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THE DEATH OF A TYRANT TYPE-SCENE IN ACTS 12:20-23:
NEGOTIATING HISTORICAL PARALLELS AND NARRATIVE FULFILLMENT
IN LUKE-ACTS

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ABSTRACT

The Death of a Tyrant Type-Scene in Acts 12:20-23:
Negotiating Historical Parallels and Narrative Fulfillment in Luke-Acts

By Alexander P. Thompson

This paper addresses the use of historical parallels in the interpretation of New Testament pericopes through the analysis of the death of tyrant type-scene's influence on the interpretation of Acts 12:20-23. Chapter 1 offers an analysis and critique of the use of the type-scene to interpret Acts 12 as it is defended in the work of O. Wesley Allen. This method mistakenly equates form and function, presumes the genre of Acts, and flattens the parallel texts to share a common view of history. Chapter 2 substantiates these critiques by reconsidering the examples of the type-scene in their unique literary settings. This analysis reveals that the multiple functions of the type-scene across genres can be categorized as moral exhortation, political critique, and comedic reversal. Chapter 3 uses these three lenses of interpretation (moral, political, and comedic) to interpret Acts 12:20-23 in its narrative context. All three functions are supported by both the literary context and the historical literary milieu. This suggests that the type-scene's use in Acts 12, rather than offering a single interpretation, generates a range of compelling interpretations that function simultaneously. This paper concludes with a few remarks about the implications this has for the use of parallels in the interpretation of the New Testament, especially the need to read parallel texts responsibly in their own unique narrative context.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"It often happens that in different books we read histories in themselves similar, but which we judge very differently, according to the opinions we have formed of the authors. I remember once to have read in some book that a man named Orlando Furioso used to drive a kind of winged monster through the air, fly over any countries he liked, kill unaided vast numbers of men and giants, and such like fancies, which from the point of view of reason are obviously absurd. A very similar story I read in Ovid of Perseus, who alone and unarmed killed thousands of men, and of Elijah, who flew through the air and at last went up to heaven in a chariot of fire, with horses of fire. All theses stories are obviously alike, but we judge them differently. The first one sought to amuse, the second had a political object, the third a religious object."[1]

The quest to find literary parallels between the New Testament and its wider historical context has produced an exhaustive amount of research, far outnumbering the length of the NT itself. From the exegetical practices in the Dead Sea Scrolls to the rhetorical strategies of Quintillian, scholars have read the New Testament in its wider literary milieu and often produced compelling and insightful interpretations. In other cases, despite the warning of Spinoza, scholars have uncritically compared similarities in texts without considering the significant differences between them. The result is that the search for parallels has often resulted in as much skepticism as it has new forms of understanding.

The difficulties of this method are twofold. On the one hand, the adduced parallel texts have often restrained the function of the NT material to fit the pattern of its predecessors. This has led scholars to neglect the unique literary construction of the NT documents. On the other

[1] Baruch Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, as cited in Matei Calinescu, *Rereading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 267.

hand, the parallel texts themselves were often pulled out of context, resulting in a reduction of the parallel texts into a 'lowest common denominator' agreement in order to gain leverage for interpreting the NT. Either of these results suggests that we should reconsider the methods and means by which such parallels are constructed. This thesis takes up these issues by considering one test case. Exploring the proposed parallels and a concrete NT text will enable us to see what needs modification, what can be maintained, and what needs substantial revision in order to strengthen the ways in which the New Testament is read in light of its literary milieu.

The death of Herod in Acts 12:20-23 has received significant attention recently in light of its wider literary background. Attempts to locate the historicity of the death of Herod Agrippa I by considering Josephus's account in *Antiquities* 19.343-352 launched the parallelism, but it has widened to include a comparison with accounts of the death of tyrants in other Greco-Roman sources. In turn, this stock-piling of parallels has led to the construction of a type-scene, i.e. a literary form where conventions of speech and action are shared in analogous situations. This newly constructed type-scene became the device for interpreting Acts 12:20-23, resulting in certain constraints that threaten to overlook the unique narrative vision of Acts itself. In effect, the verses are not read as *Acts 12:20-23*, but as another instance of the type scene. Moreover, in this amassing of parallel texts, there is rarely a discussion of the unique function each of these scenes has in its own literary context. To draw an analogy from the practice of text criticism, the parallels are being counted rather than weighed. It would be better, therefore, for both Acts and the parallels if each text received careful attention in its own context. At that point, true parallels could be distinguished from simple similarities.

This thesis will revisit the death of Herod in Acts 12:20-23 as an example of the type-scene defended most fully in O. Wesley Allen's monograph *The Death of Herod* in order to

challenge the interpretive restrictions this type-scene forces on the passage's function in Luke-Acts. I will offer an alternative reading that seeks to capture the unique theological vision and function of this text in Luke-Acts that intersects with, but is not limited to, the parallels offered by texts from the wider literary milieu. In so doing, I will provide a more compelling reading of the text as well as a more responsible method of discussing literary parallels.

I will proceed first by briefly discussing the majority reading of the death of Herod particularly as it is portrayed in Allen's construction the 'death of a tyrant' type-scene. After offering several critiques of this reading and its methodology, I will reframe the question by exploring several of the literary parallels invoked for interpreting Acts in their own unique literary construction. This exploration of parallels will reveal a greater range of functions of the type-scene from which I will draw in interpreting Acts 12:20-23 in the narrative of Luke-Acts. I will conclude by reflecting on the implications this research has for further uses of literary parallels in the interpretation of the New Testament.

Recent Research on Acts 12:20-23

The death of Herod in Acts 12:20-23 has invited renewed attention in recent decades. While a full treatment of the history of research is not necessary to repeat here,[2] our discussion will focus on recent comparative literary approaches. These approaches, rather than focusing on the historicity or possible sources of the text, [3] interpret the passage in the narrative context of

[2] For a more complete, though now slightly outdated, history of research on this passage, see O. Wesley Allen, Jr., *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke Acts*, (SBLDiss 158; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 5-24.

[3] This is not to denigrate other important approaches to the text including the historical approach as seen in William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (New Daily Study Bible; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 101-3, or the source-critical discussion captured in Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 387.

Acts (or Luke-Acts) and by comparison with various parallel texts. The parallel texts invoked tend to offer the following lens for reading: political, intertextual, and experiential.

The political lens of comparative literary analysis examines the politically charged language and imagery of Acts 12 in light of the literary milieu. Hans Josef-Klauck offers an example of this lens in *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity* when he interprets Herod's death as a veiled critique of the Roman emperor Nero by noting particular parallels between the crowd's divinization of Herod's voice with Dio Cassius's account of Nero's singing. While Klauck acknowledges in passing Luke's supposed program of political apologetic,[4] he nevertheless sees Herod Agrippa as enemy of the Church in line with both Herod Antipas (who killed John the Baptist) and Nero (who will kill Paul).[5] Herod's death thus cuts with the edge of political subversion.

An intertextual lens explores the interpretation of Acts 12 in light of a wide array of Old Testament parallel texts. Ezekiel 28,[6] the story of Jonah[7] and Deutero-Isaiah[8] have all been suggested as possible OT intertexts, albeit unconvincingly. The intertext receiving the most widespread support is the story of the exodus with its correspondences with Acts 12's mention of the Passover, the deliverance by an angel of God, and the commands to be clothed.[9] This approach locates the death of Herod in the wider biblical tradition.

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[5] Hans Josef-Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. Brian McNeil; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 44.

[6] Mark R. Strom, "An Old Testament Background to Acts 12:20-23," *NTS* 32 (1986): 289-92.

[7] C.S.C. Williams, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 152.

[8] Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Foundations and Facrts; 2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 2.155 n.12.

[9] Susan R. Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1-24" *CBQ* 52 (1990): 674-5.

The experiential lens is the newest comparative literary approach set forth by Richard Pervo. Pervo argues that Acts 12 is a sequence of events that parallel the 'text' of Christian experience as Peter undergoes the 'passion' of being imprisoned on Passover, the 'resurrection' of being led out of captivity, and the 'vindication' through the defeat of wicked enemy Herod.[10] Pervo supports this interpretation through the passage's use of the symbolic language of baptism through the deliverance from chains and prisons as they parallel death and resurrection.[11] While Pervo's insights might be penetrating for some aspects of Acts 12, its parallels to the death of Herod in Acts 12:20-23 are practically non-existent.

These lenses are all dependent on the proper use of literary parallels between Acts 12 and the wider literary milieu. However, this methodology receives the largest scholarly support in the construction of the death of a tyrant type-scene. While the other lenses depend only on a few parallel texts, the construction of a type-scene assembles numerous examples to create a broad literary convention. Walter Arend first established the type-scene methodology through analyzing brief, repeated narrative patterns (e.g. oracles or journeys) that occurred throughout the works of Homer. Robert Alter soon applied this method to the Bible.[12] With respect to Acts 12, a long tradition has recognized this passage's use of literary conventions common to both Jewish and Greco-Roman writings describing the death of tyrant figures.[13] However, it is only recently in the work of O. Wesley Allen that the formalization of the death of a tyrant type-scene has received a robust defense in the interpretation of Acts 12:20-23. As the largest amassing of

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[10] Richard Pervo, *Acts* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 302.

[11] Pervo, *Acts*, 308-12.

[12] For a brief discussion of the definition of type-scenes, see W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (3rd ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008), 121-22.

[13] Allen, 17-20.

literary parallels in interpreting the death of Herod, it is the ideal conversation partner for revisiting the use of parallel texts in the interpretation of Acts 12.

Allen's Reading of Acts 12:20-23 as a Type-Scene

Allen's work *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts* is the most sustained treatment of the death of Herod in Acts 12:20-23. Its central task is the construction of a 'death of a tyrant' type-scene through the amassing of parallels from the wider ancient literary milieu. The thesis of Allen's work is that the contextualization of Herod's death with this death of a tyrant type-scene supports the passage's function in the narrative pattern of retribution in Luke-Acts.[14] This reading reveals that the death of Herod supports Acts' apologetic historiographic aim to legitimate the Church's message and warn those who persecute it.[15] Allen's thesis unfolds across several chapters, but his construction of the type-scene through analysis of numerous parallels in chapter 2 and his discussion of the literary theme of retribution in the genre of apologetic historiography in chapter 5 are most crucial for our concerns. These two chapters contain many of the presuppositions that shape Allen's reading of the text and we will see that, contrary to Allen's intent, these presuppositions restrict his interpretation because they unnecessarily delimit the possible functions of this scene in Luke's larger narrative

Chapter 2 offers Allen's construction of the type-scene of the death of a tyrant. Type-scenes require neither verbatim repetition of language nor specific formulaic content. Rather,

[14] Allen, 199-200.

[15] Allen, 202.

they typically share conventions for presenting a particular narrative event.[16] The death of a tyrant type-scene has seven conventional elements: 1) a summary of the coming fate of the ruler, 2) an antagonist with great power (i.e. the tyrant), 3) a setting calling forth the death, 4) a particular offense to the divine power, 5) the illness resulting in death, 6) the attribution of the illness to a divine act and 7) a narration of the result of the tyrant's death.[17] While all seven elements are not present in every example of the type-scene, the basic pattern of divine offense and punishment is crucial to every instantiation. Allen uses this set of conventions to discuss a number of examples in ancient literature that includes biblical texts, Hellenistic historiography, the Maccabean accounts, and even a critique of a false prophet.[18] He concludes this exploration with two important remarks. First, he highlights the author's ability to modify the conventions to his or her unique context so the scene has a broad variation. Second, he emphasizes that the use of the type-scene does not emerge as an appendage to the narrative but is crucial to the overall purpose and ideology of the larger work. Both points support the notion of the malleability of the type-scene for an author's larger literary ends.

Chapter 2 continues with Allen's analysis of the literary conventions' appearance in Acts 12:19-24. The setting is the Caesarea meeting with Tyre and Sidon (v.19-21). The offense is Herod's refusal to deny the divine acclamation of the crowd. His punishment is death by worms,

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[16] Allen, 35.

[17] Allen, 36-8.

[18] All of his examples of the type-scene appear in Allen, 38-68. They include the death of Pheretime in Herodotus's *Persian Wars*, the death of Pompeius in Diodorus's *Library of History*, the death of Alcimus in Josephus's *Antiquities*, the death of Cassander in Pausanias's *Description of Greece*, the death of Alexander in Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet*, the death of Jehoram in 2 Chronicles and Josephus's *Antiquities*, the death of Aristobulus and Herod the Great in Josephus's *Antiquities* and *Jewish War*, and (the most widely attested) death of Antiochus Epiphanes in Diodous's *Library of History*, Polybius's *Universal History*, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and Josephus's *Antiquities*. His final examples are the death of Herod Agrippa in Josephus's *Antiquities* and Acts 12.

a punishment attributed to an angel of God.[19] Herod's death demonstrates that, as the word of God continues to spread, the victory of God becomes more apparent. In the following chapters, Allen demonstrates that the elements of the type-scene build on larger literary themes in Luke-Acts. Acts 12 functions as the close to persecution started in 12:1 with the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter. Herod's divine offense foils the rejection of these claims by Jesus (Lk 18:18) and the Apostles (Acts 3:1-26; 10:25-6). Likewise, God's retribution on the unjust is foreshadowed in the Magnificat (Lk 1:51-2) and the speech of Gamaliel (Acts 5:39). Most important is the repetition of the typology of the prophet versus opponent seen in Moses's conflict with Pharaoh, now played out in the pairs of Jesus/Judas, Stephen/(Saul), and Peter/Herod.[20] These thematic connections show that the type-scene is well integrated into the narrative arc and imagery of Luke-Acts. The death of Herod in Acts thus clearly operates as an example of the type-scene in both its use of conventions and its integration into the larger narrative.

Allen returns to the literary parallels in chapter 5 when he uses his examples of the type-scene to ask the question of the type-scene's function in Acts. He focuses specifically on the role of retribution in apologetic historiography as it best parallels the supposed genre of Luke-Acts.[21] In so doing, he limits his comparison to parallel texts in the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Diodorus of Sicily, and Josephus. He identifies two functions of retribution in apologetic historiography: 1) retribution uses the role of Providence in history to guarantee the judgment of the wicked, and 2) retribution exhorts the readers to follow the ways of righteousness rather than

[19] Allen, 70-4

[20] Allen, 144.

[21] Allen, 149.

those of the wicked.[22] In all three of these writers, the role of retribution is discussed in programmatic statements and narrated in scenes of judgment. Allen can thus conclude that "all three share the same basic understanding of retribution and what it contributes to apologetic historiography."[23]

The function of retribution has the same role in Luke-Acts as it affirms God's guidance of history and offers moral instruction. While Acts does not contain the programmatic discussions of providence working in history, Allen finds parallels in Luke-Acts' use of the 'plan of God' (βουλὴ τοῦ θεοῦ) and prophetic fulfillment, as both attest to God's guidance of history.[24] Moral exhortation is also captured in the prophetic typology that illustrates the grave consequences for those who oppose the Way.[25] Thus, the death of Herod simultaneously warns those who try to stop the spread of the gospel and illustrates the plan of God now unfolding in the retribution enacted on God's opponents.[26] Allen concludes, "Luke's use of retribution is in line with the conventional use of retribution in these examples of hellenistic historiography."[27]

Three Criticisms of Allen's Work

Allen's work is a substantial attempt to situate Acts 12:20-23 in the ancient literary milieu in order to interpret the passage's function in Luke-Acts. However, many of his methodological assumptions are subject to serious criticism and question the results of his findings. Particularly problematic is his equation of type-scene with function, the generic restraints of apologetic

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[22] Allen, 160.
[23] Allen, 195.

[24] Allen, 196. Cf. Lk 7:30; 23:51; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38.

[25] Allen, 197.

[26] Allen, 202.

[27] Allen, 202.

historiography in assessing the function of the scene in Acts, and the assumption of a common view of world history in the apologetic historiographies. By addressing these issues, one can reveal the difficulties in Allen's project and construct a more perceptive methodology for using the death of tyrant type-scene in interpreting Acts 12.

My first criticism is that Allen fails to describe how the type-scene functions differently in its various occurrences. Despite his insistence that the type-scene can display multiple functions based on its literary setting, his treatment of the individual examples never describes the diverse functions this type-scene holds. For instance, Josephus's depictions of the death of Herod the Great in *Jewish War* and *Antiquities* are treated as having the same function. However, scholars have argued for different narrative themes, purposes, and ends in these two works that suggests the type-scene examples function differently in each.[28] If it is so crucial to see the type-scene deployed in a specific context to understand its function, is it not worth articulating how the different literary settings use the convention? Rather than explore the various functions of the type-scene it these parallel texts, Allen simply assembles a list of passages that depict the death of a tyrant and, in the process, flattens the parallel texts to a simplistic shared function.

Form criticism could have greatly aided Allen's work as it particularly notes the importance of synchronic and diachronic analyses. While forms are more fixed than a type-scene, the functional analogy is instructive to see the failure of Allen's methodology. In his form critical research on miracle stories in the gospels, Gerd Theissen notes that in describing a specific form one must be aware of the synchronic aspect of a form, i.e. the similarities and

[28] Harold W. Attridge, "Josephus and His Work" in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and Talmud; ed. Michael E. Stone; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 185-232.

connections between the texts that reveal their shared relationship.[29] This is what Allen does when he shows the similarity in the seven conventions of the type-scene. But equally important is the diachronic aspect of a form that situates each unique expression of the form in a historical, cultural, and social setting.[30] This aspect is almost wholly neglected in Allen's treatment of the type-scene as he fails to situate his parallels in their unique literary settings. This inadequacy is apparent when one considers the diverse literary setting of the parallels with respect to genre, chronology, and culture. In this diversity, the type-scene is not a container that is filled up by a specific narrative, but a literary feature changed to fit its unique context like a key to a lock. One must understand the whole range of functions the type-scene reflects in its diverse settings in order to see the options available for Acts to utilize in its own context.

My second criticism follows from Allen's disregard for the contextual nature of the type-scene as it seeps into his narrow treatment of the genre of Acts. Consider his decision to interpret the function of the type-scene in Acts solely in terms of apologetic historiography: "Although other ancient genres can be usefully compared to Luke-Acts, our study suggests that a comparison with Hellenistic historiography is most pertinent. Most of the type-scenes to which we compared Herod's death scene in Chapter 2 are found in the writings of historians."[31] Despite the fact that a significant number of type-scene parallels which he did not treat (and some of which he did)[32] belong to other genres, Allen presupposes the genre of Luke-Acts to show a static generic function of the type-scene. As one review of the book disparaged, "the final

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[29] Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (SNTSU; ed. John Riches; trans. Francis McDonagh; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 1.

[30] Theissen, 2.

[31] Allen, 149.

[32] Allen's following examples fall outside the realm of historiography: Lucian, *Alex.*; 2 Chronicles 21:1-20. Other possible parallel passages include Isa 66:9; Judith 16:17; Plutarch, *Sull.*36.

chapter on providence, retribution, and genre might well have been omitted…The argument in this chapter is both circular in scope and limited in depth."[33] It is circular because Allen alone assembled the parallels and reduced Acts to the majority genre of his sampling. It is limited in depth because the type-scene appears in a diverse cross section of genres with different functions. To minimize this diversity prematurely as a result of a bias of selection is to distort the range of possible interpretations.

Furthermore, there is no consensus on the genre of Luke-Acts that warrants Allen's decision. Scholars have asserted a number of *historical* genres for Acts beyond apologetic historiography including general history,[34] biblical history,[35]and a succession narrative.[36] Other scholars have suggested parallels beyond historiography that include the novel[37] and 'prose epic.'[38] But even in the narrowly defined field of apologetic historiography, there is still a range of aims taken by individual examples of the genre. Each work in a genre re-imagines the genre in which it partakes so that "genre is much less like a pigeonhole than a pigeon."[39] This is substantiated in Gregory Sterling's argument that that the function of an apologetic

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[33] Richard I. Pervo, review of O. Wesley Allen. *The Death of a Tyrant: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke*-Acts, CBQ 60 (1998): 355-6.

[34] David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989), 116-57.

[35] Brian S. Rosner, "Acts and Biblical History," in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, (ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; vol. 1 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 65-82.

[36] Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula: Scholars Pres, 1974) 125-136.

[37] Richard I Pervo, *Profit With Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 115-38.

[38] Marianne Palmer Bonz, *The Past As Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

[39] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 37.

historiography changes depending on the strategy of the historian.[40] Thus, even if we were to follow Allen's presupposition about the genre of Acts (and that is a very generous warrant), the genre itself does not dictate how an author will utilize a specific type-scene. Such a presumption continues to reflect Allen's failure to contextualize the type-scene even in the interpretation of Acts 12.

My final criticism concerns a further example of Allen's neglect of context as he assumes agreement among the apologetic historiographers on the role of providence in history. One pillar for Allen's comparison of Luke-Acts and apologetic historiography is the shared concept of divine providence in history.[41] Besides the fact that this premise is based on a questionable shared genre, there are several other problems with assuming this shared notion. First, Luke-Acts lacks the programmatic statements and philosophical explanations about providence seen in Josephus, Diodorus, and Dionysius.[42] Second, Luke-Acts lacks the invocation of providence in the opening of its works that is characteristic of the others.[43] These formal differences in the explicit role given to providence in Luke-Acts, while not wholly refuting the notion of a shared view of history, does caution against a direct correlation.

More importantly, the role of divine retribution was a common trope in the ancient world in a variety of literary manifestations.[44] This is true of the historiographic tradition as it appears

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[40] Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-acts and Apologetic Historiography* (NovTSupp 64: Leiden: Brill, 1992), 387.

[41] Allen, 151. For the source of this assumption, see John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (SNTSMS 79; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[42] As Allen himself notes in Allen, 196.

[43] Squires, 23.

[44] Pervo, 'Review,' 356.

in writers as diverse as Livy, Thucydides, Plutarch, and Josephus.[45] But similar examples can be cited in ancient tragedies and romances. With the wide reach of the role of retribution and providence, it is unlikely that all reflect a shared view of world history. Rather, it is crucial to see how each work contextualizes its view of providence in history. This careful contextualization would have shown Allen that Luke-Acts' use of providence is thoroughly shaped around its vision of God's work in the life of Jesus Christ.[46] While the language of δεῖ has some similarity with Hellenistic historiography, its meaning is used in Luke-Acts to interpret the surprising events of salvation history that happen in God's Messiah.[47] This Christ-centered eschatology is significantly different than the comparative examples offered by Allen. Again, Allen has misconstrued Acts in order to fit the parallel examples rather than carefully contextualizing each text.

The cumulative force of these criticisms suggests a necessary refinement of Allen's methodology. The presuppositions of a united function of the type-scene, the genre of Luke-Acts as apologetic historiography, and the consistent view of history in the apologetic historiographies detract from the true value of Allen's work. His synchronic assessment of the type-scene is well articulated, but his failure to read the parallels contextually limits his interpretation of Acts 12:20-23. Rather than proposing a static function of Acts 12 in the wider literary milieu, a deeper interpretation of Acts 12 must understand how this passage both contributes to, disagrees with, and re-imagines the type-scene for its own narrative ends.

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[45] Doohee Lee, *Luke-Acts and 'Tragic History' Communicating Gospel with the World* (WUNT 346: Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

[46] Charles H. Cosgrove, "The Divine DEI in Luke-Acts: Investigations into the Lukan Understanding of God's Providence," *Novum Testamentum* 26.2 (1984): 190.

[47] Cf. Lk 4:43; 13:33; 24:7; 24:44; 24:46; Acts 1:16; 3:21; 17:3;

A Revised Methodology for Acts 12

In what follows, I will revisit the parallel texts invoked by Allen to interpret the death of Herod in Acts 12 in order to reassess the function(s) of the type-scene. First, I will look at the individual examples of the type-scene as they appear in their unique literary settings. This will introduce a diachronic analysis into Allen's synchronic analysis that establishes a 'thicker' description of the variety of functions of the type-scene, its generic settings, and its connection to the theme of providence in history. This analysis will reveal the malleability of the type-scene with which I can interpret Acts 12:20-23.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEATH OF THE TYRANT IN ANCIENT LITERATURE

"As everyone knows, words constantly take on new meanings. Since these do not necessarily, nor even usually, obliterate the old ones, we should picture this process not on the analogy of an insect undergoing metamorphoses but rather on that of a tree throwing out new branches, which themselves throw out subordinate branches; in fact, as ramification. The new branches sometimes overshadow and kill the old one but by no means always. We shall again and again find the earliest senses of a word flourishing for centuries despite a vast overgrowth of later senses which might have been expected to kill them. The philologist's dream is to diagrammatize all the meanings of a word so as to have a perfect semantic tree of it; every twig traced to its branch, every branch traced back to the trunk. That this can seldom, if ever, be perfectly achieved does not matter much; all studies end in doubts. But there is apparently some real danger of forgetting that the overwhelming majority of those who use the word neither know nor care anything about the tree. And even those who do know something of it most often use the word without thinking about it."[48]

Introduction

Just like C.S. Lewis's description of a word's meaning as a tree with a great diversity of branches, the death of a tyrant type-scene has an arboresque structure rather than a simple, linear development. Authors deployed the type-scene conventions in unique literary contexts which, in turn, generated new possibilities for meaning and function. When assessing how the type-scene functioned in Acts, it is not enough to cite parallels. One must explore the range of functions these parallels had in the their own literary setting. While a complete and total diagram of the functions of the type-scene would be impossible as the evidence for its development is fragmentary and always subject to some level of scholarly conjecture, by analyzing the various

[48] C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* (2nd ed; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 8-9.

expressions of the type-scene one can assess a rang of parameters for its possible functions. The following section will analyze numerous expressions of the death of a tyrant type-scene as they appear in their unique literary contexts in order to establish a range of functions of the type-scene with which the death of Herod in Acts 12 can be interpreted.

The Death of Jehoram in 2 Chronicles 21:1-20

An early example of the type-scene is the account of Jehoram's death in 2 Chronicles 21:1-20. Despite references to Jehoram in the earlier biblical account of 2 Kings 1-8, this gruesome account is unique to the book of Chronicles. Jehoram becomes king of Israel after the death of his father Jehoshaphat but, rather than leading Judah into proper worship of YHWH, he follows the ways of unfaithful Israel (2 Chr 21:6,11). The prophet Elijah sends Jehoram a letter denouncing his unfaithfulness and prophesying the destruction of his family by a plague as well as a disease of the bowels upon the king (2 Chr 2:14-15). The king soon dies a gruesome death and is buried ignomiously (2 Chr 21:18-20). Even though the account is brief, it utilizes many of the type-scene conventions including the offense, the punishment, and the attribution.[49]

The death of Jehoram fits perfectly into the narrative pattern of the book of Chronicles.[50] Chronicles offers a history of the period of the kings of Israel and Judah leading up to the exile where each king's reign is interpreted in terms of his faithfulness to the worship of YHWH at the

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[49] Allen, 46-8.

[50] Steven L. McKenzie, *I-II Chronicles* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 29-32. The issue of the date of Chronicles is wrapped up in the relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah and has generated a range from 520 BCE with the reconstructed Temple to 250 BCE. I follow the general scholarly consensus that the date hovers somewhere between these two extremes in the fourth century. However, the date is relatively unimportant to the discussion of the type-scene's function. Scholars are agreed that the Chronicler drew on a number of sources in rewriting his history including other canonical texts (especially 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings) and other texts now lost (i.e. Annals of King David mentioned in 2 Chr 27:24). For a basic discussion of the sources, see John Mark Hicks, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (CPNICC; Joplin: College Press, 2001), 22-25.

Temple as embodied by the prototypical faithful king David.[51] This establishes the basic theological scheme and narrative pattern: unfaithfulness results in punishment, while faithfulness results in blessing. What emerges in the narrative is not an unbiased historiography, but a revisionist account of Israel's history interpreted from a distinct theological perspective. As Jacob Meyers has summarized, "the intent of the Chronicler was neither to rewrite the history of Judah nor specifically to gather together what had not been covered by his predecessors. His work is a lesson for the people of his time and situation drawn from the history of his people."[52]

In this revisionist account, history becomes the moral textbook for the Chronicler's audience. The reward and punishment of the king function as a lesson on the intersection of providence and human responsibility.[53] While the pattern of reward and punishment is consistent, the occasions of providence vary. Whereas both Asa and Jehoram are punished with a disease for their unfaithfulness,[54] Joash dies at the hands of a foreign army.[55] In terms of blessing, the faithful David is rewarded with a good old age, riches, and honor.[56] Likewise, Hezekiah's reign was a period of prosperity due to his restoration of the Temple. His faithfulness preserved Jerusalem in the attack of Sennacherib.[57] This narrative pattern reinforces the

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[51] McKenzie 52; Hicks, 18 . This pattern is seen clearly in the summary of each king's reign in terms of worship and covenant faithfulness. Cf. 1 Chr 11:13-14; 29:26-30; 2 Chr 25:1-4; 27:1-3; 29:1-2

[52] Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles: An Introduction, translation, and Commentary* (AB: Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1965), xvi.

[53] Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; Lousiville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 44.

[54] 2 Chr 16:11-14; 21:1-20

[55] 2 Chr 24:23-24

[56] 1 Chr 29:28.

[57] 2 Chr 32:20-22, 27-33.

Chronicler's moral agenda of encouraging faithfulness to the proper worship of God through the ancestral traditions and discouraging unfaithfulness by illustrating God's immediate retribution.

The type-scene construction of Jehoram's death is utilized in this theological framework. Jehoram discouraged proper worship at Jerusalem through the construction of high places (2 Chr 21:11) and led the people to abandon their ancestral traditions for the ways of idolatry taught by Ahab (2 Chr 21:7). To make matters worse, Jehoram also killed his brothers (21:2-4). His immorality is contrasted with the faithfulness of his father Jehoshaphat who prays in the temple, won battles, and earned peace for the nation (2 Chr 20:5-35). The result of Jehoram's unfaithfulness is immediate retribution from God by disease as invoked by the prophet Elijah (2 Chr 21:15). Jehoram's grisly death underscores the wickedness of his life and warns the reader about the retribution earned for such wicked behavior. In its specific narrative context, the type-scene functions as a moral exhortation that warns the reader in light of God's immediate retribution in history.

The Death of Antiochus Epiphanes in 1 Maccabees 6:1-13

The death of Antiochus Epiphanes was a highly recorded event in Jewish and Greco-Roman sources. One account is found in 1 Maccabees. It features a majority of the type-scene elements including the gruesome punishment and clear offense though it lacks an explicit divine attribution to the illness. Antiochus appears at the beginning of 1 Maccabees as the "sinful root" (1 Macc 1:10) who persecutes the Jews and plunders the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Macc 1:20-23). His death comes several chapters later when, after a failed attempt to plunder a Persian temple, he hears of the Maccabean revolt that has defeated his army. The news makes him sick with disappointment (εἰς ἀρρωστίαν ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης, 1 Macc 6:8). Before his death, he surmises that

his mistreatment of Jerusalem was the reason he was afflicted (1 Macc 6:13) though the narrative never explicitly names God as the cause of the retribution.

This lack of attribution situates the type-scene in the larger narrative of 1 Maccabees. Unlike God's immediate retribution in Chronicles, 1 Maccabees offers a different understanding of history and God's actions in it. As John Goldstein explains, "Several traits sharply distinguish First Maccabees from the biblical histories. Prophecy is absent from the narrative; so are miracles in the sense of direct supernatural intervention."[58] First Maccabees does not create a pattern of God's intervention in its narration of the events of the Maccabean revolt. Rather, this first century BC historiography offers a more 'realistic' view of history.[59] The time of the prophets and biblical history are distinct from 1 Maccabees' period of conflict with Hellenism.[60] Rather than God's direct intervention, the narrative instead places God's deliverance in the hands of the Maccabees who are able to fight off the oppressors and bring deliverance to Israel. This is demonstrated in Judas's prayer for God to deliver Israel by giving Judas and his army victory in the battle of Emmaus.[61] History is not unfolding through direct divine intervention but through the divinely-empowered Maccabees.

This emphasis on human actions rather than divine intervention also matches the style of 1 Maccabees. The events of 1 Maccabees are presently in a somber voice that lacks the moralizing and emotional tone of 2 Chronicles. While the account still reflects an ideological bias in favor of the Maccabees and proper worship at the Jerusalem Temple, the lack of

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[58] John A. Goldstein, *First Maccabees* (AB; Doubleday and Company: Garden City, NY, 1976), 12.

[59] This date and genre description follow the general scholarly consensus as expressed in Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3rd. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 447.

[60]For a clear distinction between the period of biblical history and the events of the Maccabees, consider 1 Macc 4:41; 9:27; 14:41.

[61] 1 Macc 4:6-11. Other examples of this divine support are seen in 1 Macc 3:53; 5:62; 7:42.

emotional and supernatural elements suggests a distinct narrative framework. 1 Maccabees exhorts the audience to recognize that 'God helps those who help themselves.' Just as the Maccabees had to fight back against the oppressors, so the reader will have to act in the hope that God will assist them in their cause. Prayer and action are united, but the human response is always one of obedience with prayer revealing the cry that God will support their action.[62] The actions of God in history are, in a sense, inscrutable apart from Jewish willingness to act in the hope that God will support their cause.

In this narrative framework, the remarkable reticence about the divine source of Antiochus's death makes perfect sense. The interpretation of the illness and the possible attribution to a divine cause are placed in the mouth of Antiochus himself and not the narrator.[63] The narrator refuses to comment on whether this was a punishment from God, simply highlighting the death as part of the history of the period rather than a moral lesson. Still, unlike other Greco-Roman accounts that associate the death of Antiochus with the plundering of pagan temples, 1 Maccabees offers a clear ideological slant by linking the punishment to his crimes against Jerusalem.[64] Thus, Antiochus's death supports the ideology of God's support for the Maccabees and the Temple. However, his death functions more as an extension of the Maccabean defeat of the Gentiles rather than God's direct punishment.[65] This use of the type-

[62] 1 Macc 3:19, 34; 4:8-11; 7:37-38; 9:10.

[63] 1 Macc 6:13 reads ἔγνων ὅτι χάριν τούτων εὗρέν με τὰ κακὰ ταῦτα. While not a passive, the construction with 'wicked deeds finding' Antiochus could suggest a divine punishment. But this is the only evidence for such an attribution and it is vague at best.

[64] Diodorus, *Library of History* 29.15 and Polybius, *Universal History* 31.9, as will soon be shown, offer different rationales for his death.

[65] This is captured in the emphasis on the news of the defeat of Antiochus's armies that generates the illness that leads to his death. Cf. 1 Macc 6:8-9

scene offers a distinct contextual function. 1 Maccabees moralizes the death of the tyrant as an extension of the victory of the Maccabees rather than direct divine intervention.

The Death of Antiochus Epiphanes in 2 Maccabees 9:1-28

Unlike the sober account of Antiochus's death in 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees utilizes the death of a tyrant type-scene to depict Antiochus's death more gruesomely. After Antiochus's failed attempt to plunder the temple at Persepolis, he receives word of the shameful retreat of his forces at the hands of the Maccabeans (2 Macc 9:2-3). Filled with anger and superhuman arrogance, he sets out to make Jerusalem a cemetery for the Jews (2 Macc 9:4). But God strikes him with a tortuous sickness in his bowels and leads him to fall out of his chariot with excruciating pain (2 Macc 9:7). His body swells with worms, his flesh rots away, and the decay causes a repulsive stench (2 Macc 9:9-10). He confesses in his suffering that "it is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God" (2 Macc 9:12), reversing his earlier divine pretensions. Despite his vow to correct his injustices to the Jews in exchange for God's deliverance, the illness does not abate and Antiochus comes to a pitiful end (9:28).

The death of Antiochus in 2 Maccabees is intricately linked to a pattern of supernatural deliverance of the Jews from its Gentile political opponents.[66] The final form of 2 Maccabees dates the work to the time of Judean independence in the mid-2nd century BCE.[67] Its explicit purpose is to encourage unity between Judaism in the homeland and abroad through the celebration of Hanukkah, a thoroughly political festival celebrating God's deliverance from the

[66] Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (CEJL; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 14.

[67] Schwartz, 14.

Gentiles and the purification of the Temple.[68] As such, The major opponents of 2 Maccabees are not intra-Jewish but Gentiles that discourage proper piety rather than acknowledge the one true God. This is seen powerfully in the example of Heliodorus, who tried to rob the Temple but was stopped by supernatural messengers (2 Macc 3:22). Other defeated enemies include Nicanor and Jason. Despite claims to careful historiography in the details following typical Greco-Roman historiographic topoi (2 Macc 2:30-31),[69] 2 Maccabees constantly highlights the supernatural and miraculous in the defeat of its enemies, using the highly emotive and descriptive language of the Greek tragic tradition and the Jewish scriptures.[70] The result is a highly charged narrative of God's actions amidst the struggles of faithful Jews against wicked Gentiles aimed at inspiring deeper devotion for all Jews.

God controls history throughout the narrative of 2 Maccabees. God protects the temple from Heliodorus (2 Macc 2:24), allows the Temple to be handed over to Antiochus for a time due to the sins of the Jews (2 Macc 5:17), and eventually restores the Temple again (2 Macc 10:1-9). The result is a revisionist history like 2 Chronicles showing that God was active in both the trials of the period and the deliverance.[71] But unlike 2 Chronicles, 2 Maccabees' view of history also has an eschatological edge since the God who saves and judges in the present will also save and judge at the end of time. Thus, the martyrs can die in peace at the hands of the wicked knowing that "the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of

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[68] John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (BRS; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 82-3.Cf. 2 Macc 1:9; 10:1-8

[69] Schwartz, 171.

[70] Goldstein, 20-1; Schwartz, 66.

[71] Goldstein, 16.

life."[72] Conversely, Antiochus should be afraid because in this eschatological scenario he also will receive judgment.[73] As God is entirely in control of events of history, so God will reign in the future over the righteous and the wicked.

This view of God's complete control of history undergirds the constant narrative clashes between the righteous and the wicked that the author depicts in highly stereotyped ways. Heliodorus, Nicanor, and Antiochus Epiphanes are similar villains marked by impiety, arrogance, and warring against God.[74] They are subsequently contrasted with the righteous Jews Eleazar, Judas, and Alcimus. This rhetorical dichotomy encourages the audience to side with the righteous and, more importantly, to rejoice in their triumph over the wicked. It also offers a political and a comic edge to the narrative. Politically, the rulers of the world cannot claim the place of the King of the Universe.[75] Comically, the wicked leaders become the subject of ironic reversal and mocking. Antiochus Eupator is not the son of a good father, but mocked as the son of the impious man.[76] Likewise, the author puns on Antiochus's title as Epiphanes with references to his arrogance (ὑπερηφανία in 2 Macc 9:4, 7, 11). Many more examples of the comic elements of the narrative could be cited,[77] all of which contribute to the unique function of the type-scene.

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[72] 2 Macc 7:9.

[73] 2 Macc 9:22. Cf. 2 Macc 6:26.

[74] Schwartz, 82.

[75] 2 Macc 7:9, 19; 9:11.

[76] Schwartz, 81. Cf. 2 Macc 10:10

[77] Tobias Nicklas, "Irony in 2 Maccabees?" in *The Books of the Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology: Papers of the Second International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books* (JSJSup 118; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 100-111.

These themes help properly contextualize the function of the type-scene. First, God is clearly the one defeating Antiochus, the arrogant tyrant who thought "he could touch the stars of heaven."[78] The tyrant's death is a direct result of God's action in history and reveals a great political defeat as the king dies before the true King. Second, the means of death by a gruesome illness reveals a clear eschatological reversal. Just as Antiochus had inflicted torments on the righteous martyrs, now he receives similar torments from God.[79] Although Antiochus attempted to ascend to the heavens, he is cast down to the ground by God.[80] This eschatological description both contrasts with the martyrs' hope of the resurrection and contains references to the fall of the tyrant and the death by worms in Isaiah 14.[81] These elements offer a comic edge to Antiochus's death since God reversed his fortunes and repaid him for his punishments *quid pro quo*.

Overall, the death of Antiochus reveals a function of the type-scene that further branches its possible functions. While it does contain an element of moral exhortation by calling for emulation of the faithful rather than the wicked, the primary function of the passage is the comic reversal of the tyrant before the true God. It aims to entertain the Jews through the defeat of one of its enemies and to celebrate the victory of God now as it will be in the end of days

The Death of Antiochus Epiphanes in Polybius's *Universal History*

Polybius's *Universal History* provides the simplest account of Antiochus Epiphanes's death. This history was composed in forty books that chart the rise of Rome from the Second

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[78] 2 Macc 9:10.

[79] Goldstein, 352.

[80] Schwartz, 356.

[81] Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 188-9.

Punic War (220-168 BCE) to the destruction of Carthage and Corinth in 146 BCE.[82] While books 1-4 are complete, the rest are preserved only in fragments including the account of Antiochus's death. Despite its fragmentary nature, recent research on the extant remains of Polybius's work offers us insight into how this account could have functioned in the overall narrative. In this account, Antiochus attempts to plunder the sanctuary of Artemis in Elymais. However, the locals foil his hopes and force him to retreat to Tabae in Persia, where he is struck with madness and dies. Some attribute his death to divine retribution for his attack on the sanctuary.[83] Although a brief account, it uses the type-scene conventions even though Polybius is hesitant to attribute the death to divine action.

Polybius's *Universal History* explains the rise of Rome to a Greek audience through its narration of the events leading up to Rome's dominance of the known world.[84] In its reserved style and lack of entertaining and emotive vignettes, it is highly reminiscent of the historiographic tradition of Thucydides.[85] Polybius described his work as 'explanatory history' whose purpose was to educate society about the causes of events in order to develop insight into current decision making. As Polybius explains, "the mere statement of a fact may excite our interest, but is of no benefit to us. But when we add the cause of it, the study of history becomes fruitful. For by transferring similar events to our own times we gain the means of forming

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[82] Susan Sorek, *Ancient Historians: A Student Handbook* (New York: Continuum International, 2012), 78.

[83] The account can be found in Polybius, *Universal History* 31.9.

[84] Sorek, 76.

[85] Timothy E. Duff, *The Greek and Roman Historians* (Classical World Series; London: Bristol Classical Press, 2003), 58-9.

presentiments about what is going to happen."[86] History is thus a matter of practical education and planning for the future.

The guiding cause of history, and one of the most prominent literary themes in the work, is the role of Fortune (τυχή). Polybius's interpretation of Fortune is vague and not dependent on any single philosophical or religious framework. Sometimes Fate operates as divine providence and foreknowledge. This is captured in the prophecy of Macedon's downfall by Demetrius of Phaleron which later occurs in the narrative.[87] Divine providence is also seen in the punishment of wrongdoers.[88] At other times, fortune operates more like chance or accident. For instance, Polybius presents Hannibal's attack on Rome as coming to nothing as a result of coincidence rather than divine providence.[89] These divergent understandings are crucial to Polybius's overall project, as Fortune alone offers a wide enough narrative arc for incorporating all of the elements that led to the rise of Rome. As Polybius explains, "Fortune has guided almost all the affairs of the world in one direction and has forced them all to incline towards one and the same goal [i.e. Roman domination]. So a historian should in the same way bring before his readers in one complete overview the operations by which Fortune has accomplished this general purpose."[90] Fortune is thus the broad and all-encompassing literary theme of the whole history.

The function of the type-scene operates in this larger narrative arc. Its simplistic style reflects a historian concerned not about the emotional or entertainment value of the story but the

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[86] Polybius, *Universal History* 12.25b.2-3 (as translated in Duff, 59).

[87] F.W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Sather Classical Lectures 42; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 62. Cf. Polybius, *Universal History*, 29.21.

[88] The narrative of fate plotting the fall of Perseus to save Egypt seen in Polybius, *Universal History*, 29.27.11-12.

[89] Polybius, *Universal History,* 9.6; Walbank 62.

[90] Polybius, *Universal History* 1.4.1-2. See Duff, 58.

lessons it could teach. The temple offended is not the Temple of the Jews but a sanctuary of Artemis, revealing a version of Antiochus's death better suited to the religious view of the wider ancient world in which Rome operates.[91] More importantly, the hesitancy to attribute Antiochus's death to divine retribution reveals a candor about the complexities of fortune. While Polybius notes that some attribute it to divine displeasure, the event could also be a coincidence of fortune. Practically speaking, the account does carry some moral tones about the problems of an unchecked greed and the need for proper worship of the gods. But these are not explicitly drawn out in the fragments, leaving the account to function primarily as a recounting of a chance historical event. As such, the type-scene functions like the example of 1 Maccabees although reworked in light of the author's distinct understanding of Fortune's role in history.

The Death of Pompeius and Antiochus Ephiphanes in Diodorus's *Library of History*

Diodorus Siculus's *Library of History* includes the death of two tyrants, Pompeius and Antiochus Epiphanes, which follow the type-scene conventions. His work consists of forty books charting the history of the world from its mythic origins to the first century BCE.[92] Of these forty books, only fifteen are extant (books 1-5; 11-20) with the remaining books preserved only in several fragments. Both deaths are found in these fragments. In the first account, Antiochus is in need of funds and, hearing about the wealth of the temple of Bel in Elymais, sets off to pillage it. In order to justify his attack, he accuses the inhabitants of hostility before sacking the temple. While this made him rich, Diodorus rather succinctly states that he speedily received punishment

[91] Allen, 58-9.

[92] Brian Sheridan, "Diodorus' Reading of Polybius' Universalism," in *Historiae Mundi: Studies in Universal History* (Eds. Peter Liddel and Andrew Fear; London: Duckworth, 2010), 42.

from the gods.[93] In the second fragmentary account, Aulus Pompeius accosts a priest who came to Rome to urge the consuls to purify a temple. Pompeius is immediately stricken with a raging fever that kills him. While not attributed to divine action by Diodorus, the author does note that the average person attributed the death to Providence (θείᾳ τινὶ προνοίᾳ) for Pompeius's attack on the priest.[94] While it is difficult to place these accounts in their literary context due to their fragmentary nature, an assessment of the literary themes in the preserved portions suggests possibilities for how these examples of the type-scene function in the specific work.[95]

Unlike the Rome-centered focus of Polybius's history (which Diodorus emulated in some ways),[96] the *Library of History* is truly a universal history. It is the first of its kind in the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition to attempt a history of the world from its mythic origins to the current day.[97] Diodorus was born in Sicily and composed his work in the first century BCE, a time in which Rome had united most of the known world under a common rule. Diodorus conceived of the need for a more complete history that could parallel Rome's unification of the whole world as a 'common' civilization.[98] This history would give the reader a full description of the causation of events from which they could learn. As Diodorus argued, "if one handed down to memory the history of the whole world, as if it was one city, beginning with the most ancient times and continuing down to his own time, it is clear that he would have a great task, yet he

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[93] This account can be found in Diodorus, *Library of History*, 29.15.

[94] Diodorus, *Library of History*, 36.13.

[95] This is the reason that Allen, 40, 56-7 lacks a full treatment of the passages. However, enough is know nabout the author and the work to offer a general framework for seeing how these passages were conceptualized in the larger narrative themes.

[96] For a discussion of the level of dependence, consider Sheridan, 41-2.

[97] Sheridan, 42.

[98] Sorek, 46. Cf. *Library of History*, 1.3.2; 1.4.1.

would have written the most useful universal history for the interested reader."[99] The result of this broad scope was not the inevitable exaltation of Roman power as in Polybius, but a relativizing of Rome's rise in light of the whole of history. As a Sicilian who had seen his homeland used as a pawn by Roman generals, Diodorus's history minimizes Rome's place in the history of the world by making it the current ruling power that is also subject to rise and fall.[100]

Despite the unique angle on history offered by Diodorus, research on his work still remains undeveloped. Diodorus's work has tended to be viewed as unoriginal with its main value as a compilation and preservation of other Greco-Roman histories now lost.[101] Indeed, his work looks like a pastiche of sources that makes it difficult to distinguish what is uniquely his view. Similarly, there is little that is unique about Diodorus's use of the type-scene. The preserved fragments of the deaths of Pomepeius and Antiochus simply reveal that the type-scene conventions continued into the Hellenistic period. Nothing stands out in either account that suggests a reinvention of the type-scene. In his depiction of Antiochus, Diodorus follows Polybius but replaces the nuanced view of Fortune with a concise attribution of his death to the gods' retribution. However, the account of Pompeius's death reveals more hesitancy about attributing it to divine retribution, noting instead that it was only the plebs that understood the event this way. Does this reveal a more nuanced view of Fortune like Polybius, some underlying unity now lost, or simply the confusion arising from poor source harmonization? The evidence is too fragmentary to know for sure. However, the type-scenes likely functioned as moral education

[99] Diodorus, *Library of History*, 1.3.6 (as translate in Sheridan, 49).

[100] Sheridan, 50-1.

[101] Sorek, 47; Duff, 50.

in Diodorus's desire to instruct his readers on the causes of history. To say more than this is speculation.

The Death of Alexander in Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet*

In the brief work *Alexander or the False Prophet*, Lucian of Samosata recounts the life, deeds, and death of the religious charlatan Alexander of Abonoteichus. Alexander was active during Lucian's lifetime in the second century CE.[102] Lucian's work operates in the confines of the bibliographic genre but with a drive toward satirical attack and invective.[103] Its narrative charts the religious schemes of Alexander including producing false oracles and reverencing a stuffed snake. These religious deceits serve as proof of Alexander's offense against the gods and his fellow men.[104] His death draws heavily on the elements of the type-scene when, at the age of 70, Alexander contracts a worm infection and perishes. However, Lucian attributes this not to a special providence (εἰκάζειν προνοίας) but mere chance (κατὰ τύχην).[105] The death is truly comedic and justly ironic as Alexander's premature death discredits his earlier prophecy that he would live to be 150 years old.

This work is Lucian's response to a request for a more complete account of the fraudulent acts of Alexander.[106] But more importantly, Lucian also used the narrative "to strike a blow for

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[102] Adam Bartley, "Lucian's Contemporary Dialects" in *A Lucian for Our Times* (ed. Adam Bartley; Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 183.

[103] C.P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 148.

[104] Allen, 44.

[105] Lucian, *Alex.* 60.

[106] Lucian, *Alex.* 1; 61.

Epicurus, that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams."[107] While there is debate whether Lucian was an Epicurean or simply used Epicurus as a way to appeal to sensibilities of his friend, the work operates with an explicit contrast between the two figures.[108] Epicurus was the archetypical enemy of Alexander since Epicurus's teaching could expose his falsehood.[109] For instance, when an Epicurean uncovers Alexander's trickery, he is stoned for his impiety.[110] Similarly, Alexander condemned all of the writings of Epicurus to be thrown in the fire.[111] The resulting narrative thus contains both a invective aimed at Alexander and an implicit support for the philosophy of Epicurus.

These functions are intertwined in the use of the type-scene. The depiction of Alexander's death by maggots and the failed prophecy of his lifespan are invective.[112] The ironic and comedic death of Alexander follows the pattern established in the death of Alexander's older partner, Cocconaus. Cocconaus had partnered with Alexander in the scheme to use a stuffed snake for the production of false oracles and had died (ironically) by the bite of a viper.[113] Both Cocconaus and Alexander die by ironic reversals that make them subject to comedic derision.

But it is Lucian's understanding of history and the role given to chance that exalts Epicurus's teachings. One of Epicurus's key tenets was to introduce a 'swerve' into the origin of matter that, on a large scale, placed chance (rather than divine fate) as the guiding principle of

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[107] Lucian, *Alex.* 61.

[108] Barry Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert Limited, 1973), 115-117; Jones, 147-8.

[109] Lucian, *Alex.* 26.

[110] Lucian, *Alex.* 44-46.

[111] Lucian, *Alex.* 47.

[112] Jones, 147.

[113] Lucian, *Alex*. 10.

history.[114] This principle challenges a deterministic view of history and grounds Lucian's hesitancy to attribute these ironic deaths to divine retribution. Rather, they reveal the chance actions of fortune in history.[115] Thus, the function of the type-scene to depict the death of Alexander carries a strong comedic and satirical thrust while still supporting Lucian's Epicurean understanding of chance in history. Lucian's account functions like 2 Maccabees in its comedic and satirical use of the type-scene although reconfigured around the work's support of Epicurus.

Killing Tyrants in *Judith* and *Greek Esther*

Up to this point, the examples discussed were also featured in Allen's construction of the type-scene. However, the next two examples use only some of the conventions of the type-scene and are not, strictly speaking, complete type-scenes. And yet, their main theme of victory over a tyrant by the hand of God is strikingly parallel to examples of the type-scene. This makes the formal similarities more provocative and worthy of comparison with Acts 12.[116] These examples show the popular appeal of the type-scene and its constant adaptation in new literary contexts, revealing the further branching of the scene beyond Allen's one-to-one mapping that oversimplified the categories of use.

The Greek version of Esther is a novelistic expansion of the Hebrew version of the story, dating roughly to the first century BCE.[117] It was likely sent from Palestine to Egypt in order to

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[114] Epicurus, *Letter to Menoceus*, § 133.

[115] Another example of chance in action in the narrative are the houses that are specific stricken by the disease that the oracle of Alexander was meant to protect them from contracting. Lucian explains that the oracle of Alexander did not cause their judgment; rather, it was just a coincidence. Cf. *Alexander*, 36.

[116] Indeed, scholars have often included Judith and Greek Esther in discussing the death of Herod in Acts 12 as even noted in Allen, 17-20.

[117] Collins, 111; Lawrence M. Wills, ed. and trans., *Ancient Jewish Novels: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 29.

encourage celebration of Purim as well as encourage Jewish separation from Gentiles in religious observance.[118] The Greek version features six key additions that reframe the Hebrew short story with romantic, pietistic, and eschatological elements.[119] These additions also further support the great reversal of the story.[120] In brief, Haman plots against the Jews and tricks the king to set a day to have them killed that includes a special punishment for Mordecai. But Esther, a Jew in hiding in the court of the king, appeals to the king and saves Mordecai and the Jewish people, reversing their fortune and bringing the punishment on Haman and the Gentiles. Central to the plot of the story is the humorous death of Haman on the gallows he has constructed for Mordecai.

The Greek version enhances this conflict with several additional elements. Moredecai has a cryptic dream that frames the encounter with Haman as an eschatological conflict between dragons and the righteous nation that results in the exaltation of the lowly and the devouring of the proud (Add Esth 11:6-11). The dream is fulfilled in God's rescue of Mordecai and the Jewish people from the wicked Haman. God is the source of salvation and judgment in the narrative (Add Esth 10:4-13) as is made explicit in the decree of Artaxerxes that states "God, who rules over all things, has speedily inflicted on [Haman] the punishment he deserved."[121] The additions also highlight the hubris of Haman as a character worthy of punishment from God, as seen in Mordecia's prayer (Add Esth 13:12) and the decree of Artaxerxes (Add Esth 16:12). The narrative, while not an exact use of the conventions, operates in the same literary territory of the

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[118] Collins, 112.
[119] Wills, 27-8.

[120] The Hebrew farcical reversal elements include the punishment of Haman on the gallows he had built for Mordecai (Esth 7:9) and Jewish killing of their opponents in the same way they would have been treated (9:1-19).

[121] Add Esth 16:18.

type scene with its divine retribution on a tyrant. The resulting function of Greek Esther is reminiscent of the function of the type-scene in 2 Maccabees. The death of Haman is a comedic and satirical reversal, part of the eschatological victory of God over the enemies of Jewish people.[122]

Like Greek Esther, the book of Judith is a Jewish novel dating to the mid-2nd to late 1st century BCE and is marked by significant comic elements that aid the great reversal of the story.[123] The central narrative conflict is between Gentile forces headed by the king Nebuchadnezzar and his general Holofernes and the Jewish people of Bethulia led by the heroine Judith. This conflict is beautifully crafted into two halves. Chapters 1-7 depict the conquest of the king and his general that strikes fear into Israel. Chapters 8-16 focus on Judith who saves Israel by sneaking into the enemy's camp killing the general Holofernes. The climax of the story is God's deliverance of Israel through Judith's beheading of the wicked leader.[124] This reversal of fortunes is describing in heavily ironic tones, especially captured in the double entendres Judith utters to Holofernes.[125] Humor is a powerful tool used in Judith to describe the unfolding relationship between Yahweh and Israel including the call to obey God's law and trust in God's salvation even amidst trials.[126]

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[122] Collins, 112 notes that "the antagonism of Jews and Gentile and the fantasy of vengeance with which Greek Esther concludes are atypical of the literature of the Ptolemaic period, but they anticipate ominously the events of the Roman era."

[123] Wills, 91; Carey A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1985), 66-72; 78-85; Toni Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (SBLDS 70; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 116.

[124] Cf. Jud 8:35; 13:4-5;

[125] Cf. 12:4 when Judith tells Holofernes "your servant will not use up the supplies I have with me before the Lord caaired out by my hand all he has determined." Another great example is play on lordship of God and Holofernes in Jud 12:14. For a thorough discussion, see Moore, 78-85.

[126] Craven, 116.

The book of Judith elaborates the elements of the type-scene and casts them in an eschatological framework. First, the narrative opponent is a blatant historical fallacy that combines elements of various Jewish opponents into a single character: Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians who rules from Nineveh.[127] This archetypal villain casts an eschatological shadow over the narrative conflict. This conflict is interpreted using similar eschatological elements in the closing song when Judith declares to all tyrants that God "will send fire and worms into their flesh; they shall weep in pain forever."[128] While this is not used explicitly for the death of Holofernes, the narrative implies it in the song's celebration of Judith's victory. More explicit uses of the conventions are seen in the attribution of Holofernes's death to God by Judith (Jud 13:7, 15) and the priest Uzziah (Jud 13:18). The narrative assigns the judgment and deliverance to God alone. The result is that the audience, like the people of Israel in the narrative, worships God and proclaims "Blessed are you our God, who have this day humiliated the enemies of your people."[129]

While Judith is excluded from Allen's formal construction of the type-scene, the overall narrative reflects a number of the conventions that reveals how widespread the narrative of divine retribution was in the ancient world. More importantly, Judith uses the conventions to promote the comic plot reversal in order to encourage the Jewish readers that God will indeed deliver God's people. The use of the conventions in Judith and Greek Esther reveal the popular appeal of the comedic use of the type-scene even as it was adapted to fit new literary and social

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[127] Jud 1:1. Moore, 124 explains these are "symbols epitomizing the vilest arch-villain and the cruelest mighty city."

[128] Jud 16:17b. So, Morton S. Enslin, *The Book of Judith: Greek text with English Translation, Commentary and Critical Notes* (JAL 7; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 174-5 explains: "The song ends with the prediction of certain doom and torment for the foreign nations who have risen against the people of God."

[129] Jud 13:17.

contexts. They further support a comedic use of the type-scene and evidence the multiple function of the type-scene in ancient literature.

Josephus and the Defeat of Tyrants

Josephus's *Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews* remain the two most important sources for understanding the function of the type-scene in the ancient world. The length and historical scope of these works include several unique type-scene examples as well as a number of examples covered in other works including Jehoram, Antiochus Epiphanes, and (paralleling the account in Acts 12) Herod Agrippa. The density of examples makes them the main source of analysis. Although Allen treats the purpose and function of the type-scenes in these works as synonymous,[130] the different narrative themes and purposes of the two works suggest that the type-scenes perform unique, albeit similar, functions in the works. Following the focus on the type-scenes in their narrative contexts, the two works will be addressed separately.

The Death of Aristobulus and Herod the Great in *Jewish War*

Jewish War is the earlier of the two works (ca. 75-79 CE). Its seven volumes follow the history leading to and including the Jewish War until the fall of Jerusalem and the triumphal return of Vespasian and Titus to Rome. Josephus uses his eyewitness testimony to correct what he perceived as distorting accounts of the events surrounding these revolutionary events in Judea.[131] Two of the most important literary themes for the interpretation and function of the

[130] Allen's blanket treatment of the type-scenes as similar can be seen in the discussion of the parallel passage on Aristobulus and Herod the Great, scenes which occur in each work in Allen, 50-56. A similar neglect of the unique narrative purposes can be found in the assumption that retribution functions the same in both works so that *Antiquities* shed light on *Jewish War*. Cf. Allen, 182.

[131] Cf. Josephus, *Life* 365-366; *J.W.* 1.10-11. So also, Attridge, 192-194; Sterling, 241.

death of a tyrant type-scenes are Josephus's tendency to blame the revolt and destruction of the Temple on Jewish brigands and to interpret the events of the war as part of God's will.[132]

First, Josephus places the blame for the catastrophe in his homeland primarily at the feet of Jewish revolutionaries who deceived their people. As Josephus explains in his prologue, "it was a rebellious temper of our own that destroyed [the Temple], and that they were the tyrants among the Jews who brought the Roman power upon us."[133] These tyrants appear throughout the narrative as a variety of characters including John and Simon who divide the city by their tyrannical rules during the battle, the insurgents who first initiate the Temple burning, and the leader of the Sicarii who leads the final stand at Masada.[134] These tyrannical leaders are prefigured in the accounts of Aristobulus and Herod the Great in book 1 and foreshadow the wickedness that will bring about the judgment of God through Roman power. The accounts of these two tyrants frame the first book and thus prepare the reader for a major theme in the overall narrative.[135]

Second, Josephus develops his narration of the events of the Jewish War as part of God's guiding control over history. As Harold Attridge explains, "Josephus notes that other possible outcomes did not occur because God was in control, guiding events to their inexorable conclusion."[136] Josephus's account operates with a Jewish understanding of God's providential care in history. For example, God handed the Temple over to flames as seen in the shared date of

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[132] Attridge, 195-6. Other major literary themes include painting a positive portrait of Roman leadership, invoking a general sympathy and respect for the Jewish people *at large* despite the few rebels, and the pervasive nature of civil war in both Rome and Judea. See also Mason, NT, 69.

[133] Josephus, *J.W.* 1.10

[134] Ibid., 4.389, 577; 6.164-5, 351-3; 7.254-74. So, Attridge, 198-99.

[135] Aristobulus is depicted in Josephus, *J.W.* 1.70-84; Herod the Great in 1.647-656.

[136] Attridge, 203

the Temple destruction with the past Babylonian destruction.[137] However, this divine guidance is often conflated and juxtaposed with language of destiny (εἱμαρμένη), fortune (τύχη), and other Hellenistic historiographic terms similar to Polybius and Diodorus.[138] A close examination shows that the terminology is not used consistently throughout the work and is likely indebted to the use of non-Jewish sources.[139] Regardless, Josephus conceived his historical account as revealing God's actions in the events of his period and continues the tradition captured in 2 Kings without the eschatological fervor of 2 Maccabees.

These two themes play a vital role in interpreting the function of the deaths of Aristobulus and Herod the Great. Aristobulus is described as inferior to the righteous rule of his father John, so that even God proclaims the coming catastrophe of his reign.[140] His horrific reign includes the starvation of his mother and the murder of his brother for perceived sedition.[141] Aristobulus's vengeance establishes him as a tyrant who deserves the sickness unto death that Josephus described in detail.[142] The divine source of this punishment is made explicit both in the providence (πρόνοια) that leads Aristobulus's blood to be spilt on the same place as his brother's death and the declaration from the lips of Aristobulus that his death is vengeance from God.[143]

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[137] Josephus, *J.W.* 6.250-68.

[138] Cf. 2.360, 373, 387; 4:622; 5:88. So Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (2nd.ed.; Peasbody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 71-2.

[139] Helgo Linder, *Die Geshichtsauffassung des Flavius Josephus im Bellum Judaicum: Gleichzeitig ein Beitrag zur Quellenfrage* (Eberhard-Karls-Universität: Tübingen, 1971), 85-94.

[140] Josephus, *J.W.* 1.69.

[141] Josephus, *J.W* 1.71, 72-77.

[142] Josephus, *J.W* 1.81.

[143] Josephus, *J.W* 1.82, 84.

The entire narration of Aristobulus's reign casts him as a tyrant that deserves the retribution of God.

The death of Herod is similar in its connection to these two themes. Herod's reign is described in two sections: the first depicts his rise to power in a positive way (1.204-430) and the second marks his downfall beginning with issues at home (1.431-647).[144] Although Herod has positive qualities in the narrative and at times seems aided by providence, his reign is ultimately beset with problems due to the influence of Herod's wife Mariamne I.[145] These household troubles, which contribute to his contraction of a sickness, are amplified by his erection of an eagle image in the temple.[146] This sparks a rebellion among the young men to which Herod responds with draconian measures that include the imprisonment of the offenders (and many supporting rabbis) and their execution.[147] Subsequently, his disease worsens, causes the decay of his abdomen and genitals, and eventually kills him.[148] Josephus notes that some perceived this illness as divine punishment for Herod's treatment of the rabbis.[149] While Herod's death is briefly mentioned as punishment from God, his increasing tyrannical rule and stereotypical illness strongly attribute it to divine retribution.

These uses of the type-scene are contextualized by Josephus's larger narrative aims. Both Aristobulus and Herod the Great are depicted as tyrants that deserve judgment who foreshadow the defeat of the tyrannical Jews that fight against Rome. Like the loss of the Temple, the

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[144] Allen, 55.

[145] Mason, NT, 154. For Herod's bravery and piety see 1.369-385; 1.354-357. For the corrupting influence of his wife, see Josephus, *J.W.* 1.431-440.

[146] Josephus, *J.W* 1.647-650.

[147] Josephus, *J.W* 1.654-655.

[148] Josephus, *J.W* 1.665.

[149] Josephus, *J.W* 1.656.

retributive illnesses struck on Aristobulus and Herod are outworking of God's providence in the world. These type-scenes carry a dual function. They both describe how God is working in the world and exhort the readers not to oppose God's will through sedition lest they face divine punishment. These examples resonate with the function of the type-scene in 1 Maccabees or 2 Chronicles.

The Tradition of Dying Tyrants in *Antiquities of the Jews*

Josephus wrote his massive work *Antiquities of the Jews* more than a decade after finishing *Jewish War* (ca. 93-94 CE).[150] Its twenty volumes trace the history of the Jewish people from God's creation of the world to the eve of the destruction of the Temple during the Jewish War. Josephus constructed this coherent account of the Jewish people through compiling and adapting a number of sources that include the Greek version of the Old Testament, Jewish Hellenistic historians, and the wider Hellenistic historiographic tradition.[151] Scholars often highlight how Josephus shaped this pastiche of sources into an apologetic historiography, a specific form of history that describes a marginal people and their traditions in order to establish their identity in a larger world setting.[152] The scope of the work and its use of a wide range of sources makes it a repository for examples of the type-scene. While each scene will not be able to be discussed in detail, a brief discussion of the narrative purpose and themes of this work can shed light on how these scenes function in the wider narrative.

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[150] Mason, NT, 99; Attridge, 210-11. Cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 2-.267

[151] The treatment of the sources to this massive work is discussed in full in Sterling, 252-290.

[152] For complete definition, see Sterling, 17.

The thesis of the work states that God rewards those who follow God's will and punishes those who depart from God's law.[153] Providence (πρόνοια) supports this thesis as God works through providence to punish the wicked and reward the virtuous especially in the history of the Jews.[154] In this construction of providence there is an elimination of any eschatological perspective as Josephus links eschatology to the seditious thinking of revolutionaries responsible for the Jewish War.[155] The promise of land and a Messiah are removed from the acts of providence in history.[156] Rather, his view of providence in history tends toward a moralizing tone as it draws together Deuteronomistic theological tendencies and Hellenistic historiography.

In tension with the use of Jewish history to illustrate God's justice is Josephus's desire to paint a positive picture of Judaism for a non-Jewish audience. Josephus addresses this work to non-Jewish readers interested in learning more about Jewish culture and, perhaps, even contemplating conversion.[157] Josephus presents Israel as an alternative political constitution and philosophical school that rivals those offered in the Greco-Roman world.[158] As he explains, "the writings left by Moses have so great a force that, even those that hate us do confess, he who

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[153] Josephus, *Ant.* 1.14.

[154] Providence (πρόνοια) occurs roughly 120 times in this work. So, Sterling, 295. For examples of providence at work, consider the conditional punishment of Adam in Josephus, *Ant.*. 1.26-7; the blessing of David in 7.338; the protection of Daniel by God in 10.260; the reward of providence given to Jonathan in 13.163; etc.

[155] Sterling, 292.

[156] Cf. promise with David in Josephus, *Ant*. 7.90-93. While there are some hints that Josephus had a hope for a future beyond Rome for the Jews, this is almost completely absent from his writings. So Sterling, 292-3.

[157] Josephus, *Ant*. 1.5; 1.9; 20.262. For a full discussion of the issues of audience and a robust defense of the non-Jewish readership, see Mason, Aim and Audience, 64-80. While the primary audience is non-Jews, this does not exclude Jewish readers as a possible, albeit, nor primary audience. So Sterling, 306-8.

[158] Steve Mason, "'Should Any Wish to Inquire Further' (*Antiquities* 1.25): The Aim and Audience of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* and *Life*," in *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives* (ed. Steve Mason; JSPSup 32; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 80-88.

established this settlement was God."[159] God's laws can bring the happiness (εὐδαιμονία) sought after in the Greco-Roman political and philosophical world.[160] Jewish history is full of pious and obedient characters that illustrate the superiority of the Jewish way of life. Even the competing factions of Jewish thought offered in Judea are described in terms of philosophical schools in order to entice comparison with the non-Jewish audience.[161] This positive portrayal of Judaism operates alongside the role of providence in history in Josephus's narrative construction. These themes often result in a tension in the examples of the type-scene as Josephus both portrays God's punishment on the wicked (often Jewish) leaders and promotes a positive view of the Jewish traditions.

Bearing these two themes in mind, let us work briskly through the numerous uses of the type-scene in *Antiquities of the Jews.* The death of Jehoram builds on the material of Kings and Chronicles. However, Josephus expands and reworks the material in two ways. First, there is expanded description of the reign of Jehoram that casts him in a more positive light. Like the rewriting of Ahab and Manasseh, Josephus highlights his military prowess and leadership skills.[162] Second, Josephus also magnifies Jehoram's vices and the divine cause of his death. His wickedness emerges in the slaughter of his brothers and the practice of idolatrous worship like

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[159] Josephus, *Ant*. 3.322.

[160] Josephus, *Ant*. 1.14, 20; 3.84.

[161] Josephus, *Ant*. 13.171-73; 18.12-18.

[162] Josephus, *Ant.* 9.31, 43, 65-70. This is unpacked more fully in Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (JSJSup 58; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 322-33.

Ahab.[163] This death by illness is also clearly the punishment of God as Josephus explains "the Deity had struck at his stomach in His wrath."[164]

The death of Antiochus, however, remains an explicit punishment from God. Josephus corrects Polybius by showing that Antiochus's death arose not from his failed attempt to plunder a temple in Persia but from his injustice in Jerusalem.[165] His account of Antiochus's death lacks 2 Maccabees' mocking description of the illness but draws instead on the somber tone of 1 Maccabees.[166] A closely related (albeit brief) use of the type-scene is the death of Alcimus, a high priest who attempted to pull down the ancient walls of the sanctuary.[167] For this action against the ancient laws of the Jews, Alcimus suffered "a sudden stroke from God" dying from this affliction days later.[168] While the story of Alcimus's crime is found in 1 Macc 9:54-56, Josephus contextualizes it as a type-scene by introducing an explicit punishment from God.[169]

The accounts of Aristobulus and Herod the Great are similar to the parallels in Josephus's *Jewish War*. In *Antiquities*, both characters remain tyrants and law breakers who deserve the explicit divine punishment of their deaths: Aristobulus for murdering his brother and Herod for the incident with the golden eagle.[170] However, *Antiquities* includes further descriptions of each's

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[163] Josephus, *Ant.* 9.95-96.

[164] Josephus, *Ant* 9.104 (trans. Ralph Marcus; LCL 326; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 55. This is also made explicit in the rationale for why Jehoram is not buried (9.104).

[165] Josephus, *Ant*. 12.358-9.

[166] Sterling, 251; Allen, 60.

[167] Josephus, *Ant.* 12.413.

[168] Josephus, *Ant* 12.413 (trans. Ralph Marcus; LCL 365; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 215.

[169] Allen, 41.

[170] Aristobulus in Josephus, *Ant.*. 13.314-17; and Herod the Great in 17.168.

reign. In the instance of Aristobulus, Josephus offers a positive note about his conferment of benefits on the Jews and a quote from Strabo attesting to his candor.[171] The account of Herod's reign is significantly lengthened to span books 14-17.[172] This elaboration, as Steven Mason has argued, "is plainly geared to illustrate one of *Antiquities*' theses-that, according to the ancient and noble constitution of the Jews, those who stray from the laws come to a disastrous end."[173] Herod is unrelentingly evil in these sections, a characteristic he shares with his father Antipater. These two examples reveal the subtle ways Josephus can retell the same stories using similar conventions but for a new narrative purpose. While both deaths remain examples of God's providence in history, Aristobulus's reign is slightly improved whereas Herod is further demeaned as a wicked lawbreaker.

Antiquities' final use of the type-scene describes the death of Agrippa I. While scholars continue to debate the relationship between it and the account in Acts 12, the parallels suggest, at bare minimum, a popular tradition around the death of Agrippa I.[174] In Josephus's account, Agrippa arrives at the games he is hosting in Caesarea in shiny garments that invoke a divine acclamation from the crowd. Agrippa does not rebuke this impious flattery and, as a result, contracts an illness in his bowels. This illness is attributed to God's providence three times before

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[171] Josephus, *Ant.* 13.318-19.

[172] Sterling, 251.

[173] Mason, NT, 155.

[174] Allen, 6-7. For a full recent treatment of the matter that suggests Acts' clear literary dependence on *Antiquities*, see Pervo, *Dating Acts*: *Between Evangelists and Apologists* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge, 2006), 170-8; Mason, NT, 283 also approves of this opinion, noting "a series of half a dozen such coincidences of narrative detail, combined with the coincidence that Luke happened to include some key features of Josephus's story (the census, the three rebel figures), makes the hypothesis that Luke had some knowledge of Josephus more likely than not." That being said, there is also significant scholarly challenge to this assessment of the evidence, as seen in Craig Keener, *Acts,* 383-401. Luckily, the narrative use of the death of Agrippa is not dependent on answering the historical question as each author uses the material uniquely to different literary ends.

Agrippa dies five days later.[175] This use of the type-scene especially embodies Josephus's thesis as God punishes the lawless Agrippa for expressed a hubris bordering on blasphemy.[176] However, unlike the consistently negative portrait of Herod the Great, Agrippa receives a much more positive characterization in the narrative (until his tragic end). Indeed, Josephus contrasts the two leaders, explaining that Agrippa "took pleasure in conferring favours and rejoiced in popularity, thus being in no way similar in character to Herod, who was king before him. The latter had an evil nature, relentless in punishment and unsparing in action against the objects of his hatred."[177] Agrippa is thus an excellent example of the double thesis of Josephus's work as he experiences the divine punishment for those who break the law while also showing how God's law leads to blessing for those who do right. [178] While it might seem fickle to have a character's life resemble both principles, it nevertheless reveals Josephus's complex use of the type-scene in *Antiquities*.

These six examples of the type-scene in *Antiquities* reveal Josephus's conscious use of this popular literary trope to support his narrative. The examples uniquely illustrate both God's justice in the world and the superiority of Judaism. But they also resemble *Jewish War* in their appeal to view of God's providence in history. The function of these scenes is also similar to *Jewish War*. They exhort the readers to live according to God's law in order not to face

[175] The account is found in Josephus, *Ant.* 19.343-350.

[176] Mason, NT, 158.

[177] Josephus, *Ant*. 19.328-9 (trans. Louis H. Feldman; LCL 433; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 369; For other positive, characterizations, see Josephus, *Ant.*. 19.299-301.

[178] Mason, NT, 158.

judgment. As Allen summarizes the matter, in Josephus "divine retribution points to the providential activity of God in the world and warns people to act piously before God."[179]

Conclusion: Charting the Range of the Type-Scene

Having reassessed a wide variety of works in which the death of a tyrant type-scene appears, we can now substantiate our earlier criticisms of Allen's conclusions. First, Allen construes the function of the type-scene primarily as one of moral exhortation based on divine actions in history. However, our examination of the type-scenes in their unique literary contexts reveals a much more flexible set of functions. While the type-scenes in 2 Chronicles and Josephus do function as moral exhortation, there is also significant evidence for other functions. In Greek Esther, Judith, and Lucian's *Alexander*, the type-scene functions comedically with the death of the tyrant serving to mock the ignorance of the tyrant. There was also a political function apparent in many of the type-scenes including the ironic death of Antiochus in 2 Maccabees and Josephus's censure of the Jewish rebels and tyrants in *Jewish War*. These three functions (moral exhortation, political critique, comedic reversal) are illustrated when the examples are read contextualized. Furthermore, they are not mutually exclusive but can overlap and function synonymously. Rather than trying to limit the type-scene to a single function like Allen, it is best to hear the multiple functions resound as each example is read in its literary context. Based on these parallels, Acts 12 could function as moral exhortation, political critique, and comedic reversal.

Second, Allen tries to limit the function of the type-scene based on generic restraints. Acts 12 functions as moral exhortation because Acts, like all apologetic historiographies, use the type-scene in this manner. However, this argument fails to see the diversity of genres in which

[179] Allen, 191.

the type-scene appears. Greek Esther and Judith are examples of Jewish romance novels and Lucian's *Alexander* is a biographical satire. The type-scene also appears in a variety of historiographic settings besides apologetic historiography. *Jewish War* is not apologetic historiography as much as a historical account of a specific event in the eyewitness tradition.[180] Diodorus's *Library of History* is a world history with an annalist bend whose scope etends beyond a single people group to include all the known world.[181] Furthermore, even the examples of the type-scene in apologetic historiography have widely different functions that show genre is not a strong constraint. While Josephus's uses of the type-scene in *Antiquities* highlight the role of the Jewish God to punish the lawbreakers and reward the faithful, Polybius uses the type-scene as an extension of the fortune that has united the world under the leadership of Rome. In these two examples of apologetic historiography, the literary contexts play a much larger role in determining the function than an appeal to genre. The genre of the larger work is only one issue among many to consider when discerning the function of the type-scene.

While genre is not a strong constraint on the type-scene's function, the question of time and the guidance of history consistently impact each work's use of the type-scene. While Allen rightly notes the importance of divine retribution as a foundation for the type-scene in many of the works, he harmonizes them into a single coherent vision of divine retribution without respect to the unique way this theme is developed in each work. However, our analysis has shown how each author's construction of time and the divine guidance of history (or lack thereof) has shaped the type-scene. The eschatological scope of 2 Maccabees, Judith, and Greek Esther locates the type-scene as a foretaste of ultimate judgment on the unfaithful. Lucian rejects the divine guidance of history in light of his Epicurean predisposition for chance. Second Chronicles and

[180] Sterling, 241.

[181] Sorek, 46-7.

Josephus use the type-scene without an eschatological leaning and yet still attest to the present role of God in blessing the faithful and cursing the wicked. The Greco-Roman historians do not appeal to YHWH but to Fortune, either as the guiding principle of history that led to the rise of Rome (Polybius) or a means of relativizing Rome in the wider scope of history's vicissitudes (Diodorus). Questions of time and the role of the divine in history profoundly shape the type-scene's function in each narrative.

A representative sampling of the type-scene in a diverse group of texts from the ancient world confirms our criticisms of Allen's use of the type-scene in interpreting Acts 12. It is the unique narrative setting of each work that gives rise to the type-scene's function as moral exhortation, comedic reversal, and political critique. The function of each appearance of the type-scene is shaped less by generic restraints than by the narrative's depiction of time and the role of the divine in history. With the insights culled from the parallel examples, we are now able to discuss the possible functions of the death of Herod in Acts 12:20-23.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEATH OF THE TYRANT IN ACTS 12:20-23

"Literary genres and forms are not simply neutral containers used as convenient ways to package various types of written communication. They are social conventions that provide contextual meaning for the smaller units of language and text they enclose."[182]

Multiple Functions of the Type-Scene in Acts 12:20-23

Having reassessed the use of the death of a tyrant type-scene in ancient literature and justified our criticisms of Allen's presentation of the type-scene, we are now in a position to address Acts' use of the type-scene in its depiction of the death of Herod. Our previous analysis revealed three predominant functions of the type-scene: moral exhortation, political critique, and comic reversal. These functions are not mutually exclusive but can occur concurrently. Nevertheless, parsing the type-scene into these functions provides a closer analysis of its adaptation to a unique narrative context as David Aune suggests. This information allows us to contextualize the interpretation of Acts 12:20-23 in light of the range of ancient social conventions and the work's narrative themes.

In my interpretation of Acts 12:20-23, I will first address the notions of time and God's action in history as these themes shape the narrative perspective and contextualize the type-scene. I will then examine the type-scene's function in Acts 12 as moral exhortation, comedic

[182] Aune, 13.

reversal, and political critique. This tripartite exploration will reveal a range of satisfying functions of the text that are historically and literarily appropriate.

Time and God's Role in History in Luke-Acts

Luke-Acts is deeply engaged in discussions of God's action in history.[183] As one author noted, "perhaps no New Testament author is more concerned than Luke to testify to the accomplishment of the will of God in history or so caught up in the language of the divine plan and predetermined intention, purpose and necessity."[184] This is obvious if one notes the density of providential language in the two volumes including: the 'plan of God' (βουλή- 9 times), 'it is necessary' (δεῖ- 44 times), the use of 'to appoint' (ὁρίζω- 6 times), and a cluster of words compounded with πρό.[185] Besides the individual terminology, God's action in history is also a theme traced throughout the narrative from the baptism of John (Lk 7:29) to the speeches in Acts (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 20:27). This 'plan of God' describes the will of God working through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and the gospel's spread throughout the world.

While God's action in history is clearly evident in the narrative, how is it to be understood? While scholars once discussed this 'plan' as a continuation of God's role in Jewish history in contrast to the use of providence in Greco-Roman histories, this dichotomy has since been rejected because it distorted the primary sources.[186] Rather, Luke-Acts' use of the role of

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[183] I use Luke-Acts to denote the notion of a unified work in two volumes. For a brief defense of the literary unity of Luke-Acts, see William Kurz, S.J., *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 17-36. For a more complete discussion, see the magisterial work of Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*.

[184] David L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 33.

[185] These include προοράω (2 times), πρόγνωσις (1 time), προορίζω (1 time), προτάσσω (1 time), etc..

[186] For a helpful discussion of the history of the issue, see Cosgrove, 168-72.

God in history utilizes a popular level understanding of Fate common in Greco-Roman history though reworked in light of Jewish Scriptures.[187] Like the writings of Josephus, Luke-Acts fuses God's governance of history and retributive justice with the historian's use of fate. God's will guides history despite the opposition of outsiders in order to establish the Kingdom. Humans are participants in this plan as seen in Jesus's ministry and the proclamation of the gospel through the Spirit-filled believers.[188]

God's direct intervention emerges only in the wake of failed human responsibility. As Cosgrove explains the matter, God's action "is very much that of the *deus ex machina*, who appears precisely where human strength and ingenuity give out. The narrative device is an integral part of the Lukan theme of divine reversal, whereby events are turned upside down in what might be described as divine surprise and cunning."[189] This surprising action of God is foreshadowed in Mary's description of the God who brings down the proud and exalts the lowly (Lk 1:52) and in God's resurrection of Jesus despite the actions of the lawless ones (Acts 2:22-24). God also acts in miraculous interventions that free imprisoned believers, strike the wicked, and heal the oppressed.[190] Although this divine action has parallels in Josephus and other ancient authors, the connection between this divine action and the plan of God unfolding in Jesus is unique to Luke-Acts. This is not a calculated fate guiding history (Polybius), a history driven by an Epicurean swerve (Lucian), or even the Jewish God treating all fairly based on law-keeping (Josephus). God acts in history specifically by raising Jesus and delivering his messengers.

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[187] Squires, 189.

[188] Cf. Jesus in Lk 4:16-21; 22:14-22; Peter in Acts 4:5-22; Paul in Acts 13:16-49; 20:17-24.

[189] Cosgrove, 172.

[190] Healing in Acts 3:1-10; 9:32-43; smiting in Acts 5:1-11;8:9-24;12:20-23; freeing prisoners in Acts 12:6-17; 16:16-40.

The link between God's providential role in history and Jesus's resurrection also offers a glimpse into Luke-Acts' eschatological understanding of time. Since Hans Conzelmann noted that Luke-Acts slackened eschatological expectation and focused on the Church as operating in *der Mitte die Zeit*, the eschatology of Luke-Acts has been subject to debate.[191] Many scholars have challenged various tenets of Conzelmann's interpretation and so that a *media via* consensus has emerged.[192] Luke-Acts reveals a delay in urgency with respect to the end but still operates with an eschatological view of time.[193] This eschatology is seen in the speeches throughout Acts that reveal a belief in resurrection in the coming age.[194] Indeed, it is the resurrection that sets Paul (and the gospel) apart from the Greco-Roman philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:18, 32).While Luke-Acts agrees with the Greco-Roman historians in some ways, the reality of this coming salvation and judgment are not common ground. The eschatological vision of Luke-Acts sets it apart from the other Greco-Roman histories.

This eschatological view of time, as well as the deliverance of God in the life of Jesus and the disciples, offers a specific context for the type-scene. God's providence is not guiding all of history as an uninterested principle but surprisingly intervenes in the life of Jesus and the Church. Time is not marked by the present rewarding of the just and punishment of the unjust but by the new age that has dawned in the resurrection of the Messiah. These literary themes help contextualize the three possible functions of the type-scene in Acts 12.

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[191] Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 95-133.

[192] Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the the Acts of the Apostles* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 98 sees clear eschatological hope in the work understood through the reconstitution of Israel. I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New Testament Guides; ed. A.T. Lincoln; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 110 notes the resurrection of Jesus and the future resurrection frame the whole eschatological outlook of the narrative.

[193] James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Epworth Commentaries; London: Epworth Press, 1996), xxii.

[194] Cf. Acts 2:17-21; 3:19-21; 10:42; 17:31; 24:25.

Acts 12:20-23 as Moral Exhortation

The most widely defended function of Herod's death is as a form of moral exhortation that warns the audience about God's judgment against arrogance and blasphemy. This interpretation stresses the literary parallels between Acts 12 and ancient historiographers like Josephus or Polybius. Two crucial pillars of its defense include the presentation of the Christian community as the philosophical school *par excellence* and the stress on the antiquity of its traditions through connections to Israel's history. These two themes, joined to a view of God's providence in terms of historiography (without the eschatological dimension), contextualize the type-scene in Acts 12:20-23 as a form of moral exhortation.

The presentation of Christianity as the best philosophical school pervades much of the narrative of Luke-Acts. Luke and Acts both open with statements about passing on teaching; this motif is common to philosophical schools.[195] Acts follows Josephus in referring to the Pharisees and Sadducees as competing philosophical schools (αἵρεσις), and refers to Christianity, the best philosophical school, as the sect of the Nazarenes.[196] This philosophical supremacy of the Christian community outrivals the other Jewish schools and, in Paul's debate in Acts 17, even the Stoics and Epicureans. The excellence of the Christian community is also reflected in its ethic of shared possessions and care for one another that reflects the teachings of its founder Jesus.[197] The inverse of the community's ethic is the critique and judgment of others for hypocrisy, pride, and

[195] Lk 1:2; Acts 1:2. It for this reason, among others, that Charles Talbert argued that Luke-Acts genre is best captured under the heading of the succession narrative of philosophers. See Talbert, 125-36.

[196] Use of αἵρεσις in Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5; 24:14; 26:5; 28:22. These make up 6 of the 9 uses in the NT.

[197] Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37; 11:27-30. This follows the example and command of Jesus in Lk 6:20-36; 16:19-31; 19:1-10; etc.

greed.[198] This evidence demonstrates that Luke-Acts' presentation of the Church parallels Josephus's depiction of Judaism in *Antiquities*.[199] The narrative congruence of these documents suggests that Acts ought to share Josephus's use of the type-scene for moral exhortation.

Another theme that contextualizes the death of Herod as moral exhortation is the depiction of the antiquity of the Church's beliefs through appeal to Israel's traditions. This appeal is made through both explicit and implicit focus on fulfillment, particularly of the Scriptures of Israel.[200] From the beginning of Luke, Jesus is described using Scriptural imagery and direct citations including references to the Davidic Messiah, the prophecies of Israel, and the fulfillment of the Law of Moses.[201] An appeal to the antiquity of Israel's Scriptures as proof of Jesus's role as Messiah and the Church's mission is captured by the speeches of Acts, not only through the explicit prophetic fulfillment of Scripture but also through a prophetic typology.[202] Luke places Jesus and the apostles in continuity with the heritage of Israel through signs, suffering, and proclamation.[203] Such a strong depiction of the Church's antiquity also discredits any charge of strange 'newness' often attributed to foreign philosophical schools.[204] This

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[198] Ananias and Sapphira die for their dishonest greed in Acts 5:1-11. A similar critique is seen in the cursing of Simon in 8:14-24 and Elymas in 13:4-12. The depiction of Jesus' opponents as deceivers and hypocrites is readily apparent as shown in Lk 12:1; 16:14; 18:8-14.

[199] Mason, *NT*, 290-1.

[200] Sterling, 359.

[201] Lk 1:32-33, 45-55, 68-79; 2:22-24, 29-32.

[202] Acts 1:15-22; 2:14-36; 4:24-31;7:1-53; 8:32-35; 13:16-47; 28:23-29; etc. As Bock explains, "Luke's use of Scripture underscores that the message being proclaimed is the realization of a promise that God made long ago. Scripture legitimates the claims of the new community to reside in God's promise, plan, and program. There is a line of continuity between what God had revealed to Israel and what took place in Jesus and the new community." So Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke-Acts* (Biblical Theology of the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012),427.

[203] For a brief analysis, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Sacra Pagina 5; Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1992), 11-14.

[204] Acts 17:16-34; see Johnson, 314.

narrative supports the philosophical superiority of Christianity through a defense of its antiquity with Israel's tradition and celebrates Jesus and the Church as recipients of divine providence.

This context reinforces the moral function of the type-scene in Acts 12. Allen has already shown this, but our research further contextualizes his conclusion. The divine judgment on Herod is the result of his overreaching pride and refusal to give glory to God (Acts 12:23). He is contrasted with the disciples who seek God's will in prayer and give glory to God (Acts 12:12, 16). This dichotomy is further emphasized in the juxtaposition of Peter's miraculous deliverance and Herod's subsequent death, as well as in the different ways these persons handle the famine (Acts 11:29-30; 12:20). This sustained dichotomy reveals the moral superiority of the Christian community.

The moral function also resonates with the intertexual elements from the Exodus account. Herod is struck (πατάσσω) by an angel of God recalling the numerous divine afflictions of Pharaoh in Egypt.[205] Similar intertextual echoes of the Passover deliverance are seen in the miraculous deliverance of Peter and the angel's command to dress quickly, which recalls Israel's haste in departing from Egypt. These allusions are aided by the explicit location of Peter's persecution of Herod during the Passover festival (Acts 12:3). Acts 12 utilizes these intertexts to leverage the heritage of Israel in support of a clear moral exhortation.

This literary context establishes not only the moral failing of Herod and the moral supremacy of the Christians but also encourages the reader to follow the higher ethical path. This resonates with similar moral functions of the type-scene in Josephus's *Antiquities* and 2 Chronicles. Nevertheless, as important as this aspect is, it still neglects several elements of the type-scene as it appears in Acts 12. For instance, if the passage is used for moral exhortation,

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[205] Ex 3:20; 7:25; 9:15; 12:12 (LXX).

why does it open with the death of the apostle James? What are we to make of the eschatological view of time and divine action in Luke-Acts which is drastically different than that of the other historians? Finally, how does the Church's proclamation of Jesus as Lord (the reason for its persecution) play into this dramatic account? In order to better situate this type-scene, we will also need to consider the possibility of a political and a comedic function.

Acts 12:20-23 as Political Critique

The recent reopening of political questions in Luke-Acts offers a further context for interpreting the type-scene in Acts 12. Earlier opinion favored Acts as a political apology to Rome; however, this conclusion has subsequently been challenged by other views on the political perspectives of Acts.[206] One moderating voice in this debate is C. Kavin Rowe, who proposes that Acts interprets Roman power in its Christian worldview as something now operating under the authority of Christ. This allows the text to be sympathetic to Rome while also attesting to the lordship of Jesus over all other political claimants.[207] This position of political critique is supported by an appeal to the political implications of Luke-Acts' Christological titles in the Greco-Roman and Jewish milieu.

Another distinct political element in Luke-Acts is the prominent place of the Herodian dynasty.[208] However, the majority of Luke's references to the members of this dynasty are simply

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[206] For a brief survey of political perspectives on Acts, see Steve Walton, "The State They Were in: Luke's View of the Roman Empire" in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (ed. Peter Oakes; Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2002), 1-41.

[207] C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Greco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 140-156.

[208] For instance, in the synoptic gospels only Luke contains a trial before Herod Antipas in Luke 23:6-12 and a mention of Herod's threat to kill Jesus in Luke 13:31-3.These and other foci are highlighted in Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (SNTSMS 17; ed. Matthew Black; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 184-250.

called 'Herod' as shown in Appendix 1. While he often clarifies this name with a title such as 'king,' his use of 'Herod' leads the reader to conflate the various 'Herods' throughout the narrative into a paradigmatic enemy of God. [209] As Richard Pervo explains the matter, "the appellation 'Herod' will do for any Jewish ruler, particularly the bad."[210] The use of the appellation 'Herod' concludes with the death of Herod Antipas in Acts 12 as Agrippa II is never called 'Herod' in the narrative of Acts. There is thus a composite character called 'Herod' who unites the three Herodian kings (Herod the Great, Antipas, and Agrippa I) until his defeat in the death of Herod in Acts 12.[211] This 'Herod' operates as a political opponent of Jesus and the Church throughout Luke-Acts. The narrative subplot of this 'Herod,' in tandem with the political tones of Luke's Christology, offers a literary context in which to situate the type-scene's function as political critique.

'Herod' first emerges in the prologue that announces the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:5). His second appearance follows shortly thereafter in a similar political list that includes Pontius Pilate (Lk 3:1). These introduction formulae establish a global political context reminiscent of Roman propaganda onto which the ministry of Jesus emerges.[212] Moreover, this backdrop labels 'Herod' as tetrarch of Galilee (Lk 1:26), the same area in which Jesus will live

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[209] For a recent detailed discussion of 'Herod' as a composite literary character along similar lines, see Frank Dicken, "A King and Ruler Takes His Stand: Herod's Role in Luke-Acts in Light of Acts 4:24-28" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the BNT, King's College, London, 8 September 2012), 1-18. An important element of this argument is the citation of Ps 2 in Acts 4:24-27 where the plural terms (οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες) are connected to the singular opponents Herod and Pilate, suggesting that 'Herod' was understood as a composite opponent. See Klauck, 39.

[210] Pervo, *Acts*, 303. While the titles are often attached at the beginning of narrative section (e.g. Lk 3:1; Acts 12), the overall feel of the narrative is that the name becomes more of a catch phrase to denote the enemy constantly opposing Jesus and the Church.

[211] It is significant that no source outside of dependence on Acts ever calls Agrippa I 'Herod.' See Allen, 7.

[212] Gary Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity in the Worldview of Luke-Acts," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (SBLSymS 20; eds. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander-Stichele; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 237.

out much of his ministry (Lk 2:4, 39, 51).[213] This places Jesus and 'Herod' in the same realm of action and authority and adumbrates a possible conflict between them. The opening chapters also establish Luke's understanding of Jesus as the Davidic king in strong political terms. Gabriel foretells the birth of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7 with its promises of a throne and an eternal kingdom (Lk 1:32-33). Jesus is subsequently born in the town of Jerusalem, the city of King David (Lk 2:4, 11). This Messiah is also proclaimed as a savior, a word replete with connections to David and Roman emperors like Augustus (Lk 1:69; 2:11, 30).[214] The discord between the political rule of 'Herod' and the birth of the true king Jesus establishes the foundation for a continuing conflict between the two rulers.

The conflict develops throughout the narrative as Jesus's destiny and 'Herod's' character are further revealed. 'Herod' appears again in Luke 3:18-20 imprisoning John and adding to his wickedness (περὶ πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν πονηρῶν). In Luke 9:7-9, the reader learns that 'Herod' has killed John, with his direct speech claiming full responsibility for this iniquity.[215] As Darr explains, "In Luke's narrative world, Herod assumes complete responsibility for John's death and exhibits no remorse, no guilt, no fear, no weakness, no doubts or second thoughts. And this characterization is consistent with the Lukan narrator's evaluation of him in 3:18-20: he is the evil but powerful political opponent of the Lord's messengers."[216] Herod has heard all about the

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[213] John A Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 135.

[214] Gilbert, 237-242.

[215] Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative* (LNTS 404; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 168.

[216] Darr, 139.

ministry of Jesus and is demanding to see him (ἐζήτει ἰδεῖν in Lk 9:9).[217] Set alongside Herod's beheading of John the Baptist, this scene heightens the conflict of the rival kings. Juxtaposed to these appearances of 'Herod' are the divine proclamations of the Davidic sonship of Jesus at the baptism (Lk 3:21:-22) and the transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36). Such language continues to contrast Jesus as the chosen king who will rule over the nations with the wickedness of the ruler 'Herod.'[218]

In Luke 13:31-35, Jesus and 'Herod' are pitted against each other when the Pharisees warn Jesus to flee from 'Herod.' The motive of 'Herod' is made explicit as he wishes to kill Jesus (Ἡρῴδης θέλει σε ἀποκτεῖναι), a fact literarily in line with his character.[219] Jesus responds by labeling 'Herod' a fox (ἀλώπηξ), an animal known both for its craftiness and its destructive tendencies, which he contrasts with his own ministry of the hen gathering the chicks of Israel.[220] Jesus gathers 'Herod,' the Pharisees, and Jerusalem together as opponents who share in his death rather than acknowledge his identity as the Davidic king (Ps 118:26).[221] This incorporates the language of suffering around the image of Jesus's kingship depicted in Luke 1-3 as the political Christology crescendos throughout the rest of the narrative to the crucifixion.[222]

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[217]Frederick William Danker, "ζητέω," BDAG, 428 allows for the more amicable reading 'searching' as well as the more authoritative and foreboding 'demand' which the context suggests might be more appropriate. This is to disagree with Conzelmann, *Theology*, 51 who believes Herod's desire to see Jesus is purely pragmatic and only serves to introduce him for the Passion account. Rather, it appears that Luke has added this unique saying to the Markan tradition in order to draw a literary parallel with Herod's depiction in Luke's passion account. So, Talbert, 27.

[218] Following Jervell, 30 in reading the language of Son of God in Jewish Messianic categories.

[219] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 536.

[220] Mark Allen Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible* (London: SPCK, 1990), 30.

[221] Green, 536.

[222] For extensive references to Jesus' kingship in Luke 19-23, see particularly Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship By Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 222. As Walton, 27 succinctly summarizes it, "Jesus is referred to as 'king' more frequently than the other evangelists, not least in…the insertion of 'king' into the acclamation at the triumphal entry (Luke 19:38)."

The climactic meeting of Jesus and Herod in Luke 23:6-12 functions as an anti-climax since the wicked 'Herod' is not cast down by the Messiah. Rather, when 'Herod' finally sees Jesus, Jesus does not display or refute his kingship (Lk 23:2); Jesus remains silent before his rival. This silence subverts 'Herod's' delight at finally seeing Jesus, as the king's demand for a sign is not even acknowledged.[223] In response, 'Herod' mocks Jesus by clothing him with an elegant robe and sends him back to Pilate as an impotent Messianic pretender. 'Herod' is joined by this mockery to the scribes and chief priests (Lk 23:10) and is linked in a bond of friendship with Pilate (Lk 23:12; cf. Lk 3:1), as all share in the derisive of Jesus. While 'Herod' attests to the innocence of Jesus (v.15), he does nothing to halt the impending execution but is complicit in the death of the Messiah. Though Jesus's death embodies a dramatic reversal of traditional kingship, the reader is left with the unfulfilled expectations of the Messiah casting down the proud from their thrones.[224]

This unfulfilled expectation is embraced in Acts as the Church proclaims Jesus's death and resurrection. Jesus's resurrection attests to the divine victory and vindication of the Messiah (Lk 24:26, 44-48; Acts 2:24). Jesus now sits on the promised throne of David at the right hand of God and waits for God to put his enemies under his feet (Acts 2:34-36). This politically charged message grounds Peter's call for the Jews to repent of their sharing with the lawless in the death of Jesus (Acts 2:40). The gospel offers both salvation to the world and the expectation of the Messiah's judgment of the enemies of God as seen in the Church's reading of Psalm 2 in Acts 4.[225] Acts continues Luke's political Christological language through citation of the same OT

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[223] Hoehner, 240.

[224] This pattern of a critique of current political rule in light of service, while still promising a future judgment by the righteous, is also highlighted in Luke 22:24-30.

[225] Darr, 168.

texts as Luke's gospel. This political proclamation is further heightened, however, as the message spreads through the Roman world and causes disorder by threatening Caesar's rule (Acts 4; 17:1-7; 19:23-41). Although Jesus is already victorious in his resurrection, the 'dark side' of this victory is the defeat of God's enemies, especially those who wickedly oppose the Messiah's rule.

The death of 'Herod' in Acts 12 offers a narrative resolution to the political conflict of the two kings. Acts 12 consists of two interlocking narratives. The first (v.1-17) opens with 'Herod's' continuation in wickedness by killing James and imprisoning Peter for a later execution. This 'Herod' is historically Herod Agrippa I but as the literary construct he is the same 'Herod' who killed John the Baptist and mocked Jesus. As 'Herod' continues in his wickedness by attacking the Church, Peter is miraculously delivered from slavery in a setting that invokes both the Passover and Jesus's passion. Peter is 'raised up' (ἤγειρεν and Ἀνάστα are both in Acts 12:7) from his imprisonment in chains like Jesus's victory over the grave. Peter's imitation of Jesus's resurrection offers a further defeat of the wicked tyrant.

The second part narrates 'Herod's' dethronement by the angel of God as he, like Pharaoh, is struck with a plague (v.18-23). The three verses that depict his death are full of vivid detail, including the gruesome worm-eaten illness that follows his divine pretensions. While this idolatrous self-glorification is the explicit cause of his death, the framework also connects the punishment to 'Herod's' persecuting activity.[226] The pericope concludes with a continual triumph of the word of God (v.24-25) that shows the victory of Messiah and his community over this great tribulation.[227]

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[226] Pervo, 315.

[227] Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1989), 142.

The thrust of account thus has a strong political edge. Luke interprets the death of a king as a result of his opposition to the Messiah and his messengers. Peter's release offers consolation to the Church in its role as witnesses, while the death of 'Herod' is a warning to all who fight against God.[228] Herod Agrippa's death finally resolves the conflict between 'Herod' and Jesus, as the risen Messiah finally casts the proud tyrant off his throne. This marks the disappearance of 'Herod' as a character from the narrative as the gospel continues its march to Rome.[229]

Thus, the narrative of Luke-Acts portrays an overarching literary conflict between Jesus and 'Herod' in strikingly political terms. This literary context supports the type-scene's function in Acts 12 as a political critique in line with Judith, Greek Esther, or 2 Maccabees. This function is amply connected to Luke-Acts' eschatological orientation and focus on God's providential acts for the Messiah and the Church. This interpretation deepens the moral function of the type-scene with a political force. It also lays the foundation for the type-scene's comedic reversal.

Acts 12:20-23 as Comedic Reversal

Comedy and humor in the ancient world are both complex phenomena and are not simply synonymous. Comedy refers to a specific form or structure, particularly in drama, whose chief motif is the desire for consummation expressed through elements such as romantic love, fertility rites, or the ultimate victory of a hero.[230] Humor, on the other hand, refers to something that

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[228] Klauck, 43.

[229] The movement to the Gentile mission in Acts 13 makes this chapter a transition, which James Dunn calls "the first full denunciation of the fallacies of Gentile theism" which opens with the ironic "warning example of the king of the Jews." So Dunn, 165.

[230] On this definition of comedy, see Dan O. Via, Jr., *Kerygma and Comedy in the New Testamen: A Structuralist Approach to* Hermeneutic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 41, 45-6, 119. For a more complete discussion of classical comic theory, see George Aichele, Jr., *Theology as Comedy: Critical and Theoretical Implications* (Landham, Md.: University Press of America, 1980), 9-16.

would evoke laughter and is an element found in a variety of literary settings. Thus, Rudolph Bultmann's comment that "The New Testament shows no trace of humor," despite being a general consensus among scholars, does not necessarily solve the question of the comic in the New Testament.[231] Indeed, the role of the comedic (and the occasional appearance of humor) has been subject to significant revision due to extensive parallels with Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.[232]

The analysis of Luke-Acts has proven to be particularly helpful in identifying traces of the comedic in the New Testament, especially in its more colorful tales of conflict between Christians and other religious practitioners.[233] The reason for the density of comedic scenes in Acts has led to a variety of explanations. For Richard Pervo, the appearance of comedy and humor in Acts highlights its connection to the genre of novelistic romances that sought to entertain a wide reading audience.[234] Others attribute the use of humor and other appeals to *pathos* as the result of rhetoric's role in historiography in the ancient world.[235] This theory has been particularly explored with an appeal to the use of 'tragic history,' an ancient style in historiographic that tended to sensationalize stories with theatric qualities borrowed from tragedy and comedy to make a story more poignant or exciting.[236] The comedic elements, particularly in scenes generating humor, are rhetorical flourishes in an otherwise historical document. While

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[231] Rudolph Bultmann, "Christianity as a Religion East and West," 232 as cited in Pervo, *Profit*, 58.

[232] The fullest treatment of the possibilities of humor in the New Testament that I have found is the work, Jakob Jonsson, *Humour and Irony in the New Testament: Illumintated by Parallels in Talmud and Midrash* (BZRGG 28; Leiden: Brill, 1985). For the treatment of the comedic in the New Testament, see Via, Jr, 39-170.

[233] So the numerous examples cited in Pervo, *Profit*, 58-85.

[234] Pervo, *Profit*, 81-5.

[235] Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 376-81.

[236] Lee, 32-33.

how one addresses the question of comedy in Luke-Acts is inextricably linked to the debate on genre, it nevertheless plays a powerful role in supporting the narrative theme of divine reversal. Like the comic element in 2 Maccabees or Judith, Acts uses the reversal of characters' fortunes to communicate an eschatological edge to the actions of God in history. This narrative theme offers a further lens for contextualizing the use of the type-scene in Acts 12:20-23.

The theme of comedic reversal starts with the song of Mary that praises the God who reverses the *status quo* of society by dethroning the rich and powerful and exalting the poor and hungry (Luke 1:52-3). This theme continues in the ministry of Jesus, the one who is rejected by Israel like the prophets of old but is received by sinners, prostitutes, and those outside Israel.[237] The comic edge of this reversal is twofold: the people who should recognize Jesus reject him, while those who are not the religious elite receive him. This reversal is also apparent in the special Lukan teachings of Jesus including the reaction of the two sons in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32) or the reversed fates of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31). The comedic reversal of Jesus's ministry is also captured in his death and resurrection. The crucified Jesus is recognized as righteous (δίκαιος) not by his followers or the Jewish people but by a Roman centurion.[238] Likewise, in the gospel's conclusion the disciples struggle to recognize the risen Jesus in a series of humorous encounters that highlight the surprising consummation of God's work in Jesus's resurrection.[239] In short, the theme of comic reversal in Luke helps unpack

[237] Lk 4:16-30 where Jesus' claim that is ministry is for outsiders revokes outrage from the people of his hometown.

[238] Lk 23:47.

[239] Lk 24:13-35 is full of humor with the two disciples talking to Jesus but never recognizing his identity. Likewise, the disciples' confusion over Jesus; presence with them as a ghost leads to a humorous emphasis on Jesus' physicality after his resurrection through the eating of fish (Lk 24:36-42).

the strange working of God's guidance of history through the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah. Jesus becomes the embodiment of a comedic reversal.

This theme is continued in Acts as the earliest Christians proclaim the gospel of God's actions in Jesus to the world. The Gentiles are constantly misunderstanding the message of the gospel and consider the messengers of the good news the source of power rather than the God of Christ. Paul and Barnabas are heralded as gods by the priest at Lystra (Acts 14:8-18), Simon Magus tries to buy the power of the Spirit from Peter (Acts 8:9-24), and the Athenians confuse Paul's preaching of Christ as a discourse on the two gods, Jesus and Resurrection (Acts 17:16-33). This humorous confusion, while not inherently comedic, does lead to particularly comedic reversals in a series of divine 'retribution' miracles that accompany the interaction between the gospel and various elements of Greco-Roman society. The seven sons of Sceva who try to use the names of Jesus and Paul in an exorcism are beaten and flee naked (Acts 19:13-16) and a magician is blinded when he tries to hinder Paul's proclamation (Acts 13:4-12).[240] These comedic reversals reveal "a subtle irony which occasionally takes the form of brilliant parodies" that hinges on the fulfillment of hope in Christ that is the grounds for thwarting other religious acts.[241] These continue God's cosmic consummation achieved through Christ through the Church's proclamation.

Both comedy and humor are also present in the divine reversal of Acts 12. Several features of Peter's escape from prison in Acts 12:6-18 against which Herod's death is set contain elements of humor. The image of Peter knocking frantically at the door to be let in after his

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[240] For a fuller discussion of the divine retribution miracles in Luke-acts, see Raymond M. Gen, "The Phenomenon of Miracles and Divine Infliction in Luke-Acts: Their Theological Significance," *Pneuma* 11.1 (1989): 3-19.

[241] Klauck, 119.

miraculous escape through several locked gates is dense with humor and draws on a motif found in Greco Roman comedy beginning with Aristophanes. The role of the ignorant running slave played by Rhoda is also a stock character in ancient comedy.[242] These contribute to the light-hearted and humorous tone of the passage which is further seen in Peter's assumption that his escape was a vision (Acts 12:9) and the praying Christians thinking it is Peter's spirit at the door (Acts 12:15). The whole account exemplifies Luke's literary skill in weaving elements of suspense and adventure alongside humor and irony.[243] More importantly, the deliverance of Peter against all odds is a celebration of God's surprising work that places the scene squarely in the realm of comedy. And this is recognized by almost all recent interpreters. The real issue, however, is if this comedic theme continues into the death of Herod. Allen rejects the comedic based on the lack of humorous elements in Herod's death, explaining "While the death of a persecutor would have been an entertaining story to early (persecuted) Christians, the story does not evoke laughter as did the escape scene."[244] However, the comedic is not narrowly defined by humor but a structure grounded on consummation, an element which is integral to the type-scene's function in Acts 12.

A dichotomy between two parties is often part of the contextualization of the type-scene as a comedic reversal. Thus, Antiochus's death contrasts with the hope of resurrection among the seven brothers in 2 Maccabess. Similarly, Epicurus and Alexander are contrasted throughout Lucian's work. The comedic reversal in Acts 12 is also unpacked through explicit parallels between Jesus and Herod, the two characters engaged in a political conflict culminating in

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[242] Russell Morton, "Acts 12:1-19," *Interpretation* 55.1 (2001): 67-9.

[243] Pervo, *Acts*, 302.

[244] Allen, 4.

Herod's death. The political conflict grounds the comedic reversal as the dichotomy between Jesus and Herod reveals a comedic consummation through contrasting descriptions.

The significant parallels between Jesus and Herod are presented in Appendix 2. The sheer number of correlations provides striking support for this dichotomy. Several of the parallels are worthy of further discussion as they support the comedic reversal of the type-scene. First, Herod puts on royal robes (ἐνδυσάμενος ἐσθῆτα βασιλικὴν) before he discusses famine relief with the crowd. This connects to Herod's earlier mocking of Jesus at his trial (Lk 23:11), where Herod heaped scorn on Jesus by giving him gorgeous robes (περιβαλὼν αὐτὸν ἐσθῆτα λαμπρὰν). The literary correspondence, especially of the repeated term for clothing (ἐσθής), helps closely invoke the earlier conflict and establish a strong sense of irony. Whereas Jesus's death followed the bestowal of robes by Herod, Herod's wearing of his own robes' foreshadows his demise.

Second, Herod's refusal to give glory to God contrasts with the divine voice's affirmation of Jesus's kingship. The people's assertion of Herod's divine voice is the primary cause of Herod's death. In contrast to the false praise of the people, the voice of God from heaven has continually confirmed the mission of Jesus, both in his baptism (Lk 3:22) and in his transfiguration (Lk 9:35). Whereas the divine voice has affirmed the mission of the Messiah now exalted to share in God's identity, God rejects the hubris of Herod in claiming a divine voice. The comedic contrast simultaneously celebrates the success of Jesus and heaps scorn on the wicked Herod.

Third, Herod's decision to sit upon his throne (καθίσας ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος) contrasts with Acts' depiction of Jesus's ascension to the throne of God. The language of enthronement (βῆμα/θρόνος) is relatively common in Luke-Acts and always conveys authority and political

clout.[245] However, its predominant use is in descriptions of the Messiah Jesus. For example, Peter using Psalm 110:1 in Acts 2:30 in order to proclaim God "would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne." While the resurrected Messiah is now enthroned, Herod is dethroned for his arrogance. This comedic reversal comes as no surprise, as the gospel opened with Mary's praise of the God who "who brought down the powerful from their thrones" (Lk 1:52: καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων) and promised her son would have the throne of David (Lk 1:32).

Finally, the description of Herod's death as "being worm-eaten" (γενόμενος σκωληκόβρωτος) provides the most dramatic contrast with Jesus and marks the complete eschatological vindication of Jesus and the complete destruction of the tyrant Herod. Jesus is raised incorruptible while Herod decays to death. The term worm-eaten (σκωληκόβρωτος) is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, although it is used throughout the Greco-Roman world for the infestation of dead flesh with maggots or other decomposing agents.[246] While in theory it was originally connected to a specific condition in the ancient world, it eventually came to refer specifically to a divine punishment inflicted on the wicked as illustrated by the many type-scene accounts of Antiochus Epiphanes's death.[247] This type of death also gained specific political force in Jewish and (later) Christian communities as judgment from God.[248] This is readily apparent in a brief discussion of the term's use in Jewish literature.

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[245] Johnson, 215.

[246] BDAG, 933.

[247] For a detailed description of the interpretation of being worm eaten through the ancient world, see Thomas Africa, "Worms and the Death of Kings," *Classical Antiquity* 1.1 (1982): 1-17.

[248] Despite Allen's extensive analysis of the death of tyrant type-scene, he fails to distinguish the particularly Jewish background to 'corruption/worm eating' and how that is distinct from other Greco-Roman sources. This is noted in Africa, 7-16.

Worms as an agent of destruction of the enemies of God first appears in Isaiah 14:11, where the King of Babylon is cast down into Sheol with worms as his covering. This connects to the description later in Isaiah 66:24 where the dead bodies of those who rebelled against God are cast out of the vindicated Zion into eternal punishment by fire and worms.[249] Both descriptions use death by worms as judgment on the enemies of God in an eschatologically charged way. [250] This same motif appears throughout the second Temple period, often with echoes of the uses in Isaiah. The book of Judith celebrates God's defeat of Judith's political enemies with the claim in 16:17b that "he will send fire and worm into their flesh; they shall weep in pain forever."[251] Similarly, Sirach 7:17 warns the proud to humble themselves because "the punishment of the ungodly is fire and worms."[252] A final example is from 2 Maccabees 9:1-12, where the punishment of death by worms is cast on Antiochus Epiphanes for "thinking he could touch the stars of heaven (v.10)."[253] This decaying judgment is explicitly contrasted with the hope of a bodily resurrection in 2 Maccabees 7 when the seven sons claim the resurrection as the grounds that drives their political disobedience in the face of a tyrant who will late receive judgment through a worm-eaten illness.[254] While there are other examples of worms being used in a more

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[249] Cf. Mk 9:48

[250] Alan E. Bernstein. *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Christian Worlds* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 171.

[251]Enslin, 174-175: "The song ends with the prediction of certain doom and torment for the foreign nations who have risen against the people of God."

[252] This is the rendering of the Greek text. The Hebrew lacks worms. For discussion, see James L. Crenshaw, *The Book of Sirach: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (*NIB* 5; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 692.

[253] Cf. 1 Macc 2:62-3.

[254] Robert Doran. *The Second Book of Maccabees: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (*NIB* 4; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 240-241. For a brief discussion on the intersection of politics and resurrection language, see Alan F. Segal "Life After Death: The Social Sources," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium* (eds. Stephen Davis, et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 90-125.

eschatologically neutral, way (as in Josephus), it is the eschatological view of time depicted in Luke-Acts that suggests a more explicit view of the death as divine vindication.[255] With this rich collection of historical precedents and Acts' narrative framework, Luke's depiction of Herod's death by worm-decay expresses a strong eschatological judgment.

These literary precedents also support the contrast between Jesus's resurrection and Herod's punishment. One of the unique aspects of Luke's understanding of Jesus's resurrection is his bodily incorruptibility. This is seen in Luke's bodily depiction of the resurrection in Luke 24 and the citation of Psalm 16 in Acts 2 and 13 that highlights the proof of Jesus's διαφθορά.[256] When one reads the graphic description of Herod's death in terms of bodily decomposition by worms the contrast is immediately struck with the Messiah raised imperishable.[257]

This bodily contrast supports the comedic reversal of God's vindication of the Messiah and defeat of the royal pretender. While on the surface this judgment arose as Herod's failure to give honor to God, the larger narrative of Luke-Acts reveals that 'Herod' has continually set himself against God, his Messiah, and the mission of the Church so that this divine condemnation is deserved. Thus, Herod is dethroned and subject to eschatological judgment for his opposition to the Messiah proclaimed by the gospel. This makes the comedic reversal complete, as Jesus is exalted to rule from the throne of God while Herod is punished by God.

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[255] More examples abound, as has significantly been shown by Allen, 17-20. However, the political thrust of these deaths is little commented on and seems a place for further research, especially in the Jewish sources. This should include the similar movement from salvation for the righteous to judgment on the wicked which grounds the political rebuke to kings in Wis 1-6. See Michael Kolarick, S.J. *The Book of Wisdom: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (*NIB* 5; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 465-490.

[256] It is significant that a later Midrash on Ps 16 explicitly explains the incorruption mentioned in the psalm as proving "neither corruption nor worms had power over David's flesh." See William G. Braude, trans., *Midrash on Psalms* Vol.1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 201. The language of corruption (φθείρω) is a word family predominantly used in the New Testament with eschatological overtones (cf. 1 Cor 15:50; Gal 6:8; 2 Pet 2:12; Jude 10; Rev 11:18; 19:2). So S.E. Porter, "Wrath, Destruction," *DLNT* 1238-1241.

[257] The language of corruption (φθείρω) is a word family predominantly used in the New Testament with eschatological overtones (cf. Gal 6:8; 1 Cor 15:50; Jude 10; 2 Pet 2:12; Rev 11:18; 19:2). So S.E. Porter, 1238-1241.

The cumulative force of these parallels reveals the comedic reversal of the passage. The resurrection of Jesus as the risen King contrasts sharply with the judged and decaying enemy of God, Herod. This conclusion resounds with the larger narrative theme of divine reversal foreshadowed in Mary's opening song. Despite Allen's insistence, the comedic is a perfectly valid interpretive option. Indeed, in light of the clear eschatological slant of Luke-Acts' use of providence it seems a stronger option than a purely moral exhortation reading. But how does it alter the function of the text in the wider narrative?

Comedy in the ancient world has a variety of functions. On the one hand, comedy (particularly when linked to humor) often supported both the ridicule of opponents and education so that a comedic function enhances the political and exhortation function of the type-scene in Luke-Acts. As Jonsson explains, "The New Testament authors are brought up in a *milieu* in which it was not uncommon to ridicule opponents or make use of smiles and laughter as a means of education, just as well as polemic discussion."[258] However, the comic is also particularly expressive of eschatological hope through a structure that emphasizes consummation. Comedy intrudes in the tragic course of life and offers unexpected insight into reality through exposing an apparent incongruity.[259] Providence works through the comedic in Luke-Acts in order to open the eyes of the faithful to a new eschatological reality. As Berger explains, "the experience of the comic does not miraculously remove suffering and vile in this world, nor does it provide self-evident proof that God is active in the world and intends to redeem it. However, perceived in faith, the comic becomes a great consolation and a witness to the redemption yet to come."[260]

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[258] Jonsson, 251.

[259] For a brief discussion of comic theory in the ancient world, see Pervo, *Profit*, 58-9. For a more extensive treatment on the comic throughout history beginning in ancient Greece, see Peter L. Berger, *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1997).

[260] Berger, 215.

For the earliest Christians who read the comedic reversals in Luke-Acts, these passages offered a sense of eschatological consolation. This consolation explains how the audience can rejoice and be encouraged by a narrative opening with the death of a disciple (James in Acts 12:3). Without the eschatological framing of the comedic, Acts 12 reveals a divine guidance of history that is fickle and ruthless. However, the deliverance of Peter, the death of James, and the judgment on Herod all coalesce nicely when understood in light of the coming age that is promised through the gospel and now experienced (even if only in occasionally deliverances). The comedic reading of the passage takes seriously the eschatological vision of Luke-Acts that undergirds the actions of God and grounds the political and moral function of the type-scene. Despite the modern hesitancy to see the death of anyone (even a tyrant) as comedy, the comedic and eschatological function of the type-scene offers early Christians a deep consolation based on the victory of Christ.

Choosing the Best Reading of Acts 12:20-23

Having explored three interpretations of the type-scene's function in Acts 12:20-23 that connect to the narrative context of Luke-Acts and are supported by parallels in the Greco-Roman literary milieu, one might ask which reading is the most compelling. While Allen is emphatic that the type-scene functions solely as a form of moral exhortation, our analysis showed how this interpretation fails to adequately address Luke-Acts' eschatological view of time. However, interpreting the passage as a political critique and comedic reversal also connected to larger narrative themes as well as built on an explicit eschatologically view of time and providence. Nevertheless, these two interpretations require a close examination of the passage in its wider narrative setting in order to see both the political conflict and comedic reversal between Jesus

and Herod. The resulting ambiguities of the passage are numerous: multiple narrative themes, the complex historical uses of the type-scene, and the seemingly unanswerable question of genre. In light of the compelling argument for all three readings and the ambiguities of the passage, should we delineate the 'best' reading?

The 'best' reading of the type-scene in Acts 12 must acknowledge its ability to function as all three options concurrently. The three functions are not mutually exclusive but allow the death of Herod to resonant on multiple levels in the narrative of Luke-Acts. Indeed, the multiple functions of the type-scene is also seen in several examples of the type-scene's use in the ancient world. Therefore, the parallel texts do not exclude any of the three options so much as encourage the audience to interpret the type-scene in Acts 12 as a complex overlap of interpretative possibilities. As responsible readers trying to interpret the type-scene in light of the historical literary milieu and its unique narrative themes, we must entertain all of these interpretative possibilities in order to fully understand the function of this passage in its ancient context.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

"If there is one belief (however the facts resist it) that unites us all, from the evangelists to those who argue away inconvenient portions of their texts, and those who spin large plots to accommodate the discrepancies and dissonances into some larger scheme, it is the conviction that somehow, in some occult fashion, if we could only detect it, everything will be found to hang together…We are all fulfillment men, *pleromatists*; we all seek the center that will allow the sense to rest, at any rate for one interpreter, at any rate for one moment."[261]

The goal of this research was to examine critically the use of the wider literary milieu of New Testament for the interpretation of individual pericopes. The specific case chosen was the use the death of a tyrant type-scene for the interpretation of the death of Herod in Acts 12:20-23. The paper opened with a brief history of research on this passage and an analysis of O. Wesley Allen's use of the type-scene in reading the death of Herod in Acts as a form of moral exhortation. This examination of Allen's view revealed several flaws in his methodology. First, Allen conflated the literary features of the type-scene with a particular function without noting the diversity of functions the type-scene had in the parallel texts. Second, Allen used his understanding of Acts' genre as apologetic historiography as the primary restriction on the function of the type-scene. Besides making an assumption on the genre of Acts, this position also failed to consider how each literary work reworks its genre so that genre is not a static form. Finally, Allen assumed a narrative agreement on the theme of providence between Acts and

[261] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 72.

other apologetic historiographies that is problematic, not least because of the unique role of eschatology in Acts. While an initial reading of Allen's invocation of parallel texts in the literary milieu of the New Testament might seen to support his interpretation, a closer examination reminded us that parallel texts must be *weighed* and not solely *counted* in their use in interpretation. Each use of the type-scene needed to be appreciated in its own literary, narrative, and generic context to see the full range of functions and meanings available to the author of Acts.

Chapter 2 treated these parallel texts in their own unique literary context and considered how wider narrative, genre, and social constraints affected the text's possible functions. This analysis treated a diverse range of texts including 2 Chronicles, several Greco-Roman historians, 1 and 2 Maccabees, the works of Joesphus, Jewish novelistic texts like Judith, and even Lucian's heavily satirical *Alexander*. I concluded that these examples of the type-scene revealed three functions of the type-scene: moral exhortation, political critique, and comedic reversal. Often these functions overlapped. Thus, Allen's emphasis on moral exhortation alone appeared to be an oversimplification. I also found the strongest force that shaped the meaning and function of the type-scene was a work's understanding of time and divine action in history. It was providence and time rather than genre that shaped the conventions of the type-scene to different narrative ends.

With these three functions of the type-scene in view, chapter 3 reexamined the death of Herod in Acts 12:20-23. Leaving aside the question of genre as an inadequate restraint on the type-scene's function, the theme of divine providence and time was explored in Luke-Acts in order to see how it shaped the use of the type-scene. While Luke-Acts shared some references to providence found in apologetic historiography, this language was framed with an eschatological

understanding of time centered on God's action in Christ and the proclamation of the Church. With this theme in mind, the death of Herod in Acts 12 was explored as an example of the three functions of the type-scene. As a moral exhortation, the death of Herod reinforced the superiority of the Church as a philosophical school and showed the continuity between God's past actions for Israel and current work in the life of the Jesus and the Church. As a political critique, the death of Herod concluded a larger narrative conflict between Jesus and 'Herod' that attested to the divine approval of Jesus over against any falsely divinized leader. As a comedic reversal, the death of Herod contrasted with the resurrected Messiah as the consummation of God's surprising work that grounded the hope of the earliest Christians. All three functions of the type-scene were contextually compelling as they resonated with wider narrative themes and parallels in the wider literary milieu. While the political and comedic interpretations tend to connect better to Luke-Acts' view of time, there is no reason all three readings could not be present as they mutually support one another. I concluded by suggesting that all three readings ought to be held together as a range of possible interpretations that the earliest Christians could have heard in the reading of Acts 12:20-23.

Bearing this conclusion in mind, we can return to our initial issue: how can interpreters responsibly use the wider literary milieu of the New Testament to interpret individual pericopes? While this is a complex and multi-faceted issue, one of the words of caution this research offers is the need for careful and close reading of each text in its original literary context. Often the appeal to the wider literary milieu is not a call to a close contextual examination of parallel texts but an impulsive means of fulfilling the human desire to interpret a complex text. This human desire to understand is, as Frank Kermode has aptly named it, a need to be *pleromatists*. Interpreters are not comfortable with a text having a range of meanings but want to capture the

elusive 'singular' meaning through any possible method of restraint. While the desire to understand the text is crucial to the task of interpretation, this desire must not lead to the irresponsible flattening or distortion of parallel texts in order to justify one's reading. In using the parallel texts to construct a type-scene for interpreting the death of Herod, the quest for the meaning of the type-scene in Acts must take seriously the full range of parallel texts on their own terms and not solely for the sake of their impact on the interpretation of Acts.

My work has sought to present the unique function of the death of a tyrant type-scene in each narrative setting to reveal the possibilities the type-scene offered in the ancient world. While this treatment of the parallel texts meant complicating the interpretation of Acts 12 with a range of possible functions, this should not be seen as a step backward in the quest for the text's meaning. Rather, the range of interpretative options open to Acts 12:20-23 offers the modern interpreter a deeper appreciation of the text's wider narrative resonances and opens up new questions about the narrative as a whole. In the end, the type-scene conventions derived from the larger literary milieu become not restraints on the text that tie it down to a singular meaning but an opening of new horizons for a text in specific contextual boundaries.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: DIFFERENTIATING THE HERODIAN LINE IN LUKE-ACTS

Herods in Luke-Acts	Appearances in Luke-Acts (suggested)	Description	Occurrence	Summary
Herod the Great (37-4 BCE)	Lk 1:5	Ἡρῴδου τοῦ βασιλέως τῆς Ἰουδαίας	Luke -1	Reference in Acts is to Herod's Praetorium
	Acts 23:25	Ἡρῴδης	Acts-1	
Herod Antipas (4 BCE-39CE)	Lk 3:1, 3:19, 9:7; Acts 13:1	ὁ δὲ Ἡρῴδης ὁ τετράρχης	Luke-3 Acts-1	Differentiated by tetrarch. Reference in Acts 13 is to convert from Herod's house.
	Lk 8:3. 9:9, 13:31, 23:7-15; Acts 4:27	Ἡρῴδης	Luke-11 Acts-1	
Herod Agrippa I (41-44 CE)	Acts 12:1	Ἡρῴδης ὁ βασιλεὺς	Acts-1	Appears only in Acts, set apart from Antipas only once by title of King
	Acts 12:6, 11, 19, 20, 21	Ἡρῴδης	Acts-5	
Herod Agrippa II (48-93/4 CE)	Acts 25:13; 25:24; 25:26; 26:2, 7, 19, 27	Ἀγρίππας ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀγρίππας	Acts-7 Acts-5	Always called Agrippa, never Herod.
	Acts 25:22, 23; 26:1, 28, 32			

APPENDIX 2: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN HEROD IN ACTS 12 AND JESUS IN LUKE-ACTS

Point of Comparison	Used of Herod's Death in Acts 12	Similarities to Jesus	Uses in Luke-Acts
Clothed in Robes	ἐνδυσάμενος **ἐσθῆτα** βασιλικὴν (v.21)	περιβαλὼν αὐτὸν **ἐσθῆτα** λαμπρὰν (Lk 23:11)	ἐσθῆτα, used 4 times, the other 2 for angels' clothing
Sits on Throne	**καθίσας ἐπὶ** τοῦ βήματος (v.21)	**καθίσαι ἐπὶ** τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ (Acts 2:30) (cf. Ps 110:1 in Acts 2:34)	καθίζω used 17 times βῆμα used 8 times in Luke-Acts. θρόνος, used 5 times in Luke-Acts, 3 of the Messiah Jesus
Voice of God	**Θεοῦ φωνὴ** καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου (v.22)	**φωνὴν** ἐξ οὐρανοῦ (Lk 3:22) **φωνὴ** ἐγένετο ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης (Lk 9:35) (cf. voice of God in Paul's conversion Acts 9 and 22 or Peter's vision in Acts 10)	φωνή used 41 times
Role of Angels	ἐπάταξεν αὐτὸν **ἄγγελος κυρίου** (v.23)	ὀπτασίαν **ἀγγέλων** ἑωρακέναι οἳ λέγουσιν αὐτὸν ζῆν (Lk 24:23) (cf. role of angels in Lk 1-2)	ἄγγελος used 46 times in Luke-Acts
Glory of God	οὐκ ἔδωκεν **τὴν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ** (v.23)	οὐχὶ ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς **τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ** (Luke 24:26; cf. 21:27) **δόξαν θεοῦ** καὶ Ἰησοῦν ἑστῶτα ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ (Stephen's death in Acts 7:55)	δόξα used 17 times in Luke-Acts

Bodily Corruption	γενόμενος σκωληκόβρωτος (v.23)	ἡ σὰρξ αὐτοῦ εἶδεν διαφθοράν (Acts 2:31; cf. Ps 16:10) ὃν δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἤγειρεν οὐκ εἶδεν διαφθοράν (Acts 13:37; cf. Ps 16:10)	Both διαφθορά and σκωληκόβρωτος are only used in Acts.

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