while 'Greek' meant 'civilized,' following Hellenistic customs and language. Timothy did issue from a mixed marriage but from one of mixed cultures" (101). Thus, Malina ultimately concludes that "from an Israelite perspective when speaking outside of Judea, Galilee, or Perea," Judeans and Greeks were both within the "general name" "Israel."

¹⁶⁵ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 132-33 argues that while the Hellenes were initially an ethnic group characterized by the immutable sharing of common blood and mutable sharing of common language, common modes of worshiping the Gods, and a common way of life." When Hellenism became the ideological arm of an empire, however, the "immutable" marker of genealogy gave way to the latter three. According to Cohen, this shift represents a move away for Greekness from ethnicity and towards a *cultural* designation. However, the division of immutable and mutable components of ethnic identity is lacking as I discuss in ch. 2. Ethnicity is thoroughly fictional yet real, unchanging in emic discussion but flexible in practice. That the definition of "Hellene" would minimize the importance of shared blood in its imperial and cultural expansion represents a shift in ethnic discourse, not an eschewing of it.

Cf. Cadbury, *History*, 12: "Acts itself introduces us—and that in a small inland town (Acts 16:1)—to Timothy whose mother was a Jewess and his father 'a Greek.' Even this word Greek probably conceals racial varieties. In the New Testament it is something nearly if not quite the same as Gentile. Hellenic stock in the narrower sense can no more be assumed by the word Greek than it can from a person's use of Greek language or his bearing of a Greek name."

Similar to Luke's use of Ἰουδαῖος, the ethnic terminology of Ἕλλην is wholly absent from the Gospel of Luke while Ἕλλην and related terms occur fifteen times in the narrative of Acts.¹⁶⁶ These include, of course, the three uses of Ἑλληνιστής (6:1; 9:29; 11:20), a term highly debated in the study of Acts though clearly pointing to a particular group of people characterized by their Greek language and/or customs even if their precise composition remains difficult for exegetes to reconstruct. Furthermore, there is one reference each to the nation of Greece (20:2) and the Greek language (21:37).¹⁶⁷

As discussed above, six instances of Ἕλλην are included within the pairings of Ἕλλην and Ἰουδαῖος as a way to encapsulate broadly the whole world. Moreover, these six pairings all occur in settings where Ἕλλην is not *opposing* Ἰουδαῖος. When Ἕλλην first occurs in Acts 14:1, Luke describes the preaching of Paul and Barnabas to both Jews and Hellenes *in the synagogue of the Jews* (εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων). Despite the seemingly sectarian naming of this place of worship, it is Ἰουδαίων τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων who believe. Again in 18:4 Luke describes Paul proclaiming *in the synagogue* to both Jews and Hellenes. In 19:10, 17, large groups of people are described as Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἑλλησιν hearing the good news of God and praising Jesus's name. In Paul's farewell speech in Ephesus (20:21), Paul himself describes his witness as one directed toward Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἑλλησιν. In no instance does Luke pair Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην to describe anything but those faithful peoples who heard and received the proclamation of Paul. At least in Acts, these two terms do not refer to ethnic rivals, but

¹⁶⁶ Ἕλλην appears in Acts 14:1; 16:1, 3; 17:4; 18:4; 19:10, 17; 20:21; 21:28; Ἑλληνιστής in 6:1; 9:29; 11:20; Ἑλληνίς in 17:12; Ἑλλάς in 20:2; and Ἑλληνιστί in 21:37.

¹⁶⁷ This last verse along with its wider context in vv. 37-39 is discussed below in ch. 5, which treats Paul's self-identification as both Roman and Jew in the narrative of Acts.

ethnic partners in receiving the good news. Given Luke's use of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην in Acts, we cannot assume that Timothy's Hellene father was a "mere pagan."¹⁶⁸

This leaves us with five uses of Ἕλλην to be examined. Two are the focus of this passage referring to Timothy's father (16:1, 3). They belong in the first category outlined above by referring to a specific individual within the narrative. Because the uses found in 17:4, 12 speak of specific Hellenes in specific places, they belong in my second category.

The final use is 21:28, in which Ἕλλην is deployed as shorthand for an ethnic other in a definite site of contestation. It clearly belongs in my sixth category. By first rallying the crowd around their common ethnic identity (ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται, βοηθεῖτε), the "Jews from Asia" (v. 27 - οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἰουδαῖοι) stack one accusation of ethnic treachery on top of another. First, they accuse Paul of unrelenting, all-encompassing opposition to the definitive features of Jewish identity (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ κατὰ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ τόπου τούτου πάντα πανταχῆ διδάσκων). Even worse (ἔτι τε καὶ) and more specifically, they have borne witness to Paul's desecration of the temple grounds by bringing (εἰσήγαγεν) a Ἕλλην onto holy ground. In a narrative aside, Luke defends Paul, explaining that a certain Τρόφιμον τὸν Ἐφέσιον had been seen with him in the city but that Paul's accusers only assumed or perhaps concocted the lie of Paul's sacred trespass. Clearly here, the term Ἕλλην is implicitly laden with ethnic and religious import. The accusers did not need to explain how this trespass was a violation of the common ethnic dictates of a true Ἰουδαῖος but could simply assume the coherence of their accusation. However, to assume simply that this accusation here

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Wan, "Ethnic Construction," 147: "Most commentators equate Paul's use of 'Greek' with 'Gentile.' But 'Greek' is more neutral and less pejorative, and Paul chooses it over 'Gentile' for a reason."

is wholly religious misses the inextricability of religious and ethnic identities. It is only in this site of contestation that the ethnic appellation Ἕλλην includes a polemical tone. In this case, the context requires it but not in the number of other instances of Ἕλλην outlined above, especially when Luke pairs the terms Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην. Much like Ἰουδαῖος, Ἕλλην is a flexible term, amenable to polemical and merely descriptive contexts. In the case of Acts 16, therefore, one cannot assume a polemical, religious critique implicit in the labeling of Timothy's father as Ἕλλην.

Simplification of Ἕλλην must be avoided. Narrowing the dynamic scope of Ἕλλην to the religious dimensions of “pagan,” Pervo argues that the term is wholly negative. According to Pervo, Ἕλλην tells us what Timothy's father *was not*—not Jewish. “He was . . . the son of . . . a ‘Greek,’ that is, gentile father. That is *the father's sole importance*. Whether he was alive or dead and what his religious preferences may have been was of no interest to the narrator.”¹⁶⁹ However, this narrows too much the complex ethnic heritage of which Timothy is an heir. As I will demonstrate below, though his father is only identified with an ethnic characterization, he plays a critical role in ethnic logic undergirding the narrative of Acts 16:1-5.

Neither Jew nor Hellene but Both? Rereading Acts 16:1-5 as Ethnic Discourse

The complexities of ethnic discourse, especially as enunciated in the opening verses of Acts 16, have precluded this critical text from playing an important role in discussions about the definition and contestation of Jewish identity in antiquity.

¹⁶⁹ Pervo, *Acts*, 387. Italics added.

Questions about the historicity of the narrative—whether explicit or implicit—have also made it difficult to appreciate the fiction of ethnicity as a projection in the narrative. Could the historical Paul possibly have circumcised Timothy when we know the striking position he takes on the symbolic import of circumcision in light of the gospel?¹⁷⁰ Is this yet another instance of Luke’s reshaping of the historic Paul?¹⁷¹

A most striking example of such concerns is Dunn’s reading of these verses which eliminates *a priori* the possibility that this pericope plays anything but the historical function of verisimilitude: “Luke’s objective is not advanced by the prior account of the recruitment of Timothy, so we can be equally confident that Luke drew this too from good tradition, possibly even Timothy’s if not Paul’s own recollection.”¹⁷² According to Dunn, therefore, this narrative does not play any role in Acts beyond the recording of an inescapably historical event. This is a highly problematic position at the very least because history—whether ancient or modern—is not simply an endeavor that represents reality objectively. Especially in the case of historical narrative full of theological implications, we cannot analyze these verses simply as an attempt at historical precision. Given the nature of such narratives, the historicity of this event is simply irretrievable. For this reason, I focus on the narrative world that these verses project, the construction of literary characters within that world, and how ethnic discourse functions within that narrative world. This chapter offers an alternative to Dunn’s statement that “Luke’s objective is not advanced by the prior account of the

¹⁷⁰ See 1 Cor 7:18-19—which instructs believers to remain in whatever state they were when they converted, whether circumcised or not—and Gal 2:3—which is likely part of Paul’s own account of the events narrated in Acts 15 and points out that Titus himself was not compelled to be circumcised.

¹⁷¹ Philipp Vielhauer, “On the ‘Paulinism’ of Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn; Mifflintown, Penn.: Sigler Press, 1980), 33-50 is a classic expression of the potential inconsistencies between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of his authentic epistles and what theological motives may lie behind the projection of Luke’s Paul.

¹⁷² Dunn, *Acts*, 215-16.

recruitment of Timothy.”¹⁷³ The opening verses of ch. 16 play upon the ambiguities of Timothy’s ethnicity. Rather than representing a historical figure, they are a literary effort to promote a particular theological end. In Acts, the gospel enters a world marked by ethnic diversity and difference; ultimately, the gospel brings unity across these diverse ethnic lines not by bringing these differences to an end but by relying on their flexibility. How then can this text be instructive in such discussions? How does the ambiguity of both ethnic terminologies and markers aid our reading of this text?

First, let us consider the function of this pericope in its immediate context.

Talbert has suggested that the opening verses of Acts 16 serve as a “conclusion to 15:1-35. Its purpose is to show Paul’s acts to maintain church unity after the council”¹⁷⁴ Fitzmyer counters that the closing verses of ch. 15 (vv. 36-41) join with 16:1-5 to mark the inauguration of Paul’s second missionary travels.¹⁷⁵ Talbert suggests that 16:1-5 is a retrospective confirmation of the apostolic council, while Fitzmyer sees these verses as a prospective preparation for Paul’s continued evangelical efforts. In fact, 16:1-5 plays both functions as it embodies the continued tension between the apostolic accord of ch. 15 and the ongoing Pauline effort to evangelize both Jews and Hellenes in the remaining chapters of Acts. Though seemingly definitive, the conclusions of the Jerusalem council still must be put to the test as the relationship between Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην—the primary oppositional or differential relationship running through Acts—remains unsettled. Timothy represents an ethnic seam that runs through the rest of Acts. Too often, debates about Luke’s perspective on Judaism have become sterile, binary debates in which Luke is either a literary friend or enemy to Jews. However,

¹⁷³ Dunn, *Acts*, 215-16.

¹⁷⁴ Talbert, *Acts*, 137.

¹⁷⁵ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 570-74.

attention to the kind of ethnic discourse embodied in the literary character of Timothy suggests that the relationship between Luke and the Ἰουδαῖοι is punctuated with ambiguity and a steady negotiation of ethnic boundaries.

Perhaps the defining feature of this brief passage is the ease with which Luke engages in this ethnic discourse.¹⁷⁶ If narrative tensions exist within this narrative, Luke betrays none of them. The passage is brief, leaving much unspoken and unexplained. Why was Timothy not circumcised as a child? Would Timothy have been considered Jewish, Greek, or both following his circumcision? Did the response to this question change after his circumcision? Was the marriage of Timothy's parents legitimate from either side of the ethnic divide they represent? Despite these significant questions, Luke provides not a single response. Instead, in just a handful of verses, the narrative moves smoothly from Timothy's disputed ethnicity to the promulgation of the apostolic decree (16:4) without explicitly addressing these conundrums. And lest we emphasize too greatly the seemingly evident tension between this passage and the previous chapter's apostolic decrees, ultimately, Luke portrays these missions as unmitigated successes (vv. 4-5). While scholars wonder for good reason in light of the previous chapter why Paul takes this step, Luke evinces no discomfort with this seeming inconsistency, never requiring Paul to defend his circumcising of Timothy nor even referring to the event again in Acts.

¹⁷⁶ Contra Cohen, *Beginnings*, 363: "Although the Paul of Acts never preaches freedom from the Law and never denigrates circumcision, the author of Acts 16:1-3 seems a little uneasy with the circumcision of Timothy." I see no evidence of Luke's uneasiness. To be sure, however, scholars have been incredibly uneasy with this act. Baker, "From Every Nation under Heaven," 81 notes the relative ease with which both Luke and Philo navigate the tension between Jewish unity and diversity: "In this essay, I consider the ways in which ancient Jewish and non-Jewish writers do, indeed, depict Jews as a multiethnic or multiracial people whose individual members, from earliest antiquity, are imagined to embody multiple (often dual) lineages of birth, land, history, and culture. At the same time, these ancient writers, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, employ a strong rhetoric of Jewish unity that has but occluded Jewish diversity."

Also left unsaid is the nature of Timothy's ethnic identity after his circumcision. Luke *never* characterizes Timothy himself except to say he is not circumcised. While Luke describes Timothy's parents with the ethnic terminologies discussed above, Timothy never receives the benefit of a single clarifying ethnic term.¹⁷⁷ Whether Timothy is Jewish or not is an exegetical red herring, for Luke never characterizes Timothy in such a way. Even more, the discussion often gets bogged down because of the unspoken assumption that the primary dispute here is religious. Is Timothy a "Jew" or a "pagan?" When it comes to the latter, the notion of religion is not in play as much as ethnicity is. As Wall argues,

But the details of Luke's description of Timothy would suggest that Paul is more interested that he is the progeny of a "mixed" marriage than in his religious credentials. Timothy is the right person for the work ahead because his ethnic mix envisages the very mixture of Paul's mission Paul wanted Timothy as a traveling companion not because of his professional résumé but because he personifies and presumably has a grasp of the tensions between "being Greek" and "being Jewish" that will characterize the Pauline church.¹⁷⁸

To be sure, religious convictions about circumcision played an important part in determining ethnic identities like ancient Judaism, but ethnicity better comprehends the negotiation of identity narrated in these verses because the ultimate concern about Timothy's bisected identity is rooted in the mixed ethnic heritage of his parents. Whether or not his religious practice is considered orthodox is a subset of this wider ethnic discourse.

What then, ultimately, is the effect of Timothy's circumcision? Wholly at stake is Timothy's ethnic identity. Yet in a way, the ethnic confusion precipitated by the

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:200 who calls Timothy a "Judenchristen" though Acts never specifies Timothy's ethnic identity, only his discipleship as a follower of Jesus.

¹⁷⁸ Wall, *NIB*, 10:227.

marriage of a Greek man and a Jewish woman remains unresolved. Having assuaged the concerns of a particular population, Timothy is no longer a burden in Paul's mission but a valuable, if symbolic, narrative asset.

If the circumcision of Timothy is a response to his splintered ethnic identity, for whose sake was Timothy circumcised? I would argue that the audience of this ethnic ritual is two-fold. First, of course, are those Ἰουδαῖοι who questioned and were uncomfortable with the ambiguities of Timothy's ethnic identities. To them, the ritual of circumcision was presumably an infallible symbol of religious allegiance and thus a clear ethnic symbol. Luke here assumes that Timothy's circumcision was sufficient to assuage those Ἰουδαῖοι who were aware that Timothy's father was a Hellene, and since Paul is never critiqued for this episode in Acts, one must assume that within the narrative Timothy's circumcision proved effective. Yet, at the same time, Paul plays upon the flexibility of ethnic boundaries by assuming that the circumcision of an adult would shift his identity from debatable to certain. Thus, in this one narrative, ethnicity is both concrete and objective as well as negotiable and mutable.

Beyond this first audience, I would add a second dimension. Though implicit, I read in these verses a concern to legitimize Timothy and his ethnic identity and thus also to legitimize the efforts to proclaim the gospel in a world marked by ethnic diversity and strife. Up to this point in the narrative, Paul has had a pair of named travel companions, Barnabas and Silas, both of whom appear to be clearly Jewish.¹⁷⁹ After Timothy joins the Pauline entourage, 20:4 lists several additional traveling companions: συνείπετο δὲ αὐτῷ Σώπατρος Πύρρου Βεροιαῖος, Θεσσαλονικέων δὲ

¹⁷⁹ Barnabas is described in Acts 4:36 as a Λευίτης though a Cypriot by birth (Κύπριος τῷ γένει). Silas first appears in 15:22 where he joins a Judas called Barsabbas, both of who were ἄνδρας ἡγουμένους ἐν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς.

Ἀρίσταρχος καὶ Σεκοῦνδος, καὶ Γάϊος Δερβαῖος καὶ Τιμόθεος, Ἀσιανοὶ δὲ Τύχικος καὶ Τρόφιμος. Here, as Paul turns toward Jerusalem and eventually Rome, his travel companions seem to have non-Jewish names and, more important, are specified by their lands of origin. To be sure, these individuals could be like Barnabas, who though a Levite was a native of Cyprus, but the lack of any detail that would link these individuals to the Ἰουδαῖοι is striking. Talbert suggests that these seven specifically Gentile companions corporately represent all the Gentile churches.¹⁸⁰ More important, however, is that Timothy is quite at home in this list. He is no longer under the critical gaze of those who would question his fractured ethnic identity. Instead, he is wholly a part of a movement that does not erase one's ethnic origins but finds ways to embrace these differences. After this list of named companions, Luke only labels Paul's traveling companions as the "we" which dot the closing chapters of Acts. Citing Timothy as an instance of Luke's theological integration of pagan Rome and Jewish Jerusalem, Marguerat argues,

The double cultural and religious alliance is even clearer with the collaborator Paul chooses to replace Barnabas: Timothy (16.1-5), the son of a converted Jewish woman and a Greek father. Notice the difference from Barnabas: the narrative of Acts has progressed since chapter 13. The legitimacy of the mission outside of Judaism has just been recognized by the Jerusalem assembly (ch. 15), and, by his double affiliation, Timothy symbolizes the Church that can henceforth be born: a Church composed of those Jews who rallied to the cause of Christ and believers of Gentile origin. In every detail, the identity of Timothy coincides with that of the Church, a Church in formation, for the priority is reserved to believing Israel—the Jew first and then the Greek.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Talbert, *Acts*, 175.

¹⁸¹ Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 66-67.

What Timothy represents, however, is the collapsing of these exclusive categories. He shows that ethnic incertitude is no obstacle to the gospel and that ethnic purity is not requisite for membership in this multi-ethnic people of God.

Significantly, Timothy is at least explicitly absent in the remaining chapters of Acts.¹⁸² Nevertheless, this brief pericope provides readers a valuable glimpse into the creation and function of ethnic identities in Acts. For Luke, ethnicities are plastic identities and thus more than capable of carrying theological weight. He is not simply part of the narrative backdrop of this compelling narrative but an important symbol of the intricate negotiations of ethnicity that early Christianity faced. Speaking more broadly of the exegetical puzzle of Luke's view of Judaism, Marguerat notes, ". . . of all the New Testament writings, Luke-Acts presents not the most negative image of Judaism but the most difficult to grasp."¹⁸³ This chapter has argued that this complexity is firmly rooted in the flexibility of ethnic discourse. As we turn to the rest of Acts 16, the importance of ethnic discourse will only become more acute.

¹⁸² He is only named again in 17:14, 18:5, 19:22, and 20:4. Even in those cases, Timothy does not play a significant role in the narrative; he is only half of a traveling pair or one in a list of Paul's travel companions. He never speaks nor acts. In a sense, then, Timothy's character in Acts is less important than the complicated ethnic puzzle he embodies. Cf. Taylor, *Les Actes*, 5:231. Though a certain "Timothy" is the purported recipient of a pair of pseudo-Pauline epistles, linking these two individuals historically is highly problematic though the commentary literature frequently observes this tenuous connection.

¹⁸³ Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 129.

Chapter Four

Negotiating Ethnic Boundaries as Macedonia Beckons (16:6-15)

“An interesting fact about [Luke’s] style is its variation in itself. I can hardly escape the impression that it becomes more cultured, more truly Hellenic when his story, after the middle of Acts, launches out into the Greek speaking West.”¹

As Charles Freeman has observed, “the Greeks and other Mediterranean cultures were in a continuous process of evaluating themselves through the definition of others.”² Into this cultural environment the author of Luke leads us in the middle of Acts 16. Having secured Timothy’s ethnic credentials, Luke follows Paul’s journey through Asia Minor and finally to Macedonia. This journey evokes the vital role Macedonia played in antiquity and thus marks a critical juncture in the narrative of Acts. Furthermore, a number of boundary crossings, both cartographical and cultural, characterize this journey. Despite the conclusions of many a Western exegete, this cartographic shift is not from Asia to Europe, east to west, or Orient to Occident. Nor is the advent of the gospel into the European continent in view. Instead, Luke is describing the arrival of God’s messengers in a land rife with ethnic diversity and complexity.

These verses provide a pivot point from the consensus of Acts 15 and its complex application to the disputed ethnicity of Timothy, on one side, and the intrusion of the gospel into the colonial ambient of Philippi on the other. These pericopes provide the transition between two highpoints of ethnic discourse,

¹ Cadbury, *History*, 34.

² Charles Freeman, *Egypt, Greece and Rome: Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 113.

narratives in which ethnicity is front and center. Here, the ethnic discourse is not at the forefront; instead, implicit ethnic notions undergird the narrative shift into Macedonia and thus into the wider world of the Greek past and the Roman imperial present. In striking ways, the complexity of ethnic discourse helps explain why these verses provide such an important pivot point in the narrative of Acts.

The history of scholarship on Acts 16 has often labeled it as a monumental geographical hinge in the narrative of Acts, with which the gospel moves from the regions of the eastern Mediterranean to the shores of the continent of Europe. Attention to the function of ethnic discourse in both the composition and interpretation of Acts leads to my two-fold thesis in this chapter. First, an implicit geographical narrative that sees the gospel's gradual movement from east to west preempts a contextual and historical assessment of the ethnic claims of Acts in this admittedly important geographic move to Macedonia. I am not arguing that intentionally ethnocentric or even racist notions compelled scholars to highlight the move of the gospel into the European continent that so many scholars call home both ethnically and methodologically. Instead, implicit ethnic assumptions have led to those assumptions being imported into scholarship. Whether intentional or not, the ethical complications invoked by such interpretations and the wider implications of such readings require a second look at this text. Fundamentally, Acts is not a narrative of the triumphal march of the gospel from the Orient to the Occident. Second, I propose that the geographical move in view here is not the move to Europe but the crossing of complex ethnic boundaries. Still firmly rooted in a world dominated by the legacies of Greece and the ascendancy of imperial Rome, the early followers of Christ described in

Acts stake a claim as a movement at home amid the intricacies of the history and peoples of the Mediterranean world. It does so not by effacing these differences but by boldly writing the movement into this world's history and by incorporating the followers of God into the peoples of this region.

Is the Arrival of Christianity in Europe Significant in the Narrative of Acts?

Perhaps the greatest impediment to a full appreciation of the underlying ethnic discourse of these verses is the pervasive but relatively unexamined conclusion that theologically the advent of Christianity on European soil is significant. Fitzmyer argues, for example, that “God’s summons was leading them to the evangelization of Europe.”³ While technically true if we were tracing Paul’s journeys on a modern map, such an assertion lacks basis if we are considering the implicit mental map Luke posits in these verses. Similarly, Johnson entitles the text from 15:36 to 16:10 “The Mission to Europe,”⁴ seemingly to argue that the close of the apostolic council and the circumcision of Timothy are waypoints on the road to the mission’s eventual arrival in Europe, which is the actual narrative aim of these verses. He later clarifies that “the narrative point is clear enough: the Spirit blocked every direction sought by human initiative, and *left only an opening to Europe.*”⁵ Similarly, Koet sees in the vision of the

³ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 580.

⁴ Johnson, *Acts*, 281.

⁵ Johnson, *Acts*, 286. Italics added.

Macedonian and the initial emergence of “we” language in Acts “wie bedeutend der Schritt nach Europa für Lukas ist.”⁶

Additional examples abound: Dunn speaks of “how it was that Paul first brought the gospel to Europe, or at least in the Aegean basin”⁷; González of the “inicio de la misión en Europa”⁸; Schneider of the assurance “dass Gott selbst sie zur Verkündigung nach Europa gerufen hat”⁹; Talbert of “Paul’s divine commission for a European mission”¹⁰; Wall of “the story of Paul’s turn towards Europe”¹¹; Williams of Paul’s “first European missionary tour”¹²; and Wikgren of “the significance of Philippi as the place where the Gospel was first proclaimed in Europe.”¹³ Farahian extrapolates even further the significance of this geographical advent: “As everyone knows, the result was that Christian communities would flourish in Europe down through the years, but would arise in Asia only centuries later and would, at least apparently, be much less successful down to our own time.”¹⁴ For Farahian, the consequence of this move reverberates throughout Western history, though neglecting the Eastern churches and, more important, the narrative trajectory of Acts. Equally striking is how often scholars simply observe the arrival of Christian witnesses in Europe without exploring explicitly why this geographical moment is worth mentioning.

⁶ Bart J. Koet, “Im Schatten des Aeneas: Paulus in Troas (Apg 16,8-10),” in *Dreams and Scripture in Luke-Acts: Collected Essays* (ed. Bart J. Koet; CBET 42; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 171. For more examples in German commentary literature, see Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 1:154.

⁷ Dunn, *Acts*, 215.

⁸ González, *Hechos*, 238.

⁹ Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:203.

¹⁰ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 138. He later adds, “By means of his commissioning story, Luke makes clear that the outreach to Europe is owing not to human desire but solely to God’s intervention” (139).

¹¹ Wall, *NIB*, 10:226.

¹² Williams, “Acts,” 235.

¹³ Allen Paul Wikgren, “The Problem in Acts 16:12,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis: Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger* (ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee; Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 174.

¹⁴ Edmond Farahian, “Paul’s Vision at Troas (Acts 16:9-10),” in *Luke and Acts* (ed. Gerald O’Collins and Gilberto Marconi; trans. Matthew J. O’Connell; New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 197.

Pervo walks a fine line between this approach and the one I propose. On the one hand, he commences his comments on vv. 6-10 by noting, “This paragraph introduces the foundation of a Christian community on the European continent.”¹⁵ Just a pair of paragraphs later, however, he correctly orients the geographical center of the narrative in the Aegean region: “Even the dullest reader realizes that important developments are in the offing, namely, the evangelization of the Aegean region, which is the center and focus of Acts and the geographical location of its implied author.”¹⁶ Later still, however, Pervo observes, “As Paul crosses the boundary between ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’ to begin his independent career, the vehicle of revelation is not biblical but Greco-Roman.”¹⁷ I am not entirely sure why Pervo chooses to place the terms “Asia” and “Europe” in quotation marks though I suspect this is a subtle indication to the reader that these are categories more at home in contemporary, rather than ancient, maps.¹⁸ After all, Pervo seems committed here to rooting the narrative in ancient Aegean soil, but the specter of Eurocentric geography still lingers.

¹⁵ Pervo, *Acts*, 389.

¹⁶ Pervo, *Acts*, 390. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 427 similarly argues, “Die Mission in Europa fängt in einer römischen Kolonie mit römischer Verwaltung an, in Philippi,” while later noting that the European continent does not play a significant role in Luke’s composition. See Dunn, *Acts*, 215, cited earlier, who uses “Europe” and the “Aegean basin” as seeming synonyms. While the two names can share a point on modern maps, the pairing is problematic without further explanation. Going further, for Dunn, the entry of these Christian missionaries into the European continent is both important and an indication of Luke’s historical accuracy. Having just imbued this narrative with significant geographic symbolism, he then eliminates Luke’s purposeful framing of Paul’s itinerary as a possible explanation for the haphazard route Paul and his companions take to Macedonia. He concludes, “We may be confident for the same reason [the surprising character of Paul’s route] that Luke’s account reflects Paul’s own version of the matter” (215).

¹⁷ Pervo, *Acts*, 391.

¹⁸ See Dietrich-Alex Koch, “Kollektenbericht, ‘Wir’-Bericht und Itinerar: Neue Überlegungen zu einem alten Problem,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 386, n.61 and Pervo, *Acts*, 391, n. 55. Furthermore, *OCD*, s.v. “Europe” notes, “The Europe-Asia polarity was important in Greek ideology; the two together were taken to represent the whole inhabited space. (Africa/Libya being sometimes added as a third constituent). A Eurocentric chauvinism is evident in Roman thought.” For example, see Diodorus Siculus 11.62. Pliny the Elder, *Nat.*, 3.1.5 (Rackham, LCL) writes, “To begin then with Europe, nurse of the race that has conquered all the nations, and by fare the loveliest portion of the earth”

Several prominent commentaries have challenged explicitly and persuasively these generally unspoken assumptions. The critiques are not a recent development.

Ramsay advanced that

A broad distinction between the opposite sides of the Hellespont as belonging to two different Continents had no existence in the thought of those who lived in the Aegean lands . . . and the distinction had no more existence in a political point of view, for Macedonia and Asia were merely two provinces of the Roman Empire, closely united by a common language and character, and divided from the Latin-speaking provinces further west.¹⁹

Similarly, Jervell correctly disconnects the Macedonian plea and the later arrival into Philippi from any geographical significance tied to continental Europe; after all, “dass die Mission jetzt nach Europa kommt, wird bei Lukas gar nicht besonders vermerkt, denn es geht ja ohnehin um das römische Imperium, und Kleinasien ist kaum weniger hellenistisch als Griechenland.”²⁰ Pilhofer helpfully adds that while for Europeans the move from Asia to Europe is significant, there is little reason to presume that Luke shared a European’s sense of cartography; in fact, the absence of the term Εὐρώπη in this pericope or anywhere in the NT for that matter militates against such a position.²¹

¹⁹ W.M. Ramsay, *St Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895), 199. Peterson, *Acts*, 452 cites Ramsay approvingly yet still caps Acts 16:6-18:22 with the caption “The Word Goes to Europe.” See also Barrett, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:772 and Witherington, *Acts*, 486, who cites Ramsay in arguing that stressing Paul’s arrival in Europe is “an entirely anachronistic point of view.” In a valuable effort to dissuade modern readers from importing modern cartographical assumptions into the biblical narrative, Witherington may overstate the case. The significance of a shift from Asia to Europe as a consequential continental shift is perhaps not “entirely anachronistic” (see *OCD*, s.v. “Europe”) but largely unfounded in the reading of this particular narrative in Acts.

²⁰ Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 417. Cf. John B.F. Miller, “Paul’s Dream at Troas: Reconsidering the Interpretations of Characters and Commentators” in *Contemporary Studies in Acts* (ed. Thomas E. Phillips; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2009), 142.

²¹ Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 1:154-5. However, Koch, “Kollektenbericht,” 386, n.61 disputes Pilhofer’s conclusions, arguing that there was a “Kontinenten’-Bewusstsein” in antiquity centered around the division of Europe, Asia, and Libya. A broader continental awareness, however, does not dispute that Luke in these verses never mentions Europe and is rather consistently focused on the symbolic cartography of Macedonia and the Aegean.

Implicit ideologies around the symbolic import of Europe in modern western society find their way all too easily into our interpretation of antiquity and its texts. Especially questionable is the propensity of scholarship to see in Luke's theological activity a move toward a kind of universalism that erases ethnic differences and an accompanying cartographical justification.²² Some scholars have viewed the entry of the gospel into Europe as an emblem of the universalizing of the gospel. Such a link however confuses a basic set of queries: what links these two and what makes Europe "universal?"

My argument is not that some nativist impulses have guided western scholars to see in these verses the arrival of the gospel at its "home" in Europe. Instead, I propose that—with a few notable exceptions—scholarship has tended either to neglect the ethnic undertones of these passages by simply mentioning Europe without explaining its significance here or that scholarship has posited that Acts imagines a consequential move to Europe and thus has reimagined Luke's mental map without adequate justification. While acknowledging the presence of a "Kontinenten-Bewusstsein"²³ in ancient mental maps, I still insist that the language of Acts does not point to a continental shift. The rest of this chapter, therefore, reads Acts 16:6-15 with careful attention to the various ways in which ethnic difference shapes Luke's telling of this monumental arrival in Macedonia.

²² E.g., Johnson, *Acts*, 290 writes, "Finally, Luke shows us how, having transcended ethnic limits, the Messianist movement crossed still another geographical boundary." Also, see Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 570-709, who titles 15:36-22:21 "Paul's Universal Mission and Testimony."

²³ Koch, "Kollektenbericht," 386, n. 61.

Showing the Way: The Macedonian Dream Vision

The impetus for the arrival of Paul and his companions in Macedonia is a dream. After finding their intended destinations blocked by the spirit of Jesus (v. 7), Paul sees a vision in Troas of a Macedonian man begging for his help. The way finally clear, Paul continues on the road laid before him. What significance does this vision hold for Luke's theological agenda? I propose that the call of Macedonia is for Luke a symbolic invitation and endorsement from God *and* the peoples of the wider Mediterranean culture. Tannehill correctly points to the divine purpose behind the many obstructions Paul and his cohort encounter until the vision is granted:

Once again the narrator shows keen interest in the dialogue between human purpose and divine purpose, indicating that Jesus' witnesses, too, must patiently endure the frustration of their own plans in order to discover the opportunity that God holds open. This opportunity may not be the next logical step by human calculation.²⁴

Thus, efforts to decipher a "logical" or situational reason for the jagged path to Macedonia may be in vain. God's hand is the sole impetus of the move to Macedonia. Also important, however, is that Macedonia's pleading for assistance represents that the many Gentiles of the world have come to recognize their great need for the proclamation of these early followers of Jesus.²⁵

There are evident political ramifications of the Macedonian vision. After all, the shadow of Alexander of Macedon must be present here in some way. Pervo argues that this divine vision of guidance has crucial political analogies, exemplified by parallel

²⁴ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:195. Cf. Cilliers Breytenbach, "Probable Reasons for Paul's Unfruitful Missionary Attempts in Asia Minor (A Note on Acts 16:6-7)," in *Die Apostelgeschichte und die hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung: Festschrift für Eckhard Plümacher zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Jens Schröter; AGJU 57; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 159-60 and Gaventa, *Acts*, 234.

²⁵ John B.F. Miller, *Convinced That God Had Called Us: Dreams, Visions and the Perception of God's Will in Luke-Acts* (Biblical Interpretation Series 85; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 91-107 disagrees with scholars who place overarching emphasis on God's direction of Paul in these narratives in Acts by pointing out the human will, effort, and interpretation represented in the Troas episode. See also Miller, "Paul's Dream," 138-53.

visions of Caesar, Alexander the Great, and Apollonius of Tyana. He thus concludes, “Readers of Acts would understand not only that the direction of Paul’s mission was determined by God but also that he was an individual of the status of Alexander or Caesar.”²⁶ In this comparison, Pervo notes a significant shift from a “vehicle of revelation” that leans on the scripture of Israel in the narrative of Cornelius to one that is far more rooted in the “Greco-Roman” world in this situation.²⁷ While I am uncertain about making such a clear delineation between “biblical” and “Greco-Roman” modes of revelation,²⁸ it is reasonable to imagine that Luke’s readers would have thought of the imperial legacies of Alexander and similar political figures.

Koet similarly argues that this dream is a critical component of the legitimation of Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. Having established the theological parameters within which the apostolic council will sanction Paul’s work, the beckoning of Macedonia legitimates the mission in the eyes of the Greeks:

Der Erfolg dieses Unternehmens ist ein zweifacher. Zum einen stellt Lukas Paulus und seine Mission in die Tradition des Alten Testaments und speziell in die Tradition der grossen Propheten, zum anderen ist Paulus Mission durch diese Traumgesichte auch für die hellenistischen Leser (Griechen, Römer, und Juden) göttlich inspiriert. Lukas hat hier hellenisiert, aber zugleich implizit die römische Prätension kritisiert. Nicht Augustus, sondern Jesus ist der Herr (siehe Luk 2,1f). Er hat die Legitimation der Heidenmission in ein hellenistisches Gewand gekleidet und damit für seine hellenistischen Leser übersetzt.²⁹

On the other hand, Fitzmyer draws parallels between the vision and prophetic calls of

²⁶ Pervo, *Acts*, 391. In n. 53, he lists a number of additional citations. See also Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 139.

²⁷ Pervo, *Acts*, 391. At this point, Pervo acknowledges the critique of Miller, *Convinced*, 76 that other visions in Acts are clearly not similarly imbued with a political character. Pervo contends that “the particular form” of this vision distinguishes it from others in Acts. Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 139 lists several instances in Josephus of Jews being guided by dreams (Josephus, *Ant.*, 1.208; 2.217; 5.193; 6.334 where guiding dreams are unavailable to Saul; 7.147; 8.125-129; 11.327-328; 13.322-323).

²⁸ The prevalence of dreams at critical moments of decision is prevalent in both traditions.

²⁹ Koet, “Im Schatten des Aeneas,” 171.

the HB, situating this vision squarely in the religious legacy of Israel, *contra* Pervo and Koet.³⁰

The tenor of Lukan allusions to specific renowned Greco-Roman leaders is difficult to prove conclusively. At least in these verses, the allusions—if they exist—are perhaps too subtle for modern interpreters to glean their import fully. However, that the vision of the Macedonian evokes such eminent histories is clear.³¹ Perhaps we may not be able to tie the vision to a specific individual’s legacy (whether Caesar or Alexander), but that the vision is divine legitimation of Paul’s journey into the wider Greco-Roman world is evident.

In the end, the vision of the Macedonian is an incontrovertible validation of the place of the early followers of Jesus in the cultural and ethnic arenas of the ancient world. These are not mere pretenders on the stage of history, for Macedonia itself has beckoned and begged for assistance. Macedonia needs the proclamation of Paul and his companions. By boldly incorporating the early Christian movement into the renowned history of the lands ringing the Mediterranean, Luke once again enters into the domain of ethnicity. Cadbury’s comments on the use of βάρβαροι in Acts 28:2 seem apposite here as well:

The Greek word βάρβαροι, translated foreigners or barbarians, is of course the exact term by which the ancient Greeks distinguished all people outside their own circle. Here as often it implies especially a distinction of language—a matter in which our author elsewhere shows

³⁰ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 578 points particularly to Isa 6:8 and Jer 1:5-10.

³¹ Witherington, *Acts*, 480 argues, for example, “Another more interesting if speculative suggestion is that since Luke refers to a *certain* Macedonian, this could be taken to mean a particular one, and certainly there was no more famous or familiar Macedonian than Alexander the Great. There is a certain logic to this suggestion. Alexander was the Greek who desired to make the world one by a shared common culture, and Luke is indeed interested in suggesting that the gospel could cross a variety of ethnic lines and make of the many peoples one true people of God.” While I concur with the former assertion that the legacy of Alexander likely stands behind the vision, granting it powerful cultural currency, I do not think that Luke imagines the formation of a single ethnic people of God.

his sensitiveness; but applied as it is here either actually in contrast with himself or in sympathy with the Greek point of view it may be taken as a starting point for a study of his own Hellenic traits and the Hellenic elements in the story. In it we seem to see a little emergence of the national self-consciousness of the author. While the Greek-speaking Jews like Philo and Josephus do not hesitate to admit that as Jews they are barbarians, this writer puts Paul and his companions on the other side of the pale.³²

If Cadbury is correct about Luke's strategic deployment of βάρβαροι in the closing chapter of Acts, perhaps Luke's efforts to claim that this early Christian movement has a place in the rich history of the Mediterranean world begin to be articulated at least as early as Acts 16.

Establishing the Local, Colonial Patriotism of Philippi

Though the scene at Philippi will receive far more discussion in the next chapter, the description of Philippi in v. 12 as πρώτη[ς] μερίδος τῆς Μακεδονίας πόλις, κολωνία invites special attention in this chapter.³³ A text critical *crux interpretum*, the variants in v. 12 lead us directly into the turbulent waters of the scholarly debates over the historical accuracy of Acts. The ethnic pride of Philippi later at the center of the accusations leveled against Paul and Silas (16:20-21) is proleptically established here.³⁴ Pointing to both the overwhelming manuscript evidence as well as the historical inaccuracy of calling Philippi a capital or Macedonia the first district, many scholars

³² Cadbury, *History*, 32.

³³ Johnson, *Acts*, 291 correctly notes the “unusual detail” with which Luke embellishes his description of Philippi.

³⁴ Cf. Gaventa, *Acts*, 236, who writes, “Noticing that detail prepares for the role Roman customs and citizenship play in events that will occur in Philippi,” and Pervo, *Acts*, 402, who notes, “The political status of Philippi will be important for both the outcome of this particular story and as a symbol of the place of the church in the Roman Empire.”

have been reluctant to take “the drastic step of positing a conjectural reading.”³⁵

However, appealing to Luke’s historical accuracy in describing the city that will close this chapter of dense ethnic discourse is an unsatisfactory argument. Narrative necessity—especially the need to establish the local patriotism of Philippi—best answers this text critical question. We should rely on the manuscript evidence rather than on a postulated emendation. Ultimately, by labeling Philippi as a leading city in the region, Luke prepares the reader for the portentous encounter between Roman and Jewish identities I discuss in ch. 5.

The text critical issue in this verse revolves around the connection between πρώτη[ς] and μερίδος.³⁶ Strong manuscript evidence supports the reading πρώτη τῆς μερίδος.³⁷ In this reading, there are three options for the meaning of πρώτη.³⁸ First, the AV translates πρώτη as “chief,” though as Metzger points out calling Philippi the “chief” city is incorrect. It was not the chief city of Macedonia or the district in which it was found. Second, πρώτη could refer to Philippi being Paul’s first stop in Macedonia, though the itinerary in v. 11 fleetingly mentions an earlier arrival in Neapolis, also a city in Macedon, which discounts this option. Third, Lake and Cadbury posited the use of πρώτη as an ancient honorific title that meant “leading,” which is found in the numismatic evidence; Metzger notes,

³⁵ Mikeal C. Parsons and Martin M. Culy, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2003), 311.

³⁶ For discussion of this text critical problem, see Richard S. Ascough, “Civic Pride at Philippi: The Text-Critical Problem of Acts 16.12,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 93-103; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 394; Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 1:159-65; Justin Taylor, “The Roman Empire in the Acts of the Apostles,” *ANRW* 26.3:2443-6; and Wikgren, “Acts 16:12,” 171-78.

³⁷ Thus reads P⁷⁴, 8, A, C, Ψ, 33^{vid}, 36, 81, and other miniscules. In addition, B reads πρώτη μερίδος τῆς. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 393-5 and Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, 279 for a fuller record and description of the variants.

³⁸ See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 394.

In their comments, however, they point out that as a definite title the word has been found so far only in the cases of cities that were members of a κοινόν (league or union) in their particular province, and were not Roman colonies at the time. Since Philippi does not qualify in either respect, they conclude that it is more probable that the “meaning of πρώτη in this passage is simply ‘a leading city’” (the rendering subsequently adopted by the RSV).³⁹

Finding none of these solutions particularly appealing, NA27 and GNT4 print the reading of πρώτη[ς] μερίδος τῆς, despite the rather substantial external support for πρώτη τῆς μερίδος.⁴⁰ The manuscript evidence backing such a conjecture is marginal at best.⁴¹ This conjectural reading assumes that the best reading is one that is historically and geographically consistent with what we know of Philippi’s civic status in the “first district of Macedonia.” This conjecture ignores the well-accepted textual critical guideline of *lectio difficilior potior*, opting instead for the easier reading with minimal external support. Numerous commentators continue to find the best attested but difficult reading more likely than the conjecture.⁴²

Richard Ascough helpfully discusses this text critical problem within the context of civic strife over status, honor, and titular renown that marked civic pride in

³⁹ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 394.

⁴⁰ After laying out the evidence and arguments on both sides, Kurt Aland and Bruce Metzger parenthetically note their continued support of the reading πρώτη τῆς μερίδος largely because of its significant witnesses and despite the translational problems this reading poses. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 395.

⁴¹ Wikgren, “Acts 16:12,” 174 seeks to correct the “customary . . . refer[ence] to πρώτης as a ‘conjectural emendation.’” He cites three Vulgate manuscripts while noting F.F. Bruce’s appeal to yet two other. GNT4 lists it^c, vg^{mss}, and slav. Wikgren concludes, “These texts generally, and perhaps too arbitrarily, have been dismissed as late and insignificant or as owing to scribal blunders. But it is curious that in making or copying a mistake a late scribe should arrive at a reading which exactly describes the status of Philippi at the time when Acts was written.”

⁴² See Barrett, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:778-80; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 584; Johnson, *Acts*, 291-92; Peterson, *Acts*, 458-60; Wall, *NIB*, 10:231; and Witherington, *Acts*, 489-90. Contra Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 421; Pervo, *Acts*, 397-99; and Talbert, *Narrative Unity*, 2:140. Cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 130 who admits the difficulty of the attested reading, but only asks whether “one [should] conjecture the reading πρώτης μερίδος . . . which would fit.” Conzelmann, however, does not directly answer this question.

Greco-Roman antiquity and which surfaces in the concluding verses of Acts 16.⁴³

Ascough lays out the two alternatives to resolving the text critical issue directly:

Is [Philippi] “a first [leading/foremost] city of the district of Macedonia” (πρώτη τῆς μερίδος Μακεδονίας πόλις) or it is “a city of the first district of Macedonia” (πρώτης μερίδος τῆς Μακεδονίας πόλις) as the UBS⁴/NA²⁷ reads? The first way of reading the text presents a case of civic pride on the part of the author, but at the expense of factual accuracy. The second reading preserves the factual accuracy of the account, but has negligible textual support.⁴⁴

For Ascough, the former alternative is most likely.

Wikgren is cautious to accept such a reading, noting the difficulty of finding lexicographical confirmation of such a translation of πρώτη in the NT and further adding,

It is true that certain phrases such as τῶν πρώτων φίλων occur, in which “leading” may be regarded as the equivalent of “first” or “foremost” in the loose sense of “important”; and one may therefore concede this as a possibility in the Acts passage. But among the many and distinguished cities mentioned in Acts only one, Tarsus, is singled out for a laudatory remark, and that by litotes, “a not undistinguished city.” This would seem to militate against such special treatment for Philippi. On the other hand, the incidental references provided by the suggested “emendation” may well have been prompted by the significance of Philippi as the place where the Gospel was first proclaimed in Europe.⁴⁵

Specifically why Philippi might *not* merit such “special treatment” Wikgren does not clarify. Philippi as a geographical hinge in Acts may prove a sufficient reason for such highlighting. Furthermore, the litotes enunciated later in Acts in Paul’s defense is itself intensely laudatory; the utilization of litotes is a periphrastic literary mode that emphasizes even more a particular feature of that which is described.⁴⁶ At the same

⁴³ Ascough, “Civic Pride,” 93-103.

⁴⁴ Ascough, “Civic Pride,” 93.

⁴⁵ Wikgren, “Acts 16:12,” 176.

⁴⁶ William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, eds., *A Handbook to Literature* (8th ed.; Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1999), 293 defines “litotes” as “a form understatement in which a thing is

time, Wikgren concedes that the labeling of Philippi as πρώτη could be plausible, though he argues for the centering of that importance on the advent of Christianity on European soil and ultimately concludes that the consensus around the conjectured emendation of πρώτη as πρώτης is most likely correct.⁴⁷ This is a problematic conclusion.

Frequently at the root of these text critical discussions is not the manuscript evidence itself but a prevailing—but generally unstated or unexplored—assumption about Luke’s historical accuracy. Wikgren’s conclusion is representative of this scholarly tendency:

Much as can be said for certain of the foregoing interpretations of the “Alexandrian” text, we come back to the proposed “conjectural emendation” as in our judgment the best solution of the problem, one which is supported by significant internal evidence and *provides an exact description of the status of Philippi at the time when Acts was written*.⁴⁸

While the internal evidence is surely contestable yet compelling, is such an “exact description of the status of Philippi” as persuasive? It would be so only if one shares a basic assumption about the aims and competencies of the author Acts; that is, if one can concur that Luke was both an able and accurate chronicler of his time and that cartographical precision was a more pressing aim than Luke’s literary and theological project.

Thus, an alternative solution to the text critical problem that prioritizes the manuscript evidence and the narrative needs of the Philippian episodes proves more

affirmed by stating the negative of its opposite.” Thus, while understated, litotes still communicates emphatically a particular trait. The insinuation that the description of Tarsus as “no mean city” is somehow less than laudatory is in my mind incorrect. Cadbury, *History*, 32-33 even argues that the phrase “no mean” is an idiomatically pre-eminently Greek way of asserting Hellenic superiority. See ch. 5.

⁴⁷ See also Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 419-21.

⁴⁸ Wikgren, “Acts 16:12,” 178.

persuasive than one that leans on implicit assumptions about the precision of Luke's description of this vital city. The Lukan aim here is not primarily to provide an account that correctly synchronizes geographical and historical data. The introduction of Philippi is not primarily intended as proof of Luke's historical *bona fides*. Instead, the presentation of Philippi as πρώτη τῆς μερίδος Μακεδονίας πόλις not only concurs with the mass of text critical evidence but, more important, coheres strikingly well with the narrative which will close Acts 16. This laudatory introduction is more than a mere cartographical signpost noting the paths upon which Luke is guiding his readers; it anticipates the eruption of intense local pride that will imperil Paul and Silas.⁴⁹ The major interpretive question here is not so much whether the description of Philippi that is best attested in the manuscript tradition is correct historically but rather how that narrative description creates expectations that are met as the story unfolds.

The specific labeling of Philippi as κολωνία plays a similarly crucial role in establishing the narrative ethos of this metropolis. Pilhofer notes, "Die Information, dass es sich hier um eine κολωνία handelt, ist im lukanischen Doppelwerk ohne Parallele."⁵⁰ No other city named in Acts—even cities well known to be Roman colonies—is called a colony.⁵¹ Alone among the many cities of Acts, Philippi stands alone in bearing the literary benefits and burdens of colonial status. Tajra notes,

⁴⁹ In fact, Taylor, "Roman Empire," ANRW 26.3:2443 has argued, "In Roman times, Philippi no longer had any military or economic importance, nor did it have a large population." Even Philippi's valorization as a leading city could face historical questions. As he later clarifies, however, "The notice in Acts may well reflect the special position of Philippi among Roman colonies of the time" (2445).

⁵⁰ Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 1:159. See also Gaventa, *Acts*, 236 and Taylor, "Roman Empire," ANRW 26.3:2444-445.

⁵¹ Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 1:159 points to Antioch of Pisidia (13:14; 14:19, 21), Iconium (13:51; 14:1, 9, 21; 16:2), Lystra (14:6, 8, 21; 16:1; 27:5), Alexandria Troas (16:8, 11; 20:5), Corinth (18:1; 19:1), Ptolemais (21:7), Syracuse (28:12), and Puteoli (28:13). Also striking is the absence of the term in any other of the texts of the NT.

[Military] colonies were not founded solely to reward veterans for their service by granting them land therein, but for overriding political and strategic reasons. Colonies were an instrument of Roman policy, used to extend and consolidate Roman domination by the establishment of a loyal city or group of cities, peopled by citizens, in areas needing defence or in danger of revolt.⁵²

Or as Pervo notes, “Colonies were pieces of Rome, as it were, bulbs planted at strategic sites. Those who held this title were proud of it. The political status of Philippi will be important for both the outcome of this particular story and as a symbol of the place of the church in the Roman Empire.”⁵³ The uncertainties around the text critical issues earlier in the verse stand in marked contrast to the relatively clear implications of calling Philippi a colony. On this point, historical accuracy is an insufficient explanation for why Philippi receives this rare Lukan appellation. Other cities could safely have been labeled as colonies were Luke striving for comprehensive historical accuracy. Sherwin-White accurately suggests therefore,

Much more interesting is the question—why did the author go out of his way to introduce Philippi thus, when he never formally describes the technical status of any other city? The reasonable answer could be that it was because Paul had an adventure at Philippi of which the significance depended upon the special status of the place. The notice is a warning. Paul enters a Roman community and encounters special difficulties, such as he had not met earlier at the Roman colonies of Antioch-by-Pisidia and Lystra, where the action taken against him was not formal and official.⁵⁴

Ultimately, the implications of Philippi’s description are *narratively* and *theologically* significant and twofold, though in some tension.

First, the shadow of Rome looms large. Paul’s arrival in Philippi serves as a reminder that it is within the powerful political and cultural milieu of Rome that these

⁵² Harry W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul* (WUNT 35; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 6.

⁵³ Pervo, *Acts*, 402.

⁵⁴ A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 95.

early followers of Christ are moving. As an extension of Roman imperial power, Philippi is a colonial appendage of Roman rule and thus a place where the interests and authority of Rome can be exerted. This is a city teeming with Roman power, prominence, and prerogatives and in which Roman identity is a valuable commodity.

Second, the tenuousness of Philippi's position within the larger empire helps explain the ethnic appeal of the latter verses of ch. 16. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the residents of Philippi break a common pattern in Acts, that of locals identifying themselves with an autochthonous geographic label. The inhabitants of Philippi do not call themselves "Philippians" but "Romans." In this way, the colonial reach of the metropolitan center is made clear but also evident is the tenuous position in which the residents of Philippi find themselves. Theirs is a fragile ethnic discourse, one that can be deployed to manipulate local anxieties—as the merchants will do in falsely accusing Paul and Silas of posing a threat to the city's ethnic identity—and one that is susceptible to challenge.

Ultimately, I agree with Barrett's assessment: "The Greek of these verses bristles with grammatical and geographical obscurities and ambiguities."⁵⁵ These are truly difficult verses to translate with problematic text critical problems to resolve and elusive allusions to trace. However, I propose that the valorization of Philippi as a πρώτη πόλις long obscured by text critical debates, alternatives, and conjectures along with the unique labeling of the city as a Roman colony together paint a portrait of an important city that, although physically distant from Rome, represents an extension of Roman power and ethnic identities. As will be detailed in the next chapter, the "local

⁵⁵ Barrett, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary*, 246.

color” of this city is a critical component of its literary character, the establishment of which begins with this oft-disputed verse.

Lydia’s Ambiguous Identities and Her Unexpected Conversion

Before the controversial healing that will draw Paul and Silas into an ethnic controversy, their missionary efforts are met with some unexpected successes. This initial success in Philippi is marked by the marginality of its setting and the complex identity of its convert. Acts reports that, having arrived in the city, Paul and Silas visited a προσευχή outside the city where they reckoned people of some faith were gathering. How they imagined this to be so is not stated. After all in Acts, upon arriving in a city, Paul tends to include an initial visit at a synagogue⁵⁶ though none is explicitly mentioned here. Furthermore, Acts specifically reports that this place of prayer lies outside the gates of prominent, colonial Philippi. Set outside the gates of this seat of colonial power, this marginal setting will nonetheless soon be of great concern to Philippi’s authorities. Moreover, what kind of congregation gathered in this place is not entirely clear.⁵⁷ Is it a formal or informal synagogue?⁵⁸ Or is it simply a

⁵⁶ E.g., Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8.

⁵⁷ See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 585 who argues that “a town where so few Jews were living” would hardly have a need for a formal synagogue. Barrett, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary*, 251 is more cautious noting, “The various forms of the text hint without actually asserting a probability that a synagogue . . . would be found by a river, or other water.” Gaventa, *Acts*, 236-37 challenges the notion that the implicit absence of men at this place of prayer prevents it from being called a synagogue.

⁵⁸ See e.g. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 585 who argues that this is an explicitly Jewish community; “this is the reason for their going to a place of prayer on a sabbath.” Taylor, “Roman Empire,” *ANRW* 26.3:2446 goes further and proposes, “The apostles went, therefore, to a Jewish place of prayer, no doubt a building used for this purpose.” The definitive study of ancient synagogues by Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (2d ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 127-34 argues that while συναγωγή was the preferred terminology in Judean settings, there is significant evidence that προσευχή was preferred in the Diaspora. See also BDAG, s.v. προσευχή and Levinskaya, *Acts in its First Century Setting*, 207-25. Whether Luke imagines a formal synagogue, I think is difficult to conclude, especially since προσευχή is only used here in Acts to describe a place of prayer rather than the act of prayer itself. Furthermore, Luke uses συναγωγή freely in other contexts in Acts in both Judea and the Diaspora.

place where people gathered to pray without any real sense of institutional structure? These various narrative ambiguities together coalesce to create an unexpected scene of conversion.

From amidst a group of prayers, Luke highlights one woman: Lydia. He details her identity with three pieces of data, each equally difficult to interpret. First, Luke identifies her profession; she was a πορφυρόπωλις. Though a profession that deals with expensive textiles, the work of the πορφυρόπωλις herself may not have been viewed as a highly desirable vocation.⁵⁹ Even if the latter is true, that she is a person of means and personal power is evident in her ability to host Paul and his companions in *her* home.⁶⁰

Second, Luke identifies her hometown of Thyatira, which is located in the Lydian region of western Asia Minor.⁶¹ In other words, whether she was now a resident of Philippi or travelling through it for business, Lydia is not the first convert the narrative seems to anticipate in the Macedonian vision. After all, she is not Macedonian (let alone, European)!⁶² As is typical when dealing with ethnic identities, Luke is challenging his reader's expectations.

Nevertheless, Luke's unique use of the term here suggests that this προσευχή is in some sense different than the various συναγωγή he describes elsewhere in Acts. At the same time, the narrative may also suggest that these two gathering places share something in common as a meeting place for Jews and those attracted to their faith. The setting of the προσευχή outside the city along with its unusual description adds to the ambiguities of this description.

⁵⁹ Those who portray Lydia as an individual of significant means include Taylor, "Roman Empire," ANRW 26.3:2448. But cf. Spencer, *Journeying*, 175.

⁶⁰ See Taylor, "Roman Empire," ANRW 26.3:2449.

⁶¹ For a brief entry on the city, see John E. Stambaugh, "Thyatira," ABD 6:546. For further detail, see Taylor, "Roman Empire," ANRW 26.3:2442-448.

⁶² See Gaventa, *Acts*, 236 and Muñoz-Larrondo, "Living in Two Worlds," 283.

Finally, Luke calls her a σεβομένη τὸν θεόν.⁶³ As I argued in ch. 3, such identifiers point to an ambiguous relationship to Israel and its God somewhere between “Jew” and “Gentile.” The descriptive power of such terminology lies precisely in that they resist the clear demarcation of a specified, institutionalized class of people. Thus, asking whether she was Jewish or not misses the inherent ambiguity with which Luke characterizes her. Even if we were able to conclude that this προσευχή was a synagogue, Lydia would remain in some significant sense on the margins of this believing community.

Identified as neither Jewish nor Roman, neither Macedonian nor a European, neither wealthy nor poor, Lydia may serve as an emblematic first convert in this critical stage of development of this early movement of Christ followers. Pervo astutely observes that “Lydia is the Cornelius of this mission” as she embodies the inclusivity of the apostolic council’s compromise.⁶⁴ Lydia also parallels Cornelius in her ambiguous ethnic positioning. He too straddled a thin line between his power and his need to ask for Peter’s assistance, between his function as a powerful arm of Roman armies and his acclaim among the Jewish people. Both represent an important turning point for this movement, especially the characteristic way in which Luke does not eliminate problematic ethnic tensions but delves directly into them. As Gaventa concludes,

In some respects, Lydia inhabits the margins, since she is female, perhaps a freedwoman (i.e., a former slave), apparently operating without a male protector, and her story begins outside the margins of the city. Yet Luke does present her as having some control over her own household and as responding appropriately to God’s “opening” of her

⁶³ See Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 2:31-32 and Taylor, “Roman Empire,” *ANRW* 26.3:2449.

⁶⁴ Pervo, *Acts*, 404.

heart; in these ways, she offers a striking contrast to the woman whose story follows.⁶⁵

Cartographical Shifts, Ethnic Transitions

The scholarly consensus that these middle verses of ch. 16 are a geographical hinge of significant import for the theological and literary trajectories of Acts is correct. The narrating of the oracular plea to cross the Macedonian boundary after the Spirit's recurring interference in the Pauline travel itinerary provides a fascinating glimpse into Luke's mental mapping of antiquity. Less concerned with physical boundaries than symbolic borders, mental maps are ideological projections of cartography that help conceptualize the world metaphorically. Mental maps and physical maps are projections of ideology that help demonstrate how one gets from "here" to "there." In these verses of Acts 16, Luke reveals his ethnic map as a complex topography that eschews easy ethnic binaries and instead engages directly in the complex negotiation of ethnic difference.

Too often, scholars have exchanged the latent ethnic discourse of antiquity present in these verses for modern, western concerns about the arrival of the Christian gospel on the European continent. In doing so, they have neglected the connective tissue of ethnic discourse and ignored the narrative links between the circumcision of Timothy and the Philippian episodes. A reading that pays full attention to the powerful ethnic discourse of these verses better represents the narrative aims of this geographical turning point.

⁶⁵ Gaventa, *Acts*, 237.

First, such an approach does not import modern notions about the cultural centrality of Europe and the West into a story largely unconcerned with such a mental map. In these verses, Luke's mental ethnic map is not characterized by center and periphery, East and West, Europe and Asia, or even Jew and Gentile. Instead, Luke here tends to blur these binaries. The Macedonian oracle is a legitimating vision proving that these followers of Jesus belong on a historic stage shared with the legacies of Greek might and the ever-present power of the Roman Empire. They are entering territory once controlled by the Macedonians and now under Roman rule. The description of Philippi as πρώτη τῆς μερίδος Μακεδονίας πόλις, κολωνία begins to develop a powerful narrative portrait of the colony. This is a city marked by its Roman pride, yet its unique labeling as a colony of Rome also points to the tenuous hold of her residents's various ethnic identities. Finally, Lydia is an exemplary Christian convert not only in her faithfulness and hospitality but also in the admixture of ethnic identities and social position she represents. In a chapter of Acts so focused on the contestation of ethnic identities, her lack of ethnic identity is an intriguing anomaly.

Second, such an approach highlights the complex ways in which Luke imagines this movement of Christ followers to be crossing cultural and ethnic boundaries. Luke does not portray the crossing of the ancient world's many ethnic, geographical, and cultural boundaries as a unilateral effort. Instead, God dictates the evangelistic itineraries of the early followers of Jesus. Even so, human voices are not silenced in the process as we see by Macedonia begging for the help of Paul and his companions. Similarly, these boundary crossings do not obliterate ethnic and cultural distinction. The ambiguities of Lydia's identity are emblematic; she echoes Timothy's irreducibly

complex ethnic identity and prefigures the seemingly irreconcilable claim that Paul will make in Philippi to be both Jewish and Roman. In the end, Lydia's is an unexpected but prototypical conversion in Luke's mode of ethnic negotiations; after a Macedonian man calls for assistance, it is a *Thyatiran* woman of complex identity who first receives God's help. Such complexity, ambiguity, and seeming contradiction are Lukan paradigms.

Finally, such an approach highlights the narrative links between the opening and closing of ch. 16. As the first repercussions of the climactic apostolic council, the events of ch. 16 begin to set the narrative and theological agenda of the latter chapters of Acts. How exactly will the good news of God find root in the multicultural environs in which Paul will find himself? Consistently, in this chapter of ethnic negotiations, ambiguous identities—not clear-cut delineations—are the norm or even ideal model for this burgeoning movement. Additionally, Luke boldly contends that these believers are not intruders in the cultural world of antiquity nor do they pose a fundamental threat, for they are fully at home in the multifarious diversity and political influence so characteristic of a place like Philippi.

Turning to the close of the Acts 16, I conclude that the dense juxtaposition of Jewish, Greek, and Roman identities in this chapter of profound ethnic discourse is itself exegetically significant. As Momigliano has argued, the Roman Empire may be the hinge upon which the relationships between the panoply of ethnicities that populated the ancient world turns. He writes,

What I want to ascertain is how the Greeks came to know and evaluate these groups of non-Greeks in relation to their own civilization. I expected to find interdependence, but no uniformity, in the Greek approach to the various nations and in the response of these nations

(which recognizable from our evidence) to the Greek approach. What I did not expect to find—and what I did find—was a strong Roman impact on the intellectual relations between Greeks and Jews or Celts or Iranians as soon as Roman power began to be felt outside Italy in the second century B.C. The influence of Rome on the minds of those who came into contact with it was quick and strong.⁶⁶

Though I have focused my attention thus far on Jewish and Macedonian identities, the inexorable influence of the Roman Empire is the focus of the next exegetical chapter.

⁶⁶ Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 6.

Chapter Five

A Citizen of Rome?: The Negotiation of Paul's Ethnic Identities (16:16-40)

“Of all the environments which encircle the book of Acts the most universal though in some ways the most superficial is the Roman.”¹

Acts 16:16-40 stops at the combustible intersection of economic interests, religious fervor, ethnic negotiations, and imperial politics. With the almost off-hand exorcism of a profitable mantic girl, Paul precipitates a civic confrontation centered on ethnicity. In this scene, merchants who had watched a lucrative enterprise collapse in front of their eyes reinterpret their financial turmoil as an ethnic menace.

Camouflaging their economic interests before the Philippian authorities, they accuse Paul of a profound treachery: Paul, they say, has shattered the norms of this Roman polity by asking its denizens to practice a foreign way of life. That this charge is trumped up to cloak their economic interests is evident in the narrative. It is this cynical ploy that precipitates a civic disruption. In this way, the metropolitan environs of Philippi become a cauldron of cultural conflict.

Initially, Paul apparently reacts to these accusations with silence, for Acts does not record his defense against these public indictments. Yet, Paul will eventually engage in ethnic discourse that mirrors his accusers in method but contradicts them in message. Once again in this chapter of ethnic negotiations Acts stretches, tests, and manipulates the limits of ethnic identity.

The argument of this chapter is two-fold. First, the dispute about Paul in Philippi is centered on ethnic claims rather than being solely about religion and its

¹ Cadbury, *History*, 58.

legal practice in the Roman Empire. The Philippian merchants accuse Paul and Silas of threatening the fragile ethnic fabric of this important Roman colony. Here, Luke is not concerned to make a case for Christianity as a benign religion within the Roman Empire but to acknowledge and even exploit the complexities of ethnic negotiations in a thriving colonial metropolis.² Second, Paul's apologetic is not primarily a juridical exoneration but an ethnic claim. The translation and interpretation of Ῥωμαίους in v. 37 and Ῥωμαῖοι in v. 38 as "Roman citizen(s)" flattens the ethnic dimensions of Paul's defensive posture. Scholars have tended to imagine Paul's ethnic affiliation as inherent and monolithic; while claiming to be fully Jewish, he could therefore only claim to be a citizen of Rome, not "Roman." Postcolonial perspectives, especially the concept of "hybridity," provide a conceptual framework within which we can better understand the discursive, literary efforts of a marginalized people in the intertwined contexts of colonialism and imperialism. In fact, Paul's claim here is that he is in some way ethnically "Roman," a claim that does not contradict his consistent claim to be a Ἰουδαῖος.

This chapter first provides a brief overview of the narrative of the closing verses of Acts 16 and then turns to their history of interpretation, paying special attention to the accusations leveled against Paul and Silas as well as to Paul's claim to Roman

² Dench, *Romulus' Asylum*, 4 notes the "recurrent and sometimes contradictory motifs in Roman self perception, such as the peculiarity of the Roman ethnic, cultural, and moral character as well as its 'secondarity' with respect particularly (but not exclusively) to Greek culture; that Roman identity is a particular kind of plurality, based on both the incorporation and transformation of other peoples and cultures; that local and Roman identities may be asserted simultaneously, but the tension between them may be made very obvious; that the plural nature of Roman identity is itself traditional and based on blood descent; that Roman identity, especially in a progressively far-flung world of Roman citizens who rarely if ever participated in the political institutions of the Roman state, was rooted in the topography of Rome and, importantly, her neighbours, her inherited institutions, and her political past; and not least that the ethnic, social, and political nature of Rome were sites of intense debate." Many of these tense themes emerge in my reading of Acts 16:16-40 and could be equally applied to other forms of ethnic identity within the imperial ambit of Rome.

“citizenship,” in order to demonstrate how inattention to ethnicity as a critical component of this narrative has left a gap in how this passage has been exegeted historically. Then, I detail how ethnicity impinges upon my reading of the accusations against Paul and Silas as well as their defense. Finally, I turn to the two complementary arguments I discussed in the previous paragraph in a conclusion synthesizing the various ways ethnic discourse energizes Acts 16:16-40.

The Narrative Shape of Acts 16:16-40

The narrative of Acts moves smoothly from the Macedonian call to Paul’s arrival in Philippi, followed by the initial missional successes at a place of prayer on the outskirts of Philippi and a chain of events that will eventually lead to Paul’s vindication. The encounters with the profitable mantic girl occur amidst the regular visits of Paul and Silas to the place of prayer, which has seemingly become their center of operations in Philippi. Her healing and thus the loss of her profitability lead her owners to make an extraordinary claim that oddly fails to mention the loss to their business syndicate. Instead, they accuse Paul and Silas of acts of ethnic treachery: trying to turn Romans from their autochthonous ways to the foreign ways of the “Jews.” Without a hearing of their defense or revealing the greedy motives of their accusers, Paul and Silas are cast into prison where a miraculous earthquake seemingly leads them to freedom. This moment of rescue for Paul and Silas quickly shifts to the deliverance of a prison guard and his household. These fantastic and dramatic episodes of imprisonment and escape separate the accusations of Paul and Silas from their defense. The next morning local officials conspire to release Paul and Silas in secret, but Paul refuses to leave the city

quietly. He reveals that they are Roman and thus not foreign trespassers on Philippian soil. In this way, Paul and Silas are not only vindicated but the mixed motives of their accusers are also laid bare.

History of Interpretation

This episode has long played a crucial role in the reconstruction of Paul's biography, for it is in Philippi that Paul first claims to belong in some significant sense within the Roman Empire; traditionally, scholars have here read a claim to Roman citizenship and the legal prerogatives available as a result.³ Though Luke repeats the claim elsewhere in Acts (22:25-27, 29; 23:27), the apostle himself never alludes to his status within the Roman Empire in his extant letters.⁴ A scholarly consensus has long held that this connection to Rome is primarily juridical; Paul's legal status as a Roman citizen provides him certain rights within the empire's judicial system. Furthermore, scholars have tended not to explore but only to assume, defend, or question the historicity of Paul's Roman citizenship. That Paul is only claiming citizenship, nothing more, is never doubted, only presumed. In a sense, Paul's Roman citizenship is a

³ See the brief summary of the issue in Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 144-45 in which he defends the historicity of the Lukan claim.

⁴ Wolfgang Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?," *ZNW* 78 (1987): 200-29 argues that Paul's Roman citizenship is a Lukan fiction, since his profession, status, and Jewish religion/ethnicity would have prevented the attainment of such status. Cf. John C. Lentz Jr., *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (SNTSMS 77; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 26 who argues that Paul's "social credentials" as a citizen of Tarsus, a Roman citizen, and a Pharisee are aligned for Luke's purposes; namely, to present Paul as an individual of high status in a culture that gave utmost importance to questions of honor and social prestige. Lentz suggests that holding all these social credentials would have been highly unlikely historically. One recent proponent of the historicity of Paul's claim is Peter van Minnen, "Paul the Roman Citizen," *JSNT* 56 (1994): 43-52.

scholarly presumption despite the problematic combination of Paul's letters and the data of Acts as sources of his biography.⁵

Further eclipsing the role ethnic discourse may play in this narrative are two overriding concerns in scholarship on Acts. First is the question of Luke's perspective on the Roman Empire; second, and related to the first, is the slightly narrower concern about Luke's apologetic stance within the supremacy of Roman power. Much scholarship on this passage has tended to dwell on whether Luke's inclusion of Paul's claim to Roman citizenship helps mark Acts as a political concession to Rome and a defense of Christianity as a legal faith. This chapter proposes an alternative to these relatively narrow concerns about the "historical Paul" and Luke's attitude toward the Roman Empire. First, however, I review some recent, influential commentary literature in order to identify various strands of interpretation relating to this passage.

Beginning with Conzelmann, we find the prioritization of Luke's literary aims in his depiction of Paul as a Roman citizen unfairly accused and punished for illegal proselytizing. Thus, he begins by arguing,

The formulation of the accusation is instructive for understanding the Lukan apologetic—the charge is delivered in such a way that it can be denied. It is clear that Luke is not trying to recommend Christianity to the Romans as true Judaism; rather he distinctly sets Christianity apart from Judaism.⁶

Thus, the confrontation Luke constructs is that which establishes the differences between religious systems, not ethnic identities. Furthermore, Conzelmann notes that

⁵ See Vielhauer, "Paulinism," 33-50 who sets the agenda on the question of inconsistencies between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of his epistles. See also the summary of four positions on the question in Andrew J. Mattill Jr., "The Value of Acts as a Source for the Study of Paul," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (ed. Charles H. Talbert; Danville, Va.: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), 76-98.

⁶ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 131.

Luke does not broach the subject of the legality of propagating new deities for that was not the primary issue at hand⁷; Paul's accusers are simply mistaken.

Conzelmann later turns to Paul's belated defense. Noting this odd delay to claim his due legal protections—Paul waits until after he has been jailed and beaten to make any kind of appeal—Conzelmann argues that Luke's apologetic stance necessitates proper highlighting of Paul's citizenship claim:

This prepares for an apologetic point: Roman law did not hinder the mission In view of the events, it may seem artificial that Luke reports Paul's appeal here for the first time. But in view of Luke's apologetic purpose it makes sense, since the point receives special emphasis when made at the conclusion.⁸

Thus, for Conzelmann, Luke's appeal to Paul's Roman citizenship is a function of the book's literary agenda to defend Christianity as a faith that posed no threat to the empire. Conzelmann then proceeds to outline a number of citations of Roman law detailing how a citizen (*civem Romanum*) "enjoyed legal protections against being put in chains and against flogging."⁹ However, he does not explain why explicit references to the rights of Roman citizens (*civem Romanum*) apply here to individuals called only Roman (Ῥωμαίους). In sum, according to Conzelmann, the historical plausibility of Paul's citizenship, the narrative placement of his appeal, and the historical

⁷ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 131: "Moreover, he does not enter into the Roman legal principles" which coheres rather well with his earlier thematic assessment of Acts. Conzelmann continues to explain that the aim of Acts is not to argue that the followers of Jesus were themselves authentic members of a Jewish sect and thus already protected as a *religio licita*. In fact, he rejects even the existence of such a notion beyond the "ad hoc" formulation of Tertullian though he still sees in Acts an apologetic in relation to the Roman Empire. For Conzelmann, Luke aims to demonstrate to that part of his audience that represent the interests of the Roman empire that Christianity and Judaism are not co-extensive ("the practical-apologetic perspective") though they are theologically and historically linked ("the perspective of salvation history").

⁸ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 133.

⁹ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 133.

verisimilitude of legal protections due to citizens all serve a common apologetic purpose.

From the very first, Haenchen notes that the arrival of Paul and his cohort in Philippi is an act of cultural migration: “In this city with its Italian colonists the missionaries are foreigners.”¹⁰ This crossing of boundaries also becomes for Haenchen the core of the accusation that the Philippian “syndicate” around the mantic girl levels against Paul: simply, that Jewish proselytizing is an affront to the city’s Roman law. The accusation is thus primarily about the importation of a foreign cult into a Roman colony; for Haenchen, the grounds for the indictment remain primarily religious. When he turns to Paul’s claim to citizenship, Haenchen finds Pauline confirmation of his travails in 1 Thess 2:2, a passage, however, that makes no mention of a claim to citizenship. According to Haenchen, despite the tribulations Paul faces here, especially his clearly unjust punishment, Luke avoids portraying the Romans in too bad a light. Ultimately, he argues, the rapacious profiteers of the mantic girl are the true instigators of this unfortunate incident. Finally, unlike Conzelmann, Haenchen suggests that Paul’s belated appeal to his citizenship is not as much a part of Luke’s apologetic construction of the narrative but a practical matter:

But if Paul had transgressed the prevailing law with his mission among the Roman colonists, it was wise for him not to appeal to his Roman right of citizenship. It would indeed have spared him from the lashing, but the appeal would have entangled him in a protracted trial with an uncertain outcome, and during this time the possibility for a mission would be as good as gone.¹¹

Yet, this does not provide sufficient explanation for the eventual appeal to Paul’s “Romanness.” As Lentz has argued, if Paul had chosen to claim his citizenship before

¹⁰ Haenchen, *Acts*, 499.

¹¹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 504.

the beating, the Roman officials would have been required to cease their unjust punishment, and a “protracted trial” would not have been necessary.¹² Would not the claim of the unjust treatment of a Roman require a lengthy trial of its own so that the aggrieved citizen might receive some recompense? It is simply too difficult to propose a plausible practical reason for Paul’s delayed defense with the details Luke provides; however, what is left is an ideological construction of flexible ethnic identities. Ultimately, for Haenchen, the Philippian episode is an unfortunate incident arising from a group of greedy profiteers who accuse Paul and his companions of spreading “Jewish propaganda,”¹³ and Paul’s belated defense is a narratively defensible development.

Like my argument in this chapter, Johnson weaves together the twin accusations brought against Paul and his companions by noting “the causal [and] rather concessive character of the circumstantial participle, *Ioudaioi hyparchontes*.”¹⁴ As I will argue further below, this participial phrase is best translated as being linked to the accusation of embroiling the city; the ethnic identity of Paul and Silas are endemic to their disruptive behavior. For Johnson, the all-too-common anti-Semitism evident in Roman antiquity underwrites the linking of their Jewish identity and their purported crimes. I generally agree. Moreover, the discourse of ethnic strife directed toward Jews here in Philippi has clear echoes in other ancient literature.¹⁵ Finally, when it comes to Paul’s citizenship, Johnson correctly observes, “It is impossible, given the state of our evidence, to state whether in fact Paul was a citizen, but the fact is critical to Luke’s

¹² Lentz, *Luke’s Portrait of Paul*, 132.

¹³ Haenchen, *Acts*, 500.

¹⁴ Johnson, *Acts*, 295.

¹⁵ See ch. 3.

narrative.”¹⁶ Thus, while I argue that concerns about the “historical Paul” have drawn too much scholarly attention away from the narrative implications of Paul’s claim in Acts, Luke’s claim is consistent and important to the story arc of Acts. My question in this chapter is whether we have misapprehended this feature of the Lukan Paul by neglecting the factor of ethnicity.

Recalling my analysis of Fitzmyer’s treatment of Timothy in chapter three, we again find him making appeals to primarily religious dimensions of identity. For Fitzmyer, the accusations of the mantic merchants of Philippi are primarily religious: “Paul is charged with preaching a non-Roman cult, a mode of worship and practices that Romans do not welcome. A Roman could not adopt Judaism without liability according to Roman penal code.”¹⁷ The implication of Fitzmyer’s conclusion is that Romans were not legally allowed to exchange religious affiliations but also that these removable allegiances of faith were not integral to Roman identity. One could presumably become a “Jew” and still be a Roman. Yet surely such a shift in ethnic identities is far more foundational. The accusation is not that Paul is asking the residents of Philippi to exchange one faith for another but that Paul and Silas divert from the established Roman ethos of this important colony. Fitzmyer thus defends Paul and Silas with a religious apology:

¹⁶ Johnson, *Acts*, 301.

¹⁷ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 587 cites Cicero, *Leg.*, 2.8.19 and Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 67.14.2 and 57.18.5. Whether Luke is concerned with such legal definitions or whether they would have applied in this case is unclear to me. Equally unclear is whether answering these questions helps provide exegetical clarity on this text. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 587 concludes from these citations, “Paul and Silas, however, have not been proselytizing for Judaism, but the magistrates in Philippi at that time would scarcely have known the difference between Judaism and Christianity.” I argue that the distinction at play in the accusation brought against Paul and Silas is not that of Jew and Christian or between legal and illegal cults but between competing ethnic identities. Fundamentally, the dispute is a one-sided and clearly contrived ethnic appeal. Paul’s achievement in the narrative is not so much that he challenges his unjust punishment and imprisonment but that he undermines the ethnic foundation of his accusers. He too is Ῥωμαῖος.

[They], however, have not been proselytizing for Judaism, but the magistrates in Philippi at that time would scarcely have known the difference between Judaism and Christianity. Luke so formulates the charge that Paul and Silas can easily repudiate it. The charge, however, raises a question about the legitimacy of Christianity then in the Roman empire: Was it *religio licita*, a licit religion?¹⁸

In fact, religion is only one component of this narrative. It is not the difference between “Jew” and Christian” but between Ἰουδαῖος and Ῥωμαῖος that this narrative has in view. The allegation is centered on ethnicity.¹⁹

Fitzmyer finds Paul’s appeal to Roman citizenship as wholly plausible historically and perhaps for that reason does not seek to find a narrative or historical explanation for Paul’s belated defense like Conzelmann or Haenchen. Despite Paul’s evident innocence, he does not base his defense on debunking his accusers but on indicting the unjust process of condemning and punishing a Roman citizen without trial or other legal protections afforded him. Fitzmyer is also careful to include Silas as a fellow citizen of Rome: “That Silas was also a Roman citizen is stated nowhere else. Paul includes him in saying, ‘They flogged us,’ and that is hardly meant to be an editorial we. So one must assume that Silas was also a Roman citizen.”²⁰ Why does Silas’s purported citizenship need to be defended more than Paul’s? Alternatively, why does Fitzmyer perceive that Silas’s citizenship is more in doubt than Paul’s? He explains that the further testimony of Acts (e.g. 22:28b) confirms Paul’s citizenship despite the absence of this claim in his epistles. However, the conversation in Acts 22:25-29 between Paul and his centurion guard makes explicit mention of citizenship (v. 28—τιῆν

¹⁸ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 587-88.

¹⁹ To be sure, religion is a critical component of ethnicity, but the former does not entail the latter. Fundamentally, religion and ethnicity point to different—though admittedly related—modes of distinguishing between peoples and cultures. Too often, NT scholars have tended to highlight religion but neglect ethnic identity. See chs. 2 and 6.

²⁰ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 590.

πολιτεῖαν) amidst Paul's claims to have been born Roman (v. 29—ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ γενένημαι). As I will discuss further below, the discussion of citizenship in ch. 22 intersects with the question of ethnicity as a primordial, inborn feature of human identity. In ch. 16, there is no mention of citizenship in particular. Instead the dispute in Philippi is about the fragile ethnic identity of the Philippian colonists and these disruptive Ἰουδαῖοι.

In commenting on this narrative, Dunn posits that behind this event lies the age-old weapon of prejudice: eschewing their actual grievances against Paul, the aggrieved syndicate

. . . adopted a tactic repeated countless times in the history of communities the world over: the appeal to prejudice against small ethnic minorities commonly known for their peculiar customs. Such prejudice among Roman intellectuals against the Jews for their customs of circumcision and dietary regulations is well attested for the period. In view of the tensions between Paul and “the Jews” elsewhere in Luke's narrative, it is important to appreciate the fact that in Philippi it was precisely as a Jew that Paul suffered.²¹

Why did Paul not diffuse these prejudices with an early appeal to his citizenship? Dunn responds, echoing Haenchen closely, that a lengthy legal ordeal would foreclose Paul's missionary endeavors.²² For the same reasons as I noted above, this explanation is inadequate; in fact, when discussing the chagrined Philippian officials after Paul has unveiled his legal trump card, Dunn himself notes, “. . . they had exceeded their authority (a charge against Roman citizens had to be investigated properly), and were themselves liable to serious retribution.”²³ In the end, Dunn theorizes that Paul's actions are part of a peremptory defense of the new Christian community he had

²¹ Dunn, *Acts*, 222.

²² Cf. Dunn, *Acts*, 222 and Haenchen, *Acts*, 504.

²³ Dunn, *Acts*, 223.

helped found in Philippi, lest the Philippian elite seek to repress this group of new Christians without due consideration of their legal rights.

Gaventa notes how the accusations leveled against Paul and Silas “take one true statement (Paul and Silas are Jews) and weave it into a dangerous charge: Paul and Silas are outsiders who agitate against ‘real’ Romans.”²⁴ In this way, Gaventa accurately links the ethnic accusation of foreigners seeking to pierce this center of Roman identity. When it comes to Paul’s Roman citizenship, Gaventa bypasses the many scholarly questions about the historical veracity of the Lukan Paul’s claim by noting that Luke is consistent in his narrative about Paul’s Roman citizenship. She concludes, “The question of who in fact reflects the idea of Roman citizenship here receives an ironic answer.”²⁵ This conclusion is correct but requires an additional qualification: the challenge extends beyond the legal definitions of citizenship to the ethnic discourse revolving around Roman identity.

Witherington sees in the accusations leveled against Paul and Silas a dispute over ethos, rooted in “fear of foreigners, and suspicion about Jews and their customs.”²⁶ Why then did the pair not dispute the allegation or at least draw upon the protection of citizenship? According to Witherington, Paul’s decision is strategic, lest his witness for the gospel seem to rely on or be subservient to his citizenship; he explains, “Paul’s sense of identity came first from his Christian faith, secondly from his Jewish heritage, and only thirdly from his Greco-Roman heritage.”²⁷ The narrative, however, seems

²⁴ Gaventa, *Acts*, 239.

²⁵ Gaventa, *Acts*, 241. She also adds, “Ironically, it is those who beat Paul who acted in an ‘unRomanlike’ fashion, since they took action without proper legal proceedings and against Roman citizens at that.”

²⁶ Witherington, *Acts*, 496.

²⁷ Witherington, *Acts*, 501.

little concerned with creating a hierarchy of identities for Paul, and Witherington's gradation elides ethnic and religious identities. Even worse, it oversimplifies the complicated portrayal of Paul's multiple identities in Acts by treating these three dimensions of identity as self-contained antitheses. The controversy at Philippi centers on ethnic identity. Paul challenges the accusations not by disputing their veracity or even explicitly exposing the true *modus operandi* of the profiteers but by challenging the assumptions of the ethnic discourse of his accusers. Despite their indictment that Paul and Silas were threatening the fragile ethnic fabric of the colony, these Christ followers are themselves "Roman." They are not a threat to Philippi but *bona fide* members of its ethnic community.

From the first, Pervo's commentary on these passages acknowledges an undercurrent of ethnic tension in the narrative: "The owners were shrewd enough to mask their avarice with a potent brew concocted from the ultimate resort of the scoundrel, a dose of old-time religion, and a garnish of racism."²⁸ Greed thus takes the shape of religious fundamentalism and ethnic exclusivism. Instead of bringing a suit demanding financial recompense, Paul's accusers orchestrate a "labile mob," instigated by "charges [that] are formulated with some cleverness and eloquence."²⁹ Specifically, Pervo notes how vv. 20 and 21 "have parallel conclusions with end stress: 'being Jews . . . being Romans.'"³⁰ Pervo argues that the accusation is two-fold. First, Paul and Silas are "foreign agitators who promulgate an alien cult." Second, they "intend[ed] to

²⁸ Pervo, *Acts*, 406.

²⁹ Pervo, *Acts*, 407.

³⁰ Pervo, *Acts*, 407, n. 62. Despite this observation, Pervo does not exploit this syntactical link in his translation: "These fellows are convulsing the city! They are Jews and commend practices that we Romans can neither accept nor follow" (397). I argue below that such syntactical connections also pay significant exegetical dividends; the paralleling of the accusation is a clear instance of ethnic discourse of discord.

ignite the flames of nationalistic ardor.”³¹ Both accusations are simply false in the narrative world of Acts 16. In fact, “the final words of v. 21 will become ironic when v. 37 reveals that Paul and Silas are themselves Roman citizens.”³² I suggest that an ever-deeper irony is evident when we recognize the underlying ethnic discourse in play.

When it comes to Paul’s defense, Pervo notes the curiosity of a belated defense after the humiliating and illegal punishment has already been inflicted. He dismisses the explanation that their protestations were not heard amidst a raucous crowd as an unjustified narrative addition or that the belated defense was somehow a strategic posture. Instead, Pervo argues that this scene leans on a typology of honor and shame, ultimately revealing “that Roman law is not hostile to the new movement, however malign or incompetent some of its officials (of whom Pilate is the most outstanding example) may be.”³³ To stress this even further, Paul’s response echoes and refutes the accusations that precipitated this unjust punishment in the first place.

To be sure, these various scholarly efforts are not univocal; nevertheless, certain central notions represent scholarly agreements concerning the function and purpose of Paul’s appeal to his Roman citizenship. Ultimately, an overriding concern to uncover the historical Paul in the study of these passages has narrowed the scope of inquiry. In contrast, I propose bracketing historical questions about the historical Paul or even about the plausibility of an ancient Jew’s membership in various citizenships and strict religious sect. Whether Paul’s identification as Ῥωμαῖος is historically accurate or a Lukan fiction misses a wider narrative point. While the problematic

³¹ Pervo, *Acts*, 407.

³² Pervo, *Acts*, 407. See also *ibid.*, 414: “Paul and Silas are Roman citizens and thus the victims of gross injustice. His question is well structured and mellifluous, echoing at its close the accusation against him in vv. 20-21.”

³³ Pervo, *Acts*, 414.

evidence in the debate about Paul's "citizenship" may make this debate insoluble, more important for this study is that such efforts confuse ethnic terminologies for citizenship titles. Recent scholarly efforts have seen some recognition of the underlying ethnic discourse in this passage; at the same time, the narrowing of Paul's claim to an affirmation of certain legal rights as a citizen misses the full ironic contrast between Paul's accusers and his apology. When it comes to ethnic terminologies like Ῥωμαῖος or Ἰουδαῖος, Luke does not distinguish between citizenship and ethnic identity. Today no one would argue that Paul's Jewishness, his being a Ἰουδαῖος, should be decided based on his access to a set of political and legal rights. Why then reduce Paul's claim to be Ῥωμαῖος only to citizenship? In fact, an argument for a claim to citizenship is largely an argument from silence, at least in this passage.³⁴

Threats to the Philippian Ethnic Fabric (Acts 16:16-21)

In order to comprehend better the organizing ethnic discourse in this passage, I first turn to the events that precipitate the arrest of Paul and his travelling companion Silas. As discussed above in chapter 4, the context of these events in a Roman colony

³⁴ Cf. Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 85 for one striking example: "Roman citizenship would be incontestably indicated for Paul had his full Roman name, or even surname and family name alone, been disclosed somewhere in the NT. Its absence, particularly from the letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix at Acts 23:26-30, is disappointing. However, this must be balanced by the fact that nowhere in the NT is an individual known by all of his or her three names." Here Rapske depends on the important work of A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939); idem, *Roman Society*; and idem, "The Roman Citizenship: A Survey of Its Development into a World Franchise," *ANRW* 1.2:23-58. At the same time, no other person in the NT has precipitated such extensive efforts to defend her or his citizenship. Despite his earlier caution, Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 87 argues, "Thus, far from having nothing to say on the matter, both Paul's family name itself and the manner of its mention at Acts 13:9 may be taken to indicate his Roman citizenship, even if the circumstances of how his forebears obtained their Roman citizenship remains unknown." Contra Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, who argues that Paul's depiction as Jewish, Roman, and a citizen of Tarsus is wholly implausible. Ultimately, it seems clear to me that to make an historical claim for Paul's citizenship requires more than a modicum of speculation.

are not mere narrative flair but crucial to the setting of this story. As Tannehill explains,

There is a significant shift in cultural context between Acts 2-5 and the Philippi episode. The account of the mission in Jerusalem was strongly marked by its Jewish setting. The setting of the Philippi narrative is equally important but significantly different. It is not just Gentile but specifically Roman.³⁵

This shift in cultural context corresponds to a shift in ethnic populations, bringing to the fore the complexities of ethnic boundaries. There is, however, an additional level of contextualization. To be sure, the “contemporary coloring”³⁶ of Philippi marks the city as intensely Roman³⁷; at the same time, its description in v. 12 as a Roman colony indicates that Tannehill’s description of the narrative shift evident in this episode requires a slight but significant modification. To paraphrase him, the Philippian setting is not just Gentile, not just Roman, but indelibly marked as a colony of the powerful Roman Empire.³⁸ Thus, the city is a satellite of Roman power that reflects but also refracts Roman ethnic identity; in other words, the city mirrors the ethnic discourse of its colonial rule but also reinterprets it. The colonial position of Philippi

³⁵ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:200.

³⁶ Here I use a turn of phrase described by Cadbury, *History*, 7 as follows: “For some of these [features of Acts consonant with its wider cultural setting] I think we need to coin the phrase ‘contemporary colour’—a phrase analogous to the more familiar ‘local colour.’ The author’s own language, his literary form, his point of view toward his material, are part of this, and then in his story the customs or actions recounted may tally strikingly with what we know of the environment or the age.”

³⁷ As Taylor, “Roman Empire,” ANRW 26.3:2446 describes it, “It seems that in the first century of our era the Roman character of Philippi was especially evident.”

³⁸ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 129-30 notes this crucial setting: “In the following verses the accuracy of detail and intensity of local coloring are striking. In this instance it is important for the course of events that the city is a Roman colony.” Unfortunately, he does not lay out any further the implications of this colonial setting. Johnson, *Acts*, 298 summarizes the scene writing, “The sketch is thumbnail in size but full of the authentic feel of Mediterranean urban life.” John B. Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany: Prison-Escape in Acts of the Apostles* (BZNW 131; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 244-45 disagrees: “It is important to observe, however, that Luke nowhere emphasizes the specifically Roman character of the colony, (although his account of the trial and vindication of Paul evidences an awareness of the Roman identity of Philippi in the first-century C.E.)” He goes on to note the “rather generic” description of Philippi as a colony but observes that Luke’s only explicit identification of a Roman colony is exegetically significant.

means that its links to the Roman center of power are fragile and thus in need of a great deal of ideological defense. To be sure, to equate simply the Philippi we can reconstruct via archaeological inquiry and the Philippi projected by Luke's narrative is problematic. My aim in this dissertation is not a historical reconstruction of Philippi with the help of Acts 16;³⁹ instead, I suggest that discerning the kind of reputation Philippi held in antiquity as a Roman military colony may enhance my reading of Luke's Philippi.

Thus, some inquiry into the history of Philippi is needed. Ethnicity is a social fiction but one rooted in cultural realities.⁴⁰ For Luke's account of the negotiation of ethnic boundaries to prove persuasive to his audience, it must cohere with widely held cultural understandings or challenge commonly held assumptions. What then are these widespread understandings and assumptions about Philippi? What might an informed reader of Acts know about Philippi that helps flesh out the scene drawn by Luke? After all, ethnic discourse does not emerge in a cultural or historical vacuum. While this dissertation tends to examine the world projected by Luke's narrative and

³⁹ For such resources, see Lukas Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (NovTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 11-84 and Peter Pilhofer, *Philippi* (2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995-2000). See the summary and application of these works to Paul's letter to the Philippians in Joseph H. Hellerman, "The Humiliation of Christ in the Social World of Roman Philippi, Part 1," *BSac* 160 (2003): 321-36 and idem, "The Humiliation of Christ in the Social World of Roman Philippi, Part 2," *BSac* 160 (2003): 421-33. See also Charalambos Bakirtzis and Helmut Koester, eds., *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after His Death* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1998); Holland L. Hendrix, "Philippi," *ABD* 5:313-17; and L. Michael White, "Visualizing the 'Real' World of Acts 16: Toward Construction of a Social Index," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 234-61.

⁴⁰ See ch. 2 where I argue for the interdependence of the "fictive" and "real" dimensions of ethnic identities. To comprehend the social creation of ethnicity, we also frequently require a fuller understanding of the historical, cultural, and social contexts within which these acts of social fiction take place. What differentiates this approach from historical reconstruction is the exegetical aim. The assumption is not that historical reconstruction of Philippi, for instance, can validate one's exegesis of the passage but that an understanding of Philippi's history and reputation in antiquity helps provide a discursive context within which ethnic reasoning can occur in a persuasive way.

thus deprioritizes questions of historicity, some background to Philippi's ancient reputation is exegetically valuable.

Roman control of Philippi began in the second century BCE with the defeat of "Macedonian dynasts and dynastic pretenders."⁴¹ The year 42 BCE saw the well-known confrontation between Cassius and Brutus, on the one hand, and Octavian and Antony, on the other. The latter's victory resulted in Philippi's status as a military colony. Octavian granted his veterans land in Philippi and later did so again after his defeat of Antony in 30 BCE, each time evicting Philippian inhabitants from their lands and granting those lands along with the social status they previously held to the newly arrived colonizing veterans.⁴² Hendrix describes Philippi at the time of Paul's arrival:

. . . the population of the colony would have included a relatively privileged core of Roman veterans and their descendants; Greeks descended from the inhabitants of the earlier Hellenistic cities . . . and from other Greek settlements in the area . . . Greeks involved in commerce who had migrated from Asia Minor . . . and native Thracians.⁴³

In other words, Philippi's long history and the relatively recent introduction of colonists resulted in a teeming metropolis marked by its diversity and social stratification.⁴⁴ Yet it is the imprint of Roman culture that likely overshadowed Philippi's pre-colonial history.

Epigraphic data demonstrates [sic] unequivocally that the city and the colony were administered by Romans in a decidedly Roman fashion. Latin predominates in the inscriptions, and civic honors and offices such as duumviri, aediles, and quaestors are widely attested. A drama troupe put on Latin productions in a theater rebuilt according to Roman tastes.

⁴¹ Hendrix, "Philippi," 314.

⁴² Hellerman, "Philippi, Part 1," 325.

⁴³ Hendrix, "Philippi," 315.

⁴⁴ The latter point is articulated particularly well by Hellerman, "Philippi, Part 1," 324: "And no region east of Rome was more quintessentially Roman in this regard [the prioritization of social stratification in light of status] than the colony of Philippi." See also idem, "Philippi, Part 2."

A forum built in Roman style marked the center of the city. Residents honored Roman gods such as Jupiter, Neptune, Mercury, and Silvanus.⁴⁵

Even more explicit is Pilhofer: “Wer—wie Paulus—aus dem Osten nach Philippi kam, kam in eine andere Welt. Römische Kolonien konnte man auch in Kleinasien besuchen, aber keine war auch nur annähernd so ‘römisch’ wie Philippi.”⁴⁶ In a city that Acts depicts as distinctly Roman, ethnic discourse was likely a vital component of public life, especially in the display of public status symbols.⁴⁷

Ultimately, Paul and his companions were entering into a potential ethnic maelstrom, populated by a proud, powerful minority of Roman veterans that had under imperial dictate disposed of the lands of formerly high-standing Philippians. Luke further portrays the population as including some semblance of a Jewish community on the outskirts of the city and thus perhaps on the outskirts of the city’s center of power along with a nameless, faceless mass of other inhabitants who could be riled up in defense of this fragile colonial setting. How then does Luke assume that the inhabitants of this Roman colony developed their senses of ethnicity? How does Luke narrate the intrusion of the gospel into Philippi as being reconstrued as an act of ethnic violence?

It is in this colonial and imperial context in which Luke narrates a scene of massive civil unrest. In their regular visits to the place of prayer where Paul and his companions first met Lydia, daily encounters with a mantic girl finally precipitate what appears to be a rash reaction of exorcism. Paul here seems to react more out of

⁴⁵ Hellerman, “Philippi, Part 1,” 324-25. Cf. Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 1:91. Hellerman, “Philippi, Part 1,” 325 adds, “Only in Italy could one find a Roman settlement comparable to Philippi.”

⁴⁶ Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 1:92.

⁴⁷ See Hellerman, “Philippi, Part 1” and the inscriptional finds reproduced in Pilhofer’s second volume.

annoyance (διαπονηθεὶς)⁴⁸ than compassion and engages in one of only two instances of successful exorcism in Acts.⁴⁹ This young girl (παιδίσκην) was the vessel of a pythonic spirit (πνεῦμα πύθωνα) that imbued her with divinatory abilities that proved profitable to her masters (κυρίοις) but also prophetic, perhaps.⁵⁰ “These are servants of the most high God; they are proclaiming to you a way to salvation” (v. 17). Ambiguity pervades this seemingly straightforward confirmation of these Christian missionaries. First is the ambiguity in the anarthrous reference to ὁδὸν σωτηρίας; is this an absolute declaration of a single path to salvation?⁵¹ Similarly, one might wonder whether the girl’s naming of the God of Paul and his companions as τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου might have prompted Paul’s furious reaction.⁵² To be sure, one can find such language in non-Jewish sources to refer to the head of a number of deities in other religious systems; in fact, the superlative “most high” seems to require this pantheon of deities.⁵³ However, Mitchell has collected and analyzed evidence demonstrating how mutual influence shaped the cult of “Theos Hypsistos” throughout Anatolia; pagans, Jews, and Christians

⁴⁸ See BDAG, s.v. διαπονέομαι. Cf. Acts 14:8-10 where Paul heals a crippled man after seeing faith in him (ἰδὼν ὅτι ἔχει πίστιν τοῦ σωθῆναι); 19:11-12 which records the healing properties of clothing items that had even touched Paul; 20:7-12 where Paul revives Eutychus who died momentarily due to Paul’s soporific sermon; and 28:8 where Paul heals Publius’ father by praying for and laying hands upon him.

⁴⁹ See also 19:12, but cf. the futile efforts of the seven sons of Sceva (19:13-20) immediately following the description of the efficacy of cloths touched by Paul to expel evil spirits. Exorcisms in the Gospel according to Luke include 4:33-37, 41; 8:26-39; 9:37-42; 11:14; and 13:10-17.

⁵⁰ Dunn, *Acts*, 221 seems to dismiss the latter possibility, positing that this “dim-witted slave girl” might have simply regurgitated the language of the Christian missionaries. The portrayal of such a vacuous individual is however not explicit in the narrative.

⁵¹ See Todd Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading* (SNTSMS 129; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 224-26 and Paul R. Trebilco, “Paul and Silas—‘Servants of the Most High God’ (Acts 16.16-18),” *JSNT* 36 (1989): 64-65.

⁵² At the same time, the narrative does not provide an explicit reason for Paul’s vexation; see Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 423.

⁵³ See the discussions by Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:43-51; Taylor, “Roman Empire,” *ANRW* 26.3:2450-451; and Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 127-44.

alike drew on such language.⁵⁴ As Mitchell argues, “The relationship between Christians and pagans, like that between pagans and Jews, was complex, and the difficulty of disentangling Christian, Jewish, and pagan strands from one another in the documentary evidence is a direct reflection of these complications.”⁵⁵ According to Mitchell, therefore, the identifying of the deity by the mantic girl as τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου⁵⁶ brings us to the complex intersection of these different but mutually influential religious traditions.⁵⁷ Closer to the text at hand, however, is Luke’s own deployment of such religious verbiage.

Luke himself utilizes such terminology relatively freely and in a variety of narrative contexts.⁵⁸ The angel’s annunciation to Mary twice refers to “the most high God” (Luke 1:32, 35), Zechariah’s song once (1:76). Luke places the phrase in Jesus’s own mouth in the Sermon on the Plain (6:35).⁵⁹ Stephen’s extended speech also contains such a reference (Acts 7:48). Thus, in nearly every case, close followers of Jesus refer to God as ὕψιστος with the notable exception of the Gerasene demoniac who

⁵⁴ Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:43-51.

⁵⁵ Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:48.

⁵⁶ At least two pieces of manuscript evidence delete τοῦ θεοῦ: 1646* (see Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, 283) and 4968/P¹²⁷ (see line 19), a newly published fifth century fragment from the Oxyrhynchus papyri (see D. Leith et al., eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (vol. 74; Graeco-Roman Memoirs 95; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2009), 25. Leith, *Oxyrhynchus*, 11-13 notes that one of the distinctive characteristics of this papyrus is “the habit of abbreviating or even omitting material” (11); though the editors point out several omissions, they seem to have missed this one. The editors further argue that the tendency in this papyrus to omit as well as its similarities to D complicate the text critical history of Acts significantly, perhaps even challenging the long-standing theory of two major, independent text traditions. On the text critical issues with D, see Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Bezan Text of Acts: A Contribution of Discourse Analysis to Textual Criticism* (JSNTSup 236; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) and Josep Rius-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition* (4 vols.; LNTS 257, 302, 365, 415; London: T&T Clark, 2004).

⁵⁷ Cf. Levinskaya, *Acts in its First Century Setting*, 83-103.

⁵⁸ See for example, F. Scott Spencer, “Out of Mind, Out of Voice: Slave-Girls and Prophetic Daughters in Luke-Acts,” *BibInt* 7 (1999): 147-48.

⁵⁹ Cf. Matt 5:45 where instead of υἱοὶ ὑψίστου, it reads υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς.

calls Jesus *νιὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου* (8:28).⁶⁰ Our best point of comparison is thus the Gerasene demoniac, who, like the mantic girl, was under the influence of spirit possession.⁶¹

These two scenes share several literary features. Both narrate exorcisms. Both precipitate outrage from entrepreneurs whose businesses are somehow derailed by the exorcism.⁶² And, most important for my argument, in both cases, the narrative's protagonists are crossing some kind of ethnic border⁶³: Jesus enters Gentile land for the first and last time in the Third Gospel,⁶⁴ and Paul and his companions have just crossed into Macedonia under visionary prompting.⁶⁵ What then can we learn by juxtaposing

⁶⁰ Here, Luke clearly relies on Mark 5:7; however, the repetition of similar language in Acts 16 suggests that Luke here constructs a wider literary pattern, though based clearly on the original source of Mark. Luke also uses *ὑψιστος* twice when referring to the highest heaven where God dwells (Luke 2:14, 19:38; cf. Mark 11:10 and Matt 21:9).

⁶¹ Cf. Pervo, *Acts*, 405; Rius-Camps, *El camino*, 101-2; and Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (rev. ed.; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 100-3. See also the focus on narratives of exorcism—including the stories of the Gerasene demoniac and the pythonic, mantic girl—in Klutz, *Exorcism Stories* and Lynn Allan Kauppi, *Foreign but Familiar Gods: Greco-Romans Read Religion in Acts* (LNTS 277; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 36-37.

⁶² Both therefore also seem to carry a subtext linking economics and the rejection of Jesus, rejections which would continue against his followers. The loss of the swine herd leads the Gerasenes to request Jesus' departure while the loss of the mantic girl's abilities led her owners to accuse Paul and Silas of disrupting the whole colony not just their business endeavors. This pattern is also evident in the Ephesian uproar precipitated by Demetrius (Acts 19:23-41). Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 148: "Luke sees the way a man handles possession as an indication, a symbol, of his interior disposition" and *idem*, *Acts*, 298. See Gaventa, *Acts*, 239. Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 210 argues, "In 16.16, by characterising the girl's oracular behaviour as a means of great income for her owners, the narrator insinuates that the owners were using her in a greedy and dishonourable way." See also Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 102 who finds linguistic links between the two narratives.

⁶³ Cf. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIBCNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 335-36: "At a fundamental level, then, this text [Luke 8:26-39] concerns the crossing of boundaries in Jesus' mission, and more particularly the offer of salvation in the Gentile world." The only instance of the term *ὑψιστος* outside of the Gospels and Acts also occurs in the context of ethnic border crossing when Heb 7:1 refers to ὁ Μελχισέδεκ, βασιλεὺς Σαλήμ, ἱερεὺς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου, a priest whose ethnic relationship to the tribe of Abraham is at best unclear. See the collection of ancient interpretation of Gen 14:17-20 focusing on the character of Melchizedek in James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 276-93.

⁶⁴ Green, *Luke*, 335 and Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 101.

⁶⁵ Cf. Rius-Camps, *El camino*, 101.

these two narratives about the meaning of the mantic girl's acclamation of Paul and Silas?

The contextual commonalities shared by these two narratives are particularly instructive. For Luke here constructs a literary pattern that aids the reading of the story of the mantic girl in Acts 16, especially as regards how ethnic anxieties help underwrite the narrative of trial and defense that is the primary concern of the final verses of ch. 16. Both of these stories are set in contexts where ethnic boundaries are traversed and where economic interest helps ground the rejection of Jesus and his followers. Despite the power exhibited by the exorcisms that Jesus or his followers perform, the boundaries crossed are still in place and resistance to God's agents remains. Why these boundaries and resistance remain, however, differs in the two pericopes. While in the Third Gospel, fear (Luke 8:37—φόβω) is the named cause of the Gerasenes's request that Jesus leave,⁶⁶ the residents of Philippi do not seem to act out of fear of the God empowering acts of exorcism. Nevertheless, the two stories resonate to demonstrate a pattern adjoining the crossing of ethnic boundaries, exorcism, and economic concerns.

Whether the mantic girl's proclamation was accurately prophetic or insinuated Paul's activity with "paganism" remains, in my mind, unresolved.⁶⁷ The narrative tensions evident in the demon-inspired acclamation of Paul and his followers described

⁶⁶ Often in Luke-Acts, an encounter with the numinous precipitates fear (Luke 1:12, 65; 2:9; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37; 21:26; Acts 2:43; 5:5, 11; 19:17).

⁶⁷ Both Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 423 and Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:212 note the incommensurability in the Lukan narrative of accurate prophecy and profit-making; for them, the proclamations of the mantic girl though perhaps not deceitful are fundamentally untrue because of the way her divinatory gifts are used in a profit-making endeavor. As Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 423 concludes, "Aber die Dämonen stehen im Dienst des Geldgewinns, und deshalb dürfen sie die Wahrheit nicht sagen, denn mit der Geldgier des Wahrsagegeistes hat die Verkündigung des Evangeliums nichts gemein."

above are not easily resolved perhaps because Luke here deploys a purposefully ambiguous text.⁶⁸ In Luke 8 and Acts 16, the demon-possessed may speak the truth but not the whole truth, and it is perhaps these pervading ambiguities that set the stage for the rejection of Jesus in Gerasa and the accusations brought against Paul and his companions in Philippi. Neither the demons nor the inhabitants of these foreign lands fully comprehend the messengers of God, whether Jesus or Paul and his companions. In Gerasa, the legion of demons miscalculate and drown along with the herd of swine they possess, precipitating fear and the Gerasenes's request that Jesus leave their area. Paul's frustration at the mantic girl's daily acclamation precipitates a seemingly unthinking exorcism leading to his arrest.⁶⁹ Thus, in both cases, the potentially ambiguous declarations of the demon-possessed set in motion a seemingly inexorable chain of events ending in the rejection of the proclaimers of the gospel.

Paul's response to the mantic girl is swift, even casual. Invoking the name of Jesus, he exorcises the girl and immediately the situation unravels. Motivated by the loss of a profitable business venture, the girl's masters haul Paul and Silas before the authorities. As quickly as she had been healed, the mantic girl now exorcised disappears from the view of the narrative⁷⁰; used by her masters as a means to profit,

⁶⁸ Contra Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 226 who argues that the girl's declaration was actually an affront to Paul's Jewish sensibilities and that his explosive reaction was "not merely excusable but exemplary." On the ambiguities of this prophecy in the context of Delphic oracles, see Kauppi, *Foreign but Familiar Gods*, 33-38. Cf. also Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 127-44. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:43-51 argues for the overlap of pagan, Jewish, and Christian religious beliefs around the confession of "*Theos Hypsistos*"; as *ibid.*, 2:49 concludes, "The cults of *Theos Hypsistos* more than any others occupied the common ground shared by all three religious systems."

⁶⁹ See Spencer, "Slave-Girls," 149.

⁷⁰ Cf. Gail O'Day, "Acts," in *Women's Bible Commentary* (expanded ed.; ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 400 who writes, "Once Paul silences the slave girl, she is forgotten. The focus of the story shifts to the loss of income her owners suffer because of her silence." While I largely agree, the accusations brought against Paul and Silas will surprisingly neglect to mention either the slave girl or any loss of profit so that economic concern is the true—but unspoken—

the girl also functions as a mere narrative hinge. Unnamed, she is a redactional tool linking Paul's arrival in Philippi with this moment of persecution.⁷¹ Ultimately, both her masters and her narrator use her.

Yet, her disappearance both from the narrative and from the incriminations leveled against Paul demonstrates that it is a threat deeper than economics that will compose the logic of their indictments.⁷² It is actually vital to the discourse of ethnicity that will form the logical foundation of the merchants's accusations that the mantic girl steps off the stage. At first glance, one might assume that these masters brought Paul before the city leadership in order to seek recompense, but their initial accusatory salvo has little to do with the mantic girl and how the loss of her powers has bankrupted their successful business.⁷³ Her disappearance also diminishes whatever religious dimensions of her task as a diviner, prophet, or oracle (μαντευομένη) were conjured in the preceding verses. If this were a dispute over cult and religious practice, she likely would have played a larger role in the riotous litigation that vv. 19-24 narrate; instead, the substance of her owners's accusations is shifting. This incident will soon become a dispute over the ethnic identities and practices of these Romans living in Philippi.

motivation of the accusers. What is spoken is deeply engaged in ethnic discourse, not an economic dispute.

⁷¹ A comparison to the Gerasene demoniac is once again instructive. Luke 8:38-39 records that the now healed Gerasene—though remaining unnamed—comes to Jesus, asking to follow his footsteps. Jesus, however, instructs him to return to his home and continue proclaiming what had been done for him. No such narrative encore is made available to this mantic girl.

⁷² Gaventa, *Acts*, 238 argues, "If the narrative treats her like a prop, that is no different from others who are healed in Luke-Acts . . . The story is not *about* her any more than it is *about* Paul; instead it concerns the power of the 'name of Jesus Christ' to expel this spirit of divination." Cf. Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 260-62 and Spencer, *Journeying*, 176.

⁷³ Cf. Haenchen, *Acts*, 499-500; he writes, "They do not accuse them of driving out a spirit—such an accusation would not hold up in any court—but they had spread forbidden Jewish propaganda among them, the Romans! The crowd takes sides against the foreigners . . ." He later restates the underlying motivation as "the wounded egoism of the deprived owners" (502). See also Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:216 and Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany*, 258-60.

The charges leveled against Paul and his companions⁷⁴ in vv. 20-21 are oddly paradoxical; though straightforward, they are incompatible with the originating event.⁷⁵ Luke writes, καὶ προσαγαγόντες αὐτοὺς τοῖς στρατηγοῖς εἶπαν· οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἐκταράσσουσιν ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν, Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες, καὶ καταγγέλλουσιν ἔθνη ἃ οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἡμῖν παραδέχεσθαι οὐδὲ ποιεῖν Ῥωμαίοις οὕσιν. There is no mention of the mantic girl, their pecuniary motives, or any religious concerns.⁷⁶ Instead, the indictments of Paul and his companions are built upon a strict ethnic binary. Paul's advocacy of a foreign way of life is simply incommensurate with their Roman identity. The accusation digs even deeper than mere proselytizing; the ethnic identity of Paul and his companions itself (Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες) is deemed criminal.⁷⁷ There is a causal

⁷⁴ Peterson, *Acts*, 465 posits that only Paul and Silas were seized “perhaps because they were more clearly Jewish than their companions.” What exactly would betray their ethnicity Peterson does not specify. As I detail in ch. 3, Cohen, *Beginnings*, 25-68 convincingly demonstrates that there is no evidence that Jews in antiquity were identifiable by means of physical differences, unique dress, or other individual visual cues. To me, this offhand speculation about the identification of ethnic individuals in antiquity belies that too little critical attention is paid to the construction of ethnic identity in some scholarship.

⁷⁵ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 587 labels the appeal to their Judaism a “pretext.” Barrett, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:253 argues, “Loss of profit is treated by Luke as the real cause of the action taken by the girl's owners; the charge they bring in v. 21 is therefore a falsehood, and Luke intends that it should be seen as such.” Gaventa, *Acts*, 239 notes, “Readers search in vain for some connection between these charges and the lines that precede them. The owners report nothing of the real source of their outrage, but instead take one true statement (Paul and Silas are Jews) and weave it into a dangerous charge: Paul and Silas are outsiders who agitate against ‘real’ Romans.” See also Frederick E. Brenk, “The Exorcism at Philippi in Acts 16.11-40: Divine Possession or Diabolic Inspiration?,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 13 (2000): 4 and Craig S. de Vos, “Finding a Charge that Fits: The Accusation against Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 19.19-21),” *JSNT* 74 (1999): 51-52. This view extends into the patristic period as Chrysostom argues in *Catena on the Acts of the Apostles* 16.20-21, “You say, ‘They are advocating customs that are not lawful for us to adopt’; see how they do not even listen to the demon but are influenced by greed.” See Frances Martin, ed., *Acts* (vol. 5 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament*; ed. Thomas C. Oden; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 204. Finally, Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 12-13 observes, “The slavegirl's owners did not charge Paul with his *actual deed*—driving out the spirit of divination—as exorcism was not legal,” though presumably the loss of her use in a profitable scheme.

⁷⁶ Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 462: “The charge ignores the economic reason for their opposition, focussing on religious and socio-political issues.” I concur with the first clause of this sentence but dispute the second; religion here takes a back seat to ethnic disputes.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Acts*, 295: “The translation reverses the order of the clauses in order to suggest the causal rather [than] concessive character of the circumstantial participle, *Ioudaioi hyparchontes* But the charge is scarcely an afterthought; it is an appeal to the xenophobia of a Roman Colony.” See also Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 1:191. Contra Daniel R. Schwartz, “The Accusation and the Accusers at Philippi (Acts 16,

connection between the strife precipitated by Paul and the ethnic identity of his cohort; similarly, there is a causal connection between the customs (ἔθη, v. 21) of the Philippian populace and their sense of Roman ethnic identity.⁷⁸

The close link between a people's ἔθη and their ethnic identities is evident elsewhere in Luke-Acts.⁷⁹ In the Third Gospel, the three uses of ἔθος are all closely

20-21),” *Bib* 65 (1984): 357-63 who argues that the accusation of the Philippian merchants does not indict Paul and Silas for being Jews but despite their being Jews. Cf. also Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:31 who oddly implicates local Jews in the imprisonment of Paul and Silas (“The same story was repeated with variations in Macedonia at Philippi, where the Jews persuaded the magistrates to imprison the missionaries . . .”), going on to argue, “Luke, therefore, consistently portrayed the Jews as a section of the population which was readily distinguishable from the pagan majority; their social and religious organization was based on local synagogues; they were sufficiently respectable and respected in their cities to be able to influence decisions by local pagan magistrates; and they were tolerated, if with some exasperation, by Roman governors; above all, after initial toleration of Paul as one of their own kind, they proved implacably hostile to his Christian teaching.” Though such a pattern may hold in a number of scenes in Acts, the scene at Philippi violates nearly all of them.

First, whether there is a “Jewish community” in Philippi is not entirely clear. While the προσευχή may have been a formal or informal gathering space for Jews, Luke does not explicitly detail the religious and/or ethnic identities of those gathered there. To be sure, the argument of Levine, *Synagogue*, 127-34 persuasively demonstrates that προσευχή was used to label synagogues in the Diaspora. Whether this holds in this narrative is not entirely clear to me, especially since Luke elsewhere and consistently refers to Jewish places of worship as a συναγωγή (Luke 4:15–16, 20, 28, 33, 38, 44; 6:6; 7:5; 8:41; 11:43; 12:11; 13:10; 20:46; 21:12; Acts 6:9; 9:2, 20; 13:5, 14, 43; 14:1; 15:21; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 7, 19, 26; 19:8; 22:19; 24:12; 26:11). More important, however, is that Luke’s description of the προσευχή does not point to a particularly influential institution in Philippi. After all, the προσευχή is found outside the city walls and does not receive the appellation of συναγωγή, an institution which in other places in Acts does seem to hold some local power.

Second then, there is no local, institutionalized, and powerful “synagogue” from which Jewish “social and religious organization” is based.

Finally, there is little evidence in the Philippian episode that “Jews” held much influence or were tolerated by local leaders. Though readily distinguishable by the Philippian merchants, Paul and Silas’ Jewishness proves wholly deleterious. If anything, Jewish identity in this passage was an unambiguous insinuation of foreignness. The contrast between the ethnocentric accusations of the merchants and Paul’s belated defense that he is actually Roman is that much more striking when we consider the relative absence of powerful, visible, and explicitly Jewish institutions and peoples in Philippi beyond Paul and Silas. Again, from the description of this city’s status and its political leaders to Paul’s acquitting claim, the distinguishing mark of Philippi is its Roman character.

⁷⁸ Curiously, D reads τὰ ἔθνη instead of ἔθη along with 2412, a twelfth-century miniscule manuscript. See Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, 285. To be sure, such a change could easily be credited to a simple misreading of two similar words; a corrector later returned to the text to its best attestation. Cf. D in Acts 21:21 wherein D* reads ἔθνη in 21a and τοῖς ἔθνεσιν in 21b; in this case, the first citation agrees with the text of NA27 but not the second. D^c then reads τὰ ἔθη and τοῖς ἔθεσιν respectively; in this case, the second citation agrees with the text of NA27 but not the first. What can we conclude from these examples of the correcting of D which seem to grapple over these two terms? Initially, it is clear that the eye easily mistakes these two terms, but I would also argue for the possibility that the confusion of these two terms may also reach the lexical level. So closely aligned are ἔθνη and ἔθη—the latter being the customs, habits, and practices that help define the former—that some scribes may have taken to switching these terms for the sake of clarity.

linked with Jewish religious practice. The priest Zechariah is chosen from among his comrades to perform certain rites in the temple by lot as was customary (Luke 1:9). Likewise, Jesus's family takes him to the temple as an infant according to Jewish tradition (2:27)⁸⁰ and travels to Jerusalem for Passover, as was their regular practice (2:42). Later, Jesus retreats to the Mount of Olives in his regular practice of solitary prayer (22:39). In the Third Gospel, at least, ἔθη are those regular religious practices that distinguish Jewish devotion.⁸¹

In Acts, however, ἔθος takes on a wider meaning in a more expansive cultural setting.⁸² In five cases, ἔθη are those ethnic distinctives that set Ἰουδαῖοι apart from other peoples.⁸³ These are not simply the regular religious practices of individuals narrated in the Gospel, but vital defining features of a people which in Acts some of the early church's opponents perceive to be under threat. In a final instance (25:16), Festus introduces Paul's case to King Agrippa, pointing to the ἔθος Ῥωμαίοις as an explanation for why he did not punish Paul as the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem had demanded. To be sure, this ἔθος Ῥωμαίοις refers to a particular set of legal values.⁸⁴ There is, however, a fuller implication of this phrase that is also evident in this chapter's focal

⁷⁹ Of the twelve occurrences of ἔθος in the NT, ten of them occur in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:9; 2:42; 22:39; John 19:40; Acts 6:14; 15:1; 16:21; 21:21; 25:16; 26:3; 28:17; Heb 10:25).

⁸⁰ Here, Luke uses the related verb ἐθίζω.

⁸¹ Cf. John 19:40 where Jesus is said to have been buried καθὼς ἔθος ἐστὶν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἐνταφιάζειν. Cf. also Heb 10:25 where ἔθος describes Christian religious practice.

⁸² Cf. the use of Ἰουδαῖος in Luke versus Acts as discussed in ch. 3. There too the expansion of the narrative into the wider Mediterranean world requires a shift in the referent of terminology associated with ethnic terminology. Cf. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 424 who argues that τὰ ἔθη "was mit dem Gesetz des Mose zusammenhängt." This may be true in the narrower geographical and cultural settings of the Gospel according to Luke but not as accurate in the narrative of Acts.

⁸³ τὰ ἔθη ἃ παρέδωκεν ἡμῖν Μωϋσῆς in Acts 6:14; τῷ ἔθει τῷ Μωϋσέως in 15:1; simply τοῖς ἔθεσιν in 21:21 where Μωϋσέως earlier in the verse is a metonymy for the whole of Jewish religious and ethnic practice; Ἰουδαίους ἐθῶν τε καὶ ζητημάτων in Acts 26:3; and τοῖς ἔθεσιν τοῖς πατράσι in 28:17. Here, I would also add Peter's claim in 10:28 that it was ἀθέμιτον for Jews to dine with Gentiles. See Johnson, *Acts*, 295. Cf. 1 Pet 4:3, which uses ἀθέμιτος in a catena of negative attributes of Gentiles.

⁸⁴ H. Balz, Ῥωμαῖος, *EDNT*, 3:216 notes, "The phrase ἔθος Ῥωμαίοις (25:16) refers to legal right recognized by the Romans giving every accused person the opportunity to defend himself."

verses. In 25:16, as in 16:20-21, there is a contrast established between Roman and Jew; the ἔθος Ῥωμαίοις requires a certain type of behavior—in this case, a certain kind of justice in contrast to the demands of the Jerusalem leadership. Here too an ethnic distinction is established. Thus, the ethnic dimensions of a people’s various ἔθη are more sharply evident in Acts as the narrative moves into a world marked by ethnic diversity and thus ethnic perils.⁸⁵

Beyond the trend in Acts that ἔθη are those distinctive features of an ethnic group, that the ἔθη which Paul and Silas are accused of broaching are ethnic at their base is made even clearer in the explicit contrast their Philippian accusers propound. In contrasting “those Ἰουδαῖοι” and “we Ῥωμαῖοι,” Paul’s persecutors are comparing like to like, ethnic identity to ethnic identity. The comparison developed is not primarily cultic; that is, the question at the forefront of the Philippian merchants’s accusations is not that these Ἰουδαῖοι were trying to convince us to convert to their faith, but that these foreign interlopers are asking us to betray those distinctive features of a Roman life. As I noted above, the disappearance of the mantic girl from the scene suggests that the issue of divination and other cultic practices recedes in the accusation in favor of an ethnic argument. Furthermore, as I will detail below, when Paul claims that he and Silas are indeed Ῥωμαῖοι, he too is making an ethnic claim that contradicts the underlying charge drawn up against them.

Further backing for the ethnic register of the accusation against Paul and Silas is how the Philippian populace expresses its ethnic identity. The Philippians never refer to themselves as “Philippians” but only as “Romans” when they accuse Paul and his

⁸⁵ Cf. my discussion of Luke’s different use of Ἰουδαῖος between the Gospel and Acts in ch. 3. See also Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany*, 229-30.

companions of threatening the social ethnic fabric of their colony (v. 21).⁸⁶ This empire-level identification contrasts markedly with the local identifications otherwise common in Mediterranean cities in Acts. Compare, for example, the riot in Ephesus sparked when a merchant's economic interests in the Artemis cult are threatened. Throughout this narrative, the crowd screams, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" (μεγάλη ἡ Ἄρτεμις Ἐφεσίων),⁸⁷ and ὁ γραμματεὺς calls the crowd's attention in v. 35 by saying, "Ephesians!⁸⁸ Who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple guardian of the great Artemis who fell from heaven?" The civic pride of Ephesus is thus inextricably wrapped up with its inhabitants's ethnic identity as Ephesians and their religious devotion to Artemis. Unlike the response of Philippi's residents in Acts 16, Roman identity is absent from this uproar. Luke also frequently names local populations (the table of nations in Acts 2 is a primary example), or pairs terms such as Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλληνας, but he never includes Ῥωμαῖος in these pairings.⁸⁹ Thus, as Tannehill notes about the Philippian scene,

The accusation against Paul and Silas is designed to appeal to people who are conscious of their Roman heritage and its privileges (16:20-21). The accusers speak of themselves and their audiences as Romans, not Philippians or Macedonians, and contrast Jewish "customs" with Roman customs, a source of Roman solidarity and pride.⁹⁰

Even more, "only in Philippi were Paul and his co-workers specifically charged with advocating behavior inimical to the Roman way of life."⁹¹

⁸⁶ Cf. the three times an appeal to "Philippians" (Φιλίππων) is made in Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 2:815-16.

⁸⁷ See 19:28, 34.

⁸⁸ The text reads, ἄνδρες Ἐφεσίοι. In striving toward gender inclusivity, the NRSV has unfortunately translated, "Citizens of Ephesus," dulling the ethnic appeal of this speech and, more importantly, once again adding the term "citizen" when it is nowhere to be found.

⁸⁹ See ch. 3.

⁹⁰ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:201. See also idem, *The Shape of Luke's Story*, 222-23.

⁹¹ Hellerman, "Philippi, Part 2," 421. He also adds, "Only Philippi, moreover, is identified as a κολωνία, in spite of the fact that Luke mentioned seven or eight other Roman colonies in the course of

This consistent self-identification as “Romans” only enhances the contrast that Paul will precipitate when he will claim that both he and Silas are Ῥωμαῖοι. If the Philippians had identified themselves as “Philippians,” Paul’s defense would have been an appeal to the protections of the empire far more directly. That is, the argument would have been, though these Philippians have claimed we are violating their local, ethnic mores and thus disrupting their city, we are well within our rights as Romans to advocate our own faith; in this case, a claim to the protections of Roman citizenship would have made good narrative sense. However, the situation narrated in these verses presents a different ethnic discourse. The Philippians self-identify, not according to the local space they inhabit, but according to the imperial space within which their city is a colonial satellite. Thus, when Paul will soon claim to be Ῥωμαῖος, he undercuts these vicious accusations, not by denying their indictments as much as by destabilizing the ethnic discourse posited by their Philippian accusers.

The presuppositions of this ethnic discourse are imbedded in the Philippians’s allegations. A key to reading this ethnic discourse and this text is how one interprets Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες in v. 20. Pervo links the phrase with the clause that follows: “They are Jews and commend practices . . .”⁹² Barrett argues that the phrase details who exactly οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι are, despite some syntactical distance between these two phrases.⁹³ Schwartz disputes both, arguing that Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες “must be

his narrative, which he did not designate as colonies. Luke was clearly sensitive to the ‘Romanness’ of Philippi” (421-22).

⁹² Pervo, *Acts*, 397.

⁹³ Barrett, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:774, 789. He explains, “Paul and Silas are described as Jews (and therefore men who might be expected to cause trouble?), but the substance of the charge is given in the next verse” (789). My reading removes the question mark from Barrett’s parenthetical aside, for the accusation explicitly links the ethnic identity of the accused with the tumult they have purportedly caused. In another commentary, *idem*, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary*, 254 correctly notes the contrast between the two participial phrases and the colonial situation, which might have precipitated a

concessive: the accusers claim that while Paul and Silas are Jews, that which they are teaching is forbidden to Romans—in contrast to Jewish practices.”⁹⁴ However, I argue that the best translation of v. 20b reads something like this: “These men are causing an uproar in the city because they are Jews.”⁹⁵ Thus, I read Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες as a causal participle attached to the previous clause, particularly the verb ἐκταράσσουσιν. Proof that such reading coheres with the text is found in the next verse where a similar, parallel structure occurs: “And they are advocating customs which we are neither able to adopt nor to observe because we are Romans” (καὶ καταγγέλλουσιν ἔθνη ἃ οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἡμῖν παραδέχασθαι οὐδὲ ποιεῖν Ῥωμαίοις οὖσιν).⁹⁶ Verses 20 and 21 provide well-paired, contrasting accusations between the ethnic interlopers and the “natives” of Philippi. As Richard notes, “Aquí aparece una clara contradicción entre romanos y judíos. Los filipenses, como colonia romana, están muy orgullosos de su ciudadanía romana y desprecian a Pablo y Silas como judíos.”⁹⁷ To be sure, this is a base charge, energized by the worst kind of prejudicial and racist logic. The sharpness of this invective, however, tends to be dulled when the contrast between “those Ἰουδαῖοι” and “we Ῥωμαίοι” is lost. Talbert has noted that “the charges leveled against the missionaries are three”:

First, they are Jews This is both an appeal to nationalism and to racial prejudice. Second, they are charged with disturbing the peace

heightened sensitivity to foreign influences upon the Philippian way of life. Where I diverge is in the singular focus on citizenship and religion as the operative markers of identity in play in this narrative.

⁹⁴ Schwartz, “The Accusation,” 357-63.

⁹⁵ Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες is literally “being Jews.” See Johnson, *Acts*, 295 and Pablo Richard, “Hechos de los Apóstoles,” in *Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano: Nuevo Testamento* (ed. Armando J. Levoratti, Elsa Tamez, and Pablo Richard; Navarra, Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2007), 731.

⁹⁶ Ῥωμαίοις οὖσιν is literally “being Romans.” I am unconvinced that the shift in the verb from ὑπάρχοντες to οὖσιν is significant beyond stylistic variation. See the text critical variants in Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, 285 and Leith, *Oxyrhynchus*, 27 where we see some evidence of scribal harmonization so that both participles are formed from ὑπάρχω.

⁹⁷ Richard, “Hechos,” 731.

This is an appeal to the Roman obsession with public order. Third, they are charged with advocating customs that are not lawful for Romans to adopt or practice This is an appeal both to traditionalism and patriotism.⁹⁸

I would suggest, however, that these three accusations boil down to a simple binary between “us” and “them”; that is, I combine Talbert’s first two charges arguing for interdependence between the labeling of Paul and Silas as Ἰουδαῖοι and the charge that they are miring the city in these ethnic travails. In the end, the accusations leveled are variations on a single theme: these Jews represent a threat to our ethnic selves.

Next, I begin to ask how the claims of Paul and Silas to be Romans subvert even further the delicate balance of ethnic identities in this colonial outpost.

Ethnic Claims and Paul’s Defense (Acts 16:35-40)

I begin this section with a simple observation: in every case in Acts when Paul defends himself before imperial authorities and he appeals to his identification as a legitimate member of the Roman empire, Luke only uses the term Ῥωμαῖος without appending a specifying term like πολίτης.⁹⁹ Yet many translations here render Ῥωμαῖος as “Roman citizen” though in the other cases when Luke uses Ῥωμαῖος,¹⁰⁰ translations never render the term as “Roman citizen.” That Ῥωμαῖος could refer specifically to a Roman citizen was argued at least as early as Sherwin-White’s work.¹⁰¹

His classic studies of Roman law, citizenship, and the New Testament’s allusions to both

⁹⁸ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 143-44.

⁹⁹ Acts 16:37-38, 22:25-27, 29; and 23:27. This observation emerged in a discussion I had with Professor Shaye Cohen at Emory University; my thanks go to him for a fruitful and influential conversation at the inception of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁰ Acts 2:10, 16:21, 25:16, and 28:17.

¹⁰¹ There is a textual variant on Acts 22:26 in Nestle-Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Latine* that have Paul explicitly claim Roman citizenship (W S V read *civis Romanus*). This same variant is also present in Augustine, *Serm. Dom.*, 1.19.58. However, no such variants are evident at Acts 16:37 in the Latin text. The changes in 22:26 probably anticipate the mention of the tribune’s acquired citizenship.

are required reading for anyone interpreting Paul's claim to Romanness in Acts.¹⁰² In one of his monographs, he argues that for Luke the terms “ἄνθρωπος Ῥωμαῖος or Ῥωμαῖος alone means *civis Romanus* in the technical sense of the early Empire.”¹⁰³ Similarly, BDAG indicates that the term Ῥωμαῖος can mean both Roman or Roman citizen, citing as evidence the interchangeability of πολῖται Ῥωμαίων and Ῥωμαῖοι in Appian's *Bell. civ.* 2.4.26.¹⁰⁴ Most modern English translations seem to concur with this conclusion translating Ῥωμαῖος as “Roman citizen” consistently throughout Acts when referring to Paul's claims to be a Ῥωμαῖος; the exceptions seem to be earlier translations (e.g. KJV, Wycliffe), those relying on earlier efforts (e.g. NKJV), or those opting for a more “literal” translation (e.g. ASV, NASB), all of which translate Ῥωμαῖος simply as “Roman” along with the Reina Valeria in Spanish and the Louis Segond in French.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the commentary literature noted above takes for granted that Ῥωμαῖος is best rendered as a reference to Paul's citizenship, whether it was historical or not.

My argument in this chapter is not primarily lexicographical or simply an issue of translation. My aim is not necessarily to convince scholarship to retranslate Ῥωμαῖος throughout Acts. Neither is my argument that the term Ῥωμαῖος carries no connotation of Roman citizenship. Instead, I contend that the relatively unquestioned assumption that Paul's claim to be Ῥωμαῖος is a claim to citizenship mutes the ethnic

¹⁰² See Sherwin-White, *Roman Citizenship*; idem, *Roman Society*; and idem, “Roman Citizenship,” *ANRW* I.2:23-58.

¹⁰³ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 180. At the same time, I question why it is only in reference to Paul that ἄνθρωπος Ῥωμαῖος or Ῥωμαῖος is rendered and interpreted as “Roman citizen.”

¹⁰⁴ BDAG, s.v. Ῥωμαῖος; cf. Balz, Ῥωμαῖος, *EDNT*, 3:216 and Franciscus Zorell, ed., *Lexicon Graecum Novi Testamenti* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1999), s.v. Ῥωμαῖος. But cf. LSJ, s.v. Ῥωμαῖος, which does not list explicitly the translation of Ῥωμαῖος as Roman citizen, listing Ῥωμαϊότης as Roman citizenship.

¹⁰⁵ Modern translations opting for “Roman citizen” are numerous and include the RSV, NRSV, NIV, and TNIV.

discourse actively at play in this chapter. The sharp contrast between Paul's Philippian accusers and his defense is muffled when attention is not paid to the narrative's underlying ethnic discourse. Paul's claim to be a Ῥωμαῖος may—and indeed does—include a claim to the rights of citizenship but narrowing the scope of his claim results in exegetical imprecision.

The ethnic discourse of Acts 16 initially requires some conceptual clarification. A limited understanding of ethnicity accounts for the virtually unanimous translation of Ῥωμαῖος as “Roman citizen” when referring to Paul. In order to free Luke's ethnic discourse in Acts 16 from this scholarly aphasia, the tools of postcolonial analysis—particularly the notion of “hybridity”—proves an indispensable help.

Postcolonial Discourse of Hybridity in Philippi

In recent years, biblical scholars have begun to translate postcolonial theory from the field of literary studies to the exploration of ancient texts.¹⁰⁶ This emerging

¹⁰⁶ The literature in postcolonial approaches in NT is growing. See, for example, broader studies such as Roland Boer, *Last Stop before Antarctica: The Bible and Postcolonialism in Australia* (2d ed.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008); Musa W. Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000); Stephen D. Moore and Fernando Segovia, eds., *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Fernando Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000); idem, “Notes toward Refining the Postcolonial Optic,” *JSNT* 75 (1999): 103-14; idem, “Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead,” *JSNT* 30 (2008): 489-502; Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah, eds., *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); R.S. Sugirtharajah, “A Brief Memorandum on Postcolonialism and Biblical Studies,” *JSNT* 73 (1999): 3-5; and idem, ed., *The Postcolonial Bible* (BP 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). See also the analysis and critique of a postcolonial perspective in Collins, *Bible after Babel*, 53-74 as well as the critique of Collins and a wider analysis of the lack of infiltration of “Theory” (including postcolonial perspectives) in biblical studies in Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, “Biblical Studies ‘after’ Theory: Onwards Towards the Past, Part One: After ‘after Theory,’ and Other Apocalyptic Conceits,” *BibInt* 18 (2010): 1-27. Note especially Muñoz-Larrondo, “Living in Two Worlds,” who applies postcolonial theory to the reading of Acts.

For specific applications of postcolonial theory to other texts of the Bible, see, among many others, Brad R. Braxton, “Paul and Racial Reconciliation: A Postcolonial Approach to 2 Corinthians 3:12-18,” in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay* (ed. Patrick Gray and Gail R. O’Day; NovTSup 129; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 411-28; L. Ann Jervis, “Reading Romans 7 in Conversation with Post-Colonial Theory: Paul’s Struggle towards a Christian Identity of Hybridity,”

field remains in a state of flux as debates over the various definitions of the term “postcolonial” continue. How we define the field of postcolonial studies remains contested.¹⁰⁷ As a working definition, I concur with Sugirtharajah that “postcolonialism is roughly defined as scrutinizing and exposing colonial domination and power as these are embodied in biblical texts and in interpretations, and as searching for alternative hermeneutics while thus overturning and dismantling colonial perspectives.”¹⁰⁸ A year

Theoforum 35 (2004): 173-93; C.I. David Joy, *Mark and its Subalterns: A Hermeneutical Paradigm for a Postcolonial Context* (London: Equinox, 2008); Hans Leander, “With Homi Bhabha at the Jerusalem City Gates: A Postcolonial Reading of the ‘Triumphant’ Entry (Mark 11.1-11),” *JSNT* 32 (2010): 309-35; Marchal, “Mimicry and Colonial Differences,” 101-27; Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (BMW 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006); John W. Marshall, “Hybridity and Reading Romans 13,” *JSNT* 31 (2008): 157-78; Jean-François Racine, “L’hybridité des personnages: Une stratégie d’inclusion des gentils dans les Actes des Apôtres,” in *Analyse narrative et bible: Deuxième Colloque international du RRENAB, Louvain-la-Neuve, avril 2004* (ed. Camille Focant and André Wénin; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium 191; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 559-66; Simon Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (LNTS 340; London: T&T Clark, 2007); Ulrike Sals, “The Hybrid Story of Balaam (Numbers 22-24): Theology for the Diaspora in the Torah,” *BibInt* 16 (2008): 315-35; and Wan, “Does Diaspora Identity Imply Some Sort of Universality?,” in *Interpreting Beyond Borders* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 107-31.

¹⁰⁷ Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse*, 4 notes, “The description ‘a highly contested field’ has become something of a cliché in literary studies, but it perfectly describes postcolonial studies nonetheless.” See also Segovia, “Notes,” 104 who cautions, “[‘Postcolonial’] is a designation that I have commonly used but that I also find increasingly problematic.”

For studies of the history and background of postcolonial studies, see first the foundational works of Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman; New York: Columbia, 1994), 66-111. See also the critique and application of “subaltern studies” in Latin American history in Florencia E. Mallon, “The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History,” *AHR* 99 (1994): 1491-515 who argues in favor of the complex even seemingly contradictory notions that subaltern studies can encompass simultaneously. Subaltern studies is a field often complementary and overlapping with postcolonial studies but also capable of critique; for the latter, see Gyan Prakash, “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,” *AHR* 99 (1994): 1475-490. Writing about the inherent hybridity of subaltern studies, Mallon, “Subaltern Studies,” 1511 argues, “The question of complicity, hierarchy, and surveillance within subaltern communities and subaltern cultures is a thorny one indeed, one that cries out for nuanced and sympathetic treatment. On one side, raising this question makes clear that no subaltern identity can be pure and transparent; most subalterns are both dominated and dominating subjects, depending on the circumstances or locations in which we encounter them On the other side, complicity or hierarchy does not make impossible, in any larger sense, the occasional, partial, contingent achievement of a measure of unity, collaboration even solidarity.” These irresolvable tensions permeate Acts 16.

For an analysis of postcolonial studies in biblical studies, see the collection of essays debating postcolonial studies and their meaning in biblical studies in Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Postcolonial Bible*.

¹⁰⁸ Sugirtharajah, “Biblical Studies after the Empire,” 16. John M.G. Barclay, “The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome,” in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James Rives; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 316-17 describes postcolonialism’s

later, Sugirtharajah helpfully details the agenda of postcolonial criticism within biblical studies.¹⁰⁹ First, “it will reconsider the biblical narratives as emanating from colonial contacts.”¹¹⁰ Second, having considered the wide influence of colonial ideologies in the ancient cultures that produced the biblical texts, postcolonial critics engage in fresh readings of these texts with a special attention to “liberation struggles of the past and present.”¹¹¹ The critic pays attention to muffled voices within the text that indict the oppressions of empire and give special credence to the complicated calculus of identity formation in “postcolonial circumstances.”¹¹² Finally, postcolonialism in biblical studies scrutinizes past and present interpretations of the biblical texts querying how—not whether—colonial ideologies have shaped the guild and its conclusions. Of particular concern is the implicit but pervasive “notion of a mystical, irrational, stagnant Orient pitched against a progressive, rational and secular Occident.”¹¹³ Clearly, therefore, postcolonial criticism is not a method but a hermeneutical perspective, an interpretive agenda, a “critical sensibility,”¹¹⁴ or “an angle of vision.”¹¹⁵

The interpretive agendas of postcolonial criticism can provide a valuable insight into the contestation of ethnic identities in the closing verses of Acts 16. Speaking

“subject matter” as “the power-relations between dominant (or colonizing) cultures and the subordinated cultures which were once, or still are, under their political or economic power. Broadly speaking, post-colonial theory seeks to analyse the power of the dominant in the sphere of ideology, that is the ‘hegemony’ with which superior nations or classes control not only the economic and material lives of their subordinates, but also the terms in which they are described and defined, even the terms in which they think and speak.”

¹⁰⁹ Sugirtharajah, “Memorandum,” 4.

¹¹⁰ Sugirtharajah, “Memorandum,” 4.

¹¹¹ Sugirtharajah, “Memorandum,” 5.

¹¹² Sugirtharajah, “Memorandum,” 5 writes, “[I]t will interact with and reflect on postcolonial circumstances such as hybridity, fragmentation, deterritorialization, and/or hyphenated, double or multiple identities.”

¹¹³ Sugirtharajah, “Memorandum,” 5.

¹¹⁴ Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse*, 7 who notes the parallel with feminist criticism, which is also a line of inquiry that adapts a number of methods under a particular ideological agenda.

¹¹⁵ Collins, *Bible after Babel*, 69.

more broadly of the entire narrative of Acts, Virginia Burrus has made a compelling case for the utility of postcolonial criticism in the study of a book so saturated with the presence of the Roman Empire:

Fanning out from the Palestinian matrix of Jesus' movement to span the eastern Mediterranean and finally extending as far as Rome itself, the text maps a terrain traversed by the passages of travelers and marked by meetings between social "others" and ethnic "strangers." On such grounds alone, Luke's work would seem to provide rich opportunities for a thoroughgoing postcolonial analysis. If few have yet taken up the challenge of such an analysis, it is not only because of the relative newness of this theoretical-hermeneutical approach within biblical studies but also (one suspects) because of the haunting ambiguity of Luke's political stance. Symptomatically, Luke-Acts has been interpreted with passionate persuasiveness both as radically subversive and as skillfully accommodationist in relation to the forces of imperialism and colonialism.¹¹⁶

More specifically, the postcolonial notion of "hybridity" is a valuable exegetical lens in these verses. Fortunately, other scholars have already undertaken the task of applying the concept of "hybridity" to the interpretation of biblical texts.¹¹⁷

In a recent article focusing on a reading of Numbers, Ulrike Sals adeptly conjoins the postcolonial notion of hybridity with biblical exegesis. First, she details how postcolonial theory can aid the efforts of exegetes:

In my opinion, postcolonial theory is suitable for biblical exegesis because it has developed a very useful idea of "culture" which puts an end to the romantic dreams of clearly defined cultural entities and cultural purity that European historic thinking has endowed us with. It develops a notion of hybridity as an intrinsic feature of language and discourse, as well as in other cultural forms such as religion, art, and economics.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Burrus, "Luke and Acts," 133. See also V. George Shillington, *An Introduction to the Study of Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 86-101.

¹¹⁷ For examples of the application of "hybridity" to a non-biblical author, see Ronald Charles, "Hybridity and the *Letter of Aristeas*," *JSJ* 40 (2009): 242-59 and Barclay, "Empire Writes Back," 315-32. See also Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

¹¹⁸ Sals, "Hybrid Story of Balaam," 318.

Sals also notes the ability of postcolonial theory to integrate “the tension between metropolitan centres and the (ex/neo)colonial periphery.”¹¹⁹ Although she makes this case for the Hebrew Bible, the same is strikingly true of Acts 16: Philippi represents the metropolitan center as an extension of Roman power and its tenuous position at a colonial periphery, and Luke portrays Paul as both a peripheral Ἰουδαῖος and a metropolitan Ῥωμαῖος. Within this broad category of postcolonial thought, Sals orients her efforts in this article—as I will in this chapter—around the particular concept of hybridity.

According to Sals, Bhabha imagines hybridity as the meeting of communication and power relations, wherein the necessary gap between hegemony (especially in “the power to classify and define in order to dominate”¹²⁰) and the colonized interact. While hegemony wields its power “to define and classify,” the subaltern must wield the rules, definitions, and classifications of the hegemony to resist it as “weapons of the weak.”¹²¹ Inherent to the divide between center and periphery, “hegemon and subaltern” is a tension between the two that shapes both equally:

Culture in itself is hybrid because there is no culture without power and hegemony. When the subaltern speaks there is a necessary ambivalence because, only being able to speak in the hegemon’s language, subaltern speech confirms the hegemony. Yet at the same time there is a small break in his or her utterance that puts the hegemony in question. So hybridity can also be circumscribed as the ambivalence in every subaltern’s speech towards authority. It both affirms and questions authority at the same time.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Sals, “Hybrid Story of Balaam,” 318.

¹²⁰ Sals, “Hybrid Story of Balaam,” 320.

¹²¹ See James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). For application of Scott’s work to biblical studies, see Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul* (SemeiaSt 48; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004) and Brigitte Kahl, “Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript,” in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 137-56.

¹²² Sals, “Hybrid Story of Balaam,” 321.

It is this ambivalence which scholarship on Paul's Romanness misses.

Even closer to our text is John Marshall's recent reading of Romans 13 with the lens of postcolonial hybridity.¹²³ Noting the recent impasse between a Paul who has nothing to say about the Empire except about some of its religious dimensions (N.T. Wright) and a Paul who critiques and resists the Empire (Richard Horsley), Marshall argues that both sides actually commit the same error by inoculating Paul against any ideological infection from the Empire he is either protesting or ignoring in favor of a supposedly higher religious reality.¹²⁴ Marshall attributes such confusion to an inattention to theories concerned with colonialism and points to specific and parallel exegetical quandaries in Romans 13.¹²⁵ These verses make difficult a reading of Paul as a resister of imperial power without a strained exegetical justification for minimizing Paul's accommodation to the empire in Rom 13. Marshall explains,

Romans 13.1-7 is the apostle's only direct discussion of resistance to the Roman Empire, and he is clearly opposed to such resistance. The conundrum drawn by the continuum between these two positions—resistance and affiliation—is what the concept of hybridity can illuminate without the need to falsify Paul's own words in the course of a historical-critical attempt to understand him.¹²⁶

How then does Marshall conceive of hybridity? Leaning heavily on Bhabha's discourse analysis, Marshall details,

Under Bhabha's development, the concept of hybridity makes it possible to see the several elements of the colonial situation that are lost under the simple binary oppositions of dominant/subaltern, collaboration/resistance, settler/native. Though these binarisms may play a crucial role in the organization of and reaction to colonial power,

¹²³ Marshall, "Hybridity," 157-78.

¹²⁴ Marshall, "Hybridity," 158-60.

¹²⁵ Marshall, "Hybridity," 160 says, "Turning to scholarly readings of Rom. 13.1-7, the range of interpretive propositions and the desperation of pleadings are embarrassingly large."

¹²⁶ Marshall, "Hybridity," 163.

they are not simply innocent or complete reports of reality, but they too are orderings of the continuum of reality. With the concept of hybridity, Bhabha attempts to create a theoretical space that is not a reproduction of the purity of colonial resistance ideology nor of colonial domination ideology; purity itself is recognized as ideological rather than historical or social.¹²⁷

In this way, Marshall outlines hybridity as an interpretive path between Wright and Horsley: “. . . a disciplined attention to action made of, and in, ambiguity rather than in the purity of inversion is what makes the concept of hybridity so helpful in reading Rom. 13.”¹²⁸ This ambiguity not only permits Paul to provide both theological resistance against and accommodation to the imperial reach of Rome but is actually intrinsic to his identity within a colonial domain: “Paul’s choices in this context are not discrete sets of false and genuine choices, but a continuum of affiliation and resistance that he organizes to suit his purposes.”¹²⁹

Turning to Rom 13, Marshall finds that this passage is not an unmitigated, all-encompassing submission to imperial power but a concession to the realities of the colonized: “. . . as is characteristic of subjugated peoples, Paul’s realm of agency was circumscribed, and the practical choices available to him and to the assemblies he founded were not as wide as their imaginations.”¹³⁰ Paul’s command to submit to contemporary political authorities was neither a sanction of imperial might nor inconsistent with his resistance to the empire elsewhere in his letters. Instead, his admonitions are a “genuine” compromise attuned to both the overarching lordship of Jesus as well as the temporal powers that then held sway over the world.

¹²⁷ Marshall, “Hybridity,” 164.

¹²⁸ Marshall, “Hybridity,” 168.

¹²⁹ Marshall, “Hybridity,” 170.

¹³⁰ Marshall, “Hybridity,” 170.

Particularly helpful to this dissertation, Marshall then illustrates the tensions evident in Paul's thinking about the Empire by pointing to "Paul's putative Roman citizenship."¹³¹ If Paul were the anti-imperialist reconstructed by Horsley, why would he not relativize his citizenship credentials as he does his Jewish *bona fides*? What good is such impressive Roman status to one so opposed to the empire that proffers it? More important, why neglect to mention it even once in the extant letters? Perhaps, Marshall wonders, Paul never mentions his citizenship because it is a Lukan invention, and though he hints that such a conclusion would cause a dramatic reevaluation of Paul's posited anti-imperial stance, he does not provide specifics. Nevertheless, he concludes his essay forcefully,

Paul is both "in and of" that world, working in relation to its centre from its margins, gathering and deploying its resources in the interest of his own programme, whether that means swimming with or against the current of imperial power in any particular moment. Though ambivalence is often a terror to dogmatics, it is the condition of colonial existence and thus Paul's.¹³²

My contention is that Luke is engaged in just such a program marked by ambivalence. Having reached a colonial extension of Roman power in Philippi and having precipitated civic unrest, Luke's Paul treads the fine line of hybridity. Rather than claim Roman citizenship as a legal appendage that does not relate to his central ethnic identity, he engages in a discourse of hybridity that can claim seemingly contradictory ethnic identities in a genuine way.

Thus, there is significant overlap between the definitions of both Marshall and Sals. In this dissertation, hybridity is a concept, a rubric for understanding colonial responses to imperial power. Specifically, hybridity connotes the ambivalent posture

¹³¹ Marshall, "Hybridity," 170.

¹³² Marshall, "Hybridity," 174.

colonized communities may elect, a posture which sanctions the identity imposed by the colonizer while simultaneously undermining this very same identity.¹³³ Though dealing primarily with archaeological studies, Russell provides an excellent summation of the conceptual ground I am hoping to develop in this chapter:

In order to take the advantage of these heuristic tools we need to ask if, from an archaeological perspective, acculturation is the same as accommodation, and does the take up of new materials equate to an accommodating of colonisation? Would these two actions leave identifiably different archaeological signatures? Homi K. Bhabha recognises the problematic nature of the accommodation/acculturation/resistance relationship when he alerts us to the apparent contradiction of accommodation and resistance being virtually indistinguishable: he notes that one of the most effective means of resistance available to the invaded or oppressed is the capacity to subvert or interpret features of the coloniser's culture in unexpected ways. Here Bhabha is referring to the process of bricolage whereby the refuse of one culture is reinterpreted in another, and inculcated with "spirit that is one's own."¹³⁴

In the same way, I am asking how we might interpret the literary "signatures" of accommodation, resistance, and/or hybridity. In the mode of hybridity I propose that resistance and accommodation are false binary choices; between these radical alternatives lies a third way. Turning to Russell again, we can see that she introduces a notion complementary to hybridity, bricolage:

¹³³ Barclay, "Empire Writes Back," 317-18 summarizes, "[H]ybridity' . . . refers not simply to a conflation of syncretism of two cultures, but to the ambivalent forms of 'in-between-ness,' which serve to complicate and even destabilize the two cultures concerned. The hybrid results of this contact not only alter the 'original' native culture but also challenge the solidity of the colonizer's cultural system, since the new product is both like and unlike the dominant culture. . . . The important point is that this potential instability is open to exploitation by the colonized themselves. . . . Here strategies of 'resistant adaptation' can be adopted, in which post-colonial authors neither simply succumb to, nor simply subvert, the colonial culture but negotiate complex paths of self-expression through the adapted medium of the dominant discourse." Or as Charles, "Hybridity and *Aristeas*," 247 notes, "This space-in-between, or this 'interstitial' agency, provides a way to understand the different struggles that come to play in defining authority and subordination, assimilation and resistance in a particular cultural situation."

¹³⁴ Lynette Russell, "Either, or, Neither Nor': Resisting the Production of Gender, Race and Class Dichotomies in the Pre-Colonial Period," in *The Archaeology of Plural and Changing Identities: Beyond Identification* (ed. Eleanor Conlin Casella and Chris Fowler; New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2005), 40.

From an archaeological perspective, bricolage and the problem of the bricoleur demonstrate that to disentangle resistance from accommodation through material culture might well be an impossibility. However we can reconfigure the binaristic models to account for the possibility of creolization. If we turn again to Derrida, perhaps we can consider the possibility that bricolage and its relationship to resistance and accommodation is an instance of the undecidable (and I stress this does not mean indecisive). Bricolage can be either resistance or accommodation at the same time as being neither resistance nor accommodation. Creolization and the emergence of a new creolised culture can be constituted of actions that are both resistive and accommodating. By recognising the undecidable we are forced to revisit our conceptual categories and reflect again on why we are asking the questions we have deemed to require answers.¹³⁵

The notion of hybridity opens a valuable, complex, in-between space that can better comprehend the gradation evident in colonial contexts between resistance and accommodation, between the rejection of one's former identity or an identity imposed by the colonizer.

In the end, the postcolonial notion of hybridity is a significant help in reading texts in which empires and its colonies, the center of power and its margins, as well as the contestations of local and empire-wide identities are a central component of the texture of the narrative. Postcolonial theory is a hermeneutical lens or heuristic device that can help clarify the kind of negotiations that the conditions of empire and colonialism demand. Hybridity is but one of the ways that communities afflicted by powerlessness can define themselves both within and without the overarching power of empire. In the closing verses of Acts 16, hybridity helps clarify the complex assertion of seemingly contradictory ethnic identities by Paul and Silas. Posed against the clear polarity of Ἰουδαῖος and Ῥωμαῖος with which Paul and Silas are assailed, therefore, the claim to be both is a hybrid claim. An alternate type of ethnic reasoning

¹³⁵ Russell, "“Either, or, Neither Nor,”" 41.

between bare accommodation and wholesale resistance, hybridity is a valuable and strategic position for a movement hoping to carve a cultural niche for themselves among the many peoples of antiquity.

A Hybrid Claim: Paul's "Roman" Claim

Paul's defense occurs quite late in the narrative. Only after their public accusation as ethnic rabble rousers, their unjust beatings, their imprisonment, the interjection of a massive earthquake, the conversion of the guard who nearly took his own life, and the guard's hospitality does Paul find space to defend himself and Silas. Only then does Paul debunk the trumped-up charges of some merchants to which he had caused financial damage. His defense was not what the reader might have expected. Instead of challenging the motives and false pretense of his accusers, decrying the avaricious abuse of the mantic girl as a piece of property, or even defending their activities as benign to the Romanness of Philippi, Paul instead undercuts the very premises on which the merchants brought charges against him.

Verse 35 marks the transition to the section that will receive most of my attention. This literary seam distinguishes these verses from the preceding narrative of the deeds of Paul while imprisoned. After a full night of natural disasters and a miraculous conversion,¹³⁶ the local στρατηγοί send their ῥαβδούχους, seemingly unaware—or at least without explicit acknowledgement—of the previous night's events. They come bearing what at first glance seems like good news: "Release those

¹³⁶ The prison escape between the accusations against Paul and Silas and their later release does not receive a great deal of attention in this dissertation. Recent studies have brought vital insight into this scene of prison escape. See Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany*, 219-79. For such scenes later in Acts, see Matthew L. Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21-28* (Academica Biblica 13; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

men” (ἀπόλυσον τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐκείνους). Paul, however, will not go in peace (νῦν οὖν ἐξελθόντες πορεύεσθε ἐν εἰρήνῃ) as the magistrates had hoped. He declares, “They beat us in public and without condemnation even though we are Romans. They jailed us and now they hope to release us in private! Absolutely not! Instead, let them come personally and lead us out themselves.”¹³⁷ Despite the sharp contrast between Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες and Ῥωμαίοις οὖσιν established in vv. 20-21, Paul here declares himself a bona fide Roman who neither poses a threat to Philippi nor ought to be treated as a condemned criminal without the proper legal defenses. With one ethnic declamation, Paul undercuts the indictments brought against him and decries his treatment as an injustice. As Tajra notes, “No better answer could have been given to the plaintiffs’ shouts of Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες than this. Paul’s proclamation of his Roman citizenship completely reversed the situation.”¹³⁸ However, this is precisely where a translation of Ῥωμαίοις in v. 21 as “Romans” and of Ῥωμαίους in v. 37 as “Roman citizens” obstructs the stark contrast and complex claim Paul propounds; a consideration of the ethnic dimensions of Paul’s claim, especially with the rubric of hybridity, better encapsulates the complete reversal Tajra points out.

Four times in the Third Gospel and Acts, Luke makes specific use of the terminology of citizenship (πολίτης in Luke 15:15, 19:14, Acts 21:39; πολίτευμα in Acts 22:28).¹³⁹ In two cases in the Gospel (Luke 15:15—τῶν πολιτῶν τῆς χώρας; 19:14—οἱ πολῖται αὐτοῦ), Jesus speaks of particular citizens of geographical areas in parabolic

¹³⁷ My translation of Acts 16:37.

¹³⁸ Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 28.

¹³⁹ πολιτεύομαι appears in Acts 23:1 where it does not seem to carry the connotation of citizenship but of proper living within a community’s values and behavioral parameters. See BDAG, s.v. πολιτεύομαι. Cf. Phil 1:27.

discourse. Later in the narrative (Acts 21:39), Paul will speak of his citizenship as a native of Tarsus.¹⁴⁰

After Paul's arrest on the temple grounds on the accusation that he had desecrated them by bringing a Greek into its holy space, he refers to citizenship explicitly for the first and last time in Acts. That he was a native of Tarsus is mentioned elsewhere in Acts (Acts 9:11, 30; 11:25; 22:3), but his citizenship status only emerges in a brief exchange with the tribune guarding him in the midst of a rabid crowd. Paul, speaking in Greek, speaks to the tribune; the tribune, shocked to hear his own language, asks, Ἐλληνιστὶ γινώσκεις; οὐκ ἄρα σὺ εἶ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ὁ πρὸ τούτων τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀναστατώσας καὶ ἐξαγαγὼν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον τοὺς τετρακισχιλίους ἄνδρας τῶν σικαρίων (21:38). Having mistaken him for the unnamed rebel Egyptian, the tribune now recognizes this mistaken identity after Paul unexpectedly speaks to him in Greek. With some sense of having been dishonored, Paul deploys his excellent social credentials: ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος μὲν εἰμι Ἰουδαῖος, Ταρσεὺς τῆς Κιλικίας, οὐκ ἀσήμου πόλεως πολίτης (21:39). No one argues that what Paul meant here by ἄνθρωπος Ἰουδαῖος was that he was but a *citizen* of Judea, yet similar language in 16:37 is rendered largely as a claim of citizenship. For the most part, the stress of analysis focuses in this verse on how and why Paul might have attained citizenship in Tarsus.

In 16:37 and 21:39, we are encountering two different kinds of claims: the former far more ethnic in its focus and the latter more concerned with the accoutrements of status that language and citizenship can foster but still engaging in a wider ethnic discourse. In the closing verses of ch. 21, Luke evokes the depths of Greek

¹⁴⁰ On Paul's Tarsian citizenship, see Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 28-43.

pride both by having Paul surprise a Roman officer by speaking in Greek and by framing his appeal to his Tarsian citizenship in an “‘entirely idiomatic’ . . . form and application, which is expressive of Greek pride and indicates that the city in question is predominantly Greek.”¹⁴¹ On the one hand, therefore, Luke presents Paul as an exemplar of a high status Greek. Yet, the beginning of ch. 22 presents Paul as an exemplary Ἰουδαῖος! Though born in Tarsus, Paul insists that his education was conducted παρά τοὺς πόδας Γαμαλιήλ πεπαιδευμένος κατὰ ἀκρίβειαν τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου, ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ καθὼς πάντες ὑμεῖς ἐστε σήμερον (v. 3). His education in the common patrimony (τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου) of the Jews under a well-known teacher only enhances his ethnic bona fides.

At the close of ch. 21 and the beginning of ch. 22, very similar language (21: 39—ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος μὲν εἰμι Ἰουδαῖος, Ταρσεὺς τῆς Κιλικίας, οὐκ ἀσήμου πόλεως πολίτης and 22:3—ἐγὼ εἰμι ἀνὴρ Ἰουδαῖος, γεγεννημένος ἐν Ταρσῶ τῆς Κιλικίας) achieves two very different but complementary purposes in the narrative. First, Paul’s appeal to his hometown asserts his Greek status, and this persuades the tribune to allow him to speak to his people. Second, and after switching languages, Paul’s birth in a prominent Greek city is but concessive. Although he was born in Tarsus, he was immersed in the Jewish way of life by receiving a strict education in Jerusalem. Here, the notion of hybridity helps clarify the seemingly contradictory ethnicity of Luke’s Paul. In the span of a few verses, he can claim both his Tarsian birthplace as well as his distinct upbringing in the Jewish ethos as vital components of his ethnic identity without contradicting either one in the narrative.

¹⁴¹ Cadbury, *History*, 32-33 speaks specifically about the litotes οὐκ ἀσήμου πόλεως; he adds, “In other passages also ‘not mean’ is shown in its context to imply pre-eminently Greek.”

Returning to the primary issue at hand, we see that Luke here demonstrates that he can specify when his characters refer strictly to the rights and pride associated with citizenship. Moreover, the narrative of this Pauline defense does not set up a contrast between his identity as a native of Tarsus and a Ἰουδαῖος but demonstrates their commensurability and, even more important, the pliability of these seemingly opposing identities. Paul can turn to his Roman guard and claim his Greek status but turn to his fellow Ἰουδαῖοι and claim his Jewish credentials. Both here and in Acts 16, Paul's honor has been affronted: in the former by his unjust punishment and in the latter by his unflattering comparison to an unnamed Egyptian rebel. In the former case, he claims the mantle of Roman identity to demonstrate the senselessness of his accusers; in the latter, his citizenship along with his ability to speak Greek are explicit markers of his elevated status.

The final occurrence of citizenship terminology occurs immediately after these events. Despite all these accomplishments of identity, Paul's appeal to his ethnic kin falls short. Paralleling Jesus's rejection in Nazareth after his inaugural sermon (Luke 4:14-30), Paul's audience becomes enraged anew when he reveals that God has sent him to the Gentiles. In order to determine the source of this tumult, the tribune orders Paul's violent interrogation. Yet before the tribune can begin the flogging, a centurion hears Paul's rhetorical question: εἰ ἄνθρωπον Ῥωμαῖον καὶ ἀκατάκριτον ἔξεστιν ὑμῖν μαστίζειν; (22:25). The centurion steps in, leading to a fascinating discussion between Paul and the tribune. The latter asks Paul if he truly is Ῥωμαῖον, seemingly surprised at Paul's status. When Paul reconfirms his identity, the tribune laments, ἐγὼ πολλοῦ

κεφαλαίου τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην ἔκτησάμην (22:28). The contrast with Paul is sharp as he declares, “But I was born [a Roman]” (ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ γεγέννημαι).¹⁴²

As in Acts 16:37, 38, most translators here opt to render Ῥωμαῖον as “Roman citizen.” To be sure, Paul’s citizenship is an element of the narrative, especially since the tribune himself explicitly mentions his own πολιτεία. Paul’s simple response, however, claims more than the tribune does. In the last century, Cadbury noted the superiority implied in Paul’s retort: “The phrase merely indicates the usual but illogical preferences of human nature for rank obtained by inheritance rather than purchase.”¹⁴³ The narrative suggests a qualitative difference in the tribune’s status over against Paul’s. Paul’s status because of its—to use the parlance of ethnic discourse—primordially is superior. As an ethnic appellation held since the moment of birth, it is more authentic. He did not acquire Roman citizenship but was born Roman. At root, this is an essentially ethnic appeal in response to an inferior identity simply as an incorporated Roman citizen.

With this, Paul’s three-fold identities are fully deployed in the space of a pair of chapters. Acts 21 and 22, like ch. 16, are engaged in ethnic discourse. This is especially evident in the delicate tensions between Paul’s status as a citizen of “no mean” city and as a Greek speaker as well as a Jew who can speak τῆ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ, a student of the great Gamaliel as well as a native of Tarsus, a Jew and a native Roman—unlike the soldier whose citizenship required a significant financial investment. He is a native

¹⁴² Lentz, *Luke’s Portrait of Paul*, 44 notes, “Paul’s claim that he was a Roman citizen by birth is neatly contrasted with the tribune’s embarrassed revelation: ‘It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship’ (22:28).”

¹⁴³ Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings*, 4:284. See also Taylor, “Roman Empire,” *ANRW* 26.3:2492.

citizen of Tarsus, a well pedigreed Jew, and now a natural-born Roman. As Taylor has concluded,

Paul's complex identity—already indicated in his double name, “Saul also called Paul”—reflects the complexity of the Roman empire, in which a person could see himself as the citizen of a hellenized Oriental city and also of a city whose boundaries were coterminous with those of the civilized world, and at the same time as belonging to a people who were identified with a land formerly a sovereign state but now subject to Rome and yet who were to be found scattered throughout Rome's dominions and indeed far beyond them.¹⁴⁴

Postcolonial scholarship, with its notion of hybridity, provides the necessary conceptual base that explains how one could hold such diverse, perhaps even contradictory, identities.¹⁴⁵

Thus, examining the five instances of clear appeal to the language of citizenship, I maintain that Luke, when necessary, explicitly refers to the rights and status of citizenship. In the case of both Paul's Tarsian citizenship and the tribune's purchased Roman citizenship, Luke consistently clarifies in explicit terms when the issue of citizenship is at the forefront. In contrast, in none of Paul's claims to be a Ῥωμαῖος does Luke also attach explicit language of citizenship. In fact, the narrative contexts of Paul's claims in Acts 16 and 22 require that Paul's claim reach beyond mere citizenship to a wider ethnic claim. In Acts 16, his claim to be Ῥωμαῖος is a direct contrast and challenge to his accusers, not just the fact of his unjust arrest and punishment. In Acts 22, Paul's claim to be a native-born Ῥωμαῖος is in direct contrast to the tribune's attainment of citizenship later in life. Simply put, Luke's Paul does not

¹⁴⁴ Taylor, “Roman Empire,” *ANRW* 26.3:2493.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Muñoz-Larrondo, “Living in Two Worlds,” 272-78 who similarly claims the benefits of seeing Paul's portrayal in Acts through the lens of hybridity.

distinguish between ethnic and civic identity when it comes to his Jewish and Roman identities but does so when contrasting his Tarsian citizenship and Jewish pedigree.

The lack of equation between the term Ῥωμαῖος and a specific description of Roman citizenship is also borne out in other contemporary literature.¹⁴⁶ I begin with Josephus, who, like the author of Acts, deals directly with Ἰουδαῖοι who yet have a share in Roman identity. In *J.W.*, Josephus refers rather directly to such a mixed identity in the context of Florus's malevolent rule over Judea. Preceded by the corrupt Albinus, Florus appears irrationally bent on instigating war.¹⁴⁷ He refuses to intercede on behalf of Jews in Caesarea who had bribed him. He steals from the temple. He raids the agora in Jerusalem, ordering the killing of any who cross the soldiers's path, even women and children. Finally, Josephus laments the depths of Florus's political malfeasance and malpractice: ὁ γὰρ μηδεὶς πρότερον τότε Φλώρος ἐτόλμησεν, ἄνδρας ἵππικοῦ τάγματος μαστιγῶσαι τε πρὸ τοῦ βήματος καὶ σταυρῶ προσηλώσαι, ὧν εἰ καὶ τὸ γένος Ἰουδαῖον ἀλλὰ γοῦν τὸ ἀξίωμα Ῥωμαϊκὸν ἦν.¹⁴⁸ Here, Josephus refers to individuals who are Ἰουδαῖοι but also hold a certain "Roman dignity" (τὸ ἀξίωμα Ῥωμαϊκὸν).¹⁴⁹ In the immediate context, such dignity seems to refer to the legal and social rights of Romans associated with the ἵππικοῦ τάγματος.¹⁵⁰ According to Josephus, these wealthy elites had a share within two ethnic realms; as Mason translates,

¹⁴⁶ Baker, "From Every Nation under Heaven," 91 notes that for Philo "... 'ethnicity,' it must be emphasized, is neither identical to, nor coterminous with, 'citizenship' in any Greco-Roman city, much less with 'citizenship' in the Roman Empire as a whole."

¹⁴⁷ As Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.285 (Thackeray, LCL) notes, "The ostensible pretext for war was out of proportion to the magnitude of the disasters to which it led."

¹⁴⁸ Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.308. Cf. Acts 24:27.

¹⁴⁹ Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.308 (Thackeray, LCL).

¹⁵⁰ For further details on the equestrian rank in Josephus, see Steve Mason, *Judean War: Translation and Commentary* (vol. 1b of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*; 10 vols.; ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 80 and 247.

“although their ancestry was Judean, their status was certainly Roman.”¹⁵¹ Here, we see the simultaneous enactment of both primordial and circumstantial views on ethnicity and thus the complexities of ethnic discourse. More important, we have an instance of individuals participating in both ethnic identities. To be sure, Josephus here does not explicitly call these Jewish equestrians “Romans,” yet he posits that both identities were held equally. Josephus here is not describing Ἰουδαῖοι who happened to hold some legal rights due to their rank; their Roman “status” (Mason) or “dignity” (Thackeray) provides a second layer of ethnic identity. In the case of Josephus, there was a particular way to refer to Ἰουδαῖοι who were also, in a significant sense, Ῥωμαῖοι.

The contrast between this passage and several citations in *Ant.* 14 is instructive, demonstrating that, like Luke, Josephus opts to use specific language of citizenship for the sake of specificity. *Ant.* 14.228–230 notes concessions made for certain Ἰουδαῖοι so that they could avoid military service. The dictate calls them specifically πολίτας Ῥωμαίων though ἱερὰ Ἰουδαϊκὰ ἔχοντας καὶ ποιοῦντας ἐν Ἐφέσῳ. The contrast here is two-fold: they are Ἰουδαῖοι but Roman citizens, practitioners of Jewish religiosity who are residents of Ephesus. Speaking similarly about such concessions, Josephus refers to Ἰουδαῖοι πολῖται Ῥωμαίων, Jewish citizens of Rome (*Ant.* 14.232, 234, 235). For Josephus, there was a particular way to refer to Ἰουδαῖοι who also had Roman citizenship. Indeed, when Josephus refers to the granting of his own Roman citizenship, he explicitly notes that Vespasian bestowed this honor (πολιτεία τε Ῥωμαίων ἐτίμησεν).¹⁵²

The better analogy between Paul’s claim to be Ῥωμαῖος is not these latter

¹⁵¹ Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.308 (Mason, *Judean War*).

¹⁵² Josephus, *Life*, 423. Cf. Josephus, *J.W.*, 1.194.

instances of Ἰουδαῖοι who had Roman citizenship but the equestrians in Jerusalem who held both ethnic identities at once. For Paul's claim is not just upon the legal rights due to a Roman citizen but a far more expansive ethnic claim that ultimately undercuts the original accusation that his actions were contrary to the Roman character of Philippi. He could not possibly have acted contrary to Roman mores, for he too is Ῥωμαῖος,

However, Josephus's *Ag. Ap.* provides a challenge to this thesis. After contradicting "some of the things that the Egyptian Apion has invented concerning Moses and the departure of the Judeans from Egypt,"¹⁵³ Josephus tries to destabilize Apion's own ethnic heritage, specifically questioning whether he can legitimately be called both Egyptian and Alexandrian. Turning to Alexandrian Ἰουδαῖοι, Josephus writes,

To be amazed how those who are Judeans were called "Alexandrians" is a symptom of similar ignorance. For all who are invited to join a colony, even if they are from widely different peoples, take their name from its founders. What need is there to cite instances from other peoples? Our own people who reside in Antioch are called "Antiochenes"; for the founder, Seleucus, gave them citizenship. Similarly, those in Ephesus and throughout the rest of Ionia have the same name as the native citizens, that having been afforded to them by the Successors. Has not the benevolence of the Romans ensured that their names have been shared with practically everyone, not only with individuals but with sizeable nations as a whole? Thus, those who were once Iberians, Tyrrhenians, and Sabines are called "Romans." And if Apion discounts this type of citizenship, let him cease to call himself an "Alexandrian." For he was born, as I said above, in the deepest depths of Egypt; so how could he be an "Alexandrian" if he discounts the grant of citizenship, as he sees fit to do in our case? In fact it is only to Egyptians that the Romans, who are now rulers of the world, have refused to grant any form of citizenship. But Apion is so noble that, considering himself

¹⁵³ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 2.28 (Barclay, *Apion*). John M.G. Barclay, *Against Apion* (vol. 10 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*; 10 vols.; ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 182 notes that this is the first time that Apion receives an ethnic appellation. The proceeding narrative suggests that this initial labeling of Apion may signal the beginning of consciously ethnic discourse. That Apion's ethnic credentials are challenged in the next few paragraphs so that Josephus can defend the ethnic *bona fides* of his own people is to me a striking example of powerful ethnic discourse.

worthy of acquiring privileges from which he was debarred, he attempted to bring false charges against those who justly received them.¹⁵⁴

τὸ δὲ δὴ θαυμάζειν πῶς Ἰουδαῖοι ὄντες Ἀλεξανδρεῖς ἐκλήθησαν, τῆς ὁμοίας ἀπαιδευσίας. πάντες γὰρ οἱ εἰς ἀποικίαν τινὰ κατακληθέντες, κἂν πλεῖστον ἀλλήλων τοῖς γένεσι διαφέρωσιν, ἀπὸ τῶν οἰκιστῶν τὴν προσηγορίαν λαμβάνουσιν. καὶ τί δεῖ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων λέγειν; αὐτῶν γὰρ ἡμῶν οἱ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν κατοικοῦντες Ἀντιοχεῖς ὀνομάζονται τὴν γὰρ πολιτείαν αὐτοῖς ἔδωκεν ὁ κτίστης Σέλευκος. ὁμοίως οἱ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην Ἰωνίαν τοῖς ἀυθιγενέσι πολίταις ὁμωνυμοῦσιν, τοῦτο παρασχόντων αὐτοῖς τῶν διαδόχων.

ἡ δὲ Ῥωμαίων φιλανθρωπία πᾶσιν οὐ μικροῦ δεῖν τῆς αὐτῶν προσηγορίας μεταδέδωκεν, οὐ μόνον ἀνδράσιν ἀλλὰ καὶ μεγάλοις ἔθνεσιν ὅλοις; Ἰβηρες γοῦν οἱ πάλαι καὶ Τυρρηνοὶ καὶ Σαβῖνοι Ῥωμαῖοι καλοῦνται. εἰ δὲ τοῦτον ἀφαιρεῖται τὸν τρόπον τῆς πολιτείας Ἀπίων, παυσάσθω λέγων αὐτὸν Ἀλεξανδρέα· γεννηθεὶς γὰρ, ὡς προεῖπον, ἐν τῷ βαθυτάτῳ τῆς Αἰγύπτου πῶς ἂν Ἀλεξανδρεὺς εἴη, τῆς κατὰ δόσιν πολιτείας, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἠξίωκεν, ἀναιρουμένης; καίτοι μόνους Αἰγυπτίους οἱ κύριοι νῦν Ῥωμαῖοι τῆς οἰκουμένης μεταλαμβάνειν ἡστινοσοῦν πολιτείας ἀπειρήκασιν. ὁ δ' οὕτως ἐστὶ γενναῖος, ὡς μετέχειν ἀξιῶν αὐτὸς ὧν τυχεῖν ἐκωλύετο συκοφαντεῖν ἐπεχείρησε τοὺς δικαίως λαβόντας.¹⁵⁵

In this dense slice of text, ethnic discourse and citizenship are tightly interwoven but not necessarily equivocal. To be sure, Josephus seems to equate the gaining of a founder's name and πολιτεία.¹⁵⁶ Yet, as Barclay observes, Josephus's use of πολιτεία in this section is ambiguous, seemingly referring both to citizenship in a Greek city as well as the Roman beneficence; furthermore, whether πολιτεία in this passage refers to full citizenship, some minimal form of civic protections, or something in between is not at all clear.¹⁵⁷ In addition, it is not evident that in other contexts the ability or right to call

¹⁵⁴ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 2.38-42b (Barclay, *Apion*).

¹⁵⁵ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 2.38-42b.

¹⁵⁶ See especially, Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 2.41 where τὸν τρόπον τῆς πολιτείας seems to refer to the conferring of the Roman name over disparate conquered peoples.

¹⁵⁷ Barclay, *Apion*, 189: "Although Josephus uses the term πολιτεία four times in this passage, it is no clearer what he means by it, nor what were the actual political rights of Judeans in Antioch. While some might have had citizen rights, this cannot have been true of all: he may be alluding to some lesser civic status, as a recognized body of foreign residents, permitted to live, trade, and follow their own

oneself “Alexandrian” was a statement of autochthony or a wider claim of citizenship status.¹⁵⁸ However, Barclay also notes when commenting on 2.40, “This case suits Josephus better, since the name ‘Roman’ was co-extensive with citizenship, at least in theory.”¹⁵⁹ Due to the constraints of the commentary format, Barclay does not here draw out the meaning “at least in theory.” I am proposing in this chapter that Acts 16 provides one example in which the name “Roman” is not entirely coextensive with citizenship; to be sure, Paul’s claim does not exclude citizenship but engages in a more complex ethnic discourse that intertwines Roman citizenship and ethnic identity without necessarily equating the two. Ultimately, this section of *Ag. Ap.* provides a fascinating glimpse into the rhetorical gymnastics that one Jew of antiquity who himself has Roman citizenship undertakes to defend his people under vicious ethnic attack. He maintains the uniqueness of “our people” while simultaneously acknowledging that the rule of Rome has made “not only . . . individuals but . . . sizeable nations as a whole” to become “Romans.”¹⁶⁰

customs. Josephus’ vagueness and inconsistency suggest that he did not know what these rights were nor when they were granted.” See also the wider discussion in 188-89, 191.

¹⁵⁸ Barclay, *Apion*, 188-89, 191. In this case at least, Josephus equates “Alexandrian” with the rights of citizenship.

¹⁵⁹ Barclay, *Apion*, 190.

¹⁶⁰ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 2.40 (Barclay, *Apion.*). In addition to this literary evidence, we may also consider inscriptional evidence from Philippi itself collected by Pilhofer, *Philippi*. As I argued earlier in this chapter, my interest in historical and inscriptional remnants of Philippi is not primarily part of an effort to reconstruct the city. Instead, the aim is to get a better sense of how Luke’s description of Philippi would have resonated with his audience and, in this case, what evidence I can adduce of the use of the language of citizenship.

In a handful of cases, language of citizenship is present in inscriptions from Philippi (see Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 2:533, 660, 661, 765). In most of these cases, “citizens” may not refer specifically to the particular rights of citizenship but as a broad description of the residents of a city (533: ἴνα καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ὁρῶντες τὴν γεγενημένην εὐεργεσίαν ὑπὸ τῶν πολιτῶν πρόνοιαν ἔχωσιν τοῦ διασώζειν τοὺς ἰδίους πολίτας; the fragment on p. 660: Γνώμη πολιτῶν; 661: [Ἀρι]στοφάνης στεφανοῦται [...] καὶ τῆ τῶν πολιτ[ῶν] ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶ[σι] . . .). In another case, “citizenship” is one among several honorific descriptions appended to a list of a names (765: . . . αὐτοῖς κα[ὶ] ἐγγόνο[ις, Δελφοὶ ἔδ]ωκαν προξενί[αν, εὐεργεσίαν, π]ο[λι]τεῖαν . . .). Finally is a Latin fragment labeling an individual with the identifiers *Fil(i)pp(ensium) c(ivium) R(omanorum)* (716). At least among the extant inscriptions from Philippi, πολιτεία is mostly used generically except in the two latter instances where it is attached to specific individuals.

The main lexical defense for translating Ῥωμαῖος as “Roman citizen” remains the entry in BDAG discussed earlier.¹⁶¹ Much like Acts 16 and the selections from Josephus just discussed, however, the confluence of citizenship claims and ethnic discourse creates a complex discursive space that the simple equation of Ῥωμαῖος and πολῖται Ῥωμαίων obscures. In the passage cited by BDAG, Appian details how a political enemy of Caesar purposefully punished a recent recipient of Roman citizenship beyond what this individual’s status allowed. The controversy bubbles at a newly founded city (“Novum Comum at the foot of the Alps”¹⁶²) to whose residents Caesar grants Λατίου δίκαιον, including the specific award of Ῥωμαίων πολῖται to certain high-ranking local leaders (ὧν ὅσοι κατ’ ἔτος ἤρχον). An opponent of Caesar named Marcellus, however, decided to test these newly acquired rights. A local leader, who was now counted as a Ῥωμαῖος (καὶ παρὰ τοῦτο Ῥωμαῖον εἶναι νομιζόμενον), became the victim of a brutal beating by ῥάβδος,¹⁶³ in a way no Ῥωμαῖος ought to endure (οὐ πασχόντων τοῦτο Ῥωμαίων). Appian records that Marcellus’s political calculation was evident: “Marcellus in his passion revealed his real intention that the blows should be the brand of the alien (τὰς πληγὰς εἶναι ξενίας σύμβολον), and he told the man to carry his scars and show them to Caesar.”¹⁶⁴ Unlike the Philippian melee recorded in Acts 16, this was no accident but a purposeful political provocation, designed presumably to challenge the gradual coarsening of Roman identity with the diffusion of the rights of citizen.

¹⁶¹ BDAG, s.v. Ῥωμαῖος.

¹⁶² Appian, *Bell. civ.*, 2.26 (White, LCL).

¹⁶³ Cf. Acts 16:35, 38 where the term ῥαβδοῦχος likely refers to those local officials responsible for punishments with the use of a ῥάβδος.

¹⁶⁴ Appian, *Bell. civ.*, 2.26 (White, LCL).

The LCL translation renders both of the occurrences of Ῥωμαῖος as “Roman citizen” and for some good contextual reasons. The explicit reference to Ῥωμαίων πολῖται might suggest that the later occurrences of Ῥωμαῖος imply the former reference to citizenship. However, I propose two reasons why it might be justified to interpret Ῥωμαῖος simply as “Roman.” First, in both cases more than just the rights of citizenship seem to be in view. In the first instance, Appian records that this unnamed official had become known as Ῥωμαῖος. That is, whether emically or etically, this individual’s identity and his status were Roman. In the second instance wherein Appian deems the punishment inappropriate to Romans, the issue at hand is more than legal rights. Roman status, both ethnic and civil, requires a different kind of treatment. Second, that Marcellus’s actions are meant to be an affront to Caesar’s burgeoning power suggests an underlying rift deeper than simply the promulgation of civic rights. By purposefully targeting one of Caesar’s new Roman converts, Marcellus rejects the expansion of Roman power and identity under Caesar. Similar concerns about Roman identity and the expansiveness of citizenship rights are evident elsewhere in Appian’s *Bell. civ.* 2.120 where the persistence of the “genuinely Roman people” (Ῥωμαῖον ἀκριβῶς)¹⁶⁵ is threatened by internal corruption in the collapse of status distinction and external infiltration of “foreign blood” and soldiers “who were no longer dispersed one by one to their native places as formerly.”¹⁶⁶ Finally, and most telling, is that Marcellus beats this new Roman so that he might bear the “brand of the alien” (ξενίας σύμβολον), that is, so that his foreignness might be evident despite his new identity. That this unnamed official now has the right to avoid such punishment is only a preliminary

¹⁶⁵ Appian, *Bell. civ.*, 2.120 (White, LCL).

¹⁶⁶ Appian, *Bell. civ.*, 2.120 (White, LCL).

provocation; Marcellus's hope is that he may shame Caesar by exposing the futility of trying to make the foreigner "one of us." Here again, I am not arguing that this passage from Appian excludes citizenship. There are good reasons to translate Ῥωμαῖος as "Roman citizen" even when it is not modified by πολίτης. However, such translations tend to silence the active ethnic discourse, which best explains the political conflict between Marcellus and Caesar. Parallel ethnic conflicts similarly help make intelligible the Philippian strife of the closing verses of Acts 16.¹⁶⁷

Even these instances of Ῥωμαῖος do not therefore demonstrate that the translation of "Roman citizen" ought to be preferred in the closing verses of Acts 16. In Appian as in Josephus and Acts, the links between citizenship and ethnicity are tightly woven. However, there are significant exegetical reasons for describing Paul's appeal as fundamentally an ethnic claim. Ultimately, Paul does not contradict the first half of the accusation as much as undermine the latter half. Paul's defense is not like the avaricious ethnic libel propounded by certain Philippian profiteers; his defense is not built upon a foundation of misrepresentations and an overt appeal to a people's prejudice against a marginalized community in Philippi.¹⁶⁸ Instead, Paul challenges the very premises that he and Silas, by their ethnic presence, represent an existential threat to this Roman colony. By claiming to be Roman themselves, Paul and Silas pose absolutely no threat and thus belie the civic patriotism in which these merchants wrap

¹⁶⁷ To the evidence from Josephus and Appian, I would also add Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.44 wherein Attalus the Christian is called a "Roman" and afforded certain legal protections; Cicero, *Verr.*, 5.62 wherein a certain Gavius, a *civem Romanum*, whose defensive appeal to his citizenship while he was being beaten were purposefully ignored; and Valerius Maximus 147b (cited in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1.358).

¹⁶⁸ In the case of Philippi, whatever Jewish community may have existed according to Luke was to be found on a spatial level literally marginalized on the outskirts of the city (16:13). Richard, "Hechos," 732 writes, "Lucas quiere mostrar más bien la inocencia legal y moral de los misioneros, reconocida ahora por las autoridades romanas. La acusación que se les hizo era injusta e ilegal." Luke portrays the charges not only as illegitimate and illegal but fundamentally incorrect.

their complaints. Critically, however, by claiming to be Roman, Paul does not contradict the first charge brought against them: Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες. They are Ἰουδαῖοι, but they do not therefore threaten to destabilize the fragile ethnic fabric of Philippi. In fact, a few chapters later, Paul will defend himself saying, οὔτε εἰς τὸν νόμον τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὔτε εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν οὔτε εἰς Καίσαρά τι ἥμαρτον (Acts 25:8). In the case of the Philippian incident, Paul stresses the latter.

Blurring the Lines: Rereading the Philippian Incidents

It is not surprising that scholars have often noted the authentic feel of the entire Philippian episode here in Acts 16.¹⁶⁹ The description of Philippi rings true to the portraits of antiquity drawn in so many of our extant sources. Small details like the naming of the Philippian officials as οἱ στρατηγοὶ and οἱ ῥαβδούχος,¹⁷⁰ the vividness and ambiguities of the tale of the mantic girl and her rapacious owners, and the ethnic conflict bristling in the charges brought against Paul and Silas only magnify the rich description of this vibrant city. I have argued in this chapter that scholars have overlooked this last feature and that proper attention to it helps explain the authentic ring of this intriguing narrative as well as Luke's theological aims.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ See, for example, Hellerman, "Philippi, Part 1," 325 and idem, "Philippi, Part 2," 421-22.

¹⁷⁰ See Hellerman, "Philippi, Part 2," 422 and Witherington, *Acts*, 496.

¹⁷¹ One telling example of such academic discomfort with the flexibility of ethnic identities is evident in a pair of explanations about Timothy's absence from this section of the narrative. Pervo, *Acts*, 387 notes that "[Timothy] is thus invisible at Philippi, where, to be sure, he would have been inconvenient"; he specifies in the corresponding footnote, "The claim that Timothy was also a Roman citizen would have placed undue strain on credulity." Perhaps Timothy's absence is a function not of the "incredible" claim that he was also, along with Paul and Silas, a Roman citizen but of the narrative necessities of the Philippian incident. More importantly, what exactly would have made Timothy's claim to Roman citizenship any more surprising than the twin claim of Roman citizenship for both Paul and Silas? Curiously, while the history of interpretation exhibits quite a bit of concern over the historical probability of Paul's possession of Roman citizenship, much less attention is paid to the "historical Silas."

Similarly, Witherington, *Acts*, 495, n. 113 writes, "It will be noted that Paul and Silas, not Timothy and Luke, are the subjects of the attack. This is presumably because these two were the

In these verses, Luke's Paul uses the loose boundaries separating Jew from Roman as leverage in a politically astute and theologically significant response to both the false accusations of his accusers as well as the Roman Empire's all-encompassing power. Though I tend to disagree with Rapske's confidence in the historicity of Paul's Roman citizenship, I concur that "pairing a serious Judaism with Roman citizenship caused undeniable tensions"¹⁷²; even more tension-filled is Paul's identification as both Ἰουδαῖος and Ῥωμαῖος, Jew and Roman. The question in this chapter is how Luke narrates Paul's delicate balance between two ethnic identities. In the past, conventional scholarship permitted only two options: accommodation or wholesale resistance. Instead, I propose that Paul's claim to be a Ῥωμαῖος is a significant ethnic claim; the postcolonial concept of hybridity is a valuable hermeneutical lens of existence helps bring some resolution to these seemingly irresolvable tensions. Paul and Silas are Ἰουδαῖοι, but this identity does not automatically make them enemies of the Ῥωμαῖοι as their accusers so explicitly declare.¹⁷³

The implications of these findings are exegetically vital. First, the recognition of the ethnic dimensions lurking behind the accusation of the mantic girl's avaricious owners demonstrates what is at stake. This conflict was not solely a question of religious sensibilities or options, but an accusation that Paul and Silas were disrupting

proclaimers, exorcists, and leaders of the group. *There may also be the additional factor that these two were Jews, while Timothy and Luke could at least pass for Gentiles*" (italics added). While the first half of Witherington's argument is largely plausible, the second half—especially in light of the work of Cohen, *Beginnings*—is not as persuasive. Jews were not so easily identifiable in antiquity, and the association of Timothy with these individuals could have easily led onlookers to assume that he too was part of this motley crew of agitators. Ultimately, Luke seems little concerned in Acts 16 to demonstrate the plausibility of the Roman identification of Paul and Silas; he simply assumes it.

¹⁷² Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 87.

¹⁷³ Spencer, *Journeying*, 179 notes, "As for Paul, while not repudiating his ethnic-religious identity as a faithful Jew, this sudden introduction of citizen status does effectively neutralize the slaveowners' charge that he opposes the legal conventions governing 'us Romans'; in a sense, Paul's citizenship makes him one of 'us.'" Discerning the ethnic dimensions of Paul's claims further buttress such a reading.

the fundamental ethnic ordering of this colony. A satellite of Roman power, Philippi was in a tenuous colonial position apart from but representative of the metropolitan center. This altercation is not simply a legal dispute over the proper practice of religion but an accusation of ethnic treason: the two of you are a threat to our very existence. Thus, I disagree with Pervo when he argues, “The mission to Philippi is a great adventure story that portrays the triumph of the faith over the machinations of polytheism.”¹⁷⁴ This is a great dramatic tale, to be sure, but the victory is not over polytheism. After all, as I noted earlier, the originating event of the healing of the mantic girl is not explicitly a pitched battle between the followers of Jesus and the “pagan” gods. A comparison to Ephesus is instructive. The controversies in both Philippi and Ephesus, though rooted in economic concerns, ultimately play out under the guise of some other point of contention. Thus, while in Philippi it is the ethnic identity of the intruders Paul and Silas as a detriment to the Romanness of Philippi’s inhabitants, the Ephesian controversies revolve around the rallying cry of protecting the local goddess. That polytheism is a foil in Ephesus—even if only as subterfuge for avarice—is clear. In Philippi, such indications are lacking, and ethnic discourse takes center stage.

Second, recognizing the ethnic tenor of Paul’s defense makes better sense of its belated deployment.¹⁷⁵ Narratively, Paul’s claim to be Ῥωμαῖος is a direct contradiction of the facile accusation that he and Silas were propagating cultural practices that no

¹⁷⁴ Pervo, *Acts*, 403.

¹⁷⁵ As I noted in the history of interpretation section above, scholars have posited a number of explanations for Paul’s belated defense. See also, Lentz, *Luke’s Portrait of Paul*, 130-38 who notes that “most commentators rely on one of two explanations. Either Paul did cry out his protest but it was not heard, or he chose not to make his citizenship known.” While *ibid.*, 132 notes that the former alternative is most plausible amidst a raucous crowd, that Luke never mentions this unsuccessful claim to citizenship makes even this initially plausible explanation insufficient.

Roman could embrace. Instead of solely a claim to certain legal rights, the ethnic dimensions of a claim to be a Ῥωμαῖος both poses a challenge to the imperial designs of Rome and paradoxically also demands a place within its ethnic ambit. Thus, explaining Paul's belated defense does not require speculation that his protests were muffled by a raucous crowd or that he was somehow trying to defend the burgeoning Christian community at Philippi. Instead, the accusation and defense stand as narrative brackets around the prison scenes, the ethnic defense undermining the very premises of the ethnic accusation.

Finally, my reading of this text adds to the evidence of Luke's manipulation of ethnic discourse and his theologically significant engagement with that discourse. In these verses, Luke does not eliminate the importance of ethnic difference; in fact, he plays upon the sharply contested accusations of the slave girl's owners to relativize and belie their defense of the civic virtue of Philippi as coarse greed wrapped in a misguided ethnic patriotism. Luke's efforts to carve a cultural niche for these followers of Jesus in the wider Mediterranean world achieves an effect akin to what Barclay describes in the production of Josephus's *Ag. Ap.*: "The issue here is not simply how [Josephus] melds Jewish tradition with Hellenistic cultural forms and Romanized value-systems, but how the product, in its 'hybridity,' not only changes the character of Judaism but also contributes to the ever-changing discussion of what it means to be 'Roman.'"¹⁷⁶ In the interstitial space between the peoples of Judea and Rome, Luke is hoping to carve a space for this emerging Christian community, not by effacing the

¹⁷⁶ Barclay, "Empire Writes Back," 320.

differences between these quite different ethnic alternatives but by embracing the ambiguities of a hybrid posture.

Pervo concludes concerning these closing verses of ch. 16,

One does not require commentators to learn that this is a fine story. Chap. 16 moves from the middle of Asia Minor into a bit of Rome residing upon long-grecized soil. There are adventures of many types and lessons for all, not least about what we call “politics” and “religion.” . . . Early readers could admire its sociological realism, and more recent experts its abundance of realistic detail.¹⁷⁷

The complexity of this “fine story” requires a nuanced reading of the divergent ethnic claims that form the narrative center of these verses. Witherington sums up the threat Paul posed to the Philippian cultural fabric in this way: “Paul and his coworkers are those who turn the religious world upside down, offering one God and savior instead of many (and also instead of the emperor), one way of salvation instead of many, one people of God that is not ethnically defined.”¹⁷⁸ This chapter disputes Witherington’s final claim: the people of God cannot help but be ethnically defined. One cannot negotiate the diverse boundaries of ethnicity that littered the Roman Empire simply by wishing them away.

As Cadbury once noted about what he saw as the four definitive cultural representatives in Acts (namely, “the Roman, the Hellenistic, the Jewish and the Christian”),

Of course the interesting thing about these factors is that they overlap each other so fully. They were not water-tight compartments in any sense. They are rather strands that one can see interwoven in the story of Acts—first one and then another appearing. Take the figure of the Apostle Paul. Within the equivalent of a single chapter the author makes it clear that he is a Roman citizen, and born one too (22:27-28), that he is no barbarian but can speak Greek (21:37-38), that he was reared in the

¹⁷⁷ Pervo, *Acts*, 415.

¹⁷⁸ Witherington, *Acts*, 500.

strict law of Judaism (22:3), and that he has been directly called by Christ to preach his name to the Gentiles (22:21). He has the proud consciousness of belonging to the most genuine character of each of our four strands.¹⁷⁹

Though focused on a different chapter-length section of Acts, I have been making an analogous argument. The flexibility and interweaving of ethnic identities in Acts is a critical component of Luke's theological program in 16:16-40. These Ἰουδαῖοι, Paul and Silas, are also Ῥωμαῖοι.

¹⁷⁹ Cadbury, *History*, 10-11.

Chapter Six

Conclusion: Race and Ethnicity, Exegesis and Theology

*“Nor is it only to confirm the accuracy of Acts
that one does well to consider its relation to the ancient world.*

*There is too much tendency to regard Christianity
as something unique and apart in its origin.*

Yet it did not grow up in vacuo.

It bore close likeness to the world which surrounded it.”¹

The development of racial and ethnic identities occurs whenever peoples seek to define who they are; in other words, the negotiation of racial and ethnic difference is inescapable. Acknowledging the construction and contingency of our own communal identities is difficult enough, for it requires us to ask fundamental questions which only rarely are we forced to ask. The complexity of the enterprise is only exacerbated when we hope to interpret how an ancient writer negotiates the slippery notions of “peoplehood” in a world marked by ethnic curiosity and strife and within a movement with multi-cultural, multi-ethnic ambitions. In Acts, reflection of and interaction with ethnic notions are unavoidable, for the narrative’s thematic aim of reaching “the ends of the earth” and its setting in the cities ringing the Mediterranean require the crossing of a number of ethnic and cultural boundaries. As the ring of influence of the early followers of Jesus expands, ethnic terminology, ethnic discourse, and ethnic reasoning only become increasingly important.

¹ Cadbury, *History*, 6-7.

Acts 16 represents a critical turning point in the promulgation of this myth of Christian origins. In the wake of the consequential decisions of Acts 15, ch. 16 records initial but emblematic negotiations of ethnic difference. From the complex identities of Timothy to the strategic deployment of hybrid identities in Philippi, Acts 16 grapples directly and profoundly with the intricacies of ethnic difference. It does so not in order to assert an objective, disinterested description of ethnic diversity nor to project a world in which ethnic difference has come to an end. Instead, Luke explores the fluid boundaries between “Jews,” “Greeks,” and “Romans” while portraying these distinctions as inherent characteristics of the identity of Jesus’s followers.

Summary of Findings

The impetus for this dissertation was the intersection of two critical observations. First, race and ethnicity have continued to play an important social function in modern culture and are a valuable analytical function in the study of antiquity. Second, Acts has been a natural home for interpreters wanting to make a case about the ethnic inclusivity of the early church. Readings of the pericope of the Ethiopian eunuch, for example, highlighted the presence of an African in the early days of the community of the followers of Jesus. The focus on a single ethnic actor in this passage, however, limited the scope of these analyses, for ethnic identities are honed in the midst of negotiations, encounter, and, often times, conflict. Therefore, a fuller understanding of Luke’s ethnic discourse requires a different interpretive approach, a new set of reading practices.

In chapter 2, I turned to the development of a working definition of race and ethnicity. Stressing the utility of a polythetic approach which eschews a central defining feature of ethnic identity and in conversation with the work of Buell, Hodge, Johnson, and Jones, I developed a definition that brought together the seeming contradictions of the primordialist and circumstantialist approaches to ethnicity. Ultimately, I defined race or ethnicity as a socially constructed, discursive, pliable claim to be a group of people defined around myths of putative commonality of kinship or ancestry including origins, language, culture, religion, geography, and other organizing principles. An indispensable qualification of this definition is that an ethnicity—while asserted by its members to be natural, inherent, and unchangeable—is actually malleable and even mutable.

The exegetical center of this dissertation began in ch. 3 with the consideration of the brief, condensed account of Timothy's circumcision. The child of an ethnically mixed marriage of a Hellene father and a Jewish mother, Timothy represents a liability to Paul's efforts because certain Ἰουδαῖοι knew about Timothy's Hellene father. Consequently, Paul circumcises Timothy. Previous efforts to analyze this narrative have tended to ask whether the account was historical or whether Timothy would have been considered a Jew or a Gentile. Such questions simplify Timothy's complex and irreducibly hybrid ethnic identity. Throughout the narrative, Timothy's ethnicity remains an ambiguous matter. He represents a potent ethnic seam through the end of Acts. An embodied representative of the prevailing ethnic contrast in Acts between Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλληνας, Timothy's subtle presence in the rest of Acts shows that the early followers of Christ have developed a path of ethnic negotiation that embraces the

complexities of conflicted ethnic identities as an unavoidable reality of life around the Mediterranean but also a theologically pregnant opportunity for early proclaimers of the Christian faith to encompass ethnic diversity but not eradicate it.

Chapter 4 marked the cartographic and narrative transitions of 16:6-15. Rather than seeing the arrival of proclaimers of Christ on European soil as a consequential theological moment, I suggested instead that these verses play two crucial functions. First, in the call of the Macedonian man, Luke stakes a significant claim: these early followers of Jesus are not mere pretenders on the grand stage of ancient culture and history. Second, the description of Philippi and the account of Paul's initial missionary efforts augurs the ethnic disputes that will define Paul's experience in this colonial center as well as how these early Christians will negotiate ethnic difference by dwelling in the ambiguities of such discourse.

Finally in ch. 5, the closing verses of Acts 16 record a dramatic conflict of ethnic visions. The bankrupting of a successful business venture in the form of a mantic young woman precipitates a civic, ethnic conflict. That the girl's owners do not mention their loss of profit indicates that some factor beyond economics or religion imbues their accusations with such vitriol and meaning. They accuse Paul and Silas of destabilizing the delicate ethnic balance of their profoundly Roman city. They posit that the ethnic identity of these interlopers is the very root cause of the disruption. The belated defense of Paul ultimately exposes the mixed motives of these accusers, for he claims that both he and Silas are Romans. I proposed that reading this claim solely as an assertion of certain legal protections misses the contrast in ethnic discourse between the merchants's accusations and Paul's defense. Paul seeks not so much to

challenge the veracity of the accusation as to undercut its grounds. Using the postcolonial notion of hybridity, I argued that by claiming to be Roman, Paul in no way contradicts his Jewish ethnic identity. In a creative and strategic mode, he can hold both identities in a rich and even subtly subversive cultural symbiosis.

In the end, this dissertation is not exclusively focused on either the text of Acts or its scholarly interpretation. It encompasses both. As a constructed social reality, ethnicity is a projection of our own anxieties and hopes, an inclusive impulse to identify who we are but also an exclusive effort to distinguish between “us” and “them.” Too often, unspoken assumptions about the functioning of ethnic discourse as well as the explicit hope that Christianity could bring diverse peoples together by effacing their differences have led to the flattening of ethnic identities and discourse in the biblical text. Recognizing these problematic premises opens a path for new exegetical insight into the complex ways by which Luke imagined the early followers of Jesus finding their way and place through and in the diverse cultures of antiquity.

Implications: The Function of Ethnic Discourse in the Acts of the Apostles

Virginia Burrus has argued, “The perspective of Luke-Acts is, moreover, not only distinctively universalizing (Acts 1.8) but also explicitly transcultural (Acts 2.5-13)”² While I concur with Burrus’s noting of the complexities of Luke’s vision of the peoples of the world, I do not think that ethnic consciousness has been either universalized or simply transcended. Luke does not advocate the end of ethnic identity

² Burrus, “Luke and Acts,” 133.

and difference. He does not suggest that ethnicity is problematic, optional, or disposable. Indeed, Acts recognizes the incontrovertible reality of the constant negotiation of ethnic identities that characterized the ancient world. Whether in the case of Timothy or the accusation of Paul and Silas, the solution to narrative and theological problems is not the eradication, transcendence, or effacing of ethnic identity and difference. Instead, Luke wades directly into roiling ethnic waters, challenging and reflecting, complicating and accepting the ethnic assumptions of his world and time. Ethnic difference ultimately was not an obstacle but an opportunity, a resource in theological reflection on the expansion of the followers of Jesus in the diverse lands ringing the Mediterranean. The implications of such findings are several.

Ethnicity, Religion, and Biblical Studies

One of the primary problems in scholarship is the all-too-common mischaracterization of ethnic identities as religious options. Though biblical scholarship is certainly concerned with ancient religion and its practices, religiosity is not the sole—or perhaps even the most important—organizing principle evident in Luke-Acts. To the contrary, at least in Acts 16, ethnicity plays that definitive role. The lack of attention to ethnic discourse in this chapter has unduly steered scholars away from the complexities and flexibility of ethnic identities. Instead, much of the scholarship on the several pericopes of Acts 16 has seen contested *religious* identities where *ethnic* identities are actually in dispute. In the end, such confusion is not simply terminological. We do not solve the problem by shifting the kinds of terms we utilize. Substituting “Judean” for “Jew” does not recognize the complex function of ethnicity in

antiquity. My investigation addresses issues that reach to the core of the discipline and expose the assumptions that have long shaped scholarly reconstructions of the theological aims and narrative arc of Acts.

Discussing the emergence of the universal movement of the gospel from the provincial bounds of ancient Judaism, Martin Hengel once noted,

In any case, in view of the future advent and the already effective reality of the kingdom of God, emphasis shifts from clear notions of Israel's exclusive existence and the earthly ethnicity of the Jews as a distinct political unit to a new, eschatological and universal consciousness On the other hand, emphasis upon the unity of exclusive, Torah-bound religion and political ethnicity gave classical Judaism its identity, an identity that proved to be stronger than all other religious groups of antiquity; of all the ancient religions only Judaism and Christianity survived. But here too an insurmountable difference with the new messianic, missions-oriented movement emerges, one that continues and is hotly debated even to this day: whereas in the state of Israel the national, religious legislation continues to work along the lines of the old theocratic ideal, a national Christian state, at least for today's Protestant, can only be a *contradictio in adjecto*, particularly in view of the revolutionary sentence of John 18:36.³

Here Hengel roots the historical trajectories of Judaism and Christianity in a foundational narrative beginning with two distinct options: an ethnic-centered, national religion versus a universal outreach to all of God's people beyond the narrow confines of ethnic identity.⁴ In doing so, he commits an error far too common in our scholarly discourse by not clearly differentiating between religious and ethnic identities. Hengel seems to identify ancient Judaism as both religious and ethnic but ultimately contrasts an ethnic religion to a seemingly ethnic-free Christian identity.

³ Martin Hengel, "Early Christianity as a Jewish-Messianic, Universalistic Movement," in *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity* (ed. Donald A. Hagner; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1999), 12-13.

⁴ See Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations," 232-52 and Anders Runesson, "Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity? Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000): 120-44.

According to Hengel, Judaism's national and ethnic roots delimit the scope of its vision of the world.

But, as I have argued, ethnic discourse was unavoidable for the author of Acts. Providing a theological narrative of the spread of the Christian gospel throughout the Mediterranean world required the author to grapple with its ethnic diversity. At least in Acts 16, Luke chooses not to neglect or reject the presence and importance of ethnic boundaries but to find ways to challenge them and exploit them for his theological purposes. What then is Luke's theology of ethnicity? Luke does not imagine a church stripped of ethnic distinctives but a movement that embraces such differences as endemic to the cultures of antiquity and the ambiguities surrounding ethnic reasoning as a valuable discursive space within which to portray a movement that invites all peoples. I am not arguing that Luke constructed a new or "third race" as some early Christians did in the generations after Luke's account.⁵

At the same time, we ought not to imagine that the ethnic negotiations Luke narrates were easy. That Acts must grapple so often with ethnic disputes and contestations suggests that these were significant problems in a community that eventually saw the parting of the ways between Jew and Christian. Luke offered but one solution to these perennial interpersonal and communal contests.⁶

The Identity of Paul and His Mission

As I noted in ch. 1, scholars have been recently unraveling the ethnic dimensions of the Pauline epistles; less common have been efforts to detail such

⁵ See Buell, *Why This New Race*. Cf. Nasrallah, "Hadrian's Panhellenion," 535, n. 7.

⁶ See Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations," 232-52.

aspects of Luke's Paul. In Acts 16, Luke records two incredibly important but also problematic moments in Pauline biography. Scholars tend to question the historicity of the circumcision of Timothy, but they embrace Paul's Roman citizenship. This dissertation addresses these irresolvable historical queries by asking how these two episodes exhibit an overarching ethnic discourse, a consistent appeal to the flexibility of ethnic identities. Both Timothy's irreducibly mixed ethnic heritage and Paul's legitimate claim to be both Jewish and Roman together represent a potentially informative theme in the study of the Lukan Paul. Instead of dwelling on the historical questions surrounding these events, we should focus on the form of ethnic reasoning within which Luke operates. After all, Acts is not primarily a sourcebook for Pauline biography but a theological narrative of the origins of the movement around Jesus. Critical to this movement is the crossing and negotiation of ambiguous ethnic boundaries.

The Genre of Acts

Johnson defines "ethnic argumentation" as "the concern to formulate ethnic identities strategically as the basis for an apologetic argument."⁷ Recently, the apologetic dimensions of Acts have received much attention in Lukan scholarship.⁸ Particularly helpful has been the effort to demonstrate that the frequent aim of apologetic literature is not convincing outsiders to adopt a new lifestyle but reassuring insiders. Using the language of ethnic discourse, apologetic is more often than not an emic enterprise. If Acts is engaged in "apologetic historiography," what role does

⁷ Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 10.

⁸ See e.g. Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* (NovTSup 64; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

ethnic discourse play in this mode of communication? Can the discernment of patterns of ethnic discourse beyond Acts 16 help sharpen the assignation of the genre of Acts? More important, can the understanding of ethnic discourse help make sense of the narrative and theological aims of Acts?

The Aims of Luke-Acts

Analysis of the ethnic discourse of Luke-Acts might also provide some significant alternatives to traditional approaches to the relationship between Luke-Acts and the Roman Empire.⁹ Perhaps there is a third alternative beyond being an apologetic for the Roman Empire's benign power or for the benign presence of Christians in the empire. In the ambiguous negotiation of ethnic difference, we may catch a glimpse of a hybrid posture towards the empire. Neither accommodating nor resisting the encroachments of Roman power, these early Christians may—according to Acts—have carved a path between these binaries. Drawing upon the discourse of the powerful, Acts also subtly challenges the absolute prerogatives assigned to Jewish, Greek, and Roman identities.

Suggestions for Further Research

Having focused on but one chapter of Acts, I believe that much work remains to be done if we are to understand fully the function of ethnic discourse in this Christian myth of origins. As a test case, my work on Acts 16 demonstrates both the feasibility

⁹ For some recent thought-provoking efforts dealing with this question, see Gary Gilbert, "Luke-Acts and Negotiation of Authority and Identity in the Roman World," in *The Multivalence of Biblical Texts and Theological Meanings* (ed. Christine Helmer; SBLSymS 37; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 83-104; Robbins, "Luke-Acts: A Mixed Population," 202-21; and C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

and exegetical benefits of concerted attention on Luke's dealings with ethnic difference in antiquity.¹⁰ I began this dissertation noting that Acts is a logical biblical source for reflecting on such matters. As Cadbury noted,

What mixed names and backgrounds have the people that Paul meets! The Roman proconsul Gallio was born in Spain (Cordova), King Agrippa is of Idumean descent, while of Paul's associates Timothy is half Jew, half Greek, Silas has both the Semitic name and the Roman name Silvanus, Barnabas has the name of a Babylonian deity but is a Jewish Levite. Perhaps as a Cypriote some Phoenician blood flows through his veins. Aquila is a Jew of Pontus formerly resident in Rome and with a Roman name, while Apollos is an Alexandrian Christian with a reputation for Greek eloquence or learning who still taught the baptism of John. Such a world needed a universal religion and a missionary who could be "all things to all men."¹¹

There are a number of other passages in Acts whose exegesis would benefit from similar analyses, and several methodological refinements that could further clarify Luke's own ethnic reasoning and how this perspective shaped the recounting of this myth of Christian origins. Furthermore, a longer, comprehensive analysis of Lukan ethnic discourse throughout this two-volume opus is also a desideratum.

Scholarship has already taken important steps toward such a project, having long noted the importance of geography to Luke. Recent studies into cartography have demonstrated convincingly that maps are not simply realistic objectifications of national borders, topographical features, and transportation by-ways. Instead, maps are projections of local, national, and ethnic ideologies. Therefore, while Luke's mental maps have long been a scholarly concern, the peoples who populate these places have not drawn the necessary critical attention. This dissertation has sought to remediate this gap in scholarship. However, a project that traced ethnic nomenclature

¹⁰ See, for instance, Baker, "From Every Nation under Heaven," 79-100 who analyzes anew the narrative of Pentecost in Acts 2 with ethnic discourse in mind.

¹¹ Cadbury, *History*, 28-29.

throughout Luke's two volumes would prove immensely helpful and provide a basis for further study of the various ethnic identities that dot the narrative of Acts.¹²

Further research into the function of ethnicity in biblical studies must grapple with the complex intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socio-economics. Acts 16 teems with issues of gender; thus, it is little surprise that fully 6 of the 14 essays in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles* grapple directly with passages in ch. 16.¹³ Future work on ethnic identity in the biblical text will require a critical examination of the intersections of ethnicity and gender. As Derks and Roymans lament when speaking about a collection of essays on *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity*,

The papers gathered in this volume give remarkably little attention to the role of women in the construction of ethnic identities. If authors are explicit about gender, it is males who dominate the discussion If the battlefield may be associated with men, women play important binding roles in terms of procreation and marriage. This is true in mythology as much as in real life. There is, for instance, a striking difference between the sexes in origin myths: whereas founding heroes or ancestor gods of ethnic communities are generally male, females, especially kings' daughters, often play an important role in constructing new lines of descent or explaining fusion between ethnic groups According to Whittaker, "exogamy is the most effective destroyer of ethnic boundaries, even if it also encourages greater strategic manipulation of ethnicity." If ethnicity is particularly relevant in politicised contexts, the centrality of such contexts in much research may explain why the role of women has been underrepresented so far. In line with their different gender roles, we would expect men and women to have

¹² Cf. Judith Lieu, "Not Hellenes but Philistines? The Maccabees and Josephus Defining the 'Other,'" *JJS* 53 (2002): 246-63.

¹³ See the following essays in Amy Jill Levine, ed., *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004): Dennis R. MacDonald, "Lydia and her Sisters as Lukan Fictions," 105-10; Shelly Matthews, "Elite Women, Public Religion, and Christian Propaganda in Acts 16," 111-32; F. Scott Spencer "Women of 'the Cloth' in Acts: Sewing the Word," 134-54; James M. Arlandson, "Lifestyles of the Rich and Christian: Women, Wealth, and Social Freedom," 155-70; Virginia Burrus and Karen Torjesen, "Afterword to 'Household Management and Women's Authority,'" 171-76; and Jeffrey L. Staley, "Changing Woman: Toward a Postcolonial Postfeminist Interpretation of Acts 16.6-40," 177-92.

different ethnic markers. *Engendering ethnicity may be one of the tasks for future research on the topic.*¹⁴

In Acts 16, there are at least two instances in which gender and ethnicity interrelate. First, the ethnic function of Timothy's mother's ethnic heritage ought to be analyzed with gender constructs more clearly conceptualized and integrated with ethnic identity. Similarly, though Lydia's gender has already drawn a great deal of critical attention, her ethnic identity as a foreigner in the Roman colony of Philippi ought to receive further attention; her gender only enhances the complexity of discerning her identity in the narrative of Acts. Ethnicity like other facets of identity is not atomistic or easily severable from the matrix of identities that shape a person's or a community's sense of self and sense of otherness. Having established and demonstrated the utility of applying the conceptual category of ethnicity to Acts, the next step would be to begin to integrate these various strands of identity into an even fuller understanding of how this text carved a conceptual space for the early followers of Christ in a world marked by all kinds of diversity.¹⁵

Finally, I contend that the application of a model of ethnicity like the one I have proposed will prove useful in other texts of the NT. The epistles of Paul have already received much needed attention in this area, and the Gospels have begun to come under critical assessment. Yet, there remains a great deal of methodological and exegetical work left to do. Such efforts are still in their scholarly infancy. Significant

¹⁴ Ton Derks and Nico Roymans, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition* (ed. Ton Derks and Nico Roymans; Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 13; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 8-9.

¹⁵ Scholars have already begun to take up these questions. For a prime example, see the collection of essays edited by Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds., *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

steps have been taken toward a widely applicable and exegetically fruitful understanding of ethnicities and their negotiation in the texts of the Bible. The potential benefits of wider application of such models to the biblical texts are manifold.

Insights in all of these areas could emerge in a number of ways. Historically, a methodologically sound perspective on ethnic identity and discourse could lead to better reconstruction of the past; by eliminating the bias of contemporary problematics around race and ethnicity, we may find a fuller picture of the negotiation of “peoplehood” in the ancient world. Long-discussed questions about Judaism and Hellenism, for instance, may be answered with renewed vigor and precision.¹⁶ Exegetically, the recognition of the dynamics of ethnic discourse could help clarify a number of the quintessential questions biblical scholarship has posed. A clearer answer to the most appropriate translation of Ἰουδαῖος could be aided with attention to the dynamics of ethnicity¹⁷ and provide increased clarity about the relationship between Ἰουδαῖοι and early Christians. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the recognition that early Christian writers like Luke and Paul did not detach ethnicity from the identity of early believers, or that such writers did not imagine the cessation of ethnic difference as a necessary consequence of the Christian life, could prove meaningful in the articulation of Christian theology.

Renan once noted,

The population of Galilee, as the name itself indicates, was very mixed. This province reckoned among its inhabitants, in the time of Jesus, many who were not Jews, --Phoenicians, Syrians, Arabs, and even Greeks. Conversions to Judaism were not rare in mixed countries like this. *It is*

¹⁶ See Andrie Du Toit, “*Paulus Oecumenicus: Interculturality in the Shaping of Paul’s Theology*,” *NTS* 55 (2009): 121-43; also the essay collection edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

¹⁷ See Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 457-512.

therefore impossible to raise here any question of race, and to seek to ascertain what blood flowed in the veins of him who has contributed most to efface the distinction of blood in humanity.”¹⁸

History has unfortunately disproved Renan’s optimism as “the distinction of blood” has continued to plague us. At the same time, ethnic difference is a valuable component of the panoply of human experience. Ethnic difference does not only separate us; it can also provide a richness to life broadly and to theological reflection in particular. Acts represents only one early effort *not* to erase our differences but make sense of the encompassing claims of the early followers of Christ in a world characterized by difference and diversity.

Ultimately, ethnicity is a powerful tool for social discourse because it is densely meaningful shorthand. Much can be said with very few words; a mere handful of remarks can carry the weight of deep historical, ideological, theological, and experiential dimensions. A recent periodical noted,

The problem of the 20th century, W. E. B. DuBois famously predicted, would be the problem of the color line. Will this continue to be the case in the 21st century, when a black president will govern a country whose social networks increasingly cut across every conceivable line of identification? The ruling of *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* [a case in which a native of India who sought American citizenship after serving in World War I unsuccessfully claimed to be white] no longer holds weight, but its echoes have been inescapable: we aspire to be post-racial, but we still live within the structures of privilege, injustice, and racial categorization that we inherited from an older order. We can talk about defining ourselves by lifestyle rather than skin color, but our lifestyle choices are still racially coded. We know, more or less, that race is a fiction that often does more harm than good, and yet it is something we cling to without fully understanding why—as a social and legal fact, a vague sense of belonging and place that we make solid through culture and speech.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ernest Renan, *Life of Jesus* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1915), 83.

¹⁹ Hua Hsu, “The End of White America?,” *Atlantic Monthly* 303 (January/February 2009): 55. Cited 28 March 2010. Online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/200901/end-of-whiteness>.

The social fiction of race and ethnicity influences every aspect of human life including the narrative efforts of the author of Acts. We rarely recognize the full depth and ubiquity of racial and ethnic identities. Whether these quotidian facets of human identity do more harm than good is unclear. For the author of Acts, at least, race and ethnicity were a valuable and unavoidable element among the early followers of Jesus.

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