

LUKE'S "JEWISH" PAUL: A TALE OF SIBLING RIVALRY

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ABSTRACT

Previous scholarship on Paul in Acts focuses on reconstructing the historical Paul from a critical comparison of the discordant portraits of the apostle in the letters and in Luke's second story. As such, the throbbing question that drove not a few scholars was "Which depiction reveals the real Paul?" With a productive surge in the narrative criticism of Acts, many literary critics have redirected their efforts to Luke's sociologically tinged narrative, which undergirds a more pertinent concern: "What is Luke describing through his portrayal of Paul?" Scholars representative of a narrative reading of Acts include: Richard I. Pervo, Daniel Marguerat, and François Bovon, to name a few. They all agree that the depiction of Paul in Acts tells the reader more about the sociocultural situation of Luke's group than about the historical Paul. Despite this scholarly achievement, the air of anti-Semitism still saturates the atmosphere of Acts scholarship. Hence, it is evident that narrative criticism by itself is insufficient to decrypt the subtle rhetoric Luke employs to relate his story. Couched in a tensed tale of sibling rivalry, the familiar lexeme, "the Jews," which is frequently correlated with the "Christian" Paul, is imbued with a subtle nuance: diaspora Jewishness. Neglectful of recent critical discussions on the parting of Judaism and early Christianity and the foci of the Redescribing Christian Origins project of the SBL, many well-intentioned narrative critics of Acts have succumbed to a traditional reading of Acts evincing an anti-Semitic worldview. But this cannot be further from the truth. By contrast, I argue in this work that if narrative criticism is refined by means of the critical deductions of social scientists, and if these conclusions are polished by the perceptive study of historians of religion, it will lead to the articulation of a setting in which Luke's project may be viewed as participating in "Jewishness." In lieu of mirroring the replacement of Jewishness by

Christianness, Luke's story consistently relates the tale of Christ-believing diaspora Jews who are unapologetically steeped in imperial life and culture.

The pseudo-dichotomy that is repeatedly reaffirmed by scholars thus should be jettisoned forthwith, because it is blind to the intricacies of social becoming and identity formation. Aided by studies in social identity and collective memory, Acts may be seen to reflect the fervent struggle of Christ-believing diaspora Jews who upheld the messiahship of Jesus, the non-Judaizing of devout Gentiles, and subservience to imperial authorities as signature traits of diaspora Jewishness: the dual commitment to Jewish ancestral customs and active participation in the Greco-Roman society. So Acts is definitely about Jewishness without precluding Romanness. The key to this clarification is the type of Jewishness Luke espouses—diaspora Jewishness. Approaches to Acts that reinforce a spurious dichotomy (i.e., Judean or Greco-Roman) are methodologically flawed, because they ignore the subtle rhetoric of Luke: overwhelmingly situating references to “the Jews” in coastal cities encircling the Aegean Sea, mostly Greece and Asia Minor. In line with the principles of literary cartography, Luke's siting of “the Jews” in these cities has nuanced its denotation: diaspora Jews. Previous scholarship has ignored this subtlety and has created a hermeneutical quandary: Is Luke's sociocultural milieu Judean or Greco-Roman? The story underlying Luke's astute application of the familiar lexeme, “the Jews,” leaves no room for speculation or contradiction. The rhetoric is unequivocally lucid: Jews residing in Asia Minor and Greece. These Jews are the historical referents of Acts. Thus Luke's second story evinces ideological tensions characteristic of social becoming and identity formation. Using the sociological principles espoused by Mark Currie, hostility is fiercer when competitors have more in common. The competing groups described in Acts are not dissimilar (Jews and Christians) but are rivals (non-Christ-believing diaspora Jews and Christ-believing

diaspora Jews). Each earnestly strives to defend its unique understanding of diaspora Jewishness. Nor is Christianness indicative of a new “religion” but rather is a legitimate expression of diaspora Jewishness.

INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on “the Jews” in Acts chiefly focuses on indices emblematic of a contemporaneous religion—Judaism. As such, the accent falls on Sabbath observance, circumcision, and dietary laws.¹ Although these Jewish customs deserve scholarly attention, they frequently detract from Luke’s rhetoric: those represented in the symbolic world of Acts. Unsurprisingly, emphasis on ancestral practices is espoused by pundits of the historical-critical method who instinctively assume that Acts is a historicist narrative: it systematically and objectively chronicles past events in the post-Enlightenment denotation of the term. This proclivity has birthed questions regarding the genre, dating, and provenance of Acts (hereafter referred to as GDP).² The genre assigned to ancient narratives conditions their interpretation. So if Acts *prima facie* is presumed to be an objective, systematic, and reliable reminiscing of mid-first century apostolic history, it would naturally inform the interpretative value ascribed to the narrative. Likewise, the rivalry between “the Jews” and the “Christian” Paul will naïvely be construed as indicating a palpable conflict between Jews and Christians who lived in the mid first century. But this overlooks historical-critical data, because there is no documentary evidence attesting to the use of “Christian” until the beginning of the second century.³ If Acts’ genre is simplistically read as history, it obfuscates many intriguing existential affirmations, which can only be harmoniously analyzed from the viewpoint of narrative criticism. To appraise Acts holistically, the literary world evinced in the narrative must be scrutinized before any valid interpretation can stand, especially Paul’s unsavory interactions with “the Jews.” Arguments on Acts’ genre typically swing between two ends of a pendulum: history and literature. Most scholars agree that Acts features both; they

¹ Isaac Oliver, *Torah Praxis after 70 CE: Reading Matthew and Luke-Acts as Jewish Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

² But I concede that this acronym is pervasively utilized for Gross Domestic Product.

³ See the discussion in 3.1 below.

disagree, however, on where to place the accent. Creative solutions now abound in scholarship: historiography and apologetic history.⁴ This foregrounds my hermeneutical literary proclivity: narrative criticism.

Dating is the second component of Acts' GDP. As Edgar Krentz adeptly remarks: "It [i.e., chronology] is the skeleton of history."⁵ This implies that the timeline an exegete assigns to Acts determines how its genre is read. Proponents of early dating typically ascribe chronological accuracy to the narrative, because they unwittingly assume that Luke was a travel companion of Paul.⁶ Conversely, those who assign an early second century date to Acts suggest that the author, although influenced by the Pauline tradition that epitomized Christ associations in Asia Minor and Greece, was most likely not a travel companion of his group's revered apostle. As Richard I. Pervo avers: "'We' in Acts is best studied as a literary problem. Its major narrative function is to bring readers into the story."⁷ Exegetes espousing this view regard Luke as a third-generation Paulinist. Dating is thus pivotal to scholars' construal of Luke's Paul, because it determines if Acts' portrait is an objective reminiscing of a mid-first century apostle or is an innovation of a second-generation disciple.⁸ The former is the contention of historicists, while the latter is the argument of literary critics. I am more inclined to the latter.

⁴ Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the "Acts of the Apostles,"* trans. Ken McKinney, Gregory J. Laughery, and Richard Bauckham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Craig S. Keener, *Introduction and 1:1—2:47*, vol. 1 of *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 113-15. Richard I. Pervo's novelistic proposal has been incisively scrutinized for not taking into cognizance the complexity of ancient history (i.e., historiography). *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

⁵ Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975),

⁶ For a full discussion on this subject, see William S. Campbell, *The "We" Passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The Narrator as Narrative Character* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007); Alan J. Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 23-25.

⁷ Richard I. Pervo, *The Mystery of Acts: Unraveling Its Story* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2008), 161.

⁸ Todd Penner, "Reading Acts in the Second Century: Reflections on Method, History, and Desire," in *Engaging Early Christian History: Reading Acts in the Second Century*, ed. Rubén R. Dupertius and Todd Penner (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 1-16.

The last aspect of Acts' GDP that requires mention is provenance. Some exegetes argue that locating Luke is mere conjecture. But I strongly disagree. I firmly believe that Luke situates the recipients of Acts through the narrative's construction of Paul and its siting of his critics, "the Jews." As I will argue in 2.2, Paul's adversaries are localized in Asia Minor and Greece, which makes them diaspora Jews and not Judeans or Jews collectively. The significance of this novel interpretation of "the Jews," which is based on a critical analysis of internal literary evidence, is groundbreaking, because it conclusively upends research suggesting "anti-Jewish" implications from Luke's narrative and decisively dissipates the non-ecumenical air of anti-Semitism. Therefore, GDP, contrary to the contention of a few scholars, is not unfounded speculations about Acts; rather, it informs every meaningful endeavor geared toward deciphering the text's literary affirmations which encapsulate the actual historical milieu of Acts' composition. My GDP framework for studying Acts thus is to focus on (1) the narrative, in the context of (2) the early second century CE, and (3) Asia Minor and Greece provenances respectively. This is the "skeleton" on which my research on Luke's "Jewish" Paul is built.

Not mindful of the complementary nature of Acts' GDP, some scholars have posited varying discordant explanations for Luke's Paul.⁹ E. P. Sanders disregards Acts' historical data on Paul but accepts his diaspora provenance, which is not corroborated in the letters. Sanders bases his assertion on Paul's diaspora provenance on his unawareness of rabbinic signature adaptation of Jewish ancestral customs to evolving sociocultural settings. This glaring absence in Paul's letters, Sanders holds, indicates that he was ideologically different from the Judean rabbis. To account for the so-called discrepancies between the Pauline depictions in Acts and the letters, Sanders opines that Luke did not read Paul's writings. Sanders' arguments patently show that he

⁹ I will fully unpack the arguments of E. P. Sanders, Jacob Jervell, Daniel Marguerat, Richard I. Pervo, and Stanley E. Porter below in 5.1.

is neglectful of this research's genre and dating of Acts. His deductions thus are inevitable. Jacob Jervell is also guilty of the GDP dissociation. He assumes the historical reliability of Acts but is noticeably silent on its dating and provenance. Applying this theoretical framework, he deduces that Acts features the persona of Paul which is concealed in the letters. The latter only reveal the apostle's theology, he argues. Daniel Marguerat theologizes Luke's depiction of Paul. He, too, fails to harmonize satisfactorily Acts' GDP. He staunchly advocates a narrative reading of Acts but dates it conservatively. Pervo's assessment of Acts' GDP aligns with the perspective of this research. But he draws the conclusion that Luke is departing Judaism, because he is unaware of the critical issues raised by the Redescribing Christian Origins project of the SBL. This implies that knowledge of Acts' GDP is only a starting point, not a destination. To construct a reading of the "Christian" Paul and "the Jews" that is ecumenical in outlook, the throbbing questions raised by contributors to the aforementioned SBL project need to be taken seriously and applied to an up-to-date interpretation of Luke's narrative. Stanley E. Porter's reading of Luke's Paul reaffirms the historicist method: downplaying discordant details and accenting similar features. These scholarly contributions showcase the continuum of decades-long approaches to Luke's Paul.

As I hinted above, none of the reviewed scholarship satisfactorily addresses ecumenical interests: Jewish-Christian relations in the early second century in Asia Minor and Greece. To address this concern, I will approach the subject differently: (1) I will apply the GDP popularized by Pervo; (2) I will use the method of the historians of religion, epitomized by the Redescribing Christian Origins project; and (3) I will utilize the "theories, methods, and research outcomes" of the social sciences.¹⁰ This tripartite methodology will eschew hermeneutical pitfalls of previous scholarship that make Christian triumphalist deductions inevitable. Combining narrative,

¹⁰ John H. Elliott, *What Is Social-scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 14.

sociological, and historical criticisms is important in unraveling the multilayered underpinnings of Acts. First, I will argue that Luke's "Jewish" Paul evinces the social identity struggle of Christ associations that were comprised of diaspora Jews and devout non-Judaizing Gentiles. And I will further contend that the ensuing rivalry is not between Jews and Christians or Judeans and diaspora Jews but between Christ-believing diaspora Jews and non-Christ-believing diaspora Jews both situated in Asia Minor and Greece. By localizing references to "the Jews," Luke is unambiguously stating that Acts relates the fervid ideological scrimmage of differing diaspora Jewish viewpoints on the validity of Jewish ancestral customs for Gentiles. Hence, it undercuts Luke's argument to deduce a turn from all of Judaism from an internecine diaspora Jewish skirmish. Put differently, if Luke is interested in all Jews, why does he site his references to them exclusively in the diaspora? Being a creative writer, Luke is aptly employing literary cartography to engage the Jews who are his interlocutors.¹¹

Second, I will argue that the assumption that Acts relates the parting of Jews and Christians is a misreading of the narrative. As a matter of fact, Luke's rhetoric suggests the exact opposite: "Christianness" as a legitimate expression of diaspora Jewishness. Most historians of religion have gotten this right, although their conclusions on "the Jews" in Acts tend to be collective.¹² Establishing that Acts does not report the parting of ways between Judaism and Christianity is key to deciphering Luke's construal of the latter. In this research, I will show that Christianness is a sociocultural experiment conducted in Asia Minor and Greece that entailed a social intercourse between Christ-believing diaspora Jews and non-Judaizing Gentiles. The

¹¹ Daniel Chartier, "Introduction: Penser le Lieu comme Discours," in *L'Idee du Lieu*, Figura, ed. Daniel Chartier, Marie Parent, and Stephanie Vallières (Montréal: Université du Québec à Montréal, 2013), 15-16; Robert T. Tally Jr., "Introduction: Mapping Narratives" in *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative*, ed. idem (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.

¹² John G. Gager, "Where Does Luke's Anti-Judaism Come From?" in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 207-11.

historical success of this sociocultural configuration makes Acts the ideological flagship of Christianity.

Third, in agreement with not a few scholars, I will show that Luke's disposition toward Romanness is affective and affirmative and not condemning and disapproving.¹³ Using the figure of Paul, as I will argue in 5.2, Luke shows that diaspora Jews can be both "Christians" and Romans simultaneously. As Marguerat thoughtfully observes, Luke's Paul is a "confluence" of interacting cultures. In the affective and affirmative depiction of Paul as a Jew, a Christian, and a Roman, Luke discloses both his audience's sociocultural milieu and his disposition toward these three competing cultures. Rather than historicizing Paul in Acts, the accent should be on the sociocultural configuration he embodies. Consequently, this research is not interested in a historical reconstruction of Paul but in the historiographical application of his memory toward an ideological goal: justifying the membership of non-Judaizing Gentiles in diaspora Jewish Christ associations.

In line with the foregoing clarifications, the division of chapters is as follows: methodology (chapter one), Jewishness (chapter two), Christianness (chapter three), Romanness (chapter four), and Paul in Acts (chapter five). These chapters have been meticulously structured to guide the reader through the multiple hermeneutical layers of interpretation, beginning with an explanation on how the study approaches the subject of Luke's Paul differently, to a narrative study of both Jewishness and Christianness in Acts and other extrabiblical Christ-believing texts. Then I will proceed to a historical survey of Jewishness in the Roman Empire, which focuses on

¹³ C. K. Barrett, *Acts: A Shorter Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), xxxvi-xxxvii; Gary Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity in the Worldview of Luke-Acts," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 233-56; Joshua P. Yoder, *Representatives of Roman Rule: Roman Provincial Governors in Luke-Acts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Alexander Kyrychenko, *The Roman Army and the Expansion of the Gospel: The Role of the Centurion in Luke-Acts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Drew W. Billings, *Acts of the Apostles and the Rhetoric of Roman Imperialism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

how Jews were treated by both their compatriots and imperial representatives. Lastly, I will conclude with a sociologically-responsive, history-of-religions analysis of Paul in Acts and its implications for theological anthropology, ecclesiology, and interreligious dialogue. Unless otherwise stated, all English biblical citations will be taken from the NRSV, while Greek quotations will be culled from the 5th edition of *The Greek New Testament*.

Mindful of the trend in history of religions research, I will eschew anachronistic lexemes (e.g., Judaism, Christianity) that suggest a rigid compartmentalization of sociological phenomena in antiquity.¹⁴ In lieu of these soubriquets, I will employ “Jewishness” (identifying as Jews) and “Christianness” (being Christ believers) to stress the sociological realities they represent. The aim here is not to impugn the beliefs that Jews and Christians adhered to in antiquity but to offer a neutral language for a contemporary sociological discourse.

Attentive to the concerns raised by Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, I will avoid the widespread hermeneutical practice of blending Luke’s two, specific works, which seldom shows due diligence to notable differences in genre, theology, and reception in the early history of Christ associations.¹⁵ As such, I will opt for Luke and Acts rather than Luke-Acts. I will also review references to “the Jews” in Acts separately from the Third Gospel.

CHAPTER ONE

¹⁴ Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019).

¹⁵ Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Narrative Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

THE PROFILE OF PAUL IN ACTS

1.1 Methodological Approaches to Acts

The history of the interpretation of Paul in Acts is inextricably entwined with the divergent notions pertaining to the book's genre and purpose. Modern scholarship has relentlessly striven to proffer intelligible methodological approaches that elucidate the interrelationship, literary dependence, or purpose of dissimilar representations of the "apostle to the Gentiles" in both Acts and the letters.¹⁶ Attempts to explain and justify this literary incongruity has engendered three distinct methods: historical, theological, and literary. Those who regard Acts as a chronicle of the first-century, burgeoning church assign dates to the "three missionary journeys" of Paul and consider the narrative as an invaluable historical repository that fills in the "blank chronological spaces" palpable in the Pauline letters.¹⁷ Consistent with this approach, the sections of Acts that overlap with the Pauline letters are either harmonized to illuminate the otherwise opaque timeline in Christian origins in the earliest period or synthesized to create a more comprehensive biography of Paul. This historicist proclivity for chronicling the nascent church's growth in Asia

¹⁶ The phrase "apostle to the Gentiles" when applied to Paul in Acts must be used with great caution for two reasons: (1) although Paul as a matter of course refers to himself as an apostle in his letters, Acts' criterion for being an apostle excludes him (1:21-22); (2) according to the narrative of Acts, Peter, the leader of the twelve apostles, according to Luke, is the first to convert a Gentile. The thrust of Acts makes Gentile mission an initiative that must be endorsed by the Twelve. In any case, for Luke, the Gentile mission is embarked upon, because it was willed by God. Regarding the Ethiopian Eunuch scene which precedes the Cornelius story in Acts, see Christopher R. Matthews's extensive discussion on the development of the Philip tradition in early Christianity. *Philip, Apostle and Evangelist: Configurations of a Tradition*, NovTSup 105 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

¹⁷ Although this is not an exhaustive list, the following scholars espouse a historicist reading of Acts: Ferdinand C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1873; rev. ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003); William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915); Ward W. Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, ed. Conrad H. Gempf, WUNT 49 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989; repr., Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990); Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of Acts of the Apostles*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6-7; and Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); idem, "Pauline Chronology," in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. Stephen Westerholm (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 9-29. The notion of Paul's "three missionary journeys" is a Lukan innovation. The letters only feature a list of communities that Paul either founded or planned to visit (e.g., Rome).

Minor and Greece, besides being the signature trait of post-Enlightenment biblical scholarship, is also fueled by the desire to fill the historical lacuna that every NT text creates.¹⁸ Historical studies on Acts are frequently accompanied by a corollary appraisal of its principal characters, especially Paul. Faithful to this methodology, some scholars have undertaken the laborious task of excavating the “real” or “unknown” Paul, which presupposes Acts’ historical reliability or straightforward chronological representation of facts.¹⁹ This quest has engendered a string of throbbing questions: (1) Which is the real Paul? (2) How do we determine which information is historically accurate or not? (3) Why are there incongruous portraits of the same historical figure? (4) Why did Luke write a *sui generis* apostolic history half a century after the events occurred? (5) What is the historical purpose or immediate audience of such literature? Advocates of historicity have advanced three plausible reasons to account for the apparent misalignment of Paul’s representation in Acts with the evidence in the letters: contradiction, complementarity, and parallelism.²⁰ Contradiction acknowledges the historicity of both portraits, highlighting their irreconcilable and discordant features. Complementarity shows multiple points of agreement between both depictions. Parallelism maintains that differing representations are glaring indicators of two independent but related authors. Although proponents of historicity have raised a plethora of crucial inquiries and highlighted several commonalities between the Pauline letters and Acts, their case is undermined by more compelling approaches to the genre and purpose of

¹⁸ The historical reliance on Acts is traceable to the second-century Christian theologian, Irenaeus. But modern scholars’ hankering for historicity was heightened by the Enlightenment.

¹⁹ See Jacob Jervell, *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

²⁰ Daniel Marguerat identifies two major strands: contradiction and complementarity. *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters*, WUNT 310 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013). Parallelism, which ascribes the discrepancies between Paul’s letters and Acts to different authorship (i.e., the depictions of Paul are different, because they were written by two different persons), is chiefly espoused by Stanley E. Porter. *The Paul of Acts: Essays in Literary Criticism, Rhetoric, and Theology*, WUNT 115 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 6-7; idem, “The Portrait of Paul in Acts,” in Westerholm, *Blackwell Companion to Paul*, 136-137.

the latter. But before reviewing the assessment of critics of historicity, I will briefly examine the discordant representations of Paul in Acts that usually arouse the suspicion of historical inaccuracy.

The profiles of Paul in Acts and the letters differ markedly; in the former one notes, in particular, his jarring adherence to Jewish ancestral practices and his impassioned interpretation of Jewish history, laws, and customs. With regard to these practices, the two most hotly debated and frequently written about portrayals of Paul in Acts are the circumcision of Timothy (16:3), his companion, and his participation in and acceptance of the communiqué of the Jerusalem council, which consists of abstaining from food offered to idols, blood, strangled animals, and sexual immorality (15:29). Apart from sexual immorality, Paul's endorsement of the Jerusalem communiqué belies his views on tolerance in matters of ancestral practices espoused in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians. In Rom 14:14, Paul solemnly reiterates his conviction regarding dietary laws: οὐδὲν κοινὸν δι' ἑαυτοῦ ("nothing is unclean by itself"), εἰ μὴ τῷ λογιζομένῳ τι κοινὸν εἶναι ("except if one reckons it unclean"), ἐκεῖνῳ κοινόν ("for that one it is unclean"). Paul, in this audacious statement, relativizes Jewish dietary mores but accentuates fraternal charity and harmonious fellowship. In 14:15, he underscores the menace that legalism poses to a Christ-believing assembly: εἰ γὰρ διὰ βρῶμα ὁ ἀδελφός σου λυπεῖται, οὐκέτι κατὰ ἀγάπην περιπατεῖς. μὴ τῷ βρώματί σου ἐκεῖνον ἀπόλλυε ὑπὲρ οὗ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ("If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died"). The key verbs in Paul's admonition are λυπεῖται (injures), ἀπόλλυε (destroys), and ἀπέθανεν (died).²¹ Beyond a theology of dietary prescription,

²¹ Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 351-52; Leander E. Keck, *Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 858-62; François Genuyt, *L'Épître aux Romains: L'Instauration du Sujet* (Paris: Cerf, 2008); 206-7; Frank J. Matera, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2010),

this text reveals an existential threat to unity posed by conflicting views on customs. Historians of religion who appreciate the gravity of this subject matter have argued that the Paul of Acts cannot be the “real” Paul, since the latter reveals his personal assessment of the matter in the undisputed letters. It is not reasonable then to assume that Luke’s experience of Paul is different, given that the same Jerusalem council proceeding is reported in Acts?²² A modern understanding of history (i.e., as a systematic and objective reporting of past events) fails to provide a satisfactory answer to these evidently discordant accounts of the same event featuring the same person on the same subject matter.

First Corinthians 8:7-13 reaffirms Paul’s stance on food sacrificed to idols. Again, the concern of Paul is not on the morality of the act (which is intrinsically neutral) but its impact (i.e., whether it endangers the faith of “the weak”).²³ Paul’s attitude to food offered to idols here is consistent with his view in Rom 14:15: the act is neutral to the extent that it does not mislead the vulnerable ones in the assembly. Although Gal 2 does not tackle the question of food offered to idols, it sets forth Paul’s principle in community building, which is firmly rooted in evangelical freedom: adopting a relaxed attitude to matters of Jewish ancestral customs. Paul’s liberal and uncompromising attitude toward dietary restriction in his letters misaligns with the Paul of Acts, who is delegated by the Jerusalem council to exhort Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia on the communiqué of the believers (lit., “the brothers”). Scholars who champion the historicity of Acts are forced to assign one of three values to these puzzling accounts: complementarity, contradiction, or parallelism. These opinions, because of a methodological

Alain Gignac, *L’Épître aux Romains* (Paris: Cerf, 2014), 520; 315-20; 342-48; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 868-71.

²² See Porter, *Paul of Acts*.

²³ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 147-50; Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 120-24; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 417-33.

rigidity in interpreting history, seek to establish the relationship between Gal 2 and Acts 15 but do not adequately explore the possibility of other intervening variables: a new historical exigency, a significantly different audience, and a sociologically divergent agenda. These variables, regardless of the reluctance of practitioners of the traditional historicistic approach to Acts to explore them, call for a methodologically refined approach to the genre and purpose of Acts vis-à-vis its representation of Paul.

The most striking act of Paul himself in Acts is the circumcision of Timothy. The undergirding rationale behind this action (i.e., wariness of “the Jews”) belies Paul’s indifference to Titus’ uncircumcision in Gal 2:3. In the latter case, Paul asserts that his mission is to the uncircumcised (Gal 2:7), and that *πρόσωπον θεοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει* (lit., “God does not ‘take’ the face of humans”), usually translated as “God shows no partiality” toward human beings (Gal 2:6; Acts 10:34).²⁴ An attentive reading of the story of Cornelius and the Jerusalem council in Acts and Paul’s narrative in Gal 2 shows that the epistolary account in the latter is presented as a theological narrative in the former. Succinctly put, Luke expatiates theological ideas identical to the issues raised in Gal 2 in the successive scenes: the conversion of Cornelius and the Jerusalem council.²⁵ The indices evincing a thematic relationship between Gal 2 and Acts 10 and 15 include: (1) same venue: Jerusalem; (2) same characters: Paul, Peter, James, and Barnabas; and (3) same subject: ancestral practices that Gentiles should observe. There is also a noticeable similarity between Titus and Timothy: (a) both had a Greek parent, (b) both were Paul’s companions, and (c) the status of both was threatened by those advocating a stringent

²⁴ Michael Kochenash unearths the historical and theological significance of Cornelius’s obeisance to Peter: “Gentiles entering the kingdom of God share the status ... [of] Judeans.” This is a fitting recapitulation of Luke’s theology. “Cornelius’s Obeisance to Peter (Acts 10:25-26) and Judaea Capta Coins,” *CBQ* 81 (2019): 640.

²⁵ My attempt here is to offer a helpful way of making sense of the common material and similar theology that undergird Galatians and Acts, particularly in relation to the inclusion of faithful Gentiles and a deemphasis of dietary restrictions.

observance of ancestral practices. Although these examples are not exhaustive, they represent the principal arguments of scholars who favor a historicist reading of Acts.

The disparate reports of the Jerusalem council in both Galatians and Acts *prima facie* foreground the arguments of the proponents of historicity, because they approach the matter of Gentile inclusion differently. But this does not suggest finality, because narrating the same event could either mean thematic dependence or “equal” access to a given historical event. The latter implies that both authors (Paul and Luke) were contemporaries and that one of them doctored the facts, while the former suggests Luke’s thematic dependence on Paul’s letters or tradition(s) circulating about him.²⁶ Thematic dependence allows for a historical gap between both authors (i.e., they were not contemporaries), thereby offering reasonable explanations for the varying accounts, which could have been modified or adapted to suit a new sociocultural context. For those inclined to a historicist interpretation, Luke is seen as doctoring facts (contradiction), reporting a different story (complementarity), or writing about the same event from another perspective (parallelism).

²⁶ François Bovon articulates the second-century church’s dual reception of the Pauline legacy with unsurpassable clarity: “Enthusiastic assimilation, unintelligent reading, radicalized interpretation, polite indifference, and horrified rejection are brought together. The great Church takes two dispositions: Paul survives either in the form of a document [i.e., text] or ... a monument [i.e., figure].” “Paul as Document and Paul as Monument,” in *idem*, *New Testament and Christian Apocrypha*, WUNT 237 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 307; Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010). Pervo explains how the Pauline tradition evolved and was domesticated by churches in Asia Minor and Greece. He refers to Luke’s Paul as a “reception of Paul,” a phrase that denotes the ingenious application of Paul’s legacy by Christian writers onto new sociocultural milieux. Stanley E. Porter disagrees with this theory of Paulinism (a.k.a., reception of Paul) in the first and second century. He argues that the basis for postulating this hypothesis is not convincing. “Was Paulinism a Thing When Luke-Acts Was Written?” in *Reception of Paulinism in Acts*, ed. Daniel Marguerat (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 12-13. I will be reading Acts as an early second-century reception of Paul: “Paul as Monument.” Benjamin L. White echoes this same point, which is espoused by Pervo, Marguerat, and Bovon, by referring to second-century portraits of Paul as evincing a “traditioned figure.” He writes: “As with the Evangelists, each of Paul’s second-century reputational entrepreneurs was interested in fixing a particular image of the Apostle for memorialization” and that “Christian identity was and is wrapped up in the representation of its apostles.” *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 16. This shows that contrary to the arguments of historicists, social memory is used as a discourse tool.

Additional practices of Luke's Paul that receive much attention are exorcisms and the working of miracles. In the letters, Paul is chiefly a preacher, teacher, and founder of churches. By contrast, Luke's Paul is a speech giver, a miracle worker, and an exorcist.²⁷ While these portraits, seen from a strictly historical viewpoint, are incongruous, Luke's account could be explained as either a sign of a metamorphosized Pauline tradition or the fruit of the author's literary-theological ingenuity. If the former is the case, then Luke was relating the incredible deeds ascribed to his group's hero; but if the latter is true, then Luke was well aware of the historical Paul's charismatic gifts but still chose to enhance his legacy in legendary directions. Advocates of historicity too often get thrown off track when the disparate details are not amenable to complementarity. Confronted with the task of exhorting a historically different audience, Luke could have employed other rhetorical devices at his disposal to convey the same gospel as his mentor did. Insistence on hasty contradiction or facile complementarity unduly imposes inappropriate historicity on a narrative that does not purport to be a journal or chronicle of an incipient church.²⁸

The other strand of irreconcilable differences that historicists have noted is Paul's theology, encapsulated in his speeches in Acts. Speeches in Acts must never be particularized: they are either quintessentially the same or hardly distinguishable for Stephen, Peter, or Paul. Studies on the literary function of the speeches in Acts have shown that they were designed or adopted by Luke to convey his theology.²⁹ These speeches say more about Luke than about the

²⁷ This is a general assessment of the Pauline depictions in both the letters and Acts. There are, however, a few noteworthy exceptions to this simplistic summary (2 Cor 12:12).

²⁸ David P. Moessner, *Luke the Historian of Israel's Legacy, Theologian of Israel's 'Christ': A New Reading of the 'Gospel Acts' of Luke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 38.

²⁹ Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994); Richard I. Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts and the Question of Genre," *JSNT* 28 (2006): 285-307; Janusz Kucicki, *The Function of the Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles: A Key to Interpretation of Luke's Use of Speeches in Acts* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

historical figures to which they are ascribed. Distinguishing Paul in Acts from Paul in the letters on the basis of speech content is a futile exercise in view of Luke's underlying leitmotif: getting the towering, first-century apostolic pillar of his group to do his bidding. Besides speeches, characterization is another literary device utilized copiously in Acts. The martyrdom of Stephen, for instance, is mapped onto that of Jesus in the Third Gospel.³⁰ Even though elsewhere Paul is credited with initiating the ministry to Gentiles, in Acts, Peter is responsible for the first conversion of a Gentile: Cornelius. Through his narrative, Luke blurs the existing demarcations within second-century diaspora Jews in Asia Minor and Greece and advocates unity among disagreeing factions. To establish distinctions in Pauline representations based on a lack of appreciation of the author's rhetorical purpose is unconvincing and, sometimes, misleading. Having reviewed the concerns of the proponents of historicity, I will now evaluate the arguments of scholars in favor of literary and theological approaches.

Ernst Haenchen favors a literary reading of Acts. Disagreeing with advocates of historicity, he remarks that it is unproductive to ascribe to Acts "the precision of a police-report."³¹ Acts is meant to convince the reader about the truth of the good news proclaimed not to give a strict account of mid-first-century apostolic history. This conviction shapes Luke's interpretation of the past and understanding of the present. Edification of the reader is the sole principle that drives the relating of history in Acts. Haenchen's notion of history paves the way for modern literary studies of Acts. He stresses Luke's ingenuity as a writer: one who is able to edit, organize, and present disparate events in a compelling manner.³²

³⁰ Shelly Matthews, *Perfect Martyr: The Stoning of Stephen and the Construction of Christian Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Andrew C. Clark, *Parallel Lives: The Relation of Paul to the Apostles in the Lucan Perspective* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2001).

³¹ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 110.

³² Haenchen, *Acts*, 110; Matthews makes a similar claim: "All historical accounts are based on the arrangement and development of a narrative based on a selective use of information." *Philip*, 35.

Daniel Marguerat also criticizes some scholars' obsession with historicity in Acts. He opines that this proclivity is anchored on post-Enlightenment scholarly bias, which demeans oral traditions and overemphasizes textual evidence.³³ Regarding the insuperable misalignment of Paul in Acts and the letters, he claims that the problem is created by a methodological flaw: "genre mismatch."³⁴ The Pauline letters follow the epistolary convention, while Acts typifies historiography. To compare the representations of Paul in a letter and in a piece of historiography using the canons of the former is a "category mistake."³⁵ The affirmation of every text is credibly deciphered when attention is paid to the genre that conveys it. Consequently, the historicist, by employing the norms of epistolary convention can interpret the letters of Paul accordingly, but the same criteria cannot be uncritically imposed on historiographical writings.³⁶

Critiquing the historicist interpretation, Pervo claims that if Acts is a piece of historical writing, it is a puzzling and clumsy one. After highlighting the historical shortcomings of Acts, Pervo concludes that the narrative could profitably be read as popular ancient literature: a secular novel.³⁷ Although this is not the only beneficial use of Acts, entertainment is a valid motif that addresses the theological quandary that the text features and other hermeneutical impasses that readers find insurmountable. Pervo reaffirms his innovative reading of Acts in a sequel work, when he succinctly remarks: "Acts is a book meant, among other things, to be enjoyed."³⁸ The

³³ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*.

³⁴ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 3.

³⁵ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 16. Ryle uses this term in reference to the pseudo-philosophical mind-body problem.

³⁶ The main difference between the historicists' approach to Acts and that of historiographers is the value each assigns to the historical information in the text. Whereas the former assess such information as an objective representation of actual historical events (reality *outside* the text), the latter place the accent on reality *within* the text (what the text tells the reader about the immediate historical situation of the group). Marguerat clarifies the genre of Acts in an earlier work: *First Christian Historian*. Here, he argues that the historiographer is at liberty to construct "history" through a subjective, hermeneutical grid. Wayne C. Booth's landmark publication foregrounds the need for a different analytical method for assessing narratives. *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

³⁷ Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, 11.

³⁸ Pervo, *Luke's Story of Paul*, 12.

enjoyment of Acts, per Pervo, can only be achieved when it is read or studied for what it truly is (a story) not what it should be (history). Marguerat also echoes this entertainment motif in Acts: “Luke is the only New Testament narrator to get readers to burst out laughing while consciously making the burlesque a stimulus to narration.”³⁹ Integral to this attainment is the deciphering of the symbolic universe of Acts, which, although suggestive of apostolic history, is not convertible with the world frequently imposed on it.⁴⁰

Responding to Pervo, Marguerat argues that the very same features that are characteristic of ancient Greco-Roman novels also apply to contemporaneous histories. To propose a paradigm shift in Acts’ genre, like Pervo did, based on novelistic features also found in historiography thus is useful but neither satisfactory nor conclusive.⁴¹ While explicating the genre of Acts, Marguerat insists that Luke’s historiography employs three distinctive features: (1) the Hellenistic notion of *historia* as an etiology, (2) history as a reconstruction of the past in the present, and (3) history as a tale of the past written from the subjective viewpoint of the author.⁴² These characteristics aptly clarify the narrative approach to Acts, which is often misconstrued as an accurate representation of past events pertaining to the apostles.

The approaches of Haenchen, Pervo, and Marguerat are representative of the literary school of thought. Quintessentially, this method accentuates the freedom of Luke as a writer to address the present concerns of his group by creatively re-envisioning the history of its apostolic forebears.⁴³ Literary criticism prioritizes the symbolic world within the text and makes it the

³⁹ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 95.

⁴⁰ Pervo, *Luke’s Story of Paul*, 11-12.

⁴¹ Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 8.

⁴² Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 25.

⁴³ This approach to history (a.k.a., social memory) has received pervasive support among some modern sociologists and biblical scholars who adopt social-scientific criticism. James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Samuel Byrskog et al., eds., *Social Memory and Social Identity in the Study of Early Judaism and Early Christianity* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016); Rafael Rodriguez, *Structuring Early Christian Memory: Jesus in Tradition, Performance and Text* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010). Dale C. Allison

canon for all analyses. The narrative world of Acts is the hermeneutical grid constructed by its author to respond to historical exigencies affecting the audience. Attempts to reconstruct the historical context of Acts that ignore the symbolic world embedded in it misappropriate the text. Appreciation for the literary study of Acts has mustered a mammoth following, encompassing practically all known fields in literature: narrative criticism, reader-response criticism, and other literary theories.⁴⁴

Advocates of a theological reading of Acts maintain that it was originally intended for the proclamation of the good news about Jesus, the earliest witnesses to the Christian faith, the deeds of the apostles, and their resultant edification. The dual objective of Acts, per Martin Dibelius, is “to preach and to show what the Christian belief is and what effects it has.”⁴⁵ This bifocal goal is hardly defensible given Acts’ ambivalent theology, especially when it is juxtaposed with the Pauline letters or the other Gospels. Parsons and Pervo argue that even the theology of the Third Gospel is not perfectly aligned with that of Acts.⁴⁶ So to speak of “what Christian belief is” is unconvincing for two reasons: first, the genre of Acts needs to be articulated to decrypt the author’s theology; second, even if “Christian belief” is identified, it only applies to the specific

also applies this sociological principle in his book: *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

⁴⁴ The following scholars emphasize various forms of literary criticism in their study of Acts: Robert L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); idem, *Luke, A Social Identity Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2020). Robert C. Tannehill, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 of *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992); Wayne A. Meeks, “Assisting the Word by Making (Up) History: Luke’s Project and Ours,” *Int* (2003): 151-62; Penner and Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Acts*; Clare K. Rothchild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History: An Investigation of Early Christian Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

⁴⁵ Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology*, trans. Mary Ling and Paul Schubert, ed. K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 27. Although Acts exists in the canon because it is considered an inspired text, its theology must not be overemphasized nor be used without caution. As Haenchen rightly observed, Acts is neither a treatise in systematic theology nor is Luke a systematic theologian. Haenchen, *Acts*, 91. This point was also corroborated by Pervo. Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, 3.

⁴⁶ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Narrative Unity of Luke and Acts*, 84-114. Of course, some scholars disagree with this reading. E.g., Moessner, *Luke the Historian of Israel’s Legacy*, 38; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). Johnson opines that Luke-Acts proclaims “one gospel.”

group initially addressed. Excepting certain unifying tenets—like acknowledgment of Jesus’ messiahship and his resurrection—other Christian beliefs by the second century were undergoing metamorphosis.⁴⁷ Provided that the reader is not imposing modern categories of systematic theology on Acts, the project can be theological in the most foundational sense of the word: God’s willful participation in shaping the course of human history.⁴⁸ Acts is consistent in attributing every crucial apostolic decision to divine providence, especially the admission of Gentiles (10:44-45).

Hans Conzelmann’s contribution to the theology of Luke’s Gospel is monumental.⁴⁹ His study ignited interest in the theology of the Third Gospel. As the English title suggests—*The Theology of St. Luke*—Conzelmann stresses these fields in systematic theology: eschatology, soteriology, theological anthropology, and Christology. The aforementioned, provided they are rightly conceived and well expatiated, can be addressed from Luke and Acts. But caution should be exercised in finding simplistic theological connections to the detriment of glossing over marked discrepancies. Although many classify Conzelmann as an advocate of the theological approach, he copiously and extensively applies the literary method, a complement to the former. His eclectic approach to the study of Luke and Acts resonates with most contemporary scholars who appraise the text for what it truly is: a multifaceted piece of ancient literature. As such the

⁴⁷ The Council of Nicaea was convoked in 325 CE to resolve doctrinal disagreements bordering on the divinity of Jesus. This was well over two hundred years after Acts was written. Convoking an ecumenical council suggests rival, viable, and persuasive interpretations of the Christian kerygma, thereby indicating a lack of a comprehensive canon for early Christian writers. Hence, it is highly debatable (indeed it was not an exigent matter) what Luke’s group thought of the divine nature of Jesus (e.g., his being co-equal with the Father in essence).

⁴⁸ Frank J. Matera describes theology as “the experience of salvation [that] God has effected in Christ.” *New Testament Theology: Exploring Diversity and Unity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), xxviii. Regarding systematic categories, Matera warns that they should never be used as a “straightjacket” to organize the “unruly theology” of the NT. The NT writers were chiefly pastoral theologians: they wrote to address existential concerns in the present (e.g., social identity formation and the enduring significance of Jewish ancestral practices for Gentiles). This approach is attentive to each writing’s peculiarity and is conscious of the formative stages in early Christian doctrine. Matera’s approach to NT theology shapes my understanding of the theology of Acts.

⁴⁹ Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

earlier listed approaches—history, literature, and theology—are not used in isolation but in concert. Itemizing them was largely pedagogical. This, however, is not to deny that some approaches are stressed more than others in certain studies. I will now review the significance of these methods in the study of Paul in Acts, highlighting their pros and cons, tracing their origins, and identifying the circles of their appeal.

1.2 The Significance of the Historical, Theological, and Literary Methods

Every scholarly approach to the study of Acts has its merits and demerits. Each method underscores a particular aspect of Luke's second volume, thereby broadening the frontiers of knowledge and enriching interpretative dimensions. Below I will review the well-attested forte and shortcomings of the historical, theological, and literary methods.

1.2.1 The Historical Method

Most Pauline scholars espouse a historical interpretation of Acts (either as a whole or in part).⁵⁰ A cursory look at some introductory studies on Paul (his life, writings, and theology) confirms this claim.⁵¹ This hermeneutical tendency is propelled by academic exigency to give historical and sociocultural backgrounds for the study of the Pauline letters. As such, not a few Pauline scholars assume the historicity of Acts. Although this assumption is naïve given the

⁵⁰ Robert Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul's Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); Calvin J. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998); Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 43. Gorman identifies three schools of thought: maximalists, minimalists, and moderates. The moderates—that is, those who base their reconstruction of Paul's history on the undisputed letters and refer to Acts to supplement the data in the former—are the majority. It should be noted that the moderate position is also a historicist reading, because its adherents appeal to Luke's rhetorical work for historical corroboration. This method is different from the one espoused in this research.

⁵¹ For instance, Stanley E. Porter reconstructs the synchronous ministries of Jesus and Paul using Acts as a "guide." *When Paul Met Jesus: How an Idea Got Lost in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 22. Like I remarked earlier, Porter is a proponent of the historicist method, which is different from mine.

rhetorical sophistication of Luke's literary design, it nevertheless has a huge following among Pauline pundits and an irresistible appeal among instructors of introductory classes on Paul.⁵²

In addition, this apparent allurements of historicity is partly to be credited to Acts' canonical placement: after the Gospels (as a sequel to Jesus's ministry) and before the letters (as an introduction to Paul). Canonicity suggests this dual function of Acts thus giving traction and a long-standing pedigree to the historicist method. Given the hermeneutical logic undergirding the placement of Acts, one can arguably say that the historicism of Acts is traceable to the fourth century—if one places the accent on canonicity (Cyprian, *Ep.* 7:3).⁵³ But if the emphasis is on the first indisputable citation of Acts, then it is the last quarter of the second century (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.13.3).⁵⁴ In nutshell, the historicism of Acts has been defended by scholars, who either prioritize canonicity or the reconstruction of the historical Paul. Albeit canonicity and the reconstruction of the historical Paul are valid academic pursuits, both fail to provide satisfactory explanations for the incongruous details in Acts and Galatians.

1.2.2 The Theological Method

⁵² Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context*, 4th ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); Michael R. Cosby, *Apostle on the Edge: An Inductive Approach to Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009); Walter F. Taylor, *Paul Apostle to the Nations: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012); Patrick Gray, *Opening Paul's Letters: A Reader's Guide to Genre and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

⁵³ David E. Smith, *The Canonical Function of Acts: A Comparative Analysis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Irenaeus correlates the Jerusalem council narrative in Galatians and Acts of the Apostles. On this subject, Pervo opines that all attestations to Acts prior to Irenaeus are nebulous. The observed similarity in ideas between Acts and other first- and second-century sources thus is best explained as exposure to a common literary influence, not an argument for literary dependence on Acts. *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2006).

The theological method is also significant for the study of Luke's Paul. It focuses on the religious message contained in Acts and addressed to its recipients.⁵⁵ It highlights Luke's role as a proclaimer of the good news of Jesus. This approach emphasizes the function of Acts as biblical literature. It accents the theological themes found in the book, which include soteriology, theological anthropology, and ecclesiology.⁵⁶ These themes are the most obvious in Acts, because they are crucial to Luke's narrative on the expansion of the church. Proponents of the theological approach usually begin their investigations with one assumption: since Acts is a biblical writing, it must have a theological message. This presupposition is credible. But the imposition of other categories drawn from systematic theology on Luke is unconvincing, because Acts relates a "story" of salvation not a "discourse" on the prerequisites of receiving God's gift.⁵⁷

Although the theological method is invaluable in the study of Acts, most proponents of this approach seldom study the literary design that conveys the book's theology. Often themes or categories found in Acts are isolated for theological treatment. But given the widely accepted scholarly view of Luke being a narrative theologian, every theological treatise on Acts should

⁵⁵ Scott Shauf broadens the myopic understanding of theology in Acts as the "interpretation of kerygma," which was first espoused by Bultmann and endorsed and expanded by Conzelmann. Shauf rightly opines that theology in Acts is the unfolding of God's will for the salvation of humanity—Jews and Gentiles alike. Second, he remarks that a theological study of Acts should be centered on the text rather than the hypothetical author or reconstructed community. Emphasis on how Luke expresses his theology (i.e., in a narrative) and a broader understanding of theology concur with the perspective of my research. *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 320.

⁵⁶ These systematic categories are not exhaustive, but they are defensible. The conversion narratives of the Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius and the communiqué of the Jerusalem Council demonstrate Luke's fervent attempt to explain how God's gift of salvation was extended to devout Gentiles. This social exigency, the justification of a hybrid configuration of devout Jews and pious Gentiles, necessitates a foregrounding theology. All reconstructions of the theology of Acts thus must be premised on this historical necessity: justification of an already-existing assembly of both Christ-believing diaspora Jews and devout Gentiles.

⁵⁷ For instance, some scholars speak of the Christology of Acts. Although this is a research-worthy venture, Acts is not replete with pertinent, supporting data. Constructing a robust Christology from paltry data thus is overly ambitious. This, however, is not to deny that Luke had a personal conviction in and notion of the person of Christ. Richard B. Hays makes a similar claim. He remarks that Luke's Christology is "eclectic" and "functional." *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 114.

take into consideration the rhetorical techniques of the author.⁵⁸ It is not enough to know what Luke's claims are; it is more important to know how he presents his arguments. Therefore, I disagree with Jacob Jervell's assertion that Luke's theology is to be found behind the text (his presuppositions) and not within it for two reasons: (1) the text is the only extant evidence we have for prying into the mind of Luke, and (2) determining the "presuppositions" of Luke is a highly speculative venture.⁵⁹ If scholars still disagree on how to interpret the text, what is the chance that they would reach a consensus on the presuppositions that undergird the narrative? Jervell's emphasis on the crucial significance of the world behind the text, however, is worth investigating. But this "world" does not have a life of its own: it must always be reconstructed with the aid of and in agreement with the extant text. Next, I will discuss the literary method.

1.2.3 The Literary Method

The literary method evaluates Acts as a piece of literature comparable to other Greco-Roman literature. It underscores the literary devices and techniques employed by Luke in the execution of his narrative. Scholars who advocate this method assess the role of characterization, plots, and local color in the study of Acts.⁶⁰ This approach, while not excluding the historical and theological methods, accentuates Luke's role as a creative writer, who is capable of assembling disparate data into a coherent and compelling narrative. This ingenious utilization of data, plots, places, and characters in telling a persuasive story is the pith of literary studies.⁶¹ Narrators are

⁵⁸ Richard I. Pervo notes that Luke's "legitimizing" rhetoric is achieved by storytelling. "Israel's Heritage and Claims upon the Genre(s) of Luke and Acts: The Problems of a History," in Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, 136.

⁵⁹ Jervell, *Theology of Acts*, 10.

⁶⁰ David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, eds., *Characterization in the Gospel: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Frank E. Dicken and Julia Snyder, eds., *Characters and Characterization in Luke-Acts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

⁶¹ Chartier, "Introduction," 15-16; Tally, "Introduction," 3.

creators of the symbolic worlds they produce: they choose their cues, create their heroes, condemn their villains, and arbitrate on the principal lessons of each passage. Effective and persuasive authors, as Robert Tally writes, wear “multiple hats,” which includes being tailors, weavers, mapmakers, originators, and writers.⁶² As tailors, they sew disparate pieces of cloth together, thereby creating a new garment from old fabrics; as weavers, they weave cotton balls into fabrics; as mapmakers, they insert “signposts” into their narratives to lead readers to particular conclusions; as originators, they present a novel idea by reframing some recognizably old data; and as writers, they organize and edit their sources in drafting new narratives. This method acknowledges the historicity of isolated details in Acts and their theological interpretation but reorients the reader to the author’s broader interest: the symbolic world within the narrative.

Daniel Marguerat, although he describes the genre of Acts as historiography, typifies the literary approach.⁶³ He maintains that in writing ancient history, there is always an “interpretative mediation” or hermeneutical framework, which the historian employs to understand, interpret, and explain past events.⁶⁴ Writing history necessarily entails the author’s “spin” on past events and their reconstruction mediated through present interests. Jan Assmann states this pointedly: “In der Erinnerung wird Vergangenheit rekonstruiert.”⁶⁵ Recalling the past inevitably entails selecting, organizing, interpreting, and applying historical data. This is evidently an intricate process. Marguerat has succinctly crystallized the processes involved in

⁶² Robert T. Tally, Jr., *Spatiality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 48-49.

⁶³ Daniel Marguerat delineates Acts as a piece of “historiography with an apologetic aim, which permits Christianity to understand and speak of itself.” Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 34. I consider historiography—the art of writing history in the ancient world—as an instantiation of the literary method, because it accords literary freedom and a subjective perspective to the historian who reconstructs the past through the lens of the present.

⁶⁴ Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 5-6.

⁶⁵ Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in Frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1992), 31.

ancient history writing into three: (1) historiography is reconstructive not descriptive, (2) its description of the past is shaped by the present, and (3) it is always written from the historian's subjective perspective.⁶⁶ Joseph Méléze Modrzejewski reiterates the foregoing perception of history: "The present dictates the interpretation of the past."⁶⁷ This means that Luke is not indiscriminately collating historical data on the incipient church, as some might want to argue, but is consciously and conscientiously assessing the evidence available to him, while creatively restructuring it to tell a persuasive story about his group's "apostolic" origins in order to address contemporaneous concerns.⁶⁸

Literary interpretations of the NT, according to Mark A. Powell, focus on the final form of the biblical text, uphold the internal unity of the narrative, regard each book as an end in itself, and apply speech-act theory to its interpretation.⁶⁹ This approach contrasts with the historical method, which seeks to employ the data found in Acts to reconstruct mid-first-century church history. The historical-critical method engages Acts as a means to an end. It uses the information in Acts as though it were a "window" that provides access to reliable historical data, which either corroborates events cited in other ancient sources or refutes them. Conversely, the literary method highlights varied narrative "signposts" that Luke deploys to argue his case: the spread of the church in Asia Minor and Greece as a manifestation of divine providence. It prioritizes the extant textual evidence over speculative or hypothesized data.

⁶⁶ Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, 6.

⁶⁷ Joseph Méléze Modrzejewski, "How to be a Jew in Hellenistic Egypt?" in *Diasporas in Antiquity*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen and Ernest S. Frerichs (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 70; Jan Vansima, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

⁶⁸ This approach to Acts characterizes the perspective of this research. Luke's "present concerns" include but are not limited to the formation of social identity.

⁶⁹ Mark A. Powell's book focuses on narrative criticism in general and not on its application to Acts. *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 7-10; idem, "Narrative Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

Proponents of the literary approach have based the validity of their claims on Luke's apt delineation of his project: "to write an orderly account" (Luke 1:3). The "order" Luke proposes in the prologue of the Third Gospel has frequently been misconstrued as a historically accurate representation of facts or a chronologically exact sequencing of events.⁷⁰ This debate has been overtaken by literary studies that now underscore the sociorhetorical techniques employed by Luke in Acts. Joseph B. Tyson summarily elucidates and navigates the back-and-forth trends in Acts' scholarship. Noting the timeless significance of the sociopolitical and historical contexts for both approaches is vital to the study of Luke's project. A noteworthy leitmotif in Acts, Tyson opines, is its preoccupation with Jews and Judaism.⁷¹ Given the GDP for exegeting Acts that I discussed in the introduction, what was Luke's relationship with Judaism, and what do "the Jews" and "Christians" signify?

Representative modern studies on Acts presume the parting of ways between Judaism and Christianity as a context for Luke's work.⁷² This assumption is largely due to a widely accepted view that the destruction of the Second Temple precipitated the irrevocable parting of Jews and Christians.⁷³ Consistent with this assumption, if Acts is dated 85 to 120 CE, the many references to "the Jews" are taken to designate those who expelled Christ believers from synagogues. Acts then is construed as an apologetic for a group of Christ believers consisting of Jews and Gentiles, seeking to redefine themselves. I will argue below that this assumption undercuts Luke's story and predetermines the possible historical referents of his characters thereby obscuring the actual

⁷⁰ See Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*.

⁷¹ Joseph B. Tyson, "From History to Rhetoric and Back: Assessing New Trends in Acts Studies," in Penner and Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Acts*, 41-42.

⁷² Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 46; Pervo, *Luke's Story of Paul*.

⁷³ Pervo expresses this succinctly: "[Following the destruction of the Temple,] Jews and Christians have gone their separate ways [thereby suggesting a decisive, irrevocable, and clear-cut parting], but the roots they share make this division bitter." Pervo, *Luke's Story of Paul*, 14. This conclusion implies that the ensuing acrimony described in Acts is the consequence of a finalized separation between two rival Jewish parties or, per Pervo, Jews and Christians.

ideological impetus that engenders Acts. Therefore, close examination of the “parting of ways” is indispensable to any literary study of Acts, particularly its profile of “the Jews,” because it scrutinizes as a hasty assumption the idea of a definitive split between Jews and Christians during the period of Acts’ composition. I will now examine the idea of identity formation among early Christ associations.

1.3 Social Identity Formation in Incipient “Christianity”

In the late 1980s, Jonathan Z. Smith published an article that challenged historians of religion to jettison the pervasive use of “rigid taxonomy” in discussing ancient religions.⁷⁴ He advocates for a descriptive study of ancient religions that avoids the methodological prejudice of conferring uniqueness on some religions over against others. This proclivity, Smith opines, inclines researchers to overlook the plethora of similarities that exist among varied religions.⁷⁵ Adopting this approach facilitates the objective description of empirically measurable phenomena, which clarifies the many “grey areas” of self-identification and group formation. Smith commends anthropologists and sociologists for being the trailblazers of this method.

Reaffirming his critique of uniqueness in the history of religions research, Smith in a sequel work championed a discourse of difference that necessarily entailed attentiveness to negotiation, classification, and comparison.⁷⁶ The task of the historian, for Smith, is to describe all observable phenomena, noting their similarities and explaining their differences. This threefold task of negotiation, classification, and comparison implies ongoing interaction,

⁷⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith, “Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism,” in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* 2 (1980), 1-25.

⁷⁵ Smith, “Fences and Neighbors.”

⁷⁶ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparision of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 42.

indisputable common grounds, and possibly divergent views. It acknowledges the complex nature of group formation, the lingering interaction that plagues individual and collective identity, the syncretism that characterizes autonomous sects, and the distinctiveness and consciousness that evolve over time.

Mark Currie reiterates Smith's argument by focusing on philological entities. He remarks that language is a powerful tool frequently utilized in the arduous task of constructing reality or articulating meaning: "Language is not merely a nomenclature for entities that exist in the world, but ... [it] has a role in the production of those entities."⁷⁷ Language is not a photograph of reality but a paintbrush that produces detailed and multicolored portraits on the world's canvass. As such, the employment of "binary opposition" in literature aids the production of a reality suitable to the author's mindset. Currie summarily states: "One's sense of entities existing in the world is a product of the oppositions whose structures we use to interpret reality."⁷⁸ Currie, although not a scholar of Acts, concedes the reality-creating potential of language and contrast in narratives.

Continuing on the notion of difference, Currie writes that minor differences are more socially significant than major ones: "It certainly seems true of personal identity that one is more likely to abhor people very similar to oneself than those very different, perhaps on the grounds that one's individuality is more threatened by similarity than difference."⁷⁹ This means that when Luke writes about the hostility of "the Jews," an interpreter, mindful of the rhetoric of difference and the sociology of group distinctiveness, should think of "sibling rivalry," because hostilities are fiercer if rival factions share a lot in common. Rivalries are also driven by the quest for

⁷⁷ Mark Currie, *Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 85.

⁷⁸ Currie, *Difference*, 85-86.

⁷⁹ Currie, *Difference*, 86.

supremacy: a better expression of the group's identity. The rhetoric of difference, especially when it is imbued with negative emotions, signals "common roots" rather than "maximal difference." Given the interrelatedness of differing groups or users of the rhetoric of difference, Currie recommends the consistent use of "other" rather than "opposite," because whereas the former denotes minimal difference the latter implies stark unlikeness.⁸⁰

In tracing the genealogy of the modern concept of religion, Brent Nongbri argues that in antiquity religious groups referred to non-members as "others."⁸¹ A recurrently contrasting term over against Israel is "the nations." This term lumps together people whose deity, culture, or location is different from Israel's. It usually denotes foreigners. Nongbri notes that "religion" occurs for the first time in the sixteenth century (circa 1650s), where it distinguishes Catholic priests: religious (those who profess the evangelical counsels) and diocesan (secular clergy).⁸² "Religion" in this context refers to priests of the same religion—Catholicism. Nongbri concludes that "religion" as a category for distinguishing various forms of beliefs is relatively modern. But this does not trivialize individual experiences which are timeless nor the sociological phenomena which are perceptible.

Judith M. Lieu reaffirms this rhetoric of "otherness" in her research on Christianness in Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts. She maintains that being a Christ believer in antiquity was a

⁸⁰ Currie, *Difference*.

⁸¹ Nongbri, *Before Religion*. The thrust of Nongbri's argument, like those of many historians of early Christianity, rests on the lack of a word that encapsulates the modern idea of religion in antiquity. His research unsurprisingly stresses the Greco-Roman "religious" worldview. But Jews and Christians in antiquity approached their beliefs differently.

⁸² Although Nongbri traces the textual evidence for religion to the sixteenth century, some of the major religious orders in the Roman Catholic Church began at the inception of the thirteenth century—for instance, Carmelites, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians. It is, however, unclear (at least, Nongbri is silent on this point) how they were addressed from the beginning of the thirteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century.

social construct.⁸³ The core of Christianness, she argues, is an “experienced essence,” which is created and sustained by the “rhetoric of antithesis,” the “narrative of otherness,” and the “story of separation.”⁸⁴ Identities in antiquity, Lieu opines, were not mutually exclusive nor intrinsically opposed. Individuals, if they so desired, could have multiple identities without having to relinquish any. There was only an observable hierarchy or ranking of identities. This clarifies the pervasive syncretism in antiquity. The Christian’s socially constructed identity is only intelligible when contrasted with the polemical other. Lieu’s sociological study of the essence of Christianity in antiquity opens the floodgates to other phenomenological indices like boundaries, authorities, and jurisdictions. These sociological indices are foundational to every group’s existence. Hence, to grasp the social organization of Jewish and Christian groups in antiquity care must be taken to examine their boundaries and jurisdictions, as perceptible indicators of their self-determination and social identity.

C. K. Barrett in a study on the “Jews” in Ignatius’ letters states that the inception of the second century features a nuanced change in internecine religious controversy: from theological (doctrinal) to sociological (organizational).⁸⁵ He asserts that Paul and John represent the former era, while second-century writings evince the latter. Scholars who uncritically impose Paul’s theologically dissenting voice on Ignatius’ churches do great disservice to the latter’s immediate existential concerns. Barrett remarks that Jews in the Greco-Roman world were regarded as “an

⁸³ Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); eadem, *Neither Jew nor Greek?: Constructing Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

⁸⁴ Lieu, *Christian Identity*. “Experienced essence” borrows from the field of metaphysics, where entities are made up of essence (the core of their being) and accidents (what differentiates them from members of their genus). For instance, table would be an essence, while dinning, conference, kitchen tables would all be particularizations of the same essence (i.e., accidents). To speak of “experienced essence” thus is to say that Christians were like everyone else in the ancient world but for their conscious decision to define themselves in opposition to others.

⁸⁵ C. K. Barrett, “Jews and Judaizers in the Epistles of Ignatius,” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity, Essays in Honor of William David Davies*, ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 244.

ethnic group with strange sociological characteristics.”⁸⁶ These distinguishing features were not doctrinal but phenomenological. They refer to Jewish ancestral mores rather than to meticulously defined doctrinal tenets. Sociological features, for Barrett, safeguard interests of “organization and power.” “Judaizing” in the second-century Ignatian churches thus is sociologically defined.

Reflecting on Ignatius’s use of Ἰουδαισμός, Daniel Boyarin says that it is not convertible with “Judaism,” because it was construed as a strand of “Christianity.”⁸⁷ Ἰουδαισμός does not delineate a different group or religion; rather, it identifies an ideologically menacing sect in Christ associations. Put succinctly, Ἰουδαισμός denotes adherence to Jewish ancestral practices, while Χριστιανισμός signifies the recognition of their elective nature for Gentiles. In Ignatius’ writings, Ἰουδαισμός has no ethnic or religious denotation; it does not designate a different group or religion; rather, it identifies the agitations of a “right-wing” sect within the assembly. Proffering a subtle answer to his question, Boyarin suggests that Ignatius invented “Judaism” in order to address the perceptible ideological tensions within his churches. Ἰουδαισμός and Χριστιανισμός are primarily pedagogical rhetorical devices used to explicate the formative role that boundaries played in the creation of Christian identity.⁸⁸

In *Border Lines*, Boyarin challenges the uncritically presumed religious boundaries that separate Christ believers from Jews. These boundaries, he remarks, are superficially imposed by those in authority who sought to deter their members from abandoning group allegiance.⁸⁹ They are particularly designed to safeguard group interests. Rather than suggesting a “parting of

⁸⁶ Barrett, “Jews and Judaizers.”

⁸⁷ Daniel Boyarin, “Why Ignatius Invented Judaism,” in *The Ways That Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus*, ed. Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Theissen (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 309-24. However, Boyarin did not use the term “sociological phenomenon.”

⁸⁸ Although Boyarin prefers “epistemological” categories, I think Ignatius’s shrewd pairing of Ἰουδαισμός and Χριστιανισμός is “pedagogical” in outlook.

⁸⁹ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

ways,” boundaries indicate the agitations of those in authority whose power and control are threatened by the divided allegiance of certain members. Religious boundaries thus are factitious constructs created to clarify and safeguard social identity. Instances of “syncretism” and intermingling evince blurry boundaries, precarious circumscriptions, and agitated leaders. A researcher who hastily reads “parting” into an evolving group identity does disservice to history.

John G. Gager, focusing on those who bestrode the superficially imposed boundaries created by leaders of “rabbinic” Judaism and emergent Christianity, reaffirms the artificiality of these circumscriptions. He says that those with dual interests in synagogues and churches were negatively portrayed by historians, because history is usually told from the victor’s perspective.⁹⁰ Christian authors, whose writings pervade the second century CE, represent, defend, and justify the stance of Christian authorities on these vacillating members. The apologies of the syncretistic members, which could have offered a balanced, affected-persons’ perspective to Christian vitriol, have not survived. Relying on this palpable syncretism, Gager concludes that the back-and-forth of these members indicates the close affinity between “rabbinic” Judaism and Christianity and the superficiality of their leaders’ boundaries. Hence, the back-and-forth of members dragged on for centuries, because, although the authorities criticized and dissuaded them from congregating with the other group, they felt a strong sense of belonging to both groups. Tersely put, for the authorities, it was a question of either-or, while for the vacillating members, it was both-and. Gager’s analysis of the untold story of the “dangerous ones in between” reveals precarious and blurry boundaries.

Reuven Kimelman attributes the definitive parting of Judaism and Christianity to the relentless efforts of both Jewish and Christian authorities to keep their groups apart from each

⁹⁰ John G. Gager, “Jews, Christians, and the Dangerous Ones in Between,” *Interpretation in Religion* (1992): 249-57.

other.⁹¹ Contrary to popular misconceptions, the *Birkat ha-Minim* is neither evidence of nor an impetus for decisive parting. These benedictions were directed at the Jewish Christians who frequented synagogues and actively participated in churches. They did not refer to all Christ believers. The term *nosrim* used to address dissident members designates Nazoreans: followers of “the Nazorean,” Jesus. It is also interchangeable with *minim*. Kimelman’s arguments show that the *Birkat ha-Minim* proves the exact opposite of what some scholars read into it: the parting of ways. Rather than suggesting the parting of ways, it reveals the untiring efforts of an anxious religious hierarchy to purge groups of a contagious influence: the undeterred participation of its members who felt at home in two religiously entwined but ideologically divergent assemblies.

The method applied by the foregoing authors demonstrates sensitivity to the complexity of sociological categories. Rather than underscoring difference, it reveals resemblance; instead of espousing parting, it acknowledges the ongoing negotiation of religious identity; rather than justifying superficial boundaries, it exposes overlapping circumscriptions; instead of presuming internal ideological causations of rift, it identifies an external, hierarchical enforcement of artificial borders. For Smith, every discourse of difference must necessarily embrace the triple pillars of negotiation, classification, and comparison. Negotiation concedes the back-and-forth nature of consciously choosing, creating, or defining one’s identity. Classification highlights the functional and sociological nature of group designations. Comparison admits that groups, despite their intense rivalry, are profoundly interrelated. This method is keenly descriptive.

⁹¹ Reuven Kimelman, “*Birkat ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, vol. 2 of *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. E. P. Sanders A. I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 226-44.

1.4 Critical Discourse on the Parting of the Ways

Recent scholarly discourse on the parting of the ways questions the centuries-old assumption that Judaism and Christianity parted after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. The immediate post-Temple era is frequently regarded as the crucial time of the birthing of Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. This assumption blatantly ignores and summarily dismisses compelling evidence to the contrary, such as ongoing interaction among sects and pervasive Christian apologetics. Collected volumes on the parting of ways have since crystallized the contestations and reservations of modern scholarship on the subject, highlighting the complexity of Judeo-Christian relationships that were hitherto delineated as the “parting of the ways.” The concerns of historians of religion have triggered a renewed interest in sociological studies, thus proffering fresh insight into a stale conversation. Contributions to the “parting of ways” discourse do not gainsay the existence of multiple sects with varying ideological allegiances or communal affiliations but deny the emergence of two distinct “religions” based on differing hermeneutical approaches to a common patrimony. Before reviewing the current scholarly challenge to the traditional view on the parting of ways, its presuppositions are hereby enunciated: (1) there were ideologically divergent sects of Jewish origin at the commencement of the second century; (2) these groups had their own assemblies, parochial leaders, and, most importantly, their distinctive self-understandings; (3) each sect claimed superiority over the other; (4) members of both sects frequently vacillated; and (5) leaders dissuaded members from leaving their groups. These presuppositions evince similarities (common root, shared patrimony, identical worldview) and dissimilarities (different assemblies, separate leaders) that cannot be simplistically explained or chronologically resolved by a single incident or multiple events.

Scholars have generally identified a specific imperial event as the unequivocal marker suggesting parting: destruction of the Second Temple, the implementation of *Fiscus Iudaicus*, the *Birkat ha-Minim*, the writings of Christian apologists, or the Second Jewish revolt.⁹² The assumption undergirding this quest is both historical and chronological. But the separation of groups whose origins are inextricably entwined is not merely historical or chronological; instead, it is inevitably evolutionary and quintessentially sociological. The former perspective implies a mechanical split which is comparable to a political referendum; the latter acknowledges the organic, internal formation of groups and their unlikely dissolution at a single historical impetus. Intimately intertwined groups, put crisply, cannot be superficially divided. But they can organically evolve into separate, interrelated sects. Rather than presuming a “parting” of ways, scholarly discourse should describe the inexorable “drifting apart” of ideologies. While parting is immediate, complete, and decisive, drifting is gradual, incomplete, and ongoing. The latter epitomizes the evolutionary processes of group identity formation and permits the continuing negotiation of social identity.

The mere identification of notable differences among groups does not imply a complete, decisive, mechanical, and irrevocable separation. Differences, especially when they are defended by vitriol, are more indicative of close resemblance rather than acute unlikeness. A survey of some history of religions research shows that parochial leaders were instrumental in defining, creating, reinforcing, and sustaining differing social identities. The boundaries of ancient group identities were blurry, precarious, and negotiable. The fact that extant literature solely reports the viewpoints of leaders whose relevance and authority were apparently threatened by incessantly

⁹² James D. G. Dunn, ed., *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, WUNT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, TSAJ 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Baron, Hicks-Keeton, and Theissen, *Ways That Often Parted*.

vacillating members corroborates the maxim that history is told by victors. The members who continued to identify with multiple groups undoubtedly had a sense of belonging in each one.

Responding to a self-posed question—“Qui est Paul pour Luc?”—Odile Flichy emphatically responds: “L’étude de la figure de Paul constitue, un effet, un lieu privilégié pour éclairer la manière dont Luc conçoit le rapport entre le judaïsme et le christianisme en termes de continuité et de rupture.”⁹³ Flichy’s answer sums up the challenge of most scholars of Acts: how to explain the emergence of “Christianity” at the commencement of the second century (rupture) without prematurely severing its roots from Judaism (continuity). She rightly notes that the figure of Paul constitutes “un lieu privilégié” for studying the relationship between Judaism and Christianity at the inception of the second century. But contrary to her assumption, which is evident in her statement, Judaism and Christianity are not substantially different nor diametrically opposed categories in Acts. Her answer—although espoused by many pundits of historicist, theological, and literary methods—is anachronistic and tendentious: (1) it assumes the sociological and ideological autonomy of second-century Christianity from Judaism; (2) it reads the traditional bias of an irrevocable rupture (a synonym for parting) into the social context of Acts, thereby excluding other viable interpretations; and (3) it construes Luke’s Paul as an ideological liaison between Judaism and Christianity. Inadvertently, this conclusion presupposes that Acts was written after a momentous imperial event—possibly the devastation of 70 CE—had wreaked irreparable havoc on the relations between Judaism and Christianity. But was this the case? Did the demolition of the Jerusalem Temple have an adverse effect on Jews across the empire?

⁹³ Odile Flichy, *La Figure de Paul dans les Actes des Apôtres: Un Phénomène de Réception de la Tradition Paulinienne à la fin du Premier Siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 2007), 12.

Louis H. Feldman opines, and rightly so, that synagogues co-existed with the Jerusalem Temple. Due to the flourishing of synagogues in the Second Temple era, the tragedy of 70 CE only paved the way for a renewed emphasis on non-cultic worship: prayer and Scripture study.⁹⁴ This logical, natural, and hitch-free liturgical transition was precipitated by an already thriving synagogue practice. Lee I. Levine makes a significantly different observation: prior to 70 CE, there was no regular prayer life in the temple.⁹⁵ This perspective makes cultic life the only “victim” of Roman ire. More importantly, Levine claims that the destruction of the temple did not have an equally devastating effect on diaspora Jews. He maintains that the farther away Jews were from Jerusalem, the less impacted they were by the tragedy. He acknowledges the paltry rabbinic literary evidence for reconstructing the Jewish reaction to the temple’s destruction and dismisses the historical reliability of the Mishnah and Tosefta, because they are tinged with theological interpretations of a distant historical event. In the light of Feldman’s and Levine’s findings, the assumption that the temple kept Jews and Christians together must be jettisoned, because it only explains the strained relationship in Judea not in the diaspora. Acts was arguably written for a group located around the Aegean Sea, making it geographically further removed from the tragedy that befell Jerusalem.

James D. G. Dunn has also questioned the “parting of ways” after 70 CE. He maintains that the latent assumption that Christianity broke away from Judaism after the destruction of the Temple is anchored on a presumed normative nature of rabbinic Judaism. But this assumption is blatantly false. Dunn asserts that after the destruction of the temple, all Jewish sects embarked on

⁹⁴ Louis H. Feldman, “Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism in the First Century,” in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development*, 2nd ed., ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2011), 1-44.

⁹⁵ Lee I. Levine, “Judaism from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Second Jewish Revolt: 70-135 CE,” in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, 139-66.

an independent, mutually exclusive task of self-definition.⁹⁶ Each group strove to articulate its tenets and clarify its identity. The presumption that Judaism was monolithic is fundamental to the claims of an early parting. Dunn wittily expresses this oversight: “Part from what?”⁹⁷ In essence, one cannot say that Christianity broke away from Judaism when in actual fact different Jewish sects around Judea and the diaspora were preoccupied with seeking definite, lasting answers to bewildering and elusive questions. Dunn’s insight resonates with the perspective of this research, which will investigate the parting of ways through the literary lens of Acts.

Marion L. Soards studies the parting of Judaism and Christianity using Paul as a focal point. His work centers on the undisputed letters of Paul and their contemporaneous influence. He infers that the “parting of ways” was not a mechanical process; rather, it was quintessentially the “parting of peoples.”⁹⁸ This reinforces the sociological underpinnings of group rivalry and hierarchical imposition of sectarian boundaries. Soards cleverly phrases his threefold question thus: “Who parted from whom, when, and where?”⁹⁹ This question raises a tripartite problem: identity, dating, and location. “Who parted from whom?” underlies every conversation on the parting of the ways. Parting cannot be successfully argued unless the groups in question are meticulously defined before presenting compelling arguments. To assume that Christians parted from Jews, per Soards’s logic, is to unwittingly presume that they were recognizably different from each other. Presenting the apologies of writers who defended the establishment on both sides does not suffice, because, as Gager perceptively remarks, history is often written from the

⁹⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, vol. 3 of *Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

⁹⁷ “Part from what?” simply means that rabbinic Judaism did not constitute a formidable institution at 70 CE for Christ-believing Jews to secede from.

⁹⁸ Marion L. Soards, “Following Paul Along the Way of the Parting of Judaism and Christianity,” *Biblica* 100 (2019): 271. Soards emphasizes “people” because the parting of Judaism and Christianity, when indeed at last it occurred, was the parting of people who disagreed over how best to interpret and contextualize their patrimony.

⁹⁹ Soards, “Following Paul,” 268.

conqueror's perspective. Meaning that the contributions of the "dangerous ones in between," who evinced a deep sense of belonging to both ideologically "warring factions," are invaluable for an objective assessment, reconstruction, and narration of the sociological dynamics at play in the prolonged negotiation of boundaries. "When?" addresses the concern of dating. When did the "parting of ways" take place? Put conversely, was any single historical event responsible for the definitive separation of Judaism and Christianity? "Where?" tackles the monolithic presumption of most writers. For instance, did events in certain parts of the Roman empire have an equally devastating impact everywhere? Soards's question reiterates Levine's argument that Jews who lived far away from Jerusalem were not directly affected by the destruction of the temple. This is not to say that the temple was meaningless to them. But that their worship and lifestyle did not revolve around the Jerusalem Temple.

Returning to Flichy's interpretation of "la figure de Paul," care must be taken not to make the destruction of the temple the turning point in Jewish-Christian relationship. Giving too much weight to the destruction of the temple is apparently informed by a historicist approach to the text, which regards Luke's narrative as an objective, neutral representation of historical data.¹⁰⁰ Acts is quite the contrary—it is a creative delineation of a group's internecine quest for social identity, relevance, and existence. Flichy is, however, right in saying that studying "la figure de Paul" constitutes "un lieu privilégié" for exploring the relationship of thriving Christ associations vis-à-vis synagogues. In order to resist the lure of historicism, an alternative view that utilizes all the well-known methods needs to be applied in this study of Luke's Paul.

¹⁰⁰ Marguerat's refutation of this reasoning is sublimely impeccable. His assessment of Acts as the ingenious creation of an author with an evident subjective, historical perspective is compelling. Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*.

1.5 My Approach

My method is not radically different from the approaches adopted by the preceding scholars, but it creatively reorganizes these approaches to yield a quintessentially variant reading of Luke's "Jewish" Paul. It is eclectic and progressively consists of narrative, sociological, historical-critical, and theological methods. It is modeled on the tripartite worldviews presumed by biblical literature: the world within the text (narrative), the world behind the text (sociological and historical-critical), and the world in front of the text (theological). The narrative world constitutes the framework for studying the world that influenced the author (sociological and historical), and, based on these worlds, the world that lies ahead (theological). The narrative study of Paul's "Jewishness" aims at deciphering the identity of "the Jews" in Acts. This method stresses the role of plot and characterization in determining rhetorical denotation. Sociological criticism focuses on social identity, sectarian boundaries, and social memory. Based on this portrait of Luke's group epitomized by the Paul of Acts, other second-century Christian literature will be analyzed to corroborate Luke's vision for Christ associations. Lastly, enlightened by Luke's "Jewish" Paul, clear exegetical inferences on theology (theological anthropology, ecclesiology, and ecumenism) will be drawn. This eclectic approach hopefully will proffer a persuasive, ecumenical reading of Paul's "Jewishness" in Acts.

1.5.1 Narrative Criticism

Narrative criticism studies texts as stories (content) and discourses (rhetoric).¹⁰¹ It is a text-centered method which is not specifically interested in the historical foundation of events related in narratives, just like other forms of literary criticism. David Rhoads writes: "Narrative

¹⁰¹ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, ch.3, "Story as Discourse."

criticism ... [shows] the value of the narrative in its own right, without serving as a handmaid to historical reconstruction.”¹⁰² Narrative criticism seeks to construct meaning by studying the literary clues employed in a story.¹⁰³ As Robert Tannehill notes: “Viewed in isolation, an event may ... have a particular meaning, but when it is placed in a narrative context, its meaning can change.”¹⁰⁴ Narrative criticism focuses on the contextual denotation of a concept (e.g., “the Jews” in Acts). Since the task of the narrative critic, as Mark A. Powell notes, is to read the story as an implied reader (i.e., the imagined audience constructed from the text), it is intrinsically an imaginative process.¹⁰⁵ Tannehill reiterates this: “Reading a narrative is an imaginative process. From words on a page we must reconstruct a narrative world.”¹⁰⁶ Rhoads echoes this as well: “Readers ... use their imagination, attribute emotions, fill in gaps, [and] make connections.”¹⁰⁷ Narrative criticism assumes a fundamental orientation to Scripture: storytelling.¹⁰⁸ Every story typically consists of three integral aspects: characters, plots, and places. These form the framework for all narratives, which correspondingly answers three pertinent questions: Who? What? Where? To decipher the meaning of a text, these questions must be answered thoughtfully and satisfactorily.

In defense of literary criticism, John A. Darr writes: “Fragmenting the text has meant fracturing the narrative’s larger patterns of character, plot, rhetoric, irony, and suspense.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² David Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism: Practices and Prospects,” in idem and Syreeni, *Characterization in the Gospel*, 268.

¹⁰³ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*; see Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (London: SCM, 1999).

¹⁰⁴ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Gospel according to Luke*, vol. 1 of *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 11.

¹⁰⁵ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*.

¹⁰⁶ Tannehill, *Gospel according to Luke*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism,” 269.

¹⁰⁸ Eric Clouston, *How Ancient Narratives Persuade: Acts in Its Literary Context* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 4.

¹⁰⁹ Darr, *Character Building*, 12.

Fragmentation prioritizes historicity over rhetoric which encapsulates meaning. The latter safeguards the unity and integrity of narratives and spotlights their symbolic world. Beginning this study with narrative criticism is attentive to Luke's rhetoric. Rather than imposing the views of other authors on Luke, a narrative study will show how these "elements mutually condition and illuminate one another" in Acts.¹¹⁰ Stated summarily, the denotation of Luke's "Jewish" Paul is determined by its rhetorical function.

Characters and plots are windows into narrative worlds. Applying narrative criticism in his study of Luke's Paul, Marguerat remarks that it has an "identity function": it is emblematic of Luke's group.¹¹¹ This inferentially means that Paul's "Jewishness" mirrors an imagined group of Christ believers. Interpreting Paul differently does great disservice to Luke's rhetoric. Marguerat further opines that characters "crystallize ... [the] theological motive of a plot."¹¹² Accordingly, Paul's "Jewishness" is a recapitulation of Luke's ecclesiology, since it encapsulates his notion of Christ associations.

Expatriating Luke's characters, Darr remarks that "Lukan characters are sometimes so exclusively identified with a specific plot function that they may be said to embody or signify that function (Judas = Betrayal, Peter = Denial)."¹¹³ In accordance with this narrative logic, one can also say that given the frequent identification of "the Jews" with adversarial roles, Luke's rhetoric is neither ethnic nor religious. His concern is literary: adversaries that foment resistance to "the Way" ("the Jews" = Paul's opposition).¹¹⁴ Darr's assertion is pivotal to my construal of "the Jews" and Luke's Paul. He also states that characters are interrelated. He calls this the "web

¹¹⁰ Darr, *Character Building*.

¹¹¹ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 46.

¹¹² Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 46.

¹¹³ Darr, *Character Building*, 39.

¹¹⁴ This literary equation is not Darr's but mine. Per his argument, this inference is logically inevitable.

of interrelationships.”¹¹⁵ This means that to comprehend a literary character, one must study other inextricably entwined character(s) in the same narrative. Studying Luke’s Paul thus cannot be undertaken in isolation, it must be analyzed comparatively with “the Jews.”

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan elucidates the narrative function of characters in narratives. She remarks: “[A] character is a construct, put together by the reader from various indications dispersed throughout the text.”¹¹⁶ So characterization is quintessentially a function of reading: organizing a text into intelligible units, establishing patterns found in character traits, and drawing conclusions based on these data. It is both objective (narrative) and subjective (readers’ impressions). The complexity of characters is not solely determined by an author’s ingenuity but also by the reader’s literary competence. Central to characterization are traits. They enliven characters, create diversity, and add excitement. They are an ideal means for portraying real-life figures. They do not have an independent literary existence from the characters who personify them.¹¹⁷ Likewise, they are neither appraised nor vilified independently; their verdicts are equally applicable to the characters that embody them. Fictive characters embody appalling traits that can be vilified by everyone without the risk of hurting an actual person.¹¹⁸ But they are seldom created without corresponding quotidian experiences. Sometimes, they are explicit; at other times, they are implicit. They are either flat (predictable traits) or round (evolving traits).¹¹⁹ Paul and “the Jews” represent this broad spectrum in characterization: whereas Paul is round and dynamic, “the Jews” are flat and static. The latter personify one idea—Paul’s opposition. They

¹¹⁵ Darr, *Character Building*, 41.

¹¹⁶ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 36. This implies that “the Jews” does not have an absolute denotation in Acts; rather, a creative reader can explore viable options that are not immediately apparent in scholarly publications.

¹¹⁷ Seymour B. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978). He defines traits as a “relatively stable or abiding personal quality” of a character.

¹¹⁸ For this same reason in most Nigerian folklore, characters are usually animals.

¹¹⁹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 40; James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2005).

are consistently used to stifle Paul's initiatives and blunt his missionary strides. These preliminary findings of narrative criticism foreground a sociological study of social identity and social memory.

1.5.2 Sociological Criticism

Sociological criticism is a strand of the historical-critical method. It studies the formation of social identity, the establishment of boundary markers, and the classification of non-members as the "other." Per John H. Elliott, it approaches literature as a "vehicle of social interaction."¹²⁰ Although many exegetes attempt social descriptions of Scripture, Elliott argues that such projects are only sociological if they employ the "theories, methods, and research outcomes of the social sciences."¹²¹ The two branches of sociology that I will utilize in this research are social memory and social identity. The former studies the creative process of recalling history in order to shape, evaluate, and interpret the present; while the latter examines the prerequisites of group identity. Sociological criticism offers a hermeneutical framework for understanding Luke's employment of "Jewishness," particularly when he predicates it of Paul.

Craig L. Blomberg defines sociological criticism thus: "The study of the interrelationships among humans and how those interrelationships define and shape the behavior of individual persons and cultures."¹²² Although this definition does not include the findings of sociologists, it is nevertheless useful. Blomberg stresses its dynamic, fluid, and progressive nature. These dynamic traits subsequently shape group behavior. This delineation of sociological criticism makes it congenial to Smith's three-legged stool for studying ancient religions:

¹²⁰ Elliott, *Social-scientific Criticism*, 10.

¹²¹ Elliott, *Social-scientific Criticism*, 14.

¹²² Craig L. Blomberg with Jennifer Foutz Markley, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 91.

negotiation, classification, and comparison. Just as sociology is dynamic, fluid, and progressive, so too is the approach in this research.

1.5.2.1 Social Memory

Narrative criticism is also bolstered by a branch of social psychology called “social memory,” which studies the cognitive processes of remembering, editing, restructuring, and forgetting. When people write about the past, events are not reported indiscriminately. On the contrary, they are fastidiously related to serve contemporaneous needs.¹²³ Expressed candidly, the present determines what past event is remembered or forgotten, retained or discarded, stressed or suppressed. In a psychological experiment on conversational remembering (discourse and memory), David Middleton and Derek Edwards conclude that “collective versions of past events are available as grounds for justifying current and future action[s]; and because they are so ‘useful’ it is quite ordinary to find them being reconstructed and contested.”¹²⁴ Crisply put, contemporary utility is crucial to social memory: that which is remembered is always pivotal to the interpretation of the present. Events that are unrelated (or perilous) to the present are ignored, suppressed, edited, or forgotten.

James Fentress and Chris Wickham opine that social memory is not an objective relating of past events. It is not a disinterested chronicling of historical data. It is a deeply creative art. It attempts an affirmative construction of the present by meticulously editing the past, making it exceedingly useful to a dynamically novel context. Fentress and Wickham state: “Memory is

¹²³ Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Vansina, *Oral Tradition*; Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2002).

¹²⁴ David Middleton and Derek Edwards, “Conversational Remembering: A Social Psychological Approach,” in *Collective Remembering*, ed. David Middleton and Derek Edwards (London: Sage, 1990), 43.

ordered not like a physical text.... It is not a passive receptacle, but instead a process of active restructuring, in which elements may be retained, reordered, or suppressed.”¹²⁵ This implies that the task of remembering is *not* passive but active; it is not naïve but critical; it is not restrictive but creative; it is not a blind sequencing of historical data but a thoughtful arrangement of these based on contemporaneous pertinence.

Fentress and Wickham further state that social memory begets and nurtures communal identity. Through collective remembering, a group voices out its interpretation of the past, its perception of the present, and its aspiration for the future. These tripartite timeframes are closely knit in the construction of social memory. Fentress and Wickham write: “Social memory ... [is] an expression of collective experience: social memory identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future.”¹²⁶ Although social memory makes factual claims about the past, these must never be simplistically construed as being historically accurate.¹²⁷ The reconstructed, not retrieved, past reveals more about the present and future than the timeframe suggests. Fentress and Wickham warn: “The question of whether *we* [modern readers] regard these memories [a group’s origins] as historically true will often turn out to be less important than whether *they* [the author and addressees] regard their memories as true.”¹²⁸ Social memory avails each group the dual tools of thoroughly engaging its immediate context and consciously constructing collective identity.

Alan Kirk reaffirms the constructive role of memory in creating communal identity. He remarks: “The activity of memory in articulating the past is dynamic, unceasing, *because it is*

¹²⁵ Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 40.

¹²⁶ Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 25.

¹²⁷ Social memory is never an objective, neutral retrieval of historical data.

¹²⁸ Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 26.

wired into the ever-shifting [or changing] present.”¹²⁹ Once again, social memory is presented as a conscious reflection on past events in the light of a dynamic present. Per sociologists, historical literature is the act of responding to contemporary concerns using traditions of the past. Kirk also observes that the reconstruction of the past in the present is deeply influenced by a group’s social framework: time, place, and motivation.¹³⁰ These domesticate the past in the present, because memory is intrinsically spatio-temporal: it adheres to places, times, and pivotal events. Hence, the places and events cited in a narrative—since they are not mere retrievals of historical data—are profoundly significant (i.e., literary cartography).

1.5.2.2 Social Identity

Studies of ethnic designations must take theories of social identity into consideration. To fathom the reverberations of ethnicity in ancient or modern literature, the evolution of group consciousness must be circumscribed. In a study on social identity, Richard Jenkins maintains that people are the principal agents of group classification and creation.¹³¹ He rules out the likelihood of an intrinsic trait such as “groupness” by describing social identity in functional terms; he accents the incessant need to establish, reaffirm, and sustain identity; he emphasizes the pivotal role played by similarities and differences in the construction of social identity; and lastly, he construes the existence, idea, and transgressing of boundaries to be critical moments in the evolution of social identity.

¹²⁹ Alan Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory,” in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, eds. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 10, emphasis original.

¹³⁰ Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory,” 2-3.

¹³¹ Jenkins, *Social Identity*.

First, Jenkins asserts that “all human identities are, by definition, *social* identities.”¹³² They are “social” because they are constructed by a group’s fervent quest for meaning, which is firmly anchored on periodic formative interactions. These quotidian norms of meaning-creating human interactions include: “agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation.”¹³³ All human identities, put crisply, have two building blocks: meaning and interaction. Social identities are created by people in their quest to understand and interpret their experiences. They serve functional and formative purposes. Because human experiences are not monolithic, constructing identity chiefly entails two vital principles: similarity and difference. Groups wrestle with defining themselves in a society of similar but differing affiliations and ideologies. Jenkins’ emphasis on “agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation” evidently shows the back-and-forth dialectic of constructing group distinctiveness. Put differently, group identity is only intelligible when it is contrasted or compared with others. This interaction entails negotiation, clarification, and classification.

Second, Jenkins stresses the procedural and subjective nature of identity formation. He writes: “It [identification] is a process ... not a ‘thing’; it is not something that one can *have*, or not, it is something that one *does*.”¹³⁴ Emphasis on the functionality of social identity necessarily excludes essence. Put tersely, social identity only exists when people consciously choose to create it. Reiterating the subjectivity of all social identities, Jenkins maintains that “groups are real if people think they are: they then behave in ways that assume that ... [they] are real and, in so doing, construct that reality. They *realise* it.”¹³⁵ Seen from a sociological viewpoint, groups

¹³² Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 18.

¹³³ Jenkins, *Social Identity*.

¹³⁴ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 6, emphasis original.

¹³⁵ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 13, emphasis original.

do not exist because of intrinsic qualities but evolve because of their members' decision to confer uniqueness on them. Jenkins' approach to social identity radically alters the pervasive notion of a static, objective, and decipherable notion. He invites readers to trace the ongoing, subjective, and amorphous concept that underlies every social identity construction. Hence, identity—contrary to popular belief—is factitious (or socially created) and negotiable.

Third, Jenkins discusses the formative role played by boundaries in the construction of group identity. He observes: "Identity is constructed in transactions at and across boundaries; during these transactions working balances are struck between (internal) group identification and (external) categorisation by others."¹³⁶ Boundaries thus should never be investigated in isolation, because they constitute a meaningful identity index. They do not merely circumscribe a group; they also exclude the unwanted other. Consequently, the function of boundaries is highlighted when groups being distinguished are seen together at a glance. Boundaries ipso facto imply at least two groups. Uniqueness and separation necessarily presume another. Jenkins's point which has been consistently and thoroughly argued is that boundaries presume at least two groups and reveal their self-definitions. Self-definitions acquire meaning when placed against the backdrop of two competing ideologies. Put succinctly, the self exists because there is the other, and vice versa. These foregoing insights into social identities make the conclusions of Jenkins inevitable: "Without repertoires of identification we would not be able to relate with each other meaningfully or consistently.... Without identity there could simply be no human world, as we know it."¹³⁷ Social identity thus is the language for effective communication and the soul of all interpersonal relationships. It is the building block of the self that contrasts with the other.

¹³⁶ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 46.

¹³⁷ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 28.

W. A. Elliott approaches the subject of group consciousness differently. He focuses on the psychological aspect of group identity formation rather than on its sociological dimension. Consistent with this methodology, Elliott argues that “the touchstone of social identification ... [is] ... where the relevant loyalties lie at any given time.”¹³⁸ This approach to social identity is thoroughly subjective: “loyalties” and “at any given time.” The former stresses the individual’s sense of belonging, while the latter underscores the fickleness of this *esprit de corps*. Although Elliott’s study of group consciousness is methodologically different from that of Jenkins, both agree on the fluidity of social identity and its similarity in worldview: us and them.¹³⁹ Elliott’s insight into the psychology of group consciousness eschews rigid taxonomy (e.g., essence) and *a priori* assumptions. Social identity is quintessentially fickle, relative, and amorphous.

Susie Scott reiterates the subjectivity of social identity. First, she defines identity as “a set of integrated ideas about the self, the roles we play and the qualities that make us unique.”¹⁴⁰ Three words deserve special emphasis in this definition: ideas, roles, and qualities. These concepts are all socially constructed: they are created, interpreted, and sustained by a group of persons. One’s idea of oneself is largely dependent on societal values, as are socially constructed roles or socially celebrated qualities. Scott summarily reiterates the subjectivity and relationality of social identity: “Social identity is ... relational: defined relative to other people or groups. I find out who I *am* by knowing what I am *not*: understanding where and with whom I do (or don’t) belong.”¹⁴¹ The relationality of social identity brings to the fore terms like otherness, boundary, negotiation, and classification. There is no group identity without a conscious

¹³⁸ W. A. Elliott, *Us and Them: A Study of Group Consciousness* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), 10.

¹³⁹ Elliott, *Us and Them*, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Susie Scott, *Negotiating Identity: Symbolic Interactionist Approaches to Social Identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), 2.

¹⁴¹ Scott, *Negotiating Identity*, 2.

exclusion of the other; there is no exclusion of the other unless a boundary is superficially imposed to mark the demarcation; there is no boundary unless groups negotiate their boundaries and delineate what constitutes otherness; there is no negotiation of boundaries unless groups identify the individuals who threaten the group's individuality and classify them as the "other." A cursory look at the sociology of group identity shows that boundaries, negotiations, and classifications are inextricably entwined. None can exist in isolation; none is meaningful without the logical presumption of the other.

1.5.3 Historical-critical Method

Edgar Krentz's book features a lucid and concise delineation of the historical-critical method. He writes: "It [i.e., the historical-critical method] consciously and critically investigates biblical documents to write a narrative of the history they reveal."¹⁴² His description states that historical narratives are constructed.¹⁴³ He also adds that they are selective and exclude resources considered extraneous to the study.¹⁴⁴ Further expatiating the historical-critical method, he avers: "The goal of history is explanation and understanding not the passing of judgment on the moral acts of individuals."¹⁴⁵ In contradistinction, he asserts: "Understanding is not ethics; that is a task of philosophy and theology."¹⁴⁶ Having clarified the project of a historical endeavor as being decidedly neutral, he notes that the task of exegetes is to explain the past from "a corpus of facts arranged in [a] narrative."¹⁴⁷ Regarding the use of historical evidence, he claims that it should be treated as a hostile legal witness: "Historical sources are like witnesses in the court of law: they

¹⁴² Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 35.

¹⁴³ Meeks, "Assisting the Word," 151-62; Matthews, *Philip*, 35

¹⁴⁴ Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 37.

¹⁴⁵ Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 36.

¹⁴⁶ Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 36.

¹⁴⁷ Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 37.

must be interrogated and their answers evaluated. The art of interrogation and evaluation is called criticism.”¹⁴⁸ In impugning historical evidence, the historian must assess the author’s credibility and the integrity of the information related. This ensures that the author’s biases are identified and addressed. Krentz also remarks that every text relates to “some situation and contains truth about it.”¹⁴⁹ As I will argue later, Acts features Luke’s story of an internecine diaspora Jewish rivalry over non-Judaizing Gentiles. As a self-critical evaluation of a historian’s quest, Krentz enumerates the following qualities: “Curiosity, full of questions about the past, intellectual knowledge of how to use historical sources, ability to think critically, interrogating, and evaluating the sources.”¹⁵⁰ This hermeneutical disposition undergirds my study of Acts.

1.5.4 Theological Significance

Philip Vielhauer’s seminal study of Paul in Acts is provocative and insightful. He makes a persuasive case for the theology of this literary character and its implications for the historical setting of Luke. His work has since received a plethora of reviews: approving and disapproving, constructive and deconstructive. But his basic claims remain perennially valid: (1) the theologies of Paul in Acts do not easily align with those of the letters; (2) these incongruous theologies (pre-Pauline Christology and post-Pauline theologies) indicate historical distance (but not ideological dissonance) between Paul and Luke, thereby making the latter an unlikely travel companion of the former, contrary to the traditional assumption;¹⁵¹ (3) Luke’s theology is embedded in his narrative;¹⁵² (4) his ecclesiology is not based on the “body of Christ” but on the “unity of the

¹⁴⁸ Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 42.

¹⁴⁹ Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 42.

¹⁵⁰ Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 46-47.

¹⁵¹ For studies on the “We-Passages” in Acts, see Campbell, *“We” Passages in the Acts*. Campbell argues that this literary convention was employed by Luke to assure Theophilus of the credibility of his two stories.

¹⁵² Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte: Übersetzt und Erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 91.

human race”;¹⁵³ and (5) his historiography is distant from “earliest Christianity” but similar to the “early catholic church.”¹⁵⁴ I agree with most of his ideas and find them helpful in reading Acts. But I disagree with some of his deductions and theological categories, because a narrative theologian will present theology differently from a systematic theologian. Genre conditions presentation, and presentation shapes theology. If the genres of the undisputed letters and Acts are markedly different, they cannot be fairly assessed by the same canon. This, once again, is an apparent instantiation of “genre mismatch.”¹⁵⁵

Vielhauer’s assertion that the major difference between Paul and Luke is Christology requires clarification, because his deduction was reached solely by comparing Paul’s speeches in Acts to his letters. Luke’s Christology is at the service of his narrative goal: legitimating a Christ association consisting of diaspora Jews and Gentiles. This daring vision deemphasizes legalism. Acts thus does not describe a dissenting theology but an alternative approach to a varying social scenario. But Vielhauer is right in accenting the most jarring portrait of Luke’s Paul: his attitude to ancestral mores: “The circumcision of Timothy stands in direct contradiction to the theology of Paul, but it fits Luke’s view that the law retains its full validity for Jewish Christians and that Paul acknowledged this in a conciliatory concession to the Jews.”¹⁵⁶ Luke’s neutrality toward Jewish ancestral customs—excepting the Jerusalem council’s communiqué—is the bedrock of his theology: theological anthropology that begets ecclesiology. In lieu of Vielhauer’s theologies, I will discuss the aforementioned. The latter theological categories flow naturally from a study on social identity. Being a narrative theologian, Luke’s theology is contingent on social exigency not on the abstraction and refinement of later theological speculations.

¹⁵³ Philip Vielhauer, “Paulinism in Acts,” in Moessner, *Paul and the Heritage of Israel*, 16-17.

¹⁵⁴ Vielhauer, “Paulinism in Acts.”

¹⁵⁵ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 3.

¹⁵⁶ Vielhauer, “Paulinism in Acts,” 10.

1.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have surveyed the three traditional approaches (historical, literary, and theological) to the study of Acts stating their pros and cons. The historical method offers a useful narrative introduction to the letters and a more comprehensive biography for Paul. The literary approach highlights the symbolic world of Acts making it an end in itself. The theological method compares the religious affirmations in Acts with the letters, stressing their depictions of Paul. These approaches are undeniably useful in studying Luke's Paul but fail to account for Acts' notably "Jewish" portrayal of the "apostle to the Gentiles." Noting the limitations of these approaches, I have proposed an eclectic method that appropriates the critical discourse on the "parting" of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE in studying Luke's "Jewish" Paul. Relying on insights from social identity and collective memory, I have argued that Paul's "Jewishness" is emblematic of the blurry boundaries and fluid identities that existed within and outside Luke's Christ association. In Acts historical exigency births a socioculturally sensitive theology, which evinces the contemporaneous existential challenges confronting its recipients: the amicable coexistence of diaspora Jews and non-Judaizing Gentiles in Christ associations of Asia Minor and Greece.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT WAS "JEWISHNESS" IN LUKE'S MILIEU?

2.1 Defining Jewishness After 70 CE

“Jewishness” has been debated extensively in modern biblical scholarship, particularly in recent studies on Christian origins. Solutions traditionally proffered especially focus on ethnicity, geography, and religion. How Jewishness is construed conditions one’s interpretation of biblical writings, especially those that feature a tirade of condemnation of “the Jews.” If one’s construal of Jewishness is chiefly as religion, diatribes against Jews will be interpreted as denigrations of the Jewish religion. If Jewishness is mainly defined as ethnicity, it creates a hermeneutical conundrum in classifying Jesus’ diverse following: can one naïvely categorize Galileans and other ethnicities simply as “Judeans?” So far, the least disputed category appears to be geography, which designates the occupants of Judah as Judeans. Contentious readings and noncumenical approaches to Jewishness have birthed triumphalist interpretations of the NT. This questionable reading is particularly true of Acts. Answering seemingly straightforward questions like “Who is a Jew?” or “Who are ‘the Jews’ in Acts?” can be befuddling. This bewilderment is engendered by the philological necessity of circumscribing variegated expressions of Jewishness in every place, time, and age. Establishing such a definition, if it is possible at all, will be a Herculean task, because it seeks to circumscribe Jewishness (a malleable and negotiable concept) by suggesting a comprehensive definition (a fixed articulation of a negotiable idea). Delineating Jewishness is tantamount to downplaying its noticeable fluidity over several epochs. Rather than set rigid parameters for discussing such a malleable and negotiable notion, I will speak of deciphering Jewishness in particular discourses, like the one presented in Acts. Both historians who study events in time and space and sociologists who study people in groups know that social identity is malleable and negotiable, because it pertains to human beings who are constantly changing and adapting to new sociocultural milieux. Instead of

presenting a strict delineation of Jewishness that will turn out to be conceptually counterintuitive, I will espouse an approach that is both pragmatic and all-encompassing by concentrating on the rhetorical utilization of the term. Unlike the foregoing notions of grappling with Jewishness, the rhetorical-literary approach acknowledges authorial sovereignty and ingenuity in using familiar words to obfuscate actual historical referents, thereby de-localizing and de-particularizing a narrative. This method accords narratives an objective façade. Hence, Jewishness does not mean precisely the same thing in every given situation and in every piece of writing: context and genre are crucial in deciphering rhetorical situation. This denotation of Jewishness perfectly aligns with the narrative perspective that I explained in the preceding chapter. I will now review pertinent descriptions of Jewishness after 70 CE in scholarship, beginning with the word's etymology.

2.1.1 Etymology of Jewishness

After the reign of King Solomon, Israel was divided into two kingdoms: north and south. The Deuteronomistic Historian (hereafter DH) gives a rhetorical synopsis of the cause of this territorial division in Israel and cites divine injunction as the reason for a bloodless split (1 Kgs 12:17-24).¹⁵⁷ The northern kingdom was usurped by Jeroboam, while the southern kingdom was entrusted to Rehoboam. This preexilic, rhetorical depiction of the Davidic dynasty is pivotal to a

¹⁵⁷ John van Seters gives a lucid summary of the integral components of ancient historiography: (1) it is a distinct genre; (2) it is not an objective, neutral, and systematic reminiscing of the past (i.e., ancient historiography is etiological not chronological); (3) it evaluates the present situation vis-à-vis its interest in the past and adduces a moral reason to explain an unpalatable present circumstance; and (4) it has a corporate character and depicts the self-definition and understanding of a group. This definition of historiography excellently sums up the task of the DH and other biblical writers, including Luke. *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 4-5; see also E. Theodore Mullen, *Narrative History and Ethnic Boundaries: The Deuteronomistic Historian and the Creation of Israelite National Identity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).

description of Jewishness, which is derived from Judah, the major tribe in the south.¹⁵⁸

Etymologically, “Jewish” is a derivative of either Greek or Latin names for Judah and its residents: Ἰουδαία/*Iudaea* or Ἰουδαῖος/*Iudaeon*. The geographical underpinning of Jewishness is deeply enshrined in its appellation. This is well attested in Hellenistic Jewish writings: Philo eulogizes the courage and enormous population of Judean inhabitants (*Embassy* 215); Josephus makes several references to Judea: he relates an unprecedented earthquake that occurred in Judea in the seventh year of Herod, as the battle between Octavius and Antony was taking place (*Ant.* 15:121); he opines that Judeans derive their name from the land they occupy—that is, Judea (*Ag. Ap.* 1:179); he also describes the geopolitical dimensions of Judea (*J.W.* 3:51-58). It is evident that the etymology of “Jewish” is inextricably linked to the geographical circumscription dubbed Judea. This bolsters the reading of Ἰουδαῖος as Judean. I will now resume with the definitive break between both Israelite kingdoms.

In 722 BCE, Assyrian troops conquered Israel and displaced its inhabitants. After this tragic event, it only survives in the writings of Judean scribes, who chronicled its history with a tendentious intent. In postexilic times, the south is characteristically described as the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Ezra 1:5). But it was not partitioned between Judah and Benjamin. Rather, the common geopolitical territory was regarded as the homeland of both tribes. This is not to say that the tribe of Benjamin was entirely assimilated into the tribe of Judah, however. Because Paul, in accenting his Jewish ancestry, proudly identifies as a member of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5). This suggests that the tribe of Benjamin survived well into the mid-first century CE.

¹⁵⁸ By the NT era, Judea became a standard designation for southern Palestine, while the contiguous northern territory was called Samaria. Both territories comprised the ancient kingdom of Israel ruled by David and Solomon.

Israel, which in NT times was ethnically adulterated because of Assyria's policy of displacing inhabitants and repopulating conquered territories, survives territorially as Samaria.

Other NT writings document vestiges of this ancient ethnic tension between erstwhile Israelites. The story of the Samaritan woman in John's Gospel is a classic example of this ethnic bigotry. She raises a concern that reignites a contentious debate: since our forebears worshipped at "this mountain" (Mount Gerizim), where should contemporary Israelites (i.e., Samaritans and Jews) worship: Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem (John 4:20)? Her inquiry is replete with innuendoes as she subtly—though unsurprisingly—upholds the correctness of her group's practice: (1) she insinuates that Samaritans have remained faithful to Israel's forebears; and (2) she inadvertently remarks that Judeans have deviated from an ancestral practice. Not to get into the hermeneutics of Jesus' response here, which has produced volumes of scholarly research, this scene is prefaced with an ethnically pertinent historical datum: "Near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph" (4:5). This detail further corroborates the Samaritan woman's claims to her people's fidelity to ancestral traditions. Setting aside questions bordering on the separation of places of worship (Bethel or Jerusalem) or the Judean-self-justifying politics that undergirds the DH's books, John's account indicates that ethnic questions pertaining to the constituent members of ancient Israel persisted in the late first century CE. It contrasts Samaritans with their related but ethnically distinct counterparts, Judeans. This means that in the NT era, pronorthern kingdom sentiments survive in Samaritans, while those of the south persists in Judeans.

Luke's story of the Good Samaritan evokes a similar ethnic tension. Here, Jesus, while demonstrating what it is to be a true neighbor, narrates a story of compassion with Judeans as villains: the priest and the Levite. The scribe, who sought a straightforward reply from Jesus, responded to his closing question by describing the Samaritan's deeds, but not identifying his

ethnicity. Although this parable had an unambiguous challenge to quotidian human behaviors, the ethnic tensions between Judeans and Samaritans remain visible in the NT. Both Gospel stories involving Samaritans are insightful in underscoring the connotations inherent in the ethnic appellation, Jewish. These clarifications are crucial in a focused literary study of Jewishness. I will now review research on the denotations of Jewishness and “the Jews” in Acts.

2.1.2 “The Jews” in Acts: *Status Quaestiones*

The insuperable problem that most historical critics of Acts contend with is how to make sense of Luke’s neutral and adversarial depictions of Jews. Not distinguishing layers of rhetorical innuendo in this unadorned designation, some scholars have argued that this suggests the parting of ways between Judaism and Christianity.¹⁵⁹ Accepting this assumption, others have tried to offer a theological justification for the purported rift.¹⁶⁰ But these interpretations are egregiously misleading and grossly inattentive to the blurry boundaries that epitomized ongoing interactions and group identity negotiations between Christ associations and diaspora Jews.¹⁶¹ My contention is that Acts is not chronicling a prior and completed split between these groups. Rather, it relates the fervid struggle of an early second-century Christ association consisting of diaspora Jews and devout Gentiles, who repeatedly strive to convince other diaspora Jews that they are faithful to ancestral traditions. The preponderance of Jews (instead of Christians) in Acts mirrors Luke’s group: Christ-believing diaspora Jews who admit Gentiles without indiscriminately mandating

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Marguerat, “Juifs et Chrétiens selon Luc-Actes,” in *Le Déchirement: Juifs et Chrétiens au Premier Siècle*, ed. idem (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 155-57; Pervo, *Luke’s Story of Paul*, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Marguerat, “Juifs et Chrétiens selon Luc-Actes,” 155-57.

¹⁶¹ Daniel Boyarin, “Apartheid Comparative Religion in the Second Century: Some Theory and a Case Study,” in *Defining Judaism: A Reader*, ed. Aaron W. Hughes (London: Equinox: 2010), 90. He lucidly states the fiercely debated and recurrent topic of Jewish-Christian parting pointedly: “‘Christianity’ and ‘Judaism’ were invented in order to make sense of the fact that there were Jews and Christians.” He dubs this circular reasoning “feedback loop” (i.e., social difference is rationalized as ideological difference which in turn justifies the former).

their stringent observance of all ancestral customs. But why has Luke's adversarial portrayal of "the Jews" spurred the spurious assumption of a "parting of ways," or worse, rejection of the ancestral faith of Jesus and Paul? The answer is to be found in an overreliance on the historical-critical method, which de facto assumes that Acts is a neutral, systematic, and objective representation of mid-first century "apostolic" history. This cannot be further from the truth. Historicity in Acts is not founded on documentary reminiscence but on the retrojection of a contemporaneous, internecine diaspora Jewish rivalry into the past. This is the only historically reliable data that Acts chronicles (i.e., retrojecting its present into the narrative past). To imbue the narrative with gross facticity that is not compatible with the text's literary design or to evaluate its affirmations by the canons of a different genre does great disservice to Luke. I will now review scholarly perspectives on Jewish identity representative of popular approaches to Jewishness after 70 CE.

Lawrence H. Schiffman, although not concerned with Acts, investigates the prerequisite for Jewishness in rabbinic writings. First, he says that the Second Temple era heralded incredible diversity among Jews on a number of issues: interpretation of Scripture, observance of ancestral customs, the Torah, and theology. He characterizes this period as a "struggle between various competing ideologies for the future of Judaism."¹⁶² This delineation effectively captures the perspective of the NT writers, who ardently believed and opined that their version of Jewishness was ideologically superior to those of their religious rivals. The signature trait of Jewishness at the end of this foundational era in Jewish history thus can succinctly be phrased in a well-known Latin dictum: *e pluribus unum* (out of many, one). Disparity of ancestral practices, ideological disagreements, and internecine strife are well-documented facts that typified Jewishness in this

¹⁶² Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew?: Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1985), 2.

epoch. Second, Schiffman notes that despite this remarkable and extensive ideological diversity, Jews still recognized their compatriots as Jews nonetheless, although they occasionally referred to them as errant. The parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, per Schiffman, occurred when the latter's membership became predominantly Gentile. Put crisply, Christianity ceased being an expression of Jewishness when its members were mostly Gentiles. Schiffman's timeline for the parting of ways (i.e., the Mishnah or 200 CE) has been disproved by many reputable historians of religion. Daniel Boyarin expresses my objection to Schiffman's assertion with unsurpassable clarity: "Jews and Christians, as much as they tried to convince themselves and others differently, traveled along similar paths for a long, long time, if not always."¹⁶³ However, Schiffman's argument regarding a Jewish consciousness that accented ethnicity is invaluable. Ethnicity remained the binding force for all Jews as they strove to express their Jewishness in an evolving sociocultural milieu and to an incredibly diverse audience.

Shaye J. D. Cohen defends the ethnic malleability of Jewishness. Down through the ages, he argues, Jewishness has been sought, used, and applied for political expediency. Looking at the example of Herod the Great, he observes that this monarch's "Jewish" ancestry is constructed and utilized to achieve a desired political advantage.¹⁶⁴ Citing non-Jewish writers, he remarks that their mention of Jews did not reveal any noticeable or differentiating physiological qualities, which means that the latter were not physically distinguishable from their fellow city inhabitants. Having thoroughly examined customary Jewish indices (including circumcision), Cohen remarks that ascertaining a person's Jewish status in antiquity was precarious. But one can reasonably suspect a person to be Jewish if he or she associates with Jews or performs Jewish ancestral

¹⁶³ Daniel Boyarin, "The Close Call; or Could a Pharisee be a Christian?" in *Mapping Jewish Identities*, ed. Lawrence J. Silberstein (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 290.

¹⁶⁴ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 23-24.

practices. But he warns that a devout Gentile who admires Jews and desires to join them can do these same things. Hence, an individual's self-designation is perhaps the most reliable way of ascertaining Jewishness from a third-party perspective.¹⁶⁵ Cohen lucidly articulates the ethnic malleability of Jewishness, which does not downplay the reality but candidly unveils the sociological complexities that are often ignored. Per Cohen, it is reasonable to say that one is a Jew if he or she says so.

Daniel Boyarin rejects scholarly attempts to identify "religion" in antiquity. He asserts that religion is a modern category and that in ancient times, terms that modern writers hurriedly designate as signaling religion delineate practices that are emblematic of certain ethnic groups, like Judeans. For instance, Ἰουδαϊσμός, which is usually translated Judaism but is erroneously assumed to mean a religion, occurs sparsely in Hellenistic Jewish antiquity and is mainly found in texts tinged with political activism (2 Macc 2:21; 8:1; 14:38; 4 Macc 4:26; Gal 1:13-14). It is fair to say that this term was coined by political activists who wanted to stress Judean uniqueness amid Hellenism's growing appeal. Boyarin's delineation of Ἰουδαϊσμός (emulating Judeans) enjoys a wide appeal in scholarship.¹⁶⁶ Rather than speak of Ἰουδαϊσμός as designating religion, it denotes a people's Judaizing activities. Another viable but problematic interpretation of the same is ethnicity. Boyarin provocatively writes: "Ethnicity [in antiquity] ... is as problematic a category as religion."¹⁶⁷ So neither religion nor ethnicity denotes Ἰουδαϊσμός.

In a similar study, Matthew V. Novenson, after a thorough analysis of the political context wherein Ἰουδαϊσμός occurs (2 Macc and Gal 1:13-14), says that it means Jewish

¹⁶⁵ Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 66-68.

¹⁶⁶ Boyarin, *Judaism*, 41; Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 175-97; Matthew V. Novenson, "Paul's Former Occupation in *Ioudaismos*," in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letter*, ed. Mark W. Elliott et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 28-29. Novenson, like Cohen, accents the inextricable link between Judaizing and *Ioudaismos* (i.e., behaving like a Judean) but takes the denotation of the latter much further.

¹⁶⁷ Boyarin, *Judaism*, 36.

“political activism.”¹⁶⁸ He explains: “Virtually all Jews follow the ancestral traditions, but only a subset fight for the cause of Judaization, defending the traditions even to the point of harassing other Jews whom they suspect of endangering those traditions.”¹⁶⁹ This analysis offers a perfect resolution to the ambiguities inherent in Ἰουδαϊσμός: a radical subset of Jews who demand an unwavering commitment to Jewish ancestral practices from every Jew by threatening physical harm to dissidents. The signature trait of Ἰουδαϊσμός thus is not adherence to ancestral practices but the activism that enforces them. Novenson’s study makes Saul’s commissioning intelligible: abandoning a radical Jewish worldview for a moderate one.

Isaac W. Oliver investigates Torah praxis after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. He opines that Luke-Acts is comparable to the Gospel of Matthew in its attitude toward Torah observance.¹⁷⁰ His monograph situates Acts in its Jewish context and highlights characteristic indices (Sabbath, dietary laws, and circumcision) that typify Jewishness. Although he concedes that Matthew and Luke-Acts evince positive views of Torah praxis, their writing perspectives are notably different: Palestine and diaspora. Accentuating the Jewishness of Luke-Acts is definitely important, given decades of stressing its Greco-Roman perspective. But Oliver assumes that Luke and Acts share a seamless worldview on Jewishness. This is evidently the dominant scholarly stance on the subject, but I find Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo’s arguments questioning such a consensus very compelling.¹⁷¹ Both invite scholars to rethink critically their proclivity to harmonize Luke and Acts and gloss over their notable disagreements. They also demonstrate convincingly that there are legitimate bases for rethinking the narrative unity of

¹⁶⁸ Novenson, “Paul’s Former Occupation in *Ioudaismos*.” However, I think the phrase should be “ethnic or nationalistic activism.”

¹⁶⁹ Novenson, “Paul’s Former Occupation in *Ioudaismos*,” 37.

¹⁷⁰ Oliver, *Torah Praxis after 70 CE*.

¹⁷¹ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*.

Luke and Acts. Put succinctly, both books can have the same author without necessarily agreeing on every given topic. My approach, mindful of the issues raised by Parsons and Pervo, is to treat Acts as a distinct unit. That way, Luke's depiction of Jewishness in Acts will be acknowledged and preserved, not harmonized or glossed over.

Robert L. Brawley defends Luke's affirmative view of Jewishness. He claims that the tendentious reading of the rejection of Jews in favor of Gentile Christ believers is inattentive to Luke and Acts.¹⁷² Reviewing disputed passages in both books, he concludes that the inclusion of Gentiles does not herald the exclusion of Jews. The latter remained Luke's chief medium to the former. Brawley's thesis is no doubt convincing. But even he fails to notice the tiers of meanings of Jews in Acts. He writes about Jews in Acts as though they comprise a homogeneous sect. This is not the case. He also disagrees with Paul being construed as a "symbol of Christianity" in order not to bolster the argument of "turning to Gentiles." Yet both claims can stand side by side without chipping away either's merit. Paul can be (and I will argue he is) an emblem of Christ-believing diaspora Jews who "turn to Gentiles" (i.e., admit them into the fold) without rejecting Jews outright. The case that I intend to make in the ensuing section is precisely this: (1) that Jewishness evinces Luke's diaspora setting; (2) that although Jews consistently denote diaspora Jewry in Acts, there are notably two distinct denotations of the term—generic (as a people) and literary (as a collective literary character that opposes Paul); and (3) the Jewish rivalry related in Acts pertains to distinct diaspora Jewish sects—one approves of a considerate, defined observance of ancestral practice by Gentiles, while the other insists on an indiscriminate prescription of the same to all non-Jews. These clarifications help a reader to see the internecine

¹⁷² Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews*.

struggle that diaspora Jewish sects in Asia Minor and Greece faced in their quest to embrace people who were ethnically diverse.

Mitzi J. Smith's analysis of Jewishness focuses on the rhetorical construction of the other in Acts.¹⁷³ Elucidating this literary technique, she observes that there are two distinct references to Jews: adversarial and neutral. Stating the obvious, she opines that the adversarial usage of "the Jews" far outnumbers its neutral counterpart. This externalization of the other is a rhetorical device for critiquing a segment of the Jewish population, while sparing others who embrace the gospel and accept the inclusion of Gentiles. This sort of distinction eschews monolithic readings and those that suggest a parting of ways. "The Jews" appear on the scene after the commissioned Saul's visit to Christ believers. They feature prominently, as Smith rightly avers, in diaspora cities. She describes "the Jews" and Paul's repeated confrontations as "narrative instabilities" (i.e., events that sustain intrigue and readers' excitement) and concludes that the former are only mentioned in cities where the latter is the first to proclaim the gospel. Although her observations are valid, insightful, and compelling, she stops short of connecting some of the dots: (1) Why are "the Jews" mentioned only in the diaspora? (2) Are there post-Jerusalem council diaspora cities that any of the Twelve visited prior to Paul? The case that I will be making in the next segment is that the language of "Jewishness" reveals the author's location and that such terminology offers him the medium for discussing internecine diaspora Jewish tensions arising from conflicting views on ancestral practice requirements for Gentiles. On the second question, "the Jews" are not merely found in diaspora cities that Paul is the first to visit, because no other apostle spearheads Gentile mission in the post-Jerusalem council era. Peter's speech is markedly insightful on this subject. "The Jews" thus are better read as designating a diaspora Jewish sect in Luke's

¹⁷³ Mitzi J. Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other in the Acts of the Apostles: Charismatics, the Jews, and Women* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 57-94.

geographical location: Asia Minor and Greece. These scholarly approaches to the study of Jewishness are crucial to my study: (1) a recognition of the “inviolability” of Jewish identity (Schiffman), (2) the ethnic malleability of Jewishness (Cohen), (3) Jewishness as a practice-centered notion (Boyarin), (4) “Judaism” as a radical subset of Jewish ethnic activism (Novenson), (5) Acts as evidence of affirmative Torah praxis in Jewish diaspora (Oliver), (6) Jewishness as existentially compatible with Christ-believing (Brawley), and (7) the literary construction of “the Jews” as an external other (Smith). Taken together, these studies show that the most decisive meaning of Jewishness is contextual (literary), negotiable (sociological), and inalienable (historical). Explaining Jewishness must be firmly anchored to the text, sensitive to group dynamics, and mindful of the diversity among Jews. In the foregoing discussion, diaspora Jewry is noticeably a refrain. I will now review representative scholarship on the subject.

2.1.3 Diaspora Jews

Diaspora Jewry is a recurrent theme in the ensuing section. It is typically reminiscent of the Babylonian exile: the forceful removal from Judah and resettlement in Babylon. As such, the diaspora is naïvely assumed to be a place of deprivation and longing, while Judea symbolizes freedom and prosperity. But this portrait is unrealistic, nonfactual, and misleading. Thomas A. Kraabel debunks this ideological fantasy: “The Diaspora was not Exile; in some sense it became a Holy Land, too.”¹⁷⁴ He opines that the romanticizing of Judea and the trivializing of the diaspora are not historically informed depictions but are theologically inspired narrations. How the diaspora is construed is exceedingly dependent on the ideological underpinnings of one’s

¹⁷⁴ Thomas A. Kraabel, “Unity and Diversity Among Diaspora Synagogues,” in *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel*, ed. J. Andrew Overman and Robert S. MacLennan (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 30.

methods. If the ideological framework is apologetic, the diaspora is depicted in an appalling light; but if the viewpoint is existential, it is seen as a neutral place of human habitation. Erich S. Gruen makes a similar point: “The notion of removal from the homeland is lodged deeply in the mythology of the nation.”¹⁷⁵ He indirectly suggests that diaspora Jewish enclaves are an integral part of what constitutes the Jewish “nation.” He also remarks that exaggerating the global impact of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple overlooks the fact that diaspora Jewry flourished long before this tragic incident in Judea.¹⁷⁶ Further stressing this misrepresentation of Jewishness as encapsulated in Judea is Dale B. Martin, who writes: “Nor can it [i.e., Judaism] be limited to a ‘nation,’ since the state of Israel is not taken by most people to represent all of ‘Judaism.’”¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, Kraabel remarks that epigraphy and archaeology provide a neutral vision of the Jewish diaspora.¹⁷⁸ He avers that the Jewish diaspora is not monolithic: there is diversity of experiences and realities across the Roman Empire. These complex depictions of diaspora Jewry are hastily glossed over by pundits of Hellenistic Judaism. Kraabel further adds that happenings in Judea did not necessarily impact diaspora Jewish enclaves. As a hallmark of diaspora Jewry’s integration into imperial life, he argues that synagogues in the Roman empire, per archaeology and epigraphy, are patent indications of grafting diaspora theology onto a Greco-Roman social organization.¹⁷⁹

J. Andrew Overman, responding to Kraabel’s life’s work of reevaluating the distinction between “native” (or Palestinian) and diaspora (or Hellenistic) Judaism, argues that the adjective

¹⁷⁵ Erich S. Gruen, “Judaism in the Diaspora,” in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 95.

¹⁷⁶ Gruen, “Judaism in the Diaspora.”

¹⁷⁷ Dale B. Martin, “Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Toward a Social History of the Question,” in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 59.

¹⁷⁸ Although I find Kraabel’s method insightful, it is not the approach of my research. But his affirmative view of the diaspora—Jewish adaptability and resilience—foregrounds my references to the diaspora in Acts.

¹⁷⁹ Kraabel, “Unity and Diversity,” 21.

“diaspora” when it qualifies Jewishness has no analytical value. He states that its sole function is a negative “mailing address”: it tells you where you will not find some Jews.¹⁸⁰ Thus he debunks the pseudo-traditional categories used to distinguish Jews based on origins: (1) the “religion” of diaspora Jews is scripture-based, mostly using the LXX; (2) diaspora Jews did not have a cult, Temple, or priesthood; (3) the modelling of synagogues after Greco-Roman associations; and (4) indifference to colossal imperial events that drastically impacted Judea. Out of these four claims, Overman only agrees with Kraabel on the last point: most diaspora Jews were not significantly impacted by imperial tragedies in Judea.¹⁸¹

First, to refute the assumption that only diaspora Jews used the LXX, Overman cites many Jewish authors in Judea who used the LXX, because it was their lingua franca. He refers to letters written by reputable Jews in Greek and also states that the majority of postbiblical Jewish writings of Judean provenance are in Greek.¹⁸² Therefore, reliance on the LXX does not indicate a Jew’s provenance. Second, Overman demonstrates that there were many Jewish sects whose “religion” did not revolve around the Temple: Dositheans (Samaritans) and Pharisees (Judeans). He states this pointedly: “Not all of the Judaisms in Roman Palestine required a Temple, much less possessed a priesthood.”¹⁸³ So using Temple worship as a demarcating index between “native” and diaspora Jews is not fact-based. Third, regarding modelling synagogues after Greco-Roman social organizations, Overman notes that the same can be said of Judea. He cites Josephus who compares Jewish sects to Greek philosophical schools. The only reliable denotation of diaspora is thus a negative provenance or “mailing address”: Jews who are not in

¹⁸⁰ J. Andrew Overman, “The Diaspora in the Modern Study of Ancient Judaism,” in idem and MacLennan, *Diaspora Jews and Judaism*, 78. In his study of Jewish and Christian participations in Greek cults, Peder Borgen discloses a similar assumption. “‘Yes,’ ‘No,’ ‘How Far?’: The Participation of Jews and Christians in Pagan Cults,” in Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, 30-59.

¹⁸¹ Overman, “Diaspora,” 77.

¹⁸² Overman, “Diaspora,” 66-68; Cohen makes a similar point (*Beginnings of Jewishness*, 35).

¹⁸³ Overman, “Diaspora,” 70.

Judea.¹⁸⁴ Overman's clarifications are foundational to my assessment of diaspora Jews in Acts: Jews outside the geopolitical territory dubbed Judea.

John M. G. Barclay's reflection on diaspora Jewry is also significant in this research. He employs the term "cultural hybridity" to explain how diaspora Jews navigated the murky waters of living as Jews outside Judea.¹⁸⁵ This phenomenon is not convertible with syncretism or a naïve assimilation of Greco-Roman culture; instead, it simultaneously emphasizes cultural integration and critique. This vision of diaspora Jewry is largely influenced by Paul Gilroy's work, which proffers an identity navigation mechanism tagged "double consciousness."¹⁸⁶ With diaspora Jewry this trait translates into full participation in the diaspora while remaining committed to ancestral practices. In developing my thesis on Jewishness in Acts, Barclay's delineation of diaspora life is insightful: Luke's group is profoundly shaped by its unique diaspora context, without alienating its ancestral practices.

Noah Hacham and Lilach Sagiv, using the interpretative lens of social psychology, study the social identity implications of the *Letter of Aristeas*. The diaspora Jews who received this letter detailing the meticulous translation of Scripture into Greek possessed a "merger identity": "fully identifying as a member of the Jewish ethnos and as a member of the Greek society across all contexts."¹⁸⁷ Merger identity is contrasted with compartmentalized identity where members of a social group either identify solely as Jewish or Greek. The *Letter of Aristeas* is a compelling piece of evidence that already in the third century BCE in Alexandria, Jews had negotiated the dominant identities in their locality making it possible for them to be faithful Jews and enthused

¹⁸⁴ Overman, "Diaspora," 78

¹⁸⁵ John M. G. Barclay, "Introduction," in *Negotiating Diaspora: Jewish Strategies in the Roman Empire*, ed. idem (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 1-6.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Gilroy, *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹⁸⁷ Noah Hacham and Lilach Sagiv, "Social Identity in the *Letter of Aristeas*," *JAJ* 9 (2018): 335.

Hellenists. But “merger identity” does not imply that Jews assimilated Hellenism uncritically; what it denotes is that they were “at home” in being Jews and Hellenists simultaneously.¹⁸⁸ To do this effectively without jeopardizing their ethnic identity, they had to assess the essential traits of their Jewish *ethnos* vis-à-vis its time-bound expressions. These musings evince ongoing social negotiations. Hacham and Sagiv portray the diaspora Jews who received the *Letter of Aristeas* thus: “Jews, who had encountered and been challenged by Greek culture, and who, still attached to their original identity, sought a theoretical justification for this cultural combination.”¹⁸⁹ This research has a bearing on Acts. Just like the audience of the *Letter of Aristeas*, the sociocultural group addressed in Acts has also experienced this “merger identity”: diaspora Jews are called Hellenists to distinguish them from the Aramaic speakers in Jerusalem, while outside Jerusalem they are distinguished from non-Jewish Hellenists. Applying the same soubriquet to diaspora Jews and Greeks suggests that both share a lot in common. The argument of “merger identity” is bolstered by Luke’s persistent emphasis on uninterrupted ancestral practices for diaspora Jews. The only twist is that Gentile Christ believers are not obligated to perform these “Jewish” acts.

Gruen approaches the theme of diaspora Jewishness in a similar way. He claims that for Jews living outside Judea commitment to their ancestral homeland and full participation in their local settings are not two distinct, mutually exclusive objectives but are critical aspects of the same goal: being diaspora Jews.¹⁹⁰ Being a diaspora Jew intrinsically means immersing oneself in the life and activities of the locale, while being faithful to Jewish ancestral traditions. Gruen brilliantly recapitulates this argument: “They [i.e., diaspora Jews] were not forever adjusting to

¹⁸⁸ Hacham and Sagiv, “Social Identity,” 340.

¹⁸⁹ Hacham and Sagiv, “Social Identity,” 342.

¹⁹⁰ Erich S. Gruen, “Hellenism and Judaism: Fluid Boundaries,” in idem, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature and History* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 113-32; idem, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

alien circumstances. They were part of a broader society in which they could articulate, reshape, and contribute their own heritage.”¹⁹¹ Put crisply, diaspora Jews actively participated in and deeply reshaped their Greco-Roman societies. Gruen’s both-and approach is both insightful and invaluable in studying Jewishness in Acts. Accentuating the inextricably entwined dual identities of diaspora Jews, he asserts: “Judaism appropriated Hellenism to the goals of rewriting biblical narratives, recasting the traditions of their forefathers, reinvigorating their ancient legends, and shaping the distinctive identity of Jews within the larger world of Hellenic culture.”¹⁹² Luke’s narrative is basically a both-and: adapting to a diverse situation in Asia Minor and Greece (i.e., Gentile inclusion) and remaining faithful to ancestral practices. Luke evinces this both-and mindset in the Jerusalem council proceedings.

2.2 “The Jews” in Acts

Scholarship on “the Jews” in Acts (and Luke) usually features a predictable assumption: the designation denotes a monolithic ethnic group historically identified with the geographical territory of Judea and its concomitant religion.¹⁹³ This characterization—although featuring a

¹⁹¹ Gruen, “Hellenism and Judaism,” 131.

¹⁹² Gruen, “Judaism in the Diaspora,” 103.

¹⁹³ Robert C. Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story,” *JBL* (1985): 69-85; Lawrence M. Wills, “The Depiction of the Jews in Acts,” *JBL* (1991): 631-54; Augusto Barbi, “The Use and Meaning of (*Hoi*) *Ioudaioi* in Acts,” in *Luke and Acts*, ed. Gerald O’Collins and Gilberto Marconi, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Paulist, 1991); Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* (2007): 457-512; David M. Miller, “Ethnicity, Religion and the Meaning of *Ioudaios* in Ancient ‘Judaism,’” *CBR* (2014): 216-65; Amy-Jill Levine and Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Steve Mason succinctly delineates the foregoing scholarly proclivity: “The *Ioudaioi* of the Graeco-Roman world remained an ἔθνος: a people associated with a place and its customs—no matter how far, or how long they had been away from Judaea.” “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 511. Classicists (or historians of ancient Rome) overwhelmingly read Acts as a historically objective and reliable text valid for the reconstruction of Jewish life in the first century CE. See Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Vintage, 2008); Mary Beard, James North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Bradley Ritter, *Judeans in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire: Rights, Citizenship and Civil Discord*, *JSJSup* 170 (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (New York: Liveright, 2015).

wide range of viable interpretations of ancient Jewishness—extrapolates historical data pertaining to Jews collectively from disparate literary sources onto Acts. Historians of religion who espouse ethnicity or provenance in studying Jewishness do so to eschew anti-Semitic accusations, while those who insist on all three argue that the pseudo-dichotomy that frequently undergirds modern biblical scholarship is ideologically tinged with a distinctively contemporaneous worldview that separates church from state, religion from politics, and belief from lifestyle. But in antiquity, these facets of social life were usually entwined: being Jewish meant worshipping Israel’s God, adhering to Jewish ancestral practices, contributing annually to the upkeep of the Jerusalem temple, and making periodic pilgrimages to Judea. These obligations are ethnic, religious, and geographical. As Terence L. Donaldson pointedly notes, exclusively touting ethnicity as the most fitting translation of Ἰουδαῖοι in antiquity does not decisively forestall anti-Jewish prejudice.¹⁹⁴ Seth Schwartz echoes Donaldson’s observation in a well-reasoned response to the proponents of redefining Jewishness (Jacob Neusner and Jonathan Z. Smith) and the pundits of recategorizing the same (Steve Mason and Daniel Boyarin).¹⁹⁵ These generic discussions on the precise meaning of Jewishness are significant for most historical investigations. But they do not resolve the lingering conceptual tension that has precipitated faulty deductions regarding the function of “the Jews” in Acts. Although ideologically laudable, redefining and recategorizing Jewishness do not satisfactorily explain the variegated depictions

¹⁹⁴ Terence L. Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010). He makes a compelling case for adding the religious denotation of Jewishness onto ethnicity and provenance.

¹⁹⁵ Seth Schwartz, “How Many Judaisms Were There?: A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization,” *JAJ* (2011): 208-38; for representative publications on Jacob Neusner, Jonathan Z. Smith, Steve Mason, and Daniel Boyarin, see: Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Jacob Neusner, *Chapters in the Formative History of Judaism: Sixth Series: More Essays on the History, Literature, and Theology of Judaism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011); Boyarin, *Judaism*; Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism.”

of “the Jews” in Acts, which call for an alternative approach and a different set of critical questions.

Previous scholarship on “the Jews” in Acts focuses on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the late first century. Representing a school of thought on this topic, Jack T. Sanders asserts that Acts heralds a new “religion” that supersedes Judaism.¹⁹⁶ Epitomizing modern readings of “the Jews” in Acts, Robert Brawley espouses a conciliatory appraisal of the hostile Jews, maintaining that Luke’s portrayal of “the Jews” does not suggest rejection but a widening ideological tension among Jews engendered by the Christ movement.¹⁹⁷ Scholars who have reflected on this subject after Sanders and Brawley have relentlessly showcased sensitivity to and aversion for anti-Semitic readings.¹⁹⁸ These interpretations are no doubt well-intentioned. But the flawed hermeneutical framework that undergirds the discussion remains unaddressed: Acts does not speak of another “religion” but a different expression of the same.¹⁹⁹ Luke’s Paul—a purported “religious” deviant—repeatedly, at every given opportunity, reaffirms his orthodoxy and dedication to the patrimony of Israel. Other egregious mischaracterizations of Acts include: inaccurate delineation of its genre, inattentiveness to its rhetorical devices (e.g., “turning away from ‘the Jews’”), and inadequate evaluation of the sociocultural significance of

¹⁹⁶ Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

¹⁹⁷ Brawley, *Luke-Acts*.

¹⁹⁸ Marilyn Salmon, “Insider or Outsider? Luke’s Relationship with Judaism,” in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People*, ed. Joseph B. Tyson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 76-82; Gager, “Luke’s Anti-Judaism,” 207-11; Christopher R. Matthews, “We Had Hoped That He Was the One to Redeem Israel: The Fragility of Hope in Luke-Acts,” in *Hope, Promise, Possibility, and Fulfilment*, ed. Richard Lennan and Nancy Pineda-Madrid (New York: Paulist, 2013), 57-69.

¹⁹⁹ Most scholars who comment on Acts refer to Jews and Christians without qualification, as if both are adherents of two distinct religions in the symbolic world of the narrative. But Luke repeatedly calls the assembly of Christ believers “the Way” not a “sect,” like the Sadducees and Pharisees. This implies that the difference between Paul and his accusers is not as perceptible as the distinction between typical Jewish sects. Besides, “Christian(s)” is a third-party appellation: in Salmon’s term, it is an “outsider” designation for Christ believers.

“Christianness.”²⁰⁰ These methodological shortcomings foreground the hermeneutical recycling of trite topics. The only laudable scholarly move on the lexemes, “Jews” and “Christians,” that is mindful of Luke’s rhetoric is the need to proffer ecumenically sensitive readings, like most of the aforementioned scholars have done. Therefore, although exegetes construe Luke’s hostile references to “the Jews” and his mention of “Christians” as evidence of distinct “religions,” most agree that the latter does not replace the former. This reading is clearly well-intentioned. But it is superfluous, given Luke’s compelling description of both social identities. In this segment, I will argue that the appellation, “the Jews,” is not a soubriquet for Jews collectively. Rather, it denotes diaspora Jews and is employed by Luke to engage critics who accuse his group of not being faithful to ancestral practices, because of its concession on some ancestral practices to devout Gentiles. This disputation intensifies hostility, fuels animosity, but sustains narrative intrigue. The irony hidden in plain sight is that all those designated as “Jews” are predominantly diaspora residents. The main difference between neutral and hostile “Jews” is a matter of literary design: the latter denote Paul’s critics, while the former signify diaspora Jews generally. Being a highly skilled writer, Luke rhetorically constructs Paul to embody his group’s ideal and to dispute his diaspora Jewish critics. Reading an adversarial reference into “the Jews” as a monolithic soubriquet that symbolizes all Jews is tantamount to rhetorical malpractice. Acts is not so much about Judeans as it is about disagreeing factions in the Jewish diaspora. Jerusalem is brought into the picture primarily for arbitration. As the creator of Acts, Luke shrewdly swings the verdict of the Jewish “Supreme Court” (i.e., Jerusalem) in his group’s favor: Christ-believing diaspora Jews. This rhetorical utilization of Jerusalem shields it from all accusations. As I will argue

²⁰⁰ For the genre of Acts, see Pervo, *Profit with Delight*; Loveday Alexander, “Fact, Fiction, and the Genre of Acts,” *NTS* (1998): 380-99; Todd Penner, “Contextualizing Acts,” in idem and Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Acts*, 1-21; Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*; Meeks, “Assisting the Word,” 151-62.

below, even Paul's trial in Jerusalem is orchestrated by "Jews from Asia." Jerusalem is protected from all blame as it performs its arbitration. Even the end of Acts bolsters this assertion: Paul goes to Rome. The trip to Rome, Paul's emphatic choice, definitively exonerates Jerusalem from potential harm that might befall the story's protagonist. I will now review the statistics on "the Jews" in Acts.

2.2.1 Statistics on "the Jews" in Acts

For many scholars who hold—and rightly so—that both the Gospel of Luke and Acts were written by the same person, the preponderance of references to "the Jews" in the second volume should arouse curiosity.²⁰¹ In the Third Gospel, "the Jews" occurs barely five times: four of these feature during the trial and crucifixion of Jesus; three of them unsurprisingly refer to Jesus. By contrast, in Acts, "the Jews" appears sixty-nine times—almost fourteen times the number in the Gospel. From a peripheral viewpoint, Acts is the preferred narrative locus for "the Jews." This is deeply startling. If "the Jews," as many scholars assume, denotes Jews generally or Judeans specifically, why is the Gospel of Luke not inundated with its appearance, especially since the geographical route of this narrative is Galilee to Judea?²⁰² This line of questioning evinces Luke's rhetoric. By comparison with the Gospel, Acts, which features escapades in the Jewish diaspora, teems with references to "the Jews." How can one account for this disparity, given the befuddling lexical denotation of the epithet? The author bequeaths a narrative clue to

²⁰¹ Richard I. Pervo disagrees with the descriptor "volumes," because he regards both narratives as belonging to different genres—and I absolutely agree. He prefers the designation, "stories." "Israel's Heritage and Claims upon the Genre(s) of Luke and Acts: The Problems of a History," in Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, 127-43; see also Clouston, *How Ancient Narratives Persuade*, 4.

²⁰² For scholars who read "the Jews" as a monolithic epithet or a designation for Judeans, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Abingdon New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 155; Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2008), 41; William S. Kurz, *Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2013); and Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox, 2016), 200. In his voluminous work, Keener stresses the complexity of "the Jews" in Acts. *Acts*, 459-61.

the avid reader: excepting the Pentecost scene, there is no reference to “the Jews” until Saul’s “conversion” (9:22, 23). This is significant because most scenes leading up to Saul’s commissioning are situated in Jerusalem. So, if “the Jews” denote Judeans, it will be counterintuitive not to use the term in Jerusalem. This logic is also true for the Third Gospel. What is glaring, however, is the explosion of references to “the Jews” (sixty-six times) with the official narrative debut of Saul.²⁰³ This patently suggests that Luke correlates Paul with “the Jews.” If this is Luke’s narrative thrust, it is misleading to preoccupy oneself—as many have done and continue to do—with the lexicographical denotation of the term. Luke, too, knows the lexical signification of the word but is ingeniously utilizing it contextually.²⁰⁴ The theoretical frameworks that I will apply to decipher Luke’s strategy are Ludwig Wittgenstein’s theory of meaning and literary cartography.²⁰⁵ The theory of meaning (or language game) defined and popularized by Wittgenstein is a pragmatic approach to the fluid enterprise dubbed language. Tying meaning to literary contexts cautions the researcher against imposing or insisting on rigid categories or taxonomies that can be adapted by creative authors to suit their narrative goals. So rather than imposing the prevalent modern notion of Jewishness on Acts, this treatise carefully examines the rhetorical signification of the term in Luke’s sequel narrative.

²⁰³ Although Acts 7:58 and 8:1-3 mention Saul, they are fleeting references that offer a foretaste to his future preoccupation. Acts 9 is the celebrated narrative introduction of Saul and his ministry.

²⁰⁴ James L. Resseguie calls this rhetorical device defamiliarization. “Defamiliarization and the Gospels,” *BTB* 20 (1990): 147-53; idem, “Automatization and Defamiliarization in Luke 7:36-50,” *LitTh* 5 (1991): 137-50; idem, *Narrative Criticism*, 38.

²⁰⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997); G. L. Hagberg, *Meaning & Interpretation: Wittgenstein, Henry James, and Literary Knowledge* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994); Pierrette Bouillon and Federica Busa, eds., *The Language of Word Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Literary cartography studies the rhetorical significance places play in narratives and the corresponding experiences they elicit in these writings.²⁰⁶ It assumes that literary locales are not simply accidental products of literary construction but are imbued with narrative motifs and are thus applied by adept authors to reinforce their claims. As Marie-Laure Ryan succinctly captures it, literary locales are “bearers of symbolic meaning.”²⁰⁷ Robert T. Tally reiterates this reasoning, when he opines that narrative locations are “suffused with meaning.”²⁰⁸ Literary locations are thus not mere novelistic additions for the embellishment of narratives but serve the dual purpose of discursive and phenomenological significance. As such, places are thoughtfully used to supply narrative information and elicit crucial experiences germane to the locales cited. Deciphering “the Jews” in Acts thus must take into cognizance the contributions of Wittgenstein and literary cartography in stressing the contexts and places wherein pertinent terms are employed. For instance, if Luke consistently designates individuals in diaspora cities as “Jews,” from a literary viewpoint, he has redefined the concept. It means diaspora Jews. Below, I will argue that if the foregoing theories are meticulously applied, Luke’s discourse of “Jewishness” will reveal an underlying internecine diaspora Jewish rivalry. As Mark Currie astutely avers, hostility is fiercer when rivals have close ties or share a common heritage or occupy the same geographical locus.²⁰⁹ Therefore, the adversarial term that has befuddled many (“the Jews”) is simply Luke’s novelistic designation for a diaspora Jewish sect that antagonized his Christ-believing diaspora Jewish assembly for embodying Paul’s teaching and legacy.

²⁰⁶ Chartier, “Introduction,” 15-16; see also Tally, Jr., *Spatiality*; idem, *Topophrenia: Place, Narrative, and the Spatial Imagination* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019); Peter Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2004).

²⁰⁷ Marie-Laure Ryan et al., *Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016), 1.

²⁰⁸ Tally, Jr., “Introduction,” 3; Powell, “Narrative Criticism,” 248.

²⁰⁹ Currie, *Difference*, 86.

2.2.2 “The Jews” in Paul’s Missions²¹⁰

Paul’s mission begins immediately after his commissioning and temporarily ceases at the commencement of his trial in Jerusalem but resumes when he arrives in Rome. For the purpose of this study, only the abovenamed sections will be reviewed here. The first “Pauline” reference to “the Jews,” as I stated above, occurs right after his commissioning (9:22-23). Luke describes Saul’s adversaries in elaborate terms: “Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews.... After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him.” From the onset, jealousy and opposition are the characteristic traits of “the Jews.” The literary debut of these belligerent “Jews” crisply sums up their purpose in Acts: (1) they exist to denigrate Saul’s fast-growing reputation; (2) they did not accept the good news about Jesus; and (3) they plotted to obliterate Paul’s legacy, which Luke’s assembly embodies. It is thus not mere coincidence that “the Jews” make their debut when the commissioned Saul’s fame soared. The literary setting for this scene is Damascus, which means that Saul’s adversaries are diaspora Jews.

The dispersion that ensues after the martyrdom of Stephen corroborates the foregoing perspective on “the Jews” (11:19). Christ-believing Jews who flee Jerusalem as a result of the persecution following Stephen’s death preached solely to “Jews.” The literary plot indicates that the locations are Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. Hence, “the Jews” who are addressed by the fleeing Christ-believing Jews are diaspora Jews. They are presumably residents of the respective cities mentioned. In 13:5 Barnabas and Saul preach in a synagogue of “the Jews” at Salamis, a city in Cyprus. “The Jews” implicitly referenced here are obviously diaspora Jews. It is pointless

²¹⁰ Acts 9:22, 23; 11:19; 13:5, 43, 45, 50; 14:1, 2, 4, 5, 19; 16:3, 20; 17:1, 5, 10, 11, 13, 17; 18:2, 4, 5, 12, 14a, 14b, 19, 28; 19:10, 17, 33; 20:3, 19, 21; 21:11; 28:17, 19. A total of thirty-seven references. For scholarship on Paul’s mission, see Billings, *Acts*, 90-131. Billings’ reading of Paul’s mission is agreeable: “The mission of Paul in Acts is the principal means by which God’s *imperium* is envisaged as expanding from city to city.” Billings, *Acts*, 131.

to speak of their Judean provenance. In 13:43 Barnabas and Paul proclaim the good news to “Jews” and proselytes in a synagogue situated in Antioch in Pisidia. The venue suggests that “the Jews” are diaspora Jews. They respond favorably to Barnabas and Paul’s preaching, which distinguishes them from the belligerent “Jews,” who are consistently described as haters of Paul. Sequel to this positive response, in 13:45, these hostile “Jews,” when they saw the crowds that Barnabas and Paul had convinced, became jealous and contradicted their proclamation. The literary setting remains unchanged (i.e., Antioch in Pisidia). In 13:50, the final scene in this location, the hostile “Jews” “incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas.” This hostility forced Paul and Barnabas to move to Iconium, another diaspora city. The relating of events at Iconium is similar to Antioch in Pisidia: “a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers” but the hostile “Jews” instigated Gentiles to revolt against Paul and Barnabas (14:1-2). Once again, since the venue is in Asia Minor, Luke’s employment of “Jews” denotes diaspora Jews. In 14:4-5 Luke accounts for Paul and Barnabas leaving Iconium for Lystra by reporting a plan to kill them: a conspiracy by both diaspora Jews and Gentiles and their leaders. While in Lystra, the “Jews” from Antioch in Pisidia and Iconium came over and stirred up the people against Paul and Barnabas, forcing them to leave for Derbe (14:19). This scene features the last occurrence of “the Jews” before the Jerusalem council. All the references reviewed so far are situated in the Jewish diaspora—that is, Asia Minor and Greece. So rather than fixating on the lexical denotation of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι or a plausible theological explanation for the composite character’s animosity toward Paul and Barnabas, Luke offers the reader helpful literary clues for interpretation: these “Jews” (neutral and hostile) are all situated in Asia Minor, Greece, and other contiguous territories which makes them diaspora Jews. So the pre-Jerusalem-council section of Paul’s mission

pertains exclusively to diaspora Jews. In the ensuing paragraph, I will examine Luke's application of "the Jews" in the narrative of the post-Jerusalem-council Pauline mission.

In 16:3 Paul visits Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium—all diaspora cities. During this post-Jerusalem council mission, he circumcises Timothy, his missionary associate, because of "the Jews" who were in Lystra and Iconium. These "Jews" are undoubtedly diaspora Jews. Luke's reference to "Jews" in 16:20 is to Paul and Silas, who were accused of "disturbing" the city of Philippi and "advocating" Jewish customs. The literary location is certainly Greece and Paul, as the narrative makes explicit later, is himself a diaspora Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia. This usage is indisputably a reference to diaspora Jews. In 17:1 Paul arrives at the synagogue of "the Jews" in Thessalonica now in Greece. After preaching at this synagogue, the belligerent "Jews" are jealous at seeing Paul's success with some Jews, devout Greeks, and influential women and incite them to revolt against him (17:5). These "Jews" indubitably are diaspora Jews. In Beroea, "the Jews" that Paul encounters are described as hospitable and appreciative of the gospel he preached (17:10-11). Although these "Jews" are portrayed in a positive light, they are also diaspora Jews. In 17:13 "the Jews" from Thessalonica (hostile diaspora Jews) came over to Beroea to instigate "the Jews" there. Leaving Beroea, Paul visits Athens wherein he proclaims the gospel to "the Jews." These "Jews" are diaspora Jews, too. In 18:2 Paul meets with Aquila in Corinth, who like other Roman Jews, is ordered to leave the city by Claudius. "The Jews" in this passage are diaspora Jews. While in Corinth as Aquila's guest, Paul preaches in the synagogue to both "Jews" and Greeks every Sabbath (18:4-6). These hostile "Jews" "opposed and reviled" Paul. They are patently diaspora Jews. While still in Corinth, "the Jews" collectively attacked Paul and arraigned him before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia (18:12, 14). Gallio dismisses the case because he perceives it as a diaspora Jewish internecine matter. Moving on to Ephesus, Paul

preaches in the synagogue. These “Jews” receive him warmly (18:19). They are diaspora Jews. In Ephesus Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, refutes “the Jews” in the city (18:28). These Ephesian Jews are diaspora Jews. Still in Ephesus, Luke relates Paul’s remarkable success among “Jews” and Greeks (19:10, 17, 33). These “Jews” are also diaspora Jews. In 20:2-3 the plot of “the Jews” in Greece against Paul compels him to return to Macedonia. These Greek “Jews” are definitely diaspora Jews. In 20:18-19 Paul mentions the plot of “the Jews” in Asia Minor and Greece against him. This reference, like all the others reviewed above, delineate diaspora Jews. The prophecy of the Judean Agabus (not called a “Jew”) prima facie breaks away from this pattern, because although the literary setting—Caesarea—qualifies those mentioned as non-Judeans, the prediction is about Paul’s trial in Jerusalem (21:11).²¹¹ But as I will argue below, even though Paul’s trial is situated in Jerusalem, his accusers are “Jews from Asia”—diaspora Jews (21:27; 24:19). These citations frame Paul’s trial in Jerusalem. He is not accused by Judeans, Jews collectively, or Jerusalem (the center of Jewish arbitration), but by “Jews from Asia.” In 28:17 Paul meets with the “leaders of the Jews.” These “Jews” are Roman Jews. The last reference to “the Jews” in Acts recalls Paul’s ordeal at the hands of the “Jews from Asia” who instigated Jerusalem residents against him. Luke’s application of “the Jews” in Paul’s mission consistently denotes diaspora Jews—no exception. Next, I will carefully examine references to “the Jews” at Paul’s trial in Jerusalem.

²¹¹ John S. Kloppenborg explains Luke’s proclivity to distinguish Caesarea from Judea: “Although Caesarea clearly belonged in Herod’s kingdom and remained administratively the capital of the province of Judaea under the procurators, it was culturally distinct.” Kloppenborg, “Luke’s Geography: Knowledge, Ignorance, Sources, and Spatial Conception,” *Luke on Jesus, Paul and Christianity: What Did He Really Know?*, ed. Joseph Verheyden and John S. Kloppenborg (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 118-19. Josephus also highlights the cultural discrepancy between Judea and Caesarea (*Ant.* 15.328-330). Hence, although Caesarea is technically not a diaspora Jewish settlement, it was socioculturally diaspora-like in worldview. Luke probably could not distinguish its political status from its sociocultural trait.

2.2.3 “The Jews” at Paul’s Trials²¹²

Since Paul returns to Jerusalem from his missions in 21:17, all references to “the Jews” from here to 26:21 will be categorized as “‘the Jews’ at Paul’s trials.” In 21:20-21 “the Jews” signify the diaspora Jews that Paul encountered and proclaimed the gospel to during his mission. The ensuing verse clarifies this point: “They [i.e., those “zealous for the law”] have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs.” This accusation, even though it references “the Jews” while in Jerusalem, pertains to diaspora Jews still: those that Paul encountered in his missions in Asia Minor and Greece. In 21:27 Luke frames the trial of Paul in Jerusalem: it was engendered by “Jews from Asia.” Through this narrative framing, Jerusalem is potentially exonerated from blame for whatever will befall Paul in Rome—even though Luke is silent about the last moments of his protagonist. In 22:12 Paul recounts his commissioning for the first time. “The Jews” mentioned here are Damascus Jews. In 22:30 “the Jews” named are the same ones from Asia Minor, who spearheaded the accusations against Paul. In 23:12 these same “Jews” swear an oath to kill Paul. In 23:20 Luke further exposes the plot of these “Jews” to kill Paul under the pretext of additional inquiry into his missions. In 23:27 Luke mentions the name of the centurion who saves Paul from “the Jews”: Claudius Lysias. Lysias intervenes because Paul is a Roman citizen. The historical credibility of this detail, however, is highly debatable, given that there is no indicator of this in the undisputed letters. But the focus of this study is on the identity of “the Jews” in Acts. “The Jews” mentioned here are the same diaspora Jews from Asia Minor and Greece. In 24:5, 9, 19, and 27, “the Jews” are the same irate diaspora Jews who want to kill Paul. Luke underscores the fact that although the location is Jerusalem, Paul’s

²¹² Acts 21:20, 21, 27; 22:12, 30; 23:12, 20, 27; 24:5, 9, 19, 27; 25:2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 24; 26:2, 3, 4, 7, 21. There are a total of twenty-four references to “the Jews” at Paul’s trials.

accusers remain the same disgruntled diaspora Jews who disagreed with his interpretation of Jewishness. In 25:2, 7, 9, 10, 15, and 24, “the Jews” represents the same group of accusers who stirred up Jerusalem residents—who are notably called “the crowd,” “people,” or “Israel” (21:27-28, 30)—against Paul.²¹³ The verse that demands special attention is 25:8. At first glance, the literary context suggests that Paul’s offence against “the law of the Jews, the temple, and the emperor” is an affront to Jews collectively. But this is inattentive to the narrative that Luke has astutely contrived: Paul’s accusers are disgruntled and irate “Jews from Asia,” who fabricate mendacious allegations and spread disinformation about him. The “law of the Jews” here signifies the putative ancestral custom violations of Paul while in Asia Minor and Greece. These allegations, however, as the narrative makes clear, are spurious, baseless, and fabricated. Hence, a synonym for “law of the Jews” would be the “ancestral practices of diaspora Jews.” This is precisely what Paul’s accusers are incensed about. “The customs of diaspora Jews” is the best translation of “law of the Jews” for the following reasons: (1) there is no evidence in Acts that Paul infringes any Jewish law, (2) neither Jerusalem authorities nor Jerusalem residents accuse Paul of violating Jewish customs, and (3) per Acts, these belligerent and irate diaspora Jews fabricate untrue statements about Paul. Hence, “law of the Jews” refers to the practices that the diaspora Jews accuse Paul of violating with reference to “Jews living among Gentiles.” This accusation cannot be extrapolated to apply to Jews collectively. In 26:2, 3, 4, 7, and 21, Luke continues with this characterization of “the Jews.” The last reference in Paul’s trial (26:21) offers the reader helpful clues for identifying Luke’s target. The text reads: “The Jews [i.e., from Asia Minor and Greece] seized me in the temple.” This is precisely Luke’s introduction of Paul’s accusers (21:27). Given the Roman legal system, where trials are convened only if charges are

²¹³ For Luke’s preferred designation for Jerusalem residents, see 2.2.4 and 2.2.5 below.

brought by accusers, Paul is neither tried by Jerusalem nor Rome but by non-Christ-believing diaspora Jews, who hail from Asia Minor and Greece and oppose the waiver of some ancestral practices for Christ-believing Gentiles.²¹⁴ So from a narrative viewpoint, all the other references that follow must be framed accordingly.

The foregoing narrative study of Luke's employment of the phrase, "the Jews," in reference to Paul shows that the appellation consistently denotes diaspora Jews of varying dispositions toward his convictions. These hostile "Jews" sternly oppose Paul's proclamations and are determined to kill him, while the receptive "Jews" respond enthusiastically to his preaching. Systematically ascribing "Jewishness" to diaspora Jews solely cannot be explained from a purely historical-critical perspective but surely makes sense from a narrative viewpoint. Luke clearly knows that Judeans are Jews but by withholding this designation from them and applying it almost exclusively for diaspora Jews, he redirects the reader's attention to those he is interested in: those in his geographical milieu. The hostility that is egregiously ascribed to Jews collectively is a distortion of Luke's story. Associating "Jewishness" with Paul enables Luke to engage his interlocutors: the diaspora Jewish critics who disapproved of the non-circumcision of Christ-believing Gentiles. Reading "the Jews" against the hermeneutical backdrop of Luke's literary design illuminates the characters' historical referents. Precipitous historicization of "the Jews" has created manifold problems in scholarship that has engendered a myriad of solutions: (1) "the Jews" as indicating all Jews, (2) "the Jews" as designating Judeans, (3) "the Jews" as a literary construct, (4) "the Jews" as a theological notion, and (5) "the Jews" as evidencing ethnic reasoning. Excepting the first proposal, the others are concerted attempts to purge faulty and theologically inappropriate interpretations of the phrase "the Jews" in Acts. Granted that the

²¹⁴ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 238.

motives behind these interpretations are laudable, they do not satisfactorily explain Luke's narrative clues (e.g., siting "the Jews" exclusively in Asia Minor and Greece). Luke's story concerning "the Jews" thus demands an alternative reading.

2.2.4 "The Jews" Unrelated to Paul²¹⁵

Three scenes feature seven instances of "the Jews" that are unrelated to Paul. These are the Pentecost story, Peter's visit to Cornelius, and the Herod account. The Pentecost scene contains the first "non-Pauline" occurrence of "the Jews" in Acts. Luke's introduction is self-explanatory: Ἦσαν δὲ εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ κατοικοῦντες Ἰουδαῖοι, ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς ἀπὸ παντος ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν, "There were devout Jews from every nation under heaven [i.e., diaspora Jews] living in Jerusalem" (Acts 2:5).²¹⁶ The Greek text clearly states that the "Jews residing in Jerusalem" are the "devout men from the diaspora." The characters in the Pentecost scene are the disciples ("all those who were devoting themselves to prayer")—women, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers—and the devout diaspora Jews (1:13-14; 2:5).²¹⁷ From a narrative viewpoint, the Pentecost tale is an all-Jewish affair situated in Jerusalem. Stressing the all-Jewish composition of this gathering is crucial for deciphering the essence of "Jewishness." As the story progresses, these devout diaspora Jews are astonished to hear "those filled with the

²¹⁵ Acts 2:5, 10, 14; 10:22, 39; 12:3, 11. A total of seven references. So out of sixty-nine uses of "Jews," only seven occur without reference to Paul. This suggests that Luke correlates Paul with "Jewishness."

²¹⁶ The widespread dispersion of the Jews in the East is well attested by Josephus (*J.W.* 7.43). He remarks that after the abominable deed of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, his successors made generous donations of reparations to the Jewish nation. Further, he describes Jewish life in Antioch as marked by the "most undisturbed tranquility." The geographical spread and political influence of Jews around the East makes Luke's narrative historically credible. But this does not imply that Luke was writing post-Enlightenment history (i.e., an objective, neutral reminiscence of the past, which even post-Enlightenment folks do not write). Instead, the undisputable fact in the Pentecost scene is that there was a sizeable number of Jews all across the Greco-Roman world and that a significant number of these Jews traveled to Jerusalem for the great pilgrimages. The other details employed by Luke to flesh out this well-known fact is attributable to his authorial ingenuity.

²¹⁷ It is not my intention here to get into the contentious scholarly debate regarding the biological brothers of Jesus. This generic reference suggests family ties or relatives. It is not intended to tip the scale of the age-old debate.

spirit” speaking to them: ἕκαστος τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἡμῶν ἐν ᾗ ἐγεννήθημεν, lit., “each in their own dialect in which we were born” (2:7-8). Dialects are languages associated with specific geographical regions. Apart from this scene, the term refers to the language spoken in Jerusalem—τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ (21:40; 22:2; 26:14).²¹⁸ When Paul speaks in “Hebrew,” his audience is always Jerusalem residents—an indication that his choice of a parochial dialect ingratiate him with the audience, especially in the face of inevitable personal danger—and portrays him as a “native.”²¹⁹ The Judean dialect is also mentioned at the death of Judas. Again, τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ αὐτῶν (“in their own dialect”) refers to the parochial language of “Jerusalem inhabitants,” according to Luke’s understanding (1:19). So dialects are a hallmark of provenance, especially for Judeans.²²⁰

The emphasis on dialects being native languages—ἐν ᾗ ἐγεννήθημεν—localizes them. They are not unifying but distinguishing; they are not universal but parochial. Most importantly, they are inextricably linked to a speaker’s geographical region. In the Pentecost story, however, dialects denote the distinctive languages spoken by Jews of varying nationalities (2:9-10).²²¹ This is implicit in Luke’s choice of characters: “those filled with the Holy Spirit” and pious diaspora Jews. These dialects are presumably the native languages spoken by the respective nationalities represented. Since Luke has already framed the story as an all-Jewish affair, the question of these devout Jews from all parts of the world is very revealing: “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” (2:7). Localizing “those filled with the Holy Spirit” as Galileans implies the ensuing:

²¹⁸ Although the reference in 1:19 lacks τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ, the idea is indisputably the same.

²¹⁹ In the character Paul’s own words, he is a native of Tarsus, Cilicia, by birth, but a Judean by upbringing (22:3). The use of the slight adversative harmonizes Paul’s apparently incongruous nationalities—Jerusalem and diaspora. His presentation accentuates his Jerusalem heritage, thereby preempting the criticisms of his opponents.

²²⁰ This point is crucial in determining Luke’s pairing of “Hebrews” and Hellenists and Jews and Greeks. I will expatiate on the significance of τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ in determining the denotation of the foregoing pairings.

²²¹ The direct speech comes from the devout Jews from all parts of the known world. There is no other credible indication to suggest an additional set of non-Jewish characters. Hence, Luke’s purpose must be discerned from the “story” narrated.

(1) Jews internally distinguished themselves by provenance and language, and (2) diaspora Jews spoke and regarded their respective native languages and nationalities as their own. Describing “those filled with the Holy Spirit” as “Galileans” is extremely significant in understanding Luke’s notion of “Jewishness”: the only way to distinguish persons or groups in a global, all-Jewish gathering is to have recourse to their differences: languages and nationalities. Galileans contextually refer to “those filled with the Holy Spirit’s” provenance or language. Conversely, the Pentecost story inadvertently implies that languages and nationalities were not quintessential traits in Luke’s construal of “Jewishness.” Devout Jews can fittingly identify themselves as Parthians, Medes, and Elamites without denigrating their “Jewishness.”²²² They could also appropriate their nations’ “dialects,” because neither nationality nor language constitutes the pith of “Jewishness.” For Luke, this clarification is pivotal to the unfolding of his overwhelmingly “Jewish” narrative.

Peter’s addressees further corroborate Luke’s notion of “Jewishness”: Ἄνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ κατοικοῦντες Ἱερουσαλὴμ πάντες (2:14), Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται (2:22), Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί (2:29), πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ (2:36), and ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί (2:37). These designations— “Jews and all inhabitants of Jerusalem,” “Israelite men,” “brothers,” and “the whole house of Israel”—all suggest a literary setting for interpreting the Pentecost event: (1) it is an all-Jewish affair, and (2) the assembly is composed of diaspora Jews and Judeans.²²³ The opening words of Peter reiterate and reinforce Luke’s self-explanatory introduction (2:5). There are obviously no literary grounds for postulating the presence of non-Jewish Parthians, Medes, or Elamites. These nationalities—in

²²² A historical exposé of these nationalities is futile, because Luke has already supplied a fitting literary framework for their interpretation—a global, all-Jewish gathering.

²²³ Up until the persecution and dispersal of the church (8:1), all the events narrated implicitly or explicitly suggest Jerusalem as their locale: the healing of the lame man (3:2, 16) and the choice of the seven (6:7). Each term addressing the participants of this “global” Jewish convention consistently designates Jews: (a) “Israelites” (3:12) and (b) “brothers” (7:2). Hence, there is no compelling evidence to postulate the presence of non-Jewish characters.

the absence of other viable, non-Jewish characters—must be applied to “devout Jews from every nation under heaven.” Since Pentecost is a global Jewish gathering, translating οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as “Judeans” is inattentive to Luke’s narrative logic, because Acts identifies the latter as one of the numerous nationalities represented at this landmark event.

Second, Peter’s addressees reveal Luke’s employment of “the Jews” and “Israel.” The former denotes diaspora Jews, while the latter designates Jews collectively. The first component of the audience (i.e., “Jews” and “all Jerusalem inhabitants”) distinguishes diaspora Jews from Judeans. The Pentecost account features both groups. This component acknowledges the diversity among Jews present. The second component, “Israelites,” names both groups collectively. This epithet, as I will argue later, is rhetorically significant for Luke: it represents the world’s Jewry and encapsulates the author’s eschatological hopes for all Jews. Moving from diversity to unity is Luke’s rhetoric. The third component, “brothers,” also applies to Jews collectively. It is a term that evokes fictive kinship. The fourth and fifth components, “the house of Israel” and “brothers,” have a similar function in the narrative. Seen together, Luke is using the Pentecost story to reach all Jews. Commencing from a markedly Jewish plurality (diaspora Jews and Judeans), Luke moves narratively toward the realization of Israel’s hope forecast at the ascension of Jesus. Unsurprisingly, there is no mention of “the Jews” until Saul’s conversion. This is very significant because if the epithet denotes only diaspora Jews, as I argue it does, it would be futile for Luke’s discourse on Jews collectively (“Israel”). Put crisply, “Jews” do not signify Judeans. So far, I have shown that “the Jews” used in relation to Paul and the Pentecost means diaspora Jews.

Cornelius’ story is widely and fondly regarded as the watershed in Acts. It celebrates the recruitment of a devout Roman centurion into the Christ movement. Peter’s involvement in this

process paves the way for Jerusalem's endorsement of the mission to Gentiles. Needless to say, he had to defend Cornelius' conversion before the leaders in Jerusalem. This point is reiterated at the Jerusalem council (15:7-11). Peter's compelling argument, which is worth restating here, is that God makes no distinction between Jews collectively and Gentiles. Hence, he argues for the granting of dispensation from circumcision to devout Gentiles. Returning to Cornelius' story, his two slaves and a pious soldier make a case for their master before Peter: "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish people" (10:22). The last phrase is the subject of my analysis: ὅλου τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Ἰουδαίων. Which "entire Jewish nation" is the servant of Cornelius referring to? The literary setting supplies the clue: Caesarea. The centurion is not a Judean nor does he send alms to Jerusalem. Instead, Luke describes him as being generous to the people around him—Caesareans. The "entire Jewish people" intended are evidently not Judeans. John S. Kloppenborg proffers an erudite description of Caesarea in Luke's day.²²⁴ He argues that, although Caesarea was politically the administrative center of the province of Judea, it was culturally different. This political-sociocultural disparity is also well-attested by Josephus (*Ant.* 15.328-330; *J.W.* 1.155-156). Kloppenborg recapitulates Luke's discordant appraisal of Caesarea by comparing his knowledge to that of Josephus.²²⁵ However, I am cautiously reluctant not to categorize τῶν Ἰουδαίων in this instance as designating diaspora Jews. But it is reasonable to assume that since Caesarea historically had a culturally diaspora Jewish outlook, Luke socioculturally groups it with Asia Minor and Greece in his narrative. This instance bolsters Luke's diaspora view of "Jewishness."

The second usage of "the Jews" is situated in the context of Peter recounting before the family of Cornelius the good news God had brought to Israel through Jesus. The narrative logic

²²⁴ Kloppenborg, "Luke's Geography," 118-19.

²²⁵ Kloppenborg, "Luke's Geography," 119.

here is that Jesus' ministry which began in Galilee has spread all over Judea. Peter, representing the apostles and speaking on their behalf, says that "they" are witnesses to all that Jesus did and said in τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ Ἱερουσαλήμ (10:37-39). The NRSV translates this Greek phrase as "Judea" (i.e., "the village of the Jews" and "Jerusalem"), reading it as a hendiadys. But Luke's argument is that the apostles accompanied Jesus throughout his ministry which began in Galilee, traversed Samaria, and culminated in Judea (Luke 9:51—19:27; Acts 1:21-22). This explains why Jesus and the apostles are called Galileans (Luke 23:6; Acts 2:7). Thus the witness that the apostles first bore in "the country of the Jews" and then in "Jerusalem" should represent the length and breadth of their discipleship: Galilee to Judea (Acts 1:21-22). This application of "the Jews," like those in the Third Gospel, as I will explain later, indicates Galilean provenance. "The Jews" in Cornelius' story does not refer to Judeans. In fact, the exact opposite is true: they exclude them because the reference is to Caesarean and Galilean Jews.

Acts 12:3 presents a "non-Pauline" context for "the Jews."²²⁶ Here, the term designates those who were pleased at the news of James' death. The literary setting for this narrative is indisputably Judea, meaning that "the Jews" in this passage are Judeans (12:19). This reading deviates from the above-established pattern that consistently denotes diaspora Jews or, at least, Jews outside Judea. It is an outlier. A plausible explanation for the disruptiveness of the entire pericope (12:1-23)—and, by implication, the incongruous application of "the Jews"—has been offered by I. H. Marshall: "At first sight the story is unnecessary to the developing theme of the expansion of the church; had it been omitted, we should not have noticed the loss."²²⁷ David T.

²²⁶ This "non-Pauline" reference to "the Jews" is inconsistent with the other occurrences of the term in Acts: it implies that "the Jews" are Judeans; it uses the phrase without reference to Paul; and it has no diaspora connotation. This application of the lexeme is not normative.

²²⁷ Marshall, *Acts*, 206; for a narrative and literary reading of Acts 12, see Robert W. Wall, "Successors to 'the Twelve' according to Acts 12:1-17," *CBQ* (1991): 628-43; Patrick E. Spencer, "'Mad' Rhoda in Acts 12:12-17: Disciple Exemplar," *CBQ* (2017): 282-98; Stephen Mead, "Dressing Up Divine Reversal: A Narrative-Critical

N. Parry similarly remarks: “[Acts 12 reveals] a tendency within the early Christian community to develop stories, especially about Peter, that show the sufferings and resurrection of Christ were recapitulated in the church’s experience of persecution.”²²⁸ He describes this pericope as an interlude that sums up the first half of Acts.²²⁹ The narrative incongruity of this entire literary block could explain Luke’s isolated designation of Judeans as “the Jews.” But this application is definitely an outlier. Besides “the Jews”’ pleasure at seeing founding members of the Christ movement killed, nothing else is said about them. They are transient, hollow characters used to rejoice at the misfortune of “the Way.” They can thus be dubbed adversarial “Jews.” Alongside Herod, these “Jews” represent a fierce opposition to the activities and flourishing of “the Way,” comparable to those who resisted the missionary initiatives of Paul in the diaspora. Excepting these limited references to the hostile “Jews,” all other uses of the epithet signify diaspora Jews. For literary critics who will obsess over this disparate reference to “the Jews,” David Rhoads’ soothing counsel foregrounds my foregoing analysis: the narrative critic should not strive for perfect unity which is elusive but for coherence.²³⁰ This narrative study is coherent. Regarding the sturdiness of a sound thesis, Kloppenborg opines: “A good hypothesis is one that accounts for most of the data, most of the time, by the most probable kinds of explanatory mechanisms.”²³¹ In defense of this assertion, he remarks that there are two crucial indices of a good hypothesis: (1) it must explain all pertinent data, and (2) it must offer an “explanatory narrative” or “cover story” to the data it describes.²³² My thesis meets these lofty criteria.

Reading of the Death of Herod in Acts 12:19b-24,” *ResQ* (2018): 227-34; O. Morton Harris, “Between Text and Sermon: Acts 12:1-19,” *Int* (2018): 323-25.

²²⁸ David T. N. Parry, “Release of the Captives—Reflections on Acts 12,” in *Luke’s Literary Achievement: Collected Essays*, JSNT 116, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 164.

²²⁹ Parry, “Release of Captives,” 159.

²³⁰ Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism,” 270.

²³¹ John S. Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 21.

²³² Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel*, 20-21.

2.2.5 Why “Israel” not “Jews”?

The logical question that ensues from the foregoing discussion is why does Luke employ “Jewishness” in this way.²³³ The answer is to engage diaspora Jews who disagree with his group’s practices and reside near his Christ association. Skilled writers usually converse with interlocutors and occasionally employ fictive characters to respond to their historical critics.²³⁴ This approach to Acts makes the hostility of “the Jews” intelligible and Luke’s almost exclusively diaspora use of the same meaningful. This reading corrects mischaracterizations of Acts: “The Pauline hope for the salvation of all Israel is reduced to a bare minimum in Luke.”²³⁵ This deduction is based on a misrepresentation of the lexemes, “Jews” and “Israel,” in Luke and Acts.²³⁶ Albeit Acts features copious hostile references to “the Jews,” Luke maintains a positive and optimistic view of Jews collectively using a well-known synonym—“Israel.”²³⁷ Whereas the former is partly imbued with negativity, the latter consistently reveals Luke’s radiant hope of salvation for all peoples. It is also significant to remark here that whenever Luke refers to Jesus’ ministry, “Israel” is his preferred appellation. Therefore, in Luke and Acts, “the Jews” signify diaspora Jews, while “Israel” identifies all Jews. I will now review the uses of “Israel” in Luke’s writings beginning with the Third Gospel.

²³³ For decades, scholars have wrestled with Luke’s positive and optimistic view of “Israel” and his hostile and disapproving portrayal of some “Jews” in Acts. The solution that I am proposing and currently defending is Luke’s literary ingenuity: employing “Israel” for Jews collectively and applying “the Jews” to diaspora Jews solely. This distinction explains why Judeans are seldom called “Jews.” For the traditional tension in biblical interpretations of Luke’s dual intricate portrayals of Jews, see Gaventa, *Acts*, 45.

²³⁴ E.g., George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (New York: Knopf, 1993)..

²³⁵ Simon Buttica, “‘Has God Rejected His People?’ (Romans 11:1): The Salvation of Israel in Acts: Narrative Claim of a Pauline Legacy,” trans. Nicholas J. Zola, in Moessner, *Paul and the Heritage of Israel*, 164.

²³⁶ For a compelling depiction of Luke’s representation of “Israel,” see Matthews, “We Had Hoped,” 57-69. Even though Matthews does not distinguish between “Jews” and “Israel,” his characterization of Lukan rhetoric and optimism applies mainly to “Israel.” Luke’s hope of “Israel’s” redemption frames Acts (Acts 1:6; 28:20).

²³⁷ I will consistently use scare quotes for “Israel,” because its historical referent in antiquity is to the northern kingdom that was conquered and decimated by the Assyrians in 722-21 BCE. Since Luke’s application of the term is rhetorical, it will always appear in my discussion as “Israel.”

The application of “Israel” in the Third Gospel is Judean-centered, redemption-oriented, and optimism-tinged. It is chiefly employed in recounting biblical stories or covenantal promises and in citing Israel’s Scriptures (Luke 4:25, 27; 22:30). This utilization indicates that “Israel” symbolizes the chosen people collectively. When Luke’s intention is not to distinguish between the recipients of divine promises, he deploys an all-encompassing term, “Israel.” Another nuance that Luke imbues “Israel” with is God’s redemptive plan (1:54, 68; 2:25, 32; 4:25, 27). If the address is to all Jewish people, Luke favors the epithet “Israel” thereby evincing his hope for its redemption. This narrative consistency cannot be dismissed as incidental. Luke’s employment of the term is remarkably ingenious and thoughtful. It also means that the hostility of “the Jews” in Acts that has received enormous attention should be contextualized: it does not designate all Jews but only the critics of Luke’s group. The third observable application of “Israel” occurs with reference to Jesus’ mission (1:16; 2:34; 7:9; 22:30; 24:21). Luke’s argument is that the ministry of Jesus specifically targets Jews collectively. His two stories relate the proclamation of the good news to everyone: all Jews and Gentiles. By repeatedly addressing the audience of Jesus as “Israel,” Luke distinguishes the target of God’s redemptive plan, Jews collectively, from belligerent “Jews,” a literary character that opposes the realization of the divine promise to humanity: Jews first and then Gentiles. This narrative reading of Luke and Acts reveals an “orderly” presentation of the spread of the Christ movement. Excepting 7:9 which is situated in Galilee, these references to “Israel” suggest Judean provenance.

Acts features a comparable understanding and application of “Israel.” The entire narrative is framed by two critical references to the epithet, both teeming with optimism and inundated with the hope of restoring all God’s people (Acts 1:6; 28:20). Just like the Third Gospel, the term is imbued with three recognizable meanings: Judean provenance, Israel’s Scriptures, and Christ’s

mission. Beginning with the last, there are five clear references to Jesus' ministry (1:6; 4:27; 5:31; 10:36; 13:23). This usage bolsters my earlier claim that "Israel" denotes the recipients of God's redemption in Christ. The other lucid reference to "Israel" is in relation to Scripture (7:23, 37, 42; 13:17). Stephen's speech features most of the instances of the utilization of the lexeme in Acts. Lastly, the remaining references of the epithet suggest Judean provenance (2:36; 4:10, 27; 5:21; 9:15; 13:24). These observations imply that Luke is consciously employing "the Jews" and "Israel" differently. Collapsing or blurring the crucial distinction between these rhetorical lexemes, which has characterized previous scholarship, has engendered befuddlement, labyrinthine explanations, and growing uncertainty on Luke's notion of Jewishness. These multifarious and conflicting ideas about Jewishness can easily be resolved by adhering to the narrative clues that Luke has bequeathed to his readers. To summarize, scholars have been "following the wrong star." The "right star," as I have argued, that points to Luke's appraisal of Jewishness, is "Israel": a lexeme imbued with unceasing optimism, scriptural foundation, divine promise, soteriological significance, and Judean provenance.

2.2.6 Introduction of "Jewish" Characters

Luke's character introductions follow this sequence: Jewish identity, name, nationality, and additional information. These instances reveal a pattern: Aquila—Ἰουδαῖον ὀνόματι Ἀκύλαν, Ποντικὸν τῷ γένει (18:2); Apollos—Ἰουδαῖος δε τις Ἀπολλῶς ὀνόματι, Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τῷ γένει, ἀνὴρ λόγιος (18:24); Paul—Ἰουδαῖος, Ταρσεὺς τῆς Κιλικίας, οὐκ ἀσήμεου πόλεως πολίτης (21:39); Paul—Ἰουδαῖος, γεγεννημένος ἐν Ταρσῷ τῆς Κιλικίας, ἀνατεθραμμένος δὲ ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, παρὰ τοὺς πόδας Γαμαλιήλ (22:3). In these personal introductions, Ἰουδαῖος comes first, perhaps to stress the most important information about each individual or what most of the

dramatis personae have in common. After affirming the introduced characters' "Jewishness," what follows are their names and distinguishing traits that vary from person to person: provenance and additional information. The pattern of Luke's character introductions proffers a *via negativa* delineation of "Jewishness": it is not synonymous with nationality: Aquila is from Pontus, Apollos from Alexandria, and Paul from Tarsus, and yet they are all "Jews." But like the foregoing argument on Luke's employment of "Jewishness," these instances bolster the diaspora Jewish motif: Aquila, Apollos, and Paul are diaspora Jews. Their disparate nationalities echo the already-discussed Pentecost phrase: ἐν ᾗ ἐγεννήθημεν. These character introductions confirm that Luke distinguishes "Jews" by nationality or provenance. Distinguishing nationality from Jewishness is an intelligible move for a diaspora Jew but a problematic categorization for a Judean. This gives extra credence to Luke's diaspora Jewish perspective.

2.2.7 Hebrews and Hellenists

Identifying those designated as Hebrews and Hellenists has spurred numerous works.²³⁸ Many scholars have probed these lexemes with a historical-critical lens to determine their precise signification in the early church, while others have investigated their import for the hierarchical constitution of nascent Christ associations.²³⁹ Some have sidelined these concerns and focused

²³⁸ In my analysis, I will use "Hebrews" in scare quotes to emphasize the historical implausibility of Luke's presumption, because the language spoken in Judea, besides Greek (which is seldom acknowledged by exegetes), was Aramaic. But in acknowledgement of Luke's narrative, I will retain the terminology of Acts' symbolic world. Craig C. Hill's historical-critical study of this subject leads him to conclude that the material in Acts 6:1-7 does not offer sufficient grounds to justify the assumption that there existed an ideological divide in the early Christ movement. *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Divisions within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 40. Milton Moreland regards the narrative of Acts 1-6 as mythmaking. "The Jerusalem Community in Acts: Mythmaking and the Sociohistorical Functions of a Lukan Setting," in Penner and Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Acts*, 285-310.

²³⁹ For other pertinent historical-critical analyses on the abovenamed pericope, see Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 151-58, Étienne Nodet, "Pierre, Les Douze, Les Sept (Act 6:2-3) et Pseudo-Clément," *RB* (2014): 66-107; for a literary approach to the text, see Haenchen, *Acts*, 260-69; Gaventa, *Acts*, 111-16; David W. Pao, "Waiters or Preachers: Acts 6:1-7 and the Lukan Table Fellowship Motif,"

on the social concern that undergirds the text: neglect of widows.²⁴⁰ Beverly Gaventa, to her credit, gives an incisive response to those who are eager to find historical justification for the office of deacons: “The most important ecclesial assumption ... is that the church adapts its ministry as situations change.”²⁴¹ Returning to the social identities of the Hebrews and Hellenists, I will briefly review the arguments of the historical and literary critics. The former assert that 6:1-7 is a window into late first-century Christ-believing Jewish associations, wherein Judeans disputed with diaspora Jews, as reflected in novelistic form under the guise of abandoning widows. Many have adduced plausible explanations for this tension. Haenchen opines that this internecine friction is engendered by disparity of attitudes to ancestral practices.²⁴² In his analysis, he muddles up Jews, Hellenists, and Hebrews: as if they are separate and unrelated. Pervo avers: “‘The Hebrews’ of Acts 6:1 may be a foreshadowing of later opposition to the gentile mission, but they do not establish an early conflict *among followers of Jesus*.”²⁴³ He equates the Hebrews with the adversarial “Jews,” who are a foil for Paul and signify belligerent diaspora Jews. Besides these views, there is a trite linguistic distinction: Aramaic- and Greek-speaking Jews. This philological distinction dates back to John Chrysostom (*Hom. Act. 6:1*). Below, I will examine these epithets and determine their contextual denotations. I will eschew historicist imposition and theological justification. To decrypt the identities of the Hebrews and Hellenists, I will investigate the portrait of the former from the clues within the narrative.

JBL (2011): 127-44; for theological application, see Phillip W. Sell, “The Seven in Acts 6 as a Ministry Team,” *BSac* (2010): 58-67. These methodological approaches clearly reflect a wide spectrum of academic interests in Acts.

²⁴⁰ F. Scott Spencer, “Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1-7,” *CBQ* (1994): 715-33; Gaventa, *Acts*, 112.

²⁴¹ Gaventa, *Acts*, 116.

²⁴² Haenchen, *Acts*, 268; see Pervo, *Acts*, 158. Pervo also distinguishes these Hellenists from “other Greek-speaking Jews,” thereby complicating Luke’s literary categories. It is obvious that most reputable scholars do not know how to make sense of “the Jews,” “Hebrews,” and “Hellenists.” My study attempts to make these categories intelligible, readable, and complimentary.

²⁴³ Pervo, *Acts*, 158, emphasis original.

In the Pentecost story discussed above, I demonstrated that Luke pairs languages with geographical origins. Just as the diaspora Jews at this event retained their native languages and nationalities, so do the anonymous Jews in 6:1-7. Following this logic, the Hebrews will be both “Hebrew” speakers and from “Hebrew” land; while the Hellenists will be both Greek-speaking and from Greek-speaking territories.²⁴⁴ Luke mentions “Hebrew” language in two interrelated accounts (21:40; 22:2). In this two-part scene, Paul addresses Jerusalemites in “Hebrew” during his trial to ingratiate himself to them. In his second self-introduction, he adds details that are not mentioned in the first: “brought up in Jerusalem,” “tutored by Gamaliel,” and “zealous for God.” The reason for accenting his “Jewish” conservatism is rhetorical: currying favor with Judeans. Stressing Paul’s parochial language during his trial in Jerusalem, when his previous activities and speeches did not receive any linguistic spotlight suggests that Luke correlates Jerusalem with “Hebrew.”²⁴⁵ An earlier reference that bolsters this argument is the name given to the field where Judas committed suicide (1:19). Here again, Luke pairs “Hebrew” with Jerusalem, which means that, narratively speaking, “Hebrews” are Judeans. This logic is bolstered by the Pentecost scene which attracted diaspora Jews to Jerusalem (2:5). Given the linear progression of Acts (i.e., siting pre-dispersion narratives in Jerusalem), those concerned are either Judeans or diaspora Jews (2:5). Since “Hebrews” denotes Judeans, Hellenists logically signifies Greek-speaking diaspora Jews, who hail from “every nation under heaven.” Having resolved the social identities of the “Hebrews” and Hellenists, I will now address other instances of the latter.

Immediately after the dispute between the “Hebrews” and Hellenists, Luke focuses on the latter’s hostility toward Stephen, a precursor of Paul (6:9-14). Per the story, Stephen stupefies

²⁴⁴ Haenchen, *Acts*, 267. Hanchen supports this reading; he says that the Hellenists in Acts are “Hellenistic diaspora Jews.”

²⁴⁵ The linguistic-geographical correlation that I am concerned with is rhetorical. My argument, just to reiterate, is not a historically backed.

these diaspora Jews with his wisdom and learning. This infuriates them. Although these persons are not explicitly called “Jews,” the context implies that they are Hellenists, because they hail from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia. But they are in no way representative of all diaspora Jewry. I will qualify them as hostile diaspora Jews. Their spurious allegations are similar to those leveled against Paul (6:11, 13-14; 21:28; 24:5-6). From a literary perspective, Stephen’s foes are prospective rivals of Paul and, by extrapolation, Luke’s association. Like Paul, Stephen, although a transition character, personifies “the Way.” Albeit “the Way” (Christ-believing diaspora Jews) has not made its debut, because the narrative setting is still in Jerusalem, Luke preempts Paul’s diaspora Jewish critics. It should be stressed that Luke astutely exonerates Jerusalem residents from indictment just as he reserves their city for arbitration and legitimation of diaspora Jewish assemblies. Therefore, it is a distortion of Luke’s narrative to regard Judeans as enemies of the Christ movement.

After the commissioning of Saul and his return to Jerusalem, he encounters the Hellenists who were hostile to him (9:29). The significance of this scene is chiefly its location: Jerusalem. Luke stresses the social identity of the Hellenists because the location is Jerusalem. Once again, it is important to note that Saul’s adversaries are not Judeans but hostile diaspora Jews. The next reference to Hellenists is highly contentious (11:20). Here, Hellenists are contrasted with “the Jews.” The difficulty with this reading is that so far I have established that Hellenists denote Greek-speaking diaspora Jews in Jerusalem. This is Luke’s narrative logic. But this text breaks away from the foregoing pattern: (1) it contrasts “Jews” and Hellenists and (2) it calls a group of persons Hellenists in a diaspora context. This disparate reference suggests that Luke has a non-Jewish group in mind. The aforementioned three occurrences of Hellenists (albeit 6:9-14 does not employ the term) show that as a Jewish designation, they are localized in Jerusalem and are

contrasted with Judeans, meaning that outside these literary contexts, this soubriquet in Acts need not mean Jews.²⁴⁶ From a contextual literary viewpoint, in light of the arguments presented, “Hellenists” in 11:20 refer to Gentiles (i.e., Greek-speaking non-Jews or simply Greeks).²⁴⁷ Not to belabor the meaning of Hellenists here, if older manuscripts attest to this reading and latter ones contain Greeks, using the *lectio difficilior potior* principle, it is realistic to assume that later scribes changed Hellenists to Greeks, in order to make the literary contrast intelligible, rather than doing the reverse and obscuring an already lucid reading. Summing up these text-critical issues, Bruce M. Metzger writes:

The chief objection of modern scholars to adopting Ἑλληνιστάς here is the belief that it always means “Greek-speaking Jews,” and therefore is inappropriate to stand in contrast with the preceding Ἰουδαῖοι. But since Ἑλληνιστής is derived from ἐλληνίζειν, it means strictly “one who uses Greek [language or customs]”; whether the person be a Jew or a Roman or any other non-Greek must be gathered from the context.²⁴⁸

To summarize, Hellenists, in Jerusalem and juxtaposed with Judeans, denotes Greek-speaking diaspora Jews; while outside Jerusalem and in contrast to diaspora Jews, they signify Greeks. This interpretation is consistent with the narrative logic of Acts. Christopher R. Matthews captures this perspective: Luke uses the Hellenists as a legitimating rhetorical lexeme and sociocultural bridge that annexes his Christ association with Judean Christ believers.²⁴⁹ Historicizing Luke’s depiction of Hebrews and Hellenists overlooks Acts’ historiographical interests: to justify the admission of non-Judaizing Gentiles. In this work, I equate Hellenists to

²⁴⁶ Pervo, *Acts*, 291. He remarks that translating Ἰουδαῖοι here as “Judeans” is awkward: “‘Judeans’ is not possible here.” From a narrative viewpoint, as I have already argued, it is awkward to render the Greek as Judeans anywhere else (except chapter 12), because it belies Luke’s logic which is favorable to Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

²⁴⁷ The following exegetes read Hellenists here as Greeks: Haenchen, *Acts*, 364; Gaventa, *Acts*, 178-79. Although I agree with the sense in their translation, the term is better translated as “Hellenists” but with non-Jewish referents in mind.

²⁴⁸ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 342.

²⁴⁹ Matthews, “Luke the Hellenist,” in Warren, Brock, and Pao, *Early Christian Voices*, 99-108.

“the Jews” in Acts, because both lexemes designate diaspora Jews collectively. The former prefigures the latter.

2.2.8 The Diaspora Jewish Council in Jerusalem²⁵⁰

The precipitation of the Jerusalem council occurs in Antioch. Situating the council-instigating dispute in the diaspora (14:26) and referring to Gentiles eight times in the ensuing chapter evince the quintessence of the Jerusalem assembly—a concession for non-Judaizing Gentiles.²⁵¹ From the viewpoint of literary cartography, Luke astutely situates the altercation which engenders the council in the diaspora. This is highly symbolic. The narrative framework for the Jerusalem council is a diaspora city (introduction), diaspora believers (body), and diaspora groups (conclusion). The council is prompted by diaspora disputations concerning Gentile circumcision and observance of “the custom of Moses”; the speakers at the gathering repeatedly and enthusiastically mention their successes in converting Gentiles; the council’s communiqué is aimed at Gentile Christ believers residing in Antioch. Hence, the “Jerusalem” council is actually a diaspora-induced, diaspora-concerned, and diaspora-oriented council. Put succinctly, it is a diaspora Jewish council. This ingenious repetition of the diaspora and the copious references to Gentiles are rhetorically significant. In line with my preceding arguments, this event also corroborates the sociocultural setting, worldview, interest, and intended audience of Luke. The centrality of the “Jerusalem” council to Acts indicates that the focus of its rhetoric

²⁵⁰ The ensuing section will not be a comprehensive, erudite treatise on Acts 15, which has received enormous scholarly attention. Rather, the sole purpose of this segment is to show that one of the most important stories in Acts corroborates Luke’s perspective of “Jewishness”—Christ-believing diaspora Jewry and its Gentile sympathizers. The function of this analysis is to bolster Luke’s diaspora Jewish context and perspective. Some have designated this assembly as a “conference.” William O. Walker, “Acts and the Pauline Corpus Revisited: Peter’s Speech at the Jerusalem Conference,” in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson*, ed. Richard P. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1998), 77-86.

²⁵¹ References to Gentiles occur in these verses: 14:27; 15:3, 7, 12, 14, 17, 19, and 23. The plethora of τὰ ἔθνη (lit. “the nations”) suggests that the Jerusalem communiqué is intended for all Christ-believing Gentiles.

is on diaspora Jewry: Luke’s primary concern. The council is convoked to deliberate and address what constitutes “Jewishness” for diaspora Jewish Christ believers. It retroactively adjudicates criticisms brought by a dissenting Jewish Christ-believing faction and legitimates those who allow Gentiles to join diaspora Jewish groups without mandating their stringent adherence to ancestral practices. Even though, the dissenting Jewish sect in this chapter is Judean, its resistance is identical to the belligerent diaspora Jews: “the Jews.” Altering the origins of Paul’s stereotypical opposition paves the way for a Jerusalem council that bequeaths the highest Jewish approval to an apparently contentious diaspora Jewish practice.

During the council’s proceedings, each speaker recapitulates God’s approval of Gentiles and how the insistence on circumcision and other ancestral practices impedes a divine initiative. This initiative is emphasized by God’s inclusion of Gentiles into diaspora Jewish assemblies. The verbs employed to underscore prior Gentile inclusion in diaspora Jewish assemblies are in the aorist.²⁵² This aligns with the precipitating fracas: altercations arose because dissenting diaspora Jews were unhappy with an ongoing concession on circumcision accorded to Gentiles. Luke’s repeated employment of the aorist in reporting God’s activity among Gentiles—excepting their “turning to God,” which is related in the present—suggests that Christ-believing diaspora Jews and pious Gentiles were already praying together and identifying as one people.²⁵³ Switching to the present tense in their “turning to God” demonstrates concern for the ongoing impact of insisting on circumcision and ancestral practices. The Jerusalem council thus is better read as a legitimation of an already existing, sociocultural hybrid diaspora Jewish assembly. The

²⁵² These are some of the aorist verbs used: ἐποίησεν ἡνοίξεν (14:27), ἐξελέξατο, ἀκοῦσαι, πιστεῦσαι (15:7), ἐσίγησεν, ἤκουον, ἐποίησεν (15:12), ἐπεσκένατο λαβεῖν (15:14), and ἐκζητήσωσιν (15:17).

²⁵³ The use of the present tense ἐπιστρέφουσιν suggests that the concern of the apostles and elders is the ongoing implications of demanding the stringent observance of ancestral customs and circumcision for believing Gentiles. These subtle distinctions between the inclusion of devout Gentiles into diaspora Jewish assemblies (aorist) and the ongoing implications of mandating ancestral customs for them (present) are analytically significant.

literary creation of a Jerusalem council is a retroactive approval of an ongoing—albeit contentious—fraternal concession. It is futile to ascertain the precise chronology of this “apostolic” meeting, since it serves a rhetorical and practical intent. Daniel Marguerat captures this reading of Acts with remarkable clarity and brevity: “L’historiographie lucannienne ne pretend pas récapituler tout ce qui est à savoir sur les origines chrétiennes; elle illustre une thèse qui est l’universalisation du christianisme par le vecteur de la mission pétrinienne, puis paulinienne.”²⁵⁴ The Jerusalem council foregrounds the diaspora as the prime locale that shapes Luke’s construal of “Jewishness.” The introductory agitators that engender the council excepted, the gathering is concerned with modalities for legitimating Gentile inclusion into diaspora Jewish Christ associations. The proceedings begin and end in the diaspora. The speeches are all directed at Gentile inclusion in Christ-believing diaspora Jewish assemblies. Therefore, the Jerusalem council concurs with and builds on the earlier arguments suggesting diaspora Jewry as Luke’s literary perspective. It should be fittingly dubbed the “diaspora council” or the “diaspora Jewish council in Jerusalem.”

2.2.9 Circumcision among Diaspora Jews and Gentile Proselytes

In the foregoing section, I have argued that Luke’s perspective is most probably diaspora Jewishness because of the literary clues and narrative settings deployed in relating his story. It will thus be a disservice to Luke’s subtle presentation to impose a foreign context on his tale: a non-diaspora Jewish context (i.e., Judea). Therefore, this section will focus on diaspora Jewish

²⁵⁴ Marguerat, *Les Actes des Apôtres*, Commentaire Du Nouveau Testament (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007), 27; Haenchen, *Acts*, 459. Haenchen asserts that the Peter in this story is clearly not the historical Peter; his defense of the non-circumcision of Gentiles is best summed up as the “creed” of Luke’s group: “Belief in Jesus is the only thing which saves—Jews and Gentiles alike.” This rhetorical construction of characters in Acts makes historicist interests untenable.

writings on circumcision and dietary laws, especially as they apply to Gentile proselytes. The aim here is not to offer a comprehensive review of all the evidence on these extensively-researched topics but to underscore the historical backdrop that influenced Luke's disposition toward the ancestral practice requirements for Gentiles.²⁵⁵ Now I will begin with a concise review of the foundational biblical text that underlies later Jewish disputations on the subject.

Genesis 17:9-14 constitutes the kernel of the Jewish circumcision debate. It features the covenant between God and Abraham. The narrative delineates circumcision as a covenant marker for Jews and their slaves. Defaulters are threatened with ostracization. Like most foundational biblical texts, this pericope unsurprisingly leaves no room for exceptions. It is thus not surprising that Hellenistic Jewish debates, especially with respect to Gentile proselytes, tended to dwell largely on this divinely-sanctioned ethnic boundary marker.

Exodus 12:43-49 reaffirms the circumcision-covenant nexus. In this text, Moses is instructed to exclude uncircumcised persons, mostly aliens, from the celebration of the Passover. But those who are poised to receive circumcision are numbered among Israel. This passage is significant for many sociological reasons: (1) it shows that ancient Israel regarded its identity as fluid and negotiable (i.e., circumcised persons from any race could join them); (2) admission into Israel was malleable; and (3) the definition of Israel is not based on provenance, social or civic status, or race but on the acceptance of the divine precepts. The date of the pentateuchal books is irrelevant here. What matters is the sociological arguments of the authors/editors: admission into

²⁵⁵ For pertinent scholarship on this subject, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1-3)? Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinic Law, and Matrilineal Descent," *JBL* 105 (1986): 251-68; idem, *Beginnings of Jewishness*; idem, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Simon C. Mimouni, *La circoncision dans le monde Judéen aux époques Grecque et Romaine: Histoire d'un conflit interne au Judaïsme* (Paris: Peeters, 2007); Eric D. Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations: The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16*, WUNT 294 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Nina E. Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol*, WUNT 295 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

Israel is negotiable, attainable, and fluid. To the extent that non-Jews were willing to subject themselves to the ordinances of Israel's God, they were accorded the status of natives.

Joshua 5:2-9 continues this theme of circumcision-covenant connection. The children of deceased Israelite warriors who were not circumcised during the sojourn are circumcised prior to the people's entry into Canaan, the land of promise (Gen 17:8; Exod 6:4). Besides serving as a reminder of the Abrahamic covenant, there is also a sociological underpinning to this action: removal of the male foreskin distinguishes Israelites physically, socioculturally, ethnically, and religiously from other people. Therefore, the circumcision precept was deemed necessary to accent Israel's distinctiveness and religious peculiarity from the other nations.

With the encroachment of Hellenism, later Jewish writings accented circumcision as a mark of loyalty to the Judean heritage. First Maccabees 1:14-15 summarily describes key indices that imply abandonment of Jewishness: building a Greek gymnasium in Jerusalem and undoing the marks of circumcision through epispasm. The author interprets the removal of circumcision as a blatant rejection of Israel's God and the peoples' defining customs. In reporting a similar story, Josephus substitutes removal for concealment (*Ant.* 12.241). Without unduly stressing 1 Maccabees' pro-Judean orientation, which has received enormous scholarly attention, circumcision patently ranks highly as a distinctive ethnic boundary marker for Judeans. Nina E. Livesey says: "Circumcision is a mark of political allegiance to the Hasmonean rule."²⁵⁶ The straw that broke the camel's back was Antiochus IV Epiphanes' decree which barred Jews from observing their ancestral mores (1 Macc 1:41-50). This incendiary legislation triggered the ire of the Hasmoneans and colored their subsequent disposition toward Hellenism. For sociological reasons, it is noteworthy that some Jews did not hesitate to jettison their ancestral customs. Not

²⁵⁶ Livesey, *Circumcision*, 32.

to belabor the point, it evinces the implicit sociocultural crosspollination that was characteristic of second-century BCE Judea.

Besides being a covenantal index, circumcision, seen from a sociological perspective, is relational: it creates and sustains a sense of us and them. This nuance is critical for the ensuing assessment of circumcision among diaspora Jews. Philo, situated in Alexandria, the hub of Greek civilization, culture, and learning in the southern Mediterranean, approaches the subject differently. The reasons he adduces to defend the practice of circumcision among Jews are largely medical, scientific, or health-based: (1) it reduces the chances of male genital inflammation (carbuncle), (2) it promotes sanitary health, (3) it makes men more virile, and (4) it enhances population growth (*Spec. Laws* 1.4-7). Although these claims may be disputed by modern scientists (which is not the point of this review), they were nevertheless true for Philo and first-century Alexandrians. Quite notably, circumcision is not justified on the basis on Israel's Scripture but on scientific data. In *QG* 1.46-47, Philo asserts that circumcision promotes chastity in men. Again, whether this claim has been verified by modern scientists is irrelevant. What counts is Philo's eagerness to explain a well-known Jewish practice scientifically and medically. Stressing the pervasive attestation to circumcision in the southern Mediterranean, he remarks that many nations in this part of the globe practice it: Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Arabs (*QG* 1.48). Josephus adds Colchians, Phoenicians, and Syrians inhabiting Palestine (*Ant* 8.262; *Ag. Ap.* 1.169-170). By listing these nationalities, Philo implies that scientific findings on circumcision are cogent reasons for its continued practice.²⁵⁷ Numerous circumcising nations blur the ethnic distinctiveness of Alexandrian Jews who were unapologetically Greek.

²⁵⁷ For a modern scientific review of Philo's insight on circumcision in the southern Mediterranean, see T. James, "Philo on Circumcision," *SAMJ* 50 (1976): 1409-12. For circumcision as an identity marker in Philo, see Maren Niehoff, "Circumcision as a Marker of Identity: Philo, Origen and the Rabbis on Gen 17:1-14," *JSQ* 10 (2003): 89-123.

Circumcision situates Jews amid other cultures. For Philo, it is not an exclusionary religious custom but a scientifically proven preventative for excruciating and incurable genital inflammations. Given this reasoning, circumcision might be elective for imperial residents in the northern Mediterranean, where the weather is cold—regardless of Israel’s Scripture.

The theme of circumcision in the Pauline letters has also received significant scholarly attention. Many interpret Paul’s accommodation of non-Judaizing Gentiles to mean trivializing Jewish ancestral customs. This, however, cannot be further from the truth. The main purpose of including Paul’s thoughts among other diaspora Jewish texts is to show that his musings were shared by numerous diaspora Jews living in diverse sociocultural contexts. In a striking dialogue between E. P. Sanders and C. K. Barrett, the latter claims that Paul’s indifference to dietary laws for diaspora Jews living amid Gentiles is the most non-Jewish recommendation of the biblical writer, but the former argues that such indifference is shared by many diaspora Jews.²⁵⁸ Sanders’s perspective on Paul and diaspora Jewishness is pragmatic, realistic, and corroborated by other extant texts from similar milieux. Now follows a review of Paul’s concessionary approach to Gentile circumcision.

First Corinthians 7:17-20 states Paul’s guiding principle lucidly: Jews should not seek epispasm or do away with any ethnic boundary marker; Gentiles should not seek circumcision or adherence to all Jewish ancestral customs.²⁵⁹ This maxim goes beyond pragmatism; it is pivotal to Paul’s gospel: while retaining their ethnic distinctiveness, all nationalities are invited to join Christ associations. Romans 2:25-29 features a comparable argument.²⁶⁰ Here Paul argues that

²⁵⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to Mishnah: Five Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 392; C. K. Barrett, “Things Sacrificed to Idols,” *NTS* 11 (1965): 138-53.

²⁵⁹ See Peter-Ben Smit, “In Search of Real Circumcision: Ritual Failure and Circumcision in Paul,” *JSNT* 40 (2017): 73-100; Karin B. Neutel, “Circumcision Gone Wrong: Paul’s Message as a Case of Ritual Disruption,” *Neot* 50 (2016): 373-96.

²⁶⁰ John M. G. Barclay, “Paul and Philo on Circumcision: Romans 2.25-9 in Social and Cultural Context,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 536-56. Matthew Thiessen goes against the scholarly consensus on this passage: Paul is addressing

circumcision is essentially a matter of internal disposition toward divine precepts rather than a mark in the flesh. This nuance paves the way for a vision of Christ associations that deemphasizes ethnic moorings and accents commitment to Christ, Scripture, and divine precepts. This same idea is reiterated in Gal 5:6 and 6:15. Paul's stance on circumcision is consistent: it is not *the* indicator of God's covenant with humanity. That place belongs to Jesus and the Christ event.

Troy W. Martin has an interesting take on circumcision in Paul's letters. He argues that the issue facing Paul's churches is the conflicting views on circumcision touted by Romans and Jews. Whereas the former see circumcision as a natural stimulus for promiscuity, the latter view it as achieving the opposite in addition to fulfilling the covenant. He crisply articulates this ethnic dilemma thus: "Greeks and Romans view circumcision as rendering a male perpetually sexually aroused and therefore lecherous and immoral. Jews such as Philo view circumcision as tempering male sexual passion and enabling control of the passions."²⁶¹ Whether Martin's claim is a historically accurate characterization of the Greco-Roman aversion for Jewish circumcision is a matter up for debate. Most primary sources only feature a Roman elitist view on Jewish mores.

Josephus offers an interesting perspective on Gentile circumcision. He writes: "Everyone ought to worship God according to his own inclinations" (*Life* 113). This statement suggests that Gentile circumcision is elective. Usually scholars quote Josephus' analysis of Scripture and other historical texts. But this citation presents us with his stance on the enforcement of Jewish ethnic

Judaized Gentiles not ethnic Jews. Although his argument is compelling, the consensus view is foregrounded by sociological criticism. "Paul's Argument against Gentile Circumcision in Romans 2:17-29," *NovT* 56 (2014): 373-91.

²⁶¹ Troy W. Martin, "Paul and Circumcision," *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, vol. 1, ed. J. Paul Sampley (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 113-42.

boundary markers on other nationalities. Elsewhere, consistent with this stance, he says that Jews were the only circumcised ethnicity in Palestine (*Ag. Ap.* 1.171). The biblical texts cited earlier unequivocally demand the circumcision of those who associate with Jews or their slaves. But in presenting a Jewish perspective on Gentile circumcision that is closest to Luke's, Josephus recommends each nationality worshipping God in accordance with "their own inclinations." This relativity of Gentile circumcision was probably an emerging trend among diaspora Jews.²⁶²

In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, circumcision is situated in the Judaizing practices advocated by Jewish Christ believers.²⁶³ Representing a diaspora Jewish perspective on the elective nature of ethnic boundary markers, Ignatius writes that this move is exclusionary and restrictive unlike Christianizing proclivities that are inclusionary and all-embracing (*Magn.* 10.3-4). Since Ignatius' assemblies are presumably composed of Christ-believing diaspora Jews and Gentiles, tensions among the different ethnic groups that constituted the configuration expectedly arose.²⁶⁴ But this ideological skirmish indicates the growing leniency among diaspora Jewish assemblies toward the subjugation of Gentiles to practices that characteristically define members of their ethnic group.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* spiritualizes and moralizes all Jewish ancestral practices. Given its vitriolic nature, it is highly improbable that the narrative was addressed to Palestinian Jews or indeed to an assembly of a predominantly diaspora Jewish population.²⁶⁵ The audience, however, knew a lot about Jewishness and Israel's Scripture, because these are evidently the preparatory dispositions that the addressees needed to make sense of the text. *Barnabas* dismisses the

²⁶² See Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Judaism without Circumcision and 'Judaism' without 'Circumcision' in Ignatius," *HTR* 95 (2002): 395-415; see Livesey, *Circumcision*.

²⁶³ This theme and the historical context for Ignatius' letters will be explained in detail in 2.3.2 below. For more on circumcision in Ignatius' letters, see Cohen, "Judaism without Circumcision."

²⁶⁴ See Barrett, "Jews and Judaizers," 220-44; Boyarin, "Why Ignatius Invented Judaism," 309-24.

²⁶⁵ For an in-depth analysis of *Barnabas*' arguments against Jewish ancestral practices, see 2.3.3 below.

continued practice of circumcision among everyone, including Jews (*Barn.* 9.4). From this brief review of diaspora Jewish writings on Gentile circumcision prior to and around Luke's era, it is evident that numerous Jews circumvented the initially non-negotiable mandate of Gen 17:9-14. The impetus of this modification is arguably the Jewish situation in an overwhelmingly Gentile sociocultural milieu. Acts 15 is thus profitably read as a landmark contribution to a diaspora Jewish trend that increasingly deemphasized ethnic boundary markers to accommodate others.

2.2.10 Dietary Laws among Diaspora Jews

The foundational pentateuchal references for Jewish dietary laws are Lev 11:1-47 and Deut 14:3-21. These texts had shaped Jewish dietary habits for centuries both in Palestine and in the diaspora. For the latter, it was challenging to abide by biblical dietary prescriptions among Greeks and Romans. Unsurprisingly, many Roman writers deemed these customs irksome and loathsome, because they singled out Jews as a different, antisocial ethnicity (Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.157-60; 14.95-105; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4-5; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 33). On some occasions, the rage of local residents led to hostility and skirmish. As imperial subjects themselves, Jews were regarded as uncompromisingly fastidious in insisting on their dietary laws, which they alleged were sanctioned by their ancestral deity. In this segment, my intention is solely to review the diaspora adjustments and concessions that many Jews had to make in order to blend in with their compatriots. It is not intended to be a comprehensive treatise on purity or dietary laws but a sociological study of diaspora Jewish adaptation to an evolving sociocultural milieu.

Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deut 14:3-21 present an elaborate list of approved animals that humans can use as food. The rationale for this distinction is debatable, but Sanders has proffered an insightful explanation: he says that these dietary laws (1) encourage animal husbandry,

because they approve of the eating of domestic animals (Lev 11:3; Deut 14:6) but prohibit the use of beasts of burden, like the camel (Lev 11:4-7; Deut 14:7); (2) by outlawing wild animals, they disincentivize hunting (Lev 11:26); and (3) excepting the eating of pork, they likely have socioeconomic underpinnings.²⁶⁶ Sanders contends that pork is relatively cheaper to breed than most domestic animals. He also notes that this dietary list was modified in diaspora Jewish texts (e.g., LXX and Philo) for a plethora of practical reasons: unavailability of some of the animals of “divided hoofs, cleft feet, and cud-chewing” and availability of local animals that meet the requirement.²⁶⁷ Some of these new animals include: water buffalo, giraffe, and mountain sheep (LXX) and crane and geese (Philo). This implies that diaspora Jews reasonably negotiated and modified their dietary laws to suit an evolving sociocultural milieu.

The *Letter of Aristeas* was written from the perspective of Alexandrian Jewry. It critically evaluates commitment to Jewishness vis-à-vis Greek identity.²⁶⁸ Given the pervasiveness of Greek philosophical tradition in this city, diaspora Jews had to justify their ancestral customs in ways that would be intelligible to their compatriots. The discourse is framed to afford credibility to widely criticized Jewish peculiarities (e.g., diets). Although it might be presumptuous to say that the author’s explanation captures the dietary stipulation of the Pentateuch, it may not be far from the truth. Essentially, it says that domestic and herbivorous animals (mostly ruminants) are approved for human consumption, while wild and carnivorous beasts are disapproved (*Let. Aris.* 145-46, 170). The author justifies Scripture’s dietary prohibitions on the basis of the predatory instincts of these creatures, which are adjudged (figuratively, of course) in terms of contemptible human behavior (147-48). This orientation toward the animal kingdom has reverberation in First

²⁶⁶ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 379-80.

²⁶⁷ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 380.

²⁶⁸ Hacham and Sagiv, “Social Identity,” 325-43.

Isaiah's poetic utterance: "The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (11:6-7). It is striking that this idyllic depiction of Judea entails carnivores becoming herbivores and wild beasts being domesticated. Since the poetic sections of this prophecy are generally considered older compilations, this idea of the animal world (i.e., carnivores and wild beasts being unclean) dates back to the eighth century BCE or earlier.²⁶⁹ Hence, the *Letter of Aristeas*' justification for the dietary prohibition of wild beasts and carnivores for human consumption, albeit a mid-third-century BCE writing, is deeply rooted in Jewish antiquity. The author's metaphorical extrapolation onto human ethical conduct is telling. Carnivores are considered "unjust" creatures, because they eat herbivores for their sustenance. A related rationale for the abhorrence of certain animals, such as rodents, is the health hazards they pose to humans. The author says that creatures in this category defile everything that humans use for their consumption (*Let. Aris.* 164-65). This prohibition, given the underlying reasoning, is a preventive measure to forestall disease, a pandemic, and a debilitating health.

Philo reiterates the rationalization of Jewish dietary laws discussed above. In *Spec. Laws* 4.100-118, he enumerates the approved land, sea, and air animals for human consumption. Just like the *Letter of Aristeas*, he justifies the prohibition on the basis of the forbidden animals eating habits: carnivorous and predatory. This determination appears to find figurative support as an index of despicable persons. Philo's list interestingly includes new additions which comply with the general pentateuchal recommendations: land animals (domestic, herbivorous), sea animals (fins and scales), and birds (non-predatory). Excepting this detailed listing of approved and

²⁶⁹ Jacob Stromberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Isaiah* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

prohibited animals, the only other dietary matter mentioned elsewhere in his writings concerns pork (*Embassy* 361-62; *Flaccus* 96). Philo's extensive list is a citation of the Pentateuch. There is no indication that he favors substantial modifications to its precepts. But two things are notable: (1) he adds more land animals to the list, probably due to their availability in Alexandria; and (2) he offers a rational justification for the practice, thus indicating that the observance might have been criticized by local residents.

Paul's view on dietary laws is the most quoted on the subject. First Corinthians 8:1-13 and Rom 14:14-15 capture his exhortation to Christ believers. His concern is not the food itself but the impact of its consumption on the conscience of a fellow Christ believer, who holds that certain creatures, in adherence to Jewish dietary laws, should be abhorred.²⁷⁰ This view, as Barrett rightly remarks, is radical. It does not simply excuse Gentiles from Jewish customs but trivializes their importance for observant Jews. Unlike previous diaspora Jewish texts, Paul's argument hinges on fraternal charity not on the ritual contamination incurred by consuming predatory creatures. As Sanders perceptively notes, this position was probably held and lived by many diaspora Jews, although documentary evidence is lacking.

Christopher D. Land asserts that in 1 Cor 8:1-13, Paul is not exhorting Christ believers to practice "self-sacrificial accommodation to others" but to refrain from "behaviours that might hinder public witness."²⁷¹ His emphasis is "separation" from rather than "accommodation" to cultural norms. Although he makes a sturdy argument, the rhetoric of unity and fraternal consideration which dominates the opening chapters suggests otherwise: a common baptism into

²⁷⁰ Jewett, *Romans*, 858-60; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 868-70.

²⁷¹ Christopher D. Land, "'We Put No Stumbling Block in Anyone's Path, So That Our Ministry Will Not Be Discredited': Paul's Response to an Idol Food Inquiry in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13," in *Paul and His Social Relations*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Land (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 281.

Christ (1:12-13), the repudiation of division (3:5-9), and the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit (3:16-17). These reinforce the traditional reading which favors “accommodation” of the sensibilities of the Weak on matters of dietary laws. Paul’s views should never be interpreted in isolation from his underlying theology nor be read against an appealing historical backdrop. With him, precedence should be given to his rhetoric: fostering the spiritual good of each member, Weak and Strong alike (10:23-30).

John Fotopoulos, using rhetorical criticism, approaches the subject differently. He opines that 1 Cor 8:1-13 should not be interpreted in isolation from Paul’s other teachings regarding the Strong’s indifference to the spiritual welfare of the Weak. Taken holistically, he argues that Paul is consistent in repudiating those who consume food offered to idols in pagan temples, because this practice could blur the boundaries between Christ associations and the Gentiles’ past.²⁷² His deduction, after an extensive study, echoes the consensus view on this subject: Paul’s stance was influenced more by community building than by the upholding of Jewish dietary laws.

David Rudolph, on the foregoing subject, claims that the thrust of Paul’s stance concerns the far-reaching implications of imposing Jewish ancestral practices on Gentile Christ believers. Paul does not in any way denigrate these customs but is convinced that they should not apply rigidly to non-Jews.²⁷³ Rudolph’s argument focuses on the Weak in the assembly, who think that dietary laws have an ontological existence. He writes: “The Achilles heel of the ‘weak’ was that they regarded ritual purity and defilement as objective ontological realities.”²⁷⁴ The Strong—and Rudolph includes Paul—conversely believe that prohibited foods are not objectively impure:

²⁷² John Fotopoulos, “The Rhetorical Situation, Arrangement, and Argumentation of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13: Insights into Paul’s Instructions on Idol-Food in Greco-Roman Context,” *GOTR* 47 (2002): 165-98.

²⁷³ David Rudolph, “Paul and the Food Laws,” in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini, Carlos A. Segovia, and Cameron J. Doody (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 151-81.

²⁷⁴ Rudolph, “Paul and the Food Laws,” 171.

they do not have an inherent power to defile a person. Defilement, per Paul, is causing scandal to one's fellow Christ believer. The Pauline scholarship reviewed so far bolsters the overarching thesis that diaspora Jews adapted their ancestral customs to evolving sociocultural milieux.

Joseph and Aseneth evinces a sociocultural window into diaspora Jewish resistance to unbridled social intercourse with Gentiles. In *Jos. Asen* 7:1, the classic text that is cited to show that diaspora Jews were insulated from Gentile dietary practices, Joseph is served his meal on a separate table. But there is no mention of what his meal entailed nor does the narrative suggest that it is different from what other guests ate. "Separate table" indicates social isolation not a distinct diet. Given the narrative thrust and genre, the author might just be setting up the reason why Aseneth had to convert to Judaism. Eating alone does not mean eating a different food. Both accent different concerns: sociocultural intercourse and diet. The former is most likely intended here. The second text that is cited to buttress diaspora Jewish social insulation from Gentile diets is 8:1-7, stressing Joseph's repudiation of Egyptian food and wine. But this is not the narrative's thrust. The entire section revolves around Aseneth's rejected romantic overtures: the attempt to kiss Joseph, which could be a euphemism for a romantic liaison. Joseph's refusal is premised on the unethical nature of such a conduct for Jews. To resolve this sociocultural bottleneck, Aseneth converts to Judaism and is able to have both social and romantic interactions with Joseph. As seeming proof that the emphasis of the author is Aseneth's religious conversion, Joseph dines with her entire family even before he is married to her (20.6-9). But Sanders disagrees with such a construal. He avers: "Joseph's initial refusal to kiss Aseneth expresses the full Jewish horror of Gentile meat and wine, but the author offers no practical help on how to avoid Gentile food while not breaking off social relations, except the separate table of 7.1."²⁷⁵ "Full Jewish horror"

²⁷⁵ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 383-84.

is quiet a stretch, since Joseph, after Aseneth's conversion, is not interested in the content of the meal he is served at the wedding reception. Besides, none of Aseneth's family members converts to Judaism, yet Joseph happily dines with them all. The lesson cannot be diaspora Jewish sociocultural isolation from Gentiles, but rather the need for diaspora Jews to have romantic liaison only with converted Gentiles. The perceived danger in the narrative is that romantic relationships with Gentiles might eventually lead to the acceptance of their religion and the practice of idolatry. Unequivocally, the story affirms Jewishness (i.e., commitment to Israel's God) not sociocultural isolation from non-Jews or abhorrence of their food per se. Reviewing diaspora Jewish writings on dietary laws has shown that there was extensive rationalization and notable adaptation of ancestral customs to evolving sociocultural milieux.

2.2.11 Discussion Summary

The foregoing discussion has shown that Luke intends diaspora Jews by "the Jews" and that when Paul is on the scene, the reference is exclusively to Greece: Corinth and Thessalonica. This insight into the befuddling phrase, "the Jews," eschews totalizing interpretations, because Luke's concern is not Jews collectively but a certain segment of those in the diaspora. Consequently, Acts evinces a diaspora Jewish rivalry between Christ believers and non-Christ believers over the validity of ancestral practices for Christ-believing Gentiles. Another designation that is subtly misleading is the "Jerusalem council." This phrase is extensively employed to afford credence to Luke's Judean referents. But excepting the venue, there is nothing Judean about the Jerusalem council: the altercation that precipitates it occurs in the diaspora; the deliberations are about Christ-believing diaspora Jews and Gentiles; the resulting communiqué is sent to Christ believers in the diaspora. The substance of the meeting undeniably

shows that it was a diaspora Jewish assembly held in Jerusalem. This clarification is essential in debunking the pervasive notion of Luke's Judean referents. As I noted emphatically above, it is one of the relics of the Judean-Jewish controversy that needs to be jettisoned for readers to focus on Luke's most plausible audience: diaspora Jews. A concise review of ancestral practices in diaspora Jewish texts shows that there is extensive negotiation of what constitutes Jewishness for Gentile adherents. This sociological study reveals that Luke's approach to ancestral customs is foregrounded in other diaspora Jewish texts.

2.3 “Jewishness” Outside Acts (in Christ-believing Texts)

The foregoing discourse has shown that Jewishness in Acts evinces a diaspora Jewish ideological disagreement. The theoretical frameworks of Wittgenstein, literary cartography, and defamiliarization have convincingly shown that a prejudicial interpretation of Acts that inputs contemporary notions of Jewishness into the text is misleading, historicist, and harmfully anachronistic. In reviewing the lexeme of Jewishness outside Acts, I will focus on the literary occurrences of Jewish indices in Christ-believing extrabiblical literature written within the combined imperial reigns of Domitian, Nerva, and Trajan (81-117 CE). This dating does not imply that the primary influence upon Acts is the Roman Empire; rather, it is a summation of scholarly proposals (consensus—85-95 CE; Richard I. Pervo—110-120 CE). Since “chronology is the skeleton of history,” according to Edgar Krentz, this timeline frames the current study.²⁷⁶ Besides pertinent Christ-believing extrabiblical texts, I will examine the occurrence of Jewish indices in the Third Gospel. A separate study of Jews in Luke's Gospel is not a denial of the

²⁷⁶ Krentz, *Historical-critical Method*, 37.

narrative unity of Luke and Acts but a thoughtful index of each story's uniqueness.²⁷⁷ My approach is not to complement Acts' employment of Jewishness with that of the Third Gospel but to demonstrate each narrative's distinct presentation, stressing significant similarities and dissimilarities, if there are any. This method acknowledges and prioritizes the symbolic world of Acts, which constitutes the defining perspective of this research.

2.3.1 Gospel of Luke

The term "Jews" only appears in two chapters of the Third Gospel (Luke 7:3; 23:3, 37, 38, 51). These citations have an identical Greek form: τῶν Ἰουδαίων (genitive plural). They qualify the elders sent by the centurion whose slave was sick, the jurisdiction of Jesus' kingship, and the town of Arimathea. These possessive cases of "Jews" in Luke's Gospel are rhetorically significant. Luke's sparing use of the same is equally telling: it is not his favorite designation. Besides Luke 23:51, a territorial use of the lexeme, all other occurrences in this chapter indicate a title: ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. Not only are these utilizations titular, they are also uttered by Romans: Pilate and the soldiers. Luke 23:3 relates Pilate's interrogation of Jesus which shows his summary of the chief priest's and crowd's accusations. Although the allegations in 23:2 are threefold ("perverting our nation," "forbidding us to pay taxes," and "saying that he himself is Χριστὸν βασιλέα"), Pilate casually sums them up in one question: "Are you the king of the Jews?" The logic here is either that this is the gravest charge or the summation of all the allegations. Luke's stress is on Jesus being the emperor's rival. Pilate clearly gets this point. The qualification of the charge—τῶν Ἰουδαίων—clarifies the regal jurisdiction of Jesus. Since Pilate identifies Jesus as a Galilean, τῶν Ἰουδαίων is not an indication of Judean provenance (23:6);

²⁷⁷ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*; Allen J. Walworth, "The Narrator of Acts" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985).

also, since the charge sets Jesus up as the emperor's rival, τῶν Ἰουδαίων is not chiefly a religious designation. This clarification leaves two options: ethnicity and politics. Pilate's interrogation has an obvious political underpinning: are you a rival to Caesar? Jesus' response is emphatically "no" given Pilate's assessment (23:4). The copious appearances of the verb σῶζω around the final occurrences of ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων suggest that both ideas are interwoven. At Jesus' introduction, Luke stresses this connection: ὅτι ἐτέχθη ὑμῖν σήμερον σωτὴρ ὃς ἐστὶν Χριστὸς κύριος ἐν πόλει Δαυὶδ (2:11). Here we see the themes of savior, Christ, Lord, and kingship (albeit implicitly) merged as one. Hence, it is not surprising that Jesus is called both king and (again implicitly) σωτὴρ at his crucifixion.

This savior-king-lord connection is also true for the Roman emperors (Philo, *Flaccus* 74, 126; *Embassy* 22). Even Trajan, Vespasian's delegate, is called benefactor and savior, because he represents the emperor (Josephus, *J.W.* 3.359). Just as Caesar is savior, ruler, and benefactor, so too is Jesus. Gary Gilbert expatiates on this imperial nexus by studying three politically tinged literary tropes: savior, ascension, and list of nations.²⁷⁸ He says that they evince Luke's mastery and ingenious employment of the imperial lexicon to foreground his narrative thrust. Luke is the only Evangelist who calls Jesus σωτὴρ. Calling Jesus savior and king rhetorically equates him to Caesar. More than an ethnic designation, τῶν Ἰουδαίων is rather (and more correctly) construed as either a political jurisdiction or an official title, since it modifies savior and king. Bolstering the Roman backdrop of this appellation, the characters who employ τῶν Ἰουδαίων to describe Jesus are both Romans: Pilate and the soldiers. This is not sheer coincidence. Not only does the term trigger imperial resonance, it is also utilized by literary characters who personify the Roman Empire in Judea. In this context, τῶν Ἰουδαίων surely does not mean Judeans. Instead, it is a

²⁷⁸ Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda," 233-56; idem, "The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Propaganda and the Lukan Response," *JBL* 121 (2002): 497-529.

politically tinged appellation used by Romans to refer to a Galilean. Not only does this genitive plural have a political underpinning, it also does not denote Judean provenance.

Luke 7:3 also features a non-Judean reference to τῶν Ἰουδαίων. Here, it modifies the πρεσβύτεροι in Capernaum, Galilee. Once again, the possessive's association with Galilee is strengthened. Unsurprisingly, these πρεσβύτεροι τῶν Ἰουδαίων are delegated by a centurion, a Roman official. Both uses (Luke 7; 23) share common traits: Galilean provenance, imperial resonance, and political underpinning. Here, τῶν Ἰουδαίων qualifies Jewish leaders in Galilee whose cordial relationship with a Roman centurion makes him a beneficiary of Jesus' healing powers. The case made by these sympathetic elders is unequivocal: the centurion loves our people and built our synagogue (7:5). This twofold characterization (ethnicity and "religion") of the Roman official endears him to Galilean Jews. His magnanimity toward them entitles him to the Galilean Jesus' healing power. The verb Luke employs to describe the petition of the centurion is also telling: διασώζω (a form of σώζω). The "salvation" intended here is best translated as cure or healing, but its subtle imperial resonance cannot be overlooked. Once more, τῶν Ἰουδαίων appears in a context that is politically tinged with imperial resonance: centurion, Jewish leaders, and a "salvation" request. The amicable and fraternal rapport between Jesus and the Galilean Jewish leaders suggests that both have more in common, especially when contrasted with the irate Judeans at his trial. In this pericope, τῶν Ἰουδαίων denotes Galilean Jews. It also has a political underpinning (Jewish leaders) and imperial resonance (the centurion and the verb, διασώζω).

In qualifying Arimathea as a πόλεως τῶν Ἰουδαίων ("a Jewish city"), Luke reinforces the political connotation of the genitive plural. In this phrase, Arimathea is described as a "city of the Jews": either a political circumscription with a sizeable Jewish population or a Judean territory.

In a concise analysis, I will ascertain which option—if any at all—best captures the author’s rhetoric. The other three Gospels mention Joseph and Arimathea in a markedly different way from Luke: Matthew stresses Joseph’s economic status (“wealthy man”) and his discipleship (Matt 27:57); Mark emphasizes his political standing (“respected member of the council”) and good rapport with Pilate (Mark 15:43); John accentuates his political (and presumably economic) influence in petitioning Pilate and his relationship with Jesus as a secret disciple (John 19:38). Besides Luke, no other Gospel supplies any geographical information about Arimathea. Only Luke describes it as a “Jewish city.” This, like many other Lukan details, is particularly curious. Arimathea outside the Third Gospel is tied to Joseph’s provenance. In the light of Luke’s use of Markan material, this discrepancy can easily be explained as a Lukan innovation.²⁷⁹ To analyze Arimathea, I will synchronize the information on Joseph in the other Gospels: (1) he is a disciple of Jesus, (2) he is an influential man politically and economically, (3) his influence is tinged with imperial resonance—Pilate and centurions, and (4) being Jesus’ disciple probably makes him a Galilean recruit like the women who accompany Jesus (Matt 27:55). With these details in mind, a “Jewish city” is surely not a geographical reference but a personal descriptor (i.e., Joseph of Arimathea) modified by Luke. This phrase, as the other Gospels show, has a political overtone, imperial resonance, and Galilean provenance. The genitive plural τῶν Ἰουδαίων in the Third Gospel thus consistently denotes Jews of reputable political standing, imperial resonance, and Galilean provenance. Therefore, the Third Gospel’s employment of “the Jews,” contrary to what most think, is a political and territorial designation tinged with imperial underpinnings that imply Galilean origins.

²⁷⁹ For a magisterial delineation of the literary interrelationship of the Synoptic Gospels, see John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

2.3.2 Ignatius of Antioch

The seven epistles of Ignatius of Antioch were written en route to a martyr's death in Rome to urge Christ-believing communities to remain steadfast to the gospel of Jesus. Due to the historical circumstances that engendered these epistles, they are concise, hortatory, and incisive. They all underscore the need for ecclesial unity. In the *Letter to the Philadelphians*, Ignatius exhorts Christ believers, whom he christens “Τέκνα ... [φωτὸς] ἀληθείας,” to flee division and perverse teachings (Ign. *Phld.* 2.1). This is arguably the synopsis of this epistle. His proposal to resolve this incipient schism and errant instruction is to cling to bishops: ὅπου δὲ ὁ ποιμὴν ἐστίν, ἐκεῖ ὡς πρόβατα ἀκολουθεῖτε. His first recommendation to expunge perverse doctrine and division is sociological. “Clinging to one's bishop” only makes sense if the threat is primarily perceived as sociological, too. Barrett states this pointedly: “The sorting out of Christ groups that took place during the second century was not carried out on a purely doctrinal basis, but was related to categories of organization and power.”²⁸⁰ With this in mind, the admonition not to allow anyone to explain Ἰουδαϊσμός must be construed as an existential and sociological threat that menaces the unity of Christ believers. What is “explaining Ἰουδαϊσμός” (Ign. *Phld.* 6.1)? This phrase can only be deciphered if its components are first individually determined: ἐρμηνεύω (I explain) and Ἰουδαϊσμός.

Luke 24:27 uses ἐρμηνεύω in a well-known story: the Walk to Emmaus. As a sequel to the resurrection narrative, this scene suggests the unrecognizability of the risen Jesus. Hence, the pericope has a rhetorical inclusio: “But their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (24:16) and “Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him” (24:31). The intervening narrative that transforms the disciples' perception of Jesus is a signature Lukan revelatory experience: didactic,

²⁸⁰ Barrett, “Jews and Judaizers,” 244.

celebratory, and participatory. The verb used to illustrate Jesus' biblical hermeneutics (didactic) is ἐρμηνεύω, which refers to explaining or demonstrating how the Scriptures foreshadow his tragic death and glorious resurrection. Here, ἐρμηνεύω implies an illustration using instructive material (i.e., Scripture) that is familiar to the listener. It does not indicate the revelation of an arcane subject but the persuasive presentation (i.e., argumentation) of a fact using a widely accepted and authoritative resource. In Ignatius' letter, it presupposes these elements, too: argumentation, an authoritative and widely known resource, and an audience that regards it accordingly. "Explaining Ἰουδαϊσμός" denotes a compelling presentation of an authoritative and widely accepted resource (i.e., Ἰουδαϊσμός) to an audience that is capable of recognizing this as such. Regardless of how Ἰουδαϊσμός is defined, it is an authoritative and widely accepted lifestyle that menaces, per Ignatius, ecclesial unity which binds members of the church in Philadelphia. Since Ignatius is writing to Christ believers, Ἰουδαϊσμός cannot anachronistically refer to Judaism. Instead, it designates Judaizing practices (i.e., circumcision and other ancestral practices) that Jewish Christ believers required of Gentiles. The following statement buttresses this argument: "For it is better to hear about Christianity from one circumcised ... than Judaism from one uncircumcised" (Ign. *Phld.* 6.1). Ἰουδαϊσμός is evidently not convertible with the modern notion of Judaism but should denote Judaizing practices: Gentiles emulating Jews. Besides, pastoral letters are typically prompted by perceived aberrations in praxis and doctrine and written by authority figures for groups that regard them as such. So it would be ludicrous for Ignatius to write to non-Christ-believing Jews.

In the *Letter to the Magnesians*, Ignatius clarifies this point: κατὰ ἰουδαϊσμὸν ζῶμεν (Ign. *Magn.* 8.1). "Living according to Ἰουδαϊσμός" denotes a lifestyle that stresses Judaizing practices in contrast to a life of grace in Christ. Ignatius rhetorically contrasts Ἰουδαϊσμός with

χάρις to show that his concern is on the misleading emphasis on ancestral practices for Christ believers. This ideological-cum-pastoral tussle is reminiscent of the undisputed letters of Paul, especially Romans and Galatians. Although these letters precede Ignatius' by three generations, they tackle comparable sectarian, ideological proclivities within Christ associations. Just like Paul, Ignatius too is not repudiating Jews who are not Christ believers. Rather, he is admonishing Christ-believing Jews who persuade Gentiles to Judaize: to behave like Jews.²⁸¹ This "ethnos-bending activity" (the imposition of Jewish practices on other ethnic groups) is precisely what Pauline Christ associations resisted.²⁸² The repudiation of practicing Ἰουδαϊσμός is aimed at the Magnesians, who believe that Gentiles cannot embrace the gospel unless they first Judaize. It is thus egregiously misleading and patently anachronistic to translate Ἰουδαϊσμός as Judaism.

The last occurrence of Ἰουδαϊσμός is the most suggestive of a replacement motif. It is also the most polemical. Here, Ignatius rhetorically contrasts two dichotomies: proclaiming Jesus and Judaizing, and Christianizing and Judaizing (Ign. *Magn.* 10.3-4). What do these phrases actually mean? Ignatius in this oft-quoted paragraph employs a topic sentence: stating his conclusion first before proceeding to enumerate his premises. The paragraph reads better if the paraphrased premises are stated first before the conclusion: those who Christianize do not put their faith in Judaizing acts (premise 1); those who Judaize put their faith in Christianizing practices (premise 2); in Christianizing, people of every language and nation have been gathered under God through Jesus (premise 3); therefore, it is out of place (ἄτοπόν) to proclaim Jesus Christ and to Judaize simultaneously (inference). The logic here is simple: Judaizing as a Christ

²⁸¹ Novenson, "*Ioudaismos*," 30; see also Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *HTR* 82 (1989): 13-33; idem., *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 193-97; idem., "Judaism without Circumcision," 395-415. Cohen argues that "to Judaize" has a labeling function in Christian writings. It is seldom explicative.

²⁸² Novenson, "*Ioudaismos*," 38. He coined this helpful phrase ("ethnos-bending activity") to illustrate Paul's previous occupation in Ἰουδαϊσμός.

believer is pointless, because Christianizing offers a larger platform to people of every race and tongue. To Judaize is to choose particularity (exclusion) in lieu of universality (inclusion). It is tantamount to reverting to a restrictive vision of Christ associations: a worldview where belonging is principally defined by ethnicity or provenance rather than commitment to Jesus' teachings. The argument of Ignatius can be broken down even further: Christ believers do not put their faith (i.e., hope for salvation) in Judaizing practices; Judaizing Christ believers put their faith in Jesus Christ; through believing in Christ, people from every race are gathered under a single umbrella. It is thus preposterous to accent Judaizing customs in Christ associations. Judaizing and Christianizing are both tendencies among Christ believers. Misleading translations like Judaism and Christianity are unfounded. As Daniel Boyarin perceptively remarks: "Neither *Christianismos* nor *Ioudaismos* signify Christianity or Judaism."²⁸³ Ignatius' principal concern is with sectarian proclivities within the church. He is not addressing non-Christ-believing Jews. Again, since ecclesial unity is uppermost in his mind, being an overseer with a looming death sentence, divisive trends within the church are his main worries. Ignatius' contentious behavioral nouns—Χριστιανισμὸς and Ἰουδαϊσμός—are best read as gerunds implying conflicting internecine sectarian proclivities. In the epistles of Ignatius, Ἰουδαϊσμός consistently denotes Judaizing practices that threaten the ecclesial unity of Christ associations. It describes the "ethnos-bending activity" of Jewish Christ believers who touted Jewish ancestral practices to Gentiles.

2.3.3 Epistle of Barnabas

²⁸³ Boyarin, "Ignatius," 315; for a similar argument on *Ioudaismos*, see idem, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is appended Correction of my *Border Lines*), *JQR* 99 (2009): 7-36; but for a contrary argument to Boyarin's, see Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 241.

The portrait of Jewishness in the *Epistle of Barnabas* is exceedingly different from that of Acts. Whereas the former depicts Jewishness as a religious lifestyle that has been superseded by Christianness, the latter portrays the same as *the* worldview with competing interpretations. Although *Barnabas* seldom mentions Jews specifically, the text is principally devoted to offering spiritual reinterpretations of Jewish ancestral customs: sacrifice, temple, circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath, and covenant.²⁸⁴ These indices are spiritually interpreted to demean literalist and age-old denotations. *Barnabas* argues that ancestral mores result from a basic misunderstanding of divine precepts. They are fundamentally metaphors describing moral precepts. Construing these literally is egregiously misleading. Albeit *Barnabas*' polemic against Jewish customs is unambiguous, dating or contextualizing its diatribe is precarious. The audience of this "Christian" vitriol cannot be Jews collectively, since *Barnabas*' invective is apparently congenial to a Christ association that is predominantly Gentile. For how can a Jewish audience condone such tirade that denigrates ancestral practices and renders them spiritually impotent? The most compelling explanation is that the audience was definitely not Jewish. This diatribe implies temporal, spatial, and ideological distance from Acts. The profuse defamation of ancestral mores is a rhetorical tactic that legitimizes the audience: emphasis on morality and spiritualization of Jewish indices. These collectively indicate a Gentile audience to whom these practices are foreign. For a chiefly Gentile audience distant from the inception of the second century and third-generation Pauline associations, spiritualizing and moralizing Jewish customs are palatable. Although it is difficult to determine the exact location of the addressees of this epistle, *Barnabas*

²⁸⁴ See James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, WUNT 64 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, WUNT 82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); Ferdinand R. Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); and J. Christopher Edwards, *The Gospel according to the Epistle of Barnabas: Jesus Traditions in an Early Christian Polemic*, WUNT 503 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019).

indicates a widening ideological distance that is incompatible with Christ associations encircling the Aegean Sea at the inception of the second century (Acts). I will now review the ancestral practices mentioned in this epistle and their implications for reconstructing Jewishness.

Barnabas considers the Christ event as the fulfillment of all animal sacrifices prescribed in the Torah. Incessant sacrifices after Christ are de facto superfluous and ineffective. This reinterpretation of cultic sacrifices is not particularly new, especially in the post-Second Temple period. Not having a temple creates an existential lacuna that must be filled by creative interpretations of animal sacrifices, emphasis on Scripture, preoccupation with morality, and spiritualization of cultic stipulations. Excepting the undisputed letters of Paul, most of the NT wrestles with this inevitable absurdity. But this trend is not unique to Christ associations but is undertaken by other Jews as well (e.g., the rabbinic academy at Yavneh). So the spiritualization and moralization of cultic sacrifices—“The calf is Jesus; the sinners who offer it are those who brought him to the slaughter” (*Barn.* 8.2)—and their fulfilment in Jesus are merely suggesting a post-70 CE Jewish reflection. By itself, it does not justify anti-Jewish sentiment or a Gentile audience.

Regarding the temple, the author alludes to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, following the First Jewish Revolt (*Barn.* 16.4). Reflecting on this colossal tragedy, most likely decades later, the author compares Jewish confidence in the temple to idolatry, which is described as compartmentalizing God (*Barn.* 16.2). The true temple, *Barnabas* opines, is the human heart, which is the seat of decision-making and the bedrock of divine life in humans (*Barn.* 16.7). It is this human heart thus that must be rebuilt by “forgiveness of sins and trusting in the name [of the Lord]” (*Barn.* 16.8). This Jewish index does not indicate a predominantly Gentile audience, because Jews, too, had to reinvent their ancestral practices after 70 CE. In the

absence of the Jerusalem temple, emphasis on Scripture, morality, and spirituality became a commonplace among varying Jewish sects: both Christ believers and traditionalists. Hence, the epistle's attitude toward the temple does not convincingly indicate a primarily Gentile audience or a replacement rhetoric. It is arguably constructive hermeneutics of post-70 CE Jewishness.

The epistle's representation of circumcision raises a lot of concerns. Unlike Acts, the author is not just accommodating Gentiles by mitigating the stringency of the practice. Instead, in an incisive and devastating critique, circumcision is spiritualized as the misconstruing of a divine moral precept: "The circumcision in which they put their trust has been superseded.... [God] did not speak of a circumcision to be performed in the flesh; no, they went against the commandment, being deluded by a bad angel" (*Barn.* 9.4). *Barnabas*' claim is not just that Gentiles are exempt from circumcision but that the practice from its inception is misguided. This incendiary assertion would be congenial to a predominantly Gentile audience. Bolstering the same critique, the author remarks that people of other ethnicities, including idolaters, practice circumcision. Surely this does not mean that they are heirs to God's covenant with Israel—*Barnabas*' preferred term for the chosen people. They include: Syrians, Arabs, and Egyptians (*Barn.* 9.6). Unlike the preceding indices, categorically demeaning circumcision is a glaring indicator of *Barnabas*' non-Jewishness, because Jews cannot tolerate an unequivocal cajoling of their distinguishing (at least, in the northern part of the Mediterranean) trait. Per *Barnabas*, circumcision is simply a metaphor for Jesus and his crucifixion (*Barn.* 9.8).

On the subject of dietary prescriptions, the author dismisses all literal interpretations of the Torah, arguing that there is no divine imperative to eschew any food (*Barn.* 10.2). Dietary laws rather refer to human behavior and moral actions. Once again, instead of a literal reading of Jewish laws, *Barnabas* opts for the spiritual signification of these precepts. As a determinant of

Jewishness among Christ associations, dietary laws have been relentlessly debated since Paul. Since there are numerous citations from the NT indicating manifold interpretations, applications, and requirements of dietary laws, it is an indeterminate Jewish index, especially in mixed Jewish communities (Acts 10:9-16; Rom 14:1-4, 13-21; 1 Cor 8). The spiritualization of dietary laws, by itself, merely suggests a non-homogenous ethnic group (i.e., Jews and Gentiles), which permits other dietary habits. As a marker of Jewishness thus, *Barnabas*' elucidation of dietary laws is at worse indeterminate or at best indicative of a hybrid association of Jewish and Gentile Christ believers.

In explaining the Sabbath, *Barnabas* asserts that this Jewish custom has been superseded by the first day observance of Christ believers, since the latter anticipates the parousia and the "dawn of another world," while the former is obsolete (*Barn.* 15.8-9). Given the extensive documentation on Sabbath observance—and its popularity among Roman writers—repudiating it indicates ideological dissonance with Jews. Replacing it with the first day also suggests a widening temporal and spatial gap with diaspora Jews. The audience of *Barnabas*, from the viewpoint of Sabbath observance, is ideologically disconnected from its Jewish roots, if it had any at all. By contrast in Acts, Sabbaths are days reserved for listening to Scripture.

Barnabas' repeated use of covenant in describing God's relationship to Israel through Moses and to Christ believers through Jesus is revealing. The consistent understanding that cuts across its interpretation of Scripture (i.e., Jacob's and Isaac's sons) is that Jesus and his followers are God's favorites, while Israel has been sidelined (*Barn.* 13.2-5). This undergirds *Barnabas*' assessment and interpretation of all Jewish indices, which are seen as obsolete, redundant, and futile, because those whom they symbolize have been rejected by God: "He [i.e., God] has given it [i.e., the covenant]; but they [i.e., the Jews], owing to their sins, proved unworthy of the favor"

(*Barn.* 14.1). The appropriation of the covenant by Christ believers, per *Barnabas*, is premised on the Jews' outright rejection epitomized in the crucifixion and God's irrevocable decision to save humanity through the true heir of divine promise, Jesus Christ: "He [i.e., Jesus] appeared in the flesh, that they [i.e., the Jews] might fill up the measure of their sins, and that we [i.e., Christ believers] might receive the covenant through its destined Heir, the Lord Jesus" (*Barn.* 14.5). *Barnabas*' rhetoric is appropriative. It argues that the covenant cut with Israel has been transferred to Christ believers. Its hearers are patently indifferent toward Jewishness: they are predominantly Gentiles. For how could lapsed Jews tolerate such acquisitive rhetoric or the denigration of their ancestral practices? It is also very telling that *Barnabas* seldom uses Jews or Christians. It generically designates the former as Israel and the latter vaguely as the people. Speculations as to why *Barnabas* eschews these popular terms are beyond the scope of this work. But it does suffice to say that its worldview is not congenial to that of Acts.

2.3.4 Epistle to Diognetus

The writer of the *Epistle to Diognetus* is anonymous; its dating is uncertain; its addressee is vague, because Diognetus is probably a fictive character that epitomizes the misconceptions circulating about Christianity; its provenance is precarious. Without these prerequisite historical data, *Diognetus* cannot be contextualized with any degree of certainty. But it evinces jarring facts about Jews, Christians, and Gentiles: it presents these groups as insular and separate entities; it suggests no interaction among adherents of these groups—a reality that, in fact, continues for centuries after 70 CE; it offers philosophical reasoning in lieu of scriptural citations, because the addressee probably does not know Scripture (i.e., a Gentile); it accents the phenomenological differences of these sects, thus indicating an outsider's perspective on Jewishness and paganism;

its assertions on Christianity's clandestine ubiquity is chronologically fluid. While addressing a prominent character ("your excellency"), *Diognetus* notes the differences among three imperial "religions" with the sole purpose of defending Christianity. But were the religious distinctions among these groups, especially between "Jews" and "Christians," clear cut, as the author wants us to believe? It is hard to say, given the obvious rhetoric of the epistle. Unlike *Barnabas*, *Diognetus* copiously employs the terms, "Jews" and "Christians," thereby suggesting that the latter had become an acceptable appellation prior to its composition. This innovation indicates ideological, temporal, or spatial dissonance from Acts, Ignatius' letters, and *Barnabas*. Although *Diognetus* unwittingly hints at a parting of Jews and Christians, this literary outlook is most likely only a deliberate polemic: to defend Christianity by contrasting it with other "religions." It is probably not an accurate depiction of Jewish-Christian relations throughout the Roman Empire, because the parting of ways is not a global referendum between all Jews and Christians; rather, it is the parting of peoples in different places and at varying times.²⁸⁵ *Diognetus'* worldview only reflects the Jewish-Christian relations in an obscure Christ association. It does not indiscriminately apply to all Christ believers.

Mindful of this glaring incongruity in *Diognetus'* portrayal of Jews, I have considered it for discussion nevertheless, because it does not allude to the Second Jewish revolt (132-135 CE). The absence of this detail, however, does not necessarily mean that *Diognetus* is an early second-century text, but that it cannot be justifiably excluded from such a list. Silence on this Judean incident could have been caused by a number of factors: ignorance, relevance, or distance. If the author wrote far away from Judea, the impact of Hadrian's wrath on rebellious Jews would have been minimal. If the author knew about the revolt but chose not to include it, it was probably not

²⁸⁵ See Becker and Yoshiko Reed, *Ways That Never Parted*; Baron, Hicks-Keeton, and Thiessen, *Ways That Often Parted*; Soards, "Following Paul," 249-71.

pertinent to his defense of Christianity. If the author was unaware of the Second Jewish revolt, then that detail would not be included. The disputed statement that “Jews make war on them [i.e., Christians] as foreigners” (*Diogn.* 5.17) is an imprecise reference to parochial hostility between both groups that can occur anywhere. It is not an allusion to the Bar Kokhba revolt. Moreover, “the war that the Jews made” was not against Christians, but Romans. It was a war of liberation from Roman hegemony.

Diognetus does not evince an insider Jewish perspective; rather, it reveals a Gentile assessment of Jewish and pagan practices. The author repeatedly refers to ancestral practices as superstition (*Diogn.* 1; 4.1); descriptions of Jewish and pagan customs are phenomenological (*Diogn.* 2.2-4; 4.1); no attempt is made to evaluate Jewish customs based on Scripture; the soul-body analogy is reminiscent of Middle Platonism (*Diogn.* 6). To demean Jewish ancestral mores, *Diognetus* compares Jewish worship to that of pagans (*Diogn.* 3.2). The addressee is most likely a pagan who is suspicious or deeply wary of “Christians,” thus warranting a compelling rebuttal (*Diogn.* 2.5-6). “Jewishness” in this epistle is a distinct and insular entity from “Christianity” and paganism; hence, the narrative steadily evinces an anti-Jewish tirade.

2.3.5 Discussion Summary

“Jewishness” outside Acts is located upon a variegated ideological spectrum, featuring portraits that are significantly different. Beginning from the most ideologically kindred text (Luke’s Gospel) to the least (*Diognetus*), I have shown that texts emanating from the same geographical region share a similar perspective on “Jewishness,” while others reveal a disparate outlook. These varying depictions of Jewishness in early Christian literature indicate conceptual malleability. They signify an ideological spectrum that peers into a sociologically complex world

of incessant group identity negotiation, clarification, and determination. They demand a radically different set of hermeneutical tools in studying “Jewishness”: narratives.

2.4 Chapter Summary

“Jewishness” in Luke’s day is a melting pot for history of religions studies, sociological theories, and narrative criticism. Employing the hermeneutical frameworks of Wittgenstein, literary cartography, and defamiliarization proved invaluable in ascertaining what comprises “Jewishness” in Acts and Luke. Clarifying foundational concepts in this study, I demonstrated that the prejudicial employment of “the Jews” obfuscates its contextual denotations in narratives. In part one of this chapter, I reviewed representative scholarly approaches to some controverted themes in Acts: Jewishness and diaspora Jewry. The former features a myriad of insightful approaches: diversity in Second Temple traditions (Schiffman), ethnic malleability of Jewishness (Cohen), Jewishness as a practice-centered phenomenon (Boyarin), Ἰουδαϊσμός as indicating nationalistic activism (Novenson), affirmative attestation to Jewish ancestral customs in Acts (Oliver), congeniality of Jewishness and “Christianness” (Brawley), and the literary construction of “the Jews” in Acts (Smith). These scholars, in the light of critical theories and interpretations by historians of religion, invite readers to reimagine Jewishness in Acts, highlighting the oft-overlooked sociological traits of ethnic malleability and negotiability. Religious boundaries, as both sociologists and historians of religion assert, are fluid, factitious, and indeterminate. The assumed definitive break between Jews and Christians that unwittingly undergirds scholarship on post-70 CE writings is thus inattentive to sociological research and the complexity of group identity formation. In acknowledgment of sociological findings on social identity formation, I

have suggested a more sensitive and inclusive approach to ethnic designations, such that being Jewish and Christ-believing are not inherently contradictory but existentially congenial.

While fastidiously examining a profusely employed adjective for the provenance of Acts, I remarked that the romanticization of Judean provenance and belittling of a diaspora context is inattentive to the historical data. Contrary to naïve scholarly assumptions, the diaspora is jarringly a desirable place for Jews. So the repeated imposition of Judean provenance on Acts is founded on an egregiously misconstrued notion of the diaspora as unsuitable and undesirable for the Lukan project. In contrast, the diaspora is a fecund ideological milieu for Acts, because it resolves the age-old, hotly debated question: What is the context for Acts? The definitive reply of this inquiry is unequivocally diaspora Jewishness, understood as the simultaneous dedication to Jewish ancestral practices and critical assimilation of Greco-Roman culture. These goals are not mutually exclusive; rather, as the evidence overwhelmingly shows, they are complementary. Diaspora Jewry fosters “double consciousness” and “cultural hybridity” wherein both interests—commitment to Jewishness and active participation in the Greco-Roman society—are fervently pursued. Given the signature adaptability and malleability of diaspora Jewishness, it is most accurately a designation indicating non-Judean provenance. Attempts to imbue this appellation with a historical or analytical value is futile, because it is basically a negative “mailing address.” This characterization concurs with my interpretation of the diaspora in Acts: Luke’s story does not relate an ideologically incongruous diaspora; rather, he narrates an existentially malleable diaspora Jewish sect that adapts its characteristic ethnic mores to include devout Gentiles.

In the second segment of this chapter, I analyzed Luke’s application of Jewishness in Acts. The evidence overwhelmingly indicates that Luke consistently reserves this lexicon for diaspora settings and characters. Principal figures like Peter and the Twelve are described as

Jews, not because they are Judeans but because they are Galileans. Luke suffuses this quotidian appellation with a precise narrative denotation: diaspora Jews. Being a Jew in Acts thus means playing a vital role in the diaspora Jewish internecine rivalry that the narrative relates. Among many things, this rivalry is epitomized in the laissez faire attitude to the insistence by some on Judaizing Gentiles. Diaspora Jewishness offers the best reading of the conflicting applications of “the Jews” in Acts: (1) it makes reported disagreements an internecine matter, (2) it creates the possibility of Jewishness being compatible with Christianness, and (3) it renders interpretations of Acts that lead to anti-Jewish conclusions baseless and unwarranted.

In the third segment, I investigated Jewishness in Luke’s milieu. The writings considered here include: the Third Gospel, Ignatius’ letters, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and the *Epistle to Diognetus*. Since my proposed dating for Acts is 81 to 117 CE (the combined imperial reigns of Domitian, Nerva, and Trajan), Justin Martyr’s writings were not considered, because they imply an overt post-Second-Jewish-revolt perspective. The Third Gospel features a markedly different notion of Jewishness than Acts: it uses the term for Galileans, it is always titular, and it is tinged with imperial resonance. The divergent portraits of Acts and Luke are noteworthy and justify the particular perspective of the first treatise over against the second. Most notably, neither Luke’s Gospel nor Acts habitually refers to Judeans as Jews.

The letters of Ignatius relate a notion of Jewishness that is comparable and compatible to Acts. They employ the concept as a gerund which describes “in-house” activities: Judaizing Christ believers. This usage is markedly Christian, because it highlights a real threat to ecclesial unity. Ignatius neither has authority over non-Christ-believing Jews nor is he interested in admonishing them. His writings also address internecine rivalry among Christ believers who are members of churches in Asia Minor. His paternal concern was to restore unity to these churches

by critiquing insistence on Judaizing Gentile Christ believers. Jewishness in Ignatius' letters thus denotes the touting of Jewish ancestral practices to Gentiles. There is no reference in this usage to Judeans. The appellation merely delineates customary Jewish practices.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* presents a significantly divergent view of Jewishness. Although the term is not explicitly mentioned in the text, *Barnabas* evinces a worldview where Christians and Jews are becoming markedly distinguishable. It also features a vitriol against Jewishness that makes Christianity the fulfilment and superior of the former. The addressees are likely Gentiles, because of the steady repudiation of Jewish customs and religious tenets. It [i.e., *Barnabas*] speaks of Jews collectively as Israel and the audience as "the people." It is indefensibly imperious and indubitably mirrors an insular Christian group in the Roman Empire. Its perception of Jewish ancestral practices is unapologetically spiritualistic, thus demeaning the pervasive literalist idea of the same. *Barnabas'* representation of Jewishness is indicative of its ideological, temporal, and spatial distance from Acts. It mirrors a locale that is incongruous with Acts.

Unlike *Barnabas*, the *Epistle to Diognetus* employs the appellations Jew and Christian. But its worldview is essentially the same, because it makes its case from logic and philosophical reasoning rather than Scripture. The audience is mostly Gentiles, who have been given spurious information about Christians. To stress the uniqueness of Christianity, *Diognetus* rips apart Jewishness, because for the author both affiliations are mutually exclusive. Denigrating Jewish ancestral mores shows that the author has no empathy for Jewishness. Likewise, his addressees are comfortable with this anti-Jewish invective. The Jewish perspective of *Diognetus*, just like that of *Barnabas*, is unlike Acts. This study justifies my conclusion in this section: texts that are

ideologically, temporally, and spatially distant from Acts differ on Jewishness, providing evidence for ongoing negotiations about what comprised it.

CHAPTER THREE

“CHRISTIANNES” IN LUKE’S DAY

3.1 Defining “Christianness”: *Status quaestionis*

Defining “Christianness” can be done in an overly simplistic manner. Scholars assume both that all Christ believers are “Christians” and that Christ believing is convertible with

“Christianness.”²⁸⁶ This cannot be further from the truth, especially when the true denotation of the lexeme is firmly anchored on its narrative employment: context determines the meaning of “Christianness.” Early attestations of “Christianness” in extant ancient literature are found in texts that ostensibly originate from Asia Minor: Acts, 1 Peter, and the epistles of Ignatius; and Pliny’s *Letters*, Tacitus’ *Annals*, and Suetonius’ *Lives*. It may not be mere coincidence that all Christian-referencing writings originate from the same broad geographical location at the turn of the second century CE. “Christian” putatively assumes a distinctive meaning in early second-century Asia Minor. This is precisely the story related in Acts. Before examining the contextual underpinnings of this lexeme in Acts and contemporaneous Christ-believing literature, I will review a gamut of scholarly assumptions on the pervasively assumed genesis of “Christianness”: the myth of Jerusalem provenance, the fall of the Second Temple, the *Birkat ha-minim*, the *fiscus Iudaicus*, and “Christianness” in Acts. Since I have already examined the arguments that dispute the “parting” of Judaism and Christianity following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, I will not revisit them in this segment. Another significant aspect of “Christianness” that I would like to clarify before reviewing scholarly discussions on its inception is the application of the lexeme by non-Christ believers. This perspective is crucial when describing those named “Christians.” The era of these authors is also important; it reveals the period in history when the epithet, “Christian,” became a meaningful designation for delineating a novel, clandestine sociocultural configuration.

²⁸⁶ Ben Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 369. Witherington refers to those fleeing persecution in Jerusalem after Stephen’s death in Acts as “Christians”: “The persecuted Christians who had been in Jerusalem fled in various directions.” This description is befuddling and obscures Luke’s nuanced literary construction of characters. Other scholars who utilize the epithet, “Christian,” liberally include: Roberts Gaventa, *Acts*, 180; Parsons, *Acts*, 168; Kurz, *Acts*, 190; and Holladay, *Acts*, 246. These scholars, however, acknowledge that “Christians” is a third-party appellation. Pervo is unapologetic for his liberal application of the lexeme: “Since the author is familiar with, if not fond of, the term, it is not anachronistic to use ‘Christian’ in commenting on Acts.” *Acts*, 294. For a lexeme that features barely twice in Acts, Pervo’s notion of Luke’s “fondness” for “Christians” is elastic, to put it mildly.

3.1.1 “Christianness” in Roman Literature

Texts on “Christianness” that will be closely examined here include: the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan (111 CE), Tacitus’ *Annals* (ca. 114 CE), *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* by Suetonius (121 CE), and Lucian.²⁸⁷ These writings, in view of their provenance and suggested dates, are relevant because they are contemporaneous with Acts. Reviewing the Roman evaluation of “Christians” is significant because it offers a third-party, phenomenological description of a nascent social configuration, stripped of the customary theological cloud that enshrouds its treatment in the NT canon. Alongside Acts, 1 Peter, and the epistles of Ignatius, these writings foreground the thesis that “Christianness,” as a lexical innovation, is either a late first-century or early second-century appellation used solely for Christ believers in Asia Minor, mostly by third parties. As John G. Gager sagely remarks: “Before we have the word we can’t have the thing.”²⁸⁸ There is thus an undeniable correlation between references to “Christians” (word) and “Christianness” (phenomenon). Gager’s line of reasoning guards against uncritical, anachronistic, and retroactive applications of the lexeme, “Christians,” to all Christ believers, especially those who are Judeans or Galileans.

3.1.1.1 Pliny the Younger

²⁸⁷ Mark G. Bilby explains the relationship between these three Roman writers thus: Suetonius was Pliny’s secretary while he was the praetor of Bithynia-Pontus, while Tacitus was the governor of a neighboring province in Asia Minor. So the three of them, besides being Roman officials, were well-versed in the sociocultural, political, and religious climate of Asia Minor. Since they all used the epithet “Christian,” the lexeme might have been an Asia-Minor innovation. “Pliny’s Correspondence and the Acts of the Apostles: An Intertextual Relationship,” in Verheyden and Kloppenborg, *Luke on Jesus, Paul and Christianity*; D. S. Levene, “Chronology,” in Tacitus, *The Histories*, Oxford World’s Classics, trans. W. H. Fyfe, rev. and ed. idem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), xl-xli.

²⁸⁸ Gager, “Luke’s Anti-Judaism,” 207.

Pliny's letter 10.96 reveals the befuddlement and suspicion that enshrouds a Roman praetor's investigation into "Christianness." Appointed governor of Bithynia and Pontus in 110 CE, Pliny writes to Trajan for direction on how to deal with "Christians." His inexperience in dealing with "Christians" apparently suggests that "Christianness" is new, popular, and gaining traction in his province (Pliny, *Letters*, 10.96). Initially, his concern seems to be the potential political threat posed by "Christians" ("obstinacy," "inflexible stubbornness," and "secret brotherhood"), but his conclusion shows there are also religious and economic implications ("crowded temples" and an uptick in the "sale of sacrificial meat").²⁸⁹ In antiquity, politics and religion were inseparable: the latter was not an individual choice that had no bearing on social or family life.²⁹⁰ Pliny's wariness, albeit political, also has religious underpinnings. But his inquiry is not engendered by an apparent proliferation of "religions" in his jurisdiction, which was a commonplace in Rome; rather, his utmost concern is the political implication of allowing a fledgling, clandestine sect to expand ad infinitum.²⁹¹ The presence of a stealthy and suspicious social group like "Christians" would be a cause for alarm. Responding to his vicegerent's inquiry, Trajan allays Pliny's worry and bequeaths to prospective historians his imperial stance on religious proliferation: "Christians are not to be sought out" and "documents published anonymously must play no role in any accusation." (*Letters*, 10.97). This concise response summarily encapsulates Trajan's policies on secret cults: (1) adherents of such "religions" are not to be hunted down (no imperially sanctioned persecution), (2) whistleblowers are not to be

²⁸⁹ On the inexorable nexus between religion and the economy in Greco-Roman antiquity, Moyer V. Hubbard writes: "In Hellenistic antiquity, religion and economy were tightly intertwined." "Greek Religion," in *The World of the New Testament*, ed. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 114; Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²⁹⁰ John S. Kloppenborg, *Christ's Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 10-15.

²⁹¹ Kloppenborg, *Christ's Associations*, 16; Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 225-26, 237-39

incentivized to delate them to authorities, (3) no general rule urges dealing with such groups (the sprouting of religious sects was of trivial importance to Romans), and (4) those accused should only be punished for “obstinacy” or “inflexible stubbornness” (i.e., the crime of disobeying constituted authority).²⁹² This is definitely not the stance of an emperor who sanctions a state-wide persecution of Christians. Trajan’s reply shows sheer disinterest in the practices typically dubbed “Christian,” probably like most of his predecessors.²⁹³ His principal concern is with extirpating obstinacy and intransigent behavior.²⁹⁴ Insubordination is a catalyst for prospective insurrections. What is punishable thus is the politically tinged resistance to an avowed imperial mandate: refusing to worship Roman deities or obey the emperor’s vicegerent.

Reliance on informers and anonymously published documents suggests that “Christians” were indistinguishable from other Bithynians.²⁹⁵ They blended in with the rest of the population and did not draw attention to themselves. Pliny’s reference to Roman citizens and age discrimination in imposing penalties indicates that Christian assemblies had become a conflation of multiple ethnic identities and social stratifications. Neither in Bithynia nor in Pontus are “Christians” described as members of a distinctive ethnicity (e.g., Judeans) or geographical provenance. Their origin is apparently not relevant to Pliny’s assessment of them nor is their ethnic constitution. His mention of Roman citizens occurs for legal reasons: they have a right to

²⁹² Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 237-39.

²⁹³ William E. Dunstan ranks Trajan among the “good emperors.” *Ancient Rome* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 310. So not all Roman emperors are vicious, soulless bloodletting misanthropes. The complete list of Dunstan’s “good emperors” includes: Nerva (96-98 CE), Trajan (98-117 CE), Hadrian (117-138 CE), Antonius Pius (138-161 CE), and Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE).

²⁹⁴ Kloppenborg, *Christ’s Associations*, 16.

²⁹⁵ Shaye Cohen makes an identical argument regarding Jews using the phrase, “social mechanisms”: Roman writers did not mention any distinctive physiological quality to describe Jews, because there was apparently none. His observations also apply to most “religious sects.” Adaptation is clearly the hallmark of diaspora living. *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 25-68.

be tried in Rome.²⁹⁶ The appellation “Christian” is significantly used by a third party to describe a secret cult that portends potential political unrest. For Pliny, “Christianness” connotes a “secret brotherhood” with potential political implications for the Roman territories of Bithynia and Pontus. The final aspect of Pliny’s report that is significant to “Christianness” is his summary of some deaconesses’ testimonies.

Recounting some eyewitness accounts of “Christian” practices, Pliny lists the following: (1) liturgy: “Christians” assembled on “a fixed day” (Sundays) and sang hymns to Jesus as God; and (2) morality: they pledged to avoid crime and to live a morally upright life. This overly simplistic summary is hardly representative of Christian worship in general. But it does show the mindset of the Roman governor, Pliny: to ascertain whether this “secret brotherhood” was politically significant.²⁹⁷ His letter to Trajan unequivocally shows that it was not. Viewed from an outsider’s perspective, “Christianness” is practice-oriented: Sunday worship, clandestine gathering, and commitment to moral uprightness. Pliny’s remedy for handling the “Christianness” of arraigned members is also practice-oriented: denying “Christian” identity, worshipping Roman deities, and cursing Christ. There is no indication that church members called themselves by this soubriquet.

3.1.1.2 Tacitus

Tacitus’ *Annals* present an entirely different imperial disposition toward “Christians.” After the burning of Rome, Nero’s persecution of “Christians” is related as a desperate attempt to

²⁹⁶ Thomas E. Philips argues that Luke must have had access to Pliny’s *Letters*. He suggests that the clause that permits the deferred trial of provincial Roman citizens in Rome makes it possible for Luke to explain Paul’s repeated release from captivity and his mission to Rome. Put succinctly, Paul became a Roman citizen because Luke read Pliny’s *Letters*. “How Did Paul Become a Roman ‘Citizen?’: Reading Acts in Light of Pliny the Younger,” in Verheyden and Kloppenborg, *Luke on Jesus, Paul and Christianity*, 171-89.

²⁹⁷ Beard, North, and Price assert that it was not uncommon to hear incendiary, immoral allegations about Christians, ranging from incest to cannibalism. *Religions of Rome*, 225.

suppress the pervasive rumor that the colossal fire was caused by arsonists.²⁹⁸ Perceived as members of an antisocial, clandestine sect for most of their nascent stages, “Christians” are used as scapegoats to appease bloodthirsty Roman spectators. Tacitus’ chronicling of the emperor’s actions is extremely significant: (1) as a historian writing circa 117 CE, he is probably using the epithet “Christians” anachronistically;²⁹⁹ (2) his usage of the lexeme in relation to Rome bolsters the diaspora setting and third-party nature of the soubriquet; (3) since expediency nudged Nero to arrest and execute “Christians,” one can confidently say that this does not bespeak a state-wide persecution; (4) arresting “self-acknowledged” Christians and relying on them to fish out others suggests that they were not distinguishable from the rest of society; and (5) Tacitus justifies Nero’s cruelty on the basis of *odio humani generis*—Christian “antisocial behavior” (*Ann.* 15.44). This account reinforces what we see in Pliny’s *Letters*. Both writers flourished around Luke’s era; both assessed “Christians” from a Roman perspective. It is thus not mere coincidence that most literary attestations to “Christians” emanate from the same temporal and cultural spheres.

Delving into the significance of Tacitus’ chronicle further, he observes that “Christians” are a clandestine sect, whose practices are enshrouded in suspicion and antisocial behavior. Stealthy assembly and obscure membership make “Christians” potential scapegoats of imperial ire. Excepting their founder, Jesus, their antisocial tendencies, and clandestine meetings, nothing else is said about “Christian” practices. Per Tacitus, “Christians” delineate Christ believers living in Rome. “Christianness” is once again a third-party appellation, which serves a stative function,

²⁹⁸ Brent D. Shaw, whose argument I find compelling and apply to the early attestations of “Christians,” opines that the persecution of Christians by Nero in the early 60s—which is always linked to the great fire that gutted some parts of ancient Rome—put pointedly, did not happen. Although he concedes that the great fire is historical, its concomitant Christian persecution is not. “The Myth of Neronian Persecution,” *JRS* 105 (2015): 73–100. John G. Cook responds that Shaw’s view is based on argument from silence. “*Chrestiani, Christiani, Χριστιανοί*: A Second Century Anachronism?” *VC* 74 (2020): 237–64.

²⁹⁹ Shaw dates the *Annals* between 116–124 CE. “Myth of Neronian Persecution.”

because it identifies the following of Jesus in the diaspora. The use of “Christianness” in second-century literature (both Christian and Roman) to describe earlier phenomena, as Shaw deftly argues, is both anachronistic and inattentive to contemporaneous sociocultural realities.

3.1.1.3 Suetonius

In Suetonius’ *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (ca. 121 CE), he alludes to the same cruelty reported by Tacitus but leaves out the gory details. Since the reference is to the same emperor—Nero—it is reasonable to assume that both Roman historians had the same incident in mind.³⁰⁰ Interestingly, *pace* Tacitus, Suetonius does not give the impression that there was a state-wide persecution of “Christians.” His report barely indicates that “Christians” were punished for being a novel and superstitious sect—a concern also stressed by Pliny (*Nero* 16). Novelty, superstition, and clandestine assemblies are traits tinged with looming political and security implications. The frequency of punishment meted out to “Christians” is not stated; the nature of their penalty, per Suetonius, is imprecise. This passing reference simply corroborates Nero’s spontaneous cruelty toward “Christians” but not an incessant, systematic, and statewide brutality toward them. Also, it bolsters the claim that “Christianness” is a third-party appellation for diaspora Christ believers. Excepting this denotation, the epithet is hollow: it is a nominal lexeme.

3.1.1.4 Lucian

Lucian was born in the Roman province of Syria around 125 CE. Ordinarily, he is outside the range of my consideration (i.e., 81—117 CE). He flourished in the third quarter of the second century and mentions “Christians” four times in two of his writings: *Alexander the False Prophet*

³⁰⁰ Shaw capitalizes on the discrepancies between Tacitus’ account and those of other Roman historians to dispute the historical accuracy of Nero’s persecution of Christians after the colossal fire.

and *The Passing of Peregrinus*. Since the provenance of Lucian, like all the preceding writers, is Asia Minor, “Christians” is arguably tinged with territorial underpinnings. Reviewing Lucian’s references clarifies this assertion. In *Alexander the False Prophet*, Lucian narrates the tale of a dubious purveyor of religious experiences, Alexander, the story’s protagonist, who defrauded miracle-seeking citizens of their valuables. When the Epicureans impugned Alexander’s reputation, calling him a fraudster, he resorted to scare tactics. Afraid that he will be delated as a quack, he assembled a crowd in Pontus and told them that “atheists and Christians” have overtaken their city, thereby endangering their lives (*Alex.* 25, 38). Pairing “atheists and Christians” is critical. It means that Romans frequently disparaged “Christians” as “atheists” or “superstitious” persons. Lucian’s reference to “Christian” groups in Asia Minor corroborates this reading (*Peregr.* 16). However, not all Lucian’s applications of the lexeme, “Christian,” fit neatly to the theory of Asia Minor provenance. For instance, he speaks of “priests and scribes of the Christians in Palestine” and goes on to describe Jewish practices (*Peregr.* 11-13). This application should be translated as Christ-believing Judeans. But this usage does not undercut my argument, because the author is situated in Asia Minor and is assessing Christ associations through the lens of “Christianness” as a phenomenon in his milieu. Designating all Christ believers as “Christians” is spurred by his initial Asia-Minor encounter with the soubriquet. Having briefly reviewed “Christianness” in non-Christian texts that are contemporaneous with Acts, I will now examine another pervasive assumption: the myth of the Jerusalem origins of “Christianness.”

3.1.2 Christian Origins: The Myth of Jerusalem Provenance

It is popularly believed that since the canonical Gospels collectively depict Jesus as a Galilean whose ministry transverses the province of Judea and culminates in Jerusalem, the early “Christian” church probably began in the city where its founder died. Although plausible, this

assumption overly depends on the naïve historicization of Luke, Acts, and Galatians. The aim of this segment is not to review the historical foundation for this presupposition but to assess the ideas, questions, and arguments raised by scholars who participated in the SBL project on Redescribing Christian Origins. The focus in this portion of my analysis is the first-year seminar contributions.

Christopher R. Matthews debunks the traditional, historicist reading of Christian origins in Jerusalem by carefully evaluating—among others—the writings of Gerd Lüdemann.³⁰¹ He notes that the approach and motivation of Luke in relating the “history” of Christianity is widely misconstrued: his intention is not to present an objective, neutral, and systematic reminiscence of past events (post-Enlightenment history) but to legitimate his group by tracing its origins to the historical center of “Jewishness.” Put succinctly, Matthews opines:

Luke’s reconstruction of the Jerusalem church was a historical exercise methodologically unencumbered by modern standards of documentation. The challenge was to produce an account of Christian origins that would show how those beginnings clarified and confirmed the social and cultural situation of Christians in Luke’s time.³⁰²

This conclusion stresses two inextricably entwined concerns in Acts: (1) it is a piece of historiography with novelistic tendencies (genre), and (2) its rhetorical proclivity is to justify the sociocultural constitution of a group in Asia Minor and Greece (sociorhetorical). These interests

³⁰¹ Gerd Lüdemann, *Das frühe Christentum nach den Traditionen der Apostelgeschichte: Ein Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); idem, “Acts of the Apostles as a Historical Source,” in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); idem, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); idem, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Gerd Lüdemann with Alf Özen, *What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historical Approach to the Resurrection*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995). Lüdemann’s historicist approach to Acts and early Christianity is representative of scholars who subscribe to this school of thought. Since I have already treated the historicist method in chapter one, I will refrain from repeating similar arguments here.

³⁰² Christopher R. Matthews, “Acts and the History of the Earliest Jerusalem Church,” in *Redescribing Christian Origins*, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 174; idem, “Luke the Hellenist,” 99-107; idem, “Acts of the Apostles,” *OEBB* 1:11-26.

are foundational to Luke's rhetorical project. To use Acts to ascertain historical "facts" about the early church does gross disservice to the narrative.³⁰³ Therefore, the reliance on Acts to establish the Jerusalem provenance of "Christians" (a modern historical project) is egregiously misleading.

Merrill P. Miller, focusing on Paul's letter to the Galatians, remarks that the putative Jerusalem "church" and its apostolic leaders are rhetorical constructions at the service of gospel propaganda. To utilize Gal 1–2 to peer into the historical events of 30–40 CE is to ignore the text's principal concern: "The status and authority of Jerusalem and its leadership ... are largely constructions fabricated in the interest of making sense of and promoting behaviors and relations in groups such as those in and around Antioch that have become independent of synagogues."³⁰⁴ Thus for Miller, the myth of Jerusalem origins of diaspora "Christianness" is a sociocultural and rhetorical device deployed to legitimate the practices of Christ-believing diaspora Jews. The modern historicization of Paul's missives, which completely disregards the rhetorical situation of Galatians, fails to make a critical distinction: the purpose and genre of Galatians.³⁰⁵ Just like Matthews, Miller observes that the Jerusalem-origin motif implicitly reflects the immediate sociocultural tension caused by the indiscriminate imposition of strict compliance to Jewish ancestral practices on Gentiles, rather than the Galatian church's historical origins.

Luther H. Martin expatiates upon the genre of Acts and its relevance for a systematic, neutral, and objective reporting of historical events. He notes that Luke's method is patently rhetorical. Acceptance of Acts' literary genre logically fends off historicist interpretations of the

³⁰³ Pervo, *Profit with Delight*; idem, *Luke's Story of Paul*; Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*; idem., *Paul in Acts*.

³⁰⁴ Merrill P. Miller, "Antioch, Paul, and Jerusalem: Diaspora Myths of Origins in the Homeland," in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 203. Although I agree with Miller's rhetorical reading, I disagree with his assertion that Christ-believing groups had become independent of synagogues. The *Homilies* of John Chrysostom in the late fourth century CE caution exegetes against making such sweeping claims about the parting of Jews and "Christians." Group autonomy, certainly not in the first century, is parochial, people-centered, and indeterminate.

³⁰⁵ Miller, "Antioch, Paul, and Jerusalem," 204.

text. Martin crystallizes this argument: “If the texts produced by early Christians are to be understood as the products of their mythmaking, they cannot then count as historiographical [i.e., historicist] documentation in support of events portrayed in their production.”³⁰⁶ This simply means that if one grants that Acts is a piece of ancient historiography with novelistic proclivities, one cannot without further methodological demonstration isolate “historical data” from the text as the basis for a historical conclusion, like asserting the Jerusalem provenance of “Christianness,” a piece of information supplied by Luke’s ingenious, rhetorically suffused narrative. The common thread that the contributors to this SBL project share concerns the implication of Acts’ genre for determinations about details of Christian origins or historical claims in general.

Dennis E. Smith, just like all the previous contributors, reinforces the same overarching arguments. He writes: “The generally accepted version of Christian origins from Jerusalem derives almost entirely from Acts and ... depends on a historical [i.e., historicist] reading of Acts.”³⁰⁷ He echoes the foregoing claim that a profound understanding of Luke’s work eschews enticing historicist interpretations of any of its apparently “historical” claims. Foregrounding this argument, he concludes: “Given the weight attached to the Jerusalem church in Luke’s overall theological scheme, it is appropriate that we question the entire hypothesis of Christian origins in Jerusalem.”³⁰⁸ The essays just reviewed demonstrate that the phenomenon of “Christianness” is emphatically not of Judean provenance. As I will argue in the second part of this chapter, it derives from an audacious sociocultural experiment that involved Christ-believing diaspora Jews

³⁰⁶ Luther H. Martin, “History, Historiography, and Christian Origins: The Jerusalem Community,” in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 269-70. Martin critiques the inadvertent circular reasoning of scholars who either do not specialize in Acts or are not mindful of its genre: using a rhetorically constructed history to address a historically factual question.

³⁰⁷ Dennis E. Smith, “What Do We Really Know about the Jerusalem Church? Christian Origins in Jerusalem according to Acts and Paul,” in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 250.

³⁰⁸ Smith, “Jerusalem Church,” 250-51.

and devout Gentiles residing in Asia Minor and Greece. The symbolic world of Acts relates “Christianness” as the brainchild of these ideologically united but ethnically diverse social groups. Next, I will examine another assumption on Christian origins: the impact of the *Birkat ha-minim*.

3.1.3 Christian Origins: *Birkat ha-minim*

It is widely believed that Christians parted with Jews when they were expelled from the synagogues as a result of the *Birkat ha-minim* (or Eighteen Benedictions), a liturgical prayer that was directed against them. Yaakov Y. Teppler captures this traditional reading in a meticulously argued work.³⁰⁹ This theory of Christian origins has been challenged by Reuven Kimelmann, whose writing I will use to debunk this widespread misinformation.³¹⁰ He advances and defends four theses that elucidate the purpose of the *Birkat ha-minim*, the ethnicity of the *minim* or *nosrim*, and the prayer’s impact on Jewish-Christian relations vis-à-vis the definitive parting of ways. First, Kimelmann argues that this Jewish liturgical prayer (or a collection of ritual curses) targets Jewish Christians: those affiliated with both Christ associations and Jewish synagogues. The prayer was never designed to curse Gentile Christians, he opines, who typically had no ties to synagogues. The chief objective of faithful Jews who said this prayer fervently was to expel members who bestrode competing, ideologically different affiliations. This “syncretism” was perceived as a threat to sustaining unwavering adherence to emergent rabbinic Jewishness. Second, using rabbinic and patristic writings, Kimelmann argues that *minim* (heretics) is similar

³⁰⁹ Yaakov Y. Teppler, *Birkat haMinim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World*, TSAJ 120, trans. Susan Weingarten (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). Teppler reverts to the old interpretations of this Jewish prayer: the heretics condemned in it refer to all Christians. Historians of religion have long since debunked this interpretation, because it fails to account for the prayer’s impact on non-Jewish (or Gentile) Christ believers, who do not attend synagogue services. See Gager, “Dangerous Ones in Between,” 249-57.

³¹⁰ Kimelmann, “*Birkat ha-Minim*.”

to *nosrim* (Nazoreans). Since *minim* has identical characteristics as the pejorative *nosrim* in rabbinic and patristic writings, the heretics addressed by the *Birkat ha-minim* are Nazoreans: disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.³¹¹ So the Eighteen Benedictions curse Christ believers who bestrode competing social affiliations. Third, since this Jewish prayer only targeted Jewish Christ believers, it did not affect Gentiles. Thus its existence cannot be used as a reliable index for determining the parting of Jews and Christians. Fourth, Kimelmann, like most reputable historians of religion, concludes that the decisive parting of Jews and Christians was engendered by relentless, steady interventions of competent Jewish and Christian authorities.³¹² Using a popular dictum to summarize: Christians and Jews did not break up; they drifted apart. So the assumption that the *Birkat ha-minim* was the decisive point in history when Jews and Christians parted is ill-informed and inattentive to the intricacies of social identity formation, because it assumes that the parting of ideologically akin social groups is instantaneous—comparable to a political referendum.³¹³ Those who insist that the *Birkat ha-minim* was directed against all Christ believers must explain how prayers said in synagogues could affect non-Jewish Christians who had no affiliation with such assemblies. I will now review the *fiscus Iudaicus* theory of Christian origins.

3.1.4 Christian Origins: *Fiscus Iudaicus*

The *fiscus Iudaicus*, the Jewish temple tax redirected by Nerva to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome, is considered to be a landmark imperial decision that spurred the parting of

³¹¹ Teppler, *Birkat haMinim*. He disagrees with this widespread reading among historians of religion and maintains that there is no attestation to *nosrim* prior to the third or fourth century CE. So it could have been a later addition and not part of the original text that broadly addressed all Christ believers—Jews and Gentiles alike.

³¹² Boyarin, *Border Lines*.

³¹³ Jae Hee Han, “The Baptist Followers of Mani: Reframing the Cologne Mani Codex,” *Numen* 66 (2019): 242. Han does not address *Birkat ha-minim*, but he suggests exploring other theories of “religious becoming.”

Jews, who paid their taxes, and “Christians,” who evaded these stipulated financial obligations.³¹⁴ I will discuss this position using Bart D. Ehrman’s contribution to the volume, *The Ways That Often Parted*. His thesis is that Jews and Christians were distinguishable from Gentiles (i.e., those who were neither associated with Jewish synagogues nor Christ associations) in the first three centuries CE. His argument summarily reads: since only Jews were obliged to pay the *fiscus Iudaicus*, Christians, who were not affiliated to Jewish synagogues evaded the tax. Hence, from the viewpoint of imperial tax compliance, Jewishness was functionally defined: being Jewish meant paying the temple tax. In theory, Ehrman’s reasoning is both compelling and plausible; but in practice, it is naïve to assume that all Jews paid this tax and that Jewish Christ believers collectively refrained from making this contribution. No doubt, Nerva’s target was those who identified as Jews; but the enforcement of the *fiscus Iudaicus* in the late first century would not have been perfect. Ehrman’s argument is feasible only if the implementation of Nerva’s taxation plan was completely successful: free from human error. Moreover, although a functional definition of Jews is compelling and attentive to the intricacy of social identity, associating Jewishness with financial obligations is not sustainable or practicable, because people will be in and out of “Jewishness,” depending on their financial situation or constraint. Being a Jew when one is financially buoyant or willing to pay taxes and a “non-Jew” when one is broke or adamant is nonsensical and befuddling. Ehrman’s claim that pagans can distinguish between Christians and Jews fails to explain the need for informants in the works of Pliny and Tacitus. Both acknowledged the need for spies to show the authorities who the Christians were,

³¹⁴ Margaret H. Williams, “Jews and Christians at Rome: An Early Parting of the Ways,” in Shanks, *Partings*, 151-78; Bart D. Ehrman, “Christian Persecutions and the Parting of Ways,” in Baron, Hicks-Keeton, and Thiessen, *Ways That Often Parted*, 283-307.

meaning that they were hardly distinguishable from other citizens. This would be superfluous if Christians were markedly different from other ethnicities.

Further weakening Ehrman's argument, Sara Mandell makes a compelling case that addresses three fundamental questions pertaining to the *fiscus Iudaicus*: Why? What? Who? Her answers to these questions are illuminating. First, she addresses why the tax was repurposed. She opines that since the Jerusalem temple treasury was used to fund the rebellion, when the Judean rebels were defeated, the Romans usurped its riches as a war indemnity.³¹⁵ Therefore, the *fiscus Iudaicus* is not an ethnic, national, or regional tax. It is rather the booty of war. This explanation answers the first and second questions: why—rebellling against Rome; what—war indemnity. Second, she identifies those mandated to pay the temple tax as the following: the “Pharisaic-rabbinic sect and its adherents.”³¹⁶ This category excludes many Jews in the Roman Empire, because the aim was not to punish all Jews but only those who had sympathized with the Judean rebellion. Even the sympathizers of this rebellion could not easily be identified unless they disclosed their identities. Next, I will examine the epigraphical and archaeological arguments for Christian origins.

3.1.5 Christian Origins: Epigraphy and Archaeology

Some scholars have explored Christian origins using archaeological and epigraphical sources. Those who espouse this view argue that the study of Jewish and Christian catacombs and their corresponding religious insignia reveal theological discrepancies on eschatology.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ Sara Mandell, “Who Paid the Temple Tax when the Jews Were under Roman Rule?” *HTR* 77 (1984): 223-32.

³¹⁶ Mandell, “Temple Tax,” 232.

³¹⁷ Margaret H. Williams, “Image and Text in the Jewish Epitaphs of Late Ancient Rome.” *JSJ* 42 (2011): 328-50; idem., “Jews and Christians at Rome: An Early Parting of the Ways,” in Shanks, *Partings*, 151-78. In the latter article, she argues that the parting of Jews and Christians began barely twenty years after the death of Jesus and culminated in the early decades of the second century. This stance is increasingly called into question as being inattentive to the complexity of social identity formation, which necessarily involves prolonged and localized communal boundary negotiations.

Different catacombs and religious symbols suggest that Jews and Christians aligned with their respective communities, especially at death. However, the use of epigraphy and archaeology to establish the parting of Jews and Christians is highly contentious. Leonard V. Rutgers observes that there are four phases in the development of Christian catacombs: improvised structures (late second century), construction of Christian catacombs (third century), rapid expansion of church-owned cemeteries (fourth century), and their cessation and the influx of tourists visiting them as historical artifacts (toward the end of the first millennium CE).³¹⁸ But he remarks that dating these catacombs is difficult because of the nefarious activities of grave robbers and the uncertainty of dating pictorial styles, bricks, and pottery.³¹⁹ Only durable material remains, like coins, can be dated with any degree of certainty. Using archaeology to establish the moment of Christian origins is thus rather precarious. The other concern that Rutgers' study raises is the purported "Christianness" of some early catacombs. He asserts that a number of second-century Gentile Christians were buried with their family members in pagan cemeteries and not in those now designated "church" catacombs.³²⁰ In the late second century, burial sites were not a conclusive index for determining "Christianness." Besides burials with pagan family members, Rutgers also notes that even "Christian" catacombs are gifts from pagan benefactors. There is thus a myriad of pagan insignia on these structures which were later "Christianized."³²¹ Searching for the exact moment when Christians parted ways with Jews and completely dissociated themselves from fraternizing with their pagan compatriots and emerged as a distinct "religion" based solely on archaeology and epigraphy *prima facie* might sound feasible, but

³¹⁸ Leonard V. Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome: In Search of the Roots of Christianity in the Catacombs of the Eternal City* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 53.

³¹⁹ Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*, 50-52.

³²⁰ Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*, 55-56.

³²¹ Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*, 60.

arriving at precise chronology and reconstructing intricate social identity negotiations chiefly based on material remains are highly dubious outcomes.

So far I have briefly examined popular theories of Christian origins, highlighting their merits and demerits. These widely held explanations of Christian provenance all share common, flawed assumptions: (1) “Jewishness” and “Christianness” are mutually exclusive affiliations; and (2) the parting of both groups can be traced to a specific event that occurred at a given point in time. These assumptions overlook the complexity of social identity formation that inherently involves a myriad of prolonged, localized negotiations spanning centuries. Below, I will review scholarly attempts to reimagine “Christianness” as a race or ethnicity.

3.1.6 “Christianness” as Ethnicity

Denise K. Buell reimagines “Christianness” in terms of ethnicity. Employing ethnic reasoning, she argues that early Christians defined themselves collectively by utilizing well-known racial tropes, like adherence to distinguishing religious practices or citizenship in a polis.³²² Disagreeing with the widespread scholarly assumption of “Christianness” being “neither Jew nor Greek,” she contends that ethnic reasoning was used ingeniously by early Christian authors to balance the sociocultural scale of inclusiveness (all ethnicities and nationalities can become Christians) and distinctiveness (Christians are distinct from monolithic ethnic groups).

³²² Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 2-5; idem, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition,” *HTR* 94 (2001): 449-76; idem and Caroline Johnson Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 235-51; see also Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); L. L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (London: T & T Clark, 2009); Cavan W. Concannon, “When You Were Gentiles”: *Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul’s Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); David G. Horrell, “Ethnicisation, Marriage, and Early Christian Identity: Critical Reflections on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3 and Modern New Testament Scholarship,” *NTS* (2016): 439-60; Christopher Stroup, *The Christians Who Became Jews: Acts of the Apostles and Ethnicity in the Roman City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

Ethnic reasoning is both pragmatic and negotiable, because it defines race functionally and existentially. As Buell astutely notes, ethnicity is principally constructed via the performance of prescribed customs or actions, thereby making admission flexible and obtainable.³²³ Besides flexibility, ethnic reasoning assures stability by creating a sense of peoplehood.

Buell's creative and daring approach to "Christianness" stirs an already settled perception of the subject. Her emphasis on pragmatism and negotiability shrewdly navigates the landscape of ancient ethnicities and early "Christianity." Her study carefully blends stability and flexibility, identity and negotiability, and realism and pragmatism. "Christianness" is not a monolithic idea that remains unchanged in different settings and for many centuries; it is also not a sociocultural assembly that is diametrically opposed to the quintessential trait of "Jewishness." Rather, it is a social formation that self-identifies as a distinct "race" made up of people from every ethnicity, class, and language. One of Buell's claims tallies with my reading of Acts: "Christianness" is not a "religion" distinct from "Jewishness" (in fact, the former is subsumed in the latter). But unlike Buell's, my analysis is heavily reliant on the symbolic world portrayed in Acts.

Jonathan M. Hall, having studied various Greek ethnicities, reaffirms pragmatism and negotiability as crucial undergirding principles in comprehending social identity in antiquity: "Ethnic identity is not a 'natural' fact of life; it is something that needs to be actively proclaimed, reclaimed and disclaimed through discursive channels. For this reason, it is the literary evidence which must constitute the first and final frame of analysis in the study of ancient ethnicity."³²⁴ Hall makes three insightful observations on the study of ancient ethnicities: (1) congenital impositions on or associations with particular ethnicities must be expunged, (2) ethnicity is

³²³ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2.

³²⁴ Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 182.

intrinsically negotiable, and (3) texts must be prioritized in the study of social identities in the ancient world. These principles are enshrined in my study of “Christianness” in Acts.

Bolstering the foregoing argument, Gerd Baumann employs two quotidian metaphors—blood and wine—to accentuate the role of sociocultural factors in creating ethnicity. Like wine, ethnicity is not naturally occurring; it requires social, economic, and political “fermentation” to produce it; its denotation, like the taste of wine, is determined by “climactic” factors. Baumann states: “Both wine and ethnicity are ... creations of human minds, skills, and plans—based on some natural ingredients, it is true, but far beyond anything that nature could ever do by itself.”³²⁵ He acknowledges that there is a natural base to what sociologists categorize as ethnicity but its reality always exceeds nature. Since ethnicity is not “naturally occurring,” it is a social construct. Put pointedly, Baumann states: “Ethnicity is the product of people’s actions and identifications, not the product of nature working by itself.”³²⁶ As a social construct, ethnicity is imbued with meaning by those who ascribe value to it. The negotiability and social constructiveness of race or ethnicity is crucial to a study of “Christianness” in Acts, since it reveals profound complexities of social becoming and group peculiarity that are not easily explained by inventing a “religion.”

3.1.7 Representative Scholarship on “Christianness” in Acts

Traditional approaches to the study of “Christianness” in Acts typically claim that Paul’s activities herald a new “religion.” Scholars who espouse these interpretations inadvertently apply anachronistic assumptions to the narrative: Jews and Christians had parted ways before Acts was written; these social identities do not overlap in the story; and both groups represent

³²⁵ Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 64.

³²⁶ Baumann, *Multicultural Riddle*, 63.

ideologically distinct worldviews. These presuppositions ignore recent critical studies on the parting of the ways, sociological sketches of collective identities in the ancient world, and an informed reading that acknowledges the prior concerns raised in interpreting Acts. To engage advocates of the stance outlined above, I will review the work of Christopher Mount, who focuses on a commonplace term in Acts scholarship—Pauline Christianity. He opines that attributing Christian origins to Paul is a Lukan innovation that only gains traction at the end of the second century CE.³²⁷ Likewise, the canonical proximity of Acts and Paul’s letters is an attempt by the church to concretize multiple, competing traditions that undergird Christian origins.³²⁸ I find Mount’s thesis agreeable, but his assessment of “Christianness” vis-à-vis “Jewishness” in Acts highly problematic. For instance, he makes the following contentious assertions: (1) Paul’s confrontation with unbelieving Jews comes to define “Christianness” as a distinct “religion”; (2) Paul’s letters do not influence Luke’s depiction of him; (3) Luke preaches a distinct “religion” (i.e., “Christianness”); and (4) Luke claims Hellenistic culture as a presupposition for “Christianness.”³²⁹ These claims are all highly contestable and refutable. First, Paul’s disagreement with unbelieving Jews (i.e., non-Christ-believing diaspora Jews) did not usher in a new “religion.” This argument neglects the story. Luke’s “Jewish” Paul repeatedly asserts his “Jewishness” by demonstrating how the scriptures are fulfilled in his impassioned interpretation of ancestral practices. He disagrees with hostile and irate “unbelieving Jews” but fraternizes with hospitable “believing Jews.” The difference is not a new “religion” but an inclusive approach with empathetic concern for the enduring relevance of ancestral practices for Gentiles.

³²⁷ Christopher Mount, *Pauline Christianity: Luke-Acts and the Legacy of Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 8-9. Most scholars of Acts agree with this observation.

³²⁸ Mount, *Pauline Christianity*, 9.

³²⁹ Mount, *Pauline Christianity*, 172.

Second, Mount avers that Paul's letters do not impact Luke's portrayal of him. Although this claim eschews the hermeneutic trap of harmonizing Paul's letters with Acts, the conclusion reached is either logically tenuous or historically unsound. No one can assert with utmost certainty from reviewing multiple disparate literary sources that Luke had no access to Paul's letters, which were probably circulating in some parts of the Christ-believing world.³³⁰ Rather than compare and contrast these letters with Acts, Pervo approaches the question meaningfully and insightfully in terms of multiple receptions of Paul.³³¹ Varying receptions of Paul among early Christians neither indicates contradiction nor unawareness. Instead, they evince ardent attempts by different second-century churches to appropriate a legendary apostle in addressing contemporaneous interests.³³² Pervo's characterization of Acts aptly captures the perspective of this research.

Third, Mount's assertion that Paul preaches a distinct "religion" misconstrues "Christian" identity in Acts. "Christianness," as I will soon argue, is not a "religion" but a sociocultural configuration that creates a unique platform for Christ-believing diaspora Jews to fraternize with pious Gentiles without mandating the latter to Judaize entirely (i.e., to alter their ethnicities). It is not about a "religion"; Luke is emphatically clear on this point. "Christianness" is a sociocultural assembly that avails devout Gentiles of the opportunity to become "one" with Christ-believing diaspora Jews.

Fourth, Mount argues that the Hellenistic world is the sociocultural milieu for Acts. This, however, is only partly correct. The context for Luke's "Jewish" Paul (or "Christianness") is not

³³⁰ See Pervo, *Making of Paul*; idem, *Dating Acts*.

³³¹ Pervo, *Making of Paul*; see also Daniel Marguerat, "L'image de Paul dans les Actes des Apôtres," in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Histoire, récit, théologie: XXe congrès de l'Association catholique française pour l'étude de la Bible*, ed. Michel Berder (Angers, 2003; Paris: Cerf, 2005).

³³² Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 150.

the Hellenistic world per se but diaspora Jewishness, which inherently encapsulates commitment to ancestral mores and Greco-Roman society.³³³ This spurious dichotomy inundates scholarship on Acts. But the debate can easily be resolved by a both-and approach rather than an either-or proposal. Besides, social identity in antiquity was complex: a diaspora Jew living in Rome or Asia Minor or Greece is not insulated from the pervading Hellenistic culture. The individual inadvertently juggles two competing worldviews and creates a unique interpretation that is hardly convertible with either.

Apart from the foregoing problematic deductions of Mount, other claims require further comment. For instance, he recapitulates the project of Acts in these words: “An account of the origin of Christianity that separates Christianity from Judaism and establishes Christianity as a respectable religion in the Graeco-Roman world.”³³⁴ While the latter deduction is acceptable, if properly understood, the former is not. The purpose of Acts is not to separate “Jewishness” from “Christianness,” because Luke’s understanding of the latter contains the former. “Christians” are Christ-believing diaspora Jews who proclaim the good news to devout Gentiles, fraternize with them, and do not mandate their stringent compliance with Jewish ancestral practices. Hence, to summarize Acts as a separation of “Jewishness” and “Christianness” is to ignore the central story that Luke relates. The symbolic world of Acts belies the parting of ways, which Mount assumes in making his case. Still on this point, Mount opines: “Paul’s appeal to Caesar marks the decisive break between Christianity and Judaism.”³³⁵ This statement reveals the hazard of historicizing Luke’s narrative. There is no break between “Jewishness” and “Christianness” in Acts; appealing to Caesar availed Luke of the opportunity to account for the spread of the gospel in Rome. On

³³³ See Kraabel, “Unity and Diversity,” 21-34; Gruen, “Hellenism and Judaism,” 113-32; idem, *Diaspora*; Barclay, “Introduction,” in idem, *Negotiating Diaspora*, 1-6.

³³⁴ Mount, *Pauline Christianity*, 173.

³³⁵ Mount, *Pauline Christianity*.

the subject of the symbiosis between Christ-believing diaspora Jews and “Christians,” Luke is exceptionally consistent. The fracas between Paul and “the Jews” is a localized conflict that is not representative of diaspora Jewry in its entirety. Arguably the most misleading assertion of Mount on this same topic is framed thus: “From the Judaism of Jesus to the Christianity of Paul.”³³⁶ This is a worrisome distortion of Luke’s project. The theological direction of Acts is not from “Judaism” to another “religion.” It is rather from a restrictive notion of “Jewishness” to a creative interpretation of the same: Christ believers of other ethnicities need not Judaize entirely to belong. Mount’s thesis that Paul as the architect of Christianness is a Lukan innovation that gained traction toward the end of the second century is agreeable, but his assumptions—Acts bespeaks the parting of Christianity and Judaism, evinces a Hellenistic sociocultural milieu, and can be historicized—are off the mark.³³⁷ These ideas and their corollaries are pervasive in Acts scholarship, but they are not the hermeneutic lens I employ in this research.³³⁸ I will now review pertinent sociological assessments of social labeling that are germane to “Christianness.”

3.1.8 The Sociological Foundation for Social Labeling

Before investigating Luke’s notion of “Christianness,” it is important to review theories of group labeling. Stephen G. Wilson argues that there is no objective criterion for assessing social deviance or apostasy: “[Social] deviance is defined not by the quality of particular acts or

³³⁶ Mount, *Pauline Christianity*, 174.

³³⁷ Mount, *Pauline Christianity*, 8-9. Mount impugns the widespread descriptor, “Pauline Christianity.”

³³⁸ See chapter 1.

attitudes in themselves but by the negative social reaction they evoke.”³³⁹ It is thus not a static phenomenon but a relational concept; it exists when there is a palpable, negative social reaction to an emerging or nonconformist group. This relativistic approach to social deviance is critical to group identity formation, especially “Christianness” in Acts. The pervasive tendency to think of social identity in inflexible or monolithic terms is grossly inattentive to the dynamics of group formation. Social labeling, as Wilson observes, evinces a society’s reaction to what it perceives as “otherness”: “Labeling is the consequence of society’s reaction.”³⁴⁰ It is seldom an indication of a group’s preference or self-identification. It applies to nonconformist behaviors (empirically identifiable acts) not to ideologies (convictions).³⁴¹ While exercising their preservative instincts, societies usually label suspicious or menacing groups in order to safeguard their values, lifestyle, and existence. Labels are rarely self-imposed; they are self-preserving tactics used by societies to isolate and terminate potential threats to the status quo. Wilson’s stress on the subject of social labeling is crucial to a sociologically grounded study of “Christianness” in Acts. Scholars often spill ink on the ideological distinctiveness of “Christians” or the ancestral practices of “Jews,” leaving out a critical sociological index: behavior.³⁴² Wilson stresses behavior because social identity is not chiefly the result of ideological disparity or indifference to rituals. These assumptions have long bedeviled Acts scholarship leading many to assert that Luke’s utilization of “Jews” and “Christians” suggests irreconcilable ideological differences that justify the parting of both groups. This explanation is anachronistic and incongruous with sociological research.

³³⁹ Stephen G. Wilson, *Leaving the Fold: Apostates and Defectors in Antiquity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 113; for comparable arguments, see John M. G. Barclay, “Deviance and Apostasy: Some Applications of Deviance Theory to First-Century Judaism and Christianity,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 114-27.

³⁴⁰ Wilson, *Leaving the Fold*, 116.

³⁴¹ Wilson, *Leaving the Fold*, 135.

³⁴² No doubt the argument can be made that compliance with ancestral practices is a form of behavior. But Wilson’s point is that the reaction of a society is only triggered by an egregiously menacing behavior, which in the context of Acts could be a Jewish group’s attitude to a given ancestral practice (e.g., the circumcision of Gentiles).

Social identity formation and group labeling are more complex in reality than many would concede. Wilson foregrounds this notion by likening social boundaries to “penumbras” rather than “hard-and-fast lines.”³⁴³ These metaphors accentuate the fluidity and negotiability of social identity formation. Rigidity and stability *prima facie* may appear intelligible, but they do gross disservice to social identity analysis which is inherently negotiable.

3.1.9 Discussion Summary

In the foregoing section, I have studied “Christianness” from several illuminating angles: the perspective of Roman writers, the theories of Christian origins, “Christianness” as ethnicity, “Christianness” in Acts, and the sociological foundation for social labeling. This investigation shows that non-Christ believers habitually used the epithet, “Christians,” to delineate diaspora Christ believers. The evidence of this usage correlates with the earliest utilization of the epithet in “Christian” circles: Acts, 1 Peter, and the epistles of Ignatius. This confirms that the term is a late first-century or early second-century creation and is chiefly a third-party soubriquet mostly applied to Christ believers in Asia Minor and Greece.

Having examined the popular theories of Christian origins, I demonstrated that none satisfactorily accounts for the complexity of social identity formation, which necessarily entails prolonged and extensive negotiations. Most of these theories share similar flawed assumptions that are untenable: (1) Jews and Christians became mutually exclusive groups, and (2) the parting of both groups was instantaneous and traceable to a specific historical event. As I already argued in chapter one, group identity formation is complex and prolonged. It is not similar to political referendums. The parting of ways is quintessentially the parting of peoples in different

³⁴³ Wilson, *Leaving the Fold*, 134.

places and at different times in response to different sociocultural stimuli. Hence, a “catch-all” approach fails to account for Luke’s rhetoric which must be discerned in the narrative of Acts.

The discussion of representative scholarship on “Christianness” in Acts highlights well-known yet misleading assumptions about the narrative. The widespread reading of Luke’s story that finds a rejection of Judaism is inattentive to the intricacy of ethnic identification in antiquity. Awareness of this worldview illuminates Luke’s rhetorical thrust and spotlights the narrative’s theological underpinnings. Using the lexemes of “Jewishness” and “Christianness” (as I will soon explain), Acts relates the story of Christ-believing diaspora Jews and non-Judaizing Gentiles being part of the same sociocultural configuration.

3.2 “Christianness” in Acts

Judith M. Lieu offers a helpful hermeneutical framework for studying “Christianness” in Acts. Unlike many others, her analysis stresses the sociological dimension of “Christianness.” Her approach has noteworthy implications for this study. She claims that “Christianness” is a social construct: a product of social boundary formation and group consciousness articulation.³⁴⁴ At its core, it is an “experienced essence” which is fittingly characterized by these polemic traits: “rhetoric of antithesis,” “narrative of otherness,” and “story of separation.”³⁴⁵ In quotidian parlance, “Christianness” emerged out of the pressing sociological need to be distinguishable from other well-established social groups in antiquity (e.g., Jews and Gentiles). It is sustained by the relentless attempts by diaspora Christ believers to distinguish themselves socioculturally from comparable religious sects. To embark on a study of “Christianness” in Acts like most do with a strong sense of conceptual stability, sociological constancy, and ideological uniqueness is

³⁴⁴ Lieu, *Christian Identity*.

³⁴⁵ Lieu, *Christian Identity*.

naïvely prejudicial and anachronistic. Social identity in antiquity (and to some degree even in modernity), as sociologists now claim, is behavior-centered, functional, and negotiable.³⁴⁶ It is neither immutable nor congenital. Instead, it is actualized in the labyrinthine maze of personal interaction, group association, and the inexorable crosspollination of disparate ethnically laced practices. The second crucial point that Lieu makes pertaining to “Christianness” is that social identity in antiquity is not mutually exclusive: a person can be both Jew and “Christian,” Gentile and “Christian,” Roman and Jew, or “Christian” and Roman.³⁴⁷ So the pervasive assumption that one is either a Jew or “Christian” is methodologically flawed.³⁴⁸ So too is the liberal designation of characters in Acts as exclusively “Jewish” or “Christian.”³⁴⁹ In the previous chapter, I argued that “Jews” in Acts signifies diaspora Jews specifically, *pace* current scholarship. In the same vein, I will assert below that “Christians” denote Christ-believing diaspora Jews and devout Gentiles who are not subjected to the strict observance of all Jewish ancestral practices (e.g., circumcision and dietary laws). With this definition, I wish to impugn the pervasive indiscriminate designation of Christ believers in Acts as “Christians.” This proclivity blurs Luke’s intricate rhetoric which repeatedly stresses the diaspora provenance of the disputed

³⁴⁶ Jenkins accentuates the dynamism and fluidity of social identity. *Social Identity*. Elliott stresses the temporality and fickleness of group identity. *Us and Them*. Susie Scott highlights the relationality of social identity. *Negotiating Identity*. Viewed collectively, these sociologists bolster Lieu’s claims regarding Christian social identity formation: fluidity, negotiability, dynamism, and relationality.

³⁴⁷ Lieu, *Christian Identity*.

³⁴⁸ Some scholars employ “Jewish Christians” to delineate the social identity of Christ-believing Jews of the late first and early second century. Many have either lauded this innovation or accepted it uncritically. Mindful of the tensed scholarly debate on this subject, I will decline to take sides. But I do find the arguments of Daniel Boyarin against the invention of the lexeme and Annette Y. Reed’s heuristic use of it compelling. Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity,” 7-36; idem, “Judaism as a Free Church: Footnotes to John Howard Yoder’s ‘The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,’” *CC* 56 (2007): 6-21; Reed, *Jewish Christianity and the History of Judaism: Collected Essays*, TSAJ 171 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018). Fortunately, the narrative world of Acts does not permit such hybrid designations, because the group’s identity is diaspora Jewish. Nevertheless, the author evinces knowledge of a novel, third-party appellation for his group: “Christians.”

³⁴⁹ Judith M. Lieu, “The Forging of Christian Identity and the *Letter to Diognetus*,” in *The Religious History of the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. James A. North and Simon R. F. Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 437. Lieu distinguishes between “self-identity” and “perceived identity.” For those Paul personifies in Acts (i.e., Christ-believing diaspora Jews), the former is “Jews,” while the latter is “Christians.” Conflating both lexemes, using them liberally, or creating a hyphenated social identity obfuscates Luke’s narrative.

lexeme, “Christianness.” Relying on Lieu’s sociological framework, I will eschew the foregoing conceptual fissures in my analysis.

The soubriquet, “Christian(s),” occurs twice in Acts and only once elsewhere in the NT (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16). In its debut, Luke, while insinuating that it is not his preferred epithet for the Antiochian Christ believers, reveals its quintessential attributes: (1) it describes those designated by the cognomen; (2) it indicates the location where the appellation is first employed; (3) it suggests that this alias is a third-party soubriquet (i.e., neither used by Christ believers nor Luke himself); (4) it bespeaks an ethnic and sociocultural experiment; and (5) it testifies to its anonymous originators. These attributes will hereafter be dubbed “Christian indices,” since they delineate Luke’s articulation of a burgeoning social experiment in one of his favorite cities, Antioch: the sociocultural melting pot of diaspora Jewishness and “Christianness” in Acts. Why are these indices crucial to a construal of “Christianness”? Because they offer an opportunity for a critical literary investigation into a multifaceted reality that snowballs into Christianity. The first “Christian” index studies those called “Christians.” Most scholars assume that Christ believing is convertible with “Christianness”; but this is surprisingly not the case. Those whom Acts portrays as “Christians” are definitely Christ believers; but not all Christ believers are “Christians.” This obviously means that historical critics have for too long been reading their prejudices into the text, thereby glossing over the subtle distinctions that Luke employs to tell his story of emergent “Christianness.”³⁵⁰ The second “Christian” index that is

³⁵⁰ For a cursory list of scholars who use “Christians” and “Christ believers” interchangeably, see Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts,” 69-85; Dixon Slingerland, “‘The Jews’ in the Pauline Portion of Acts,” *JAAR* 54 (1986): 305-21; Stephen G. Wilson, “The Jews and the Death of Jesus in Acts,” in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Paul and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Richardson with David Granskou (Ontario: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1986), 155-64; idem, *Related Strangers*; Joseph B. Tyson, “The Problem of Jewish Rejection in Acts,” in idem, *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People*; Lawrence M. Wills, “The Depiction of the Jews in Acts,” *JBL* (1991): 631-54; Witherington, *Acts*; Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); Lawrence M. Wills, *Not God’s People: Insiders and Outsiders in the Biblical World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought*

pivotal to a discourse on “Christianness” is location. Once again, as I remarked in the preceding chapter, literary cartography is invaluable in analyzing the denotation of locations in a narrative. Since Acts, as many reputable scholars have remarked, is best read as a piece of historiography with novelistic tendencies, the places that Luke cites are not randomly chosen. Instead, they are rhetorically significant. Fledgling “Christianity” is not a universal phenomenon—as many would like to believe (at least from the perspective of Acts)—but a parochial experiment. Not only are all Christ believers not “Christians” in Acts, but it is in Antioch that “the disciples” are first called “Christians.” The third “Christian” index that is vital to this study is its status as a third-party appellation. In scholarly publications on Acts, “Christian” is used as a self-explanatory epithet. This cannot be further from the truth. Luke’s choice of “Christian(s)” bolsters this reasoning: no literary figure introduces him- or herself as a “Christian”; the narrator does not call anyone the same, except to note that a third party called a person or group, “Christian(s).” This implies that in Luke’s day it was a sectarian appellation designating those who participated in this sociocultural “Christian” experiment. Besides, as the preceding chapter shows in detail, Acts is inundated with “Jewishness.” So there is no doubt that Luke’s preferred name for the pioneer members of his social experimental group is “believing Jews,” which in the post-Stephen persecution outside Judea denotes Christ-believing diaspora Jews.³⁵¹ The fourth “Christian” index analyzes the social nature of “Christianness”: an ethnic and sociocultural experiment. “Christianness” is glaringly not a “religion”; it is not an autonomous assembly of Christ believers in the diaspora made up of Jews and Gentiles; it is not an organization with its own meticulously articulated doctrinal tenets; it is also not an insular sect that is ideologically incompatible with

(Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 77; Thomas A. Robinson, *Who Were the First Christians?: Dismantling the Urban Hypothesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Stroup, *Christians Who Became Jews*; just to name a few.

³⁵¹ “Pioneer members” solely refers to the originators of the Christ movement among devout Gentiles. Thereafter, “Christianness” is fondly called “the Way,” especially by Paul. This indicates the preference of insiders.

“Jewishness.” “Christianness” is conversely an audacious social experiment: the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus by Christ-believing diaspora Jews to devout Gentiles and the enduring, yearlong fellowship that ensued (Acts 11:26).³⁵² For Luke, it is an ethnic and sociocultural experiment that triumphed. Narrativizing the intricate origins of “Christianness” elucidates the core tenet of this daring experiment—that is, Christ-believing diaspora Jews and devout Gentiles can collectively identify as members of a social group, regardless of their ethnic particularities—and refutes mendacious notions circulating about the same: “Christians” demean ancestral practices. The fifth index studies the pioneers of “Christianness.” As Acts demonstrably shows, the originators of the “Christian” movement are Christ-believing diaspora Jews, who broke ranks with colleagues who preached the gospel to Jews solely. They are the pioneers of “Christianness,” which gains Jerusalem’s legitimation. Saul and Barnabas, as the narrative relates, are coopted separately into an already thriving sect: the latter is delegated by the church in Jerusalem, while the former is recruited by the latter. Even though in the second citation of “Christian” only Paul appears, Luke has already laid a solid foundation for the epithet in the first scene: albeit Paul is the last disciple to be recruited into this sociocultural experiment dubbed “Christianness,” after spending a full year living with other members of the fold, he embodies its ideals in succeeding chapters. Parting ways with Barnabas after the Jerusalem Council, Paul thereafter personifies this audacious sociocultural, “Christian” experiment. This explains why Agrippa addresses him as the embodiment of the diaspora wing of the Christ movement.

3.2.1 “Christian” Persons

³⁵² Philip F. Esler echoes this point by saying that the Gentiles Luke is interested in are the devout persons who revere the Jewish God. Hence, in this chapter and elsewhere, I consistently use the adjective, devout (or its synonym, pious), to qualify the Gentiles who became Christ believers. *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 42.

To decipher the contextual meaning of “Christianness” in Acts, the logical starting point should be the identity of those designated as “Christians.” Acts 11:26 provides an ostensibly straightforward answer: “the disciples.” But who are these “disciples”? Does the term denote Barnabas and Paul; the Christ-believing diaspora Jews who proclaimed the good news to Gentiles; Gentiles; Barnabas; Paul; or Christ-believing diaspora Jews, the Gentiles whom they converted, Barnabas, and Paul? Although any of these options are viable, only one has the most compelling contextual evidence to foreground it: the last reading—the Christ-believing diaspora Jews who preached to Gentiles, these Gentiles, Barnabas, and Paul. Here are the arguments in favor of this interpretation.

First, Acts 11:26b in Greek is a lengthy infinitive construction, which features three aorist infinitive verbs—συναχθῆναι and διδάξαι apply to αὐτοῖς, while χρηματίσαι syntactically agrees with τοὺς μαθητὰς. If the third verb were to agree with αὐτοῖς, it would be an awkward grammatical construction, because it would be redundant to introduce τοὺς μαθητὰς at the end of the sentence just to reinforce αὐτοῖς. But this “clumsy” syntax is easily resolved if the third infinitive verb, χρηματίσαι, refers to a group that is not previously represented by Barnabas and Saul: τοὺς μαθητὰς. Consequently, τοὺς μαθητὰς designates more persons (already mentioned in the narrative: the ἐκκλησία in Antioch) than the Jerusalem delegates: Barnabas and Saul.

Second, since τοὺς μαθητὰς identifies a larger group than the Jerusalem delegates, it denotes persons already mentioned in the story with regard to Antioch: Christ-believing diaspora Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene who proclaimed the good news to Gentiles. These persons, alongside the Jerusalem delegates and Gentiles who embraced the good news, make up the ἐκκλησία in Antioch. This explains why the soubriquet, “Christians,” is only used after these

three groups had lived together for a full year. “Christians” (i.e., τοὺς μαθητὰς) thus denotes the Christ-believing diaspora Jews who preached to Gentiles, these Gentiles, Barnabas, and Paul.

Third, to bolster the foregoing assertion, the ensuing pericope that predicts severe famine all across the world reports “the disciples” making a financial contribution to support the elders in Jerusalem. Barnabas and Paul are patently not the sole contributors, as would be the case if “the disciples” specifically referred to them. Rather, they are merely the bearers (lit., “arm”) of the ἐκκλησία in Antioch’s contributions. This distinction is helpful in clarifying Luke’s intent for the noun, τοὺς μαθητὰς. It is indubitably a designation for every member of this thriving sociocultural experiment dubbed by third parties, “Christians.” The narrative stresses the cordial relationship and reciprocity between the ἐκκλησία in Antioch and the ἐκκλησία in Jerusalem: the latter legitimates the former, while the former financially supports the latter. This ecclesial rapport unequivocally rebuts the pervasive disinformation of “Christian” Antioch being a radical, dissenting Christ-believing Jewish sect. So “Christianness” delineates Christ-believing diaspora Jews who preached the good news about Jesus to Gentiles, these Gentiles, Barnabas, and Paul: the entire ἐκκλησία in Antioch.³⁵³

3.2.2 “Christianity’s” Pioneers

Related to the question—Who are the “Christians”?—is who invented the notion of “Christianness”? The membership of Antioch’s ἐκκλησία streamlines all options. Since these Christ-believing diaspora Jews coopted Gentiles into the Antiochian ἐκκλησία, the latter cannot be the originators of the group, because they were admitted into it. This eliminates Gentiles,

³⁵³ See Maia Kotrosits, *Rethinking Early Christian Identity: Affect, Violence, and Belonging* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 89-91. But for a traditional application of “Christians,” see Joseph B. Tyson, “Problem of Jewish Rejection”; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 62-66; Giorgio Jossa, *Jews or Christians?: The Followers of Jesus in Search of Their Own Identity*, WUNT 202 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 12-13. Jossa uses “Christian” loosely to denote all followers of Jesus: Christ believers. This approach is inattentive to the narrative logic of Acts which situates the soubriquet in the diaspora where it belongs and severs it from the oft-assumed following of Jesus. The caption of his chapter two reinforces his thesis: “The Christians from 30 CE to 100 CE.”

while retaining Christ-believing Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene, Barnabas, and Paul. Similarly, Paul is also not a viable candidate, because he is the last person to be recruited. Likewise, Barnabas is not the founder of “Christianness,” because he was sent by the ἐκκλησία in Jerusalem to a thriving Christ association in Antioch. These straightforward eliminations point in the same direction: Christ-believing diaspora Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene, who proclaimed the gospel of Jesus to Gentiles. This is the most compelling reading. The pioneers of “Christianness” are de facto anonymous. This historiographical depiction of “Christian” origins is symbolic: imprecise, anonymous, audacious, and spontaneous. Anonymity implies indecipherable pioneers; imprecision denotes the gradual emergence of group consciousness; audacity stresses breaking away from normative “Jewish” proclamations; spontaneity bespeaks ethnic and sociocultural exigency (i.e., diaspora Jews who share a common sociocultural milieu with other Hellenists naturally extended the gospel of Jesus to them). Ethnic hybridity provides a fecund social backdrop for this ideological crosspollination: the good news about Jesus and the subsequent waiver of some ancestral practices. Central to Luke’s relating of the origin of “Christianness” is the implicit absolution of Paul from its foundation: he is the last person to be coopted into an ethnically and socioculturally diverse body of believers. In an ostensibly simple story, Luke achieves the following: (1) he exonerates Paul from allegations of founding a socioculturally dissenting diaspora “Jewish” sect that poses grave danger to ancestral customs; (2) he makes “Christian” origins the offshoot of Christ-believing diaspora Jews’ spread across Asia; (3) he stresses Jerusalem’s endorsement of “Christianness” from its very inception (i.e., the ἐκκλησία in Antioch is not a renegade); and (4) he reiterates the rapport between “Christians” in Antioch and those in Jerusalem, the symbol of authenticity and “Jewish” orthodoxy. Given the detailed preface of the Third Gospel as an “orderly account” (i.e., rhetorically organized argumentation),

the implications of this pericope on “Christian” origins include: refuting egregiously misleading ideas circulating about “Christianness” and exonerating Paul from allegations of perverting “Jewishness.” Luke’s tale offers a helpful resolution to this pervasive disinformation about Paul and “Christianity’s” wanton recruitment of Gentiles, while accommodating their sociocultural distinctiveness. Put crisply, Paul is not the pioneer of “Christianness,” and “Christians” remain faithful to “Jewish” ancestral customs.³⁵⁴ Setting the record straight means—historiographically speaking—rhetorically organizing arguments on early “Christianity” to debunk the “fake news” widely in circulation.³⁵⁵

3.2.3 The “Christian” City

Antioch is definitely *the* “Christian” city, because there Christ-believing diaspora Jews who fled persecution in Jerusalem, after living among Gentile Christ believers for an entire year, are called “Christians,” alongside Barnabas and Paul. It is Luke’s meticulously chosen city for an unprecedented ethnic and sociocultural experiment: Christ-believing diaspora Jews residing amid Gentiles: sharing a common life and identifying as members of the same fold. Being a work of historiography, Luke earmarks Antioch as the most fitting venue for this pioneering experiment in cultural hybridity, which unfurls a pathway to being “Jewish” without the mandatory acceptance of its concomitant ethnic obligations. Antioch is also the city where an altercation ensues between sticklers for the stringent observance of ancestral mores by Gentiles and Barnabas and Paul. Although some scholars have speculated about the place of composition of Acts, the most reliable clue for Luke’s perspective of “Jewishness” and “Christianness” is not the locations most visited by Paul but the venue for the first “Christian” experiment that triggered

³⁵⁴ Pace Robinson, *First Christians*, 152.

³⁵⁵ Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism*, 77.

the Jerusalem Council. The literary situation of crucial moments in “Christianness” in Antioch is significant, especially in the light of literary cartography.³⁵⁶ But I am not saying that Antioch is definitely the place of composition for the Lukan corpus; rather, my claim is based on Luke’s avowed method: historiography, literary cartography, and narrative criticism. Antioch is a top contender for the provenance of Acts, because it plays host to key moments in “Christianness.”

3.2.4 “Christian” Appellation

The appellation “Christians” is a third-party designation: it is not Luke’s term for the social experimental assembly, and it is definitely not the group’s preferred name. This is clear from both occurrences of the word: in Acts 11:26, *χρηματίσαι* is an aorist infinitive stative verb; in Acts 26:28, Agrippa inquires if Paul is persuading him to become a “Christian.” In both instances, neither the “Christians” in Antioch nor the “Christian” Paul self-identifies accordingly. “Christian(s)” is thus a third-party appellation in Acts: stative verb or Agrippa. As a work of historiography, what is the significance of this third-party epithet? Since “Christians” in Acts do not call themselves by this soubriquet, it is not an epithet that identifies them internally. Rather, it is a neutral term used by intrigued outsiders for a socially hybrid assembly: “neither Jew nor Greek.” Acts is inundated with a plethora of preferred, pertinent, and popular epithets: Jews and Gentiles. These ethnic terms, in Luke’s symbolic world, are normative, unlike “Christians.” Acts’ bifurcated worldview—Jews and Gentiles, Jerusalem and diaspora, and Christ believing and non-Christ believing—shows that an epithet denoting ethnic hybridity is taxonomically incongruous, because such a term encompasses persons from the aforementioned classes. Besides taxonomical incongruity, a novel, third-party lexeme accentuates the nature of this

³⁵⁶ Ryan et al., *Narrating Space*, 1; see Chartier, “Introduction,” 15-16; see also Tally, Jr., *Spatiality*; idem, *Topophrenia*; Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination*.

“Christian” experiment: although Luke knows of this cognomen, he refrains from using it; the participants in this experiment do not call themselves by it, because they self-identify by other meaningful lexemes, like “Jews.” Since historiography employs historical events and figures to report contemporaneous reality, Luke is obviously making the following claims: (1) that the soubriquet “Christians” was already pervasive in Asia Minor; (2) that this epithet is what intrigued outsiders call this ethnically hybrid assembly; (3) that Luke’s preference for other designations bespeaks ongoing ethnic distinctiveness within the assembly; and (4) that “Christian” assemblies had become places where Jews and Gentiles shared a common life: listening to Scripture, sharing meals, and engaging in social intercourse. The first reference to the “Christian” experiment is ideologically dense: it is an ethnic and sociocultural melting pot. An entire year of common life between Christ-believing diaspora Jews and Gentiles inferentially includes a litany of human activities (although not specified), without prejudice to Luke’s story.

3.2.5 The “Christian” Social Experiment

What then is the “Christian” social experiment and how is it unprecedented in the world of Acts? Acts is a meticulously written account of how a Jewish movement of Christ believers spread across Asia Minor and Greece and reached Rome. It begins with “unfinished businesses” or “housekeeping” stories: the Ascension of Jesus and the death and replacement of Judas Iscariot. In a sense, these narratives “tidy up” the “unfinished business” of the Third Gospel: taking the risen Jesus out of the scene and “justice” being served for Judas’ betrayal. Right after the replacement of Judas by Matthias, Luke relates the Pentecost event: the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Galilean following of Jesus: the apostles, Jesus’ female disciples, his mother, and siblings. These testify to the transforming gift of the Holy Spirit to diaspora Jews from across the globe.

From this monumental event to the dispersal that ensued following Stephen's martyrdom, Acts reports all-Jewish episodes in Judea, mostly in Jerusalem. Between introducing the dispersal and subsequently rejoining its narration at 11:19, Luke adds pertinent details to the diaspora Jewish mission: the conversion of Samaria and the Ethiopian Eunuch, Paul's commissioning, the conversion of Cornelius, and Peter's justification of the same before the Jerusalem assembly. These intervening narratives predispose the reader to Luke's principal motif: Christ-believing diaspora Jews recruiting devout Gentiles, like Cornelius, and sharing a common life with them as if with fellow Jews.³⁵⁷ This transformative, monumental sociocultural experiment is the flagship of "Christianness": Christ-believing diaspora Jews who ardently hold that pious Gentiles need not be uncharitably and uncritically obligated to the strict observance of ancestral practices. This is the audacious ideological worldview that created the phenomenon, "Christianness." This reality in Acts does not suggest a distinct "religion" but defends a social group that is ethnically diverse (Jews and Gentiles), yet culturally compatible (Hellenists) and ideologically united (Christ believers).³⁵⁸ The remarkable successes of this social experiment are indeed the fulfillment of the Pentecost: *e pluribus unum*. After the successful flagship scene of Jewish and Gentile Hellenists living together, opposition to this novel sociocultural configuration intensifies. Again, according to Acts, as I have extensively argued in chapter two, the rivalry that ensues among "Jews" does not bespeak notions of a "Christian" replacement. Instead, it is Luke's

³⁵⁷ I disagree with Vernon K. Robbins's claim that in Acts there exists "sharp boundaries" between diaspora Jews and Gentiles. "The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models of Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 306. Esler claims that the Gentiles that Luke is interested in are devout persons who acknowledge the superiority of the Jewish God and are enamored by some Jewish customs—of course, excepting circumcision and dietary laws. *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*. This conviction blurs the ethnic boundaries that ordinarily might separate the two. Even the argument of social discrimination based on ethnic distinctiveness is not sustainable as some scholars who have studied diaspora Jewish cultural assimilation in the Greco-Roman world argued. See Hacham and Sagiv, "Social Identity," 325-43.

³⁵⁸ Pace Wills, "Depiction of the Jews," 653; Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts," 69-85.

ingenious reporting of diaspora Jewish internecine scrimmage: all parties involved are residents of diaspora cities, meaning that they are diaspora Jews. Jerusalem is not the villain but the arbiter of “Jewishness.” This explains its recurrent legitimating function: Peter’s defense of Cornelius’ conversion, the Jerusalem Council, and Paul’s trials. According to Luke, Jerusalem is a neutral legitimating authority that arbitrates over new interpretations of “Jewishness.” The “Jewish” villains, who are dubbed “unbelieving Jews,” are diaspora Jews who disapproved of Christ-believing diaspora Jews’ concessions to devout Gentiles. This ideological strife is portrayed as an inevitable consequence of admitting Gentiles without mandating them to Judaize. For too long, scholars have interpreted the dual occurrence of “Christian(s)” in Acts as indicating the parting of Judaism and Christianity.³⁵⁹ This cannot be further from the truth. Rather, Acts relates the skepticism that greeted the nascent stages of a new, daring, ethnically inclusive and culturally complex experiment that triumphed. It legitimates an already existing but often vilified historically identical group.

3.2.6 “Christianness” as “the Way”

As the reflection of “Christianness,” Paul mirrors “the Way.”³⁶⁰ This appellation makes its debut when Paul’s (then Saul) first significant action is reported: capturing Christ believers in Damascus (9:1-2). Like the adversarial character “the Jews,” “the Way” is intimately linked to

³⁵⁹ Mount, *Pauline Christianity*; Wills, *Not God’s People*, 195; Wilson, “Jews and the Death of Jesus,” 164.

³⁶⁰ Or “the Movement,” according to Pervo, *Mystery of Acts*, 98. For more on the rhetorical function of Paul in Acts, see 5.2 below.

Paul. He is the *raison d'être* for both terms: he personifies the group that “the Jews” oppose, and he represents those who subscribe to “the Way.” From the viewpoint of narrative criticism, if “the Jews” and “the Way” are introduced during Paul’s debut and are mostly used in relation to him, then their denotations are inseparable from him. He imbues meaning to these epithets. The occurrences of “the Way,” as I will demonstrate below, confirm Luke’s intent for its application.

Acts 9:2 relates Saul’s resolute commitment to subdue “the Way” in Damascus. As an ardent diaspora Jew (albeit his diaspora “Jewishness” gets no attention here), he goes to the high priest to get authorizing letters to hunt down members of “the Way” in Damascus. These persons are evidently diaspora Jews who are subject to the high priest’s jurisdiction. This reporting belies allegations of “Christians” parting from other diaspora Jews. Having to “fish out” “Christians” from diaspora Jewish synagogues suggests that their identity was unquestionably Jewish. This is the story that Luke consistently tells: “Christianness” is not a distinct social reality from diaspora Jewishness. Instead, diaspora Jewishness is the bedrock of “Christianness.” This argument is bolstered by all the other references to “the Way.”

Acts 18:25-26 features the only “non-Pauline” citation of “the Way.” Excepting the lack of reference to Paul, this reference reinforces the foregoing denotation of “the Way”: it applies to Christ-believing diaspora Jews solely. It is not an appellation that designates Judeans or Christ-believing Galileans—like the apostles, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his siblings. In this passage, “the Way” identifies the following Christ-believing diaspora Jews: Aquila and Priscilla (natives of Pontus) and Apollos (a native of Alexandria). It is not sheer coincidence that apart from Paul, the named characters who are associated with “the Way,” like him, are also Christ-believing diaspora Jews. Luke’s reasoning is remarkably consistent: he is not addressing Christ

believers generally; rather, he is making a compelling case for a group of Christ-believing diaspora Jews' interpretation of "Jewishness," just like his configuration.

Acts 19:9, 23 report the challenges encountered by Paul in proclaiming the good news about Jesus and defending "the Way." Although his preaching is addressed to a diaspora Jewish synagogue, some of them spoke ill of "the Way," forcing him to abandon these non-Christ-believing diaspora Jews. This piece of information is very insightful. Not every diaspora Jew subscribed to "the Way." Therefore, "the Way" is not simply diaspora Jewry or Christ believers, but Christ-believing diaspora Jews.

In Acts 22:4, Paul recounts his prior days as a persecutor of "the Way." This reference alludes to Acts 9:2. It is part of his defense before the Jerusalem authorities. His rhetoric evinces his diaspora Jewish identity, by stating his birthplace and speaking in Aramaic to ingratiate the irate mob, and to demonstrate that he has been a relentless defender of ancestral practices. "The Way," although an integral part of diaspora Jewry, comes under the scrutiny of the Jerusalem authorities, because of its members' worrisome practices, like non-Judaizing Gentiles. This reference to "the Way," like all the others, denotes Christ-believing diaspora Jews, who do not mandate the holistic Judaizing of devout Gentiles.

Acts 24:14 further clarifies "the Way": it is not a third-party soubriquet like "Christians." "The Way" is used both by Luke and Paul. This preferred epithet indicates how Luke perceives his group's relationship with Jews elsewhere, particularly those in Jerusalem. Paul's conscious distinction—that others misconstrue "the Way" by calling it a "sect"—implies that "Christians" are not like Sadducees (5:17), Pharisees (15:5), or the Essenes (Josephus, *Life* 10; 12; 191). These groups in Acts—excluding the Essenes, of course—are Judean factions. By insisting that "Christians" are members of "the Way" not "a Sect," Paul both distinguishes them from these

Judean factions and asserts that their distinctiveness is not a notably formal one, comparable to Greek philosophical schools. Rather, the uniqueness of “Christians,” which Paul mirrors, lies in the creation of a new sociocultural entity, borne out of pastoral exigency, wherein Gentiles are not obligated to Judaize completely. Using the earlier-established principle of “merger identity” (see 2.1 above), Christ-believing diaspora Jews are convinced that it is not obligatory for Gentiles to Judaize in order to join diaspora Jewish groups. The multiple, logical leaps assumed include: (1) the observance of all ancestral practices is not necessary for Gentiles; (2) being Hellenists themselves, Christ-believing diaspora Jews can associate with other Hellenists. Relentlessly throughout Acts, Paul forges ahead with this conviction. Paul’s insistence on the epithet, “the Way,” suggests that spurious dichotomies like “Jews-Christians” or, even worse, “Judaism-Christianity,” are grossly neglectful of Luke’s recurrent rhetoric. Put pointedly, “Christianness” logically implies diaspora Jewishness, because the very definition of the former presupposes the latter. Luke is not anachronistically touting a conciliatory reading of “Judaism” and “Christianity”; instead, he is depicting a sociocultural entity that inherently makes some “Christians,” like Paul, de facto diaspora Jews. This portrait reformulates a timeless aphorism that is oft-ignored: different expressions, one religion; different people, one identity.

3.2.7 Discussion Summary

“Christianness” in Acts is encapsulated in five “Christian” indices: persons, pioneers, location, appellation, and sociocultural experiment. “Christian” persons refer to those whom Luke designates “Christians.” In the foregoing study, I have demonstrated that being a Christ

believer is not interchangeable with being a “Christian,” because the Christ-believing diaspora Jews whom Luke calls “Christians” are those who preached to Gentiles and associated with them. “Christians” are not simply Christ believers; rather, they are Christ-believing diaspora Jews who admit Gentiles into their assemblies without mandating their stringent compliance with ancestral practices. “Christian” pioneers do not refer to Barnabas and Paul, contrary to popular opinion. Per Luke, the founders of “Christianness” are anonymous Christ-believing diaspora Jews, who deviated from the norm (i.e., preaching to diaspora Jews solely) by proclaiming the gospel to Gentiles and living in their midst. This narrative excludes Paul as a possible founder of “Christianness.” “Christian” location identifies Antioch as a specific diaspora “Jewish” assembly that becomes the flagship of a transformative ethnic and sociocultural experiment wherein pious Gentiles are admitted into Christ-believing diaspora “Jewish” associations and mingle with them. Antioch is a likely contender for the provenance of Acts, since it features key “Christian” scenes: the first “Christians” and the origin and destination of the diaspora Jewish council in Jerusalem’s deliberations. “Christian” is a third-party epithet. It is neither used by Luke nor by “Christians.” His preferred designation for “Christians” is “believing Jews” (Christ-believing diaspora Jews). Although Luke is aware of the appellation, “Christians,” he reports it as an epithet employed by outsiders for this novel sociocultural experiment. Lastly, “Christianness” evinces sociological characteristics: it is an ethnic and sociocultural experiment that triumphed. Luke stresses the audacity of the Christ-believing diaspora Jews who broke ranks with their colleagues in order to proclaim Jesus to Gentiles. Narrating “Christianness” shows its audacious, precarious, spontaneous, and anonymous origins within diaspora Jewry. Luke describes “Christianness” not as Paul’s brainchild but as the initiative of keenly interested Christ-believing diaspora Jews who shared the message of Jesus with their Gentile compatriots. But after the diaspora Jewish council

in Jerusalem, Paul mirrors “Christianness.” This post-council depiction of Paul is arguably the pervasive tradition in Luke’s milieu, which is “rhetorically organized” at the inception of the premier Christian association to absolve the “apostle to the Gentiles” of the disinformation circulating about him. These “Christian” indices collectively present a contextually grounded portrait of “Christianness”: a stable fellowship of Christ-believing diaspora Jews with Gentiles wherein the latter are not obligated to abide by a strict observance of “Jewish” ancestral customs in order to be bona fide members.

3.3 “Christianness” in Luke’s Day

In the preceding segment, I argued that “Christianness” denotes a stable, hybrid assembly composed of Christ-believing diaspora Jews, who ardently hold that non-Jews need not Judaize in order to join them, and pious Gentiles. Assessing “Christianness” in Luke’s day requires the investigation of the manifold depictions of Christ-believing groups found in geographically diverse extrabiblical Christian literature written within the stipulated timeframe of this project: the combined imperial reigns of Domitian, Nerva, and Trajan (81-117 CE). In a thematic order, these writings include: the epistles of Ignatius, *I Clement*, the *Didache*, the *Epistle to Diognetus*, and the *Epistle of Barnabas*.³⁶¹ Prior to these discussions, I will examine the isolated occurrence of “Christian” in 1 Pet 4:16. The aim of these investigations is to create a comprehensive portrait of “Christianness” (understood here as those specifically designated by the term) in the world of Acts, highlighting their overlaps and dissimilarities.

3.3.1 First Peter

³⁶¹ The sequence of these apostolic writings is not chronological but thematic: only the epistles of Ignatius utilize Χριστιανισμός and Χριστιανός, the Greek words usually translated as “Christianity” and “Christian.”

First Peter was written for Christ believers in Asia Minor, who were undergoing scorn and defamation at the hands of their Gentile compatriots (1 Pet 1:1). It repeatedly mentions the generic persecution (e.g., “various trials,” “fiery ordeal”) experienced by these believers, which is portrayed as verbal in nature—defamation and ridicule (1:6-7; 2:23; 4:4, 12). The context of 1 Peter has been hotly debated, because the text avails itself to competing interpretations. But the bone of contention is usually predictable: deciphering the meaning of *παρεπίδημοι* (strangers or foreigners) in the text and its implications for contextualizing the letter. Scholars who espouse a sociopolitical reading of the term, like John H. Elliott, argue that it denotes “a specific segment of the population who, because of foreign origin and allegiances, has limited political, legal, and social rights.”³⁶² His sociopolitical (or sociological, as he prefers to call it) method is insightful most times but not this time, because it raises many probing questions: (1) if the addressees are “foreigners” in Asia Minor, what is their nationality or country? (2) Elliott’s stance evinces his assumptions: diaspora Jews remained and were treated like foreigners in their cities (I debunked this reasoning in chapter two); (3) it also reveals his position on the ethnicity of church members in Asia: they are solely Jews (this belies Luke’s portrait); and (4) since Paul writes to the church in Galatia, a city mentioned at the introduction of 1 Peter, where were those believers, who arguably were an admixture of Jews and Gentiles, two generations later? Elliott’s argument reiterates a misleading notion of the diaspora: Jews who lived in such places remained foreigners.³⁶³ Although Josephus’ history is fraught with ideological interests, his overarching depiction of diaspora Jews suggests that in Alexandria, granted his portrait is not representative

³⁶² John H. Elliott, *Conflict, Community, and Honor: 1 Peter in Social-Scientific Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2007), 1-50. Elliott personifies the sociopolitical reading of “foreign aliens.” For similar arguments, see idem, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

³⁶³ For a detailed discussion on this subject, see 2.1.3 above. Kraabel articulates this beautifully when he says that the “diaspora became a Holy Land, too.”

of all diaspora Jewish experiences, they flourished and enjoyed imperial countenance (*Ant.* 14.117; *J.W.* 2.487). Hence, the narrative of diaspora Jews being “foreigners” in their own cities and persecuted accordingly is inaccurate and misleading.

Donald P. Senior and Karen H. Jobes interpret *παρεπίδημοι* metaphorically, as do many other scholars.³⁶⁴ Their arguments, however, are not anchored on my foregoing claims regarding diaspora Jewishness but on the biblical tradition of spiritualizing Jewish diaspora. My acceptance of this reasoning is not based on theologizing diaspora Jewry but on the historical improbability of Elliott’s sociopolitical argument. Given this reading, the hostility experienced by the churches in Asia Minor is apparently induced by their antisocial lifestyle and anti-Roman disposition that is crisply summed up as immorality: “licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry” (4:3).³⁶⁵ The letter’s rhetoric suggests that this undesirable condition or generic suffering has come about because of the Christ believers’ wholehearted turning to Christ. Living among Gentiles, their repudiation of vile acts, according to the author, induces animosity from non-Christ believers (1:14-16; 2:11-12), whose expectation of ongoing indulgence in impropriety implies that both groups—“Christians” and irate Gentiles—are of the same race. This explains why these Gentiles reasonably expected that Christ believers (mostly Gentiles) would conduct themselves like their compatriots. This expectation would be ludicrous if those

³⁶⁴ Donald P. Senior, *1 Peter*, Sacra Pagina 15 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 9-10; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2005), 44.

³⁶⁵ It is important to note that this generic appraisal, frequently attested in “Christian” literature, does not accurately describe “non-Christian” Greeks collectively, because the ancient Greek philosophers—Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—equally accented a morally purposeful and fulfilling life as the *summum bonum* of humans. Not only did these Greek philosophers envision moral uprightness as the path to a fulfilled life, they also regarded ethically blameless persons as ideal political leaders. See Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974); Aristotle, *Politics*, 2nd ed., trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). So already in the fourth century BCE, Greek philosophers highly esteemed moral rectitude and self-discipline. It is very unlikely that this ethical legacy vanished from Greek cities after the demise of its lustrous thinkers. Negative depictions of non-Christ believers in “Christian” texts thus are best construed as polemics designed to contrast “Christianness” with “otherness.” This elitist rhetoric justifies and bolsters the moral “higher ground” chosen by proselytes, who are predominantly Gentiles.

targeted were mostly Jews, who were never aligned with such abhorrent behavior. Therefore, these churches were persecuted, because, although they shared a lot in common with their non-Christ-believing compatriots, they refused to participate in the latter's impropriety, thereby being subjected to undeserved suffering—a recurrent theme in 1 Peter.

Notably, the hostile living condition of the churches in western Asia is never attributed to an imperial government. Instead, the opposite is true: unequivocal obedience to competent human institutions is demanded (2:13-14, 17) and the household code is upheld and lauded (2:18; 3:1, 7; 5:5). Citing this prevalent domestic hierarchical structure, the author, just like the exhortations on suffering, mandates stringent compliance to this civic norm in order to showcase Christ believers as law-abiding and dignified (2:15). Living among the general population while being faithful to the moral standards of “Christianness” makes these Asian churches susceptible to defamation by “ordinary people.” Although pervasive, their suffering is neither state-wide nor state-sponsored: it is engendered by the scrutinizing behavior of their non-Christ-believing compatriots (3:9, 16; 4:4), which is consistently described as defamation and calumny. Using the undesirable living conditions as a springboard, the author exhorts churches in Asia and beyond not to despair. Their persecution is patently induced by Gentile hostility caused by their moral distinctiveness. Appealing to Jesus’ exemplary life, the author enjoins these churches to emulate the lustrous example of its inspirational founder by showing perseverance amid undeserved suffering (4:16). It is within this literary context that church members are called “Christians.” Although many commentators stress the pejorative connotation of this term, I think the author is upending its pervasive denotation to achieve a rhetorical objective.³⁶⁶ This epithet is not simply a derisive soubriquet. Rather, it is a hortatory appellation that aims to reignite the enthusiasm of

³⁶⁶ Elliott, *Conflict, Community, Honor*, 1-50; Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 160.

beleaguered Christ believers. Since Acts and 1 Peter both mention Asia Minor cities in their narratives and feature “Christians,” it means that this appellation is a parochial designation for Christ believers, which is typically employed by disinterested outsiders and probably assumes hortatory significance at times of existential threat (e.g., 1 Peter and Ignatius).³⁶⁷ The addressees of 1 Peter are not called “Christians.” Neither are those of Acts or Ignatius. The epithet is clearly not yet the preferred designation for Christ believers. Although 1 Peter employs it to accent the significance of emulating Jesus’ disposition at his passion, it is highly debatable if this rhetorical application equals endorsement for quotidian life. The logic of modeling the church’s suffering after that of Christ is repeatedly stressed throughout the letter (2:21-24; 4:1). The churches’ ongoing persecution is regarded as a participation in Jesus’ suffering (4:13).³⁶⁸ “Christian” in 1 Peter means imitating Jesus in his passion and death so as to inherit his glory. The rhetoric of resurrection being the reward of persecuted Christians is also persuasively argued by Ignatius (*Eph.* 11:2). Hence, we see that “Christian” is hortatory both in meaning and application.

3.3.2 *First Clement*

First Clement addresses the problem of division in the church at Corinth. It bemoans the disunity between church members and their leaders, caused by the illegitimate deposition of their overseers from office (*1 Clem.* 44). Eusebius attests: “In the name of the church at Rome,

³⁶⁷ For a discussion of this lexeme in Roman writings, see 3.1 above; for a historical-critical analysis of 1 Peter’s fictive audience, see Will Robinson and Stephen R. Llewelyn, “The Fictitious Audience of 1 Peter,” *HeyJ* 61 (2020): 939-50.

³⁶⁸ For a philosophical presentation of “participation in Christ,” see Stanley K. Stowers, “What Is ‘Pauline Participation in Christ’?” in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders*, ed. Fabian Udoh et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 352-71. Stowers opines that Christ believers are able to participate “in Christ,” because of the divine pneuma they share with Jesus.

Clement composed one recognized epistle, long and wonderful, and sent it to the church of the Corinthians, where there had been dissension” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.16). He opines that Clement is the author of the epistle (*Hist. eccl.* 3.13). Given the complex nature of questions of historicity and authorship, as a matter of convenience, I will refer to the author of the epistle as Clement. In his lengthy reprimand, the church in Rome neither exerts influence nor demonstrates preeminence over the Corinthian church.³⁶⁹ The tone of the letter is apparently fraternal, cordial, and collegial. It is thus anachronistic to imbue incipient Petrine primacy into it. Clement, the eponymous author, makes extensive use of Scripture and employs pertinent analogies to accentuate his repudiation of the Corinthian church’s malfeasance. Bolstering his overarching argument, he notes that the apostles knew that there would be “dissensions over the title of bishop” and tried to avert prospective agitations over church leadership by appointing credible persons as their successors. Agitations, dissensions, and ambitions, Clement notes, are engendered by a myriad of underlying vices that pervaded the Corinthian church (*I Clem.* 3). These vices that tarnish the church’s reputation, Clement maintains, are comparable to the problems addressed in Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (*I Clem.* 47).³⁷⁰ But unlike this letter, he argues that these agitators are neither apostles nor are they apostolic appointees. These instigators are accused of inciting some church members and turning them against their clergy. In the final exhortation, Clement beckons on these agitators to embark on a self-imposed exile for peace to reign in the beleaguered church (*I Clem.* 54).

In this epistle, “Christianness” is not solely a parochial reality but had become a universal identity as well. Not that there was a central governing body, but that Christ associations had

³⁶⁹ Barbara E. Bowe, *A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Paraenesis in Clement of Rome* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988).

³⁷⁰ Eusebius believes that Clement was a “colleague” of Paul (*Hist. eccl.* 3.15). This could explain the letter’s penchant for the Pauline phraseology, “in Christ.”

spread to major cities in the Roman Empire. From an organizational viewpoint, churches are autonomous; but from a religious perspective, they support themselves morally (and financially). Being autonomous creates particular churches; being members of far-flung Christ associations guarantees cordiality and fraternity. The thrust of the epistle—illegitimate deposition of rightful leaders—does not reveal the ethnic constitution of both churches. So whether these churches had a predominantly Gentile, Jewish, or mixed membership is insignificant. The bottom line is that some agitators ousted duly appointed church officials and that such act evinces moral depravity within a “Christian” assembly. Clement unequivocally condemns this incidence.

The main issue with the church in Corinth is sociological—the hierarchy of the church.³⁷¹ The power tussle bespeaks a burgeoning assembly of Christ believers that ambitiously tests the boundaries of acceptable organizational structure. It is thus not surprising that Clement relies on Paul for his admonition. Although Χριστιανός is not used in *First Clement*, “Christianness” (“in Christ” phrases) saturates the epistle: it copiously denotes being Christ-like. It is a functional social identity: acquired, retained, and defended. The best attestation to this denotation is “Let one who has love in Christ keep the commandments of Christ” (*I Clem.* 49). Keeping the “commandments of Christ” is equated to loving “in Christ,” which means that “Christianness” is inherently functional. Although *First Clement* employs “in Christ” often, most references do not identify church members but qualify fitting “Christian” behavior. The preponderance of “in Christ” expressions simulate Pauline letters: “godliness in Christ” (*I Clem.* 1), “those in Christ” (*I Clem.* 43), “calling in Christ” (*I Clem.* 46), and “love in Christ” (*I Clem.* 49). Other phrases coined after Christ’s name also have the same performative function: “Christian training” (*I*

³⁷¹ James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthians Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); L. L. Welborn, *The Young against the Old: Generational Conflict in First Clement* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2018).

Clem. 21, 47). “Christianness” is a behavioral quality not a nominal identity; it is functional not static; it is *what* Christ believers do, not *who* they are.³⁷² But this argument from silence does not gainsay the prevalence of “Christian” in Rome or Corinth; it only redefines it as a set of Christ-modeled behaviors.

Philologically speaking, “Christian” is not a name for church members but a rhetorical device employed to steer them toward Christ-like conducts. From a sociological viewpoint, “Christianness” is both parochial and universal. Both parochiality and universality are nurtured by a profound sense of unity and fraternity. Local independence, cordial universality, and common appeal to religious patrimony depict “Christianness” sociologically as incipient, far-flung Christ associations but philologically as a conduct modeling Christ-likeness.

3.3.3 Ignatius’ Letters

In Ignatius’ letters, Χριστιανός and Χριστιανισμός are both indices of “Christianness.” Just as I argued in chapter two, Ἰουδαϊσμός denotes insistence on Judaizing practices in Christ associations, while Χριστιανισμός indicates acts emblematic of ethnically diverse groups.³⁷³ Both nouns are functional: they accent behaviors and do not imply distinct “religions.” Similarly, Χριστιανός is a descriptive term: it delineates the moral conduct of Christ believers. Speaking of his forthcoming death, for instance, Ignatius asks for perseverance not only to be a nominal Christian but a real one: in martyrdom (*Ign. Rom.* 3.2). His wordplay is particularly insightful: λέγωμαι (nominal identity) and εὐρεθῶ (true identity). “Christianness” is not Christ believers’ nominal identity but their Christ-modelled behaviors. Ignatius’ unwavering faithfulness

³⁷² See Jenkins, *Social Identity*.

³⁷³ Daniel Boyarin, “Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism,” *J ECS* 6 (1998): 577-627; idem, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity,” 7-36; idem, “Why Ignatius Invented Judaism,” 309-24; Cohen, “Judaism without Circumcision,” 395-415.

(ἐὐρεθῶ), especially in the face of impending death, makes him a model Christ believer, because he perseveres to the very end. This same logic is applicable in the *Letter to the Magnesians*. Here, Ignatius utilizes Χριστιανόι rhetorically. He likens it to acknowledging the need for church hierarchy in principle but not showing deference on quotidian ecclesial matters (Ign. *Magn.* 4). Once again, in another effective wordplay, he contrasts nominal “Christianness” (καλεῖσθαι) with actionable behavior (εἶναι). “Being called” is a social identity function (what outsiders call Christ believers), while “being” underscores the need for distinctive practices that earmark Christ’s following. Ignatius’ hortatory employment of Χριστιανός prods the church in Magnesia to elicit a desirable response: deference to Damas, a young bishop (Ign. *Magn.* 2-3). So Χριστιανός, in these verses, is not simply a static identifier but a specific-behavior-inducing hortatory cognomen. Through this sparsely employed appellation, Ignatius reiterates the church’s occasionally forgotten functional identity: conformity to Christ in his death and resurrection.

In the *Letter to the Ephesians*, Χριστιανός is Ignatius’ affective epithet for Ephesian Christ believers. The soubriquet here, too, is subtly performative (Ign. *Eph.* 11.2). The Greek verb Ignatius uses, once again, is ἐὐρεθῶ. The first person, subjunctive mood stresses Ignatius’ personal prayer in the face of inevitable danger to remain a faithful Christian unto death. The “share” he hopes for is the resurrection: ἐν οἷς [τοὺς πνευματικοὺς μαργαρίτας] γένοιτό μοι ἀναστῆναι τη προσεθῇ ὑμῶν, (lit., “by these [these spiritual pearls] that by your prayer I may be raised”). In this line, Ignatius emphasizes the theological nexus between undeserved Christian suffering and the resurrection—the promised inheritance for faithful Christ believers, just like 1 Peter. The literary context for Ignatius’ reference to “Ephesian Christians” is his imprisonment. Χριστιανός is not merely a nominal identity but is a performative epithet that serves a hortatory function.

In Ignatius' *Letter to Polycarp*, he continues with this hortatory and rhetorical utilization of Χριστιανός. The context is an appeal to Polycarp to convene a council where a new overseer can be elected for the administration of the church in Antioch, Syria. Ignatius employs the term Χριστιανός to underscore the disposition of a Christ believer: subservience to the divine will (Ign. *Pol.* 7.3). For him, Christ believers should be eager to assume responsibilities. Χριστιανός does not nominally denote a Christ believer but signifies a Christ-modelled disposition. These instances show that Χριστιανός, although a familiar epithet for Christ believers, is performative in signification. Besides being performative, Ignatius, in the light of his looming martyrdom and firm emphasis on deference to bishop Damas, sees Χριστιανός as a designation that imbues a well-known cognomen with hortatory significance. Consequently, it is not a nominal epithet but one that profoundly resonates with the church's performative identity: emulating Christ.³⁷⁴

3.3.4 The Didache

The *Didache* is a brief exposition of nascent, formative teachings and liturgical activities that characterize a burgeoning Christ association. It is divided into two principal parts: teaching and praxis. The first part, especially the opening section, is reminiscent of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (*Did.* 1.3–3.10), while the second deals with liturgy—baptism, Eucharist, Sunday worship, prayers and prayerful dispositions, and other ritual practices (*Did.* 7–10, 14).³⁷⁵ Just like Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, the didactic segment also addresses morality, copiously citing Scripture.³⁷⁶ But this thematic similarity does not imply literary dependence: both texts can use

³⁷⁴ William R. Schoedel regards unity as the central theme in Ignatius' letters. *Ignatius of Antioch, Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 21.

³⁷⁵ For a collection of pertinent essays on this subject, see Huub van de Sandt, ed., *Matthew and the Didache: Two Documents from the Same Jewish-Christian Milieu* (Assen: van Gorcum, 2005).

³⁷⁶ Joseph Verheyden, "Eschatology in the Didache and the Gospel of Matthew," in *Matthew and the Didache*, 193-216.

gospel traditions independently without necessarily postulating literary dependence. Fortunately, the objective of this section is neither to review nor to explore source-critical issues but to unearth the *Didache*'s rhetorical depiction of "Christianness." On this subject, there are two dominant perspectives: philology and theology. The former delineates the contextual use of the lexeme "Christian," while the latter focuses on issues of instruction and praxis.

The *Didache* makes an isolated use of the lexeme "Christian," which occurs in the second part of the text dealing with practical matters. Here, "Christian" is not a nominal term for Christ believers, but a reference to itinerant purveyors of religion who seek remuneration. The larger literary context of this lexeme bolsters this claim, because the preceding segment uses avarice as an indisputable indicator of questionable purveyors of religion: "But if anyone says in ecstasy, 'Give me money' or something else, you must not listen to him" (*Did.* 11.12). The next section, by contrast, reads: "Every genuine prophet ... who is willing to settle among you is entitled to his support" (*Did.* 13.1). The theme of prophecy is introduced using the phrase "in the name of the Lord." Beyond doubt, the lexeme "Christian" refers to itinerant purveyors of Jesus with mercenary proclivities (*Did.* 12.4-5). The author pairs Χριστιανός with χριστέμπορός ("Christ-monger") to show that these mercenary religionists are exploiting the gospel of Jesus to their personal enrichment. This explains why the epithet is not used elsewhere. In this context, "claiming to be Christian" and "purveying Christ" are convertible. Hence, "Christian" is not a designation for Christ believers but a self-styled appellation of self-seeking itinerant preachers.

As a concept depicting an early church's Christ-likeness, "Christianness" means the exact opposite. The first segment of the *Didache* reinforces and expands the Sermon on the Mount material, while the second expatiates structured liturgical activities in the early church. The first part accentuates the centrality of moral uprightness for Christ believers, while the second evinces

early signs of an organized liturgy and a clearly defined hierarchy. The latter enumerates ritual practices that later typify Christian churches: baptism, Eucharist, and Sunday worship (*Did.* 7, 9–10, 14). “Christianness” here is comparable to other instances found in early Christian literature.

3.3.5 The *Epistle of Barnabas*³⁷⁷

The *Epistle of Barnabas* is an anti-Jewish vitriol. It was written to convince “Christians” that faith in Jesus Christ is the surest way to salvation, a theme that recurs throughout the epistle (*Barn.* 1:8; 4:6). However, it does not mention the terms, “Jews” or “Christians,” but delineates the deeds associated with the former. In this epistle, “Christianness” signifies Christ believers and their practices (i.e., their creative spiritualizing and moralizing of Jewish ancestral customs). James Carleton Paget frames the purpose of *Barnabas* differently: “The epistle is written against the background of a renewed hope in the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.”³⁷⁸ If this characterization is correct, why does the epistle spiritualize Jewish practices? Why render Jewish boundary markers obsolete if the possibility or expectation of a new temple was imminent? Carleton Paget takes the bait of imposing incongruous historicity on the text. Inasmuch as historical backdrops are useful and crucial to the interpretation of ancient literature, some sociopolitical milieux are more problematic than others, especially if they are assigned based on isolated claims within the text (*Barn* 16:3-4). Carleton Paget makes another contentious claim:

³⁷⁷ The *Epistle of Barnabas* is being reviewed for two reasons: (1) it evinces awareness of the destruction of the Second Temple and was quoted by Clement of Alexandria who flourished circa 150-215 CE in his *Stromata*; (2) it is regarded as a diaspora text. These attributes make it comparable to Acts. For a detailed discussion on the dating and provenance of *Barnabas*, see Robert A. Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé* (Paris: Cerf, 1971); Carleton Paget, *Epistle of Barnabas*; Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*; Ferdinand R. Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); and J. Christopher Edwards, *The Gospel according to the Epistle of Barnabas: Jesus Traditions in an Early Christian Polemic*, WUNT 503 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019). These scholars, however, concede that both the suggested timeline and provenance for *Barnabas* are at best well-reasoned, educated guesses.

³⁷⁸ Carleton Paget, *Barnabas*, 69.

Barnabas was written to give “Christians” “a clear identity over against the majority Jewish community.”³⁷⁹ If this were actually the intention of *Barnabas*, it failed woefully in achieving it. How can one actualize a “clear identity” based on the moralizing or spiritualizing of Jewishness? As the narrative of *Barnabas* consistently shows, even though the anti-Jewish vitriol suggests otherwise, “Christians” creatively articulated their Jewish heritage. Nothing else is more transparent. What is rather convincing is that the spiritualization of Jewish ancestral practices resonated with the audience because its temple had fallen.

Reidar Hvalvik suggests an eastern Mediterranean setting for *Barnabas*.³⁸⁰ After reviewing several proposals for *Barnabas*’ provenance, he concludes that this geographical region is most congenial to *Barnabas*’ content. The task of finding a suitable historical context is dependent on the historical reliability of the narrative itself, meaning that all scholarly proposals are at best well-reasoned, educated guesses. In line with his chosen location for *Barnabas*, Hvalik regards the narrative as a diaspora Jewish text.³⁸¹ This characterization, as I argued in chapter two, denotes any geographical location outside the province of Judea. This proposal is truly persuasive given the unlikelihood of its Judean provenance. Relying once more on literary clues embedded in the text, Hvalvik identifies the writer as a “God fearer.”³⁸²

Having addressed these preliminary issues, I will now review *Barnabas*’ understanding of “Christianness.” *Barnabas* is undoubtedly a vitriol against customary notions of “Jewishness,” the ideological backdrop against which the author fashions “Christianness.” Both ideologies are

³⁷⁹ Carleton Paget, *Barnabas*, 69. Carleton Paget’s reading of Jews and “Christians” is insufficiently nuanced. He assumes that both groups had parted ways, thus justifying the Christian quest of a unique, independent identity thoroughly purged of Jewishness. This is clearly not the case, because the author seldom mentions—if he does at all—neither “Jews” nor “Christians.”

³⁸⁰ Hvalvik, *Scripture and Covenant*, 41-42.

³⁸¹ Hvalvik, *Scripture and Covenant*, 42.

³⁸² Hvalvik, *Scripture and Covenant*, 44. In this work, I have tried to refrain from a full-blown discussion on the “God-fearers.” However, whenever I refer to devout Gentiles, those are the persons intended.

inextricably linked; hence, the latter is presented as a moralizing or spiritualizing of the former's literalist interpretation of divine ordinance. Put crisply, "Christianness" is the spiritualizing or moralizing of "Jewishness." In order to grasp the former, knowledge of what constitutes the latter is a logical presupposition for the reader. This rhetoric intelligibly assumes the following audience: Christ believers who are conversant with Jewish ancestral practices or Jewish Christ believers who continue with their rituals and probably encourage Gentiles to do likewise (i.e., to Judaize). If the continuing adherence to ancestral practices were not a pressing concern, it would be awkward for the author to dedicate so much time and energy to moralizing and spiritualizing the same. The author's vitriol is only intelligible when read as a backdrop to a church that is well grounded in Scripture and Jewish ancestral practices. Consequently, Carleton Paget's claim that *Barnabas* is setting forth a "clear identity" against "Jewishness" is far from convincing. What sort of "clear-identity" rhetoric will meticulously review all Jewish boundary markers? Surely in the post-70 CE era, there were traditional Jewish assemblies that spiritualized certain elements of Jewishness, too—granted not to the extent of *Barnabas*.

The depiction of "Jewishness" in *Barnabas* is hostile: it repeatedly demeans ancestral practices; it undermines the biblical foundations for these customs; and it unequivocally asserts that Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jews are doomed (*Barn.* 16:5). The historical context that can engender such an assessment of "Jewishness" is evidently post 70 CE, wherein Jews of varying ideological persuasions grappled with ingenious ways of explaining a colossal tragedy that had befallen Jerusalem. (Absence of a temple necessitates an ingenious interpretation of its role in the formation of God's people but does not justify the animus toward ancestral practices in general.) *Barnabas'* approach is to denigrate the scriptural foundation that undergirds practices popularly earmarked as "Jewish," because they did not safeguard Jews from Roman military

prowess and imperial ire.³⁸³ Although versatile in Jewish traditions, the author's identity is neither certain nor conclusive: the animus consistently shown toward Jewish practices and the prospective fate of those who still identify as Jews are too glaring to gainsay or overlook. Nevertheless, the tirade assumes that its readers are conversant with the issues being discussed: personal knowledge of "Jewishness" that can be ascribed to Jewish Christ believers or Judaized Gentiles. These options give a hermeneutical framework to the narrative.

Besides historical concerns, "Christianness" is described as spirituality or morality. After criticizing the localization of divine presence in the temple, *Barnabas* regards the human heart as the true temple of God (*Barn.* 16:7). Apart from its temple-replacement motif, it has a moralizing thrust (*Barn.* 2:1-2). It criticizes complacency and condemns overreliance on being a covenantal race (*Barn.* 4:6-7, 13). Its dogged commitment to spirituality or morality bespeaks an assembly that is distancing itself from its Jewish ritual roots, because it profusely cites Scripture—a Jewish text—to make its arguments. In *Barnabas* "Christianness" is practice-oriented: Christ believing consists in living a morally upright life and not reposing one's hope of salvation in adherence to Jewish ancestral customs. This practice-oriented emphasis is bolstered by an elaboration of the scriptural and salvific significance of the cross (*Barn.* 11–12). While demeaning these practices, *Barnabas* delineates "Christianness" as spirituality and morality, eschewing traditional Jewish customs. Accenting the church's distinctiveness in relation to the Sabbath, he endorses Sunday as the preferred day of worship (*Barn.* 15:9). Dietary laws, according to the author, came into existence because Jews misconstrued God's precepts, couched in metaphor (*Barn.* 10:2). In this same vein, circumcision has been superseded and God's directive to Abraham prefigures Christ (*Barn.* 9:4, 7). "Christianness" thus is morality, spirituality, and the deliberate dissociation from

³⁸³ There is, however, no explicit reference to the quelling of the First Jewish revolt by the Romans in 70 CE.

Jewish ancestral customs. It is a functional identity and assumes a definite denotation only in a string of contrasting activities.

3.3.6 The *Epistle to Diognetus*

The *Epistle to Diognetus* uses the lexeme, “Christian,” profusely. It bespeaks a completed parting of Jews and Christians, according to the author’s presentation. Employing an anonymous, generic plural appellation, “Christians,” it describes the beliefs and activities of Christ believers. In the narrative world of the text, “Christianness” is markedly distinguished from “Jewishness.” Stating unapologetically the writer’s mandate vis-à-vis that of Jesus, who is often called Logos, the mission of Christ believers is strictly defined as the evangelization of Gentiles (*Diogn.* 11.1-3). This starkly contrasts with previous writings, which implicitly concede the possibility of a hybrid audience—Christ-believing Jews and Gentiles. The author’s self-description suggests proximity to the apostles, which works to situate the text historically in the second generation of the Christ movement. But this is probably a self-legitimizing tactic used to convince the audience that the message is authentic, since apostolic authorship typically confers validity on gospel writing. So by itself, this piece of information does not suffice to provide a reliable date for *Diognetus*’ composition. But what is indisputable is its understanding and defense of the Christ movement: (1) it is distinct from “Jewishness”; (2) it is universal (*Diogn.* 6.1-10); (3) regarding group practices, the author is unaware or believes that Christians are indistinguishable from other groups (*Diogn.* 5.1-4), meaning that liturgical acts reported by other Christian writers are foreign to *Diognetus*. Its notion of “Christianness” is transitional: practice-oriented and focused on group identity formation. This nuanced application of “Christians,” coupled with its preponderance in the text, indicates either ideological, spatial, or temporal distance from Acts, which does not

relate the social identity of Christ believers by this term nor its preponderance in the narrative.

Diognetus also deviates from the pattern in other contemporaneous “Christian” writings, where “Christianness” signifies activities that typify authentic Christ believers.

Besides its markedly divergent ideological outlook, *Diognetus* features other historically significant data on the persecution of Christ believers in the Roman Empire (*Diogn.* 5.11-17).

Apart from this generic reference to anti-Christian hostility, it also alludes to a state-sponsored persecution (*Diogn.* 7.7). But it is unclear if this occurrence is contemporaneous with the epistle. Even if it is, its historical referent is imprecise: which persecution and by which emperor? These ambiguities are not explained by the author nor are they indicative of a specific time frame. What is most reliable is the depiction of “Christianness” and “Jewishness” as dispositions of rival groups. This portrait suggests a provenance other than second-century Asia Minor, where there were several hybrid Christ associations consisting of Jews and Gentiles.

3.3.7 The *Martyrdom of Polycarp*

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* dates to the second half of the second century and portrays a notably novel application of “Christianness” in comparison to Acts. “Christian” here is employed nominally to assert one’s status. It is not a third-party epithet nor is it used in a hortatory fashion: Polycarp self-identifies as a “Christian,” thus indicating that Christ believers had appropriated a soubriquet that was originally used by outsiders. Although I am not categorizing the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* as belonging to Luke’s era, I have included it in this analysis because it clarifies the conceptual trajectory of “Christianness” in the second century CE: descriptive (Acts), rhetorical-hortatory (1 Peter, Ignatius), and stative (Polycarp). The stative utilization of “Christianness” evinces a metamorphosized appellation: it is not only used by third parties but is Polycarp’s self-

designation. Asked several times to save his life by renouncing Christ and swearing by the fortunes of Caesar, Polycarp defiantly avows: “I am a Christian” (*Mart. Pol.* 10.1).

“Christianness” here is not simply the emulation of Christ’s virtues (i.e., rhetorical-hortatory) nor is it describing a novel hybrid sociocultural experiment (*Acts*); rather, it has evolved into a stable individual or group identification. This transition is further bolstered by the herald’s triple announcement and the outrage of Jews and Gentiles, each personalizing the epithet “Christian” (*Mart. Pol.* 12.1-2). “Christianness” is the ethos of the group that Polycarp personifies; it is an assembly of persons (distinct from Jews) that denigrates pagan cults and deities. It also refers to a set of instructions that creates a distinctive individual status: Polycarp offers to teach the proconsul how to become a Christian. The era of Polycarp’s martyrdom is markedly different from that of *Acts* and Ignatius. It bespeaks a well-developed, widely circulated epithet denoting Christ believers. Although Christ believers self-identified as “Christians” (stative) by the second half of the second century CE, the other denotations of the term (descriptive and rhetorical-hortatory) linger. So in the conceptual trajectory of “Christianness,” succeeding stages presume preceding ones: rhetorical-hortatory contains descriptive, and stative incorporates both descriptive and rhetorical-hortatory. These phases collectively reveal the temporal evolution of individual and communal consciousness by early Christ believers, who are first described as “Christians” by third parties, exhort themselves to emulate Christ using the same third-party lexeme, and finally self-identify accordingly.

3.3.8 Discussion Summary

In the foregoing study, I have carefully traced the notions of “Christianness” as an early second-century lexeme. This review shows that the ideological trajectory of Christianness spans

description, rhetoric, and identity. The earliest attestations of the lexeme were descriptive and usually indicated a third-party appellation; the intermediary applications of the epithet bespoke hortatory literary contexts; latter employments of the term evinced a conscious appropriation by Christ believers. Therefore, it is inattentive to this ideological trajectory to use “Christian” freely in Acts as a designation for all Christ believers, when later extrabiblical writings did not apply the designation with the same rigidity. Allowing nuances in designations for Christ believers paves the way for deciphering each narrative’s rhetoric in employing Christian and its cognates.

3.4 Chapter Summary

The analysis in this chapter shows that “Christianness” in the first quarter of the second century was an evolving concept. In the first segment, I argued that it is a third-party soubriquet that delineates Christ believers in the Roman Empire; that the myth of Jerusalem provenance of “Christianness” is founded on the naïvely misleading historicizing of a rhetorical narrative; that the theories of *Birkat ha-Minim*, *Fiscus Iudaicus*, and epigraphical findings do not satisfactorily explain Christian origins, because they all inaccurately assume that the parting of Christians and Jews was instantaneous and universal, comparable to a political referendum. The last section of the first part examined a representative piece of scholarship on “Christianness” in Acts. Looking at this work, I raised concerns about some pervasive scholarly assumptions that are inattentive to the critical discourse on the parting of ways that has redefined modern awareness of the ongoing interactions and negotiations of Jews and Christians in the second century. This aspect of studies obliges exegetes to reappraise the lexemes of “Jewishness” and “Christianness” in Acts.

The second segment of this chapter addressed Luke’s construal of “Christianness.” Here, I argued that Luke’s delineation of this lexeme inherently envelops “Jewishness.” That is not to

say they are the same or indistinguishable. But it does imply that both lexemes are ideologically entwined in Luke's mind: "Jewishness" denotes diaspora Jewry, while "Christianness" describes Christ-believing diaspora Jews and devout Gentiles who are not mandated to Judaize completely. So there is only one "religion" in Acts—Jewishness. "Christianness" is an empathetic expression of it. Whereas all "Christians" are Christ believers, not all Christ believers are "Christians." The crucial difference is being a diaspora Jew. Christ-believing Galileans are not "Christians," since they do not reside in the diaspora. But this does not diminish their Christ-believing status. It only indicates the location where the epithet "Christians" initially occurred. This new perspective to an old conversation has far-reaching implications for Lukan studies: "Christianity" versus "Judaism," parting of ways, and Christian origins. If Acts shows how "Jewishness" and "Christianness" are compatible, its content cannot be naïvely used to defend the replacement of the former by the latter, the parting of Jews and Christians, and the Jerusalem origin of "Christianity." Historiographical texts, as I have already established in chapter one, employ the past to discuss the present. Hence, the historical present of Luke is not determined by the chronological veracity of Acts but by its affirmation: Christ-believing diaspora Jews and devout Gentiles fraternized without the latter being mandated to Judaize fully. This is a historically responsible deduction from Acts.

In the third segment, I examined the conceptual evolution of "Christianness" in the works of Christian writers who are contemporaneous with Luke. This study shows that the lexeme was initially applied descriptively: it designates a sociocultural assembly of diaspora Jews and devout Gentiles. Later, it served as a practice-oriented appellation, wherein it denotes the emulation of Christ. Eventually, it became a stative term that identifies Christ believers in the diaspora. Since

social identity correlates with appellation, it makes sense to assume that those called “Christians” evolved in their group consciousness.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STATUS OF JEWS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

4.1 Religion in the Roman Empire

The notion of religion as a set of beliefs and practices that define a group’s interaction with and reverence for the divine is a modern Judeo-Christian imposition on Greco-Roman

antiquity.³⁸⁴ For an all-encompassing study of all manners of interaction with the divine and acts of reverence for deities in antiquity, restrictive delineations that exclude most “religions” must be set aside.³⁸⁵ In this section, I will review Rome’s disposition toward religions and distinguish between *religio* and *superstitio*, lexemes with misleading modern cognates (religion and superstition).

Most classicists agree that Rome had a favorable policy toward religious sects, provided they did not pose a threat to imperial peace, security, and right order.³⁸⁶ This pragmatic stance has been echoed by many writers. But in the following analysis, I will engage James Rives in depth, because he represents the scholarly consensus on Rome’s tolerance of religious proliferation and its exercise. First, he dismisses anachronistic impositions of a restrictive definition of religion on all ancient phenomena reflecting awareness of the divine. He asserts:

There was no one unified and coherent set of beliefs and principles, no sacred scriptures, no priestly class, and no associated moral code [excepting Jewishness and Christianness, of course]. Instead ... [there was] a group of loosely related but largely distinct ways of thinking about and interacting with the divine world.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith defines “religion,” the object that historians of religion investigate, as a scholarly creation: “A second-order, generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as ‘language’ plays in linguistics or ‘culture’ plays in anthropology.” “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in idem, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 194. For related studies, see idem, “Fences and Neighbors”; idem, *Drudgery Divine*. Smith’s description does not refer to the phenomenon by which people in antiquity interacted with the divine; rather, his emphasis is the “disciplinary horizon” (religious studies departments in universities) earmarked for investigating ancient “religions.”

³⁸⁵ After this instance, I will not apply scare quotes to the word, “religion,” but will use it with the same denotation below.

³⁸⁶ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*; James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007); Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*; Wouter Vanacker and Arjan Zuiderhoek, eds., *Imperial Identities in the Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

³⁸⁷ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 52; however, I doubt if Mary Beard and Richard L. Gordon would agree with Rives that the Roman religion was “priest-less.” Beard “Priesthood in the Roman Republic,” in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. Mary Beard and John A. North (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 19-48; Gordon, “From Republic to Principate: Priesthood, Religion, and Ideology,” in *Pagan Priests*, 62-83.

Rives's statement suggests that Jewishness is not the gold standard for what constitutes religion in antiquity. The first part of the quote describes contemporary notions of religion, while the latter delineates popular religions in Rome.

Second, Rives opines that openness and fluidity were quintessential traits of imperial religions in ancient times, because exclusivity was not a prerequisite for being a religionist.³⁸⁸ Devotees could seek out religious groups and experiences without backlash or social labeling. It was normal and expected. Permeable religious boundaries also meant that religionists did not construe their religions as being unique.³⁸⁹ Rives maintains that in Roman antiquity there was no such thing as contradictory religious beliefs: religionists could practice one religion, adopt the beliefs of another, associate with religionists of other cults, and not be bothered by an anachronistic designation such as syncretism.³⁹⁰ In addition to openness and fluidity, although Rives does not mention this as a distinct component, pragmatism (whatever is expedient or whatever works) can also be added. This means that it was expected for religionists to search without any restriction for the religions of their choice.

Third, Rives observes that ancient religions did not only offer religionists an opportunity to interact with the divine but created a sense of community. He says: "Rejecting collective worship meant rejecting group identity."³⁹¹ Conversely, refusal to worship parochial deities is tantamount to blatant unwillingness to assimilate into the society. This resistance would have been perceived as a threatening behavior. It could also mean that the individual was opposed to fostering the good of the empire, because at some of these religious rites, the emperor's welfare

³⁸⁸ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 52.

³⁸⁹ Smith, *Drudgery Divine*.

³⁹⁰ Rives says: "The fact that worship of one deity did not preclude the worship of others meant that it was possible for people to belong simultaneously to a number of different groups." *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 129; see also Wendt, *Temple Gates*.

³⁹¹ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 129.

(or his worship) is uppermost.³⁹² Orienting religious worship to social identity formation and political life is crucial.³⁹³ Rives accents this socioreligious nexus in the statement: “To belong to a community in the Graeco-Roman world meant to worship the deities of that community and to participate in its rituals, especially sacrifice and the accompanying meal.”³⁹⁴ Hence, religious activities inherently reinforced communal life; exclusion from religious rites was tantamount to excommunication (opting out of the community). If religion and society were inextricably entwined in antiquity, Roman officials would understandably clamp down on new, noncompliant groups (e.g., Christians), who refused to participate in ritual meals, because it was a glaring indication that they were opposed to imperial welfare.³⁹⁵ Rives’s thematic connection—worship, meal, and community—explains the rationale of the Roman sacrificial system, as other classicists reiterate: “The demand was not that Christians should worship Roman deities, but that they should participate in the sacrificial system as a whole with its offering of incense, pouring of libations and tasting of sacrificial meat.”³⁹⁶ Suppressing a clandestine religious sect was always necessitated by security concerns and imperial welfare, because religion is existentially bound to the society (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96).

³⁹² Beard, North, and Price capture this logic beautifully: “When Christians faced trials before Roman officials, the principal issue was their relationship to the traditional gods, not to the (divine) emperor.... Behind this lay a further concern: if they would not support the traditional pantheon (which upheld the emperor), how could they support the emperor [or the Roman Empire by extension]?” *Religions of Rome*, 361.

³⁹³ E. Mary Smallwood’s stance—that is, “Rome kept religion and politics apart”—has been jettisoned by modern historians of religion. *The Jews under Roman Rule: Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 130.

³⁹⁴ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 128.

³⁹⁵ The imperial privileges accorded to Jews were vigorously contested by embittered citizens in different provinces, because they were perceived as being anti-Roman. Despite this opposition, they were inevitable because Rome had to secure its geopolitical interest in the Levant. Martin Sicker captures this beautifully: “Judaea was not important to Rome because of the religion and culture of its people, whose general rejection of Roman culture and beliefs was an affront to the leaders of the mighty state. Its importance also had very little to do with anything that was to be found in the country, such as natural resources or other wealth. As far as Rome was concerned, Judaea’s singular significance lay in its geopolitical position.” *Between Rome and Jerusalem: 300 Years of Roman-Judaean Relations* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), viii.

³⁹⁶ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 239.

Fourth, Rives argues that belonging to a cult offered manumitted slaves, the poor, and the marginalized an opportunity “to advance their social status.”³⁹⁷ This “advancement” is premised on the existential nexus between religion and society: if cults created group identity, people at the lower rung of the economic ladder could “improve” their economic prospects by associating with those who were better placed socioeconomically. This makes sense given the interrelatedness of society, economy, and religion in Greco-Roman antiquity.³⁹⁸ It is superfluous to second-guess the actual motivations of the socioeconomically disadvantaged in religious groups, because every reason, regardless of it being self-serving, is a legitimate and valid basis to join or depart a cult. Given the way religious membership was used to gain practical, life-changing advantages, John S. Kloppenborg’s decision to designate religious configurations in Greco-Roman antiquity liberally as “associations” is justified.³⁹⁹

Fifth, the consequence of the foregoing nexus is that the same interconnectedness makes imperial authorities suspicious of clandestine fledgling groups. Rives asserts: “Roman authorities were often more concerned with the organization of public cult and religious authority because these things were intimately bound up with the fundamental power structures of society.”⁴⁰⁰ So in addition to religion being connected to communal life, it was also a cause for concern to Roman officials, because cultic alignment could be a springboard for insurrection by dissatisfied groups. Overseeing religious activities availed imperial authorities the opportunity to identify

³⁹⁷ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 128.

³⁹⁸ Marietta Horster, “Living on Religion: Professionals and Personnel,” in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, ed. Jörg Rüpke (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 331-41; Hubbard, “Greek Religion,” 105-23.

³⁹⁹ Kloppenborg, *Christ’s Associations*; see also Albert Baumgarten, “Graeco-Roman Voluntary Associations and Ancient Jewish Sects,” in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 93-112; Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); idem, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009); Ritter, *Judeans*, 3.

⁴⁰⁰ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 85.

potential threats to the status quo. This Roman a priori religious approval was mostly beneficial to Jews.⁴⁰¹ In sum, according to Rives, Rome did not restrict the free exercise of religion.

Next, I will examine the distinction between *religio* and *superstitio* in ancient Rome. *Pace* Rives, other classicists have argued that Rome was not a religious “free-for-all.”⁴⁰² This inference is based on the critical distinction between *religio* (acceptable religious practices) and *superstitio* (practices carried out by non-state-approved configurations). Translations of *religio* as “religion” and *superstitio* as “superstition” are misleading, because these terms in antiquity do not denote a defined set of beliefs and practices versus dubious religious conducts respectively. *Religio* was simply a public function carried out by the emperor or a priest that shows reverence for imperial deities. It includes: offering incense, pouring libations, and consuming the sacrificial meal.⁴⁰³ Usually, it is public, communal, and practice-oriented.⁴⁰⁴ By contrast, the modern meaning of religion presumes morality (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). But in antiquity, *religio* was practice-driven. The “religious” emperor, regardless of his moral disposition (e.g., infidelity to his wife), is the one who performs the required public, communal function of incense, libation, and ritual meal. Delineating *religio* in this fashion makes it a state-approved ritual that accords appropriate reverence to imperial deities. *Religio* is thus an integral component of “Roman self-description,” while *superstitio* is a “slur against others.”⁴⁰⁵ This implies that the latter connotes “foreignness” (not state-approved) as opposed to the former which denotes “Romanness” (state-approved).⁴⁰⁶ Tacitus’ utilization of *superstitio* corroborates this notion:

⁴⁰¹ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 195.

⁴⁰² Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 212.

⁴⁰³ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 239.

⁴⁰⁴ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 216.

⁴⁰⁵ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 215.

⁴⁰⁶ In the fourth century, when Christianity received imperial recognition, some authors designated Judaism as a *superstitio*, after being a *religio* for centuries. If the same religion can be both *religio* and *superstitio* at different points in time depending on who holds the reins of imperial power, it is certainly not the religion’s tenet that is vacillating but the state’s disposition toward it.

first, he dismisses an Alexandrian for worshipping Serapis (*Hist.* 4.81); second, he disparages Jews for practicing *superstitio* and rejecting *religio* (*Hist.* 5.13); third, he inculpates Christians for practicing “pernicious superstition” (*Ann.* 15.44). These applications of *superstitio* have a common thread: foreignness. They evince an approach to the divine which Romans find repugnant. Tacitus’ assessment is based on his elitist Roman perception. *Superstitio* connotes disapproval of foreignness in a way that is analogous to the Greeks’ dismissal of non-Greeks as barbarians. Like most lexemes employed in ancient Rome, *religio* and *superstitio* were tinged by a religionist’s political standing: approved (Roman) or disapproved (foreign).

In his account of the Bacchanalian scandal of 186 BCE, Livy relates a proconsul’s speech which highlights the menace posed by foreign cults.⁴⁰⁷ He implies that they induce crime and licentiousness; their ever-expanding membership threatens imperial security; their random (presumably clandestine) meetings are a cause of concern; and their male initiates are unsuitable for conscription into the military (59.15). This recapitulation of Livy’s diatribe against the Bacchanalian cult accents the pervading Roman suspicion of foreign religions. Because their activities are enshrouded in secrecy, they are deemed potentially dangerous. This proclivity is inevitable in an era underlined by unceasing military campaigns and relentless warfare. But a century and a quarter later, Julius Caesar will exempt the Jews from the prohibition imposed on the Bacchanalian cult (*Ant.* 14.213-216).

Writing after Rome’s conquest of Jerusalem and subsequent enslavement of its residents (63 BCE), Cicero repudiates Jews for being anti-Roman. He asserts: “The demands of their religion were incompatible with the majesty of our empire, the dignity of our name and the institutions of our ancestors; and now that the Jewish nation has shown by armed rebellion what

⁴⁰⁷ The Bacchanalian cult denotes the Bacchic ritual practices whose membership swept across Italy.

are its feelings for our rule, they are even more so” (*Flac.* 69). Although Cicero concedes that Jewishness is a *religio*, he nevertheless castigates it for being anti-Roman. Three words sum up the danger posed by Jewishness, according to Cicero: empire, name, and institution. These lexemes are synonymous with the Republic. Cicero connects the anti-Roman proclivity of Jews to their armed rebellion, thus establishing a diaphanous ideological nexus: foreign religions and potential insurrections. His speech foregrounds future Roman suspicion of alien religions and its cliché repudiation of them as *superstitio* (see *Clu.* 68.194). Cicero thus correlates two concepts that recur in Roman writings: anti-Roman *religio* and potential insurrections.

Elsewhere in the same writing, Cicero refers to Jewishness as a *superstitio*. The context is his praise for Flaccus’ prohibition of temple tax remittances by Asia Minor Jews (*Flac.* 67). He proudly cites the Roman senate’s practice of barring all financial remittances (exports of gold) from all parts of the Republic.⁴⁰⁸ Lauding Flaccus’ bold decision, he contends that depriving the Jews of their annual contribution was in the public interest, and he chides them for practicing an “outlandish superstition.” In the same vein, he praises Pompey for not desecrating or looting the temple after he captured Jerusalem. But he remarks that Pompey’s restraint had nothing to do with the religious sensibilities of the Jews but was borne out of sheer concern for public opinion (*Flac.* 68). Cicero is probably responding to competing accounts regarding the undergirding motivations of Pompey’s decision. Nevertheless, he is emphatic on the claim that it had nothing to do with the superstitious beliefs of Jews. Cicero’s criticism of anti-Romanness was not solely directed against Jews, even Greeks got a fair share of his elitist remarks: “the extravagance and unreliability of the Greeks” (*Flac.* 71). Although Cicero did not speak on behalf of every Roman,

⁴⁰⁸ Although Cicero does not give a definite reason for this policy, it might be a commonsense security measure: wars are expensive and require lots of funds both for the soldiers and their supplies. The senate’s policy was conceived as a preventive measure for prospective uprisings.

his repudiation of Jews indicates that there was a smoldering resentment toward them in Asia Minor and elsewhere in the Republic because of their antisocial behavior and anti-Roman inclination.

Referring to other religious groups, Cicero distinguishes between *religio* and *superstitio*. He defines the former as a thoughtful and reasoned disposition toward deities and the latter as an irrational and fear-based approach to the same (*Nat. d.* 2.72). The tenets of these religious sects are not Cicero's primary concern but the reasonableness of their practitioners. Religious persons are those who meticulously evaluate their acts of reverence to deities to ensure that they are not excessive or thoughtless. Conversely, the superstitious are those whose worship is punctuated by "groundless fear of the gods" (*Nat. d.* 1.117). Besides reverential paranoia, Cicero contrasts *superstitio* with science, because the hallmark of the former is irrationality (*Nat. d.* 3.92). Bereft of thoughtfulness, *superstitio* poses grave danger to imperial peace and order. Once again, Cicero highlights the anti-Romanness of foreign cults and dismisses them in his signature elitist fashion as *superstitio*.

Seneca distinguishes between *religio* and *superstitio*. Although *De clementia* concerns pity and mercy, he makes a passing comment regarding a befitting form of reverence to the gods and a profanation of the same. Just as *religio* is fitting and *superstitio* is a perversion, so is mercy the hallmark of the wise and pity the debilitation of the human will (*Clem.* 2.5). Even though Seneca does not mention any specific religion, his assumptions about *religio* and *superstitio* are telling. By extrapolation, the former is reasonable and fitting, while the latter is emotional and excessive. No doubt Seneca's assumptions about *religio* and *superstitio*, on the one hand, and mercy and pity, on the other hand, are politically charged. Just as the former (*religio* and mercy) in both cases are extolled by Romans, the latter (*superstitio* and pity) are frowned upon. Roman

officials are lauded and memorialized for their clemency (Cicero, *Flac.* 68; Augustus, *Res gestae* 3; Josephus, *J.W.* 5.360-61). Although modern readers assume that mercy and pity are synonyms denoting an emotional response toward the vulnerable or oppressed, for Romans, they are politically tinged: the former is a thoughtful decision that epitomizes Romans, while the latter is a mere emotion depicting the internal disposition of foreigners toward the disadvantaged.

Juvenal's harsh remarks about Jewishness echo Tacitus' assessment of the same. He ridicules the ancestral practices typically associated with Jews: Sabbath observance, abstention from pork, worshipping an invisible deity, practicing circumcision, loathing for Roman laws, and upholding of Mosaic precepts (*Sat.* 14.95-105). Juvenal's satirical synopsis of a Jewish priestess' trade discloses his underlying prejudice: Jewishness is a foreign religion. He remarks: "Jews will sell you whatever view of a dream you like for a couple of coppers" (*Sat.* 6.47-48). He is clearly extrapolating the priestess' trade onto all Jews everywhere. His cynicism is understandable and has been adeptly analyzed by Heidi Wendt, who has studied the religion of freelance experts in antiquity.⁴⁰⁹ Juvenal and Tacitus have shown that *religio* and *superstitio* were not just religious lexemes but were also politically tinged terms: Romanness (state-approved) and foreignness (not state-approved). The latter unsurprisingly was a catch-all term for Jews, Christians, and others.

Suetonius' employment of *superstitio* is similar to that of his Roman contemporaries. He says that punishment was meted out to Christians for practicing a "new and dangerous superstition" (*Nero* 16). Novelty in religious matters in ancient Rome was always greeted with suspicion.⁴¹⁰ And so to dismiss Christians as being both novel and superstitious is to underline their eccentricity. In Pliny's letter to Trajan, Christians are accused of novelty and superstition

⁴⁰⁹ Wendt, *Temple Gates*.

⁴¹⁰ Paula Fredriksen opines: "In the Mediterranean culture, for all groups, antiquity and ethnicity were the twin measure of respectability and of identity." *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 44.

(*Ep.* 10.96). The political underpinning of this letter cannot be overlooked: clandestine groups could pose security risks. Pliny cautiously probes Christian practices, judiciously seeking out nefarious activities all to no avail. Whenever Romans thus employ *superstitio*, they invariably highlight the foreignness of the religionist's practices and Rome's likely disapproval of such excessive reverential acts toward deities and threatening sociocultural configurations.

Along with the primary trait of foreignness, some classicists have imbued *superstitio* with two additional denotations: excessiveness and impropriety. Excessiveness spotlights aberrations incurred in showing unrestrained reverence to deities, while impropriety underscores the lack of state approval.⁴¹¹ *Superstitio* is the fitting antithesis of *religio* because whereas the latter offers the gods fitting reverence (state-approved) the former does not. In antiquity, the greatest threat to the practice of *religio*, as some classicists have argued, is not the “neglect of the gods” or the “denial of their existence” but the rendering of improper and excessive acts of worship.⁴¹² Hence, Roman writers designated Jewish and Christian worship as *superstitio* because they exceeded the state-approved expressions of reverence to the divine. They were also delineated as such because they were regarded as being improper: abstention from pork, Sabbath observance, fastidiousness regarding foods and how they are processed, and refraining from extramarital liaisons and sexual impropriety.⁴¹³

Philostratus, although born a Greek and educated in Athens, foregrounds the prevalent Roman elitist assessment of Jews and their ancestral practices. He derides the antisocial behavior of Jews and likens the sociocultural chasm that their customs engender to far-flung destinations like India. He writes:

⁴¹¹ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 215-16.

⁴¹² Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 217.

⁴¹³ But it is understandable how impropriety (excessive or unintelligible) gradually became *superstitio*.

The Jews cut themselves off long ago, not only from the Romans, but from all mankind, since people who have devised an unsociable way of life, with no meals, libations, prayers, or sacrifices in common with other men, have moved further away from us than Susa, Bactria, and the Indians beyond that (*Vit. Apoll.* 5.33.4).

Voicing out the anti-Romanness of Jews, Philostratus says that they should have been left unconquered, because they do not easily integrate with other people or assimilate Roman values, quintessential traits in modeling the empire after a family: the emperor as *pater patriae* and the imperial occupants as its children (see Augustus, *Res gestae* 35). These antisocial Jewish mores probably enkindled the ire (or at least hostility) of some imperial residents, which survives in the recurrent, incisive critiques of many Greek and Roman writers. Although Philostratus does not address the subjects of *religio* and *superstitio* with regard to the Jews, the shroud of suspicion that undergirds the attribution of the latter to non-Romans is much evident and reaffirmed.

The designation, *religio licita*, employed by Tertullian to describe Christianity, according to some classicists, is not a Roman term but an innovation of Christian polemics (*Apol.* 21.1).⁴¹⁴ It was coined by Christian apologists who had to defend Christianity from accusations of novelty, illegitimacy, and *superstitio*. As expected, Tertullian defines Christianity as distinct from Judaism and asserts its legitimacy by coining the phrase, *religio licita*. But Roman writers did not use this phrase. Cults were simply categorized as *religio* or *superstitio* depending on their origin and degree of assimilation into the Roman Empire.

Dale B. Martin's insightful study on superstition uncovers many facets of its denotation in Roman antiquity. He notes that *superstitio*—besides being anti-Roman, excessive *religio*, and a political menace—connotes practices that contradict nature or philosophy. He writes:

Superstitio is the gullible attribution of literal truth to the offensive myths about the gods and heroes, which are offensive because they attribute impious and

⁴¹⁴ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*.

shameful actions to those superior beings.... *Superstitio* is *religio* or something that looks like *religio* used for base or evil purposes.⁴¹⁵

But this aspect of *superstitio* is not unrelated to its foreign, excessive, or eccentric traits. Martin's investigation gives a diachronic justification to the subsequent emergence of modern superstition as an incredible expression of religion. But he cautions that in Greco-Roman antiquity there was no sense of the supernatural: gods and humans were both part of the natural realm.⁴¹⁶ Therefore, it is anachronistic to define superstition as an ethereal belief or an unscientific conviction, insofar as many "scientific" claims of antiquity would not qualify for such a category now. Since my study centers on the status of the Jews in the Roman Empire, I will restrict my claims to the anti-Roman, excessive, and foreign underpinnings of the lexeme. These nuances show the pervading Roman perception of the "other," whether they be Jew, Christian, or Egyptian. The foreignness of the ridiculed religionists connotes power dynamics, legal status, and potential political danger. The Roman attitude to religion in the foregoing section is accommodating and neutral, except for religious expressions that are construed as a probable springboard for insurrections or a menace to the political order because they are foreign or anti-Roman. When Jews increasingly became Romanized, their religion correspondingly became *religio* and was accorded the same recognition like others.

4.2 The Status of Jews in the Roman Empire

⁴¹⁵ Dale B. Martin, *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 130.

⁴¹⁶ Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, 16, emphasis original. He writes: "If we want to discern precisely *what* counted as superstition in the ancient world and *why*, we must avoid invoking the category of 'the supernatural' and must instead look for the *ancient* logic of nature that made certain beliefs and actions seem superstitious to intellectuals of that time."

Investigating the status of Jews in the Roman Empire is a daunting task, because social groups in antiquity were shaped by a myriad of experiences: political, sociocultural, economic, geographical, and religious. These tiers of influences need to be viewed in healthy tension with each other to peer into the intricate reality of group identity formation. In addition to these multilayered influences, there are a plethora of methods for undertaking such an investigation: archaeological, religious, literary, and sociological, to name a few. In this study, I will adopt the latter two approaches because of my earlier avowed interest in social identity formation. As many sociologists have observed, because of the dynamism of group identity formation and the blurriness of social boundary markers, the most reliable resource for reconstructing a people's experience in antiquity is indisputably literature.⁴¹⁷ To avoid a lopsided assessment of any group, evaluations by its members and outsiders must be carefully analyzed side-by-side and a critical reconstruction of historically corroborating accounts accented.⁴¹⁸ Since history is concerned with the systematic reporting of human activities in time and space, this overview will focus on four prominent Jewish enclaves in the Roman Empire: Alexandria, Asia Minor, Rome, and Judea. Steve Mason accurately cautions scholars from doing a methodologically imbalanced study of Roman Judea that prioritizes archaeology and the writings of Josephus over the happenings in the entire empire.⁴¹⁹ This study, following Mason's recommendation, situates the investigation of the status of Jews in the context of empire-wide events, which means that deductions will not be based solely on regional occurrences but on the emergent, overarching impression garnered from all the aforementioned Jewish enclaves. Regarding the timeline, the imperial events that will be

⁴¹⁷ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*; Jenkins, *Social Identity*; Elliott describes literature as a "vehicle of social interaction." *Social-Scientific Criticism*, 10.

⁴¹⁸ For instance, I will not be relying solely on Josephus' writings (insider) but will add Jewish assessment by Roman authors (outsiders). This balance is crucial to reconstructing a multifaceted imperial Jewish experience.

⁴¹⁹ Steve Mason, *Orientation to the History of Roman Judaea* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016).

reviewed below are those that occurred between the principates of Augustus and Trajan, the latter's reign tallying with the latest defensible dating ascribed to the composition of Acts.⁴²⁰ Pertaining to the sort of details to be examined, I will be guided by Barbara Burrell's cautionary and insightful approach, which deemphasizes the personal traits of objectionable leaders (e.g., Herod the Great and Emperor Caligula) but accents landmark events and their impact on Jews.⁴²¹

4.2.1 Asia

Already in the first century BCE, Asia Minor was described as an affluent and thriving Roman province.⁴²² Some Roman officials vied for tax-gathering contracts in the territory. Attesting to Asia's auspicious economic prospects is the extortion charge brought against Lucius Valerius Flaccus before the Roman senate after he left office. The assumptions of the charge are twofold: (1) Asia Minor was financially buoyant, and (2) some Roman officials abused their offices. As Flaccus' attorney, Cicero brilliantly proffers an impassioned defense of his client that these assumptions had laid bare. One of his arguments addresses Flaccus' decision to prohibit Jews in Asia Minor from remitting the temple tax (two drachmae) to Jerusalem (*Flac.* 67). Cicero repeatedly uses the term "gold" to designate the medium of payment. In arguing his case, he cites the policy of the senate that prohibits the remittance of gold from provinces. Although he does not elaborate upon this senate stipulation, it is probably a measure undertaken to avert smoldering insurrections, because warfare was expensive and required an extraordinary pool of funds. Barring most remittances of gold meant preventing foreigners from stealthily raising the

⁴²⁰ Pervo, *Dating Acts*.

⁴²¹ Barbara Burrell, "Basileus Meets Imperator: Herod's Evolving Honors to Augustus," *BASOR* 384 (2020): 45-67. She accentuates Herod's public life and downplays his personal traits.

⁴²² "Introduction to *Pro Flacco*," in *Cicero: In Catilinam I–IV, Pro Murena, Pro Sulla, Pro Flacco*, trans. C. Macdonald (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 421.

funds required to initiate a revolt against Rome. But it seems that even though there was a general policy prohibiting remittances from the provinces, Jews were exempted and continued to send their gold to Jerusalem (*Ant.* 14.192-198).⁴²³ The accusation against Flaccus of financial impropriety might have been a distortion of what actually happened: he embezzled the gold confiscated from the Jews. Not to derail with issues of historicity, Cicero justifies the actions of Flaccus on the basis of the charge of superstition: being anti-Roman and antisocial. These accusations are politically significant and warrant the judicious application of administrative foresight in restricting what was hitherto an imperial privilege. Put pointedly, Cicero was insinuating that Flaccus' decision was justified based on the antisocial and anti-Roman proclivities of the Jews.⁴²⁴ To foreground his claim that extortion of the Jews was not his client's intention, Cicero cites the exemplary gesture of Pompey who refused to pillage the temple's gold when he conquered Jerusalem (*Flac.* 68; *J.W.* 1.153-154). The most cogent reason for this allusion is to show that reputable Roman officials—like Flaccus—have a history of not pillaging the gold of Jews. Flaccus' unpopular administrative policy was not motivated by avarice, per Cicero, but by an unwavering commitment to safeguarding imperial interest (e.g., forestalling insurrections). This incident—preventing the remittance of temple taxes—affected the religious obligations of the Jews residing in Asia Minor, but it did not graduate into a full-blown persecution nor did it spread to other parts of the Roman Empire.

⁴²³ This citation—which contains Julius Caesar's grant of imperial privileges to Hyrcanus, the Jewish High Priest, after his triumph as the ruler of the republic—does not refer to the annual temple tax remittance specifically but stresses the broad imperial sanction of Jewish ancestral customs granted by Julius Caesar and publicized in the provinces. It is thus reasonable to assume that the implementation of this decree chiefly meant that Jews were not harassed by their local Roman rulers and were permitted to remit the temple tax accordingly.

⁴²⁴ E. P. Sanders offers a different explanation for the prohibition of Jewish remittances in the diaspora. He opines that such prohibitions were necessitated by the need to conserve provincial resources. *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015). Whether Flaccus' decision was political, financial, or both cannot be determined with utmost certainty. But it is evident that this custom unnerved some Roman administrators.

John M. G. Barclay opines on the economic backdrop that engendered the mistreatment of Jews by Greeks in Asia Minor: dire economy, burdensome taxation, callous tax collectors, insatiable Roman governors, and unceasing imperial demands.⁴²⁵ This depressing financial climate made the Jews an easy target: they collected funds for the Jerusalem temple and held an inviting and sizeable treasury in their synagogues. Hence, in challenging fiscal circumstances, Jews in Asia Minor were targeted not for their race or religion but for their deep pockets.

About six decades later, Augustus would write in his royal chronicles, corroborating the foregoing assertions regarding Asia Minor's affluence and the recurrent financial impropriety of dishonest Roman officials, that he had returned the ornaments stolen by others from the temples in this Roman province (*Res gestae* 24; see Suetonius, *Aug.* 52). Clearly, Augustus mentions this achievement in his annals to show that he is truly the *pater patriae* of the whole Roman Empire, a bar that his successors will be judged by (*Res gestae* 35). His assertion suggests that Asia was a goldmine for Roman officials, mostly for its religiously affiliated wealth. Flaccus' decision could also be a prudent measure to keep a tab on the movement of gold within the province. Regardless of what his actual intentions were, neither Jews in Asia nor their gold was targeted by a Roman official at the end of Augustus' principate (14 CE).

Earlier in his principate, Augustus addressed complaints from Jews in Cyrene and Asia on their maltreatment by Greeks, which infringed on their untrammelled exercise of ancestral customs that had been sanctioned by Julius Caesar in a decree to Hyrcanus, the Jewish high priest (*Ant.* 16.160-161).⁴²⁶ Augustus reaffirmed these imperial privileges initially granted by his

⁴²⁵ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 267-68.

⁴²⁶ For Augustus' remarkable sensitivity to the Jewish nation, see Philo's lengthy, fervent, and untrammelled eulogy of his principate (*Embassy* 156-58). Augustus is depicted as the "messiah" of the Jews: he makes their world safer; he heals their diseases; he feeds their poor and marginalized; and he is the custodian of imperial peace.

adoptive father and permitted the Jews in Asia, once again, to remit temple taxes to Jerusalem (*Ant.* 16.162-165). This documentation suggests that the motivation behind the petition that led to the trial of Flaccus had not abated. Given the considerable wealth of the province, both Romans and Greeks were envious of the Jews and harassed them repeatedly. E. Mary Smallwood nuances the nature of the harassment of Jews in Asia by their Greek compatriots. She says that the ire of the Greeks was fueled by the refusal of Jews, despite enjoying full civic rights, to be conscripted into the Roman army like other city inhabitants.⁴²⁷ The historical backdrop of this scrimmage could possibly be the exemption granted them by Lentulus Crus, Pompey's consul of Asia Minor. Grant believes that this privilege was a reward for Hyrcanus and Antipater's collaboration with Pompey's military campaign.⁴²⁸ Regardless of the historical impetus that engendered the hostility toward Jews in Asia Minor, it did not have imperial authorization. It only shows that they, like so many culturally distinct groups in human history, were victims of sociocultural stigmatization and ideological discrimination.

The cities mentioned by Josephus show that the harassment which diaspora Jews residing in Asia experienced at the hands of their Greek compatriots was pervasive: Laodicea and Tralles (*Ant.* 14.241-243), Delos (*Ant.* 14.213-216), Miletus (*Ant.* 14.244-246), Pergamum (*Ant.* 14.247-255), Sardis (*Ant.* 14.259-261), and Ephesus (*Ant.* 14.262-264). To this list, one may add the regions enumerated in 1 Peter—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia—which was written for a group of Christ believers residing in the aforementioned territories (1:1). This shows that the hostility of Greeks in Asia toward those perceived to be socioculturally threatening, a century later, remained unchanged. But the harassment was never official or systematic; instead, it was spontaneous and mob-styled. Albeit this adverse experience of Jews in Asia is not representative

⁴²⁷ Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 143.

⁴²⁸ Michael Grant, *The Jews in the Roman World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 57-58.

of their status in the Roman Empire, it is reasonably foreseen given the recurrent antisocial and anti-Roman charges repeatedly brought against diaspora Jews.

4.2.2 Alexandria

The landmark events of imperial significance to Alexandrian Jews in the Roman Empire are Julius Caesar's grant of privileges and the uprising of Alexandrian Greeks between 115-117 CE. These pivotal happenings form bookends for my analysis of the experience of Jews in the Alexandrian enclave. Julius Caesar's dealings with Jews are chiefly colored by his repeated use of the locutions, "friends" and "confederates," to designate them, because of their invaluable military assistance and political alliance with the Roman army when it mattered the most (*Ant.* 14.193). Confederation is a politically tinged term deeply rooted in the history of the Roman republic.⁴²⁹ It implies that the Romans regarded Jews as their allies, comparable to the members of the defunct Latin league, and expected them to fight alongside them and defend imperial interests. Given this marked outpouring of imperial support for Jews, it is not surprising that Suetonius attests to them mourning the demise of Julius Caesar (*Iul.* 84.5). And, indeed, the imperial privileges bequeathed to them outlived Julius Caesar (*Ant.* 16.162-165).

Alexandrian Jews were permitted to organize themselves into a parallel state: they were ruled by an ethnarch and had their own government that oversaw their internal affairs, both judicial and political (*Ant.* 14.117). As James S. Jeffers observes, this imperial concession was engendered by the political alliance established between Jews and Romans since the conquest of Julius Caesar.⁴³⁰ By contrast, Roman Jews, as Jeffers remarks, did not enjoy an identical political

⁴²⁹ See 4.3.3 below.

⁴³⁰ James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 40; Grant, *Jews in the Roman World*, 62.

autonomy, perhaps because Rome was the imperial center and would not permit conflicting loyalties that could lead to possible insurrections either by Jews or embittered foreigners residing in Rome. The analytical import of the political concessions and juridical permissions granted to Alexandrian Jews becomes the historical stimulus for the subsequent Greek uprising a century and a half later. The insurrection of Alexandrian Greeks is a glaring indicator that Jews rose to prominence and were subsequently resented for lording it over their compatriots and treating them harshly.

The foregoing analysis also suggests that the experience of Jews in Alexandria, like that of those in Asia Minor, was a mixed bag: on the one hand, they received imperial sanction for an untrammelled commitment to their ancestral practices; on the other hand, they were despised and harassed by their Greek compatriots for, presumably, being antisocial and anti-Roman and yet receiving eyebrow-raising imperial concessions (*Ag. Ap.* 2.65). Apion's main critique of the antisocial proclivities of Jews in the preceding quote is hinged on their blatant refusal to participate in the local cult which is a crucial facet of imperial life.⁴³¹

4.2.3 Rome

The first set of Jews who were settled in Rome were most likely prisoners of war who were forcibly removed from their ancestral home. Cicero alludes to their presence in his defense

⁴³¹ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*; Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods: Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Roman Empire* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1999); Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Jack J. Lennon, *Pollution and Religion in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); North and Price, *Religious History of the Roman Empire*.

of Flaccus (*Flac.* 28, 66); Suetonius, writing approximately one and three-quarter centuries later, reports that the Jews in Rome mourned Julius Caesar (*Iul.* 84). They were distinguishable from grieving foreigners, who thronged to the pyre of the deceased Caesar. Being grouped with other foreigners meant that the Jews had not been fully absorbed into Roman life prior to the inception of the first principate. The unpleasant incident usually attributed to Tiberius is the expulsion of Jews from Rome. Regarding this, there are varying accounts (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81-84; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.85.2; Suetonius, *Tib.* 36; Cassius Dio, *Rom. hist.* 57.18.5a). Below, I will carefully study them and comment on their discrepancies.

Deciphering the historical credibility of incongruous accounts is precarious, but their corroboration makes a valid reconstruction of what precipitated Tiberius' reaction plausible: (1) Augustus reaffirmed Jewish privileges first given by Julius Caesar; (2) this imperial mandate must have increased the number of Jews in Rome and, inadvertently, fraudsters as well; (3) these Jewish criminals must have proliferated with the existing imperial blanket permissiveness toward most religions; (4) seeing the abuses, Tiberius would have acted not to rescind his predecessor's policy but to suppress Jewish criminals and their associates, who perpetrated nefarious activities under the guise of religion; and (5) Tiberius' move to expel Jews and Egyptians was inseparable from his mandate to clamp down on brigands and miscreants, because both groups threatened the peace and order of Rome (see Philo, *Embassy* 161).

Although there are several accounts of the expulsion of Jews and Egyptians from Rome during the principate of Tiberius, there are notable similarities: (1) those affected are Egyptians, Jews, and criminals (Tacitus adds astrologers); (2) the reason for their expulsion is to safeguard the peace and safety of the populace, because criminals are mentioned immediately after Jews and Egyptians; and (3) Tiberius ordered the expulsion. Tacitus and Suetonius do not give any

compelling reason for the expulsion of Jews other than the emperor decreed it. But Josephus adduces a cogent reason: some Jewish fraudsters duped Fulvia, an influential Roman Jewish convert, of her purple and gold, which she had earmarked for the Jerusalem temple (*Ant.* 18.81-84). His report corroborates the versions of Suetonius and Tacitus and makes them plausible, since the expulsion of Jews was presumably necessitated by a perceived security threat and the implicit rampage of dubious religionists. Dio Cassius' succinct account tallies with the foregoing reports. He notes that Tiberius banished Roman Jews for unbridled proselytization (*Rom. hist.* 57.18.5a). The implicit fear that undergirds his action is definitely the peace and safety of Roman citizens, especially since Jewishness was considered a *superstitio* by many Romans at this time.

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that Tiberius did not alter the status of Jews in the Roman Empire. He expelled Jews, Egyptians, and others whom he deemed a potential threat to peace and order. The implicit reason for his actions seems to be that the proliferation of Jews in Rome was a cause for alarm. Crime (Josephus and Tacitus) and superstition (Suetonius and Dio Cassius) are likely indicators of looming political threats. Consequently, his decision does not evince “ethnic cleansing” or “religious suppression” but is a move of expediency intended to safeguard law and order in Rome. Since there is no literary evidence that suggests the repetition of the aforementioned mandate in his twenty-three-year principate, it is safe to assume that Jews, Egyptians, and other practitioners of foreign religions in the empire went about their businesses unperturbed. Louis Feldman's claim that only proselytes were expelled from Rome is creative but not convincing, because the same event receives multiple attestations, yet there is no record of proselytes being the principal targets.⁴³² One must conclude thus that the expulsion would have affected only Jewish culprits and their associates but not all Jews in Rome, since many—as

⁴³² Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 94.

Philo wants us to believe—were Roman citizens (*Embassy* 155, 157). Since Tiberius did not extend this mandate to the provinces, his intention was surely not to hurt all Jews but to tackle a matter of great urgency and restore sanity to the imperial center.

4.2.4 Judea

The Judean experience is by far the thorniest of all Jewish enclaves in the Roman Empire. But it should also be stressed that it was definitely not monolithic. Being the Jewish homeland, there were lots of moving parts: (1) Judea's political alliance with Rome; (2) the Romanization of its major cities; (3) the increase of Greek settlers in its coastal regions; (4) enforcement of direct rule; and (5) the Judean revolts of 70 CE and 132-135 CE. These momentous events make the characterizing of the experience of Judeans an amorphous and onerous task. Taken together, however, they paint a comprehensive and informative portrait.

4.2.4.1 Judea's Political Alliance with Rome

The political alliance between Rome and Judea predates the inauguration of the empire. With the invasion of Pompey, Judea came under Roman control and some of its inhabitants were taken to Rome as prisoners of war (*Flac.* 68). During the First Triumvirate (the joint reign of Pompey, Crassus, and Julius Caesar), Judea was primarily under the supervision of Pompey and later Julius Caesar, after he emerged as the victor in the power tussle that ended unfavorably for Crassus and Pompey. With Judean military assistance in the crucial Alexandrian battle, Caesar emerged victorious and gave imperial privileges to Jews (worship of their God, collecting and remitting temple taxes from the Jewish diaspora, keeping the Sabbath, exemption from military service, and minting their own coins in Judea) that would define their relationship with Rome for

centuries. This political alliance significantly shaped the destiny of Judea, particularly during the reign of Herod, the self-acclaimed “friend of the Romans.”⁴³³ The Roman-Jewish rapport hinged on perceptible overlapping interests: for Romans, it was a way to secure the geopolitical territory of Israel and fend off the Parthians, the greatest eastern threat to their hegemony; for Judeans, it was a way to avoid a gruesome defeat and guaranteed bloodbath that would surely end in “immeasurable hardship and obliteration.”⁴³⁴

On so many counts, the relationship between Augustus and Herod was emblematic of Rome’s political alliance with Judea. The former was the patron, while the latter was the client. Being an astute administrator, Herod navigated the murky waters of upholding Roman interests, while also safeguarding his territorial needs. Both objectives were never deemed contradictory, conflicting, or incompatible but were always perceived as being complimentary, shrewd, and expedient.⁴³⁵

4.2.4.2 Romanization of Judea’s Major Cities

The Romanization of Judea is an integral component in the study of the Jews, because it highlights the extent of assimilation—at least for territories outside Jerusalem—of imperial culture and values. Four indices are helpful in situating this conversation in context: temples built for the veneration of Augustus, cities renamed after the emperor, a colosseum built for gladiatorial shows just outside Jerusalem, and the education of children of the Judean elite in Rome. These indices, although not exhaustive, show that there was profound assimilation of

⁴³³ Grant, *Jews in the Roman World*, 91-92.

⁴³⁴ Sicker, *Rome and Jerusalem*, viii; Grant, *Jews in the Roman World*, 81-82.

⁴³⁵ Burrell, “*Basileus Meets Imperator*,” 62.

Roman values and lifestyle, even in the Jewish homeland. I will discuss these innovations in detail below, leaving aside Herod's personal motivations for doing them.

After the victory of Augustus at the Battle of Actium (31 BCE), Herod pledged loyalty to the new ruler of the republic forthwith. Wanting to turn a new leaf in Rome's dealings with its clients, Augustus restored the territories that Pompey had taken away from Judean leadership. In appreciation of Caesar's magnanimity, Herod embarked on an extensive, bold, and sociocultural-landscape-changing Romanization of the territories under his control. First, he built temples for Caesar in Samaria and Strabo's tower. Second, he renamed the capital of Samaria Sebaste (Augustus in Greek) and Strabo's tower he called Caesarea. Third, he erected an amphitheater for gladiatorial contests. These accomplishments attracted Greeks from all over the empire and advertised Judea as a reliable ally of Rome. Besides these structural and cultural developments, Herod's children were educated in Rome, ensuring that his successors imbibed Roman culture, were steeped in its politics, acquiesced to its politicians, and appreciated its learning. The custom of educating children in Rome did not end with Herod. Agrippa did the same. In fact, the latter's son was personally tutored by Claudius. This practice was a sensible way of safeguarding the reins of power: would-be leaders are mentored by Roman tutors to appreciate imperial lifestyle and governance. By immersing a generation of client-state leaders into Roman organization, the likelihood of elite-sponsored rebellion became minuscule.

4.2.4.3 Greek Settlers in Judea's Coastal Cities

Judea's symbiotic relationship with Rome inexorably attracted a huge influx of foreign settlers.⁴³⁶ Martin Goodman articulates this pointedly: "In a cosmopolitan city like Jerusalem, one never knew who was Roman and who was not. Neither appearance, nor dress, nor language, nor name was a certain guide."⁴³⁷ His description of the sociocultural outlook of Roman Judea implies that the longstanding pigeonholing of NT writings by modern scholars into discrete sociopolitical milieux is grossly inattentive to the widely dispersed, demographically disparate, and socially entwined groups amicably coexisting in late first-century Palestine.⁴³⁸ Surgically-precise and utopian-styled appraisals of the province of Judea are, at best, idyllic, surely not realistic. The sociological method concedes ethnic diversity, racial complexity, and sociocultural interaction and integration—all crucial features of a thriving and interactive human society, just like first-century Palestine. Describing the demographic constitution of Samaria, Grant remarks that it had a large Gentile population, which made it a fecund soil for Herod's Romanizing programs.⁴³⁹ Regarding Caesarea, Martin Sicker asserts that it was a congenial choice as the political headquarters of Judea for two reasons: (1) it had a dominant Greek population, and (2) unlike Jerusalem, it was located by the sea coast, which facilitated communication and accessibility with Rome.⁴⁴⁰ So it is unsurprising that Herod erected two pagan temples in these cities without any backlash from the populace. Although Jewish assimilation or tolerance of Romanization should not be exaggerated, it must be unequivocally stated that a sizeable percentage of residents in Roman Judea were unperturbed by Herod's Romanizing policies.

⁴³⁶ Josephus loosely refers to these foreigners as Greeks due to the language they spoke.

⁴³⁷ Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 156.

⁴³⁸ I am obviously using Palestine anachronistically at this time, because the epithet was either officially assigned to the Judean circumscription by Antonius Pius in 139 CE, three years after his predecessor, Hadrian, squashed the second Jewish revolt, or gradually transitioned into Syria-Palestina, as Peter Schäfer observes. *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 161.

⁴³⁹ Grant, *Jews in the Roman World*, 71.

⁴⁴⁰ Sicker, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 117.

4.2.4.4 Enforcement of Direct Rule

After the death of Herod, his kingdom was divided among his children: Archelaus was given charge of Judea and Samaria; Antipas of Galilee and Berea; Philip of Gaulonitis, Paneas, and Trachonitis; and Salome, Herod's sister, of Jamnia, Ashdod, and Phasaelis (*Ant.* 17.188-189). Being an ethnarch, Archelaus' territory was referred to as a kingdom, accentuating the ethnic ties of Judeans and Samaritans. Early on in his reign, Judeans revolted and petitioned Augustus to intervene because of his harsh treatment of his subjects. In response to this request, Rome instituted direct rule for Judea and Samaria, the territory under an ethnarch. The result had far-reaching implications for the territory's residents. Sicker expresses this beautifully:

It was a firm principle of the imperial government to leave enforcement of local laws and the management of native institutions to local authorities.... As a result, the indigenous Judaeen authorities enjoyed more local autonomy under the Romans than they had under the Herodians.⁴⁴¹

It also had significant tax implications. Sicker says that the norm for all subjugated states was the mandatory levy of capitation and produce (land and sea) taxes. With the implementation of Roman direct rule in Judea, the inhabitants were ipso facto exonerated from the poll tax, which was automatically imposed on all conquered territories. So the removal of Archelaus and the inauguration of direct rule lessened the financial burden of Judeans and Samaritans and ended the humiliation of continually paying Rome for their forebears' military loss. With the deposition of Pontius Pilate and the commencement of Claudius' principate, the direct rule of Judea ceased and Agrippa was installed as the new leader.

4.2.4.5 Judean Revolts

⁴⁴¹ Sicker, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 118.

The Judean revolts of 70 and 135 CE, being full-fledged warfare, necessitated military interventions by reigning emperors (Vespasian and Hadrian). As such, they marred the Rome-Judea relationship that had been fostered and reinforced over the decades. The first Judean revolt triggered the first imperially sanctioned attack on Judeans. Like in most wars, every army strives to quell opposition. Rome did precisely that. The events of this war described by Josephus thus are inadmissible for reconstructing the status of Jews across the empire, because they were borne out of expediency: squashing a client-state revolt. At the end of this war, Vespasian made long-lasting military changes in Jerusalem, like stationing a Roman legion in the city. But it must be accented that the punitive measures imposed were restricted to Judea, a glaring indicator that the Romans regarded the revolt to be a localized Jewish rebellion that was not representative of diaspora Jewry.

The second Judean revolt in 135 CE engendered more radical changes for the ancestral home of the Jews: (1) Judeans were displaced and their city was repopulated with foreigners, thereby extensively changing the demographics of Jerusalem; (2) Hadrian erected the temple of Aelia Capitolina (probably named after himself and the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome) on the site where the demolished temple had stood; and (3) Judea was designated Syria-Palestina to purge the territory of all Judean affiliations. Hadrian's punitive measures reveal a lot about his understanding of the second revolt: it was fueled by ethnic, religious, and nationalistic agitations. These agitations were apparently not shared by diaspora Jews who were not noticeably harassed or decisively punished for the rebellion in Judea.

4.2.5 Discussion Summary

A survey of the status of Jews in four enclaves of the Roman Empire shows that the majority of them lived their lives without governmental interference. But it also indicates that many groups, as expected, impugned the privileges accorded Jews and were incensed by their antisocial and anti-Roman proclivities. These localized, ethnic skirmishes, although reasonably foreseen given the social peculiarities of diaspora Jews, are not emblematic of their experience. Neither are the punitive measures imposed as a result of the two wars. To conclude, Jews in the Roman Empire were not specifically targeted by imperial authorities but regularly experienced parochial hostility.

4.3 Roman Citizenship

Since Acts portrays Paul both as a diaspora Jew and a Roman citizen, after reviewing the status of Jews in the preceding segment, I will examine citizenship in Rome and its extension to Jews. The Roman citizenship of Paul in Acts has been studied through multiple lenses, chiefly conditioned by the narrative's genre. Few assume that Acts is historically accurate.⁴⁴² Recently, Thomas E. Phillips has impugned this assumption by arguing for a different influence for Luke's portrayal of Paul. He opines that Paul became a Roman citizen because Luke either read or had reasonable access to Pliny's *Letter* to Trajan, which was widely circulated in Asia Minor.⁴⁴³ He grounds his intertextual argument on the principle of "availability" or "accessibility" espoused by Richard B. Hays and Dennis R. MacDonald, respectively.⁴⁴⁴ Phillips asserts that Luke's attribution of Roman citizenship to Paul explains his repeated release from custody and his

⁴⁴² See chapter 1.1 for the proponents of the historicist reading of Acts.

⁴⁴³ Thomas E. Phillips, "How Did Paul Become a Roman 'Citizen'? Reading Acts in Light of Pliny the Younger," in Verheyden and Kloppenborg, *Luke on Jesus, Paul and Christianity*, 171-89.

⁴⁴⁴ Phillips argues his case using intertextuality in a form popularized by Richard B. Hays and Dennis R. MacDonald. See respectively *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) and *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?: Four Cases from Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

eventual appeal to Caesar. Given Luke's rhetorical style, Philips's reasoning is compelling; distinguishing "historical accuracy" and "historical plausibility" is vital to the current study. He defines the former as the "creation of a narrative which corresponds to actual historical events" and the latter as the "creation of a narrative which sounds realistic to its readers, given their presumed frames of reference."⁴⁴⁵ In the light of Luke's historiography, the latter is probably the case. The "presumed frames of reference" available to Luke made his depiction of Paul as a Roman citizen credible. I will now review the historical plausibility of Paul's Roman citizenship vis-à-vis external literary sources.

Martin Goodman's synopsis of the criteria for Roman citizenship is explanatory: (1) children of Roman citizens are de jure citizens; (2) children of a Roman male and a provincial female can only become Roman citizens if their parents' union is recognized as intermarriage by a parochial court; (3) a Roman woman can only beget a Roman citizen if she marries a Roman male; and (4) Roman citizenship can be acquired through military service rendered to the empire, lobbying, or other extraordinary means.⁴⁴⁶ This description suggests the following options for Paul in Acts: his parents were both Roman citizens or his father was a Roman citizen and married his mother in a provincial city empowered to administer intermarriages (Acts 22:25-29). Since no extant documentary evidence contains reliable data on Paul's parents and their legal status, the only reasonable option to explore in this section is the grant of Roman citizenship to children born in provincial cities. This study does not pretend to have the final say on the civic status of Paul's parents but seeks to accent Acts' "presumed frames of reference." Before

⁴⁴⁵ Philips, "Roman Citizen," 181.

⁴⁴⁶ Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 156. For the granting of Roman citizenship to individuals who had served in Rome's military, see Livy 26.21.9-11. The third point raised by Goodman is disputable given a contrary attestation for children born legally fatherless to Roman mothers (Gaius, *Inst.* 1.75-81). But since Rome was a patriarchal society, like most ancient civilizations, it is not surprising that Goodman's option could have been normalized over time.

investigating the grant of Roman citizenship to provincial residents, I will recapitulate the underlying ideology of the Roman Empire vis-à-vis its residents and shed light on the fourth century BCE Roman-Latin treaty and its obligations.

4.3.1 Mythical Foundation

The competing myths of Rome's foundation reveal its inhabitants' self-understanding: Rome is a place for migrants and people with a slew of questionable behaviors, among others. Being a place for all peoples since its inception, Rome arguably has the most accommodating policies of all ancient occidental civilizations. Mary Beard opines: "No ancient Greek city was remotely as incorporating as this; Athens in particular rigidly restricted access to citizenship."⁴⁴⁷ Creating a pathway to citizenship for provincial residents is widely regarded as the secret to Rome's successful streak. That is not to say, however, that Romans consistently had a positive view of outsiders. On the contrary, they were noticeably elitist in their assessment and blatant repudiation of foreigners.⁴⁴⁸ Rome's accommodating civic policies, as Adrian N. Sherwin-White notes, were originally manifestations of its patron-client relationship with its provinces.⁴⁴⁹ He says that Rome treated its colonies as "allies."⁴⁵⁰ This relationship consisted of both economic benefits and military responsibilities for these allies. Sherwin-White captures this crisply: "The Roman state is an expanding state, with room to spare for all who are prepared to serve her and imitate her truly."⁴⁵¹ So the incorporating civic policies of Rome aided the spread of its hegemony, gave its allies a stake in imperial life, and bonded all the provinces to the imperial

⁴⁴⁷ Beard, *SPQR*, 67.

⁴⁴⁸ See 4.1 above.

⁴⁴⁹ Adrian N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 108-16.

⁴⁵⁰ Sherwin-White, *Roman Citizenship*.

⁴⁵¹ Sherwin-White, *Roman Citizenship*, 116.

center in what Paula Fredriksen likens to a familial relationship.⁴⁵² But it should be stated here that the Romans did not adopt these liberal civic policies, because they placed outsiders on par with themselves. Rather, they acted in this way because of the reasonably foreseen military benefits: securing the loyalty of allies, quelling nationalistic insurgency, and eliminating the us-them Greek model that estranged many non-Greek city inhabitants.

Accenting the contrast between the Greek political outlook and the Roman civic vision, Beard compares the phenomenon of slavery in the two. Whereas slaves were seldom freed in Greek civilization, Romans habitually manumitted slaves for a plethora of reasons. In ancient Greece, if slaves were fortunate to gain their freedom, they did not receive Greek citizenship and were sadly plunged into the abyss of civic oblivion and societal annihilation.⁴⁵³ By contrast, slaves in ancient Rome could save up and purchase their Roman citizenship or be manumitted by their owners. If their owners were Roman citizens, they were sometimes accorded a similar status.⁴⁵⁴ Beard remarks that by the late second century CE most Roman citizens had slaves in their ancestral lineage.⁴⁵⁵ Sherwin-White's assessment belies Beard's assertion on manumitted slaves in ancient Rome. The former claims that freed slaves at best received full civic privileges but not a political voice. He writes: "A Roman freed slave is a half- or a quarter-citizen.... He had some or all of the civil rights, but not the political rights, of a full Roman citizen."⁴⁵⁶ Regardless of what the historical situation was in antiquity, Romans were unquestionably more accommodating to manumitted slaves than the Greeks.

⁴⁵² Fredriksen, *Paul*, 38.

⁴⁵³ Beard, *SPQR*, 68.

⁴⁵⁴ Beard, *SPQR*.

⁴⁵⁵ Beard, *SPQR*, 67.

⁴⁵⁶ Adrian N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament: The Sarum Lectures 1960-1961* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 158.

Stressing further Rome's incorporating policies toward outsiders in the late first century is Trajan's move to include non-Italians in the Roman senate.⁴⁵⁷ This momentous decision heralds the involvement of outsiders in the prestigious Roman senate. Being the first non-Italian to be appointed an emperor, Trajan opened the gates for outsiders to have a stake in Rome's economy: he mandated them to invest in the imperial center.⁴⁵⁸ The trend of non-Italian emperors reached its apogee when a non-European was appointed a Roman emperor, Septimius Severus. He was from Africa. So it is not surprising that less than two and a half centuries from the commencement of the empire, Caracalla decided to grant every free inhabitant in the empire Roman citizenship. His decision did not come out of the blue but was anchored on centuries of unceasing, incorporating civic policies and Rome's concerted engagement with imperial residents.⁴⁵⁹ Studying the history of Rome's extension of citizenship to all free occupants of the empire unearths the pith of its political vision: the empire is stronger when all imperial inhabitants are loyal allies. Since the focus of this study is the historical plausibility of Luke's depiction of Paul, I will briefly review Roman citizenship versus Latin right.

4.3.2 Roman Citizenship vs Latin Right

Most classicists trace the ideological roots of Roman citizenship to the aftermath of the Second Latin War (340-338 BCE), which engendered the dissolution of the preexisting Latin league nations and the imposition of Rome's hegemony over the conquered.⁴⁶⁰ Prior to this war,

⁴⁵⁷ Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, 312.

⁴⁵⁸ Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*.

⁴⁵⁹ Myles Lavan, "The Foundation of Empire? The Spread of Roman Citizenship from the Fourth Century BCE to the Third Century CE," in *In the Crucible of Empire: The Impact of Roman Citizenship upon Greeks, Jews and Christians*, ed. Katell Berthelot and Jonathan Price (Leuven: Peeters, 2019).

⁴⁶⁰ Adrian N. Sherwin-White, "The Roman Citizenship: A Survey of Its Development into a World Franchise," *ANRW* 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972), 23-24.

the Latin league organized itself as a confederation to protect the interests of its participating members: it proffered military support to member nations and mobilized its armies to wage war against common adversaries. Subsequent to this war, Rome set aside its previous political alliance with the conquered and subjugated their citizens under its supervision. Albeit these Latin cities continued to have limited, supervised autonomy for arbitrating local matters, they were thereafter annexed to Rome as “citizens without voting rights.” What began as punishment for rebellious Latin league nations metamorphosized into an imperial franchise. Rome’s hegemony precipitated the formation of municipal settlements, which designate places with a sizeable number of Roman citizens who could not participate in Roman elections. These settlements, mostly the defunct Latin league nations, became nominal Roman citizens and were disenfranchised. The reason for this deprivation was to prevent Rome’s erstwhile rebels from shaping the political landscape of its evolving republic. Myles Lavan lucidly states the rationale for municipalities: “The Romans punished most of the rebel communities by annexing them as *municipia*.... They were left as largely autonomous urban centres with their own magistrates, cult and laws.”⁴⁶¹ The creation of the *municipia* was punitive, which means that the autonomy allowed such cities was neither a gesture of courtesy nor kindness; rather, it was probably an act necessitated by strained human resources. What began as political expediency metamorphized into Rome’s signature dealings with subdued nations: turning conquered territories into Roman municipalities (Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 41.24.1; 49.16.1).⁴⁶² Even though these municipal cities were Romanized, their residents were not arbitrarily given full citizenship like Rome’s residents; they were disenfranchised. The civic rights exercised by occupants of Rome’s conquered territories

⁴⁶¹ Lavan, “Foundation of Empire,” 25

⁴⁶² Cassius Dio’s reference is to Julius Caesar and Augustus continuing with the Roman-Latin municipality model of imperial governance. If these Roman leaders carried on with a practice that began in the fourth-century BCE (three centuries earlier), it is reasonable to assume that it defined the Roman political landscape for a long time.

later became known as Latin rights, which practically meant civic status without voting rights at Roman elections. Depriving subdued Latin territories of suffrage limited its residents' ability to effect change in the empire. It was a second-class civic status befitting to Rome's subjects. The need to subordinate municipal cities under Roman supervision was not solely political but also economic. Rome imposed direct taxation on all its provincial cities for land and poll.⁴⁶³ Holders of the Latin right were susceptible to land taxation except if they were granted immunity by competent authority. So the decision to retain municipalities was not only to avert insurrections but to fund Rome's military campaigns. For centuries to come, direct annexation became Rome's model for most of its municipalities: the local community enjoyed autonomy, remitted taxes to the imperial center, supported Rome's military campaigns, and was deprived of full citizenship. This model casts doubts on the historical plausibility of municipal occupants (e.g., in first-century Asia Minor) acquiring Roman citizenship, except for military service or Roman paternity or administrative privileges. The latter typically occurs in municipalities where an outgoing magistrate (and his entire household) is conferred with Roman citizenship for services rendered to the empire. In this case, inhabitants of municipalities had the power in principle to make their compatriots a Roman citizen by electing them into office.⁴⁶⁴ The discretionary grant of Roman citizenship and Latin rights continued side by side for centuries: the latter serving as a pathway to citizenship for unaffiliated occupants of the empire and the former indicating an accomplished civic status. There is evidence showing that entire cities were accorded citizenship during the

⁴⁶³ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 147.

⁴⁶⁴ Lavan, "Foundation of Empire," 36.

principate.⁴⁶⁵ The lingering debate, however, is whether these provincial residents were permitted to vote in Roman elections.

Scholarship on Roman citizenship usually cites Cicero's defense of Cornelius Balbus, a Spaniard who served in the Roman army during the Sertorian War (79-72 BCE), as an invaluable resource on the subject. Cicero's arguments justify the legality of Pompey's action: the conferral of citizenship for military service—a practice that was subsequently ratified by the *lex Gellia Cornelia* (72 BCE). It is reasonable to assume that Balbus' civic status was also extended to his entire family (Pliny, *Nat.* 36). The disputation of Balbus' award is premised on the *lex Papia* (64 BCE), which has rightly been dubbed "Alien Act" by R. Gardner.⁴⁶⁶ He writes:

The law [*lex Papia*] made liable to eviction from Rome all non-citizens then resident there, but was mainly directed at the residue of dwellers in the Italian peninsula, mostly Transpadanes, who had not been enfranchised after the Social War.⁴⁶⁷

The *lex Papia* is a reminder that Romans jealously guarded the conferral of citizenship to non-members of the defunct Latin league. In defense of Balbus, Cicero affirms the lawfulness of Pompey's actions and the suitability of the recipient. From the onset, he opines that rewarding brave soldiers with citizenship for their service to the Republic is fitting and lawful (*Balb.* 3). Returning to the lingering question of the suffrage exercised by Roman citizens in the municipalities, Cicero correlates citizenship with a parochial legal system: rights are defined by a person's provenance (*Balb.* 31). His argument relies heavily on Balbus' new residence, political alliance, and territorial allegiance—Rome. Sherwin-White reframes Cicero's arguments adeptly:

⁴⁶⁵ Lavan ("Foundation of Empire") estimates that by the death of Augustus (14 CE), there were about a hundred municipalities with Latin rights and that by Caracalla's universal grant of Roman citizenship in 212 CE, two centuries later, the number had risen to a thousand. But he remarks that there were none in the East.

⁴⁶⁶ R. Gardner, "Introduction to *Pro Balbo*," in Cicero, *The Speeches: Pro Caelio—Provinciis Consularibus—Pro Balbo*, trans. R. Gardner (London: Heinemann, 1958), 618.

⁴⁶⁷ Gardner, "Introduction to *Pro Balbo*," 619.

“‘Change of soil’ means ‘change of state’ in the primitive thinking that underlies the odd Roman practices of *exilium* and *postliminium*.”⁴⁶⁸ Even though Balbus was originally a Spaniard, after he joined Pompey’s army and fought for Rome’s causes, he de facto switched his allegiance. Apart from his military endeavors, Balbus was actively involved in shaping the political landscape of Rome.⁴⁶⁹ With his wealth, he was able to wield influence in many circles. Gardner writes that the case brought against him was spearheaded by Romans who opposed the Triumvirate and its generous civic policies that greatly benefited non-Italian imperial residents. Balbus became a target because he was an avid supporter and defender of the Triumvirate, like his eloquent attorney, Cicero. Since Balbus’ defense occurred in mid-first century (56 BCE), one cannot assume that subsequent emperors did not grant citizenship to other remarkable individuals in the Roman provinces. Indeed, the contrary is well-attested. But the principle of denying Romans living outside Rome suffrage continued to be the norm.⁴⁷⁰ So Roman citizenship outside Rome (or the defunct Latin league confederation) is comparable to “citizenship without voting rights.” This would have most likely been the case in Asia Minor.

4.3.3 Roman Citizenship and Name Change

Having surveyed the franchise of Roman citizenship and its corollary, Latin right, I will now examine a trait that is hardly discussed by scholars who write on imperial influence on the NT: name change. Sherwin-White claims that name change is an essential trait of a person’s Romanness. He opines: “There can be no certainty about the status of a person with Latin names unless he has at least two, including a recognizable gentile name, and mentions either his tribe

⁴⁶⁸ Sherwin-White, “Roman Citizenship,” 49.

⁴⁶⁹ Gardner, “Introduction to *Pro Balbo*,” 614-17.

⁴⁷⁰ Sherwin-White, “Roman Citizenship,” 48.

or a post in the Roman public or municipal service.”⁴⁷¹ This criterion excludes many characters in Luke and Acts, including Paul. The obvious exceptions are the Roman procurators of Judea, like Pontius Pilate. Sherwin-White bases his argument on an empire-wide practice where a Roman customarily had three names: *praenomen*, *nomen*, and *cognomen*. The first two functioned like modern personal names (first and middle), while the third was a family name traceable to one’s Italian tribe and is certainly gentilic in denotation. The difficulty in affirming the Roman status of a character is worsened by the fact that a single name or *praenomen* is not a reliable indicator of civic status.⁴⁷² Sherwin-White cites Paulus, Secundus, and Lucius as examples of a *praenomen*.⁴⁷³ Since Paul is solely known by his *praenomen*, it is highly improbable that he was a Roman citizen. To recapitulate Sherwin-White’s first prerequisite for Roman citizenship, let me state it thus: (1) two names minimum, (2) an Italian name, (3) a name showing the bearer’s Latin tribe, and (4) a name that shows the public office the bearer held in Roman government (e.g., municipal post or service in Rome). Luke’s use of Paulus does not meet these criteria; in fact, it is debatable that it fulfills any. Following Sherwin-White’s insightful analysis, the most informed deduction one can make is that Paul’s Roman citizenship is solely a feature of Luke’s narrative world.

Further complicating arguments regarding the historical plausibility of Paul’s possession of Roman citizenship is the practice of many provincial residents who assumed Latin names because of the prestige it afforded them.⁴⁷⁴ This practice was extensive and socially intelligible. Writing in a sociopolitical milieu where claims to citizenship were commonplace (e.g., in Asia

⁴⁷¹ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 157. “Tribe” either refers to the original groups that comprised the city of Rome prior to its annexation of the Latin league nations or one of these nations.

⁴⁷² Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 162.

⁴⁷³ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 161. Sanders misconstrues Paul as a cognomen. *Paul*, 13.

⁴⁷⁴ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 157.

Minor), Luke likely assumed these “frames of reference” in swamping his narrative with bearers of Latin names. This could explain his portrayal of Paul as a Roman citizen. Since the acquisition of Latin names was a trend on the rise in the provinces, Asia Minor most likely would not have been insulated from this vital index of Romanization. According to Sherwin-White, Latin names all across the empire were borne by both manumitted slaves and full-fledged citizens.⁴⁷⁵ Determining whether someone was freeborn or manumitted required more information than simply their Latin names. Since my analysis appears to be skewed toward men, the reader might accuse me of chauvinism. But it was the Roman world that was chauvinistic. Sherwin-White remarks: “Most Roman girls had no real names at all unless they took their father’s *cognomen*.”⁴⁷⁶ If Latin appellations neither revealed the civic status of a Roman woman nor a provincial man, it means that it cannot be a reliable index of Roman citizenship in the provinces. Against this historical backdrop, there appear to be no viable arguments leading to the supposition that Paul was indisputably a Roman citizen.

Having done a thorough, painstaking analysis of Latin names in the provinces, using Acts as a guide, Sherwin-White concludes that the Roman identity of characters in Luke’s narratives in terms of their rights of citizenship should be reexamined. He asserts: “There can be no certainty that any of the centurions in the stories of Acts or the Gospels was a Roman.”⁴⁷⁷ This claim upends the assumptions of not a few scholars who take for granted the civic status of the individuals mentioned in the narratives. But it does not impugn the orientation or sociopolitical milieu of the author who was submerged in the ocean of imperial life. So whereas Sherwin-White has astutely pointed out the shortcomings of Luke’s depiction of “Roman” characters, he

⁴⁷⁵ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 158.

⁴⁷⁶ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 162.

⁴⁷⁷ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 156.

has not debunked (nor is he interested in doing so) the sociocultural atmosphere that undergirds the narrative of Acts. The literary plausibility of Paul's depiction, which was the starting point of this concise analysis, is credible; the fine details of Luke's supposed historical foundation for the descriptions of his narratives' characters, however, is inconclusive. Luke's literary presentation thus, although questionable in historical terms, has just enough plausibility to succeed, especially with an audience that very much wants Paul to be a Roman citizen.

4.3.4 Geographical Spread of Roman Citizens

Toward the end of Augustus' principate, he wrote in his imperial annals that there were numerous Roman citizens in the empire. The figure he stipulates is 4,937,000 in total (*Res gestae* 8), which includes 500,000 soldiers—300,000 of whom were provincial inhabitants (*Res gestae* 3). Some classicists have disputed the historical accuracy of these numbers and all other figures documented by ancient historians.⁴⁷⁸ But it is not my intent here to reexamine their arguments. The point I wish to highlight here is that by 14 CE, the end of Augustus' principate, there were numerous imperial residents who possessed Roman citizenship. Most notably are the 300,000 soldiers scattered throughout the provinces. If the ratio of the total number of soldiers in the empire to those residing in the provinces is anything to go by, there were approximately three million Roman citizens living in these locations. Given the prominence and auspicious wealth of Asia, it would have gotten a fair share of these persons. A century later would expectedly have witnessed a surge in Roman citizens across the empire, making the account in Acts historically plausible. Lauding Augustus' magnanimity toward Roman Jews, Philo writes that there were many of them who had become citizens as a result of their manumission (*Embassy* 155). Now if

⁴⁷⁸ Tim G. Parkin, *Demography and Roman Society* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992); Walter Scheidel, *Debating Roman Demography* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

numerous Jews in Rome had obtained citizenship prior to 14 CE, given the sociopolitical and economic significance of Asia Minor in the empire, Luke's description of Paul a century later is definitely plausible.

4.3.5 Discussion Summary

This brief study of Roman citizenship has shown that the franchise was firmly rooted in Rome's inaugural philosophy and interaction with foreigners. It has highlighted the challenges experienced by the republic in rewarding notable persons of non-Latin league provenance with Roman citizenship; it has accented the role of the franchise in incentivizing outsiders to join and support Rome's expansionist programs; and it has emphasized the familial accomplishments of the award that made Rome one of the most successful ancient hegemonies. This four-layered study (Roman philosophy, Latin right, Latin soubriquet, and geographical spread of Roman citizenship) makes the civic assertions of Paul in Acts historically inaccurate, because although Latin right or the civic status awarded to provincial city inhabitants was widespread, there is no reason to assume that the recipients could participate in Roman elections. However, excepting the deprivation of suffrage in Roman elections, Luke's claim about Paul is literarily credible due to the pervasiveness of conditionally enfranchised citizens in Asia Minor. Also, Latin names are inconclusive indices for ascertaining Romanness in the NT, because most characters are known solely by their praenomen. Lastly, given the documented number of Roman citizens in Augustus' imperial annals both in Rome and the provinces, Luke's delineation of Paul a century later would have been historically plausible or compatible with his readers' "frames of reference."

4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have argued that the diaspora Jewish experience in the Roman Empire was not monolithic: each enclave had a unique experience vis-à-vis its parochial character. With regard to Rome's attitude toward foreign religions, 4.1 showed that Romans were indifferent to most alien religionists unless their practices proved to be politically significant. Also, that the distinction between *religio* and *superstitio* had nothing to do with religious mores or expressions but with the political significance of its practitioners: anti-Roman or antisocial. To the extent that Jews became allies of Romans, to that degree did their practices become *religio*. In 4.2, I opined that from the commencement of the Roman Empire to Luke's day there is no documentary evidence to support a state-sponsored persecution of diaspora Jews. But this does not preclude spontaneous ethnic skirmishes targeting diaspora Jews in different enclaves. This means that from an administrative viewpoint, Romans did not seek to persecute Jews for worshipping a different deity or adhering to foreign customs. In 4.3, I showed that Luke's depiction of Paul as a Roman citizen, given the widespread attestation in the empire to citizens without suffrage in the provincial cities, is literarily credible. But in the light of some historical objections raised by classicists, its veracity is highly disputable. Since rhetoric relies on readers' broad exposure to the substance of a narrative, Luke assumes that they would recognize Paul as a Roman citizen. This justifies Luke's at homeness in imperial life. In 4.4, I argued that since Augustus' annals attest to the dispersal of numerous imperial citizens across provincial cities, by the inception of the second century, holders of this esteemed civic status would have soared thus foregrounding Luke's readers' "frames of reference."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF PAUL IN ACTS

In the preceding chapters, I examined prior scholarly conversations on Luke's Paul and their ramifications for the parting of Jews and Christians (chapter one); I reviewed Luke's references to "the Jews" as designating diaspora Jews, mostly residents of Asia Minor and Greece (chapter two); I studied Luke's application of "Christians" as embodied by Paul (chapter three); and I investigated the status of Jews in the Roman Empire to proffer a historical context for Luke's depiction of Paul, diaspora Jews, Christians, and their interaction with Roman-appointed parochial leaders (chapter four). These investigations foreground a study of the rhetorical function of Paul in Acts.

5.1 Scholarship on Paul in Acts

E. P. Sanders's erudite and comprehensive introduction to Paul's life and letters is a fitting starting point. He opines that Luke's account of Paul's "pre-Christian" life is unreliable because of his avowed rhetorical interest in Jerusalem.⁴⁷⁹ Disregarding the narrative situation of Paul in Jerusalem, Sanders argues, making copious references to Paul's letters, that he was most probably a diaspora Jew, since this is consistent with his silence on ongoing contemporaneous, contentious sectarian legal disputes in Judea. Being a diaspora Jew meant that he was definitely not a Pharisee, in any formal sense of the word, since the latter have left no documentary evidence for their presence or existence outside Palestine.⁴⁸⁰ Sanders's argument hinges on the noticeable absence of distinctively Pharisaic (or Palestinian Jewish) tenets in Paul's letters. He observes that there are many instances in these writings where the legal stance of the Pharisees or their purity laws would have come in handy. But Paul does not argue his case by resorting to

⁴⁷⁹ Sanders, *Paul*, 17.

⁴⁸⁰ Sanders, *Paul*, 22.

these sectarian stipulations; rather, he habitually appeals to the LXX—a text that was widely utilized by and undeniably familiar to diaspora Jews. Being a diaspora Jew, Paul was remarkably conversant with the Greek version of the Jewish Scripture and cited it profusely. Sanders’s closing argument on the unlikelihood of Paul being a Palestinian Pharisee is framed thus: “He seems not to have been highly educated in how to make general principles or vague laws in the Bible apply *precisely* to everyday life.”⁴⁸¹ This is indisputably the signature trait of Palestinian Pharisees.

Sanders’s claim on Paul’s diaspora provenance is largely based on his impressive study and surpassing knowledge of his letters and Palestinian Judaism.⁴⁸² He highlights Paul’s silence on notable Palestinian Jewish debates and sectarian legal positions in the first century. Although his position is based on *argumentum ex silentio*, it is nonetheless convincing given its corroboration in Acts. Sanders’s arguments, however, inadvertently open the possibility that Luke’s depiction of Paul, as a diaspora Jew, is historically accurate in another sense. As I have argued in previous chapters, the story of Luke is historically plausible not in the minutiae of its narration but in its rhetorical effect. Even though I agree with Sanders’s attribution of diaspora provenance to Paul, the subject of my investigation is not the Paul in the letters but the one in Acts. The latter, as I will argue later, mirrors the Lukan group in opposition to other proximate rival diaspora Jewish assemblies in Asia Minor and Greece. Sanders’s claim that the letters are the primary source for reconstructing Paul is widely accepted, especially by pundits of Acts.⁴⁸³ But Luke’s Paul resides in a historical context several generations removed from the letter writer.

⁴⁸¹ Sanders, *Paul*, 54, emphasis original.

⁴⁸² E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

⁴⁸³ Sanders, *Paul*, 56.

I find three interrelated claims of Sanders to be disputable: (1) Luke did not read Paul's letters, (2) Luke had little knowledge of Pauline theology,⁴⁸⁴ and (3) Acts should be dated around 80-90 CE.⁴⁸⁵ These assertions are deeply connected, because the most plausible explanation in defense of Luke's apparent innovation regarding Pauline theology hinges on chronological distance, distinct literary genre, and a shift in sociocultural realities different from those addressed by Paul in his letters. To conclude that Luke did not read Paul's letters based on his nuanced approach to novel existential concerns of his day (e.g., non-circumcision of Gentiles and their non-adherence to Jewish dietary laws) ignores the evolutionary dimension of theology.⁴⁸⁶ Similar theology does not necessarily mean an identical response to a comparable situation. Likewise, to say that Luke did not read Paul's letters because of his novelistic slant to the apostle's writings and gospel obfuscates the literary medium employed in communicating the theology of Paul in Acts. Luke could have read Paul's letters, imbibed them, reflected on them in a developing sociocultural milieu, and ingeniously opted to respond differently to comparable issues (e.g., circumcision and Jewish dietary laws) facing his group that flourished half a century later. Terence L. Donaldson supports this argument: "Jewish opinions varied through time, place, and cultural context. Each text has to be treated primarily as providing evidence for its own time and place."⁴⁸⁷ So Luke's unique approach to the non-circumcision of devout Gentiles and their optional adherence to dietary laws (issues addressed by Paul) accents the malleability of theology. Akin to these assertions is dating. Richard I. Pervo shrewdly categorizes Sanders-styled dating of Acts as sentimental and politically correct.⁴⁸⁸ He suggests 110-120 CE as a

⁴⁸⁴ Sanders, *Paul*, 55-56; for a contrary argument, see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 51-147.

⁴⁸⁵ Sanders, *Paul*, 14.

⁴⁸⁶ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6th ed. (London: Longmans, 1890).

⁴⁸⁷ Donaldson, *Judaism and Gentiles*, 507.

⁴⁸⁸ Pervo, *Dating Acts*.

defensible dating for Acts, basing his argument on Luke's familiarity with Josephus' writings and Irenaeus' citation of Acts.

Jacob Jervell, being a staunch advocate of a historicist reading of Acts, refers to the second major protagonist of the narrative as the "real" Paul. He argues that Paul's letters are inundated with theology, thereby obfuscating the true persona of the apostle. As such, he opines: "Paul's letters are sources containing more of Paul than we usually look for."⁴⁸⁹ The personal traits of Paul are fleshed out in Luke's second volume. Jervell's underlying goal clearly is to explain, justify, and reconcile the discordant portraits of Paul in Acts and the letters. Whereas the letters are suffused with theology, Acts relates biographical data. Still guided by historicism, Jervell maintains that "Paul the Jew is easily lost if one focuses on his letters."⁴⁹⁰ Unlike many who fail to distinguish the genres of the letters and Acts, he commendably differentiates the two but poorly categorizes them.⁴⁹¹ His assumption that Paul's letters exclusively feature his theology while Acts evinces his true persona is a misreading of both genres. To reconcile apparently discordant portraits of Paul on the shaky ground of hermeneutical schizophrenia (Paul's theology does not reflect his persona) is far from compelling: "Paul had more freedom in his theology than in his life-style and practice."⁴⁹² To his credit, however, Jervell makes helpful observations about Luke's Paul: (1) he was influenced by a myriad of sociocultural traditions;⁴⁹³ (2) Jewishness in the first century was characterized by "*orthopraxy* [observance of ancestral practices] not *orthodoxy* [normative creedal beliefs]";⁴⁹⁴ and (3) correlating Rom 9–11 with the "Pauline" section of Acts. Jervell's historicist preoccupation with Acts colors his judgment of

⁴⁸⁹ Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, 55.

⁴⁹⁰ Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, 59.

⁴⁹¹ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*.

⁴⁹² Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, 58.

⁴⁹³ Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, 55.

⁴⁹⁴ Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, 58.

Luke's creative project, thus leading him to postulate superfluous dichotomies in order to excavate the "real" Paul.

Daniel Marguerat approaches Luke's Paul differently, using narrative criticism. He notes that comparing and contrasting the portraits of Paul in the letters and Acts without being mindful of their distinct genres is methodologically flawed.⁴⁹⁵ In line with genre differentiation, he regards Paul in Acts as an identity marker: "[Luke] imagines Christianity inheriting simultaneously the best of the Jewish tradition as well as Roman universality; the Paul of Acts, standing at the confluence of these two cultures, illustrates the Christian vocation."⁴⁹⁶ According to Marguerat, Luke's Paul tells the reader more about Luke's group and its fervent striving to be accepted among diaspora Jews than it does about the "historical" Paul. In addition to bestriding two sociocultural worlds (Jewish and Greco-Roman), Paul in Acts symbolizes the "future of Christianity": unapologetic identification as a Jewish sect, optimistic prospects of universality, and profound rootedness in imperial life and culture.⁴⁹⁷ It also functions as a rhetorical bridge: reassuring Jews and appeasing Romans.⁴⁹⁸ Although Marguerat's analysis has several laudable insights, his predictable pitfall is his methodological assumption: Acts evinces the parting of Jews and Christians. As such, Paul is unwittingly appraised as a Jew who had become a "Christian." This interpretation is also echoed in Odile Flichy's essay.⁴⁹⁹ The ever-alluring temptation for NT scholars is to ascribe to the Judean tragedy of 70 CE an empire-wide impact for Jews. This cannot be further from the truth.⁵⁰⁰ Due to this egregious assumption, Marguerat

⁴⁹⁵ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*; idem, *First Christian Historian*.

⁴⁹⁶ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 46.

⁴⁹⁷ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*.

⁴⁹⁸ Marguerat, "Paul et la Torah," 81-100.

⁴⁹⁹ Flichy, "L'Apôtre des Nations," 37-49.

⁵⁰⁰ See 4.2 above.

copiously refers to those mirrored by Paul as Christians on their way out of Jewishness but who seek legitimation and antiquity for existential reasons.⁵⁰¹

Even though I agree with Marguerat's thesis, I find his historical assumptions debatable. Legitimation and antiquity were not sought by a sect that had been expelled from the synagogue but by fervent diaspora Jews who regarded their acknowledgment of Jesus' messiahship to be complementary to their ancestral practices: the precise argument made with distinction in Acts. This clarification resolves another well-meaning deduction of Marguerat: "[Luke's] portrait of Paul is marked more by the issue of Christian identity and the claim to heritage than by the change in soteriology, which in Luke's day, was considered an accomplished fact."⁵⁰² If Torah praxis in Acts—especially the circumcision of Gentiles—has no soteriological value (to quote Marguerat, "an accomplished fact"), why was it still being debated by Luke who flourished and wrote for third-generation Christ believers?⁵⁰³ What is the rhetorical value of the Cornelius story and the diaspora Jewish council in Jerusalem? I firmly believe, backed by historiographers, that just as historiography is not about the past but the present, the ideas addressed in Acts are not a recycling of the ideological struggles of Paul but an engagement with the existential menace (i.e., circumcision, dietary laws, and the communal tension that their enforcement would engender) to the survival of Christ-believing diaspora Jews residing in Asia Minor and Greece.⁵⁰⁴ That being said, Marguerat makes insightful remarks on foundational themes to the study of Luke's Paul: reception and genre. Regarding reception, he situates Luke's project among early Christian writers: "Every phenomenon of reception implies coherence *and* shifting, continuity *and*

⁵⁰¹ Marguerat, "Paul et la Torah," 99-100.

⁵⁰² Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 65. His "change" in soteriology needs nuancing. François Bovon frames this same point a lot better: "Luke is not replacing salvation through works with salvation through faith, but rather salvation through ritual works [e.g., circumcision] with salvation through Christ and moral works." "Studies in Luke-Acts," 188.

⁵⁰³ Marguerat implies that the audience of Acts are third-generation Christians. *Paul in Acts*.

⁵⁰⁴ See 1.5.2 above.

discontinuity with respect to the original.”⁵⁰⁵ This approach potentially absolves the material in Acts of incongruity and inconsistency in its alternative depiction of Paul. Marguerat asserts that Paul was received both as “practice” and “discourse.”⁵⁰⁶ Pertaining to genre, he describes the portrayal of Paul in Acts as a “biographical memory.”⁵⁰⁷ Social memory, as I remarked in 1.5.2 above, is seldom an objective, neutral, and systematic reminiscing of the past. Jan Assmann corroborates this as well: “In der Erinnerung wird Vergangenheit rekonstruiert.”⁵⁰⁸ So matters of Torah praxis for Gentiles living among diaspora Jews and worshipping with them was a far cry from being delineated as an “accomplished fact” when Acts was written. Luke’s narrative thus is best read as a significant milestone in the ideological struggle toward attaining a local consensus. Marguerat’s theological reading of Luke’s Paul is illuminating. He defines the literary significance of Lukan characters as follows: “[To] crystallize the theological motive of the plot.” Hence, the Paul of Acts encapsulates Luke’s theology. This is also echoed by Jervell: “‘Lukas ist Erzähler und kein systematischer Theologe.’”⁵⁰⁹ Like Jervell, Marguerat, too, assumes that Jews and Christians have parted prior to the writing of Acts. This assumption skews his interpretation of Luke’s “Jewish” Paul.

Richard I. Pervo believes that Luke’s Paul was constructed to address contemporaneous concerns and not to reconstruct the missionary itinerary of the apostle who lived half a century earlier.⁵¹⁰ On this subject he concurs with Andreas Lindemann.⁵¹¹ His reading of Acts is

⁵⁰⁵ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 21, emphasis original; idem, “Paul after Paul: A (Hi)story of Reception,” trans. Michael D. Thomas and Julien C. H. Smith, in Moessner et al., *Paul and the Heritage of Israel*, 89, emphasis original; for pertinent publications on the reception of Paul in Acts, see Karl Löning, “Paulinismus in der Apostelgeschichte,” in *Paulus in den Neutestamentlichen Spätschriften: Zur Paulusrezeption in Neuen Testament*, ed. Karl Kertelge (Freiburg: Herder, 1981); and Marguerat, *Reception of Paulinism in Acts*.

⁵⁰⁶ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*; see also Bovon, “Paul as Document,” 307.

⁵⁰⁷ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 65.

⁵⁰⁸ Assmann, *Kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 31.

⁵⁰⁹ Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 91.

⁵¹⁰ Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 150.

⁵¹¹ Andreas Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum*, BHT 58 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 49-50.

consistent with his landmark publication, *Profit with Delight*, wherein he compellingly argues for reading the book as a novel.⁵¹² Although he accepts the theory of reception, he nevertheless assumes the parting of Jews and Christians, just like Marguerat. This assumption informs his liberal usage of Christians to designate Christ believers indiscriminately. In his sequel work, *Luke's Story of Paul*, he regards Acts as a text detailing a movement away from Judaism: Christianity had replaced Judaism for believers in Christ.⁵¹³ He ascribes this interpretation to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Even though his insight on the genre of Acts is invaluable and extensively quoted in scholarship, he fails, like many others, to situate Luke's narrative in the sociocultural milieu of a vibrant and thriving diaspora Jewish sect residing in Asia Minor and Greece. Monolithic constructions of Jews and Christians in Acts engender false notions of the competitive struggle of two religions against one another, because the hostility against Paul is easily read as emblematic of Jewish animosity toward all Christ believers.⁵¹⁴ But the story of Luke is more subtle: rival diaspora Jews struggled for legitimacy and faithfulness to their ancestral practices. Diaspora Jews who formed Christ associations with non-Judaizing Gentiles held that their worldview evinced a better understanding of their religious patrimony, while non-Christ-believing diaspora Jews accused them of missing the mark.⁵¹⁵ François Bovon captures this rhetoric succinctly: "Luke-Acts may ... be described as an exercise in legitimating a sectarian movement."⁵¹⁶ Hence, Acts mirrors an internecine diaspora Jewish conflict not a

⁵¹² Pervo, *Profit with Delight*; idem, *Luke's Story of Paul*.

⁵¹³ Pervo, *Luke's Story of Paul*.

⁵¹⁴ Wilson, "Jews and the Death of Jesus," 155-64; Niels Hyldahl, "The Reception of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles," in *The New Testament as Reception*, ed. Mogens Müller and Henrik Tronier, JSNTSup 230 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Palmer Bonz, "Luke's Revision of Paul," 143-52; Matthews, *Perfect Martyr*, 32; Christopher Mount, "Constructing Paul as a Christian in the Acts of the Apostles," in *Engaging Early Christian History*, 141-52.

⁵¹⁵ Although there is historical attestation to this ideological divide among Christ-believing Jews two generations earlier (e.g., Paul's letter to the Galatians), Acts does not relate the same. My argument thus is solely based on the internal evidence in Acts.

⁵¹⁶ Bovon, "Studies in Luke-Acts," 189.

struggle between Jews and Christians (as if the latter is technically not the former).⁵¹⁷ Stephen G. Wilson, applying his social-scientific acumen, articulates this subject brilliantly with indelible resonance: “The one involved a radical break which left Judaism for the Jews [Marcionites]; the other took what it wanted and ... left nothing for the Jews [Christians].”⁵¹⁸ And again: “The one attacked the symbols and left the people alone [Marcionites]; the other took the symbols and attacked the people [Christians].”⁵¹⁹ However, it needs to be noted that his reading of Acts, like that of many scholars, leads to overly simple and anachronistic conclusions, too.

Stanley E. Porter goes against the scholarly current. He opines that there is no conclusive ground to posit or sustain the hypothesis of discordant depictions of Paul in the letters and Acts.⁵²⁰ He argues persuasively that the assumed differences can be easily reconciled by postulating a two-author theory: (1) different authors typically view the same problem differently, (2) using distinct genres leads to addressing identical existential concerns differently, and (3) emphasizing separate theological objectives—for instance, exhorting local churches (Paul) and advocating for ecclesial unity (Luke)—can produce different shades of emphases without resulting in rhetorical incongruity.⁵²¹ Porter’s audacious, counter attempt to resolve the hermeneutical bottlenecks in interpreting Luke’s Paul is laudable. But realistically speaking,

⁵¹⁷ For a similar claim, see Lloyd Gaston, “Judaism of the Uncircumcised in Ignatius and Related Writers,” in Wilson, *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, 42; but Gerard Rouwhorst upends this interpretation: “Discussions about Sabbath observance were taking place not between Christians and Jews, but rather among Christians. The debate was between ... Christians ... of Jewish descent ... and Christians ... of Gentile origins.... A careful study ... has shown that varying strategies were used by the latter to combat, refute or convince the former....” I exceedingly appreciate Rouwhorst’s fervent attempt to eschew a Christians-versus-Jews scenario, but this deduction, albeit on a slightly different provenance from Luke’s, is not satisfactory. “Ritual Interactions between Jews and Christians East of Antioch,” in *Jews and Christians in Antiquity: A Regional Perspective*, ed. Pierluigi Lanfranchi and Joseph Verheyden (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 180.

⁵¹⁸ Wilson, “Marcion and the Jews,” 58.

⁵¹⁹ Wilson, “Marcion and the Jews.”

⁵²⁰ Stanley E. Porter, *Paul of Acts*.

⁵²¹ For a study on Luke’s focus on ecclesial unity, see Andrianjatovo Rakotoharintsifa, “Luke and the Internal Divisions in the Early Church,” in *Luke’s Literary Achievement: Collected Essays*, JSNT 116, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 165-77.

discordant Pauline depictions cannot be glossed over as simply complementary despite their markedly palpable discrepancies. Nevertheless, the elements from which Porter constructs his argument are significant: difference in authorship (genre, provenance, date, and sociocultural milieu) and pastoral goals can notably impact the portrayal of literary characters, especially given Marguerat's notion of characters as "theological crystallizations of plots."

The scholars I have carefully reviewed above have made monumental contributions to the study of Paul in Acts. They have assiduously wrestled with the divergent portraits of the apostle in both the letters and Acts and have drawn their well-reasoned deductions after painstaking studies. Sanders dismisses the historicity of Acts' biographical data on Paul. Basing his argument mostly on the letters, he opines that Paul was most probably a diaspora Jew. To account for the discordant depictions, he avers that Luke did not have access to Paul's letters. Jervell grapples with this thorny subject differently: he claims that the letters evince Paul's theology, while Acts features Paul's persona. Marguerat approaches the subject through the lens of narrative criticism and regards Paul as the embodiment of Christianity. Pervo concurs with this literary approach and accentuates differences in Pauline depictions. Porter proposes a two-author theory that elucidates the differences in portrayals on the basis of authorial discrepancies—genre, dating, provenance, and sociocultural milieu. Although I find most of the foregoing insights agreeable, none takes into cognizance the critical discourse on the parting of the ways and sociological criticism in its study of Luke's Paul. In the next segment, I will show the benefits of using these hermeneutical frameworks in analyzing the Paul of Acts.

5.2 The Rhetorical Function of Luke's "Jewish" Paul

In the past three decades, Luke's penchant for rhetorical devices has been consistently accented and convincingly debated by numerous scholars. For instance, Pervo opines that the most cogent arguments against the historicity of Acts are literary patterns utilized in the narrative: "repetition, symmetry, and stereotypes";⁵²² Clark examines literary parallels employed in the same;⁵²³ Sandra Schwartz stresses Luke's proclivity for trial scenes;⁵²⁴ Janusz Kucicki identifies three principal rhetorical devices in Acts (narratives, speeches, and dialogues);⁵²⁵ and Gregory Sterling shows the theological underpinnings of speeches in Acts.⁵²⁶ These interactions with the symbolic world of Acts indicate that rhetoric is at the core of Luke's historiography. This also applies to Luke's depiction of Paul. In chapter two, I argued that "Jewishness" in Acts designates diaspora Jews, mostly those residing in Asia Minor and Greece.⁵²⁷ This nuanced application of "Jewishness" has eluded many scholars who hastily conclude that Acts is straightforwardly a Christian text.⁵²⁸ Luke's unique employment of a well-known lexeme is only defensible if his narrative objective is to engage diaspora Jews, whom he almost exclusively calls "Jews." By singling out diaspora Jews residing in Asia Minor and Greece, Luke is likely engaging those who are emblematic of his group and its proximate critics. The intriguing disputations between the "Jewish" Paul and the menacing "Jews" are evidently internecine

⁵²² Pervo, *Making of Paul*, 150.

⁵²³ Clark, *Parallel Lives*, 53-54 (Peter and Paul), 224-26 (the miracles of Peter and Paul), 242-44 (the speeches of Peter and Paul), 276-77 (Stephen and Saul), and 305 (the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch). Luke and Acts are replete with literary parallels.

⁵²⁴ Sandra Schwartz, "The Trial Scenes in the Greek Novels and in Acts," in Penner and Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Acts*, 105-38. She opines: "There are more individual legal scenes in Acts than there are in the five Greek novels put together." "Trial Scenes," 118.

⁵²⁵ Kucicki, *Function of the Speeches in the Acts*.

⁵²⁶ Gregory E. Sterling, "'Opening the Scriptures': The Legitimation of the Jewish Diaspora and the Early Christian Mission," in Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, 199-226. Focusing on Stephen's speech, he remarks that one of the most insightful affirmations of Luke in this speech (and others) is "the legitimacy of life under God outside the land of Israel." Sterling, "Opening the Scriptures," 217.

⁵²⁷ See 2.2 above.

⁵²⁸ See Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts," 69-85; Wilson, "Jews and the Death of Jesus," 155-64; Sanders, *Jews in Luke-Acts*; Palmer Bonz, "Luke's Revision of Paul," 143-52; Wills, *Not God's People*.

diaspora Jewish scrimmages related as a mid-first-century tale of the expansion of an incipient movement of Jewish Christ believers. The “Jewishness” of Paul is employed as a rhetorical locus for engaging diaspora Jewish critics in the same environs. Luke’s eccentric employment of “Jewishness” is justified when read against the literary backdrop of defamiliarization.

Expatriating this rhetorical device, James L. Resseguie asserts that it is a surprise-inducing technique which sustains intrigue and guarantees suspense: “A defamiliarized reading is one that is less automatic, less able to glide smoothly over the text; it is more aware of the bumps in the road and the disruptions in the text.”⁵²⁹ These “disruptions” elucidate Luke’s astute application of “Jews” to diaspora Jews exclusively. In chapter three, I examined an oft-misconstrued appellation, “Christianness,” vis-à-vis the “Jewish” Paul. Contrary to the dominant scholarly proclivity that delineates Christ believers indiscriminately as “Christians,” a careful analysis of Acts shows that Luke’s legendary apostle is the only character who embodies “Christianness.”

Once again, exegetes who find Acts to be monolithically Christian, based on two occurrences of this term in the narrative, are inattentive to Luke’s subtle arguments couched in an intriguing, defamiliarizing tale: the unceasing skirmishes in the story are not between Jews and Christians but between Christ-believing diaspora Jews, mirrored by Paul, and non-Christ-believing diaspora Jews. The disagreements enthusiastically related are a diaspora Jewish affair, thereby precluding the struggle of one religion against another. Luke’s shrewd defamiliarized employment of “Jewishness” and “Christianness” is an enthralling novelistic account of how Christ-believing Jews in Asia Minor and Greece negotiated, redefined, and expanded their understanding of “Jewishness” to accommodate their acceptance of the messiahship of Jesus and their concession

⁵²⁹ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 38; idem, “Defamiliarization and the Gospels,” 147-53; idem, “Automatization and Defamiliarization,” 137-50; for the originator of this literary theory in modern history, see Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique,” in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

to non-Judaizing Gentiles. In the person of Paul, Luke narrates how an assembly can be both faithfully Jewish and unapologetically Christian. His legendary figure thus becomes a sociocultural “confluence” and an ideological melting pot of two complementary worldviews: the antique adherence to ancestral customs and the novel acknowledgment of Jesus as the messiah and the daring admission of non-Judaizing Gentiles. As I will argue in the ensuing section, Luke’s narrative of “Jewishness” and “Christianness” is a solid bedrock for erecting numerous contemporary theologies: theological anthropology, ecclesiology, soteriology, and ecumenism. In chapter four, I investigated the third attribute of Luke’s group reflected in the figure of Paul: Romanness. As with “Christianness,” Luke relates Romanness as an identity that is congenial with diaspora Jewishness.⁵³⁰ Adaptability is a pivotal characteristic of all thriving novel movements, including “Christianness.” This trait enables “Christians” to continue being diaspora Jews, admit non-Judaizing Gentiles, and acquire esteemed civic status. In this tripartite identity, Luke has ingeniously delineated his Christ association: fervent diaspora Jews, passionate Christ believers, and law-abiding imperial occupants. With these broad strokes sketched on Luke’s literary canvass, I will now delve into the distinctive hues that each rhetorical brush stroke imprints on his sociocultural portrait of Paul.

5.2.1 Paul’s “Jewishness” Reaffirmed

As Schwartz keenly observes, Luke has a penchant for trials. Stressing this inclination, she says: “There are more individual legal scenes in Acts than there are in the five Greek novels put together.”⁵³¹ This evidently implies that trial scenes are Luke’s preferred rhetorical devices

⁵³⁰ See 2.1.3 above.

⁵³¹ Schwartz, “Trial Scenes,” 118

for communicating his theology or ideology. Many characters face trials in Acts: Stephen is tried before the high priest (6:12—8:1a); Peter faces “trial” after converting Cornelius (11:1-18); there is a Jerusalem “trial” to adjudicate the circumcision concession granted to devout Gentiles by Christ-believing diaspora Jews (15:6-29); and Paul’s celebrated trials (22:1-29; 22:30—23:11; 24:1-27; 25:13—26:32). Per these statistics, Luke’s quadrupling of Paul’s trial stresses the significance of the proceedings. Whereas other characters are assigned a trial, Paul gets four. Stringing together these trials serves as the denouement of Luke’s discourse on Christ-believing diaspora Jews. It is thus not surprising that these scenes conveniently feature the dual attestation to Paul’s tripartite identities: Jewishness, Christianness, and Romanness. The ensuing analysis on the reaffirmation of Paul’s “Jewishness” will thus be centered on his trial: the denouement of Luke’s legitimization of his configuration.

Underscoring Paul’s “Jewishness” are the allegations levelled against him: instructing diaspora Jews to forsake ancestral practices (21:17); teaching against Israel, the law, the temple, and profaning the latter (21:28); belief in the resurrection (23:8); “agitator among the Jews, ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes,” and profanation of the temple (24:5-6). These charges are identical to the charges brought against Stephen (6:11-14). Like in every legal proceeding, accusations necessitate trials. Beyond any reasonable doubt, Paul’s trial reflects his practice of “Jewishness” in the diaspora. As with Stephen, the allegations leveled against Paul are false. But they evince the genuine concerns encountered by Luke’s association: does his assembly of Christ believers remain one of faithful Jews notwithstanding their innovative interpretation of Jewish customs? The answer Luke proffers is a resounding affirmative. Luke’s rhetoric is premised on a group remaining faithful diaspora Jews while associating with devout, non-Judaizing Gentiles and acknowledging the messiahship of Jesus. Given Schwartz’s comment regarding Luke’s

penchant for trials, it is arguably his preferred rhetorical device to give a theatrical presentation, similar to a denouement, to diaspora Jewish scrimmages over ancestral practices. Graphic presentations are memorable and indelible; hence, they are rhetorically highly effective.

Accenting the diaspora provenance of the foregoing disputation is the Jerusalem mob's inability to articulate the charges brought against Paul to non-Jews. Albeit the mob is convinced of these allegations, having been incited by Jews from Asia Minor and Greece, it could not articulate the accusation lucidly to a third party (21:34). This reiterates the parochial nature of the legal proceeding: it is not between Jews collectively and Christ believers but between diaspora Jews of differing views on ancestral practices. These subtle nuances to Jewish customs left bystanders in the dark. "The Jews" who had a score to settle with Paul, like him, are diaspora Jews from Asia Minor and Greece (21:27). The Jerusalem crowd apparently was unperturbed until these "Jews" instigated it. A passive mob and indifferent Romans respectively exonerate Jerusalem and imperial authorities from guilt.

The speeches of Paul, like the others delivered at trial scenes in Acts, encapsulate Luke's theology.⁵³² They attest to Paul's unwavering commitment to Jewishness. They detail efforts undertaken to apply Jewishness faithfully to evolving sociocultural milieux. Sterling insightfully sums up the underlying rhetoric of Luke's speeches: "the legitimacy of life under God outside the land of Israel."⁵³³ This claim perfectly aligns with Luke's depiction of Paul's "Jewishness." In the first trial scene, Paul accents his tutelage under the supervision of Gamaliel. This is clearly a rhetorical move, because the audience, as the narrative makes clear, is the mob, Jerusalem inhabitants. What better way is there to ingratiate oneself to an irate and threatening mob than to emphasize one's agreement with the opposition. This is the narrative logic of 22:1-5. Luke also

⁵³² Soards, *Speeches in Acts*; Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts," 285-307; Kucicki, *Function of Speeches*.

⁵³³ Sterling, "Opening the Scriptures," 217.

stresses the language of Paul's defense: the Jerusalem dialect. The second trial follows a similar pattern. Being up against the Sanhedrin, Paul implants discord among his arbitrators: he discloses his Pharisaic status and claims he is being arraigned for his belief in resurrection (23:6). Luke's introduction of Paul's shrewd move suggests that the pith of his assertion is merely part of a novelistic design: it is not meant to tell the reader anything definitive about the historical Paul's affiliation with Judean Pharisees.⁵³⁴ Instead, knowing that the trial is situated in Jerusalem, Luke had to show off his knowledge of Judean sects. As Sanders admits, there is no documentary evidence to ascertain the existence of diaspora Pharisees.⁵³⁵ Therefore, the Pharisaic status of Paul is more profitably read as an act of literary improvisation and ingenuity.⁵³⁶ Bolstering this argument is the frequent association Luke makes between Paul's Pharisaic status and his belief in the resurrection of Jesus and affiliation with "the Way." Since the trial is about Paul's involvement with Christ believers in the Jewish diaspora, it makes sense to deduce that his Pharisaic status in Acts was deployed to foreground his ideological predisposition to accept the resurrection of Jesus. The following references highlight Luke's correlation of being a Pharisee and believing in the resurrection: 23:6-10 and 26:4-8. These citations evidently show that Luke is astutely making Paul's Pharisaic status the ideological predisposition for his belief in the Risen Lord. So the biographical detail of Phil 3:4b-6 should not be admitted as evidence in corroborating Paul's Judean sectarian status in Acts.

⁵³⁴ On the historical implausibility of Paul being a Pharisee, see Sanders, *Paul*, 22; for a social-scientific and narrative study of Pharisees in Acts, see Raimo Hakola, "'Friendly' Pharisees and Social Identity in Acts," in *Contemporary Studies in Acts*, ed. Thomas E. Phillips (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 181-200.

⁵³⁵ Sanders, *Paul*; for an extensive treatment on the Pharisees, see idem, *Jewish Law*, 135-354; idem, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE—66 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 597-708.

⁵³⁶ Even though in Paul's letters, he claims to be a Pharisee (Phil 3:5-6; and indirectly Gal 1:13-14), in Acts, his Pharisaic status is imbued with a glaring rhetorical function: belief in Jesus' resurrection. My interest is in the latter. For a historical-critical study of the plausibility of Paul's Pharisaic status, see Sanders, *Paul*.

In the third trial, Paul describes himself as a model citizen: he is not a troublemaker or an instigator (24:12); he is a law-abiding citizen who has been viciously calumniated (24:13); and his only guilt is being a Christ believer and believing in the resurrection of the dead (24:14-15). His visit to Jerusalem is characterized by Jewish acts of piety (24:16-18). It is not surprising thus that Felix does not find him guilty of any crime (24:22). Quite notably, Paul does not mention his Jewish sect here, because he is being tried by a Roman. In the fourth trial, Paul faces Agrippa, a Jewish monarch. Once again, he mentions his Pharisaic status (26:5). This conscientious accent of Paul's Pharisaism when he is facing Jewish arbitrators and Luke's signature novelistic proclivity make the historical reliability of the assertion disputable. What can be deduced from Luke's depiction of Paul as a Pharisee is that his Christ-believing diaspora Jewish association did not find its legendary figure's Judean sectarian past objectionable.

Closely akin to Paul's Pharisaism is his Jerusalem affiliation. Milton Moreland brilliantly writes: "By linking his story of Christian origins so directly to Jerusalem, Luke was negotiating a path for his audience between Rome and Jerusalem."⁵³⁷ His argument, as most scholars espouse, is that Luke seeks to situate his group amid two dominant identities: Romanness and Jewishness. Reminiscing about Jerusalem or the temple is not an indication of Luke's provenance; rather, it is a literary design that corresponds to post-Second-Temple Jewish reflection. As Simon Goldhill memorably asserts: "The Temple, lost and reconstructed, yearned for and mourned for, pictured and sung about, is above all else a monument of the imagination."⁵³⁸ So Luke's reminiscing of the trials of Paul in Jerusalem is a theatrical depiction of a diaspora Jewish skirmish over Jesus and the legitimacy of non-Judaizing Gentiles among diaspora Jews. Moreland correctly asserts

⁵³⁷ Milton Moreland, "Jerusalem Destroyed: The Setting of Acts," in Dupertius and Penner, *Engaging Early Christian History*, 17.

⁵³⁸ Simon Goldhill, *The Temple of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 18.

that Jerusalem, although the literary cultic epicenter, per Luke, functions as a “narrative setting” or “imagined historical, cultic site.”⁵³⁹ In achieving his aim, Luke appeals to his readers’ innate romanticizing of the Jewish ancestral home and its cultic site to buttress his argument. He writes: “There is always interplay between the narrative’s creative spatial impression and the reader’s worldview.”⁵⁴⁰ This ideological predisposition makes the case of Luke credible to his readers. Jerusalem, Sanhedrin, and the temple are literary devices used in retrospect to dramatize a contemporaneous skirmish in Asia Minor and Greece. But I find Moreland’s claim that Luke’s group had no personal experience of the physical temple disputable, because negations cannot be demonstrably proven.⁵⁴¹ Since disproving a negative is usually an uphill task, I will settle for highly improbable.

5.2.2 Paul’s “Christianness” Justified

Although many scholars imbue “Christianness” in Acts with an inflexible denotation (i.e., as a recognizably distinct religion), the opposite is the case.⁵⁴² In three of his trials, Paul identifies belief in the resurrection of the dead as the singular tenet being disputed (23:6; 24:15; 26:6-8). “The Way” is pejoratively denounced as a “sect” for realizing this Pharisaic teaching in Jesus.⁵⁴³ This, in a nutshell, is Luke’s thesis on “Christianness”: God has fulfilled the promise made to Israel’s patriarchs in Jesus’ resurrection. It goes beyond the scope of this segment to investigate the validity of Luke’s application of Israel’s Scriptures to justify the resurrection of Jesus. What is, however, apparent is his anchoring of “the Way’s” practices and beliefs in

⁵³⁹ Moreland, “Jerusalem Destroyed,” 18.

⁵⁴⁰ Moreland, “Jerusalem Destroyed,” 20.

⁵⁴¹ Moreland, “Jerusalem Destroyed,” 19.

⁵⁴² For a list of scholars who use “Christianness” as a religiously distinct entity, see Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts,” 69-85; Slingerland, “The Jews,” 305-21; Wilson, “Jews and the Death of Jesus,” 155-64; idem, *Related Strangers*; Tyson, “Problem of Jewish Rejection”; Wills, “Depiction of the Jews,” 631-54.

⁵⁴³ Pervo, *Mystery of Acts*, 98.

Jewishness: worshipping the God of Israel and abiding by the precepts of Israel's Scriptures (24:14). Crisply put, the chief "Christian" element in the "Christianness" of Luke's Paul is Jewish. This is the pith of Luke's argument. He justifies Paul's "Christianness" by firmly anchoring his affiliation with the Christ movement in a broader Jewish eschatological hope that Pharisees unequivocally espouse. To emphasize the Jewish foundation of Paul's belief in the resurrection of the dead, I will briefly review some pertinent Jewish literature on the subject.

The resurrection—construed as the fulfillment of Jewish eschatological hope in God who grants justice to humans, raising the dead, rewarding the righteous, and punishing sinners—is a tenet that matured only in the mid second century BCE. Its crystallization correlates with the well-attested Jewish acts of resistance to Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes (e.g., Maccabees). Albeit this notion evolved gradually in ensuing centuries, it is unquestionably anchored on two theological principles: God's power over life and death and divine justice. These religious convictions are the fecund theological soil for examining the Jewish belief in the resurrection. Put pointedly, the resurrection of the dead is always an affirmation of God's oversight over human activities (e.g., in Jesus, his resurrection becomes God's statement of vindication and Luke understands it in this very sense). The earliest references to bodily resurrection in Israel's Scriptures are metaphorical: Isa 26:19 predicts the restoration of Judah after its destruction; Ezek 37:1-14 alludes to Judah's return from Babylonian captivity. So there is no indication that these passages delineate the fate of all humans. It is also important to note that Jewish thought was hardly unanimous. Other texts pessimistically express doubt over the existence of an afterlife (Eccl 3:16-22; Job 14:10-14). The clearest indication of bodily resurrection is attested in Dan 12:2-3. As I said above, this fate is premised on God's justice: rewarding those who have lived blameless lives and punishing those who have faltered. Daniel's description assumes that all will be raised to experience judgment.

Affirming this, E. P. Sanders opines that many misread Paul's eschatology: equating reward with salvation and punishment with damnation. He argues that both the righteous and unrighteous will be raised; but the former will be rewarded and saved, while the latter will be punished but then saved.⁵⁴⁴ Resurrection is thus inextricably entwined with God's justice. In 2 Macc 7:23, 29, the fate that awaits the righteous who do not falter amid trial and persecution is bodily resurrection. The mother of the seven sons speaks confidently of regaining her sons after their martyrdom. The resurrection of these upright young men becomes God's decisive vindication of victimized persons. In these foregoing biblical texts, bodily resurrection features noticeably in contexts where there is palpable political turmoil.

In extrabiblical Jewish literature, the sociopolitical contexts of resurrection-featuring texts are hardly turbulent. *Fourth Ezra* 7:75-101 details the postmortem fate of all humans: both righteous and unrighteous persons are raised; the former is rewarded with blissful immortality, while the latter are tormented and haunted by regrets. This description does not entail bodily resurrection because the souls or spirits of the raised are the agents of God's actions. *First Enoch* 103 does not promise a bodily resurrection but the raising of the spirits of the deceased to meet their appropriate fates. As with the aforementioned references, the existence of the afterlife acts as a morality check for humans. Commenting on Isa 61:1, 1Q521 2 II, 12 reads: "For He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall revive the dead, He shall send good news to the afflicted." It is, however, uncertain if this is an unequivocal allusion to bodily resurrection or God's power over human life (see Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6). The rabbis, as Sanders rightly opines, hold that the afterlife is for everyone: "All Israelites have a share in the world to come" (*m. Sanh.* 10:1). Even though some, ironically, are excluded from this general offer: those who deny the resurrection of

⁵⁴⁴ Sanders, *Paul*, 45-47.

the dead and heretics. This rabbinic stance on the afterlife corroborates Sanders's interpretation of Paul's eschatology: reward and punishment are not convertible with salvation and damnation.

The writings of Philo and Josephus are replete with afterlife descriptions. The latter holds that the soul is immortal, while the body is mortal (*J.W.* 3.372); and that at death, the souls of the righteous will receive a new body (i.e., bodily resurrection), while the souls of the unjust will be punished (*J.W.* 2.163). Per Josephus, bodily resurrection, which he identifies as a Pharisaic tenet, is the reward for a righteous life. Once again, Sanders's assessment of Jewish eschatology is on point: both the righteous and unrighteous will be raised; the former will receive their reward (bodily resurrection), while the latter will be punished (per Josephus, deprived of a body). Philo applies this idea in his commentary on the second account of creation. He identifies the principle of animation in human beings as the divine spirit, which he calls intellect elsewhere (*Creation* 135). As with Josephus, he opines that the intellect, being a divine substance residing in a body, is immortal, while the body is corporeal. Stressing a bodiless afterlife, he remarks that atheists are dead in their souls (or intellects), while the devout will have endless life (*Spec. Law* 1:345). Just as in Neoplatonism, the intellect is the human beings' link with the One, in the same way, he interprets the divine pneuma as humanity's link with God and immortality.⁵⁴⁵ So he expectedly does not develop the idea of a bodily resurrection, because it is contrary to the inherent nature of matter (the human body) and form (the divine pneuma), the former being corruptible and the latter incorruptible.

The trial of Paul avails Luke of the opportunity to clarify his group's identity: Christ-believing Jews. In acknowledging the fulfillment of the Jewish eschatological hope in Jesus, his assembly did not cease being Jewish; rather, it fulfilled its Jewishness. As a rhetorical locus, the

⁵⁴⁵ For a comparable philosophical understanding of Paul's "participation in Christ," see Stowers, "Pauline Participation in Christ," in Udoh et al., *Jewish and Christian Identities*, 352-71.

figure of Paul echoes the perfect symphony of Jewishness and Christianness: none displacing nor replacing the other but each reinforcing and justifying the other. This is the underlying rhetoric of Luke that his group in being Christ believers did not relinquish their diaspora Jewish identity. In fact, it celebrated the complementarity of this dual identity and Paul's trial accentuates this.

5.2.3 Paul's "Romanness" Accented

Paul's "Romanness" is introduced unceremoniously at his first trial before the Jerusalem mob (21:39; 22:25-29). The narrative function of these references to Paul's civic status is simply to grant him preferential treatment from the tribune and centurion, presumably Roman officials. Scholars have also added a more palpable narrative objective to Luke's attribution of Romanness to his chief protagonist: appeal to Caesar. Thomas E. Phillips asserts that Paul became a Roman citizen because Luke had reasonable access to Pliny's letters to Trajan.⁵⁴⁶ He claims that prior to Pliny's administrative missives, there was no documentary evidence showing that a citizen in the province could appeal to Caesar for a hearing. Magistrates, per Matthew L. Skinner, expectedly oversaw, resolved, and arbitrated over parochial disputes and litigations.⁵⁴⁷ This, he explains, was the most cost-effective means of administering a vast empire plagued by inadequate officials and other logistical restraints.⁵⁴⁸ So a centralized legal system was not feasible in the first century CE.

John C. Lentz's rhetorical study of Paul in Acts offers valuable insight into Luke's motif: Paul, a literary mirror of Christianity, is presented as a respectable man of high social

⁵⁴⁶ Phillips, "Roman Citizen," 171-89.

⁵⁴⁷ Matthew L. Skinner, *The Trial Narratives: Conflict, Power, and Identity in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 15.

⁵⁴⁸ Skinner, *Trial Narratives*.

standing.⁵⁴⁹ The civic status of Paul is thus one of the many rhetorical devices employed by Luke to present Christ believers in Asia Minor and Greece in appreciative light. Lentz's argument is, no doubt, insightful. However, it assumes that social respectability or high status is the principal objective of Luke's narration. Given the named addressee, "most excellent Theophilus" (presumably, if the appellation refers to an actual patron, an influential man of high social standing), this reasoning has merit.⁵⁵⁰ But Lentz's study does not accent the three-layered identities of Luke's Paul and why this portrait is congenial to the author's rhetoric: Christ-believing Jews who fully participate in imperial life. Whereas it is disputable if Luke's Paul is a person of high social status (being a Roman citizen is not a guarantee), it is evident that he is definitely not a threat to law and order. As I argued in 4.1, the distinction between *religio* and *superstitio* is politically tinged: if it is state-approved and congenial to Romanness, it is the former; but if it is not state-approved and considered a menace to law and order, it is denigrated as the latter. This distinction is not based on cultic practices but on whether certain religions should be tolerated by Roman elitist political ideology. Likewise, Luke's rhetorical construction of Paul achieves all this: at his trial, he clarifies his identity: he is a diaspora Jew who holds that a Jewish sectarian belief has been realized in Jesus. By stressing his citizenship from birth, Luke suggests that both identities are unquestionably compatible. This echoes my earlier conversation on diaspora Jews in 2.1.3.

Besides the narrative goal of explaining the Roman mission, since the undisputed letters do not say anything about Paul's Roman citizenship nor is it attested in any primary text apart from Acts, it is highly probable, in view of Luke's novelistic proclivity, that Paul is constructed

⁵⁴⁹ John C. Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵⁵⁰ See Donaldson, *Jews in the New Testament*, 76; Greg Carey, *Luke: All Flesh Shall See God's Salvation. An Introduction and Study Guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

in the image and likeness of an idealized audience.⁵⁵¹ Anthony J. Blasi, in his insightful book on the sociological construction of charisma, writes:

The fact is that the charisma to which we respond is not the real human. It may belong or pertain to a real person, but it is our creation. We are social beings with our language, imagery, and expectations. We transform public persons so that they become items of our vocabulary, figments of our collective imagination, and fulfillments of our societal needs.⁵⁵²

As with historiography, narratives say more about their immediate sociocultural contexts than the purported historical milieux they bespeak.⁵⁵³ David Weissman opines: “Stories are partial. Each begins as the rationale for an individual life: my way of construing who and where I am.”⁵⁵⁴ Acts, like all creative writings, is a partial account that is amenable to its author’s interests. Echoing this same concern, Janet Burroway writes: “All writing is autobiographical as well as invented.”⁵⁵⁵ “Autobiographical” identifies the historical interests of Luke, while “invented” denotes the narrative constructed to address these concerns. Seen against this backdrop, Paul’s civic status evinces Luke’s attitude to Romanization: the inevitable sociocultural and political setting for living as Christ-believing diaspora Jews. As Pervo argues: “The Way [Christianness] he [Luke] envisioned was amenable to Greco-Roman culture and imperial rule, but it was neither married to it nor overly concerned with defending it, although it could make some helpful improvements.”⁵⁵⁶ Amenability is a recurrent theme in Paul’s trial

⁵⁵¹ Pervo, *Profit with Delight*; idem, *Luke’s Story of Paul*; idem, *Making of Paul*.

⁵⁵² Anthony J. Blasi, *Making Charisma: The Social Construction of Paul’s Public Image* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991), 4.

⁵⁵³ Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*.

⁵⁵⁴ David Weissman, *Styles of Thought: Interpretation, Inquiry, and Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 53.

⁵⁵⁵ Janet Burroway, *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2007), 3.

⁵⁵⁶ Richard I. Pervo, “(Not) ‘Appealing to the Emperor’: Acts (and the *Acts of Paul*),” in Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, 165-79. Pervo expresses Luke’s imperial disposition better than Matthew L. Skinner, who sees Paul’s trials as proof of the Christ movement subverting or manipulating Roman officials. “Unchained Ministry: Paul’s Roman Custody (Acts 21—28) and the Sociopolitical Outlook of the Book of Acts,” in *Acts and Ethics*, ed. Thomas E. Phillips (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 79-95.

before Felix. His defense rested on his being law-abiding, a fervent Jew (a *religio* from a Roman viewpoint), and not an insurrectionist or an originator of a new movement. These assertions are politically significant: through his affirmations and denials Paul shows Felix that he is not a person of interest to Roman officials.⁵⁵⁷ Hence, in the figure of Paul, Luke delineates the Christ movement as congenial to imperial administration, firmly rooted in diaspora Jewishness, and not a politically significant sociocultural configuration.⁵⁵⁸

5.2.4 A Sociological Study of Luke's "Jewish" Paul

Many critics of the sociological approach make extensive use of social description in an attempt to understand the sociocultural milieu that produced the biblical text without the diligent application of "theories, methods, and research outcomes" of the social sciences.⁵⁵⁹ Useful as this procedure might seem, it falls short of sociological criticism, which employs the "methods, theories, questions, and research outcomes" of the social sciences to study biblical literature.⁵⁶⁰ The difference between these two apparently similar approaches is that the latter permits critical sociological research on social identity formation to guide questions posed to the text, defines the method for extracting pertinent answers, and circumscribes the foundation for constructing meaning. In line with the latter, which I reviewed in 1.5.2, Luke's "Jewish" Paul can be read as an attempt to defend a Christ-believing diaspora Jewish association's attempt to defend its concession to devout Gentiles, reaffirm its belief in Jesus as the messiah, and justify its involvement in imperial life. Social memory, as shown in 1.5.2.1, is subjective and reconstructs

⁵⁵⁷ Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography*, NovTSup 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 386.

⁵⁵⁸ Laura Nasrallah makes a similar claim but not with the figure of Paul in Acts. "The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian's Panhellenion," *JBL* 127 (2008): 533-66.

⁵⁵⁹ Elliott, *Social-Scientific Criticism*, 14.

⁵⁶⁰ Elliott, *Social-Scientific Criticism*, 14.

the past with the sole purpose of making it pertinent to the present.⁵⁶¹ Contemporary application conditions what is recalled, edited, deleted, or saved.⁵⁶² Social memory is inherently relative, too, because a description of the past need not be historically accurate to nonetheless be true for the group that sees it as such. Just like storytelling, it creates group identity. Ellin Greene expresses this pointedly: “Storytelling is a sharing experience.... Enjoying a story together creates a sense of community.”⁵⁶³ This establishes an ideological nexus between social memory and social identity.⁵⁶⁴ Social identity, as eminent sociologists have argued, is a human product: there is no quintessential trait such as “groupness” that makes a group what it is. All human identities are constructed. This construction always entails a process of becoming or exiting; it is not inflexible or static. Social identity rests on two inextricably entwined pillars: meaning and interaction. The quest for meaning is a journey in group identity discovery; it is the dialectic of interaction, clarification, classification, and negotiation. It is essentially a functional construct. “Agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation,” usually classified as contraries, per Jenkins, clarify the essence of all social identities.⁵⁶⁵ They identify insiders and outsiders. Using boundary markers to circumscribe groups, sociologists argue, is misleading, because every boundary implies at least two groups (e.g., Jews and Christians). Rather than isolating a group, boundaries compel researchers to examine other adjacent social identities. As Currie writes: animosity is fiercer when competitors share a lot in common.⁵⁶⁶ If the sociological method is applied to Luke’s Paul, the deductions will include: (1) Acts is a

⁵⁶¹ Middleton and Edwards, “Conversational Remembering,” in idem, *Collective Remembering*, 43.

⁵⁶² Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 25.

⁵⁶³ Ellin Greene, *Storytelling: Art and Technique*, 3rd ed. (New Providence, NJ: R. R. Bowker, 1996), 33.

⁵⁶⁴ See David Weissman, *Styles of Thought: Interpretation, Inquiry, and Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 53.

⁵⁶⁵ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 18.

⁵⁶⁶ Currie, *Difference*, 86; see Smith, *Drudgery Divine*.

narrative of the past that serves a present need;⁵⁶⁷ (2) the contemporaneous usefulness of Acts pertains to the legitimacy of the configuration that Luke addresses;⁵⁶⁸ (3) in producing Acts, Luke was reporting his association's collective identity;⁵⁶⁹ (4) since social identity is factitious, the imposition of modern categories such as "Christians" on Luke's configuration should be critically evaluated, because neither the author nor his characters self-identify that way;⁵⁷⁰ (5) since social identity is constructed, priority must be given to the author's critical self-assessment of his audience's identity using its image of Paul as a reference (i.e., Christ-believing diaspora Jews);⁵⁷¹ (6) since agreement and disagreement clarify a group's self-understanding, a diaspora Jewish rivalry should never be construed in terms of irreconcilable ideological differences leading to the parting of Jews and Christians but as evidence of religious similarity and geographical proximity;⁵⁷² (7) since Luke's Paul appears to be constructed to evince the social identity of his audience, this means that they continued to self-identify as Christ-believing diaspora Jews who participated in imperial life. Hence, characterizations such as "Christians" for all Christ believers and "Jews" for Paul's critics should be jettisoned, since they distort Luke's rhetorical objective and foreground debates on the parting of the ways.⁵⁷³

5.2.5 Luke's "Jewish" Paul and Critical Discourse on the Parting of Ways

⁵⁶⁷ Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*.

⁵⁶⁸ Bovon, "Studies in Luke-Acts," 189; Matthews, "Luke the Hellenist," 99-108; Flichy, "L'Apôtre des Nations," 37-49; Marguerat, "Paul et la Torah," 99-100; idem, *Paul in Acts*, 46.

⁵⁶⁹ Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*.

⁵⁷⁰ Jenkins, *Social Identity*.

⁵⁷¹ Judith M. Lieu distinguishes between "self-identity" and "perceived identity." In Acts the "self-identity" of Paul (and the configuration he represents) is diaspora Jew, while the "perceived identity" is obviously Christian. "Forging of Christian Identity," 437.

⁵⁷² Jenkins, *Social Identity*; Smith, "Fences and Neighbors," 1-25; idem, *Drudgery Divine*.

⁵⁷³ Lieu, *Christian Identity*; eadem, *Neither Jew nor Greek*.

The foregoing discussion has clearly shown that scholars who hold that Acts evinces the parting of Jews and Christians wrongly characterize Luke's rhetoric, whose argument is not that they have parted ways but that there are noticeable disagreements among diaspora Jews residing in Asia Minor and Greece. Making this internecine conflict into a referendum for Jewishness and Christianness, an attempt that is profoundly anachronistic, is oblivious of theories of social becoming.⁵⁷⁴ Reviewing Paul's four trials shows that Luke's legendary figure's notion of Christianness is as a legitimate movement within and firmly anchored in diaspora Jewishness.⁵⁷⁵ Luke's "Jewish" Paul does not reveal the parting of Jews and Christians but domesticates Christ believing in Jewish eschatological hopes. It is thus not surprising that all concessions of ancestral practices (e.g., circumcision and dietary laws) are accorded not to diaspora Jews but to devout Gentiles. Thus Luke's argument does not trivialize the validity of Jewish customs but redescribes them as ethnic observances that should not deter the admission of enthusiasts of other nationalities. In the person of Paul, Luke's group avows its unwavering commitment to Israel's God, Scripture, Jewish eschatological hopes, and openness to the admission of other ethnicities. The palpable narrative tension between Paul and his critics, per Barrett's comparable analysis of "Jewishness" in Ignatius, is not theological or doctrinal but sociological and organizational.⁵⁷⁶ It bespeaks the noticeable factions among Jews residing in Asia Minor and Greece. Paul's defense speeches corroborate this interpretation. Judith M. Lieu makes a similar claim in her article wherein she argues that the imposition of parting of ways on early Christian literature is a theological construct.⁵⁷⁷ Elsewhere she maintains that Christianness is a social construct which is

⁵⁷⁴ Soards, "Following Paul," 249-71; Hee Han, "Baptist Followers of Mani," 243-70.

⁵⁷⁵ See Alan F. Segal, "Jewish Christianity," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 326-51.

⁵⁷⁶ Barrett, "Jews and Judaizers," 220-44.

⁵⁷⁷ Judith M. Lieu, "The Parting of the Ways: Theological Construct or Historical Reality," *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101-19.

created and sustained by the “rhetoric of otherness.”⁵⁷⁸ This apologetic or polemic begets an “experienced essence.”⁵⁷⁹

Boyarin’s research on the questionable identification of “Judaism” in early Christian writings is helpful.⁵⁸⁰ He opines that “Judaism” is a modern construct.⁵⁸¹ He also says that its construction evinces a “feedback loop,” which is circular argumentation: postulating abstract entities (“Judaism” and “Christianity”) from the observance of social differences (Jews and Christians).⁵⁸² To this he adds that boundary creation is a function of organization and power not ideological differences.⁵⁸³ Affirming this stance, Gager remarks that extant literature on the origins of “Christianness” and “Jewishness” are lopsided, because they do not feature the critical views of the “dangerous ones in between.”⁵⁸⁴ As Smith has repeatedly argued, historians of religion should employ the descriptive method of the social sciences and eschew the use of inflexible and misleading taxonomies.⁵⁸⁵ This approach encourages comparative analysis and interdisciplinary studies of common realia in antiquity. If these insights are applied to the study of Luke’s “Jewish” Paul, who rhetorically mirrors Luke’s Christ association, they would show that the audience of Acts, although Christ believing, was steeped in Jewishness and Romanness. This tripartite social identity is not conflicting or mutually exclusive but is complementary and characteristic of sociocultural configurations among diaspora Jewry.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁷⁸ Lieu, *Christian Identity*.

⁵⁷⁹ Lieu, *Christian Identity*.

⁵⁸⁰ Boyarin, “Why Ignatius Invented Judaism,” 309-24.

⁵⁸¹ Boyarin, *Judaism*.

⁵⁸² Boyarin, “Apartheid Comparative Religion,” 89-116.

⁵⁸³ Boyarin, *Border Lines*; idem, “The Close Call,” 266-98.

⁵⁸⁴ Gager, “Dangerous Ones in Between,” 249-257.

⁵⁸⁵ Smith, “Fences and Neighbors,” 1-25.

⁵⁸⁶ Overman, “Diaspora”; Barclay, “Introduction,” in idem, *Negotiating Diaspora*; Gruen, “Hellenism and Judaism”; idem, *Diaspora*; idem, “Judaism in the Diaspora”; Hacham and Sagiv, “Social Identity,” 325-43.

5.3 The Theology of Paul in Acts

In the preceding section, I argued that Luke's rhetorical tripartite delineation of Paul as Jewish, Christian, and Roman mirrors his audience: Christ-believing diaspora Jews incorporated into imperial life. This literary construct is not merely a reminiscing of past events but a tactful legitimization of a contemporary sociocultural configuration, featuring Christ-believing Jews and non-Judaizing Gentiles. Section 1.5.4 above enumerates three theological categories that will be discussed in this segment: theological anthropology, ecclesiology, and ecumenism. Before reviewing these fields in theology, I will elucidate my underlying notion of biblical theology. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza defines biblical theology as a critical reflection on the practical implications of exegesis and its transformative potential in the human society.⁵⁸⁷ This definition comprises of three component parts: critical reflection, practical implication, and transformative potential. By "critical reflection" is meant a thoughtful assessment of the literary proclivities of biblical writers or their rhetorical affirmations that evince their convictions about God and humanity. "Practical implication" focuses on the ethical significance of biblical narratives, insights, and innovations. "Transformative potential" addresses the prophetic dimensions of exegesis: the societal changes that should accompany exegetical endeavor. If these questions were applied to the foregoing study on Luke's "Jewish" Paul, Schüssler Fiorenza would expect the exegete to ask pertinent questions regarding the existential implications of Luke's literary construct and the sociocultural configuration it represents: (1) since devout Gentiles in Acts are dispensed from Jewish ancestral practices, do multifarious ethnic customs have a soteriological significance? (2) since membership in Luke's assembly downplays immutable human qualities but accents devotion to Israel's God and adherence to its Scriptures, should contemporary

⁵⁸⁷ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 176.

religions be reimagined to deemphasize expressions that epitomize certain ethnicities, while stressing aspects that are a common denominator to all humans? (3) since in the figure of Paul, Luke expertly harmonizes Jewishness, Christianness, and Romanness without belittling any, should historians and theologians adopt a more inclusive approach in their studies of Judaism, Christianity, and the Roman Empire in the first century and later? Luke's argument apparently is that in being a Christ believer one neither relinquishes Jewishness nor Romanness.

Dale B. Martin's approach to biblical theology is also pivotal to this research. He opines that theology entails "showing how statements of faith and belief can be seen as rational, sensible, and coherent."⁵⁸⁸ He unapologetically correlates creedal formulations and philosophical analyses; he accentuates the role of biblical exegesis in shaping a community of faith—a stance deprecated by diehard historical critics. He enumerates the following as his underlying principles for studying biblical theology in the twenty-first century: orthodox, ecumenical, postmodern, Marxist, provisional, and nonfoundationalist.⁵⁸⁹ By orthodox, he affirms the following: (1) that he is a fervent Christian with an undeniable religious affiliation, (2) that he is determined to proffer interpretations of Scripture that are not bound by historical criticism, and (3) that he accepts all Christian creedal formulations of the first millennium. By ecumenical, he avers that the biblical theology he espouses concerns beliefs that are jointly held by the three major Christian groups: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant. By postmodern, he contends that the goal of historical criticism—absolute certainty—is untenable; in lieu of this unattainable objective, he opts for relativity and contextuality of biblical truths, which does not denigrate the validity of Scripture, but realistically situates its affirmations in the sociocultural

⁵⁸⁸ Dale Martin, *Biblical Truths: The Meaning of Scripture in the Twenty-first Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), Kindle edition, introduction, "What This Book Is and What It Is Not."

⁵⁸⁹ Martin, *Biblical Truths*.

milieux of varying Christ believers. By Marxist, he propounds a method that stresses the material dimensions of biblical interpretation: sociocultural, political, and economic. By provisional, he concedes that biblical theology is evolving and inconclusive; hence, its findings should not be communicated as final or decisive. By nonfoundationalist, in opposition to historical critics, he claims that there is no “meaning” “back there” to be recovered before a biblical text can be meaningfully studied or fruitfully interpreted.⁵⁹⁰ He calls this approach “creative anachronism.”⁵⁹¹ Although I agree with most of Martin’s “underlying principles” of biblical theology, I have some reservations about his nonfoundationalist and orthodox methods. Granted that in most liturgical settings interpreters do not need the precise historical milieu to interpret Scripture prayerfully and profitably to a devout congregation, historical contexts can clarify the meaning of disputed texts. But the overarching arguments of Martin remain valid: knowledge of a biblical text’s historical milieu is not a *sine qua non* for an informed application (e.g., narrative criticism). Regarding orthodoxy, Martin admits that his interpretation of Scripture might be strange to the historical author and readers of the text, thereby allowing for an arbitrary imposition of creedal formulations of succeeding centuries on incipient Christ associations of varying ideological spectrums.⁵⁹² Although his method anchors biblical interpretation in a faith community’s evolving self-definition, it fails to prioritize the existential and theological concerns of the original recipients of the texts: they had theologies and pastoral issues they wanted to address, too. So later theologies should not take precedence over the nascent theologies of the NT, mostly couched in enchanting narratives (e.g., Acts).

⁵⁹⁰ Martin, *Biblical Truths*.

⁵⁹¹ Martin, *Biblical Truths*.

⁵⁹² Karen L. King accents the marked diversity of nascent Christ associations. “Which Early Christianity?” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66-84; eadem, “Factions, Variety, Diversity, Multiplicity: Representing Early Christian Difference for the 21st Century,” *MTSR* 23 (2011): 216-37.

Luke Timothy Johnson's approach to biblical theology addresses the foregoing argument adeptly: "Catholics [and biblical theologians] should be concerned not only with the world that produced the New Testament but ... with the world that the New Testament produced."⁵⁹³ While acknowledging (not repudiating) the role of historical criticism in biblical exegesis, he opines that the religious movement that the NT birthed should be an inherent part of its interpretative spectrum. Stressing this reasoning, he says elsewhere that biblical theology must never be reduced solely to a critical study of the sacred text, because Scripture participates (but does not encapsulate) divine revelation. To use it as the summation of God's self-disclosure to humanity is tantamount to idolatry: the deification of language.⁵⁹⁴ Picking up on the "world that produced the New Testament," it needs to be said that the assumption of the historical critics that this phrase only pertains to politics, culture, and social life is misinformed. This world also chiefly includes the religious experiences of the Jews. Belief in God and conviction in being the chosen people shape the creative utilization of politics and sociocultural life to produce Scripture.

Raymond E. Brown proffers a nuanced take on biblical theology by distinguishing between the "core of a doctrine" and its "time-conditioned expression," on the one hand, and a "naïve understanding" of a doctrine and its "nuanced presentation," on the other hand.⁵⁹⁵ Most of what Martin objects to are the "time-conditioned expressions" and "naïve understandings" of Christian tradition, rather than their "core" tenets and "nuanced presentations." Having reviewed the tripartite identities of Paul in Acts against the backdrop of the Christ movement of second-century Asia Minor and Greece, I will now discuss Luke's vision of humanity (theological

⁵⁹³ Luke Timothy Johnson, "What's Catholic about Catholic Biblical Scholarship? An Opening Statement," in idem and William S. Kurz, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A Constructive Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 23.

⁵⁹⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 2-3.

⁵⁹⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (New York: Paulist, 1985).

anthropology), its implication for constituting Christ-believing associations (ecclesiology), and its significance for Judeo-Christian dialogue (ecumenism).

5.3.1 Theological Anthropology

Luke 2–3 is inundated with narrative clues that bolster the author’s notion of theological anthropology: canticle of Simeon (2:29-32), quote from Second Isaiah (3:4-6), the baptism of Jesus (3:22), the genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38), and the healing of the centurion’s servant (7:1-10); the latter, however, is not included in the aforementioned range. Introductions typically set the tone for narratives; they reveal themes that will be expatiated later in the body of literature. The canticle of Simeon, as Christopher R. Matthews suggests, mirrors Luke’s harmonious vision of the new Israel which consists of Jews and devout Gentiles.⁵⁹⁶ Although Matthews applies this leitmotif broadly to include all Jews, in Acts, as I have shown in 2.2 above, Luke’s vision is fulfilled among diaspora Jews, whom he frequently associates with Gentiles. So the ideological platform for the realization of Simeon’s ardent prayer is diaspora Jewry. In the missions of Paul, which occur mostly in Asia Minor and Greece, this prayer becomes a reality. Inserting Simeon’s prayer for God’s salvation, which is intended for “all peoples” to be a “light for revelation to the Gentiles” and “glory to God’s people, Israel,” is a crystallization of Luke’s theological vision for diaspora Jews living amid devout Gentiles: both are called to experience God’s salvation as God’s united people, “Israel.” In Luke’s literary redefinition of Israel, it includes Gentiles who acknowledge the God of Israel, abide by the divine precepts, and worship alongside diaspora Jews. Richard P. Thompson captures Lukan theology thus: “Unlike rhetoric, which seeks generally to persuade in direct ways and through logical argumentation, narratives function in

⁵⁹⁶ Matthews, “Fragility of Hope,” 57-69.

indirect ways that may subtly coerce the reader to evaluate through imagination and reflection.”⁵⁹⁷ Jacob Jervell echoes this same reasoning: “Lukas ist Erzähler und kein systematischer Theologe.”⁵⁹⁸ Therefore, Luke’s portrayal of Simeon indirectly foregrounds his subsequent depiction of Paul and the sociocultural configuration he represents.

Quoting Isa 40:5, Luke echoes the theological anthropology undergirding his two stories (3:6). As with the opening line of Second Isaiah which heralds a new beginning for Judeans, this citation mirrors a commencement of some sort. Using a familiar literary format, it lists important officials in Judea: Emperor Tiberius; Pontius Pilate, governor of the province of Judea; Herod, the local ruler of Judea; Philip, tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis; Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene; and Annas and Caiaphas, high priests of Judea (3:1-2); earlier on, Luke mentions Augustus and Quirinius, the governor of Syria (2:1-2).⁵⁹⁹ After two chapters of “introduction,” Luke reverts to the opening format of notable Jewish prophetic writings in order to announce the debut of John the Baptist, the precursor to Jesus (Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1-3; Ezek 1:2). It is in the context of this new beginning and prophetic preparation for Jesus’ ministry that Isaiah’s universal call to salvation reverberates: “All flesh will see the salvation of God.” This prophecy is not fulfilled in John’s ephemeral proclamation (nor in Jesus’ ministry), but it is nonetheless announced as the narrative objective of Luke and Acts.

In the ministry of Jesus, inaugurated at his baptism, which Hans Conzelmann aptly captions the “middle of time,”⁶⁰⁰ this universalist vision is reiterated: “You are my son, the

⁵⁹⁷ Richard P. Thompson, “‘What Do You Think You Are Doing, Paul?’: Synagogues, Accusations, and Ethics in Paul’s Ministry in Acts 16–21,” in *Acts and Ethics*, ed. Thomas E. Phillips (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 77.

⁵⁹⁸ Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 91.

⁵⁹⁹ Gary Gilbert remarks that Luke’s immersion into imperial life is most evident in his marked sensitivity to Roman officials of all strata. “Roman Propaganda,” 233-56; see also James R. Edwards, “‘Public Theology’ in Luke-Acts: The Witness of the Gospel to Powers and Authorities,” *NTS* 62 (2016): 227-62.

⁶⁰⁰ Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte Der Zeit: Studien Zur Theologie Des Lukas*, BHT 17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1962); idem, *The Theology of Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper, 1961).

beloved; with you I am well pleased” (3:22). Luke’s variant of God’s address to the newly baptized Jesus quotes Psa 2:7. In this royal psalm, the newly installed king, who is adopted as God’s son at his coronation, is bequeathed two landmark inheritances: “the nations” and “the ends of the earth” (Psa 2:8). By quoting this psalm at the baptism of Jesus, Luke envisions this pivotal event as heralding the fulfillment of God’s unceasing promise to Israel’s kings: charge over the nations and jurisdiction to the ends of the earth. This promise was not fulfilled throughout the monarchic era in both Israel and Judea. But it survived as a theological theme in the Third Gospel, wherein God’s salvation extends to the ends of the earth. As Gary Gilbert notes, savior and salvation have imperial reverberations.⁶⁰¹ Luke is the only Evangelist who uses the term, savior, for Jesus. Given the imperial underpinning of Luke’s narratives, his rhetoric is to portray Jesus as the new Augustus, who is unquestionably the savior *par excellence* (Philo, *Flaccus* 74, 126; *Embassy* 2, 145-47; Josephus, *J.W.* 3.359). Either as the fulfillment of Psalm 2 or the new Augustus, Jesus’s ministry impacts “the nations” and reaches “the ends of the earth.”

Luke’s genealogy of Jesus also sounds a universalist tone. Unlike Matt 1:1-16 which begins with Abraham, it is traced to God through Adam (3:23-38). It accents the universality of Jesus’ ministry by tracing his ancestry to the archetype of humanity, both Jews and Gentiles. Not only is the genealogy traced to Adam, it culminates with God, which means that just as all peoples, Jews and Gentiles, have their origin in God, they are heirs to divine inheritance. This rhetorical move paves the way for the narrative’s favorable disposition toward non-Jews (e.g., the healing of the centurion’s slave). In 7:1-10, Jesus is petitioned by leaders of Galilean Jews to heal the slave of a centurion. This Roman official is exceptionally described as a man who loves Galilean Jews and built their synagogue (7:5). Already at the nascent stages of Jesus’ ministry

⁶⁰¹ Gilbert, “Roman Propaganda.”

Luke introduces a fervent Roman who, even before encountering Jesus, is noticeably committed to fostering the good of Galilean Jews and reverences their God by building their house of worship. The ensuing miracle is not my interest here but the early presence of a devout representative of “the nations.” Nor will I examine the historical facticity of Luke’s claim below.

Continuing with this theme of universality, the risen Jesus promises the Eleven that the Holy Spirit will make them witnesses in “Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The geographical locations mentioned here function like concentric circles, which move from the hub to the outermost circumference. Jerusalem is obviously the beginning of apostolic witnessing, which gradually extends to the region under an ethnarch, Judea and Samaria, and then the diaspora.⁶⁰² In Luke’s narrative design, universality is announced in the introductory chapters of the Third Gospel; it is proclaimed to Judea and Samaria by Peter and Philip, who represent the Twelve; and it is extended to the diaspora by Paul. Like concentric circles, Jesus is the pith (Jerusalem), the Twelve are the intermediary circle (Judea and Samaria), and Paul is the outermost layer (diaspora). This notion of universality is similar to Paul’s: “Jews first, then Gentiles” (Rom 1:16). It lucidly eschews any notion that Gentiles displace Jews. Paul reiterates this stance when he opines that the faltering of Jews paved the way for Gentile inclusion (Rom 11:11-12). So Luke’s envisioning of universality is quintessentially Pauline. It is also expectedly gradual: a providential outward movement from a predominantly Jewish nucleus.

The dispersal that followed the martyrdom of Stephen triggered the narrative move from Jerusalem to the intermediate concentric circle, Judea and Samaria (8:2). Signaling this transition changes the narrative setting significantly: Gentiles are featured and the location is altered. This

⁶⁰² See Fernando F. Segovia, ““And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues”: Competing Modes of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism,” in *Reading from This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, vol. 1, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 5; Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus*, 20-22.

change heralds a partial fulfillment of Jesus' promise (1:8). Right after this dispersal, Philip converts Simon the Magician and the people of Samaria (8:9-13). After this conversion, the Jerusalem leaders endorse Philip's accomplishment in a non-Judean territory. Following this act of legitimation, Philip converts the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-40). Having fulfilled these actions, Philip leaves the scene.⁶⁰³ In Acts 10, Peter converts Cornelius and his household in Caesarea. Once again, Luke relates the events of this intermediate concentric circle of gospel proclamation as activities spearheaded by the Twelve, ably represented by Philip and Peter. The legitimation of this event in the ensuing chapter buttresses this point (11:1-18). By inserting digressionary tales into the account of the dispersal of Christ-believing Jews from Jerusalem, Luke fastidiously interweaves stories regarding the intermediate period to explain the move from the nucleus to the diaspora. The theology that undergirds this storytelling emphasis is patently to show that Paul's diaspora missions are providential and emerged out of concerted apostolic missionary endeavors. With the official debut of Paul and the intermediate concentric circle delineated, the story rejoins the dispersal into the Jewish diaspora, the outermost concentric circle. In the very first scene of Gentile conversions in the diaspora, Paul is coopted into this fledgling initiative. When news of this sociocultural configuration reached Jerusalem, it was greeted with rejoicing (11:22). The subsequent diaspora missions of Paul and Barnabas and the pivotal diaspora Jewish council in Jerusalem both foreground Luke's argument in favor of theological anthropology that is indelibly echoed by Peter: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (10:34-35). In a nutshell, this

⁶⁰³ For issues pertaining to the traditions utilized by Luke which are not covered in this work, see Matthews, *Philip*.

encapsulates Luke's vision of humanity: deemphasis of ethnicity or provenance and accentuation of dedication to Israel's God and the divine precepts.⁶⁰⁴

5.3.2 Ecclesiology

The rhetorical locus of Luke's ecclesiology is arguably the experimental configuration named "Christianness": Christ-believing diaspora Jews who associate with pious, non-Judaizing Gentiles. The theology that underlies this incipient sociocultural setup is twofold: prioritization of dedication to Israel's God, its Scripture, and the acknowledgment of Jesus' messiahship, on the one hand, and deemphasis of ethnic practices, on the other. Reflecting on Luke's theology of "Christ associations," François Bovon opines that in Luke and Acts soteriology and ecclesiology are interrelated. The waiver of any Jewish ancestral practices requirement for devout Gentiles is not only a soteriological question but is ecclesiological as well. Bovon writes: "Luke is not replacing salvation through works with salvation through faith, but rather salvation through ritual works [e.g., circumcision, dietary laws] with salvation through Christ and moral works."⁶⁰⁵ Philip F. Esler, corroborating Bovon's reading, avers that the Gentiles that Luke is solely interested in are those characterized by exceptional acts of devotion to Israel's God and its people.⁶⁰⁶ Bovon's argument interweaves salvation and sociocultural configuration. He remarks that ritual works, being ethnic boundary markers, initially served as empirical indices for the chosen people. But Luke nuances this mindset: "It [i.e., admission of non-Judaizing Gentiles] brings the convert into the company of the real people of God."⁶⁰⁷ His neutrality (not

⁶⁰⁴ Anders Runesson describes this ideological proclivity among some Christ associations as "de-ethnosing Judaism." "Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 59-92.

⁶⁰⁵ Bovon, "Studies in Luke-Acts," 188.

⁶⁰⁶ Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*.

⁶⁰⁷ Bovon, "Studies in Luke-Acts," 188.

repudiation) toward non-Gentile adherence to Jewish ancestral customs is both soteriological and ecclesiological: they are not necessary for salvation but are ethnic boundary markers.⁶⁰⁸ This finds resonance in Pauline theology which is succinctly expressed in 1 Cor 7:17-20. Paul's argument, like Luke's, is that believers need not alter their ethnicity (or, indeed, any of their immutable qualities) in order to belong to Christ associations.

Daniel Marguerat approaches the subject of ritual works, soteriology, and ecclesiology differently. He asserts: "[Luke's] portrait of Paul is marked more by the issue of Christian identity and the claim to heritage than by the change in soteriology, which in Luke's day, was considered an accomplished fact."⁶⁰⁹ Whether soteriology was "an accomplished fact" by Luke's day is a topic up for debate. But Marguerat's insight unwittingly buttresses the stance of Bovon: ecclesiology and soteriology are entwined in Luke and Acts. As such, Christian identity, which mirrors the members of Christ associations in Asia Minor, is Luke's precise ecclesiology. Who they are and what they do evince his notion of soteriology: what constitutes the prerequisites of salvation? It is thus not a question of either-or as Marguerat envisions it: identity or soteriology. As a matter of fact, it is both: Luke's delineation of Christian identity indirectly reveals his idea of soteriology. Put pointedly, knowing the constituent members of Christ associations unearths God's salvific design, according to Luke.

Andrianjatovo Rakotoharintsifa's interpretation of Luke's ecclesiology is incongruous with Acts. He claims that Luke rhetorically relates the internal divisions in the incipient Christ

⁶⁰⁸ For publications on the negotiability of circumcision in Jewish thought, see Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish?" 251-68; idem, *Beginnings of Jewishness*; idem, "Judaism without Circumcision," 395-415; idem, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?* Simon C. Mimouni, *La circoncision dans le monde Judéen aux époques Grecque et Romaine: Histoire d'un conflit interne au Judaïsme* (Paris: Peeters, 2007); Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*; Livesey, *Circumcision*.

⁶⁰⁹ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 65; see idem, "Paul et la Torah," 81-100; Flichy, "L'Apôtre des Nations," in Marguerat, *Reception of Paulinism in Acts*, 37-49.

movement to accord with his “ecumenizing ecclesiology.”⁶¹⁰ As with many scholars, how Acts is read (e.g., Jewishness and Christianness) informs its interpretation. As I argued in 2.2 and 3.2, Luke is addressing an internecine diaspora Jewish disagreement not a parochial Christian dissent.

5.3.3 Ecumenism

Since Acts deals with a diaspora Jewish scrimmage and not with a Judean-diaspora face off, Luke’s project should never have been construed as at the level of the Christian religion versus Judaism, because the hostilities related in the narrative represent contemporaneous ideological and existential disagreements. Most scholars who espouse such a facile reading typically assume that Luke’s lexeme of “Jewishness” applies to Jews collectively. But this is not the case. Instead, “Jewishness” is an ingeniously nuanced appellation for the less-than-idyllic diaspora Jewish experience. Another copiously misconstrued and misused term is “Christianness,” which many exegetes assume is an indisputable contrasting sociocultural configuration to “Jewishness.” As I argued in 3.2. above, this cannot be further from the truth. “Christianness” is not a rhetorical contrast for “Jewishness.” Rather, borrowing Marguerat’s phrase, it has an identity function: it delineates the sociocultural configuration of Christ-believing diaspora Jews and devout non-Judaizing Gentiles. Put crisply, “Christians” are “Jews,” too. So conceptions of the replacement of Judaism by Christianity are misplaced and misrepresent Luke’s story. Conversely, Acts makes an oft-ignored assertion: “Christianness” is a faithful interpretation of “Jewishness” that is sensitive to an evolving context and not unduly critical of “Romanness.” As Marguerat insightfully remarks: Paul is a confluence of multiple cultures.⁶¹¹ Since Luke’s depiction of Paul accents “Christianness” as a legitimate movement

⁶¹⁰ Rakotoharintsifa, “Luke and Internal Divisions,” 176-77.

⁶¹¹ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 46.

rooted in “Jewishness” and incorporated into “Romanness,” ecumenical conversations will do well to commence from this delineation of three competing cultures that is markedly complementary, gently critical, and resolutely progressive. Aided by social-scientific criticism, the narrative critic may concede that the Paul of Acts does not belie the Paul of the letters.⁶¹²

5.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that applying the critical discourse on the parting of ways between Jews and Christians and sociological criticism to the study of Luke’s Paul nuances scholarly deductions on the subject. Contrary to the pervasive opinion, the hostility between Paul and “the Jews” reflects an internecine diaspora Jewish rivalry in Asia and Greece over ancestral customs. Positing different religions based on the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah and openness to non-Judaizing Gentiles is inattentive to the sociological issues enshrouding Luke’s chronicle. The disputing factions, as many sociologists have opined, have a lot more in common than we acknowledge. By siting “the Jews” (the catalyst for anti-Jewish readings) exclusively in Asia and Greece, Luke knew that his local readers would connect the dots between their existential threat and the menacing group in Acts.

CONCLUSION

In this research, I have questioned a few assumptions in Acts’ scholarship that underlie anachronistic and inattentive interpretations: (1) monolithic translations of “the Jews,” (2) indiscriminate ascription of “Christian” to all Christ believers, (3) postulating separation due to disagreements, (4) inattentiveness to concerns raised by the Redescribing Christian Origins SBL

⁶¹² See Odile Flichy, “The Paul of Luke. A Survey of Research,” trans. James D. Ernest, in Moessner et al., *Paul and the Heritage of Israel*, 18-34.

project, and (5) lack of a sociologically sensitive approach to social identity formation in many readings of Paul in Acts. These hermeneutical pitfalls have reinforced the illusory referendum-styled parting of ways between Jews and Christians and have plagued many erudite publications. First, I argued that the notion that Acts puts Christians against Jews is premised on a misreading of the narrative clues supplied by Luke, which are compatible with literary cartography, defamiliarization, and Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. These theories prioritize the contextual denotation of words and do not uncritically impose a generally accepted lexicographical meaning on lexemes. They emphasize the role of narrative sites in shaping rhetorical meaning. Therefore, Luke's exclusive situating of "the Jews" in Asia Minor and Greece, especially in connection to Paul, surely means that the reference is not to Jews generally. This literary clue has not been recognized or analyzed by any scholar. Using literary cartography, "the Jews" denotes diaspora Jews residing in Asia Minor and Greece. Since Luke also portrays Paul as a native of the same Roman province, the rivalry related in Acts is a parochial affair and not illustrative of Jewishness globally.

Second, indiscriminately ascribing "Christian" to all Christ believers in Acts blunts Luke's incisive rhetoric: Christ-believing diaspora Jews who admit non-Judaizing Gentiles. Christianness, per Luke, originates from Antioch, not Jerusalem. It is a brainchild of Christ-believing diaspora Jews who extended the gospel to their Gentile compatriots. This reading of Christianness corroborates documentary evidence dating to the inception of the second century and originating from Asia Minor. This indicates that the reality designated "Christian" was not simply Christ-believing, because, although the NT is also Christ-believing, the lexeme does not feature anywhere else besides 1 Peter. As I said in 3.3, Acts and 1 Peter share common traits: dating (second century) and literary provenance (Asia Minor). This explains why "Christian" is

part of Luke's vocabulary. Since language describes phenomenon, per Gager, it is reasonable to assume that Christianness is a second-century reality coined in Asia. But unlike the pervasive scholarly assumption, it is not indicative of a movement that is departing Jewishness. Rather, Luke portrays it as a sociocultural configuration deeply immersed in Israel's Scriptures and unapologetically convinced of the crucial importance of ancestral practices for Jews solely.

Third, misconstruing the social identities of "the Jews" and "Christians" has launched a projectile that has taken scholarly discourse in Acts away from the nuanced parochial concerns related by Luke. As such, the critical discourse on the parting of Jews and Christians is a vital resource to employ in studying social identity formation in incipient Christ associations. This hermeneutical framework makes the exegete attentive to the complexity of group dynamics and self-definition. It realistically assesses social boundaries as fluid, negotiable, and becoming. When applied to Paul's unsavory encounters with "the Jews," it eschews inflexible taxonomies and encourages palpable similarities. Insights from the Redescribing Christian Origins project jostle scholars to evaluate thoroughly prejudicial readings of Acts that are inattentive to social boundary formation.

Taken together, these methods have shown that Paul in Acts mirrors Luke's sociocultural configuration: Christ-believing diaspora Jews who were fully immersed in imperial culture. They avoid the hermeneutical pitfall of an inaccurate and anachronistic assessment of the narrative and delineate a Christ association that regards Jewishness, Christianness, and Romanness as compatible and complementary.

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